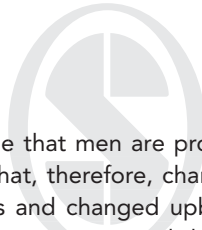


Chapter 1

Fortunes of Radicalism

Indian Maoists and the Dead End of Politics

Maidul Islam



The materialist doctrine that men are products of circumstances and upbringing, and that, therefore, changed men are products of other circumstances and changed upbringing, forgets that it is men that change circumstances and that the educator himself needs educating. Hence, this doctrine necessarily arrives at dividing society into two parts, of which one is superior to society (in Robert Owen, for example). The coincidence of the changing of circumstances and of human activity can be conceived and rationally understood only as *revolutionising practice*.

—Karl Marx¹

In April 2006, the then prime minister of India claimed that the Maoists are the greatest internal security threat to the country.² He reiterated

¹ Karl Marx, 'Theses on Feuerbach' (Third Thesis), in *Selected Works*, vol. 1, eds. Karl Marx and Frederick Engels (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1969), 13–14 (emphasis in original).

² Siddharthya Roy, 'Half a Century of India's Maoist Insurgency: A Political Analysis of the Long-running Conflict', *The Diplomat*, 21 September 2017. Available at: <https://thediplomat.com/2017/09/half-a-century-of-indias-maoist-insurgency/> (accessed on 24 November 2018).

that position later in a speech at the Chief Minister's Conference on Internal Security in New Delhi on 7 February 2010.³ Who are these Maoists that are posing such a grave danger to the security and stability of the Indian nation-state? The Communist Party of India (Maoist) or CPI (Maoist) was formed by the merger of two Left-wing extremist parties, namely, the Communist Party of India (Marxist–Leninist) People's War Group, known as PWG, and the Maoist Communist Centre of India (MCCI) on 21 September 2004.⁴ Both parties had their genealogical roots in the Naxalite movement of the late 1960s and cherished their Naxalite legacy. Thus, in May 2017, the Central Committee of the CPI (Maoist) issued a pamphlet that urged 'comrades' and 'friends' to celebrate the 50th year of Naxalbari armed rebellion from 23 May to 29 May.⁵ The mission of the Naxalites has been the transformation of the existing socio-economic system. In other words, they believe in the radical restructuring of the society with the abolition of private property and along with it the dissolution of the remnants of feudalism and capitalism in socio-economic, political and cultural realms. Five decades later, in the aftermath of the golden jubilee celebration of the Naxalite uprising, and when India has gradually transformed from an old-order State-managed capitalism to corporate-led neoliberalism and, in effect, has further deepened the norms and practices of capitalist structures in everyday life of the people, what does it mean to be radical in contemporary India? Has the radical transformation of capitalism in India exposed the limit of the promise of the Maoists? Has the success story of Indian capitalism questioned the basic premise of the Maoists to fight the capitalist nation-state with its armed strategy? Do the Maoists need to learn from the global

³ The full speech is available at: <http://www.satp.org/document/paper-acts-and-ordinances/prime-minister-s-speech-at-the-chief-minister-s-conference-on-internal-security-february-27-2010> (accessed on 24 November 2018).

⁴ Joint Press Statement by Kishan, General Secretary of MCCI and Ganapathy, General Secretary of CPI (M–L) [People's War] dated 14 October 2004. All primary materials in the form of party documents, pamphlets, press releases and statements of CPI (Maoist) used in writing this chapter have been taken from: <http://www.bannedthought.net/India/CPI-Maoist-Docs/> (accessed on 31 October 2018).

⁵ CPI (Maoist) Pamphlet on 50th anniversary of Naxalbari.

experiences of successes and failures of specific political strategies? Do they need to introspect their political tactics by seriously engaging with the failures of the armed strategy in fighting a neoliberal State and be open-minded to use electoral democracy and mass movements as sites of political struggles? This chapter will deal with such questions by analysing the ideological discourses of Maoism and examine the radical politics of the Maoists in contemporary India by assessing the extent of the Maoist influence and whether they pose any significant security threat to destabilize the Indian State. In order to do such an exercise, first, a brief exposition of the political ideology, strategy and tactics of the Indian Maoists is necessary.

IDEOLOGY, STRATEGY AND TACTICS OF THE INDIAN MAOISTS

The CPI (Maoist) considers the 1970 party programme of the Communist Party of India (Marxist–Leninist) or CPI (M–L) that broke away from the Communist Party of India (Marxist) or CPI (M) in 1969 and the MCC document of 1969 providing ‘the correct revolutionary general line for the Indian revolution after breaking the decades-old entrenched revisionism in the Indian communist movement’. The Indian Maoists aim to ‘apply Marxism–Leninism–Maoism to the concrete conditions of India and by fighting, exposing and breaking from the age-old revisionism of the CPI and CPI(M) brand’. They eulogize the Naxalbari revolt led by Charu Mazumdar in May 1967 in North Bengal.⁶ The central task of the Indian revolution according to the Maoists is the seizure of political power by armed force or through protracted people’s war.⁷ In this respect, the Maoist party seeks to provide ‘the much-needed leadership to the people’s movement countrywide... to accelerate the armed agrarian revolutionary war throughout the country’.⁸ The CPI (Maoist) identifies the ‘imperialists, the comprador

⁶ All quotes in the paragraph are from CPI (Maoist) Party Programme, 5.

⁷ CPI (Maoist) Central Committee (P), ‘Strategy and Tactics of the Indian Revolution’, 21 September 2004, 36–48.

⁸ CPI (Maoist) Party Programme, 5.

bureaucratic bourgeoisie and the big landlord classes' as the 'targets' of the revolution in order to

overthrow the semi-colonial, semifeudal rule of the big landlord-comprador bureaucratic bourgeoisie classes, and imperialism that backs them, through armed struggle and to establish the people's democratic state under the leadership of proletariat—the new democratic state; in place of it by smashing the reactionary autocratic state.⁹

The Indian Maoists believe that to achieve victory in revolution, a strong revolutionary party must be ideologically guided by the principles of Marxism–Leninism–Maoism in all matters. Such a party should be

well-disciplined and built up through revolutionary style and method; that is based on democratic centralism; that links the theory with practice; practises criticism and self-criticism; is closely integrated with the masses and relies firmly upon them; and stands firmly on the class line, mass line and armed struggle.¹⁰

In this regard, the Maoists in India identify specific classes who could be potential allies of a revolutionary strategic united front for carrying forward the task of the Indian revolutionary movement. This united front according to the Maoist party programme is a four-class alliance comprising 'the working class, peasantry, petty bourgeoisie and national bourgeoisie—under the leadership of working class based upon worker–peasant alliance'.¹¹ However, the Maoists describe the first three classes as 'the motive forces of the revolution', while the national bourgeoisie (middle traders, middle and small bourgeoisie) 'is a vacillating ally'.¹² In carrying forward the goal of the new democratic revolution in India, one primary task of the United Front is to 'unite all the oppressed nationalities, persecuted religious minorities and other

⁹ Ibid., 23.

