

# A Marxian 'Moment' in the 'Theatre of the Oppressed': Infrapolitics and Making of the 'Naxal Narrative' in South-Eastern Uttar Pradesh

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## Introduction: Structural Crisis and Rise of Naxalism

Social and political movements do not originate in vacuum but are rather the residual effects of a deep-seated structural crisis and frustration rooted in the objective conditions of existing social, economic and political order, its institutions and practices and notions of development, participation and governance that people challenge and seek to change. The state becomes central to this exploitative enterprise as it carries the legitimate monopoly on the means of violence, functions as an arbiter for the allocation of socially valued goods and is an upholder of existing institutions and practices that shapes relationships between citizens, organized interests, institutions and political system. It makes binding decisions, claiming to represent and aggregate various social interests and enforces adherence to them (Jenkins and Klandermans 1995). Naxalite movement or 'naxalism' or *Naxalbari*<sup>1</sup> as it is popularly known is one such example of a political movement in post-independent India that lays bare the dialectics and inherent contradictions in society, politics and economy.

Naxalism and Maoism<sup>2</sup> is cradled amidst a world of plentitude and paucity and is located between constant rhythms of acute poverty, uneven development, political insularity, caste atrocity and forcible dispossession from one's land followed by incumbent social polarization as has been the case in South-Eastern Uttar Pradesh. Naxalbari or ultra-Left extremism i.e. the phenomenon of waging an armed struggle against the '*enemies of the state*' (our emphasis) originated in 1967 in a village named *Naxalbari* in Darjeeling District of West Bengal and from where the movement draws its name.<sup>3</sup> The movement was shaped by the socio-political ferment going on

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<sup>1</sup>In an interesting rendition of the etymology of the term 'naxalite', Bela Bhati on interviewing few naxalites in Central Bihar was told that naxalite is made of two words naksha that is map and the English 'lite' which means 'prakash' or light and therefore put together it means making a new map for Bharat (India) with our lights. For more details see, Bela Bhatia (2005). The Naxalite Movement in Central Bihar, EPW, April 9, 2005.

<sup>2</sup>These will be used inter-changeably throughout the text since they are almost similar in content and their stated objectives.

<sup>3</sup>Some like Shivaji Mukherjee would argue and say that the Maoist insurgency in India had colonial origins. Adding further, he says that what we see today is basically a fallout of the colonial policy of ruling the land by adopting two forms of 'indirect rule' i.e. the *zamindari* land tenure and *princely states*. According to Shivaji , "while the *zamindari landlord tenure* system created conditions of lower bureaucratic penetration as also land/caste inequality, the *princely states* tended to have lower levels of government institutions and also often had tribals who were ignored and neglected and untouched by modern bureaucratic institutions." This set up the structural conditions to restlessness and insurgency in India in the future. (p.5)

in other parts of the world like the national liberation movements in underdeveloped nations, retaliatory stance of small countries against the might of US Army followed by anti-imperialist demonstrations against US involvement in Vietnam. These protests coincided with the feminist / Black movement in the United States and in Europe and the student-worker revolt in France. Most importantly, in China, the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution attacked the revisionist ossification and distortions of Marxism.

Naxalism began with the slogan 'land to tiller' and had its roots in feudal oppression, caste / class and gender discrimination and indulged in agrarian mass revolution and urban terror in order to usher into a communist society. Influenced by Mao Tse-tung's political sentiments contained in his Little Red Book, Naxalism bases its ideology on the '*Historic Eight Documents*,' set of eight monographs written by Charu Majumdar, one of the chief ideologues of the movement. This peasant uprising involved not only the poor and landless peasants and the marginalized but also public intellectuals of various hues like writers, young students, artists, professors often hailing from upper class landed gentry i.e. the Bengali '*bhadralok*' from West Bengal.

Naxalite movement in its initial phase became a kind of collaborative effort of rural guerilla fighters and young educated urban folks who partook in this civil war. These activities and events resulted in the form of naxal songs and literature called '*naxal sahitya*.' These formed a rich corpus of cultural repertoire of *testimonies* by individuals who lived through and survived those politically charged times and compelled the Beijing leadership to hail the movement as 'spring thunder.'

Like all other social and political movements, the left movement in India too has undergone internal churning and witnessed fissures and fusions while tackling important issues like revolutionary mass-line versus revisionism and participating in the electoral process etc. It is in this backdrop that we see the genesis of an ultra-left splinter group which was initially called *Dakshin Desh* in 1975 and later the Maoist Communist Centre of India (MCCI). However, after its merger with People's War Group (PWG) and Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist) in 2004, MCCI was rechristened as the Communist Party of India (Maoist) and its followers being addressed as Maoists or *Maovadis*.

Both the ultra-Left insurgent groups Naxalism or *Naxalvad* and Maoism or *Maovad* have a well built organizational structure and share great deal of ideological semblance. Maoism is viewed as an extension of ultra-Left wing radicalism that was ideologically articulated in the form of Naxalbari movement in the late 1960s in India and which is being interpreted and reinterpreted to make the doctrine contextually relevant (Kujur and Chakrabarty 2009). It is a politico-ideological platform that hinges on classical Marxism and Leninism and draws its sustenance from what is better known as the 'deepening of democracy.' The movement has been associated with the 'infrapolitics' (Scott 1990) of the disenfranchised, 'fourth worlders' and the indigent specially the Scheduled Tribes or *adivasis*, (around 500 communities constituting 8% of India's total population) Scheduled Castes or dalits (16% of India's total population) and Most Backward Castes<sup>4</sup> (MBCs) who seek their citizenship rights. It is pertinent to point out that the list of those disenfranchised and affected by the government's notion of development excludes the Denotified Nomadic Tribes (DNTs) or *Vimukta Jatis*, a special designation given to the so called Criminal Tribes and who today constitute a substantial percentage of India's total population.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>4</sup>The Government of Bihar came out with a separate nomenclature for the lowest among the dalits i.e. Maha Dalit and instituted a State Maha Dalit Commission in 2007 to make Article 38 and Article 46 pertaining to the SCs and STs turn into reality. The initiative is a serious attempt at make special project and earmark special funds for the overall development of these most deprived sections among the Scheduled castes.

<sup>5</sup>(a) The category 'Denotified Tribes' stands for all those communities who were labeled as Criminal Tribes enforced during the colonial rule according to the Criminal Tribes Act XXVII of 1861.

(b) According to a Maharashtra based NGO named ECONET, the total population of DNT and NT in 2001 was 10,74,50,018. We must remember that the NT's and DNT's still have a nomadic lifestyle and therefore, in such a

It is noteworthy that most of the naxal movements have originated on the margins of the state viz. the tribal and mineral rich belts and areas abundant in natural resources but suffer from deficient development, chronic poverty, are devoid of basic physical infrastructure and means of connectivity. However, such pockets are 'catchment areas' for both the private investors and the government at large due to availability of vast tracts of government and forested land at throw away prices along with a reserve army of labour. In the recent years, such regions have been targeted even more so as compared to the past for fast-track industrial development by the government under the aegis of the New Economic Policy (NEP) of the Government of India (GOI) since 1991. The NEP has led to rolling back of the state, injected market forces and has monetized the economy leading to a yawning gulf between the *haves* and the *have nots*. This has resulted in islands of 'Zomia' or 'shatter zones' (Scott 1990) populated by the under-privileged and deprived sections of the society mainly the dalits and tribals. This trend is more visible in the 'backward districts' of India which turn into new 'theatres of the oppressed' where dissent and naxalism incubate and finds support from those excluded, displaced and pauperised by the developmental process.<sup>6</sup> It remains to be seen whether such violence that impede a smooth and democratic functioning of administration become a case of growing gap between the aspirations of the weaker sections of the society and the poor delivery mechanisms of state in the backward districts.

An impending issue which is at the core of the structural crises and responsible for the rise of naxalism has been the caste based social structure which institutionalizes social exclusion, untouchability and oppression and imposes degrading occupations on dalits, denies their basic human rights including the right to live with dignity. Such a situation blocks all avenues of social advancement and enforces physical as well as structural violence on the dalits in order to perpetuate caste domination. In the case of *adivasis*, the agrarian structure has deprived them of the access to natural resources vital to their subsistence traditionally by expunging them from their land by force, fraud and manipulation or by denying them access to forest resources and alienating them from their habitat and livelihood.<sup>7</sup> According to a report, almost 40 percent of all those displaced by government projects are of tribal origin.<sup>8</sup>

A look at Table 1 below compares the socio-economic condition of the SC's, ST's and OC's (other castes i.e. non SCs / STs) in terms of the Human Development Indicators viz. poverty levels, mortality and under nutrition, access to agricultural land and capital assets, literacy etc. It also shows the discrimination and atrocities against the SC's and ST's in a social structure that doesn't see 'equality for all' as a life principle.

According to a long time observer of naxalism, Prof. Manoranjan Mohanty (2005), the Naxalite challenge rests upon i) the issue of agrarian transformation, ii) rights of the tribal population iii) the nationality movement, and iv) resisting imperialism and globalization. These conditions produce a never ending spate of structural violence and injustices of the state machinery which is an everyday life experience for dalits, *Mahadalits*, *adivasis*, DNTs and members of the Most Backward Castes (MBCs). Another feature that has been responsible for the growth of naxalism in places like Central Bihar is the sprouting of private caste-based armies like *Ranvir Sena* whose

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situation, it would be difficult to arrive at a correct figure. The government doesn't have official Census statistics on the demography of the NTs and DNTs which further acts as an impediment to facilitate policy level inputs, programmatic and schematic interventions.

<sup>6</sup>Here the backward districts are identified on the basis of (a) relatively weak economic and social infrastructure and (b) lack of effective system of democratic administration.

