Beyond Naxalbari: A Comparative Analysis of Maoist Insurgency and Counterinsurgency in Independent India

JONATHAN KENNEDY

Department of Sociology, University of Cambridge

SUNIL PURUSHOTHAM

Faculty of History, University of Cambridge

INTRODUCTION

Over the past two decades, as the political influence of Marxism has declined in most of the world, Maoist insurgency in India has not only persisted but expanded. Union Minister of Home Affairs P. Chidambaram (2009) estimates that Maoist insurgents are active in 223 of India's 626 districts—although only 90 are consistently affected by insurgent violence—and Prime Minister Manmohan Singh (2006) has stated that the insurgency poses "the single biggest internal-security challenge" India has ever faced. Maoist insurgency is not, however, a recent phenomenon: although the insurgents have failed to seize state power, insurgencies involving various combinations of left-wing organizations and rural inhabitants have occurred in ebbs and flows since independence. Table I uses data from the Uppsala Conflict Data Program/Peace Research Institute Oslo (UCDP/PRIO) "Armed Conflict Database" to demonstrate that there have been three distinct waves of Maoist insurgent activity. These were not necessarily referred to as Maoist insurgencies at the time, but they all involved an armed conflict between the state and a political organization that legitimized its activities with reference to communist and Maoist ideology and strategy.

Naxalbari is an area of West Bengal where a faction of the Communist Party of India (CPI) (Marxist) incited sharecroppers and agricultural laborers

to undertake insurgent activity in 1967. Naxalbari has a unique position in the popular imagination of left-wing insurgency among all sections of Indian society, including the government, the revolutionaries, and the wider public. The dominant narrative presents Naxalbari as the originary point of reference for understanding Maoist politics in India. Sumanta Banerjee (2002: 2115), for example, argues that there "can be no doubt that Naxalbari was a watershed in the recent history of India…. Most of the progressive trends in social activism today can be traced indirectly to the issues raised by or associated with the Naxalite movement in 1960s." Studies of the second wave present the first as "a brief insurrectionary phase" organized by a proto-Naxalite cadre (Banerjee 2008 [1984]: 137; also see Mohanty 1977). In accounts that concentrate on the third wave, the first is usually ignored (Shah 2006; Guha 2007; Planning Commission 2008; Shah and Pettigrew 2009; Miklian 2011). Moreover, the third wave is conflated with the second; it is seen as a direct continuation of what began in Naxalbari, which is why contemporary Maoist insurgents are still commonly referred to as "Naxalites."

In this essay we challenge the dominant narrative by treating each wave as a distinct case worthy of comparative analysis. The paper has five sections. The first constructs an ideal typical structure of Maoist insurgency in India, which we use as the standard of comparison in our analysis. The second, third and fourth sections analyze the three waves of insurgency in turn; for each, we consider the specific economic, political, and social circumstances in areas affected by insurgency, the role played by the insurgents, and the state's

TABLE 1.

The Three Waves of Maoist Insurgency in Independent India

	Dates	Main Revolutionary Party	Main States Affected
First	1948 (1946)* to 1951	Communist Party of India (CPI) faction.	Erstwhile Hyderabad State (now Andhra Pradesh)
Second	1969 (1967)* to 1971	CPI (Marxist) faction. Became CPI (Marxist-Leninist) in 1969	West Bengal and Andhra Pradesh. But also Bihar, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa, and Uttar Pradesh
Third	1990 (1980)* to date	People's War Group and Maoist Communist Centre. Merged into CPI (Maoist) in 2004	Began in Andhra Pradesh and Bihar. Now concentrated in Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Maharashtra, Orissa, and West Bengal

Source: Gleditsch et al. 2002.
Note: *The UCDP/PRIO dataset only takes into account years when the state was party to the conflict and when there were over twenty-five battle deaths. The dates in parentheses indicate when, irrespective of these criteria, the insurgents first engaged in significant violent activity.

counterinsurgency strategy. We conclude the paper by comparing the three waves and considering the substantive implications of this study.

AN IDEAL TYPICAL STRUCTURE OF MAOIST INSURGENCY

Table II sets out an ideal typical structure of Maoist insurgency in the Indian context. An ideal type is an abstract model that identifies and exaggerates certain essential characteristics of a given phenomena. It is not meant to describe or explain the real world, but rather to provide a heuristic device that enables the researcher to see the real world in a more systematic way and to facilitate the identification of commonalities and differences between phenomena (see Weber 1949: 90–110). We acknowledge that this strategy does not enable us to generate thick description of complex and often disaggregate sociopolitical phenomena that comprise what we deem "insurgency" in the way that a narrowly focused ethnographic study would. But our approach does give us a broad temporal and spatial perspective, enables us to compare Maoist insurgency and counterinsurgency throughout India over the past six and a half decades, and allows us to understand the broad structural characteristics.

Insurgency cannot be reduced to guerrilla warfare alone (Desai and Eckstein 1990). Kalyvas (2006) specifies three levels for analyzing an insurgency: the macro-level is the realm of elites, ideologies, and grand politics; the meso-level, the interface between political actors and the populations; and the micro-level, where small groups and individuals interact. Macro- and micro-levels actors are distinct entities with different constituencies and objectives. A variety of sources have demonstrated that, in the first (Harrison 1956;

TABLE 2.

An Ideal-typical Structure of Maoist Insurgency in India

	Macro-Level	Meso-Level	Micro-Level
Actors	Political leaders and ideologues	Guerrilla squads (*dalam*) and village committees (*sangham*)	Rural inhabitants
Constituency	Sections of the middle classes, often from outside the base area	A combination of macro-and micro-level actors	Sections of rural inhabitants in the base area
Contribution	Ideology and organization of modern revolution	Operational doctrine of guerrilla warfare	Mass support and access to local resources
Objective	Seize state power	Seize local power	Improve local economic, political, and social circumstances

Sundarayya 1972), second (Mohanty 1977; Banerjee 2008), and third (Bhatia 2005; Shah 2006) waves, the leaders of the respective insurgent organization were predominantly upper caste, middle class and well educated. Moreover, it is generally agreed that in all three waves the insurgents' mass support came from various sections of the rural lower classes, predominantly lower castes and Scheduled Tribes (Sundarayya 1972; Mohanty 1977; Bhatia 2005; Guha 2007; Banerjee 2008; Kunnath 2009).

The expressed aim of macro-level actors is to capture state power through protracted guerrilla war, whereas the objectives of micro-level actors tend to be concerned with more localized political and socioeconomic issues. Nevertheless, the interests of the micro and macro levels coincide at the meso level, where the undermining of state power allows both groups to further their objectives. For macro-level actors the seizure of local power is a step toward seizing state power (CPI 1950; Mazumdar 1967; CPI [Maoist] 2004). They set up rural base areas, which they aim to gradually expand to encircle the urban centers. On the other hand, the undermining of localized economies of power allows micro-level actors to improve their local economic, political, and social circumstances (Sundarayya 1972; Mohanty 1977; Bhatia 2005; Guha 2007; Banerjee 2008; Kunnath 2009). Thus, insurgency entails a transaction between macro- and micro-level actors. Insurgents provide disparate groups of supporters with a unified organizational structure, while the supporters endow the insurgents with access to resources needed to sustain the insurgency, such as food, shelter, intelligence, and recruits (Kalyvas 2006). This is not to deny a proper politics to micro-level actors, but rather to make the point that micro-level politics are typically articulated either through the master narrative of Maoism or through universalist human rights and indigenous rights discourses. By setting up our inquiry through the use of an ideal type we do not wish to deny the salience of ideology, political aspirations, or cultural and localized particularities by reducing the complex phenomena of Maoist insurgency to instrumental rationality alone. Indeed, the democratization of Indian society has produced radical consequences, and perhaps the persistence of Maoist insurgency is the most radical of all.

Naxalbari is often cited as the birthplace of Maoism in India (e.g., Shah 2006; Guha 2007; Planning Commission 2008; Shah and Pettigrew 2009). In April 1948, however, the dissident faction of the CPI responsible for organizing the insurgency in the Telengana region formally adopted Maoism. The "Andhra Thesis" was the first explicit espousal of Maoist principles and praxis in India:

Our revolution, in many respects, differs with the classical Russian Revolution; but to a great extent similar to that of Chinese Revolution. The perspective is likely not that of general strike and armed uprising, leading to the liberation of the rural side; but the dogged resistance and prolonged civil war in the form of agrarian revolution, culminating in the capture of political power…. Backward communication system, topographic and terrain conditions are exceptionally suited for prolonged guerrilla battles (Chinese

way) which lead to the establishment of liberation bases…. The path is that of Chinese liberation struggle under the leadership of Comrade Mao Tse-Tung, the practical, political and theoretical leader of the mighty colonial and semi-colonial revolution (CPI 1950: 106, grammar *sic*).

Second- and third-wave insurgents have professed their adherence to the Maoist strategy of "Protracted People's War" first proposed in Telengana (see Mazumdar 1967; CPI [Maoist] 2004). Therefore, we must begin by analyzing the situation at the time in Telengana.