¹⁰ Ibid., 29.

¹¹ Ibid., 28.

¹² CPI (Maoist) Central Committee (P), 'Strategy and Tactics of the Indian Revolution', 80; also see CPI (Maoist) Party Programme, 27–28.

oppressed social sections in the course of advancing the armed struggle for the seizure of political power'.¹³

Moreover, the Indian Maoists ascertain certain classes who could provide direct recruitment to the people's liberation army. Therefore, according to the Maoists, a strong and well-disciplined people's army under the leadership of a revolutionary party will be primarily built 'through the armed agrarian revolution mainly from among the landless poor peasants, agricultural labourers and the working class'.¹⁴ The building of the people's liberation army is absolutely crucial for the Maoists as it signifies 'the armed power of the people', and it is by expanding and developing the guerrilla war that the Maoists 'can establish the guerrilla zones and the base areas in strategically favourable areas, where they aim 'to arouse, organise and arm the vast peasant masses on the basic slogan of the agrarian revolution, "Land to the tillers and political power to the revolutionary people's committees!"'¹⁵ The Indian Maoists, thus, rely on the strategy of armed struggle to combat the State, and the road to political power through the electoral tactic is a closed option for them. As their party programme argues,

[T]he tactics of participation in the election in the name of using it is tantamount to abandoning the tasks of building and advancing the armed struggle. Reality is that without people's political power everything is illusion. The people's political power can be established and advanced only through the path of protracted people's war. Parliamentary path and participation in the elections are completely incompatible with Protracted peoples war in the concrete conditions of India. Even the advancement of real people's political consciousness is closely linked with it. More so, the accumulation of forces, including the development and Bolshevization of the party itself are inseparably linked with it. That is why the armed struggle is the 'centre of gravity' of the Party's work as comrade Mao stated. In this overall context, the slogan of 'Boycott Election', though a question of tactics, acquires the significance of strategy in the concrete conditions of India. It is also

¹³ CPI (Maoist) Party Programme, 28.

¹⁴ Ibid., 29.

¹⁵ Ibid., 25.

correct to raise the slogan ‘Boycott Election is a Democratic Right’ on a mass scale’.¹⁶

In a Hindi pamphlet issued by the Dandakaranya Special Zonal Committee of the CPI (Maoist) dated 6 January 2015, the party gave a call to boycott the panchayat elections. Similarly, it regularly gives a call to poll boycott before assembly and parliamentary elections as well. A decade back, there was a sharp critique of the Maoist call of poll boycott and political violence by none other than a credible chronicler of the Naxalite movement.¹⁷ The Maoists responded to such a critique by justifying the tactical line of poll boycott along with admitting the ‘setback’ in some states like Andhra Pradesh, where the voter turnout was high due to the high deployment of police.¹⁸ However, the Maoists did experiment to participate in local rural bodies in Odisha in 2012 while winning more than 50 seats in the panchayat elections in Malkangiri and Koraput districts.¹⁹ Such an experiment was not emulated elsewhere besides their reluctance to amend the party programme or change their strategy and political-tactical line regarding their general approach towards electoral participation. While carrying forward the armed struggle strategy, the Maoists identify certain strategic areas that need to be built as a core base for people’s war.

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Basing on the laws of protracted people’s war in India, in order to confront an enemy, who is far more superior in strength, the revolutionary forces will have to select areas, in which the enemy is relatively weaker and which are favourable to the revolutionary forces, and develop the revolutionary war there. Our country has many such areas that are strategically important for the people’s war where Liberated Areas can be established. These Bases will act as the lever or fulcrum for coordinating

¹⁶ Ibid., 25.

¹⁷ Sumanta Banerjee, ‘The Maoists, Elections, Boycotts and Violence’, *Economic & Political Weekly* 44, no. 18 (2 May 2009): 8–10; Sumanta Banerjee, ‘Critiquing the Programme of Action of the Maoists’, *Economic & Political Weekly* 44, no. 46 (14 November 2009): 75–77.

¹⁸ Spokesperson, CPI (Maoist), ‘On the Election Boycott Tactic of the Maoists’, *Economic & Political Weekly* 44, no. 38 (19 September 2009): 73–77.

¹⁹ Ajay Gudavarthy, *Maoism, Democracy and Globalisation: Cross-currents in Indian Politics* (London: SAGE Publications, 2014), 61–66.

and advancing the people's war in the country and for seizing political power countrywide.²⁰

There has been a recent change of guard in the CPI (Maoist) leadership with the replacement of the ideologue, Muppala Laxmana Rao, aka Ganapathy, as the general secretary of the party with Namballa Keshava Rao, aka Baswaraj, who was heading the Central Military Commission (CMC) of the party and is known to be an expert in fieldcraft, use of explosives and military tactics. According to a media report, the leadership change is for rejuvenating the fighting capabilities of the Maoist party, which has been in the 'setback' stage all over the country as several documents of the CPI (Maoist) point to the party's failure in attracting youth and the inability to spread the movement to urban areas.²¹ However, replacing an ideologue with a military war specialist at the helm of the organizational leadership of the CPI (Maoist) means that the party will continue to follow the strategy of armed struggle. As part of the military strategy, the Maoists have chosen hilly and dense forest zones to combat the security apparatuses of the State.

These strategic areas are hilly regions with dense forest cover, have sufficient economic resources, a vast population, and a vast forest area spreading over thousands of square kilometres. In such areas the enemy is weak, and these areas are very favourable for the manoeuvres of the people's army. In these strategic areas we can defeat the enemy completely by fulfilling the tasks of building and consolidating a strong proletarian party and a strong people's army; procuring the people's support and economic resources, while developing the guerrilla war aiming at the building of liberated/base areas in these areas.²²

At the operational level, the Maoists have mostly chosen the forests and hilly areas of the central-eastern provinces of India. They have preferred

²⁰ CPI (Maoist) Central Committee (P), 'Strategy and Tactics of the Indian Revolution', 50–51.