<sup>7</sup>It is also a historical fact that the tribals have always resisted any attempt by the regime of the day to expropriate forests or alienate them from their land. According to Ranajit Guha, there were not less than 110 known instances of these protests and sporadic rebellions or *bidroha*, *fituri* etc in a spread of 117 years.

<sup>8</sup>Guha, Ramchandra, 2007. *Adivasis, Naxalites and Indian Democracy*, Economic and Political Weekly, Vol. 42, No. 32, p. 3306.

Table 1: *Caste, Ethnic Group Inequality, 2000*

Human Development Indicators		ST	SC	OC	ALL
<b>Poverty</b>					
1	Percentage of Poor (Rural)	36	46	21	27
2	Percentage of Poor (Urban)	38	35	21	24
3	Poverty of Agricultural Labour (Rural)	46	61	39	45
4	Poverty of Casual Labour (Urban)	58	64	45	49
<b>Mortality and Undernutrition</b>					
1	Infant Mortality (per 1,000 live births), 2005/6	51	44	36	NA
2	Under Five Mortality, 2005/6	88	96	59	NA
3	Proportion (%) of Children with Anaemia	78	79	72	NA
4	Proportion (%) of Underweight Children	21	26	14	NA
<b>Access to Agricultural Land and Capital Assets</b>					
1	Value of Assets per Household in Rupees (1992)	49,189	52,660	134,500	107,007
2	Percentage of Self-Employed Cultivators	16	48	41	NA
3	Percentage of Wage Labour (Rural)	26	49	25	NA
4	Percentage of Casual Labour (Urban)	26	26	7	NA
<b>Unemployment Rate (Rural) (Current Daily Status) %</b>		5.5	3.0	3.4	NA
<b>Non-Agriculture Wages of Rural Labour (In Rupees)</b>		61.06	54.38	64.9	NA
<b>Literacy</b>					
1	Literacy Rate (Rural), 2001	51	45	63	59
2	Literacy Rate (Urban), 2001	68	69	82	80
<b>Percentage of Non-Agriculture Workers (job diversification)</b>		27.07	15.80	32.2	NA
<b>Discrimination and Atrocities</b>					
1	Number of registered cases of discrimination, 1992-2001	14,030	876	-	-
2	Number of registered cases of atrocity, 1992-2001	81,796	7,645	-	-
3	Total Cases of discrimination and atrocity, 1992-2001	285,871	47,225	-	-

Government of India, Development Challenges in Extremist Affected Areas, Report of an Expert Group to Planning Commission, New Delhi, April 2008, p. 4.

cadres have been the prime accused for mayhem and genocides against Dalits in the region.

In the recent years, many other issues have added up which has aggravated the already worsening socio-economic situation and bolstered the naxal movement. Issues of farmer's suicide, informalization of formal sector and contractualisation of industrial workforce, rising prices and soaring unemployment, development induced displacements that include creation of SEZs, EPZs, IT Parks and industrial hubs, environmental degradation etc apart from gender and caste based structural violence perpetrated by upper castes have been a serious cause of concern for the states and the central government.

Naxalism as an underground movement has mushroomed in at least 223 districts out of a total of 602 districts of India across 14 states, which are recognized as dreaded dens of 'Maoist insurgency'.<sup>9</sup> Out of these, 76 districts are in a large contiguous area spread over several states like Andhra Pradesh, Orissa, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Bihar and West Bengal. To a lesser extent this trend is also visible in Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Maharashtra and Uttar Pradesh.<sup>10</sup> The government has identified 26 districts in seven Maoist-hit states as highly Naxal-affected with 80 percent violence in the last three years being reported from Chattisgarh, Jharkhand, Odisha,

<sup>9</sup>There are conflicting reports about the number of districts affected by Naxal activities. According to *The Times of India*, New Delhi of 30th June, 2008, the Maoists controlled 55 districts in 9 states in 2003 which went up to 170 districts in 15 states in 2006.

<sup>10</sup>See Concluding Remarks of the Report of an Expert Group, Government of India-Development Challenges in Extremist Affected Areas- (New Delhi, Planning Commission, 2008)

Bihar, West Bengal, Maharashtra and Andhra Pradesh. It is estimated that naxalites are active across 40 per cent of India's geographical area, a territory better known as 'Red Corridor' in the official circles.<sup>11</sup> According to a Report of an Expert Group, sporadic incidents of naxalism are also seen in states with high proportion of adivasis or dalits like Punjab, Haryana, Rajasthan and Gujarat.<sup>12</sup>

According to government claims, the Maoists have shown their presence in North-East India too and Assam has been recognized as the new breeding grounds for Naxals who are trying to tie-up with the insurgent groups in Manipur and Arunachal Pradesh.<sup>13</sup> The Maoists plan to give their movement a pan-India shape in order to wage out an all-out war against the Indian state. Their main political purpose is to establish an alternative state structure in India by creating a "red corridor" in Naxal-affected areas, stretching from Nepal border to central India and Karnataka in the south. In order to achieve their stated objective, Naxalite rebel leaders take up causes like protecting people's rights of *Jal*, *Jangal* and *Jamin* (water, forest and land) and provide justice through their committees like the *Sangam* and the *Jan Adalat* (people's court), a situation that is symptomatic of what some experts say 'retreat of civil governance.' Sahni (2000) In places like Balaghat in Madhya Pradesh, the Naxalites have been helping the villagers with food and medicines, ran medical camps, took responsibility of the orphans especially girls and provided security and sustenance to them.<sup>14</sup> In order to increase their cadre strength in areas like Punjab and Maharashtra, the Naxalites are appeasing the Dalit youths by invoking the name and images of Dr. Baba Saheb Ambedkar and Sardar Bhagat Singh in Maharashtra and Punjab respectively.<sup>15</sup>

The formation of the Coordination Committee of the Maoist Parties and Organizations in South Asia (CCOMPOSA) in 2001 which includes ten Maoist groups from Bangladesh, India, Nepal and Sri Lanka is a matter of grave concern. The newly formed outfit claims to resist not only US imperialism and globalization, but also the "centralized" Indian state and its internal repression of minority people through People's War. It has also threatened to engage firmly with India's expansionist designs backed by US imperialism in South Asia. If police sources are to be believed, the Naxalites with the help of Dalit youths and Islamist terrorist group, Indian Mujahideen (IM), want to have their own government in the country by 2025.<sup>16</sup> Figure 1 below gives the contours of the Naxalite affected areas according to which almost whole of India is under the sway of naxalism with a good portion either highly or marginally affected.

Naxalism poses a serious concern for the administration and the Indian state in terms of stalling socio-economic development as well as the violence involved resulting in loss of lives. A look at Table 2 shows the number of incidents from 2008-13 and the number of people killed in these Naxal attacks.

In terms of state-wise incidents of Naxal activities during 2008-2013, the government has reported many more such activities in Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Chhattisgarh and Jharkhand than the rest of the country. Table 3 below gives the state-wise figures of Naxal violence for 2014 under various heads and one can certainly say that though the number of incidents remains the same as compared to 2013 the number of attacks on police has increased. Further, there has been a decline in number of naxalites killed in police encounters whereas the number of naxalites arrested and surrendered in combing operations showed an increase.

In view of growing incidences of naxal casualties that involved army personnel, policemen and innocent civilians etc, the Government of India created a special division named Naxal Manage-

<sup>11</sup>[indiandefence.com/threads/maoist-threat-in-india-40-percent-of-country.43722/](http://indiandefence.com/threads/maoist-threat-in-india-40-percent-of-country.43722/)

<sup>12</sup>Op. cit, p. 3

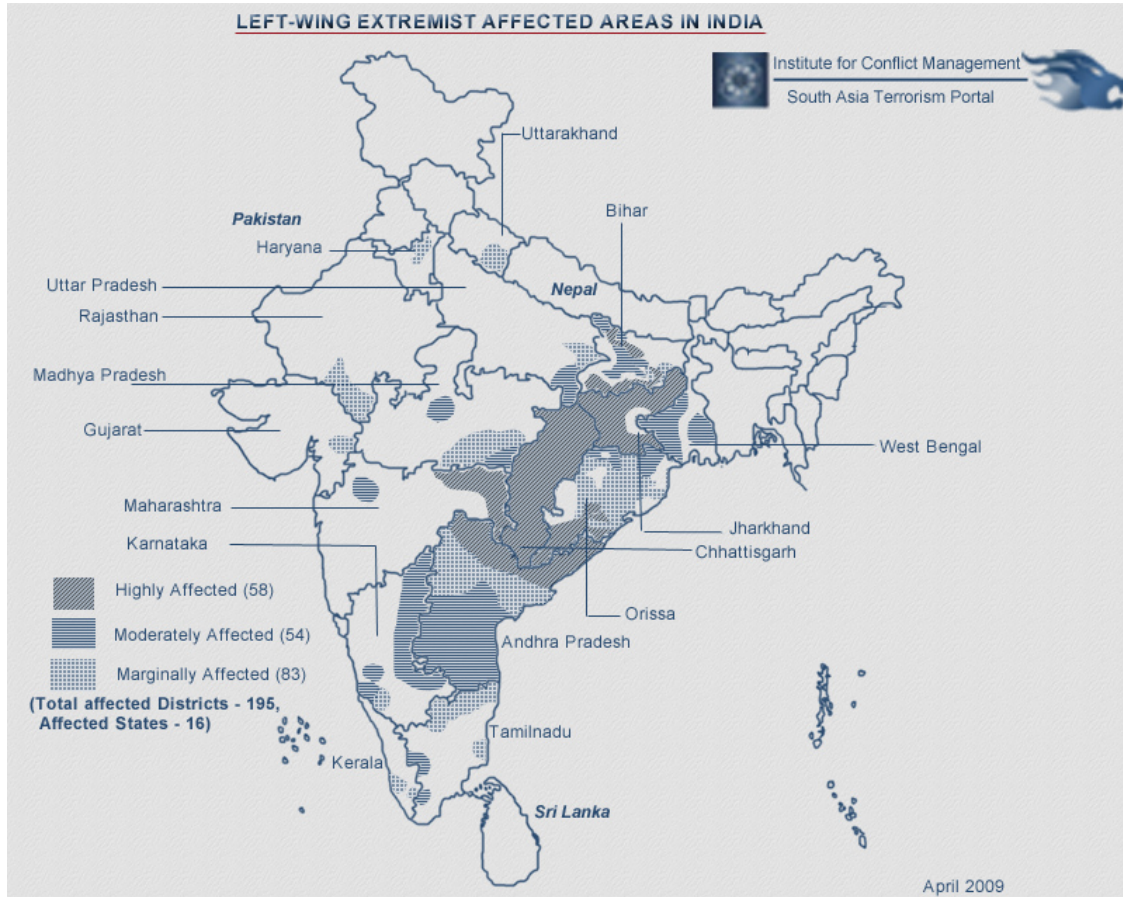
<sup>13</sup><http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/countries/india/document/papers/2012/HM.internalsecurity.htm>.

