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## Maoism in South Asia: A Comparative Perspective On Ideology, Practice, and Prospects for the 21st Century

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**Maoism in South Asia**

A Comparative Perspective On Ideology, Practice, and Prospects for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

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“If one’s line is incorrect, one’s downfall is inevitable, even with the control of the central, local and army leadership. If one’s line is correct, even if one has not a single soldier at first, there will be soldiers, and even if there is no political power, political power will be gained. This is borne out of historical experience of our party and by that of the international communist movement since the time of Marx.... The crux of the matter is line. This is an irrefutable truth.”

-Mao Zedong, 10<sup>th</sup> National Congress of the Communist Party of China

## **Abstract**

The Maoists in both India and Nepal have drawn on Maoist theory to analyze their countries as semi-feudal and semi-colonial, setting the stage for Maoist revolutionary movements. The two movements differ in their historical interpretations of communist revolutions and Marxism—the Nepalese Maoists have come to reject Marxist notions of the state, while the Indian Maoists have uncritically upheld the experience of socialist states and communist revolutions. These differences in historical interpretation are intimately linked with the divergent theoretical and practical orientations of the Maoists in both countries, orientations that have emerged due to distinct material conditions that both revolutionary movements have faced. These Maoist movements show that while a movement can utilize Mao's philosophy and strategy broadly, each country has particular conditions that a revolutionary movement must confront. The communist revolution in China cannot be repeated identically in any country in the world today, and new theoretical and practical orientations must emerge to update and make Maoism effective in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

## **Introduction**

South Asia has become the focal point of armed communist revolution in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Both India and Nepal have been host to revolutionary Maoist movements for a number of years now, but the movements have grown apart in their ideological and practical orientations. South Asia has evolved from a region of armed struggle into a region that is concentrating ideological struggle alongside struggles for liberation.

Both the Communist Party of India (Maoist) and the Unified Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) (formerly the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist)) have taken up the complicated struggles for making communist revolution in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, and time when most have come to think that communism is nothing but a dead philosophy or one confined to eccentric corners of Western academia.

The two communist movements have come to concentrate certain outlooks and trends that have emerged in the relative chaos after the collapse of revolutionary China in 1976 after the death of Mao Zedong. For communists that upheld the development of Marxism-Leninism brought forward by Mao, the loss of socialist China was a near deathblow. Those that followed Mao's thought had long declared the Soviet Union to be social-imperialist, socialist in name but capitalist in essence, after the death of Stalin in 1950s. For Maoist revolutionaries, socialist China had served as a base area for the world revolution after the loss of the Soviet Union. When Deng Xiaoping took China back towards capitalism after Mao's death, revolutionaries had the difficult task of understanding how the revolution was reversed in China.

Even more, Maoist revolutionaries had to deal with the problem of making communist revolution in a world without a key leadership figure and without a friendly, benefactor country to provide ideological and physical support for revolution. The Revolutionary Communist Party, USA has developed a framework to group the general trends that

emerged in the revolutionary communist movement after the loss of socialist China, and this framework is quite convincing. While it, of course, does not include every possibility for the redevelopment of communist revolution in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the framework puts forward three camps of revolutionaries that have developed after the loss of China. The three trends are:

Revolutionaries that refuse to critically examine the historical experience of socialist revolution. The core notion is that everything went more or less perfectly in previous socialist revolutions and societies, and that the “handed-down wisdom” simply needs to be implemented. This camp is, therefore, quite dogmatic in that nothing that happened in the historical experience of revolution is open to question.

Revolutionaries that break with and discard the entire experience of socialist revolution. Because of the onslaught of the “death of communism” ideology and a lack of deep engagement, in a scientific way, with the historical experience of revolution some revolutionaries have simply decided to do away with everything that happened. Often these revolutionaries seek comfort in some of the most famous bourgeois theoreticians from the 18<sup>th</sup> century, all while claiming to be communists.

Revolutionaries that have sought to engage with both the positive and negative aspects of socialist revolution. These revolutionaries have understood the need to both uphold and criticize the experience of socialism. In so doing, the hope would be that mistakes would not be repeated and positive experiences can be built upon in order to make a successful world socialist revolution that sets the stage for the development of communism (Revolutionary Communist Party, USA, ““Communism: The Beginning of a New Stage” 31).<sup>1</sup>

Internationally, these three trends concentrate how the collapse of socialism was handled by Maoist revolutionaries and the subsequent implications for communist movements that build upon that theoretical basis. In South Asia, though, this dialectical unity of theory and practice takes a particular form. As a result of a certain analysis of conditions within India and Nepal, the respective communist parties have been struggling over how to make new democratic revolution, which lays the groundwork for a transition to socialism and the dictatorship of the proletariat, which in turn lays the groundwork for communism. New Democracy is what most think of when they think of Maoism: armed revolution from the countryside, an emphasis on overthrowing imperialism, etc.