²¹ K. Srinivas Reddy, 'Ganapathy Steps Down as Maoist Chief', *Telangana Today*, 6 November 2018. Available at: <https://telanganatoday.com/ganapathy-steps-down-as-maoist-chief> (accessed on 11 February 2019).

²² CPI (Maoist) Central Committee (P), 'Strategy and Tactics of the Indian Revolution', 51.

such a zone in their party programme as well in the following manner: '[T]he waves of the new phase of the "spring thunder" are once again reverberating today in Andhra, Bihar–Jharkhand, Dandakaranya, and other areas of our country.'²³ According to an observer, the core areas of Maoist conflict is in the 'Chota Nagpur and Orissa plateaus—loaded with 93 percent of the country's iron ore, and 84 percent of its coal' that has a terrain of plateau hills, forests and rivers.²⁴ However, despite their ideological commitment, by sticking to the path of armed struggle while targeting certain geographical spaces as their core strategic base areas and giving the call to boycott elections, the Maoists have really shrunk in the form of organizational influence in recent years.

THE EXTENT OF THE MAOIST INFLUENCE

The leaders of the Maoist movement have expressed concerns about how the Maoists are weak in plains and urban areas while being confined to the most backward forest areas of the country.²⁵ According to a status paper on the problem of Left-wing extremism, tabled by a former home minister of India on 13 March 2006, Naxal violence was reported from 509 police stations in 11 provinces of India, which is 5.8 per cent of the total number of police stations in those Indian states.²⁶ However, from 2008 onwards there has been a steady decline of Left-wing radical activities and the quantum of violence. In reply to a question in the lower house of the Indian Parliament, the minister of state for home affairs replied that in 2008, Left-wing extremist activities were reported from 223 districts of India, while in 2009 it was 208, in 2010 it was 196 and by 2011 it was just 182. Out of 182 districts, only 83 districts were considered to be severely affected by Left-wing extremism.²⁷ Also, 2013 onwards, a shrink in the number of Maoist leaders at the middle and top can be witnessed due to killings,

²³ CPI (Maoist) Party Programme, 5.

²⁴ Roy, 'Half a Century of India's Maoist Insurgency'.

²⁵ Gudavarthy, *Maoism, Democracy and Globalisation*, 53.

²⁶ Available at: <http://www.satp.org/document/paper-acts-and-oridnances/status-paper-on-the-naxal-problem> (accessed on 24 November 2018).

²⁷ Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India, 'Starred Question Number 1, Answered on 22nd November 2011' in Lok Sabha.

arrests and surrenders.²⁸ Based on the data available with the South Asia Terrorism Portal, an analyst has shown that by 2016, only 104 districts were affected by Left-wing extremism, and out of them, only 25 districts have been profoundly affected while another 31 are moderately affected.²⁹ Also, there has been a steep fall in the number of casualties (including civilians, security personnel and Maoists) driven by Left-wing extremists from 1,180 in 2010, the peak year of Maoist violence to 238 in 2017, the lowest since the formation of the CPI (Maoist) in 2004.³⁰ Recently, the home minister of India stated in May 2018 that ‘casualties among security forces have declined by 53–55 per cent’ and the ‘geographical expanse of leftwing extremism affected areas has also decreased by 40–45 per cent.’³¹

In the 2018 Chhattisgarh assembly elections, the Maoists gave a poll boycott call, and according to the media reports, some districts such as Dantewada, Bijapur and Sukma had a tensed situation.³² In fact, in the first phase of Chhattisgarh assembly elections, out of 18 assembly constituencies, 12 were in the Maoist heartland of Bastar.³³ However, the voter turnout in this phase was 70 per cent even as explosives were recovered in a couple of regions.³⁴ In 2008 assembly elections, in the

²⁸ N. Manoharan, ‘Left-wing Extremism in 2013: A Mixed Bag’, in *Armed Conflict, Peace Audit and Early Warning 2014: Stability and Instability in South Asia*, eds. D. Suba Chandran and P. R. Chari (New Delhi: SAGE Publications, 2015): 126.

²⁹ Roy, ‘Half a Century of India’s Maoist Insurgency’.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Shishir Tripathi, ‘Red Corridor Is Shrinking’, *Governance Now*, 15 July 2018. Available at: <https://www.governancenow.com/news/regular-story/red-corridor-is-shrinking> (accessed on 24 November 2018).

³² Suvojit Bagchi, ‘Chhattisgarh Assembly Elections 2018: Maoist Boycott Call Looms over Dantewada’, *The Hindu*, 11 November 2018. Available at: <https://www.thehindu.com/elections/chhattisgarh-assembly-elections-2018/maoist-poll-boycott-call-whose-election-is-it-anyway-in-chhattisgarh/article25469374.ece> (accessed on 2 December 2018).

³³ Arunima, ‘Bastar Votes Amid Fear That Leadership Change in CPI Maoist Could Mean More Violence’, *CNN-News18*. Available at: <https://www.news18.com/news/india/bastar-votes-amid-fear-that-change-in-guard-in-cpi-maoist-could-mean-more-violence-1936227.html> (accessed on 2 December 2018).

³⁴ *The Hindu*, ‘Chhattisgarh Assembly Elections 2018: 70% Turnout in Phase One of Polls’, 12 November 2018. Available at: <https://www.thehindu.com/>

same 18 constituencies of Chhattisgarh, the voter turnout was 67.07 per cent, while in 2013 assembly elections, it was 75.86 per cent.³⁵ In the Maoist-affected areas in Chhattisgarh, barring just two tribal assembly constituencies of Bijapur and Konta, no assembly constituency reported a voter turnout less than 50 per cent in 2008 and 2013 Chhattisgarh assembly elections. In the first phase of 2018 Chhattisgarh assembly elections, 18 sensitive constituencies went to polls, which are regarded as Maoist affected zones. According to the Election Commission of India data, they recorded an average turn out of 76.46 per cent. In 2018, Konta witnessed a voter turnout of 55.30 per cent, Bastar, Dantewara and Bijapur noticed a turnout of 83.37 per cent, 60.64 per cent and 48.90 per cent respectively. In the last one decade, moderate to high voter turnout has been witnessed in the so-called Maoist-influenced districts in the states of Bihar, Jharkhand, Telangana (previously part of Andhra Pradesh), Odisha and West Bengal. Thus, there is ample evidence to argue that the Maoist influence has been dwindling in India as their organizational presence is shrinking on the one hand, while their poll boycott calls seem to be not working on the other hand. In this context, a pertinent question could be of the following: Why has the Maoist influence waned despite their rhetorical call to serve the interests of the poor and the most downtrodden sections of the Indian population? One can argue that the retreat of the Maoists in the recent past is because of their dated understanding of the dynamics of Indian capitalism and the neoliberal State, which has a bearing on their political-tactical line and the nature of mobilization behind their political project.