<sup>14</sup><http://www.indiaenvironmentportal.org.in/files/CommunityNREGAnaxal.bestpractice.pdf>

<sup>15</sup>[abinet.org/naxal-dalit-im-nexus-government-in-country-by-2025-2/](http://abinet.org/naxal-dalit-im-nexus-government-in-country-by-2025-2/)

<sup>16</sup>Op. cit.

Figure 1: *Left-Wing Extremist (Naxalite) Affected Areas in India*



Source: <http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/countries/india/database/conflictmap2009.html>, Institute for Conflict Management, South Asia Terrorism Portal, April 2009.

ment Division in the Ministry of Home Affairs in October 2006 to address the Naxal problem in an effective manner.<sup>17</sup>

According to some observers and analysts, the Naxals have influence over Sonbhadra, Mirzapur and Chandauli districts (given in red colour in the District Map of Uttar Pradesh given below) in Uttar Pradesh, while Gorakhpur, Ghazipur and Ballia (in purple colour) are targeted as potential districts to be brought under their influence.<sup>18</sup> Of the seventy five districts in Uttar Pradesh, Sonbhadra is the most vulnerable and volatile as it is the only district in India that shares borders with four other naxal affected Indian states and where the writ and mandate of ultra left runs large.<sup>19</sup> The District Map of Uttar Pradesh below will highlight the three volatile districts that are reeling under the grip of naxalism.

Analysts further point out that at least seven districts of Uttar Pradesh are connected to

<sup>17</sup>See more at <http://mha.nic.in/uniquepage.asp?Id.Pk=540>

<sup>18</sup>See more at. [www.sspconline.org/article article No.22](http://www.sspconline.org/article%20article%20No.22)

<sup>19</sup>Sonbhadra shares borders with Kaimur and Rohtas district of Bihar, Garwha district of Jharkhand to the east, Koriya and Surguja of Chattisgarh to the south and Singrauli district of Madhya Pradesh to the west.

Table 2: *State-Wise Breakup of the Extent of Naxal Violence 2008-2013*

State	2008		2009		2010		2011		2012		2013 up to 30.4.	
	Incidents	Deaths	Inc	D	Inc	D	Inc	D	Inc	D	Inc	D
Andhra Pradesh	92	46	66	18	100	24	54	9	67	13	12	4
Bihar	164	73	232	72	307	97	316	63	166	44	75	19
Chhattisgarh	620	242	529	290	625	343	465	204	370	109	94	25
Jharkhand	484	207	742	208	501	157	517	182	480	163	151	61
Madhya Pradesh	7	0	1	0	7	1	8	0	11	0	1	0
Maharashtra	68	22	154	93	94	45	109	54	134	41	29	5
Odisha	103	101	266	67	218	79	192	53	171	45	28	6
Uttar Pradesh	4	0	8	2	6	1	1	0	2	0	0	0
West Bengal	35	26	255	158	350	258	92	45	6	0	0	0
Others	14	4	5	0	5	0	6	1	8	0	1	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1591</b>	<b>721</b>	<b>2258</b>	<b>908</b>	<b>2213</b>	<b>1005</b>	<b>1760</b>	<b>611</b>	<b>1415</b>	<b>415</b>	<b>391</b>	<b>120</b>

Source: Naxal Management Division, Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India. Also available at <http://mha.nic.in/pdfs/SWENV-2008-12.pdf>.

Maoist affected regions of Nepal and another seven with Bihar. A concerted study of the causes and prognosis of the current situation in south eastern Uttar Pradesh therefore becomes necessary.

This paper aims to explore the socio-political and economic dimensions of south eastern Uttar Pradesh in order to engage and analyse the making of the Naxal narrative in the last few years. It discusses the ground reality of poverty, politics and under-development in the three districts of south-eastern Uttar Pradesh. The paper also gives a brief history of the region and deals with the political volte face with the entry of radical left party CPI (ML) (L) in the electoral scene in the three districts and the results thereof. The paper tries to contextualize and problematise the existing situation in south eastern Uttar Pradesh and interpret it within the Marxian paradigm with rising class consciousness, upward mobility, Gandhi constructivism and the interplay of social and cultural capital.

## Interrogating the Official Narrative to the Naxal Problem

India's Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh had remarked in 2007 that the Left wing extremism was probably the single biggest security challenge to the largest democracy of the world. He further said that it continues to be so and that we cannot rest in peace until this '*virus*' (our emphasis) is eliminated. This requires improved intelligence gathering and efficient policing capabilities, better inter-state and intra-state communication and most importantly, better leadership and firmer resolve. Improving policing capabilities require better police infrastructure, enhanced training facilities, superior equipment and resources and dedicated forces.<sup>20</sup> This view is related to the analysis of 'the Naxal Problem' presented by the Ministry of Home Affairs through 'Status Papers' tabled in the Parliament from time to time.

In the Status Paper of 2006, the government recognizes that (a) the Naxalites operate in a vacuum created by the absence of administrative and political institutions, (b) it is pertinent to espouse local demands and take advantage of the disenchantment prevalent among the exploited segments of the population, and (c) there is a need to seek an alternative system of governance which promises emancipation of the exploited class from the clutches of the exploiter classes. The government promises to address the Naxal problem through a dual approach by (i) pursuing

<sup>20</sup>See more at <http://pmindia.nic.in/speech/contant.asp?id=632>

Table 3: *State-wise Statistics of Naxal Violence in 2014 (up to 15.09.2014)*

State	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M
Andhra Pradesh	14 (19)	3 (3)	3 (0)	0 (0)	1 (2)	0 (1)	3 (1)	21 (55)	76 (42)	0 (0)	6 (4)	1 (0)	1 (1)
Bihar	120 (134)	22 (29)	4 (6)	6 (13)	14 (6)	10 (6)	4 (0)	282 (184)	3 (2)	0 (33)	66 (52)	1 (1)	8 (2)
Chattisgarh	236 (236)	40 (53)	16 (24)	42 (33)	67 (64)	86 (64)	23 (30)	370 (273)	155 (22)	32 (26)	93 (108)	11 (13)	4 (4)
Jharkhand	262 (271)	61 (84)	19 (24)	7 (28)	30 (42)	12 (8)	4 (12)	291 (177)	17 (12)	5 (14)	134 (148)	9 (5)	30 (29)
Madhya Pradesh	3 (1)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	1 (0)	1 (0)	0 (0)	11 (2)	0 (0)	0 (0)	1 (4)	2 (0)	0 (0)
Maharashtra	56 (52)	14 (12)	6 (7)	12 (2)	23 (25)	9 (8)	10 (23)	7 (27)	27 (44)	1 (0)	17 (24)	1 (1)	0 (0)
Odisha	84 (64)	20 (15)	18 (14)	0 (5)	16 (17)	6 (3)	5 (21)	58 (90)	61 (55)	2 (0)	88 (83)	0 (0)	3 (3)
Telangana	10 (7)	3 (0)	3 (0)	1 (0)	2 (0)	1 (0)	0 (0)	27 (62)	11 (17)	0 (0)	11 (4)	0 (0)	0 (0)
Uttar Pradesh	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	1 (3)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)
West Bengal	0 (1)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	6 (20)	3 (0)	0 (0)	15 (40)	0 (0)	0 (0)
Others	1 (3)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (1)	0 (0)	0 (0)	6 (16)	3 (0)	0 (0)	15 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)
<b>Total</b>	<b>786</b> <b>(788)</b>	<b>163</b> <b>(198)</b>	<b>69</b> <b>(77)</b>	<b>68</b> <b>(82)</b>	<b>154</b> <b>(158)</b>	<b>125</b> <b>(91)</b>	<b>49</b> <b>(87)</b>	<b>1080</b> <b>(1009)</b>	<b>353</b> <b>(194)</b>	<b>40</b> <b>(73)</b>	<b>432</b> <b>(467)</b>	<b>25</b> <b>(20)</b>	<b>46</b> <b>(39)</b>

Available at [http://mha.nic.in/sites/upload\\_files/mha/files/LWEViolanceStatistics2014.PDF](http://mha.nic.in/sites/upload_files/mha/files/LWEViolanceStatistics2014.PDF); Figures in brackets show details of the corresponding period of 2013

**A:** No. of Incidents

**B:** No. of Civilians Killed

**C:** Police Informants Killed (Out of Total No. of Civilians Killed)

**D:** No. of Security Forces Killed

**E:** No. of Encounters with Police

**F:** No. of Attacks on Police (Including Landmines)

**G:** No. of Naxalites Killed (Encounters and Attacks)

**H:** No. of Naxalites Arrested

**I:** No. of Naxalites Surrendered

**J:** Total No. of Arms Snatched

**K:** Total No. of Arms Recovered

**L:** Arms Training Camps Held

**M:** No. of Jan Adalats Held

effective combing operations against Naxalites, and (ii) accelerating programmes of progress and development in the Naxal affected areas<sup>21</sup> The Status Paper has further underlined a 10 point counter-measure so that the Naxal affected regions can be lifted out of chronic poverty, appalling law and order situation coupled with sluggish economic development.