THE FIRST WAVE OF INSURGENCY, 1946–1951

The Situation in Telengana

Previous analyses of the first wave of insurgency—both insurgents' accounts (Sundarayya 1972; Gour 1973; Rao 1971; Reddy 1984) and scholarly studies (Pavier 1981; Thirumali 2003)—have attributed its emergence and success to grievances related to the political and socioeconomic structure of rural society in the plains of Telengana.[1] The Nizam of Hyderabad ruled through a small elite comprised *jagirdars* and *deshmukhs* (large landlords) who economically and politically dominated rural Telengana. Telengana's rural population had a number of grievances, some of which only affected the poorer sections of society and others that transcended class. There was significant landlessness, while large areas of land were concentrated in the hands of a few landlords and *deshmukhs*. Indebtedness was pandemic with landlords and *deshmukhs* as the main source of credit. Caste was a significant determinant of rural economies of dominance, and *vetti* (unpaid labor) and *bhagela* (bonded labor) were commonplace. Agrarian discontent was further piqued by the imposition of a grain levy during the war, which required cultivators to pay more than half of their harvest or wages to the state. The ruling elite avoided the levy and sold their grain for inflated prices on the black market. Moreover, a strong nationalist dimension was given to rural discontent with the Nizam's refusal to accede to the Indian Union when the British left the subcontinent in August 1947 (Gour 1973; Roosa 2001).

Insurgency on the Plains

Since before independence, Indian communists have quarreled over how best to apply Marxism to, and achieve Marxist goals in an overwhelmingly rural, hierarchical, and particularistic society. Between 1945 and 1948, the national CPI leadership provided "loyal opposition" to the Congress (quoted in Overstreet and Windmiller 1959: 264). But, after B. T. Ranadive replaced P. C.

---

[1] Telengana region consisted of the Telugu-speaking districts of the erstwhile princely state of Hyderabad, which joined the Indian Union in September 1948 after a brief military invasion. Telengana is now part of Andhra Pradesh.

Joshi as general secretary in early 1948, the CPI advocated an explicitly militant course. Ranadive argued that a socialist revolution was imminent, declared war on the Indian state, and set about organizing a general strike that would allow an urban vanguard to direct the course of the revolution. In response, the state effectively suppressed the CPI in many areas, banning the party and forcing its leaders underground. Even in its infancy, the Indian state had the capacity to repress challenges in areas where the "structure of political opportunities" was not overwhelmingly favorable to radical dissidents.[2]

From the early 1940s onwards, communist cadres working within the Andhra Mahasabha—which started as an organization concerned with the social and cultural development of the people of Telengana—organized villagers around issues of forced labor, debt bondage, caste discrimination, landlord abuses, and the grain levy, among others. This led to the proliferation of village *sanghams* (committees), which became forums for rural inhabitants to voice grievances and assert claims. It was only in late 1946, following a brutal offensive by the state, that villagers took up arms.[3] Although limited in terms of geographical spread and the sophistication of weapons, large segments of the rural population were mobilized and this marked the beginning of the first wave of insurgent activity (Sundarayya 1972). At first, the Telengana cadres were a regional dissident group within the CPI. The Andhra Provincial Committee of the CPI, which was coordinating the Telengana insurgency, challenged the Ranadive line with the Maoist Andhra Thesis in summer 1948. But not until the Andhra Communists gained control of the CPI Central Committee in 1950 did the national party leadership back the Maoist line. Even then, the national CPI organization remained deeply divided over the question of armed struggle and, as a result, provided little material support to the Telengana insurgents.

Despite mass discontent and a capable insurgent organization, the increase in insurgent activity can only be understood in the context of a marked shift in the structure of political opportunities. The nascent insurgency received a huge boost in June 1947 when the Nizam announced that Hyderabad would not join the Indian Union. The Telengana CPI formed a brief anti-Nizam alliance with the Hyderabad State Congress, but unlike the Congress, whose activists fled to the state borders, the CPI cadres remained in the villages of Telengana. Thus, the CPI was left the premier nationalist organization in Telengana and earned the loyalty of the majority of the rural populace due to their willingness to kill and be killed in defense of the popular sovereignty invested in local *sanghams*. As the strength of the movement grew, the rural elite and their

---

[2] The structure of political opportunities refers to factors that affect the ability of insurgents to launch a credible challenge to the state and the state's capacity to repress such challenges (McAdam 1982).

[3] British Library, India Office Records, L/PS/13/1203, no. 22, file 1/5.

agents fled the villages for the nearest town or police station, allowing the *sang-hams* to fill the administrative void and enact radical reforms, including significant land distribution. The Nizam's administration was further emasculated by widespread manufacturing strikes, armed border raids by State Congressmen and socialists, student protests, and an economic blockade imposed by the Indian Union. As a result, the state "simply ceased to exist" in rural Telengana (Gour 1973: 102).

Nonetheless, the state retained a capacity for violent repression. The Hyderabad Army, police, and Razakar militiamen conducted a violent counter-insurgency against the opponents of the Nizam's government. While hundreds of villagers were killed and thousands arrested, the communists managed to organize effective opposition to the Nizam's government, boosting their standing among the population of rural Telengana. Swami Tirtha, leader of the Hyderabad State Congress, later admitted as much in a 1949 letter to the military governor, writing that the insurgents "have organised community life and have fought against every type of suppression. It is they who have, in the main, made the peasant stand erect. They also fought against the Razakar regime. So they were looked upon generally with softness and sympathy."[4]

At the movement's high point in mid-1948, *sanghams* were established in some two to three thousand villages (Sundarayya 1972). *Sanghams*, however, often functioned independently of each other and reforms varied accordingly at the village level. This left considerable room for local agency in determining the course of the movement. Moreover, many of the collective benefits resulted from the absence of landlords, moneylenders, and village officials rather than the proactive work of a parallel government. In the absence of a ruling elite there was no forced labor, debt bondage, or grain levy, and land "distribution" often came in the form of cessation of rent payments, and free access to common grazing grounds, water, and forest resources.

The Fall of the Nizam

In September 1948, the Indian Army invaded Hyderabad. Within a week the Nizam was defeated and Hyderabad acceded to the Indian Union. Military Governor General J. N. Chaudhuri led a new government formed under the auspices of the Ministry of States in New Delhi. This marked another dramatic change in the structure of political opportunities and had two important consequences.

The first was that the support base of the insurgents narrowed as the nationalist dimension of the anti-Nizam movement was challenged by the legitimacy of the Congress-controlled nation-state. Some villagers who had previously been pro-*sangham* helped Indian forces to identify communist

---

[4] National Archives of India (henceforth NAI), Ministry of States, file 1(5)-H/51.

sympathizers, exposed hiding places of *dalams* (guerrilla squads), and testified against them in court (Sundarayya 1972). Rather than attempting to incorporate the *sanghams* and their radical socioeconomic reforms, the government sought to return to the status quo ante by, inter alia, returning redistributed lands to the landlords and reestablishing village administration throughout rural Telengana. Sensing that the government was working in the interests of the landlords and wealthy cultivators, the majority of the population, mostly landless and burdened with debt, saw continued support for the communists as the only way to defend the gains made during the course of the revolt against the Nizam.

The second consequence was that the Indian state now had a far greater capacity for repression in Telengana. In late 1948 and early 1949, the state undertook a massive counterinsurgency offensive. Lacking intelligence and fighting an enemy indistinguishable from local inhabitants, the government's strategy was heavy-handed. According to official sources almost ten thousand people were arrested in the first two years alone[5]; unofficial sources suggest many more were detained (ibid. 1972). As a result of this offensive D. V. Rao, at the time a CPI leader in Telengana and later a prominent Naxalite, reported that the insurgents "lost a major part of our guerrilla army and leadership" in late 1948 and early 1949 (Rao 1982 [1949]: 139). It has often been claimed that this marked the end of the movement on the plains (Pavier 1981; Rao 1971; Reddy 1984), but this view is not supported by the archival evidence. After the initial setbacks, the insurgents reorganized effectively in the plains in 1949 and continued to provide a structure for people living on the plains of Telengana to express their manifold grievances—over food shortages, inadequate land reforms, state support for landlords, and heavy-handed police action (Rao 1982). Indeed, the following year the Director of the Intelligence Bureau concluded the insurgents were "extending their influence."[6]

Tribal Rebellion Meets Maoist Insurgency

As a result of increased state repression, many surviving cadres fled to the hills and forests that ran across Telengana and along Hyderabad's borders, making these areas a new and important theatre of the insurgency. Historically, these areas were what Scott (2009) refers to as "zones of refuge"—areas where the relatively inaccessible terrain allowed a variety of peoples to avoid incorporation into state-making projects. Many of those people who historically inhabited the more or less contiguous hilly, forested regions of central India are widely referred to as "tribals" or "*adivasis*," a category that encompasses a remarkably diverse group of communities classified by the India Constitution as "Scheduled Tribes" (Guha 2007). Until the advent of the colonial state, there was a relatively stable relationship between "projects of rule and their agents"

on one hand, and "zones of relative autonomy" and their *adivasi* inhabitants on the other. There were extensive commercial and other ties between *adivasis* and polities on the plains. While the rulers of states on the plains may have coveted the peoples and natural resources in *adivasi* areas, they had insufficient material force to incorporate and assimilate *adivasis* or to enforce the regular collection of revenue (Sundar 2007). As a result, interference by the state and other out-siders in these areas was minimal, revenue extraction underdeveloped, and socioeconomic differentiation limited (Sundar 2007; Padel 2009).

The colonial state radically altered the balance of power in *adivasi* areas. Colonial administrations sought to systematically control and exploit the sub-continent's natural resources, and this ruptured the relationships between *adivasi* areas, governmental apparatuses of rule, and wider economic pro-cesses. A new legal regime and governmental structures aimed to restrict *adi-vasis'* access to the forests and attempted to force them to take up settled agriculture (Guha and Gadgil 1989; Sundar 2007; Padel 2009). As the forests had great material and ritual importance in their lives, these develop-ments were generally detrimental to *adivasis'* wellbeing. They also dramati-cally increased the infrastructural power of the state in these areas, which undermined the relative political autonomy hitherto enjoyed by many *adivasi* communities. It should be noted, however, that the military and colonial admin-istration did not pursue this process solely for overt economic reasons—actors, both institutions and individuals, at a variety of levels from international to local, were also driven by various political, religious, scientific, and ideological motivations. They formed powerful and, to a large extent, de-centered constel-lations that shared interests in altering the terms of interaction between *adivasi* communities and the wider political economy of South Asia.