INDIAN CAPITALISM, THE NEOLIBERAL STATE AND THE CONSTRAINTS OF THE MAOISTS

The Maoists regard India as ‘a semi-colonial, semi-feudal country with uneven development’ and vast rural backward areas with sharp class contradictions. In such a context, the CPI (Maoist) argues that

elections/chhattisgarh-assembly-elections-2018/chhattisgarh-assembly-elections-2018-voting-live-updates/article25472703.ece (accessed on 2 December 2018).

³⁵ Computed from the Election Commission of India data.

The party of the proletariat has no other way but to take the path of protracted people's war, just as in China, to advance the revolution towards victory i.e. to liberate the rural areas first and then having expanded the base areas—the centre of democratic power in rural areas—advance towards countrywide victory through encircling and capturing the cities.³⁶

In this respect, they also maintain that the 'urban petty-bourgeoisie class and middle class revolutionary intellectuals are revolutionary forces and their vast majority will become the faithful ally of the revolution'.³⁷ In this regard, commentators have questioned the Maoist understanding of India as a semi-colonial and semi-feudal country like China in the 1930s and their formulations of primary contradiction between feudalism and the broad masses that have been influenced by the programme of the Communist Party of China in the context of political economy transformations in India from late 1960s.³⁸ Moreover, can the Maoist analysis of the urban middle classes as a revolutionary force who could be an ally of the cause of revolution be taken seriously when India's middle classes have been the direct beneficiary of the neoliberal economic reforms with the gradual implementation of the policies of liberalization, privatization and globalization?

The political economy of contemporary India has been characterized by rapid economic growth as a result of the processes of primitive accumulation of capital, and the logic of profit primarily driving such an accumulation economy. However, the processes of primitive accumulation have simultaneously created a large redundant surplus population as a constitutive outside of capital who cannot be absorbed into the capitalist enterprises but must be supported through various forms of anti-poverty programmes and governmental welfare schemes because this surplus population in a post-colonial context has electoral power besides the consensus in the policymaking discourses about

³⁶ CPI (Maoist) Party Programme, 25.

³⁷ Ibid., 27.

³⁸ Deepankar Basu and Debarshi Das, 'The Maoist Movement in India: Some Political Economy Considerations', *Journal of Agrarian Change* 13, no. 3 (July 2013): 365–381.

taking care of such a population.³⁹ Thus, effects of the primitive accumulation on the vast number of peasants, artisans and petty producers in the informal sector need to be reversed in the form of providing livelihood needs of the poor to continue the growth of corporate capital under conditions of electoral democracy because leaving the marginalized groups without any governmental support system runs the risk of turning them into ‘dangerous classes’.⁴⁰

A decade back, noted social scientist Partha Chatterjee had correctly observed how peasant societies in India have dramatically changed in the aftermath of economic transformation from the 1980s onwards. He mentioned five prime changes of peasant societies in contemporary India. First, the spread of governmental technologies as a result of the deepening reach of the developmental State and electoral democracy has created a condition where the State is no longer an external entity to the peasant community. To quote him,

Governmental agencies distributing education, health services, food, roadways, water, electricity, agricultural technology, emergency relief and dozens of other welfare services have penetrated deep into the interior of everyday peasant life. Not only are peasants dependent on state agencies for these services, but they have also acquired considerable skill, albeit to a different degree in different regions, in manipulating and pressurising these agencies to deliver these benefits.⁴¹

Second, even the gradual and piecemeal reforms since the 1950s in the domain of agrarian property have led to a situation where except in few isolated areas, ‘for the first time in centuries, small peasants possessing land no longer directly confront an exploiting class within the village, as under feudal or semi-feudal conditions’ which has far-reaching consequences at the level of inventing new strategies of peasant politics.⁴² Third, according to Chatterjee,

³⁹ Kalyan Sanyal, *Rethinking Capitalist Development: Primitive Accumulation, Governmentality and Post-Colonial Capitalism* (New Delhi: Routledge, 2013[2007], paperback ed. with a Foreword by Partha Chatterjee).

⁴⁰ Partha Chatterjee, ‘Democracy and Economic Transformation in India’, *Economic & Political Weekly* 43, no. 16 (19 April 2008): 53–62.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 54.

⁴² *Ibid.*

Since the tax on land or agricultural produce is no longer a significant source of revenue for the government, as in colonial or pre-colonial times, the relation of the state to the peasantry is no longer directly extractive, as it often was in the past.⁴³

Fourth, the possibility of shifting from peasant occupation and peasant migration into new cities and industrial regions is 'no longer a function of their pauperisation and forcible separation from the land, but is often a voluntary choice, shaped by the perception of new opportunities and new desires'.⁴⁴ Finally, there is a new economy of desire among the younger members of peasant families not to opt for a life of a peasant anymore but to accept urban non-agricultural occupations even though moving to a new city or town might pose some hardships and uncertainties. This trend according to Chatterjee is due to 'the spread of school education and widespread exposure to modern communications media such as the cinema, television and advertising' along with the 'lure of anonymity and upward mobility' in city-based non-agricultural professions.⁴⁵

In addition to the changing nature of contemporary peasant society in India, Chatterjee sharply points out the relative decline of the landed elites in comparison to the ascendancy of the power of corporate capital, and the hegemony of corporate capital over the space of civil society whose members are constituted by the urban middle classes. The educational, professional and social aspirations of the middle classes have now become tied with the fortunes of corporate capital along with an emergence of a vague belief among the urban middle classes that rapid economic growth will solve all problems of poverty and unequal opportunities.⁴⁶

When one compares the contemporary reality of the fast-changing nature of Indian capitalism under conditions of neoliberal governmentality and electoral democracy, then one cannot but conclude that the Maoists in India have a dated understanding of

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 56–62.

the dynamism of Indian capitalism and the neoliberal State. Indian capitalism has fundamentally transformed from the early 1990s onwards while expanding the rural market and transforming peasant societies. Moreover, the inclusion of the agrarian economy within the neoliberal governmental strategies creates a significant impediment for the Maoists to mobilize the agrarian population. What is interesting to note is that under a neoliberal policy regime when farm incomes have been declining and issues of farmer suicides and demands for farm loan waiver have been emerging, the Maoists have been unable to mobilize the peasant population throughout India. Instead, new demands for reservation by landed castes in government jobs are emerging as agriculture has become economically unviable. Thus, the agrarian revolution that the Indian Maoists aspire to achieve, in effect, has been mostly symptomatic of emotionally charged fetishes than a serious strategy of political mobilization. At the same time, when the hegemony of corporate capital has swayed an overwhelming majority of the urban middle classes in India at a time when neoliberal capitalism has directly benefited the urban petty bourgeoisie, the Maoist assessment of the urban petty bourgeoisie as a ‘revolutionary force’ which will ‘become the faithful ally of the revolution’ is nothing short of wishful thinking. In the context of the aforementioned critical evaluation of the Maoist movement, a critical examination of the responses by the Parliamentary Left towards the Maoists is relevant.