Similarly, land reforms and land acquisition for public or private use along with infrastructural development are given a fresh priority by the states in dealing with Naxal activities. It is admitted in the Status Paper (2006) that if "land reforms are taken up on priority and the landless and the poor in the Naxal areas are allotted surplus land, this would go a long way in tackling the developmental aspects of the Naxal problem." Secondly, "the States have been requested to focus greater attention on this area as also accelerate developmental activities and create employment

<sup>21</sup>Status Paper on the Naxal Problem, tabled in Parliament on March 13, 2006 by the Union Home Minister Shri Shivraj Patil. [http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/countries/India/06March13\\_Naxal](http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/countries/India/06March13_Naxal)



Figure 2: District Map of Uttar Pradesh



Available at <http://www.probharat.com/india/states/maps/uttar-pradesh-political-map.php>. Viewed 17.01.2015

opportunities in the Naxal affected areas with special focus on creation of physical infrastructure in terms of roads, communication, power along with social infrastructure such as schools, hospitals, etc.”<sup>22</sup>

It is significant that the GoI is aware that there is a positive link between failed development and naxalism and therefore has been making efforts to assuage the angst among the under-privileged sections like the tribals and dalits in some of the worst naxal affected districts. The GoI has been improvising on the already existing flagship programmes, allocating additional central

<sup>22</sup>Op. cit.

assistance for Left Wing Extremist (LWE) affected areas besides inaugurating new developmental plans, innovative schemes and improving infrastructural facilities with a special focus on tribal population. These programmatic interventions were better planned, had greater outreach with increased funds while making sure that they were effectively implemented and benefitted the needy and poor especially the Dalits and tribals.

In keeping with the Centre's sustained efforts to enhance livelihood opportunities, the Ministry of Rural Development introduced *Governance and Accelerated Livelihoods Security project* (GOALS) in Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand and Odisha, which are affected by naxalite activities. Flagship programmes like the *Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana* (PMGSY) also saw a phenomenal increase in its funding. The Backward Districts Initiative (BDI), a component of the *Rashtriya Sam Vikas Yojana* (RSVY) and part of the developmental scheme to infuse growth in the backward regions of the country was introduced in 55 Naxal affected districts of India to fill critical gaps in physical and social development in those regions. Similarly, *Roshni* was launched last year in 24 worst Naxal affected districts; a placement linked skill development scheme targeting 50,000 rural men and women, mostly tribals. The idea behind the scheme was to show a 'new path' to the tribal youths who are being targeted by Maoists.<sup>23</sup>

Other programmatic interventions in the naxal-hit districts include placement linked skill-development initiative, establishment of Rural Self-Employment Training Institutes (R-SETI), Self Help Groups (SHGs), more flexible scheme and increased funding for MNREGA and the 60 districts that are part of the Integrated Action Plan (IAP) which looks after supplementing infrastructure deficits in naxal-affected areas.<sup>24</sup> The IAP is one of the most successful development schemes in naxal-affected since 2010 and is being implemented as Additional Central Assistance (ACA) during the 12th Five Year Plan for 88 selected tribal and backward districts in nine states that are affected by left wing extremism.<sup>25</sup> The funds allotted under the scheme have also been raised substantially with a view to link all the 60 districts under IAP within a stipulated time period. National Rural Livelihood Mission (NRLM) or Aajeevika launched by the Ministry of Rural Development, GoI is another ambitious plan aimed at creating efficient and effective institutional platforms for the rural poor enabling them to increase household income through sustainable livelihood enhancement and improved access to financial services. Apart from these measures, the GoI plans to launch the *Pradhan Mantri Rural Development Fellows* through which it will select three young professionals for three years in each IAP district who will assist collectors in rural development planning in order to infuse a sense of ownership, planning and implementation in the schemes and programmes.<sup>26</sup> Recently, the GoI planned on giving extra financial package and other incentives to government officials like administrative officers (Indian Administrative Officer), police officers (Indian Police Service) and security personnel working in the naxal affected regions. These emoluments called 'hardship allowance' include special monetary benefits, out-of-turn promotion and choice posting after completing their tenure successfully in Maoist-affected places.<sup>27</sup>

These historical contingencies and causal relations provide substantial basis to navigate through the industrially prosperous but poverty stricken and conflict ridden history and polity of south eastern Uttar Pradesh. It offers a research platform to unravel and problematise the 'Marxian

<sup>23</sup>See more at <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/Roshni-for-Naxalite-affected-areas-50000-youths-to-be-trained/articleshow/20479410.cms>

<sup>24</sup><http://www.downtoearth.org.in/content/fresh-development-plan-naxal-affected-districts> , Fresh development plans for naxal-affected districts. Kumar Sambhav Shrivastava. September 14, 2011. Viewed 04.11.2014

<sup>25</sup>See more at [http://articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com/2014-09-09/news/53731080\\_1\\_scheme-home-ministry-integrated-action-plan](http://articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com/2014-09-09/news/53731080_1_scheme-home-ministry-integrated-action-plan). Accessed on 23.12.2014 at 23:44.

<sup>26</sup>See more at <http://www.downtoearth.org.in/content/fresh-development-plan-naxal-affected-districts>

<sup>27</sup>See more at <http://zeenews.india.com/news/nation/govt-plans-to-give-incentives-for-working-in-naxal-belt.937687.html>. Accessed on 23.12.2014 at 21.00

Moment' in the region and its multiple layers of contrapositions leading to the rise of Naxal tendencies in this region.

## **A Critical Analysis of a 'Marxian Moment': Inherent Contradictions, Class Consciousness, Upward Mobility and Gandhian Constructivism in South Eastern Uttar Pradesh**

The contemporary development dynamics and challenge of poverty in south eastern Uttar Pradesh necessitates a critical analysis and micro study of its social structure in order to make sense of a spurt in cases of socio-political violence in Sonbhadra-Mirzapur-Chandauli, the three contiguous and 'naxalite districts' of Uttar Pradesh. Besides the three districts mentioned above, there are five more that are prone to Naxalite violence namely Gazipur, Mau, Ballia, Deoria and Kushi Nagar.

It is a well known fact that different forms of deprivation are mutually interrelated and therefore, any group suffering from one form of deficit is likely to face others too. This structural-functional framework takes us back to the pre-independence era where agrarian relationships were predicated on a highly stratified feudal system with a tacit coupling between caste and occupation whereby occupation was hereditary and ordained religious and scriptural sanctions.<sup>28</sup> Caste system as we know was a closed arrangement and construed as ones' destiny, and as such, any transgression of the pure / impure or right hand / left hand caste dichotomy was met with the most stringent punishment that involved physical torture, economic fine as well as social estrangement.

Like all class societies, the Indian feudal system too was divided along class lines i.e. between those who owned the means of production and those who worked for the owners. During the British Raj, the feudal structure entailed control over land and ownership of means of production by few dominant elites called Zamindars who were usually Rajputs, Bhumihars, Brahmins or Muslims of aristocratic descent. The low caste groups and marginalized communities were the landless peasants or the '*khetihar mazdoor*' and comprised 'the other'. This varied category was compelled to either work in the fields of the landed gentry whereby their labour powers was expropriated in lieu for their daily subsistence and reproduction of labour power or else serve the upper caste as *kamins* in a patron-client relationship for the *jajmans* under the *Jajmani* system. In both situations, the low caste groups were easy victims at the hands of the upper castes and exploited at every level; socially, economically and sexually. Further, they were kept at bay from the 'trickle effect' of the benefits of development resulting in a vast army of exploited and landless agricultural workers and bonded labourers. This highly classificatory order and rigid social structure became 'castes of mind' (to borrow the title of Nicholas Dirx's book) and led to umpteen number of caste atrocities and human rights violations which have continued after independence and have become an existential reality of north India in the current times. However, after independence, things were to change and make a dent in the old feudal agrarian relations with the passage of major land reforms as a result of which Zamindari system was abolished.

Historically speaking, the Zamindars have dominated the power structure of eastern Uttar Pradesh. (Amin 1984) There was an absence of public investment in irrigation and the revenue system was very rigid. The cumulative consequence of the political economy of permanent settlement was witnessed in the form of mass poverty of peasantry which included middle peasants and independent farmers. There were a large number of indebted peasants and tenants with no

<sup>28</sup>Various studies have shown that tight bind between caste and occupation is breaking at various places in India but hasn't been rendered non-functional.

surplus to invest while at the same time a small group of landlords and merchants with surplus and capacity to invest, but no interest to invest in agriculture as they used to get high returns from pre-capitalist sources like ground rent and interest from usury. The last decades of colonialism saw major peasant mobilizations due to rising class consciousness among peasants against the inherent contradictions that lay embedded in the Hindu caste order, Zamindari system and colonial revenue rules. In many places, the state peddling of socialist reconstruction in post colonial times created a conducive environment for engineering major rural transformations in north India especially in U.P., Bihar, Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh during the 1960's.