In an appendix to the 1941 *Hyderabad Census*, the anthropologist Führer-Haimendorf described how the activities of non-*adivasi* merchant-moneylenders, contractors, and landlords, as well as government officials and Forest Department Guards, combined to rapidly transform *adivasi* commu-nities: "Aboriginals … are everywhere losing ground; their land is taken up by more advanced and affluent populations, the use of forests restricted by the laws of Government and their simplicity exploited by merchants and money-lenders" (Führer-Haimendorf 1945: LI–LII).

The reservation of forests, which began in Hyderabad in 1900 and was upheld by forest guards, prevented shifting cultivation and severely restricted the collection of forest produce. More generally, laws operated "frequently against, but rarely in protection, of their [the *adivasis'*] interests" (ibid.: XXXVIII). Non-*adivasi* immigrants from the plains were able to take over land that *adivasis* had cultivated for generations because *adivasis* had no *patta* (legal) ownership. Those *adivasis* who had been granted *patta* often lost it through dealings with non-*adivasi* tribal merchants and moneylenders. Separated from their means of subsistence and production, and often indebted

to merchant-moneylenders, many *adivasis* were compelled to undertake wage labor for non-*adivasi* landowners and contractors. In this way *adivasis* were reduced from "free hill men" to the "wretched position of landless labourers" and in many cases bonded laborers or "serfs" (ibid.: LI, XVI).While Führer-Haimendorf betrays a romanticism about tribal societies that was common to colonial anthropologists, his assertion that *adivasi* communities were, in general, adversely affected by the nature of their increasing interaction with the colonial state and economy remains fundamentally valid.

These processes of alienation and subjugation resulted in profound animosity among many *adivasis* toward state agents such as forest guards, revenue officials, and the police, as well as non-*adivasi* moneylenders, landlords, and forest contractors who were perceived to be exercising power unjustly. Before the arrival of the CPI cadres in the late 1940s, *adivasi* discontent in Telengana took various forms. Relatively localized rebellions occurred among disparate *adivasi* communities of northern Telengana from the early nineteenth century onward (Raghavaiah 1971). Both state officials and communist leaders credited the communists with mobilizing *adivasis*, but such claims overlook the fact that various *adivasi* communities were independently undertaking armed resistance against the state in the 1940s. In 1940 Komaram Bhimu led a revolt amongst the Gonds and Kolams against the Nizam's government and attempted to establish a "Gond Raj" (Bhukya 2004). In January 1948, before the CPI cadres arrived, Koyas took up arms against the Nizam's forces and established "*panchayati raj*" (local rule) in almost fifty villages.[7]

Shortly after the police action of September 1948, the military governor reported that the Koya of Warangal district were "ardent supporters of communism."[8] Two years later, the chief secretary to the Government of Hyderabad considered the Koya "the backbone of the Communist organization."[9] The CPI cadres provided disparate groups of aggrieved *adivasis* with a unified organizational structure, which channeled previously disaggregated struggles into a common insurgency and allowed for tribal participation despite potential ideological incompatibilities with Maoism. In return, the insurgents provided *adivasis* with collective incentives that addressed their primary grievances: they chased away Forest Department officials, redistributed land, negotiated higher prices with traders for forest products, and forced contractors to pay fair wages. Above all else, the CPI pledged support for a politically autonomous Koya area and local self-government (Sundarayya 1972). Presciently, the director of the Intelligence Bureau saw the potential strength of this union. In 1951 he warned that if the communists succeeded in setting up

---

[7] NAI, Ministry of States, file 19(2)-H/50.
[8] NAI, Ministry of States, file 1(11)-H/48.
[9] NAI, Ministry of States, file 19(12)-H/50.

base areas in the hill and forest areas of northern Telengana and what is now southern Chhattisgarh and Orissa, it would "be difficult to dislodge them."[10]

Counterinsurgency

Within days of the Nizam's surrender in mid-September 1948, Hyderabad's newly-appointed military governor ordered "vigorous military and police action" against the Telengana communists.[11] This governmental offensive involved two brigades of the Indian Army and over nine thousand armed policemen brought into Hyderabad from the Indian Union.[12] A few battalions of the Hyderabad Army and two squadrons of cavalry were also made readily available.[13] While the insurgency suffered major setbacks in late 1948 and early 1949 due to the heavy military pressure, by mid-1949 the movement had reorganized along strict lines of Maoist guerrilla warfare, and began to spread to new areas. Alarmed by this development, the Hyderabad government created the "Telengana Special Area" in early 1950 and an Indian Civil Service officer was appointed as special commissioner to oversee unified police and civil administration in the area. The special commissioner proposed what is now commonly referred to as a "double-pronged counterinsurgency strategy"; to wit, the combination of strong police action with "ameliorative" developmental measures designed to win the support of the local population.[14] The proposed development measures included construction and repair of irrigation tanks, sinking of wells, provision of medical aid, opening of schools, distribution of food and other essential commodities, and, most importantly, agrarian reform legislation (Sundarayya 1972).

Sherman (2007: 512) has argued that these developmental measures were responsible for bringing an end to the insurgency, but again, archival evidence indicates otherwise. The administration built at least 268 "civil centres" to be used as "centres of rural uplift," but which were in practice armed police outposts where landlords and government officials could reside and visit their villages with police protection.[15] Hundreds of miles of roads were constructed, but these were primarily designed to allow more effective movement of police and military units.[16] Many of the developmental measures were either never implemented or inadequate. For example, agrarian reforms took the form of the 1950 Hyderabad Tenancy and Agricultural Land Act, but when the armed struggle was called off by the CPI leadership in October 1951 the special commissioner reported that the majority of the land was still in the

---

[10] NAI, Ministry of States, file 6(7)-H/51.
[11] NAI, Ministry of States, file 1(11)-H/48.
[12] A brigade in the Indian Army is typically comprised three thousand or more men.
[13] NAI, Ministry of States, file 17(1)-H/50.
[14] NAI, Ministry of States, file 5(32)-H/50.
[15] NAI, Ministry of States, files 5(8)-H/50-I; and 6(7)-H/51.
[16] NAI, Ministry of States, files 19(12)-H/50; and 6(7)-H/51.

hands of landlords, most cultivators remained landless, and many tenants were paying cash rents "undoubtedly higher than that allowed by the Act."[17] Moreover, the Act increased evictions across Telengana as landlords sought to prevent tenants from gaining legal rights over their lands.

Substantively, the new counterinsurgency strategy consisted of three other notable features. First, from late 1949 onward, *adivasis* were forcibly relocated into camps from their villages in the forests. While the Hyderabad administration framed these camps as tribal development projects and some were well planned, it appears that most were little more than basic roadside camps. The Military Intelligence Directorate noted in mid-1951 that there "is a paucity of food grains, water and other bare necessities of life at centers where they have been concentrated…. No medical aid is made available to the villagers. Consequently deaths due to various diseases are frequent."[18] Communist sources contain even more severe condemnations of the camps. Sundarayya (1972: 253) claimed that more than ten thousand *adivasis* died in the camps as a result of disease and violence. As a counterinsurgency measure, forced relocation was in many ways counterproductive; Swami Tirtha wrote to the chief minister informing him that as a result of the relocation scheme, the *adivasis* were "seething with unrest with no tangible advantage to the Government."[19]

The second major aspect of the counterinsurgency was the creation of armed units that were variously referred to as Home Guards, Village Defence Squads, and Grama Raksha Dals. While local Congress politicians or wealthy landlords headed many of these vigilante groups, the rank and file was forcibly recruited by the police.[20] By the end of 1950, the special commissioner claimed to have home guards or village defense squads working in over eighteen hundred villages.[21] While thousands of firearms were distributed, villagers were more commonly armed with rudimentary weapons such as spears and axes. Such villagers consequently became common targets for communist *dalams*. As a rule, members of the vigilante organizations operated with impunity and they were offered material incentives for killing suspected insurgents. More than three hundred Koyas were organized into "tiger squads" and sent into the forests in pursuit of communist *dalams*, while other *adivasis* were conscripted as "special police constables."[22]

Finally, archival evidence indicates that the systematic killing of suspected insurgents in false "encounters" became a key pillar of the government's counterinsurgency strategy. From mid-1950 the number of suspected communists

[17] NAI, Ministry of States, file 6(5)-H/51.
[18] NAI, Ministry of States, file 6(9)-H/51.
[19] NAI, Ministry of States, file 1(5)-H/51.
[20] Sundarayya 1972; NAI, Ministry of States, files 17(1)-H/50; 6(7)-H/51; and 1(5)-H/51.
[21] NAI, Ministry of States, file 5(32)-H/50.
[22] NAI, Ministry of States, files 6(5)-H/51; and 6(7)-H/51.

killed became greater than the number captured, and from this point onward the number of communists killed outnumbered the number of firearms captured, usually by a significant margin. Others were "disappeared" from police or military custody.[23]

Why Did the Movement Fail?

Counterinsurgency measures and state violence were able to set limits of political possibility and marginalize the insurgents, but they failed to eliminate the guerillas or institute effective administration in many areas of Telengana. The Telengana revolt could have persisted with relative success in such a marginal state, but a change in the CPI leadership's strategy brought the first wave of insurgency to an end. Many CPI leaders were keen to take part in India's first general elections in 1952, and Stalin and the Soviet leadership endorsed this strategy when a CPI contingent visited Moscow in early 1951 (Overstreet and Miller 1959). In mid-October 1951, the CPI called off the armed struggle in Telengana. Thus, the insurgency ended when its leaders were incorporated into the formal politics of the state. The state did not adequately tackle the causes of various micro-level grievances, setting the stage for the return of insurgency to Telengana. Indeed, popular support for the communists was evident in the 1952 elections, which saw the CPI-led Peoples' Democratic Front win most seats in Telengana with overwhelming majorities (Election Commission of India n.d.). Moreover, as we will show, Telengana became the cradle of Indian Maoism, playing a central role in both the second and third waves of insurgency.