The standard critique of the Maoists by the ideologues of the Parliamentary Left has been that the Maoists have a confused understanding of the world situation, an incorrect analysis of the Indian State, an artificial theoretical construct like the ‘Chinese path’, ignorance about the element of class struggle within the parliamentary system, distance from everyday political struggles of the people and distortion of Mao Zedong’s thought by putting Mao out of context to seek justification for guerrilla warfare and, in effect, represent an ideological strand of violent anarchism.⁴⁷ Such analyses of the Maoists had their genealogy

⁴⁷ Anil Biswas, ‘“Maoism”: An Exercise in Anarchism’, *The Marxist* 21, no. 4 (October–December 2005): 1–15. A similar kind of response by challenging and critiquing the politics and ideology of the Indian Maoists was later articulated by two more ideologues of the CPI (M). See Pushpendra Grewal, ‘Indian Maoists: Flawed Strategy and Perverted Praxis’, in *Maoism: A Critique from the Left*, ed.

in the ideological critique by the CPI (M) ideologues towards the Naxalites in the late 1960s, 1970s and 1980s with particular reference to their wrong analysis about the nature of Indian big bourgeoisie, incorrect understanding about India's independence, factional fights within the Naxalite movement and subsequent splintering of several Naxalite groups.⁴⁸ What is remarkably similar in all polemical critique of the CPI (M) ideologues towards the Maoists is that of copious quotes from Lenin's *Leftwing Communism: An Infantile Disorder*. The point is that while the Maoists have been correctly understood by the CPI (M) ideologues as an anarchist force with a warped ideological path, the CPI (M) ideologues' copious quote of Lenin's pamphlet by locating the roots of Left-wing extremism cum adventurism as a petty bourgeois phenomena is a problematic formulation on four grounds. First, there is a subaltern base of the Indian Maoists, particularly among the poor Adivasis in parts of Chhattisgarh⁴⁹ and landless Dalits in parts of Bihar⁵⁰ who cannot be even remotely identified with the petty bourgeois strata.

Second, Lenin's analysis of the nature of petty-bourgeois adventurism and childishness, written between 1918 and 1920 in a specific context of the early days of the Soviet Union,⁵¹ is wrong to be extrapolated and transplanted into Indian conditions. In other words, when the Government of India is not led by a revolutionary party unlike the post-revolutionary situation in the erstwhile Soviet Union, there is no point to mimic an argument that was put forward by Lenin in

Prasenjit Bose (New Delhi: LeftWord Books, 2010); Nilotpal Basu, 'The Tragedy of "Maoism"', in *Maoism: A Critique from the Left*, ed. Prasenjit Bose (New Delhi: LeftWord Books, 2010).

⁴⁸ See 'Ideological Debate Summed Up', Party Document issued by the Polit Bureau, CPI (M), June 1968; Biplab Dasgupta, *The Naxalite Movement* (New Delhi: Allied Publishers, 1974); Prakash Karat, 'Naxalism Today; At an Ideological Deadend', *The Marxist* 3, no. 1 (January–March, 1985), 42–65.

⁴⁹ Nandini Sundar, *The Burning Forest: India's War in Bastar* (New Delhi: Juggernaut Books, 2016).

⁵⁰ George J. Kunnath, *Rebels from the Mud Houses: Dalits and the Making of the Maoist Revolution in Bihar* (New Delhi: Social Science Press, 2012).

⁵¹ See V. I. Lenin, "'Left-Wing" Childishness and the Petty-Bourgeois Mentality', in *Lenin: Selected Works*, vol. 2 (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1968 [1918]), 429–451; V. I. Lenin, "'Left-Wing" Communism—An Infantile Disorder', in *Lenin: Selected Works*, vol. 3 (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1968 [1920]), 512–585.

countering a specific adventurist trend in the aftermath of the Bolshevik revolution in Russia. Also, the socio-economic and political conditions along with the correlation of political actors in the form of specific class forces and non-class identitarian groups in contemporary India are different from that of the nascent stage of the former Soviet Union.

Third, since the petty bourgeois middle class is an ally of the CPI (M)'s own people's democratic front, it is somewhat disingenuous to only critique the Maoists as victims of petty-bourgeois deviations. In fact, there exists a compelling critique not by anyone less than a prominent party intellectual of the CPI (M) about how the Bengal unit of the CPI (M), governed by the demands of the urban middle classes, opted for a corporate capital-led industrialization with a neoliberal policy trajectory at the cost of the class interests of the peasants, rural poor, petty producers and small traders.⁵² In other words, unlike the charge of petty-bourgeois anarchism in the case of Maoists, the CPI (M) has been trapped into petty bourgeois revisionism. Moreover, what the CPI (M)-led Left Front has been traditionally doing regarding political mobilization is nothing different from non-Left parties' adoption of populist rhetoric for mass mobilization. The political and ideological content of such populist rhetoric might be different in the cases of the big national parties, the regional parties and the communist Left. However, the logic of populism as a strategy to mobilize various sectors of the electorate cutting across caste, class, language and gender has been the aim of all major political parties in India.

Finally, the critique of the Maoists about their incorrect analysis of the world situation could also be directed against the CPI (M). The CPI (M) still believes that China, Vietnam and North Korea (DPRK) are 'socialist' countries.⁵³ However, there exists a credible

⁵² See Prabhat Patnaik, 'Left in Government', *Frontline* 23, no. 10 (20 May–02 June 2006): 23–25; Prabhat Patnaik, 'In the Aftermath of Nandigram', *Economic & Political Weekly* 42, no. 21 (26 May 2007): 1893–1895; Prabhat Patnaik, 'The Left in Decline', *Economic & Political Weekly* 46, no. 29 (16 July 2011): 12–16.