After independence with the implementation of Land Reforms Acts and abolition of intermediaries like Zamindars, Talukdars, Jagirdars and Inams, various other developments related to land re-distribution were witnessed like land ceiling and tenancy reforms and conferment of ownership rights to the erstwhile tenants. These legislations were further complimented and buttressed by non-state mediations and movements premised on Gandhi's trusteeship in land like *Bhoodan* (land gift) and *Gramdan* (village gift) initiated in 1951 and 1955 respectively by Acharya Vinoba Bhave; a dedicated socialist and Gandhi's spiritual heir. (S.K. 1958) These state and legal interventions manifested itself in a heightened class consciousness among the subaltern groups to fight the oppressive feudal structure and resulted in a movement now known as 'naxalism.' These land related re-shuffling posed a major challenge to the old segmented social structure with its pre-defined duties and obligations for the varna order which punctuated the north India landscape with caste related violence.

These efforts did mark a rupture in the hitherto existing power structure and caste system and brought about new avenues of upward mobility and social upscaling in the lives of depressed classes. These gateways were possible through the process of sanskritization, anti-Brahmin movements spearheaded by shudra leaders like B.R Ambedkar, anti-caste religions like Buddhism, bhakti movements and other 'protest sects' that influenced the caste system albeit in terms of 'positional changes' or 'horizontal mobility' and not 'structural changes' or 'vertical mobility.' These changes were seen more as levelers of an otherworldly and metaphysical nature. Nevertheless, a perceptible decline was witnessed in the share of land ownership of upper castes while that of the intermediate and backward castes increased significantly as shown in Table VIII below. The displacement of large land owners by middle farmers belonging to intermediate castes after independence has been described as the tipping point or what we prefer to call the 'Marxian moment.'

Table 4: *Share of Castes in Land Ownership in Uttar Pradesh*

Caste	Pre-Independence (%)	Post-Independence (%)
Brahmin	17	18
Thakur	34	19
Bania, Kayastha & Khatri	16	2
Jat, Bhumihar & Tyagi	4	6
Ahir, Kurmi, Lodh & Gujar	6	20
Other Backward Castes	2	18
Scheduled Castes	1	9
Muslims	20	8
Total	100	100

Table 4 shows a major shift in terms of land ownership by different caste groups and communities in U.P. when we compare their socio-economic position before and after India's independence.

(Hasan 1989) The Table above clearly depicts that the *Thakurs*, *Baniyas*, *Kayasthas*, *Khatri*s and Muslims were losers whereas the *Ahirs*, *Kurmis*, *Lodh*, *Goojars* and OBCs witnessed upward mobility besides a significant improvement in the share of SCs too. The Jats, Bhumihars, Tyagis and Brahmins also improved though marginally. The change has been summarised as follows:

"In caste terms the principal losers in northern India were Rajput-Thakurs and to a lesser extent Bania, Kayasthas and Muslim landlords. The main beneficiaries were the erstwhile tenants amongst Jats, Yadavs, Kurmis, Koeris..." (Jain 1996: 138)

Caste upheavals encouraged formation of caste *senas* (or armies) in Bihar and UP in north India resulting in brutal mass murders, rapes, violence and atrocities of inconceivable kinds.<sup>29</sup> However, the "Other Backward Classes / Castes" which rose in the mid 1960s so as to distinguish themselves from the Scheduled Castes / Scheduled Tribes became an important political force in the Green Revolution years. This category was soon to occupy seats in the administration, polity, educational institutions and professional field and later gave a fillip to the policy of positive affirmation based on the Mandal Commission Report of 1990s meant for the OBCs.

The newly emerging intermediate castes or OBCs also called 'bullock cart capitalists'<sup>30</sup> (Rudolph and Rudolph 1987) in the 1980s challenged the hegemony of the upper castes which was losing in terms of land ownership as well as social and cultural capital. At the same time their interests collided with those of the SCs who comprised the agricultural labour class. Meanwhile, the SCs also became politically conscious and mobilized their community members as a consequence of an increasing democratization of the political space and public sphere. The provisions of affirmative action for promoting social mobility contributed to a newfound awareness and assertiveness among the SCs of Uttar Pradesh. Caste being protean in its nature was trying to adapt and modernize itself according to the changed circumstances. These changes were accompanied by social competition and tension in the rural areas as the benefits of economic and political changes since independence had not been distributed equally among the backward classes and the scheduled castes. Some of these communities gained a larger share in government positions and other beneficiary schemes and policies of the state due to their greater political weight on the basis of numerical strength or better mobilization. These developments and internal socio-economic churning pointed towards a subversion of traditional hierarchies and the case of *Yadavas* among the Backward Castes and *Chamars* among the SCs is a pointer in this regard.

South Eastern Uttar Pradesh has moved from Zamindari Raj to Dominant Caste Democracy because of a number of structural changes in the power system. The lines of conflict are getting redrawn due to declining legitimacy of the old order erected due to the nexus of colonial bureaucracy and an archaic feudal agrarian system amidst rising expectations within the framework of welfare state and representative democracy. Any effort, therefore, to explore the roots of poverty, social conflict, political competition and crisis of governance in south eastern Uttar Pradesh needs a thorough investigation and understanding of the complexities in the economic and socio-political transformations in the last 60 years.

<sup>29</sup>It must be remembered that in UP and Bihar, land-owning castes chiefly Bhumihars and Kshatriyas organized private armies to protect their property against caste-related land reforms, and have been responsible for large scale massacre of Dalits. One such barbaric act occurred in 1996 in Bathani Tola in Bhojpur, Central Bihar in which Ranvir Sena, a private army of upper caste Bhumihars killed 21 Dalits which included men, women and children. A year later, more such gory incidents took place under the banner of Ranvir Sena in Laxmanpur-Bathe (1997), and Shankarbiga (1997). Prior to these incidents, other such acts of violence resulting in large scale deaths have been reported from Arwal and Kansara (1986), Golakpur (1987), Malibigha (1988), Lakhawar (1990), Sawanbigha (1992), Aiara (1994), Khadasin (1997) and Chouram and Rampur (1998) (Chaudhari 1999).

<sup>30</sup>According to the Rudolphs, "bullock capitalists" is the key phenomenon of the 1980s who are, generally, those self-cultivators with 2.5 to 15.0 acres of land. Their demands include lower costs for inputs and higher prices for outputs. They are at the root of India's self sufficiency in food and are mobilized to express their views in voting and in demonstrations and other extra parliamentary means.

A combined view in terms of the demographic makeup in Sonbhadra, Mirzapur and Chandauli will give a better picture of the current situation in these naxal affected regions as presented in Table 5 below.

*Table 5: Demographic Features of Chandauli, Mirzapur & Sonbhadra (2001)*

	Chandauli	Mirzapur	Sonbhadra
Area (sq kms)	2487.7	4521.5	6788.0
Population	16,43,251	21,16,042	14,63,519
a. Sex Ratio (F/1000M)	922	897	898
b. Sex Ratio (0-6 year)	937	929	956
Growth (1991-2001)	28.63	27.62	36.13
Rural	14,69,693	18,29,536	11,88,089
Urban	1,73,558	2,86,506	2,75,430
Scheduled Caste	3,99,174	5,66,160	6,13,497
Percentage of SC	24.29	26.76	41.92
Scheduled Tribe	253	1,302	493
Percentage of ST	0.02	0.06	0.03
Literacy Rate	59.72	55.31	49.22
a. Males	74.04	69.59	62.95
b. Females	44.13	39.26	33.70
Girls marrying below 18 yrs	N.A	58.6	67.0
Percent of Safe Delivery	N.A	23.3	24.4
Percent of Children with Complete Immunisation	N.A	29.3	18.8

Source: Census of India 2001

A look at the demographic features of these three districts alerts us about the low sex-ratio in the region particularly in Mirzapur and Sonbhadra districts. Moreover, all the three districts are found to be below the national and provincial levels of urbanization with an unsatisfactory literacy rate. The condition of people in Sonbhadra is much more disturbing than Chandauli and Mirzapur on this count. It is significant that all the three districts are with much larger population of SCs than the national average of 15 percent and state average of 21 percent. In fact, with SCs constituting nearly 42 percent of the total population, Sonbhadra becomes one of the very few districts in India where every two out of five persons are from the Dalit community. The relative backwardness of these districts in terms of sex-ratio, literacy level and urbanization along with a significant concentration of deprived Dalit communities and neglected tribals has to be kept in mind while exploring the causes of the rise of left extremism in the region.

Although the data depicts that all the three districts have negligible presence of STs, the reality is that many tribal communities haven't been included in the State Gazette as STs due to administrative neglect and bureaucratic apathy. It is important to underline that no tribals were listed in UP in 1961 but a decade later the number was put at 198,565 (Peterson 1997: 264) and have been found to be varying between 1967 and 2005.

The STs inhabit the southern plateau of Uttar Pradesh and their estimated population from twelve major tribal communities is 3,00,000. (Hasnain 2001) The list of STs in Uttar Pradesh was revised in 2003 by the Government of India and these included ten tribes with region specific as shown in Table 6 below:

Even though the state included the above mentioned ten tribes into the list of STs in the year 2003, four tribes viz. Kol, Korwa, Majhwar and Oraon of this region were left out of the twelve

Table 6: *List of Scheduled Tribes in Uttar Pradesh (2005)*

Tribe	Districts in which these tribes live
Gond, Dhuria, Naik, Ojha, Patwari, Raj-Gond	Maharajganj, Gorakhpur, Siddharthnagar, Basti, Deoria, Mau, Azamgarh, Jaunpur, Ballia, Ghazipur, Varanasi, Mirzapur, Sonebhadra
Kharwar/Khairwar	Deoria, Ballia, Ghazipur, Varanasi, Sonebhadra
Shariya	Lalitpur
Pankha, Panika	Sonebhadra, Mirzapur
Chero	Sonebhadra, Varanasi
Parahiya	Sonebhadra
Baiga	Sonebhadra
Agaria	Sonebhadra
Pathari	Sonebhadra
Bhuia/Bhunia	Sonebhadra

Source: Uttar Pradesh 2005, Information and Public Relations Department, Government of Uttar Pradesh

tribes as mentioned above by anthropologist Nadeem Hasnain. Moreover, in the revised list of 2003, district Chandauli is not mentioned in the Government Order (GO), since it was the part of Varanasi district in the past.