However, even New Democracy is contested. At the core of the differing interpretations of history, strategy, and theory is the state. The key question is, “what is the relationship between the state and new democratic revolution, and what is the correct strategy for

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<sup>1</sup> While the *Manifesto* from the RCP focuses on the first two trends as incorrect tendencies that have resulted mostly from a lack of engagement with history (and thus making contemporary revolution), the third trend is implicitly suggested in the analysis

changing the state and society?” All of the differences between the CPI (Maoist) and the UCPN (Maoist) ultimately have their greatest implications when it comes to the state and revolution.

This paper is dealing with the theory-practice dynamic as it applies to making a communist revolution concentrated in the particular form of new democratic revolution. The differences in political line and practice that have emerged in India and Nepal show that there are “contested Maoisms” that are directly affecting one of the most populous regions of the world, and these contested Maoisms demand interrogation.

## **Research Questions**

Why did revolutionary Maoist movements emerge in both Nepal and India?

Is the three-trend framework applicable to the Unified Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) and the Communist Party of India (Maoist), and, if so, how do the parties fit in?

How does ideological line relate to the revolutionary practice of the parties?

## **Sources and Methods**

This study focuses on ideological trends in revolutionary communist movements, so it will therefore delve deeply into primary source documents from the parties.

Further, very little work has been done in recent years examining the communist revolutionary movements in South Asia. Much of this is, understandably, due to the fact that the groups have been/are engaged in direct conflict with the state, and it is no simple thing to do research in a warzone. Secondary source material and scholarly material more broadly is quite limited, and that which exists seems to be heavily reliant upon news groups (such as the *Times of India* and other mainstream press outlets). This issue is problematic because it is very difficult—if not impossible—to get any sort of balanced accounts out of the mainstream press when it comes to understanding movements that are trying to overthrow the dominant state. Much of the available reporting is simply based in “atrocious shouting”—meaning that much of the information does not go much farther than reporting deaths from clashes.

While it is important to use the limited secondary source information available, in order to get a clear picture of revolutionary ideology any inquirer must look towards the documents from the revolutionary movements themselves.

Methodologically, I sought to identify key points that determined the upholding of or transformation of line. The constant struggle was to identify why line did or did not change in the face of material circumstances that the revolutionaries have faced and are currently facing. By understanding the development of ideological and political line in relation to both history and present, the trajectory of the revolutionary movements becomes much clearer.

## Literature (And Its Problems)

The Maoist movement in India is painfully understudied; so much so that the authoritative work on the movement is from 1970s-1980s. This book, *India's Simmering Revolution* (originally published in India as *In the Wake of Naxalbari*) by Sumanta Banerjee, is a thorough history of the development of the CPI (ML) (the forerunner to the CPI (Maoist) that is currently active; these distinctions will be addressed later on in the paper). The strength of this work is that it shows the complex historical development of the Maoist movement in India. In particular, Banerjee argues that the history of the Communists in India before the Maoists is one of grooming by Western Marxists. The Indian Communists associated with the original Communist Party of India (CPI) followed the ideological path of believing that only the working class could be a revolutionary force in the country (Banerjee 59). No doubt this attitude was seen as peculiar in a country whose proletariat was still small, especially when compared with the huge numbers of peasants in the country who were just as, if not more, oppressed by the political and economic system of India.

In fact, this points to a larger problem surrounding the literature on the Indian left more broadly. There is a wealth of information on the leftist parties that participate in Parliament, particularly in the realm of political science literature. To be sure, it is unique and interesting that India's left parties have remained popular both nationally and in individual states at a time when left parties seem to be losing their significance in many countries in the world. However, the emphasis on the institutionalized left has left a vacuum of information on the non-institutionalized left, the Maoist movement most importantly. As it will be shown later on in this paper, a resistance against the policies and practices of the institutionalized left, particularly in West Bengal, has in fact driven many to support and work with the Maoists in recent years.

Despite all the usefulness of Banerjee's work, to have the seminal piece on a movement that is still very—if not more—active today written in the 70s/80s is problematic. A more recent book, published in 2002 and called *People Power: The Naxalite Movement in Central Bihar*, by Prakash Louis is an excellent piece that focuses on understanding the interplay between people, Maoists, and the security forces repressing the Maoists in Bihar. It puts forward information on the violent clashes between the various actors, gathering much-needed data on numbers, types, etc. of people being killed. What it lacks, however, is a real analysis of the ideological orientations of the Maoists. Even if it had a deep analysis, important events took place in 2004 that would demand a reevaluation of the ideology of Maoism in India.