⁵³ See the following documents of the CPI (M) in their party congresses in the last few years. Communist Party of India (Marxist), Paragraphs 6.1–6.32 of *Resolution on Some Ideological Issues* adopted at the 20th Party Congress (Kozhikode: 4–9 April 2012), 15–21; Communist Party of India (Marxist), Paragraph 1.35 of the *Political Resolution* adopted at the 21st Party Congress (Vishakhapatnam: 14–19

academic literature that convincingly demonstrates that China has been implementing a project of neoliberalism entirely different from the Anglo-American variant⁵⁴ while Vietnam is also reaching new heights of building capitalism⁵⁵ and North Korea looks like a monarchy with a dynastic rule.⁵⁶ While a detailed analysis of the ideological debates between the Maoists and the Marxists in India is beyond the scope of this chapter, one can safely argue that both the Maoists and the Marxists forget to acknowledge that the socialist experiments in the 20th century eventually built capitalism.⁵⁷ In this regard, the Indian Marxists are still to acknowledge that the Chinese and the Vietnamese have successfully built neoliberal capitalism in the 21st century. The Chinese experience has proved that neoliberalism as an economic doctrine has been a malleable technology of governance in different political regimes quite distinct from one another such as authoritarian, democratic and communist.⁵⁸ In the context of the aforementioned theoretical and ideological debates, can the Maoists learn from the *practice* of the Left in the 21st century?

CAN THE MAOISTS LEARN FROM 21ST-CENTURY INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCE?

If one analyses the prospects of the international experience of Left-wing politics globally in the 21st century, then it is clear that traditional

April 2015), 9; Communist Party of India (Marxist), Paragraphs 1.56–1.68 of the *Political Resolution* adopted at the 22nd Party Congress (Hyderabad: 18–22 April 2018), 15–18.

⁵⁴ David Harvey, ‘Neoliberalism “with Chinese Characteristics”’, in *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 120–151.

⁵⁵ Lan Nguyen, *Guerilla Capitalism: The State in the Market in Vietnam* (Oxford: Chandos Publishing, 2009); also see Christina Schwenkel and Ann Marie Leshkovich, eds., ‘Neoliberalism in Vietnam’, special issue, *Positions: Asia Critique* 20, no. 2 (May 2012): 379–670.

⁵⁶ Andrei Lankov, *The Real North Korea: Life and Politics in the Failed Stalinist Utopia*, fully updated and revised ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015 [2013]).

⁵⁷ Aditya Nigam, ‘Democracy, State and Capital: The “Unthought” of 20th Century Marxism’, *Economic & Political Weekly* 44, no. 51 (19 December 2009): 35–39.

⁵⁸ See Aihwa Ong, *Neoliberalism as Exception: Mutations in Citizenship and Sovereignty* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006).

communist parties have not been much successful in the road to political power. Instead, various forms of socialist and Left-wing populists have been able to form governments through democratic political mobilization. It is in this regard that the Indian Maoists have severe limitations in championing and articulating a political project that could be appealing for a Left-wing populism in the 21st century. Apart from a conventional class-centric approach and the limitations in the class-centric formulation of the united front⁵⁹ like major communist parties in India, the Maoists have four additional problems. Firstly, the military strategy of the Maoists to combat the modern Indian State has become obsolete. It is because, now, it has become almost impossible to tackle the surveillance system and the humongous military strength of the neoliberal State.⁶⁰ The failure of the Maoists to capture political power through an armed strategy is real not only in India but also in other parts of the world. In the recent past, in Nepal, the Maoists did not opt for an armed seizure of political power and had chosen the route of electoral democracy. Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), the Shining Path in Peru, the Maoist Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) and several other Maoist groups in Latin America have been unsuccessful to capture political power through armed guerrilla warfare.⁶¹ Many Maoist groups in these countries have been primarily restricted to specific zones of forests and mountains, much like the Indian Maoists.

The emergence of a progressive Left in an emerging world has already given signals of moving away from ‘traditional ideas associated with socialist theory and practice’ of the 20th century, although there are continuities with the socialist ideas of the 20th century concerning

⁵⁹ CPI (Maoist) Party Programme, 23, 27–29; CPI (Maoist) Central Committee (P), ‘Strategy and Tactics of the Indian Revolution’, 78–80. The limitations of the Maoists in championing the politics of left-wing populism has been argued by me in *Indian Muslim(s) after Liberalization* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2019), pp. 249–253.

⁶⁰ The relevance of political violence or the revolutionary violence of the Maoists as a necessary condition for radical social and political change is well debated in Ajay Gudavarthy, ed., *Revolutionary Violence versus Democracy: Narratives from India* (New Delhi: SAGE Publications, 2017).

⁶¹ Vijay Prashad, ‘The Antinomies of “Maoism”’, in *Maoism: A Critique from the Left*, ed. Prasenjit Bose (New Delhi: LeftWord Books, 2010), 70–88.

the role of the nation-state and the attitude towards imperialism.⁶² Globally, it is the Left-wing populists, who have been able to capture political power while fighting neoliberalism. The ‘pink tide’ of Left-wing populism that swept several Latin American countries during the first one and a half decade of the 21st century is often anchored around the name and the figure of a charismatic leader. For example, democratic and Left-wing populist mobilization could be noticed with the popularity of Kirchnerism in Argentina in which both Néstor Kirchner and Cristina Fernández de Kirchner gave a Left-wing turn to the traditional Peronist populism of the Justicialist Party. Similarly, Left-wing populist leaders like Hugo Chavez came to power with the call for a Bolivarian revolution in Venezuela. Evo Morales in Bolivia and Rafael Correa in Ecuador are primarily charismatic populist Left leaders with massive support. The socialist Left in Venezuela, Ecuador and Bolivia or the Centre-Left populists in Nicaragua, Chile and the Workers Party in Brazil, the socialist Left in Portugal, the National Regeneration Movement (MORENA) in Mexico and the Coalition of Radical Left (SYRIZA) in Greece have been successful models of Left-wing populism. Similarly, the Left-wing populist articulations have helped to form strong opposition parties like the Labour Party under Jeremy Corbyn in the United Kingdom. The Left-wing populists have also been able to rally significant mass support as evident in the cases of the Podemos in Spain, the Die Linke in Germany, Jean Luc Melechon’s Unsubmissive France or enthusiasm behind Bernie Sanders in the United States.