The details about the infrastructural situation in south eastern Uttar Pradesh as shown below in Table 7 informs us that there is much to be desired in these districts for a reasonable agenda of sustainable development in the near future. It is a well known fact that this region is the zone of power generation and the southern region of Sonbhadra has the unique distinction of being called the 'Energy Capital of India.'<sup>31</sup> However, less than 30 percent villages have been provided electricity for domestic use and as the largest district of Uttar Pradesh is one of countrys' most backward districts out of the 250 other districts.<sup>32</sup> Moreover, it is one of the 34 districts in Uttar Pradesh that receives funds from the *Backward Regions Grant Fund Programme* (BRGF).<sup>33</sup> Further, there are few secondary schools and fewer colleges in the region which accounts for poor occupational diversification and mobility. The impact of rampant poverty and widening regional disparities is reflected in the lives of people of Uttar Pradesh ranging from health conditions to telecom connections (Kurien 2000) and power consumption. Other basic amenities like post and telegraph, transport services, all weather roads and health care facility are deficient and abysmally poor with high rate of infant and maternal mortality in the region.

It is relevant to look at the number of people below poverty line (BPL) and other households in the districts of Chandauli, Mirzapur and Sonbhadra to have a view of the extent of the disconnect between development through industrialization and the number of people in distress and deprivation due to poverty (See Table 8 below).

According to Table 8, in all the three districts, the BPL Households have a very large proportion from the SC and the OBC communities and a large number of their households are under the poverty line.

<sup>31</sup>For details pertaining to thermal power plants, lime stone mining and various industries like chemical, cement, abrasive etc in Sonbharda, see '*Mercury Pollution in Sonbhadra District of Uttar Pradesh and its Health Impacts*', CSE, New Delhi, October 2012, pp.5-6.

<sup>32</sup>The total population of Sonbhadra as per 2011 census was 1,862,612 which is one percent of the state population. The population density according to the 2011 census was 270 while that of the country is 382. Op. cit., pp. 6-7.

<sup>33</sup>[http://www.nird.org.in/brgf/doc/brgf\\_BackgroundNote.pdf](http://www.nird.org.in/brgf/doc/brgf_BackgroundNote.pdf)

*Table 7: Infrastructural Facilities in Chandauli, Mirzapur & Sonbhadra (2001)*

	Chandauli	Mirzapur	Sonbhadra
Total Inhabited Villages	1419	1767	1363
Safe Drinking Water	1363	1726	1340
Electricity (Power Supply)	927	1198	555
Electricity (Domestic)	530	673	456
Electricity (Agriculture)	341	276	68
Primary Schools	748	1096	744
Middle Schools	231	207	139
Secondary/ Sr. Sec. Schools	54	67	51
College	15	12	8
Medical Facility	282	318	207
Primary Health Centres	21	36	17
Primary Health Sub-Centres	28	54	24
Post, Telegraph & Telephones	341	659	265
Bus Services	194	162	114
Paved Approach Road	878	1002	566
Mud Approach Road	999	1401	1108

Source: Census of India 2001.

*Table 8: Rural and BPL Households in Chandauli, Mirzapur & Sonbhadra(BPL Census 2002)*

	Chandauli	Mirzapur	Sonbhadra
Total No. of Rural Households (HHs)	250844	310506	232005
Total Rural Population	1550716	1592830	1294835
Total No. of BPL Households (HHs)	135893	213658	150728
Total BPL Population	668349	1089110	835505
SC BPL HHs	63478	60322	65054
ST BPL HHs	0	22313	9011
OBC BPL HHs	59231	96715	60555

Source: Compiled from the statistics released by the Department of Rural Development, Government of Uttar Pradesh, 2002

The availability of limestone, cement, coal and water sources has made this area a major hub for industrial activities. The entire nation has been benefitting due to mushrooming of thermal power plants, cement factories and other industries in Sonbhadra that produce aluminum, carbon and chemicals. It must be noted that Sonbhadra is part of the resource-rich Singrauli area; country's industrial powerhouse with massive coal reserves and power plants.<sup>34</sup> However, this industrial development has come at a huge social, economic and ecological cost as industrial pollution, non-compliance of environmental norms, official apathy over the years has resulted in the region suffering from one of the largest number of cases of flourosis, a water borne disease caused due to excessive presence of fluoride and mercury found in water source in the region especially dumped in Rihand Dam by the big industries in the region. This disease has taken a heavy toll on the

<sup>34</sup>See more at <http://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-national/cse-finds-frightening-levels-of-mercury-in-sonbhadra-region/article4015005.ece>. Accessed on 10.12.2014 at 20:04.



lives of poor villagers in Sonbhadra as most of the people suffer from extreme physical deformity. Situation has worsened to such an extent that it has become impossible for young girls and boys from the region to get married and men to earn a living owing to non-mobility and deformity of vital body parts. Therefore, this antithesis of industrialization and chronic poverty becomes an issue of major concern for south eastern Uttar Pradesh. The grim situation can be further extrapolated by comparing the internal disparities within Uttar Pradesh, and between U.P. and the rest of India.

The state of Uttar Pradesh till the year 2000 was organised into five regions on the basis of geographical and socio-economic distinctions. These regions were (a) Western, (b) Eastern, (c) Central, (d) Bundelkhand and (e) the Himalayan region. The Himalayan districts of Uttar Pradesh were separated from it to create a new state Uttarakhand in 2000 after continued mobilization against regional disparity and continuous marginality of the hill region.

A glance at some of the social indicators proves that poverty levels are found to increase in Uttar Pradesh from West to East. The incidence and severity of poverty has remained virtually unchanged in the eastern region since 1980s. In fact, Bundelkhand and Eastern Uttar Pradesh were among the four regions of India which experienced an increase in the incidence of poverty between 1972-73 and 1987-88. Similarly, if one takes urbanization as an indicator of developmental change, then we find that according to Census 2001, urbanization was highest in Western U.P. (28.25%) and extremely low in the eastern region districts (11.78%). In rural-urban terms, about 23 percent of the urban population and 27 percent of the rural population lived below poverty line in 1999-2000. Thus states like U.P. with lower ratio of urban population had higher proportion of people living in poverty. However, there was better growth rate in the eastern region in agriculture in terms of food grain production at an annual compound rate of 5.81 percent from 1980 to 1990. The eastern region has higher dependence on agriculture with 66% main workers engaged in agriculture comprising of a large majority of small and marginal farmers (83%).

In terms of inter-state distribution of poverty, Uttar Pradesh is identified as one of the backward or BIMARU states of India and among one of the nine states having the 100 poorest districts of India as per the 2001 census. Poverty estimates have shown that the gap between U.P. and the rest of India continues to be high with 31% of the state population belonging to BPL as against 26% at all India level during the year 1999-2000. The slow rate of poverty reduction in the state is directly linked to the poor economic growth of U.P. in the 90's. It must be noted that almost half of the India's poor men and women comprising one third of its total population is concentrated in the six states of Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Bihar, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh. However, one cannot ignore the actors and agents of change who were working ceaselessly to bring about peace, development and prosperity in the region.

A holistic view of the socio-political dynamics in the districts of south eastern Uttar Pradesh cannot ignore the presence of actors and multiple patterns of social mobilization focused primarily on Gandhian constructivism aimed towards change and progress. These efforts were bolstered with the support of post colonial state for providing relief from natural calamities since the 1950s and the growth of a number of voluntary organizations that campaigned against bonded-labour and child-labour in the 1970s and 80s. On the other hand, the political life of this region got democratized since independence with the introduction of Universal Adult Franchise and broadening of political space with a jump in the number of political parties after 1967.

The origins of Gandhian constructive activities in this region go back to the establishment of *Uttar Pradesh Gandhi Smarak Nidhi* in 1950 and promoted *Gram Sewa Kendras* in 1952. In 1954, *Banvasi Sewa Ashram* (henceforth *BSA*) was established to undertake drought relief oriented constructive activities and between 1957 and 2006, the *BSA* campaigned for *Gram Swaraj* impacting the lives of people of hundreds of villages of four development blocks of Sonbhadra district. This has been possible due to the cooperation between the state, national and international agencies

and Gandhian organizations like *BSA* that bases its work on Gandhian ideals.

According to *BSA*, the organization contributes to local level participation and engagement with developmental activities that spawns activities like community development, rural credit, loan and political awareness, social welfare works for education and health care, natural resource and management. It has also contributed towards empowerment of rural poor including women and youth and has provided land entitlement, made availability of food grains and installed hand pumps and wells for safe drinking water.

In short, the Gandhian and other voluntary interventions in merely fifty years have created an impetus for development in the villages of this region through communitarian mobilization and cooperation with state run programmes for rural development and empowerment at the local level. The impact of constructive work by *BSA* is well recognized among the villagers of the area particularly in the field of agricultural development, health care, educational progress and improvement in the status of women folk. Apart from the socio-economic changes that were made possible through individual and cooperative efforts, the socio-political upheavals in the region too had been altering and shaping the region's political character.