Further, while there are some works on the ideological orientations of the earlier stages of the Maoist movement, the same issue of the literature being dated comes up. This problem has been acute now, especially given that there is ease of access to major ideological documents of the Maoists. These major documents—mostly from 2004—mark a repositioning of both the theoretical and practical orientations of the Indian

Maoists. Such documents will be evaluated in depth in this paper in order to fill the void of study on the contemporary Maoist ideology in India.

Outside of the problems with more academically oriented literature, there have of course been works by various security institutes on the Maoist movement. The orientation of such work, however, focuses mostly on eliminating rather than understanding the Maoist movement. There is little care for the ideological development, interpretation of history, or the changing methods of mass integration of the Maoists.

Worth a direct mention is Arundhati Roy's recent essays assembled in *Broken Republic*. Roy managed to tour some of the main Maoist areas in India, and she has reflected on her experiences and put out some work on them. They are in much more of a narrative style, given her background, which is not to say that the essays are not valuable. However, her intention is not to explain the complex nature of the movement or to deeply delve into ideological intricacies. The essays are powerful and useful, but much more work needs to be done.

Across the border, the developments in Nepal (which will be gone into great depth in this paper) have opened up much more space for work on the Maoist movement.

One book that reflects this is *Himalayan People's War*, which is a collection of various articles edited by Michael Hutt. There are a number of articles focusing on the relationship of the Maoist movement to the (now altered) political system in Nepal, seeking to understand why a Maoist movement emerged in a country like Nepal. In this book—and in other academic articles—there is information on the interplay of gender and ethnicity in the Maoist movement in Nepal.

The general information from new sources on the most contemporary events in Nepal is relatively good, at least in terms of outlining the major divisions and controversies within the Maoist movement. What such news lacks, perhaps not too surprisingly, is a thorough explanation and analysis of the ideological shifts that have taken place recently within the Maoist movement in Nepal. This issue is very problematic because without understanding such shifts, the information from mainstream media remains uncontextualized, and thus loses its value for academic analysis. This paper will seek to remedy this problem by exposing the ideological side and mixing it with contemporary developments to present a clearer picture of what is happening for the Maoists in Nepal.

A strong book that explores the process of people's war and the establishment of the counter-state in Nepal is *Dispatches from the People's War in Nepal* by Li Onesto. To those familiar with Chinese history and the Mao era, reading this book will undeniably lead to a nostalgic feeling. In fact, this is what makes the book so valuable for the purposes of this paper. When it was published in 2005, it looked to most outside observers of the movement that Nepal was going to become the next Maoist state. During this time and shortly after, some major changes were taking place within the Maoist movement in Nepal, particularly with regard to its ideological orientations. *Dispatches* shows the movement at (perhaps) the height of its stage of revolutionary Maoism and



people's war before the CPN (M) became a parliamentary party. The information within this book constitutes an important baseline from which to measure and understand recent changes.

So yet again, the availability of contemporary ideology being presented in a concise and academic fashion is just as lacking for the Nepalese Maoist movement as it is for the Indian Maoist movement. This paper will seek to remedy this problem, and in doing so it will allow the movements to make more sense in a comparative ideological context.

## **WHY A MAOIST REVOLUTION IN INDIA?**

### **A Brief History of the Revolution in India**

The broader left has been a strong force in India for years, but revolutionary communism in its incarnation of Maoism emerged from a faction within the left wing of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) (CPI (M)) that was led by Charu Mazumdar. The CPI (M) itself was the result of an earlier split within the Communist Party of India (CPI), both parties that still exist today in India. The faction that emerged from the CPI (M) under the leadership of Charu Mazumdar called itself the Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist) (CPI (ML)) and was formed in 1969. The birth of the CPI (ML) took place after the uprising of poor peasants in Naxalbari, West Bengal in 1967. Although the initial uprising was crushed, it was a momentous event for India and for Indian peasants in particular because it showed that resistance was possible for even the most downtrodden in the country. This initial spark of peasant revolution in India is colloquially referred to as the “Naxalbari uprising,” and those associated with the uprising, the future CPI (ML) and even the CPI (Maoist) today are still referred to as “Naxalites” or “Naxals” (Banerjee).