One could maintain that there are also limitations of these Left populists, as in the case of SYRIZA in Greece⁶³ and in some cases in Latin America, the Left populists have also lost power as in Brazil and Argentina or are under serious threat from the opposition in Venezuela. The achievements of the agrarian policies of the Left governments in Latin America concerning land redistribution and advancement in agribusiness were complemented by the long commodity boom in the first one and a half decade of the 21st century that helped to increase

⁶² Jayati Ghosh, ‘The Emerging Left in the “Emerging” World’, *Economic & Political Weekly* 47, no. 24 (16 June 2012): 33–38.

⁶³ Cas Mudde, *SYRIZA: The Failure of the Populist Promise*, with a Foreword by Petros Pappasantopoulos (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017).

employment and reduce poverty among the rural subaltern classes. At the same time, the limitations of the transformative social project of the 'pink tide' were that the Left governments in South America got entangled within the logic of capitalist liberal representative democracy.⁶⁴ However, the road to power is not perpetual, and that contingency, uncertainty and indeterminacy are ineluctable part of politics. In other words, the permanent feature of human societies is that there is no end of politics and there is nothing outside politics. Thus, even if today there have been setbacks for the Left populists in some parts of Europe and Latin America, it does not mean that the possibility of building a new hegemony for the Left populists does not exist in future. However, what is interesting to note is that traditional communist parties lead none of those successful Left-wing populist mobilizations in Europe and Latin America. In such a global context, the Indian Maoists need to understand that today the practice and norm of electoral democracy has been so profound and instrumental in the making of widespread participation of the people in the democratic process that it is difficult to bypass electoral democracy. It has become nearly impossible to earn the consent of the Indian people for a high-risk political game of military fight against a technologically superior neoliberal State.

Second, the Maoist politics has increasingly exposed its limits at a time when a new political subject, namely the *homo oeconomicus* (the individual rational and calculative entrepreneur),⁶⁵ has emerged under conditions of neoliberalism in India. This new subject is very much entrenched within the massive architecture of neoliberal governmentality in India where the calculative entrepreneurial 'citizen-voter' is increasingly becoming individualized and dependent on the doles and subsidies of the modern State.⁶⁶ This new citizen-voter is

⁶⁴ Leandro Vergara-Camus and Cristóbal Kay, 'New Agrarian Democracies: The Pink Tide's Lost Opportunity', in *Rethinking Democracy: Socialist Register 2018*, eds. Leo Panitch and Greg Albo (London: Merlin Books, 2017), 224–243.

⁶⁵ For a detailed analysis of such a concept and its evolution from the 18th century and its return under neoliberal conditions, see Michel Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1978–1979*, ed. Michel Senellart, trans. Graham Burchell (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008).

⁶⁶ Ranabir Samaddar, *Neo-Liberal Strategies of Governing India* (London: Routledge, 2016).

engaged in making Aadhaar cards, NREGA job cards, BPL cards, etc., which make them dependent on the neoliberal State. It is challenging for the Maoist politics to organize this new political subject for high-risk militarist war against the State when this new citizen-voter is so much dependent on the statist agencies. The only path that is open for any form of Left movement is then to use electoral democracy as a site of popular struggle against neoliberal policies of the Indian State. This electoral democracy, which has been given legitimacy by the Indian State is the only site to be subverted by the people. It is an electoral democracy that has been instrumental in the vote for Donald Trump. The Brexit episode also shows that substantial sections of people have voted against the agenda of the neoliberal establishment. If the alt-right can successfully use electoral politics, it is difficult to imagine that the Left cannot do when there are successful examples from Europe and Latin America.

Third, the Maoists have focused on the primacy of struggle against primitive accumulation in the domain of *jal* (water), *jangal* (forests) and *zamin* (land). Sometimes, their restricted spatial location as a hideout strategy hinders them from coming out in the villages and towns to initiate both economic and political struggles. In effect, such an approach has alienated them from vast sections of workers and peasants in large parts of the country because their restricted territorial locality has kept them outside the domain of the struggles against capitalist exploitation and other forms of non-class oppression in hundreds of towns and cities, and thousands of villages and suburbs. Although the political activities of the Maoists in urban areas in India are clearly expressed in the party's document,⁶⁷ it is crystal clear that they have been unable to mobilize any significant sections of the urban population and have largely been trapped in the forest areas of central-eastern parts of India. The contradiction between their tactical target of liberating rural areas first and then 'advance towards countrywide victory through encircling and capturing the cities'⁶⁸ according to their party programme on the one hand and the emphasis on the Maoist organizational

⁶⁷ CPI (Maoist) Central Committee (P), 'Strategy and Tactics of the Indian Revolution', 135–144.

⁶⁸ CPI (Maoist) Party Programme, 25.

activities in urban areas on the other seems to be a significant hindrance in connecting with the people at large.

Finally, in an age of populist and horizontal mobilizations along different class and non-class lines, the Leninist model of vanguard party with the organizational principle of democratic centralism has reached its limits. Democratic centralism was adopted in a state of emergency in a war-like situation, more than a century back in Russia. Moreover, it has been suitable for and indeed served its purpose once for a militarist organization. However, it will not work under conditions of electoral democracies as evident from the experiences of the 20th century where the communist parties, guided by democratic centralism have been relatively more successful to capture political power against forms of monarchy, autocracy and military dictatorships but have been far less successful to gain power under parliamentary democracies. Moreover, what is the point of adopting a democratic centralist line if the military strategy has itself become obsolete at a time of great democratic upsurge?

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The Maoist politics in India, as we have seen in this chapter, welcomes political violence in the form of an armed struggle at the cost of vilifying participation in elections as a wrong tactic that would dissolve the radical character of a revolutionary party. However, one must understand that political violence threatens democratic politics, with increasing levels of political antagonism and enmity getting priority over democratic ways of political articulation. In this respect, according to noted political theorist Chantal Mouffe, the objective of democratic politics is to domesticate ‘hostility’ and try to defuse ‘potential antagonism’⁶⁹ where the main objective of democratic politics is ‘to transform antagonism into agonism’.⁷⁰ Here, one must understand that while antagonism is a friend/foe relation and a ‘struggle between enemies, agonism is [a] struggle between adversaries’.⁷¹ As Mouffe points out that while

⁶⁹ Chantal Mouffe, *The Democratic Paradox* (London: Verso, 2000), 101.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 103.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 102–103.