The people of Sonbhadra, Mirzapur and Chandauli have been active participants in the national movement under the Indian National Congress and Congress Socialist Party since 1930s and the Quit India Movement of 1942. Elections became occasions for building and destabilizing social coalitions among castes and classes from one election to another. Thus, there has been a political socialization of the masses in the competition for power through representation for the last five decades with the introduction of universal adult franchise. The electoral mobilization has been able to generate social churning at all levels of the society which gets reflected in the electoral outcome in the last two elections of UP assembly (See Table 9) and reveals the complexities of the party based social mobilization.

*Table 9: Party Position in South East Uttar Pradesh Assembly Election 2002*

	BJP		BSP		CPI(ML)(L)		CPM		INC		SP	
	2002	2007	2002	2007	2002	2007	2002	2007	2002	2007	2002	2007
Chandauli (SC)	25.51	18.54	31.32	34.87	1.31	-	-	-	5.4	5.37	27.57	28.18
Chakia(SC)	30.97	15.6	25.58	36.36	3.41	1.09	-	2.44	2.67	4.24	29.14	34.13
Mughalsarai	25.81	28.52	23.52	28.89	6.8	1.19	-	-	2.75	3.16	34.06	30.46
Dudhi(SC)	23.53	18.47	10.75	32.25	0.76	2.74	-	-	17.95	4.65	36.2	29.52
Robertsganj(SC)	17.76	19.09	20.37	30.05	1.29	0.85	-	-	11.29	6.47	20.5	19.83
Rajgarh	-	-	30.54	30.7	3.45	2.74	8.91	2.09	19.09	13.59	-	20.49
Chunar	34.45	29.48	19.15	24.1	1.35	1.09	-	-	6.83	5.76	18.5	27.23
Majhwa	11.16	18.3	31.05	31.92	0.33	0.52	-	-	20.08	7.11	15.27	28.68
Mirzapur	27.49	14.38	19.65	24.68	0.71	0.48	-	-	6.75	14.52	34.21	32.27
Chhanvey (SC)	18.04	15.27	30.53	31.98	-	-	-	-	9.86	11.92	19.11	16.56

Source: Election Commission of India 2002: Election Commission of India Archive

Table 9 shows figures which help us understand the emergence of Naxal tendencies in these districts between 2002 and 2007. The Assembly Elections of 2002 was important because of the consistent absence of traditional communist parties from all constituencies except for the active presence of the CPI (ML)(L) in all the constituencies barring Chhanvey (SC). This was a turning point in the evolution of the CPI (ML)(L) as it became the only communist group engaged in electoral mobilization in this region. A significant aspect of the 2007 elections in the areas shown in Table IX from the perspective of the Left was the continuous marginality of the two traditional communist parties (CPI and CPM) and consistent presence of the CPI (ML)(L) candidates in all the constituencies where it had put up candidates during 2002. It signified that the so called extreme left radicals had aligned themselves with electoral democracy for seeking

radical democratic transformations.

The official narrative of the Naxal activities has been focusing only on extra constitutional Left wing extremist events and episodes. But, there is a growing engagement of the Maoist Communists in the constitutional and electoral processes as part of their official approach towards 'radical democratic transformation of the Indian society.' Table 10 presents the electoral profile of the CPI (ML)(L) in terms of the votes received in the constituencies of south eastern districts during the two assembly elections of Uttar Pradesh in 2002 and 2007.

*Table 10: Electoral Performance of CPI (ML)(L) in South Eastern Uttar Pradesh 2002-07 (Percentage of votes polled)*

Constituency	2002	2007
Chandauli *(SC) Scheduled Caste	1.31	*NC
Chakia(SC)	3.41	1.09
Mughalsarai	6.8	1.19
Dudhi(SC)	0.76	2.74
Robertsganj(SC)	1.29	0.85
Rajgarh	3.45	2.74
Chunar	1.35	1.09
Majhwa	0.33	0.52
Mirzapur	0.71	0.48
Chhanvey (SC)	NC	NC

Source: Election Commission of India 2002-07

According to the above mentioned figures the electoral participation of the CPI (ML)(L) candidates began in the assembly elections of 2002 who had put up candidates in nearly all constituencies of the south eastern districts of Uttar Pradesh. The CPI (ML)(L) entered once more in the electoral process in the state wide elections of 2007 and suggests that the Left wing radical candidates were able to create a limited space in terms of electoral identity in this region of Uttar Pradesh in spite of their political distance from the major coalitions and traditional Left parties. It also shows that the Left wing radicals are not exclusively engaged in promoting the politics of bullet against the processes of ballot. It is extremely unfortunate that the Approach Paper of the GOI has failed to take note of the complex strategy of the Naxal formations in its effort to present the picture about the main challenge from the perspectives of internal security.

## Nodes and Pathways of Naxalism in Southeastern Uttar Pradesh

The genesis of Naxal activities in U.P. took place in the 1969-70 during the Chief Ministership of Chandra Bhan Gupta. However, the recent spurt of Naxal activities can be traced back to 9th March, 2001, in Bhawanipur; a remote village under Madihan Police Station in eastern Uttar Pradesh<sup>35</sup> where 16 people were killed by the police including a 14 year old boy on the pretext of countering naxals most of whom were tribals and Dalits. The state under the aegis of the then Chief Minister Rajnath Singh encouraged the police for this act by rewarding the "brave" policemen with cash award and a promotion in their ranks.<sup>36</sup> This event became the turning point

<sup>35</sup>People's Union for Democratic Rights, Association for the Protection for Democratic Rights. (April, 2001) Dead. Hence Guilty. 'Encounter at Bhawanipur and Its Aftermath, p. 2.

<sup>36</sup>Op cit., p. 14.

in the political life of the people of Sonbhadra, Mirzapur and Chandauli districts and witnessed a new trajectory of Naxal activities with multiple implications for the relation between the state administration and the deprived sections of these districts.

It is argued that the incident was carried out by the state administration in order to curb rising discontent and protest activities among the rural poor in the region. This led to state-wide protests and strikes denouncing the killings that were being witnessed on various platforms by the CPI (ML). The simmering angst against the administration was taking a confrontational turn due to the various atrocities faced by the Adivasis and Dalits of this region which included deprivation from their land, forests and pond by the local landlords and contractors. Now, there was a new awakening among the rural poor on class lines giving way to class solidarity in place of caste mobilization prevalent since 1980s around "Mandalisation" of the political discourse.

Bhawanipur as a village having a population of about 2000 is divided along caste lines with the upper castes and the *Kurmis* in the main village while the *Kols* (a tribal community), *Chamars* and *Yadavas* located in settlements separated by streets. Most of the villagers are agricultural labourers or small peasants who work on the lands of bigger landlords mainly from traditional upper caste landowners, the *Brahmins* and the *Rajputs* while the relatively backward caste of *Kurmis* have emerged as the new landlords and as a powerful force over the last twenty five years in Bhawanipur and adjacent areas. *Chamars* and *Kols* form the main laboring groups. Apart from their own landholdings, the landowners from an early time established control over the Gram Sabha land meant for use by the village and later in 1975 partly distributed in some villages among landless labourers mainly dalits and tribals.

The struggle of villagers in the area began with their self-organisation to demand control over the Gram Sabha land, already distributed by the state some 25 years ago. The struggle also included implementation of minimum wages, a minimum of 100 days of assured labour per year and a concerted fight against caste oppression. While the basic demands of minimum wages and right to work along with access to land over which they have legal claim remained unfulfilled, state repression over these struggles had increased significantly especially in the last few years. The tragic event of Bhawanipur provided an opportunity to the BJP led state government to make intervention under the pretext of curbing Naxalism. In order to actualize its fantasy of governmentality, a package of Rs. 1,600 crore was announced by the BJP government at the Centre in the name of "*Karmnasa Package*" aimed at suppressing the rising militancy among the rural poor.<sup>37</sup>

The next major event took place on 22 November, 2001 when a PAC camp at Khoradih village in Rajgarh block of Mirzapur district was ransacked by the villagers as well as CPI (ML) activists and sympathizers.<sup>38</sup> The fallout of this event resulted in the arrests of CPI (ML) activists and sympathizers from many villages in a district level campaign and some of them were beaten up in the police stations. A reign of terror was unleashed by the police on the pretext of arresting the culprits responsible for the incident and houses were searched without warrant. A long list of complaints regarding cash and jewelry being looted and women raped by the police came to public light. In an effort to contain restlessness, the Rajnath Singh government in the state launched a district wide assault to push back the rising wave of mobilisation. The main motive behind this "cleansing" exercise was to avenge the CPI (ML) activists who were demanding action on those police officials who were guilty of perpetrating Bhawanipur massacre.

In response to the mistreatment CPI (ML) sympathisers and activists by the police, people from various sections showed their solidarity with the people's movement which was gaining strength. Socialists, intellectuals, human rights organisations and literary personalities passed resolutions condemning the state terror and participated with the local rural poor, Dalits and

<sup>37</sup>Op cit.

<sup>38</sup><http://www.docstoc.com/docs/80169196/PDF-Vol-8.-No8—Communist-Party-of-India- Marxist-Leninist>

Adivasis, including a large number of women, in dharna and strikes.

One of the major reasons for growing discontentment among the people in this Naxal affected region was the issue of hunger deaths which had plagued south eastern Uttar Pradesh. Matters came to light and administration swung into action only when reports of 18 hunger deaths of children many below the age of 5 years and which had occurred in the last 11 months was published in a local daily on August 5, 2003. The district administration was aware of the plight of these poor Dalits, peasants, and Adivasis especially the *Ghasia* tribe,<sup>39</sup> an indigenous tribe which had migrated four years back from village Markudi, Tehsil Robertsganj, in search of earning livelihood.