The CPI (ML) became the beacon for those that followed the leadership of Mao in opposition to that of the Soviet Union in India. Still, some groups maintained independent identities from the CPI (ML) but nonetheless took up the banner of Maoism, an important one being the Maoist Communist Center of India (MCCI). After the initial Naxalbari uprising and its defeat in 1967, there was somewhat of a lull in visible revolutionary activity, but this lull started to end in the 1980s. While the CPI (ML) was largely defeated after Naxalbari, other organizations emerged that essentially represented the continuation of the CPI (ML). The resurgent activity in the 1980s was led by a subgroup that broke off (only to join up again later) from one of the organizations that continued the legacy of the CPI (ML). This group that led the militant actions in the 1980s was called the Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist) People's War (CPI (ML) PW), which is also commonly referred to as People's War Group (PWG). Its goal was, as can be seen from its name, to begin armed revolution in India by building strength in the Indian countryside as per Mao's strategy of people's war.

The PWG worked to establish its standing army in Dandakaranya, a wide swath of jungle that stretches across multiple states in central/eastern India (Roy 65). This jungle remains an area of heavy CPI (Maoist) activity today. In much of India's heavily forested regions,

and particularly in central/eastern India, tribal people (or *adivasis*, which essentially means “original inhabitants”)<sup>2</sup> live in great numbers. The PWG, therefore, had to build a base both among peasants as its predecessors had in Naxalbari and among the *adivasis*.

A good example of the method of the PWG for building mass support was a movement for a price increase in the tendu leaf trade that took place in 1981. Tendu leaves, which are forest produce and collected by the *adivasis*, are used to make *beedis* (a type of cigarette). The PWG managed to successfully organize the *adivasis* to get a 100% price increase from 3 paise to 6 paise (paise are to cents as rupees are to dollars) for a bundle of 50 leaves (Roy 70). While in some senses this was an economist method, PWG was able to mobilize the masses in the area successfully, which subsequently enabled PWG to gain the confidence of the *adivasis*. PWG continued activities like this for the next two decades, along with building its armed forces in Dandakaranya.

Many *adivasis* also came to support the Maoists over time as a result of other causes. *Adivasis*, on the whole, were never integrated into the mainstream Hindu culture of India, and subsequently had no caste system. But there have been attempts to introduce the social structure of modern India into tribal societies, notably by Baba Bihari Das. He sought to introduce caste, and he conferred the status of *Dwiji* (twice-born Brahmins) upon those who were the first to convert—those turned out to be the village chiefs and larger landlords in the area (Roy 69). Those that shunned such Hinduization tended to be the less well off, and they were conferred a low caste status despite their non-acceptance of the Hinduization. Oppressive attempts at integrating *adivasis* into mainstream India like this served to only create a better base for the Maoists.

The PWG and MCCI merged in 2004 to make the CPI (Maoist) despite their history of bloody conflict. The Party is the current nexus of Maoism in India. It has inherited the legacies of both groups and the support among the masses that the groups struggled to build.