THE SECOND WAVE OF INSURGENCY, 1967–1971

The Situation in Rural West Bengal

Previous studies of the second wave of insurgency have concentrated on the political economy of West Bengal and specifically the conflict between *jotedars* (non-cultivating landholders) and *bargadars* (sharecroppers) and, to a lesser extent, agricultural laborers (Mohanty 1977; Banerjee 2008).[24] The lives of sharecroppers were precarious; in a situation of increasing competition for agricultural land their tenure was insecure and the share of produce they gave to the *jotedars* was unstipulated. Moreover, *jotedars* tended to combine landholding with grain dealing and money lending, which gave them enormous power over cultivators. The conflictual relationship between *jotedars* and rural

---

[23] See NAI, Ministry of States, file 5(32)-H/50; 19(12)-H/50; 1(30)-H/50; 11(3)-H/49; 6(13)-H/51; and 6(9)-H/51.

[24] Banerjee (2008) points out that *adivasis* provided a great deal of support for the insurgency in West Bengal. He fails to note, however, that many of these *adivasi* groups had been incorporated into state revenue and administrative systems as early as the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, long before *adivasis* in less accessible parts of the Tribal Belt, which resulted in their losing their distinctive economic and political practices (Duyker 1987).

cultivators manifested itself in the *Tebhaga* (three parts) movement in 1946. The CPI-dominated *Kisan Sabha* encouraged sharecroppers to retain two-thirds rather than the customary half of their harvest. The movement was met with violent police repression and was abandoned by the CPI leadership as a symbolic gesture of support for the newly installed Nehru government. In the 1950s the state government, intending to give sharecroppers more security, passed land reforms that increased their share of harvest to two-thirds and placed a ceiling of 25 acres on landholdings. In practice, however, these reforms had little impact because *jotedars* retained their dominance over both state and village-level politics (Mohanty 1977; Banerjee 2008).

Towards Naxalbari

Throughout the 1950s and early 1960s there were debates within the CPI between a dominant group that advocated a peaceful transition to socialism combined with selective support for Congress policies and factions that proposed a more radical line. This discord came to an impasse in the 1960s as a result of the Sino-Soviet split and the Sino-Indian border clashes. In 1964 a pro-Chinese (although not unequivocally Maoist) faction broke off to form the CPI (Marxist). From the outset the CPI (Marxist) discouraged militancy, which led to dissidence among the more radical elements of the new party. In the mid-1960s Charu Mazumdar, a district level CPI (Marxist) organizer who would become the charismatic leader of the second wave, began propagating a Maoist line among sharecroppers and agricultural laborers in the Naxalbari area of northern West Bengal (Mohanty 1977; Banerjee 2008).

The late 1960s was a period of political upheaval in India generally and West Bengal in particular. Economic changes and the deepening of democratic political participation helped to undermine vertical ties of clientelism that had been the foundation of both colonial rule and Congress hegemony (Kohli 2009). This allowed new parties to enter the political arena. The Congress won the 1967 elections but was defeated in several states, including West Bengal, where a period of intra-elite struggle for state power began. The CPI (Marxist), as part of the United Front coalition of centrist and leftist parties, formed West Bengal's first non-Congress government, in which CPI (Marxist) politicians held the Home and Land Revenue portfolios.[25] This brought intra-CPI (Marxist) conflict to a head; the Central Committee claimed they were using the government as "an instrument of peoples'

[25] The United Front government lasted from February to November 1967, when it was replaced by a short-lived minority government and then, in early 1968, President's Rule (when a centrally appointed official rules the state). The United Front returned to government after elections in 1969, but the coalition disintegrated. In spite of the CPI (Marxist) emerging as the largest party in the 1971 elections, they did not form a government and President's Rule was again declared in June 1971.

struggle," but the Maoist faction accused them of indirectly strengthening the state system (Mohanty 1977: 141).

The first insurgent activity was reported in Naxalbari on the same day in March 1967 that the United Front was sworn into office (Ray 2002). The timing was motivated by the Maoist faction's desire to distinguish itself from the mainstream CPI (Marxist) and demonstrates the relative autonomy of insurgent actions from micro-level grievances (ibid.). Over the next few months the Naxalbari cadres occupied lands, harvested crops, burnt land records, cancelled debts, and passed death sentences on oppressive landlords. By May 1967, the high point of the movement in Naxalbari, the rebels claimed to control three hundred square miles of territory, although the police reports suggest it was not more than seventy (Mohanty 1977; Banerjee 2008). At first the United Front government reacted with moderation and CPI (Marxist) leaders attempted to negotiate with the insurgents. But the CPI (Marxist) were under pressure from the center and in July 1967 police operations commenced and the insurgency was quickly defeated (Ray 2002).[26]

Beyond Naxalbari

Although the insurgency was crushed in Naxalbari it continued elsewhere. In November 1967 an All India Coordination Committee of Communist Revolutionaries (AICCCR) was formed to bring together supporters of the Naxalbari model of revolution. The AICCCR formally became the CPI (Marxist-Leninist) on Mayday 1969, which coincided with the United Front coalition's return to government after a period of President's Rule. Between 1967 and 1971 insurgent activity continued in West Bengal (Mohanty 1977: Banerjee 2008). But as the insurgents came under increasing pressure from the state, their activities moved away from the original strategy of a rural-based movement driven by mass support from sharecroppers and agrarian laborers.

The insurgents were generally unsuccessful at generating mass support and building base areas in the countryside. This was due in part to the success of the CPI (Marxist) in persuading large portions of the rural lower classes, particularly sharecroppers, that they were the best representatives of their interests. The CPI (Marxist) dramatically increased their support base over the period of the insurgency: they won 43 out of 280 seats and 2,293,026 votes in the 1967 state elections, and 80 seats and 2,676,981 votes in 1969—making them the largest political party in West Bengal—then 113 seats and 4,241,557 votes in 1971 (Election Commission of India n.d.). The CPI (Marxist-Leninist), moreover, committed multiple strategic errors. Mazumdar optimistically believed the insurgency would transform spontaneously into a mass movement—citing Mao's aphorism that a single spark

---

[26] It should be noted that the insurgency is classified as a law and order issue, and is therefore the responsibility of state governments rather than the center (see Miklian 2011).

could set a whole prairie ablaze—and predicted that the Naxalites would seize state power by 1975 (Banerjee 2008). Thus, Mazumdar failed to take into account Mao's most basic points regarding guerrilla warfare, the importance of mobilizing a mass support base through the provision of collective incentives and the suitability of terrain for undertaking guerrilla warfare. The insurgents' inability to generate mass support and build base areas had several consequences.

One consequence was that the insurgents altered their strategy. Between 1965 and 1968 Mazumdar attached some importance to non-violent activities; in 1969 the annihilation of class enemies was recognized as the "higher form of class struggle," implying that there were other ways; but throughout 1970 and the first half of 1971 the leadership emphasized annihilation as their only goal and one that could "solve all our problems" (quoted in Banerjee 2008: 289). The idea was that if selected class enemies were killed then the rest would flee, liquidating their economic, social, and political power, and therefore leading to the establishment of guerrilla bases (Mazumdar 1970a). But in the absence of mass front organizations to provide collective incentives and mobilize political awareness, local populations generally failed to respond to annihilations. To compound these problems, the "annihilation line" was a bone of contention amongst CPI (Marxist-Leninist) cadres and leaders, and contributed to the movement's disintegration (Mohanty 1977; Ray 2002; Banerjee 2008).

A second consequence was that the urban middle classes, in particular students, played an increasingly important role in the insurgency (Banerjee 2008). From 1969 onwards, Mazumdar, drawing inspiration from the Chinese Cultural Revolution, encouraged students "to plunge yourselves into the revolutionary struggle here and now instead of wasting your energy in passing examinations" (Mazumdar 1970b: 87–88). Many students went off to join the movement in the countryside and became the primary support base of the insurgents (Mohanty 1977; Banerjee 2008). As a result, the insurgent organization became unbalanced and overly reliant on those who were referred to by their rivals as "middle class romantics" (Ray 2002: 4).

Third, in the face of increased state repression in rural areas the student cadres returned to Calcutta and other towns in West Bengal and from spring 1970 onwards insurgents and their activities were concentrated in urban centers (Mohanty 1977; Banerjee 2008). Here, they enjoyed some popular support due to public resentment toward the police. Fourth, in the cities, insurgents moved away from targeting class enemies—between March 1970 and mid-June 1971, businessmen, moneylenders, and landlords accounted for only 12 percent of the insurgents' victims in Calcutta (Rudra 1971). Tensions between CPI (Marxist) and CPI (Marxist-Leninist) rose in the build-up to the 1971 elections. *Dalams* were increasingly used to attack political rivals, who accounted for an estimated 37 percent of victims in this period. This discredited

the insurgents, especially among their middle-class support base, and indirectly strengthened the position of the Congress Party.

Beyond West Bengal

Insurgent activity affected several other states, including Bihar, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa, and Uttar Pradesh. But it was most intense and widespread in Andhra Pradesh, where two cases require our consideration.