‘antagonism is a we/they relation in which the two sides are enemies who do not share any common ground, agonism is a we/they relation where the conflicting parties...nevertheless recognize the legitimacy of their opponents. They are “adversaries” not enemies.’⁷² In this regard, according to Mouffe, the aim of democratic politics

is to construct the ‘them’ in such a way that it is no longer perceived as an enemy to be destroyed, but as an ‘adversary’, that is, somebody whose ideas we combat but whose right to defend those ideas we do not put into question.⁷³

However, what is the condition of existence of such a violent politics which treats opponents as enemies? Here, Mouffe argues that ‘when there is lack of democratic political struggles...the opponent cannot be perceived as an adversary to contend with, but only as an enemy to be destroyed.’⁷⁴

Thus, taking refuge in physical violence and extermination is a result of perpetual depoliticization, which is again a by-product of lack of democratic political struggles in a given political context. The circularity of political violence of the Maoists is precisely a mirror image of the statist violence where the Maoists, much like the State, mimic the logic of annihilation of the political enemy. The ideological justification in favour of a politics of violence with its ideological roots in the classic Naxalite formulation of the annihilation of class enemy⁷⁵ is primarily a reflection of the crisis of political hegemony of the Maoists. A politics which cannot democratically mobilize people behind its project takes refuge to violence. It is true for any kind of extremist politics including religious extremism of various strands, which is fundamentally grounded on a politics of hatred and vindictive assaults. A politics of hatred, which takes refuge to violent elimination of political opponents than politically and ideologically combat the same is a reflection

⁷² Chantal Mouffe, *On the Political* (London: Verso, 2005), 20.

⁷³ Mouffe, *The Democratic Paradox*, 101–102.

⁷⁴ Chantal Mouffe, *The Return of the Political* (London: Verso, 1993), 6.

⁷⁵ The annihilation campaign of the Naxalites in the early 1970s has been written by Sankar Ghosh, *The Naxalite Movement: A Maoist Experiment* (Calcutta: Firma K. L. Mukhopadhyay, 1974).

of deep-seated depoliticization. The frustrated violence of the Indian Maoists in that sense meets its political dead end, which closes down any scope of politics in general and undoubtedly democratic politics in particular. In such a context, the Maoist vision of the Indian revolution only becomes a utopia much like the utopia of the utopian socialists. Thus, the vanguard party of the Maoists, ‘the educator’, needs some ‘educating’ to quote Marx from the epigraph of this chapter. This educating is about updating the Maoist understanding of dynamism of neoliberal capitalism and the lessons from the international Left movement, which might help the Maoists to invent alternative strategies and tactics to transcend the neoliberal State with a vision of a post-neoliberal order. At present, the strategy and tactics of the Indian Maoists are warped, confused and flawed, the results of which are apparent in the form of the shrinking base of the Maoist party in India.

Before concluding, let me put forward the major arguments of this chapter. This chapter has tried to assess the radical political project of the Indian Maoists in the aftermath of the golden jubilee celebration of the Naxalite movement of the late 1960s. In effect, this chapter has analysed that the Indian Maoists have no real military and political strength to combat the Indian State and thus pose no great security threat to the Indian State. Such an argument was primarily based on the following. First, the ideological formulations of the Indian Maoists have no robust analysis of the fast-changing nature of Indian capitalism and the dynamism of the Indian State. As a result, it lacks innovative strategies and tactics of political practice that would ensure a sustained level of mass mobilization behind its political project. Second, the military strategy of the Maoists to combat the modern Indian State has become obsolete besides being escaping the strategy of democratic political mobilization. The failure of the Maoists to capture political power through an armed insurrection is real not only in India but also in other parts of the world as evident from the examples from contemporary Asia and Latin America. Third, it has become nearly impossible to earn the consent of the people for a high-risk military fight against a technologically superior neoliberal State. This is because the practice and norm of electoral democracy have been so profound along with the widespread participation of the people in the democratic process that it is difficult to bypass electoral democracy. Fourth, Maoist politics

has to now engage with a new political subject of citizen-voter, who is very much entrenched within the massive architecture of neoliberal governmentality where the calculative entrepreneurial citizen-voter is increasingly becoming individualized and dependent on the doles, subsidies and various forms of welfare schemes of the modern State. Finally, the primacy of Maoist military struggle against primitive accumulation in the domain of mines and forests has restricted their spatial operation as a hideout strategy in the forests of central and eastern India. Their restricted territorial locality has alienated them from vast sections of the people and has kept them outside the domain of everyday struggles against capitalist exploitation and forms of non-class oppression.

The radical transformation of capitalism and neoliberal State in India has exposed the limits of the revolutionary promise of the Maoists. Extant academic literature and security agencies tend to overemphasize the threat of the Maoists⁷⁶ than their actual strength. In contrast, this chapter has pointed out the failure of the Maoists in combating the Indian State and living up to their promise of the social revolution. A more realistic assessment would be that the Maoists will continue to create some sensation with violent attacks here and there just like many armed militias have been doing in various parts of the world. However, they would be unable to create any major destabilizing situation for the Indian State. The redundant surplus population who have been the victims of primitive accumulation under conditions of neoliberal capitalism in India remains as the constitutive outside of capital in the domain of political economy. The Indian State has acquired the skills to accommodate those redundant surplus population by making them more participatory in everyday democratic exercise of demands and claims on the State, engaging them with the electoral process and offering various forms of doles and subsidies. Besides, the statist parties can deflect the attention of the very same population through caste and community-based assertions. In contrast, the

⁷⁶ One such glaring example of treating Maoists as ‘a serious threat to India’s stability and integrity’ can be found in an essay published a few years back by Arvind Verma, ‘The Police and India’s Maoist Insurgency’, in *Policing Insurgencies: Cops as Counterinsurgents*, eds. C. Christine Fair and Sumit Ganguly (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2014).

Maoists have not been able to invent any alternative strategy to rally the victims of the twin processes of primitive accumulation of capital and capitalist accumulation. Therefore, the Indian Maoists only remain as the constitutive outside of Indian democracy. However, remaining outside the domain of Indian democracy is a voluntary choice of the Maoists. It is not structurally bound as the redundant surplus population is with regards to the zone of the contemporary political economy of India. Unless the Indian Maoists change their course to use electoral democracy as a site of political struggle while learning from the practices of the Nepali Maoists and the Left populists from the international experience in the 21st century, it would eventually become an irrelevant political force, the symptoms of which are pretty clear at this moment.



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