The acute misery of *Ghasia* tribe in Robertsganj dates back to the colonial period and even during the pre-colonial rule of the Princely States. The *Ghasias* worked as bonded labourers and their families starved in the wake of non-availability of food and in a desperate attempt to escape bondage and atrocity of the rulers, the ancestors of these *Ghasia* tribals settled in deep forests. Their livelihood was dependent on forest produce by making and selling products like brooms, combs and drums called '*Mander*' used in *Karma* dance. After the abolition of the Zamindari System and the enactment of Labour Reform Act in 1950, the Princely States were compensated by the government for doing away with the ownership of these lands which never belonged to them. However, the *Ghasias* were now being oppressed by the priestly class who had become the *de facto* new landlords of the area reaping all the benefits of the development schemes.

The trials and tribulations of these tribals further get aggravated by the state. The land on which these families are presently settled belongs to the Forest Department which every now and then abuse, harass and threaten these tribals with dire consequences if they cut maize plants in the name of cultivating the forestland. Almost half of Sonbhadra is classified as 'forest land'<sup>40</sup> and is under the control of the Forest Department for which it would deem fit to label this Department as the biggest landlord. While the dominant castes have huge landholdings, the majority of dalits and *adivasis* eke out a precarious livelihood on small plots of degraded land and live in perpetual fear of eviction by the Forest Department which considers them as 'encroachers.' Some of these communities have repeatedly been facing development induced displacement due to setting up of power plants, coal mines and cement factories on the forest land.<sup>41</sup>

The declaration of all forests as either reserved or protected by the government further marginalized the *Ghasia* tribe. The land where the tribe has settled now has been declared as forestland under the Indian Forest Act, 1927. According to Section 4 of this Act, forest dwellers have to be served a Notice by the Government in the wake of declaring any forest area as 'Reserved' so that tribals can file their claims. However, no such procedure was followed in this case and without settling any claim, the land was declared as forestland. Since 1997, the Forest Department has been trying to evict the *Ghasias* by various unscrupulous methods<sup>42</sup> and has resulted in making 500 villages as part of this dispute.

However, with restrictions on the access to forest and forest produce, this crucial economic support was taken away from them and people from the *Ghasia* community were forced to migrate from their village. They then settled near the district headquarters in the hope of getting better

<sup>39</sup> *Ghasia* tribe is one of so called Ex-Criminal tribes declared by the colonial rulers according to the Criminal Tribes Act of 1871. The *Ghasia* tribe has been mentioned in R.V. Russell's book "*The Tribes and Castes of the Central Provinces of India*, Vol I (of IV), p., 27. The etymology of the tribe's name comes from the Hindi word '*ghaas*' that is grass. The *Ghasis* by profession were grass-cutters and therefore were known as *Ghasias*. They also performed as village musicians on festive occasions like marriage.

<sup>40</sup> See more at <http://sanhati.com/articles/2355/>

<sup>41</sup> Op.cit.

<sup>42</sup> A Fact Finding Team led by social activists, intellectuals, bureaucrats and lawyers were sent to study the volatile situation in Sonbhadra. The team came to the conclusion that there were serious anomalies and gaps in the land settlement process and land records in the district. See more at: <http://sanhati.com/articles/2355/#sthash.Y1e5n5F3.dpuf>

employment opportunities by virtue of being closer to the town. However, money earned in the town simply catered to their peripheral needs. From the time that the community migrated to the district headquarters where they had to resort to the wild and poisonous grass like "*Chakwar*", wild mushrooms and extremely poor quality of rice. The adult members were somehow able to survive the poisonous nature of the mushrooms but the children were unable to tolerate its poisonous contents.

The Kaimur Survey Settlement<sup>43</sup> introduced in 1986 saw a steep rise in land conflicts due to the connivance of the survey officials and the revenue machinery. This continuous alienation from the natural resources beset the *Ghasias* with a sense of deep resentment particularly among the youth and women. Integration of these 'contested' areas in the larger democratic framework has been seen only through the active engagement of human rights groups, political parties and media. The conflict over land in Robertsganj, a city and municipal board in Sonbhadra has been caused by the connivance of the forest officials, upper caste landowners and private corporations.<sup>44</sup>

The trajectory of Naxal mobilization took a shocking turn on 20th November, 2004 in the Jungles of Naugarh in district Chandauli when a massive landmine blew up a truck and killed 15 policemen. It was reported in the media as the first display of strength of the recent merger of two Naxalite formations viz, the Maoist Coordination Committee (MCC) and the People's War Group (PWG). This incident was preceded by blowing up the residence cum office of the forest ranger killing three persons at Majgahi in Naugarh and was aimed at demonstrating the tightening grip of the Naxals around the Kaimur hilly terrains on all sides of the U.P., Bihar and Jharkhand border. In response, the state engaged in a two track damage control programme. First, it asserted its control mechanism through raids and arrests of workers and sympathisers of pro-Naxal organisations and formations. It also included a 'provision of surrender' for such people but this strategy remained very limited in its scope and reach as the government failed to attract anyone to surrender. However, the maximum arrests have been in 2010 and 2011, the years in which the real trouble began.

Another state response was to focus on the development deficit in protest affected areas. The Government of Uttar Pradesh launched a '*Naxal Affected Samagra Gramya Vikas Yojana*' in these districts with 18 development programmes since 2005 to 'thwart' naxalite activities in these areas. The statement of objectives of *Dr. Ambedkar Grameen Samagra Vikas Vibhag* which implements the '*Naxal affected Gramya Vikas Yojana*' is significant for exploring the relation between failures of the present system of development and administration and their consequences for the villagers.

In 2005, starvation and food scarcity among marginal groups like the *Musahars* were reported by visiting human right groups and a number of voluntary organisations and added to criticism for administration's failings to deliver goods, particularly the Public Distribution System. The next most significant event in the Naxal narrative of south-eastern UP took place on 18 April 2007 when the legendary Naxal leader Sanjay Kol was killed in an encounter. However, the loss of one of their top leaders did not deter the CPI (ML) from active participation in the UP Assembly elections in 2007 in all but few constituencies of this region.

## Conclusion

The genesis of infrapolitics and Naxal narrative in Sonbhadra, Mirzapur and Chandauli reflects the deep seated disenchantment and unrest among the marginalized sections of the society. This gets amplified and intertwined with the deepening of democratic aspirations, multiple forms of

<sup>43</sup>The Kaimur Survey Settlement was a land survey started in 1986 in response to a Supreme Court order and was the benchmark for the District Administration and the Forest Department to settle and demarcate and ratify claims of individuals in the forest area.. See more at: <http://sanhati.com/articles/2355/#sthash.Y1e5n5F3.dpuf>

<sup>44</sup>See more at <http://sanhati.com/articles/2355/>

exclusions, feudal agrarian social structure and rising class consciousness among the intermediate and low caste groups.

The three districts are proving to be fertile grounds for protest politics as the region suffers from a strange paradox of poverty amidst plenty. These districts are known to be rich in terms of industries, power generation capacity and mineral resources, yet the region is a dumping ground for developmental residues which also manifests in high rate of illiteracy, unemployment, villagers suffering from flourosis and extremely poor health facility. Moreover, an extremely poor performance on various socio-economic indicators makes Sonbhadra as one of the most backward districts of India. All these factors contributed to a series of protest activities by poor peasants and other marginal groups in the area under the banner of radical groups including CPI (ML) and supported from time to time by the civil society and human rights organizations like the People's Union for Civil Liberties (PUCL), *Banvasi Sewa Ashram*, Peoples' Union for Democratic Rights (PUDR) and Association for the Protection of Democratic Rights (APDR) etc. These demonstrations were largely aimed at drawing the attention of the political class to take cognizance of the volatile situation in the region that had resulted in the loss of innocent lives in the course of 'encountering' the so called 'naxalites' by the police.

It is clear that this continuity of failed development has proved to be a catalytic factor for radicalisation of politics in the recent years through voluntary organisational platforms, party politics including electoral democracy and extra parliamentary engagements. However, the government's idea of tackling such situations through draconian laws and instituting extra constitutional vigilante groups like *Salwa Judum*, *Karmnasa Package* and *Operation Green Hunt* has ended up in 'societies of control' (Deleuze 1992). Further, these counter-insurgency tactics has only militarized the tribal society, produced child soldiers and left behind maimed, wounded and orphaned population besides social evils like 'forced marriages, witchcraft, superstition and forced drudgery' (Azad 2006). Attempts at purging dissenters have only succeeded in creating 'states of exception' (Agamben 2003) and which has already been dismissed by the Government of India. Also, state's narrative of developing a grand 'security architecture' to engage with the naxal problem is a self defeating exercise to begin with since such anti-naxal combing programmes fail in addressing the real cause behind anti-democratic activities and violence. It is high time that the GOI realizes that crime and corruption go hand in hand and are anathema to a thriving nation state and democracy and development.

The solution for countering politics of protest and confrontation lies in real political intent and willingness of the government to deal with pressing issues like poverty, unemployment, systemic and structural violence and devise pro-poor policies that benefits the real needy. There is a dire necessity for the lawmakers to encourage environment friendly sustainable development that produces job oriented growth, provides basic infrastructure and amenities like safe drinking water, sanitation, housing, health care facility and literacy and guarantees forest rights to tribals while ensuring food security, mitigates social exclusion and citizenship rights to the deprived sections. If not, then we will end up stoking and playing with fire and keep on having more such 'liberated zones' and enclaves of parallel governance. Mere cosmetic changes in the form of financial doles, plans and programmatic interventions will only prove to be papering over the cracks. The magic and the charisma for the power to be lies in attracting those wielding guns and bullets to go to schools and colleges and work in the fields, factories and offices so that their dreams don't die in a bloody 'encounter.'

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