Srikakulam, Andhra Pradesh, has a large *adivasi* population, referred to colloquially as *girijans*, who faced problems similar to those of *adivasis* in the adjacent areas of the former "Agency Tracts" in the coastal Andhra districts, as well as northern Telengana (Mohanty 1977; Banerjee 2008). In 1959, a non-*adivasi* communist schoolteacher named Vempatapu Satyanarayana set up the Girijan Sangham, which affiliated with the CPI (Marxist) after the 1964 schism. Initially the Girijan Sangham sought to work within the confines of the law. After agents of moneylender-merchants murdered two *adivasis* in October 1967, the Girijan Sangham began to organize *dalams*. But not until October 1968, at a meeting with members of the AICCCR including Mazumdar, did the Girijan Sangham decide to follow the Naxalbari model. The first guerrilla action came the following month, and by the end of 1969 the insurgents claimed to control nearly three hundred villages covering between seven hundred and eight hundred square miles (ibid.).

The Srikakulam insurgents came under enormous pressure from the state; police action began in early 1969 and was intensified by the addition of central paramilitary forces in summer 1970. Although the terrain where the insurgency took place was hilly and wooded, compared to the vast and densely forested border regions of Telengana, Srikakulam was small and close to the plains. Therefore, the state's counterinsurgency was a relatively straightforward endeavor. Villages were surrounded, often burned to the ground, and inhabitants were moved to newly constructed villages outside the forest (Rangaswamy 1974). Satyanarayana died in an alleged fake "encounter" in July 1970, and several other important leaders were killed or detained in the following months (Mohanty 1977). By the end of 1970 the movement had been defeated in Srikakulam, and moneylenders and traders returned to renew their activities (Banerjee 2008).

In the summer of 1968, another group of dissidents that had recently been expelled from the Andhra Pradesh CPI (Marxist)—including four out of nine members of the Andhra state secretariat—declared that they would launch an insurgency (Mohanty 1977). A significant proportion of this group had been involved in the first wave, including T. Nagi Reddy, Chandra Pulla Reddy—who wrote a book (Reddy 1981) on the first insurgency in Telengana—and D. V. Rao, an author of the 1948 Andhra Thesis. Their strategy eschewed the Naxalbari model of revolution and instead advocated a more patient approach that would first allow the insurgents to build a support base among the agrarian

lower classes. The Revolutionary Communist Committee of Andhra Pradesh (RCC) was disaffiliated from the AICCCR in February 1969 (Mohanty 1977).

The insurgency was to take place in the hilly, forested border regions of Telengana that had been the most enduring site of insurgent activity in the 1940s and 1950s. The cadres once more found strong support among the *adivasis* and terrain conducive to guerrilla warfare. By mid-1970, the RCC claimed to have "liberated" an area of between 7,000 and 8,000 square miles inhabited by over half-a-million people (Banerjee 2008). The RCC leadership was arrested in 1970. From this point, a schism developed between those who supported the erstwhile leaders' patient approach and those who favored the new leaders' aggressive line, although both groups continued to be referred to as the RCC. In March 1971 the Government of India sent ten thousand para-militaries into the area. As in Srikakulam, the local population was removed from their villages and placed in roadside camps (ibid.). The state's counterin-surgency did damage the organizational capacity of the insurgents in northern Telengana but, as in the first wave, it failed to defeat them. In 1974, by which time the wave of insurgency that had begun in Naxalbari was long defeated elsewhere in India, *dalams* still operated in Telengana (ibid.). It seems apparent, therefore, that despite being a footnote in most accounts of the second wave, the insurgency in northern Telengana was the most widespread and durable.

Why Did the Insurgency Fail in West Bengal?

The structure of political opportunities shifted in favor of the counterinsurgents. The victory of Indira Gandhi and her Congress faction in the 1971 general elec-tion marked a temporary end to political upheaval at the center. Specifically, Gandhi's socialist rhetoric, based on the slogan of *Garibi Hatao* (eradicate poverty), allowed her to attract a great deal of support from India's poor, although not so much in West Bengal, where the center gained control of state politics by the re-imposition of President's Rule. Victory in the Bangla-desh Liberation War in 1971 bolstered popular support for the central govern-ment, and as a result of China's support for Pakistan, the Maoist insurgents—who had declared that "China's chairman is our chairman"—were popularly discredited.

From mid-1970 onward the central government increased the amount of troops, equipment, and coordination it provided to the states (Ministry of Home Affairs 1971). In West Bengal the police and military were empowered by a series of laws, some which originated in the colonial period and others that were specially enacted to deal with the insurgents. Areas of Calcutta were cor-doned off and searched house by house. The West Bengal police divided the urban insurgents into three categories: "Non-committed" Naxalite students were co-opted with promises of protection from the police and jobs (Banerjee 2008). They were even encouraged to join Indira Gandhi's Congress Party. Criminal or "lumpen" elements were given a monthly salary of 150 rupees

to join "home guards" that helped security forces identify other Naxalites. And finally, those students thought to be ideologically committed were shot or held indefinitely in custody. This strategy was remarkably successful; by the beginning of 1972 the movement's support base was destroyed and almost all top leaders were either dead or in prison. In July 1972, Charu Mazumdar died in police custody. The CPI (Marxist-Leninist) fragmented into numerous groups, and with the exception of northern Telengana, this marked the end of the second wave.

Unlike in the first and third waves, second-wave insurgents fought the state until they were all but destroyed. Thus, the state's extensive and violent measures of repression are usually presented as the reason for the defeat of the second wave (Mohanty 1977; Banerjee 2008; Oetken 2009). But when considered in comparative perspective it is apparent that this alone is an inadequate explanation, because many insurgencies—including both the first and third waves—were far more effective at resisting determined efforts to defeat them. Our analysis indicates that the insurgents' strategic mistakes, coupled with the success of their legal rivals the CPI (Marxist), meant that they were unable to build either mass support or base areas. As a result, they veered away from the Maoist idea of a mass-supported rural insurgency, and instead became a top-heavy urban movement. When the structure of political opportunities became increasingly unfavorable to the insurgents, they were unable to effectively resist the counterinsurgency.

THE THIRD WAVE OF INSURGENCY, 1980 TO THE PRESENT

Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, and West Bengal in the 1980s

In the first two waves, insurgent activity was heavily concentrated in two states, Andhra Pradesh and West Bengal. The third wave of insurgent activity began once again in these two states, as well as in Bihar, in the early 1980s. But while it steadily increased in Andhra Pradesh and Bihar throughout the decade, it tailed off in West Bengal (Ministry of Home Affairs 2010).

After the Emergency (1975–1977), most insurgents were released from jail and some tried to revive the armed struggle. In 1980, K. Seetharamaiah, a veteran of the Telengana movement in the first wave and a follower of Mazumdar during the second, founded the Peoples War Group (PWG) in Andhra Pradesh. The PWG discarded the annihilation line and instead stressed the importance of organizational consolidation and the provision of collective benefits to rural lower classes. PWG cadres operated in the densely forested border regions of Telengana where, as in the previous two waves, they availed of terrain suitable to guerrilla warfare and a strong support base among the *adivasi* communities whose grievances had been ignored by the state. In the same year, PWG *dalams* first began work in Bastar, which is currently considered the epicenter of Maoist insurgency in India (CPI [Maoist]

2005). The Maoist Communist Centre, the most prominent insurgent organization in Bihar, can trace its heritage to the hilly, forested areas on the Bengal-Bihar state border, which provided rugged terrain and willing *adivasi* supporters. It grew out of Dakshin Desh, an insurgent movement formed in 1969 by opponents of Mazumdar's annihilation line who preferred a more patient strategy. Both Andhra Pradesh and Bihar state governments failed to take measures such as land reforms to check the dominance of higher-caste landowners on the plains. From their sanctuary in the hills the insurgents expanded into these areas, where they found support among lower-caste agricultural laborers (Balagopal 2006; Bhatia 2005; Kunnath 2009).

The CPI (Marxist)-led Left Front won the first post-Emergency elections in West Bengal in 1977 and remained in government for the next three decades. While land reforms have generally made little headway in most of India, West Bengal is an exception. Tenancy reform gave sharecroppers security of tenure and guaranteed them an improved share of their crops. Unlike other states in India, where putative reforms were not enforced, the Left Front's reforms fundamentally changed the relationship between the sharecropper and the *jotedar* to the benefit of the former (Kohli 1987; Hanstad and Neilson 2004). The legislation was accompanied by a massive campaign to register sharecroppers and to educate them in their rights. By 2003, 1.5 million sharecroppers had benefitted from this scheme (Hanstad and Neilson 2004). It has been noted that the Left Front's attempts at improving the situation of landless laborers were far less successful, and that the local-level party apparatus has been an instrument of both patronage and coercion that is, to some extent, responsible for the Left Front's electoral success (Mallick 1994). Nevertheless, land reforms and other measures did go a long way toward placating sharecroppers, who were hitherto the most revolutionary segment of rural Bengal. The remarkable success of the CPM strategy is apparent in the fact that they ruled West Bengal uninterrupted from 1977 until their electoral defeat to the Trinamool Congress in May 2011.

The Situation of Adivasi *Areas in Central India*

From 1990 onward the insurgency spread from Andhra Pradesh and Bihar to contiguous areas of the central tribal belt in Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Orissa, and what became Chhattisgarh and Jharkhand in 2001 (Ministry of Home Affairs 2010). These areas are notable for their rugged terrain and high proportion of *adivasis* (Ministry of Tribal Affairs 2006; Guha 2007). Insurgent activity has recently returned to West Bengal, but it is concentrated in the hilly, forested areas bordering Orissa and Jharkhand that are largely inhabited by *adivasis*.

Non-*adivasi* insurgents operate in these areas largely because the terrain is suited to guerrilla warfare (Guha 2007). We have shown that in the first two waves insurgent activity began in situations where there was micro-level

discontent, macro-level cadres, *and* a favorable structure of political opportunities. In both cases the latter was due to exceptional circumstances that temporarily limited the state's ability to repress the insurgents. When the structure of political opportunities changed, the insurgents found it very difficult to conduct operations in anywhere but the mountainous, hilly areas inhabited by *adivasis*, where the state's ability to project its disciplinary power remained limited. Conversely, the third wave of insurgent activity has increased at a time that the state's ability to project its power in rural areas has grown dramatically (Chatterjee 2008; Kohli 2009). This has been possible because insurgents have taken advantage of spatial rather than temporal variance in the structure of political opportunities; that is, they have taken the conscious decision to build bases in areas "where the geographical conditions (mountains, hills, forests, and other favorable terrain) are more favorable for conducting the guerrilla war" (CPI [Maoist] 2004). Indeed, insurgent activity in the plains of Andhra Pradesh and Bihar has subsided over the past two decades as the state has become more effective at projecting its power there (Bhatia 2005; Balagopal 2006; Kunnath 2009).

Pace recent research into insurgency, which stresses the singular importance of terrain suitable to guerrilla warfare (Fearon and Laitin 2003; Kalyvas 2006), our analysis indicates that there are also important socioeconomic and political reasons why *adivasis* continue to provide a reliable support base for insurgents. Analytically these are difficult to separate from geographical factors, since they are both a consequence of *adivasis* inhabiting inaccessible terrain where the state finds it difficult to project its power. As with northern Telengana, state power in these areas has historically been limited; their populations were intimately associated with, but not politically or socioeconomically dominated by centralized state-governed societies on the plains. This changed with the advent of the modern state in South Asia—first in its colonial, then its national form—which sought to incorporate non-state spaces and self-governing *adivasis* within its putative borders (Guha and Gadgil 1989; Sundar 2007; Padel 2009). This process has, with few exceptions, been to the detriment of *adivasis*: it led to loss of land to immigrants from the plains, restricted access to forests and forest produce, and the generally inequitable incorporation of *adivasis* into wider systems of commerce, capital production, and revenue extraction. Perhaps most importantly, these processes significantly reduced the political autonomy of *adivasi* communities vis-à-vis the state. It led to a significant number of insurrections in the central tribal belt in the nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries. Many of these occurred in areas where the population now provides strong support for the insurgents (Raghavaiah 1971). Examples include the Muria rebellion of 1876 and the Bhumkal rebellion of 1910 in what is now southern Chhattisgarh (Sundar 2007); the Kalahandi rebellion of 1882 in eastern Orissa (Padel 2009); and the Kol uprising of 1831–1832 and Santal insurrection of 1855 in what is

now Bengal, Bihar, and Jharkhand (Duyker 1987). The CPI (Maoist) has attempted to claim this history by referring to these rebellions as earlier steps on "the path of liberation" and portraying "the present generations [of *adivasi* insurgents] as their heirs" (CPI [Maoist] 2005: i).

Today *adivasis* are, in theory, protected from exploitation and alienation from their land by the Indian Constitution and later legislation such as the 1996 Panchayats (Extension to the Scheduled Areas) Act and the 2007 Forest Rights Act. But, unlike other minorities such as Scheduled Castes, Other Backward Castes, and Muslims, they have had little success in pursuing their interests through institutional political channels. Guha (2007) argues that this is in large part due to the sparse distribution of *adivasis* throughout India, but even in supposedly tribal states of Chhattisgarh and Jharkhand, where *adivasis* are heavily concentrated, they have had little success in furthering their interests through electoral politics. Many *adivasi* political leaders, such as Mahendra Karma in Chhattisgarh and Shibu Soren in Jharkhand, have promoted policies that not only increase their personal wealth, but also intensified the very exploitative processes that form the core of *adivasi* grievances. *Adivasis*, therefore, have little stake in formal electoral politics and do not comprise a political minority that has been mobilized by a party in the same way that, in certain areas, lower castes or Muslims have. Rather, they are a developmental or legal minority in the sense that the state is tasked with "developing" them and defending their legal rights. However, *adivasis* have had little influence in determining the course of such development or success in getting their rights enforced by the state.

After independence in 1947, processes of state and market expansion, as well as tribal resistance, persisted with ideological, cultural, and political logics that were fundamentally different to those of their colonial predecessors. Nevertheless, there were certain continuities (Guha 2007; Sundar 2007; Padel 2009). The state remained an important actor: the 1950 Indian Constitution ascribed *adivasis* into the postcolonial order as developmental subjects and reinstituted the colonial policies that made the state the custodian of their traditional homelands: the 1927 Forest Act, which put forest land in the hands of the Forest Department, remains the foundation of forest administration in India, and the state uses the 1894 Land Acquisition Act to expropriate land inhabited by *adivasis* for "development" projects such as hydroelectric dams, mines, and industrial enterprises. Population pressures in other parts of India have increased the influx of non-*adivasis* into the sparsely populated tribal belt, and on the ground, merchant-moneylenders, contractors, and landlords remain the primary exploiters of *adivasis*. What is more, a variety of other actors have come to the fore in these areas, most notably large multi-national businesses, particularly in the mining sector.

Thus, in the late 1980s, just as the insurgents were expanding in central India, Commissioner for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes B. D.

Sharma wrote that the state's development policies had worsened the position of *adivasis*, resulting in a "backlash of modernization" and "simmering discontent in almost the entire middle Indian tribal belt particularly on issues of land and forest" (Sharma 1987: 2). Sharma concluded that there would be no peace between *adivasis* and the state as long as the issue of autonomy—in terms of political empowerment and command over resources—remained unresolved.

The Rise of the Communist Party of India (Maoist)

In 2004 the PWG and the Maoist Communist Centre merged to form the CPI (Maoist). This was the first time in thirty-five years that the vast majority of insurgent activity had been pursued by a single group. It is interesting to note that the Party's most prominent leaders, including Muppalla Lakshmana Rao (also known as Ganapathi), Katakam Sudarshan (Anand), Cheruri Rajkumar (Azad), and Mallojula Koteswara Rao (Kishenji), are from Telengana (the latter two were recently killed).[27] Compared to previous avatars, the CPI (Maoist) is far more specialized as an insurgent organization. It does not have a relationship to mainstream communist parties in the same way that the Telengana cadres did with the CPI, or the CPI (Marxist-Leninist) did with the CPI (Marxist). Although the CPI (Maoist) has engaged in peace talks with the Andhra state government and recently expressed an interest in engaging in talks with the central government, the distance separating the insurgents from institutional politics is relatively wide. Furthermore, the CPI (Maoist) uses increasingly sophisticated training, tactics and weaponry (Ministry of Home Affairs 2009). Indeed, when the state increased the intensity of its counterinsurgency, the insurgents were able to hit back with a series of spectacular strikes in 2010, such as an ambush that killed seventy-six members of a Central Reserve Police Force patrol in Chhattisgarh.

The insurgents mobilized *adivasi* support by attempting to address their concerns over political empowerment and command over resources. The Maoists advocated the formation of separate "tribal states" in the central Indian tribal belt (e.g., *Times of India* 1992). They also undermined the power of oppressive and exploitative structures in the central Indian tribal belt (Planning Commission 2008). More specifically, the insurgents chased away Forest Department guards who had enforced laws restricting *adivasis'* access to the forests. They secured a fifty-fold increase in price of *tendu patta*, the leaf used for rolling *beedie* cigarettes, which are a major source of cash for *adivasis* in central India. They also forced contractors to pay higher wages to agricultural laborers, and distributed surplus land to landless and

---

[27] The importance of insurgents from Andhra Pradesh has not been accorded the recognition it deserves. Andhra leaders provide a connection between the three waves of insurgency and give further credence to the argument that Telengana, rather than Naxalbari, should be considered the cradle of Indian Maoism.

marginal cultivators. Jan Adalats (People's Courts) provide a mechanism for publicly punishing forest guards, contractors, and moneylenders whose activities impinge on *adivasis*' autonomy.

All of this is not to say that the insurgents have improved the quality of life of *adivasis*. The militarization of the central tribal belt has resulted in the criminalization and silencing of much non-Maoist *adivasi* political activity, as well as the death and displacement of thousands of *adivasis* at the hands of both state forces and the Maoists. By all established metrics, neither six decades of state-initiated "tribal development," nor an almost equally long period of Maoist insurgency have delivered any improvement in the quality of life for the majority of *adivasi* in central India. Nevertheless, the insurgents have been successful at presenting themselves as the defenders of *adivasi* interests. A Ministry of Tribal Affairs report stated that *adivasis* "view the State as their exploiter and enemy" and support the insurgents because they "help them to get their rights, protect them from exploitation and redress their grievances" (2006: 15). This indicates that while social and economic factors are important in informing support for insurgency, it remains, in the end, a matter of politics.

The Government's Counterinsurgency Strategy

The Union Ministry of Home Affairs claims to advocate a "holistic" approach to counterinsurgency: "While it is necessary to conduct proactive and sustained operations against the extremists, and put in place all measures required for this, it is also necessary to simultaneously give focused attention to development and governance issues" (Ministry of Home Affairs 2009: 16).

At the state level there is some variation in the tactics used. In Chhattisgarh, which has been the epicenter of the insurgency over the past decade, the counterinsurgency bears similarities to the first wave in northern Telengana, described earlier. In 2005 the state sponsored a vigilante militia, Salwa Judum, and recruited "Special Police Officers" from local *adivasi* population. Salwa Judum burned down several hundred villages and displaced approximately fifty thousand *adivasis* into roadside camps. In addition, the security forces killed a large number of suspected insurgents and insurgent supporters in false encounters (Independent Citizens' Initiative 2006; Guha 2007; Sundar 2007). The counterinsurgency in Andhra Pradesh—which is undertaken by the Greyhounds, a well-trained specialized force founded in 1989—has avoided the chaos, but not the violence, of neighboring Chhattisgarh (Balagopal 2006). In Jharkhand, the insurgency has been largely ineffective due to the resistance of local political elites (Miklian 2011). The counterinsurgency was given a new impetus in autumn 2009 when the central government began a coordinated assault on the insurgent strongholds, deploying one hundred thousand extra paramilitary and police forces (Mukherji 2010). A Ministry of Home Affairs official described the operation as "a comprehensive operational strategy that would first seek to clear an area of Maoists, occupy it militarily and

follow up with socioeconomic development activity" (in Ramakrishnan 2010: 4). Thus, the so-called "Operation Green Hunt" is an expansion and intensification of the existing strategy rather than a change in direction. The aim is not just to defeat the insurgent cadres, but also to expand and intensify, in the name of development, the very same economic, bureaucratic, and legal processes that fuel many *adivasi* grievances. This is a disciplinary developmentalism in that the primary aim is to refashion *adivasi* ways of life according to a dominant developmental paradigm in the hope that this will allow the state to better control *adivasi* populations in territories that it has hitherto been unable to govern effectively.[28]

The principal of "walking on two legs"—which combines the "stick" of proactive and sustained military assault with the "carrot" of development and governance—is presented by the state as a sound one (Singh 2006).[29] What is more, much criticism of the state's counterinsurgency policy concentrates upon the relative weight of military versus development and governance aspects. For example, the Planning Commission's "Expert Group's" report, *Development Challenges in Extremist Affected Areas*, condemned the state's violence and argued that the cause of insurgency in *adivasi* areas is a lack of development and that the solution is the implementation of development programs (Planning Commission 2008). The Integrated Action Plans of 2010–2011 and 2011–2012 allotted 33 billion rupees (approximately U.S.$700 million) for development projects in "affected" districts (*Hindustan Times* 2010). This overlooks that, in practice, both development and governance programs work to expand the power that the state and other non-*adivasi* actors have over *adivasi* communities. Seemingly benevolent features of development and governance, such as welfare, healthcare, and education remain inadequate among *adivasis*, while those that do exist are scant consolation for the political and economic autonomy that *adivasis* have lost. Other aspects of development, such as building roads, which is undertaken by a corps of military engineers called the Border Roads Organization, and police stations that look like

---

[28] The disciplinary objectives of developmental projects have been, and continue to be, explicitly acknowledged in state planning documents. In the state of Andhra Pradesh, for example, many tribal development programs implemented from the late 1960s onward have aimed to "wean the tribals from the influence of extremists operating in Tribal areas" (cited in Social Welfare Department's (Andhra Pradesh) [1984] *Scheme for Rehabilitation*). See also, among others, the Government of Andhra Pradesh's "Pilot Project for Tribal Development: Khammam District" (1974); "Sub Plan for the Tribal Areas of Andhra Pradesh" (1975); "Tribal Welfare: Note for the Use of Planning Commission" (1982); "Impact of Tribal Welfare Plans" (1987); "Evaluation Study Report of Tribal Development Programmes" (1988). All of these are documents available at the Tribal Cultural Research and Training Institute Library, Hyderabad.

[29] This strategy is the dominant approach to counterinsurgency across the globe, suggesting a universalization and homogenization of governmental practices and knowledge with little reference to localized particularities. See Sewall et al. 2007; and also Galula 2006 [1964]; Thompson 1966; and Kilcullen 2010.

armed fortresses, increase the state's capacity to project its power in *adivasi* areas.

Thus, although police and military actions on one hand, and development and governance programs on the other, are presented as opposite poles of the debate on counterinsurgency, they share a similar logic and the same objectives. Both depoliticize insurgents, defining them as either criminals in need of punishment or as poor *adivasis* whom the state must care for and control using developmental measures. Both also aim to further expand and entrench the influence of non-*adivasi* constellations of power among communities that historically enjoyed relatively high levels of political and economic autonomy. The commitment to development is not cynical but rather a product of complex systems of belief concerned with how to best improve society. Our argument is that a primary effect of developmental measures, intended or otherwise, is the disciplining of local populations and an increase in the efficiency of governmental mechanisms of care and control. Current support for Maoist insurgency is not only a claim to political empowerment, but also a critique of the dominant paradigms of development.

CONCLUSIONS

Our analysis demonstrates that the commonly accepted "Naxalbari-centric" narrative obscures our understanding of Maoist insurgency in India and must be fundamentally rethought. Far from being a brief insurrectionary phase, the first wave of insurgent activity in Telengana lasted five years, affected a large area, and provoked a massive counterinsurgency campaign from the state. When seen from a comparative perspective that takes into account the *longue durée* of Maoist insurgency in India, Naxalbari and the insurgency in West Bengal in the late 1960s and early 1970s appear short-lived and atypical. This is not to deny the central role that Naxalbari and West Bengal in the second wave play in the popular imagination among all sections of Indian society, including the government, the revolutionaries, and the wider public. But many aspects of the second wave that are usually stressed—the charismatic leadership of Mazumdar, the annihilation line, the role played by middle-class students, and the urbanization of the movement—distinguish it from the vast majority of Maoist insurgent activities in India. Moreover, accounts of the first and second waves tend to emphasize the role of sharecroppers and agricultural laborers on the plains of Telengana and West Bengal, while that of *adivasis* in the forested terrain of central India are seen as peripheral. But when we analyze the first two waves in the light of the third, we see that the insurgency has been most enduring among *adivasis* in the densely forested hills of central India. Indeed, *this is the common feature that unites all three waves*, and understanding why this is the case is crucial to understanding the remarkable durability of Maoist insurgency in India.

To a large extent, the presence of non-*adivasi* insurgents in these areas can be explained by the suitability of terrain to guerrilla warfare and the willingness of *adivasis* to support the insurgents. The overriding grievances among the *adivasis* of central India are the historically iniquitous relationships produced by the processes of state and market expansion that have incorporated and subordinated *adivasi* populations that previously experienced a large degree of socio-economic and political autonomy. But the state's counterinsurgency strategy has not sought to address these grievances. Instead, the state has pursued a military strategy followed by development and governance interventions, which further the power of the state and other non-*adivasis* in territories inhabited by *adivasis*. Thus, the state is, paradoxically, attempting to undermine the *adivasis*' support for the insurgency by intensifying the processes that are the root causes of their discontent. Bearing in mind that Maoist insurgency has prospered in *adivasi* areas of central India for over six decades, and that insurgent activity has increased markedly there over the past two decades, the state's counterinsurgency strategy must be considered a profound failure. While the professed aim of counterinsurgency is to defeat insurgency, in this case, counterinsurgency seems to have actually perpetuated it.

REFERENCES

Archives

Ajoy Bhavan Library (Communist Party headquarters), New Delhi.
India Office Records, British Library, London.
Indian Official Documents Collection, Central Secretariat Library, New Delhi.
National Archives of India, New Delhi.
Official Publications Department, University Library, Cambridge.
Tribal Cultural Research and Training Institute Library, Hyderabad.

Published Sources

Balagopal, K. 2006. Maoist Movement in Andhra Pradesh. *Economic and Political Weekly* 41, 29: 3183–87.
Banerjee, Sumanta. 2002. Naxalbari: Between Past and Future. *Economic and Political Weekly* 37, 22: 2115–16.
Banerjee, Sumanta. 2008 [1984]. *India's Simmering Revolution: The Naxalite Uprising.* New Delhi: Zed Books.
Bhatia, Bela. 2005. The Naxalite Movement in Central Bihar. *Economic and Political Weekly* 40, 15: 1536–49.
Bhukya, Bhangya. 2004. Colonisation of Forest and Emergence of Gond Nationalism in Hyderabad State. *Itihasa* (Journal of Andhra Pradesh State Archives and Research Institute) 30, 1–2: 59–79.
Chatterjee, Partha. 2008. Democracy and Economic Transformation in India. *Economic and Political Weekly* 43, 16: 53–62.
Chidambaram, P. 2009. Chidambaram Inaugurates DGPs/IGPs Conference. At: www.pib.nic.in/release/release.asp?relid=52610 (accessed 15 June 2010).
Communist Party of India (CPI). 1950. Report on the Left Deviation inside the Communist Party of India: Draft Critique Submitted by the Members of the Central

Committee from Andhra and Amended and Approved by the Central Committee in Its Recent Meeting. Ajoy Bhavan Library, New Delhi.

Communist Party of India (CPI) (Maoist). 2004. *Strategy and Tactics of the India Revolution*. At: http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/countries/india/maoist/documents/papers/strategy.htm (accessed 15 July 2010).

Communist Party of India (CPI) (Maoist). 2005. *Masses of Dandakaranya Rebel: In the Path of Liberation*. Kolkata: Radical Publications.

Desai, Raj and Harry Eckstein. 1990. Insurgency: The Transformation of Peasant Rebellion. *World Politics* 42, 4: 441–66.

Duyker, Edward. 1987. *Tribal Guerrillas: The Santals of West Bengal and the Naxalite Movement*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Election Commission of India. n.d. Election Results—Full Statistical Reports. At: http://eci.nic.in/eci_main/StatisticalReports/ElectionStatistics.asp (accessed 15 July 2010).

Fearon, James D. and David D. Laitin. 2003. Ethnicity, Insurgency, and Civil War. *American Political Science Review* 97, 1: 75–90.

Führer-Haimendorf, Cristoph von. 1945 Tribal Populations of Hyderabad: Yesterday and Today. *Census of India, 1941, Volume 21: Hyderabad*. New Delhi: Government of India. Official Publications Department, University Library, Cambridge.

Galula, David. 2006 [1964]. *Counterinsurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice*, London: Praeger Security International.

Gleditsch, Nils Petter, Peter Wallensteen, Mikael Eriksson, Margareta Sollenberg, and Håvard Strand. 2002. Armed Conflict 1946–2001: A New Dataset. *Journal of Peace Research* 39, 5: 615–37.

Gour, Raj Bahadur. 1973. *Glorious Telengana Armed Struggle*. New Delhi: Communist Party Publication.

Guha, Ramachandra. 2007. Adivasis, Naxalites and Indian Democracy. *Economic and Political Weekly* 42, 32: 3305–12.

Guha, Ramachandra and Mahdav Gadgil. 1989. State Forestry and Social Conflict in British India. *Past and Present* 123: 141–77.

Hanstad, Tim and Robin Nielsen. 2004. West Bengal's Bargadars and Landownership. *Economic and Political Weekly* 39, 8: 853–55.

Harrison, Selig. 1956. Caste and the Andhra Communists. *American Political Science Review* 50, 2: 378–404.

Hindustan Times. 2010. Rs. 3,300-cr to check Maoists (29 Nov). At: http://www.hindustantimes.com/India-news/NewDelhi/Rs-3-300-cr-to-check-Maoists/Article1-632090.aspx (accessed 18 June 2012).

Independent Citizens' Initiative. 2006. War in the Heart of India: An Enquiry into the Ground Situation in Dantewara District, Chhattisgarh. At: cpjc.files.wordpress.com/2007/07/ici-warintheheartofindia.pdf (accessed 15 July 2010).

Kalyvas, Stathis N. 2006. *The Logic of Violence in Civil War*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Kilcullen, David J. 2010. *Counterinsurgency*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Kohli, Atul. 1987. *The State and Poverty in India: The Politics of Reform*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Kohli, Atul. 2009. *Democracy and Development in India: From Socialism to Pro-Business*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Kunnath, George J. 2009. Smouldering Dalit Fires in Bihar, India. *Dialectical Anthropology* 33: 309–25.

Mallick, Ross. 1994. *Indian Communism: Opposition, Collaboration, and Institutionalization*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Mazumdar, Charu. 1967. It Is Time to Build Up a Revolutionary Party. *Liberation* 1, 1 (Nov.): 62–79.

Mazumdar, Charu. 1970a. A Few Words about Guerrilla Actions. *Liberation* 3, 4 (Feb.): 17–23.

Mazumdar, Charu. 1970b. A Few Words to the Revolutionary Students and Youth. *Liberation* 5, 3 (Mar.): 13–14, 84–91.

McAdam, Douglas M. 1982. *Political Process and the Development of the Black Insurgency, 1930–1970*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Miklian, Jason. 2011. Revolutionary Conflict in Federations: The India Case. *Conflict, Security and Development* 11, 1: 25–53.

Ministry of Home Affairs. 1971. *Annual Report, 1970–71*. New Delhi: Government of India. Indian Official Documents Collection, Central Secretariat Library, New Delhi.

Ministry of Home Affairs. 2009. *Annual Report, 2008–09*. New Delhi: Government of India. Indian Official Documents Collection, Central Secretariat Library, New Delhi.

Ministry of Home Affairs. 2010. Details of State-wise Annual Totals and National Annual Totals from 1980 to 2009. (Right to Information application filed by Purnima Ramanujan in March; copy available from Jonathan Kennedy.)

Ministry of Tribal Affairs. 2006. *National Tribal Policy: A Policy for the Scheduled Tribes of India*. New Delhi: Government of India. Indian Official Documents Collection, Central Secretariat Library, New Delhi.

Mohanty, Manoranjan. 1977. *Revolutionary Violence: A Study of the Maoist Movement in India*. New Delhi: Sterling.

Mukherji, Nirmalangshu. 2010. Arms over People: What Have the Maoists Achieved in Dandakaranya? *Economic and Political Weekly* 45, 25: 16–20.

Oetken, Jennifer. 2009. Counterinsurgency against Naxalites in India. In Sumit Ganguly and David Fidler, eds., *India and Counterinsurgency: Lessons Learned*. London: Routledge.

Overstreet, Gene D. and Marshall Windmiller. 1959. *Communism in India*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Padel, Felix. 2009. *Sacrificing People: Invasions of a Tribal Landscape*. New Delhi: Orient Blackswan.

Pavier, Barry. 1981. *The Telengana Movement 1944–51*. New Delhi: Vikas.

Planning Commission of India. 2008. *Development Challenges in Extremist Affected Areas: Report of an Expert Group*. New Delhi: Government of India.

Pulla Reddy, Chandra. 1981. *The Great Heroic Telengana Struggle*. Hyderabad: A Road to Liberation Publication.

Raghavaiah, V. 1971. *Tribal Revolts*. Nellore: Andhra Rashtra Adimajati Sevak Sangh.

Ramakrishnan, Venkitesh. 2010. Flawed Operation. *Frontline* 27, 9: 4–9.

Rangaswamy, Amrita. 1974. Making a Village: An Experiment. *Economic and Political Weekly* 8, 46: 1524–27.

Rao, Chandra Rajeswara. 1971. *The Historic Telengana Struggle: Some Useful Lessons from Its Rich Experience*. New Delhi: Communist Party of India.

Rao, Devulapalli Venkateswara. 1982 [1949]. *Refutation of Wrong Trends Advocating Withdrawal of Telengana Armed Struggle*. Hyderabad: Proletarian Line Publications.

Ray, Rabindra. 2002. *The Naxalites and Their Ideology*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Reddy, Arutla Ramachandra. 1984. *Telengana Struggle: Memoirs*. B. Narsing Rao, trans. Delhi: People's Publishing House.

Roosa, John. 2001. Passive Revolution Meets Peasant Revolution: Indian Nationalism and the Telengana Revolt. *Journal of Peasant Studies* 28, 4: 57–94.

Rudra, Ashok. 1971. Urban Guerrillas in Calcutta. *Economic and Political Weekly* 6, 28: 1379–82.

Scott, James. 2009. *The Art of not Being Governed: An Anarchist History of Upland Southeast Asia*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press.

Sewall, Sarah, John Nagl, David Petraeus, and James Amos. 2007. *The U.S. Army Marine Corps Counterinsurgency Field Manual*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Shah, Alpa. 2006. Markets of Protection: The 'Terrorist' Maoist Communist Centre and the State in Jharkhand, India. *Critique of Anthropology* 26, 3: 297–314.

Shah, Alpa and Judith Pettigrew. 2009. Windows into a Revolution: Ethnographies of Maoism in South Asia. *Dialectical Anthropology* 33, 3–4: 225–51.

Sharma, B. D. 1987. *The Report of the Commissioner for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, 1986–7*. New Delhi: Government of India. Indian Official Documents Collection, Central Secretariat Library, New Delhi.

Sherman, Taylor C. 2007. The Integration of the Princely State of Hyderabad and the Making of the Postcolonial State in India, 1948–1956. *Indian Economic and Social History Review* 44, 4: 489–516.

Singh, Manmohan. 2006. PM's speech at the Chief Minister's Meet on Naxalism. At: http://pmindia.nic.in/speech/content.asp?id=311 (accessed 15 May 2008).

Social Welfare Department (Andhra Pradesh). 1984. *Scheme for Rehabilitation of Podu Cultivators*. Hyderabad: Government of Andhra Pradesh. Tribal Cultural Research and Training Institute Library, Hyderabad.

Sundar, Nandini. 2007. *Subalterns and Sovereigns: An Anthropological History of Bastar, 1854–2006*. 2d ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Sundarayya, Puchalapalli. 1972. *Telengana People's Struggle and Its Lessons*. Calcutta: Communist Party of India (Marxist).

Thirumali, Inukonda. 2003. *Against Dora and Nizam: People's Movement in Telangana, 1939–1948*. New Delhi: Kanishka Publishers.

Thompson, Robert. 1966. *Defeating Communist Insurgency: The Lessons of Malaya and Vietnam*. London: F. A. Praeger.

Times of India. 1992. Naxals Stepping Up Activities in the State. 26 May: 12.

Weber, Max. 1949. *The Methodology of the Social Sciences*. Edward Shils and Henry Finch, eds. and trans. New York: Free Press.

Abstract: This paper demonstrates that there have been three distinct waves of Maoist insurgency in India since 1947. We construct an ideal typical model of Maoist insurgency that is used to compare the roles played by local populations, insurgents, and state counterinsurgency measures across space and time. This allows us to demonstrate that the commonly accepted narrative of Indian Maoist insurgency must be fundamentally rethought. The Naxalbari outbreak in 1967 and the subsequent insurgency in West Bengal is generally agreed to be the central point in the history of Maoist insurgency in India. But our analysis demonstrates that it was comparatively short-lived and atypical. We instead trace the genealogy of Indian Maoism to Telengana in the late 1940s. The common feature linking all three waves is the persistence of insurgent activity among various tribal or *adivasi* communities in the central Indian "tribal belt." Their overriding grievances are the historically iniquitous relationships produced by the processes of state and market expansion that have incorporated and

subordinated *adivasi* populations who previously had a large degree of socioeconomic and political autonomy. The state's counterinsurgency strategy has consisted of violence combined with developmental and governance interventions. This has pushed Maoist insurgency to the margins of Indian political life but has been unable to eliminate insurgent activity or address the fundamental grievances of *adivasis*. We conclude by arguing that Maoist insurgency in India should not be considered as crime to be resolved by state violence, or as an economic problem requiring the intensification of developmental measures, but as a matter of politics.