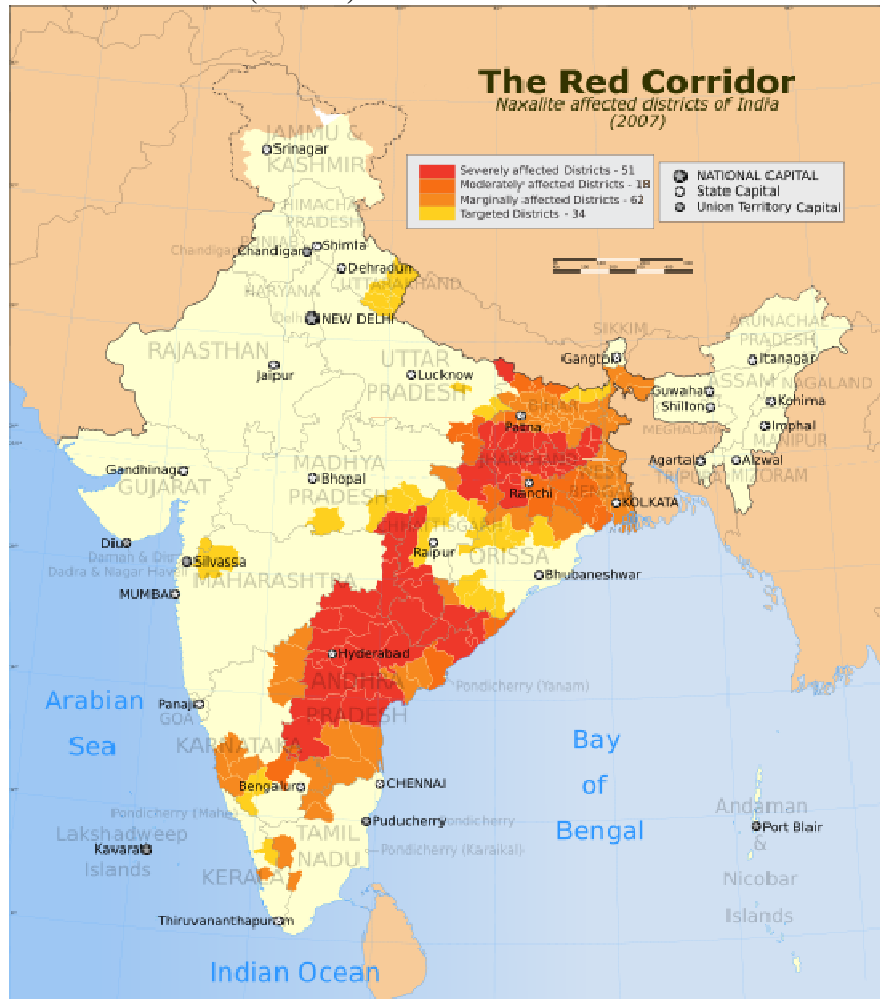
Prime Minister of India Manmohan Singh famously declared that the Maoists are the number one internal security threat to India. For India, with its massive internal and external problems that include separatist movements, ethnic/religious riots and cleansings, Islamic terrorism, crushing poverty, systemic corruption, ever-present threat of war (nuclear or otherwise) with Pakistan, severe ecological crises, and countless others, the head of the Indian government has pointed to the Maoists as the most dire threat. The Maoists have become the defining issue of modern India.

## **Red India**

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<sup>2</sup> Using umbrella terms like “tribal” or “*adivasis*” is inherently contradictory because the terms are used to homogenize distinct groups across many regions; yet for the purposes of this paper, we can understand such terms to be used with regard to those who are least integrated, culturally, politically, economically, and socially into the modern Indian nation-state and live mostly—though not exclusively—through gathering-hunting lifestyles dependent upon, most importantly, natural jungle produce.

The so-called “Red Corridor,” the swath of central/eastern India that has the highest amount of activity of the CPI (Maoist), is a territory that is in constant flux due to clashes between the government forces and the Maoists. The map below (while somewhat dated as it is from 2007) is a good rough outline of the territory under varying degrees of control of the CPI (Maoist).



(Wikimedia Commons)

The areas that the Maoists have consolidated power in operate under a new government, one that is separate from the Republic of India. In these areas, and particularly in Dandakaranya, authority rests in *Janatana Sarkars* (people’s governments)—this principle of organization is drawn directly from the Chinese and Vietnamese revolutions (Roy 75). Each of these *Janatana Sarkars* is elected by a cluster of villages whose combined population can range from 500-5000, and has nine departments (agriculture, trade and industry, economic, justice, defense, health, public relations, education and culture, and jungle). A group of *Janatana Sarkars* comes under an Area Committee, three combined Area Committees make up a Division, and there are currently 10 Divisions in Dandakaranya (Roy 75). A new state is beginning to emerge from within India itself.

This emergence is not without great pain and destruction. Following tactics used by the British, Americans, and others various state police forces and paramilitary groups in India (the Salwa Judum and those involved in Operation Greenhunt most infamously) are using what is called strategic hamleting—mass imprisonment in concentration camps—against the local populations (Weil 6) in “Naxal-infested areas” in an effort to separate the revolutionary fighters from their mass base.

## **White India**

In order to understand why a “red India” has developed, the situation in the country as a whole has to be understood. India remains highly rural, highly socially stratified, vast numbers of its people are highly impoverished—these are all things that have been noted and written about time and time again. Yet there are aspects of India’s present that are not part of the public consciousness, particularly the political economy of India and how the state is tied into the global capitalist economy.

One of the most salient ways to understand India’s connection to the marketplace is through minerals. India’s is one of the world’s most mineral-rich countries (particularly in aluminium, which is necessary for the production of many things, from electronics to weapons), but most of its mineral wealth is concentrated in *adivasi* areas. There are varying provisions within the Indian Constitution prohibiting the sale of tribal land (depending on the designation of the tribe) to non-tribals, as in Fifth Schedule areas—which is where most of India’s valuable minerals lie (Padel and Das 197). Yet, capital has an uncanny way of making it into every nook and cranny. Whether it is through companies simply building factories or other implements to collect minerals illegally—such as at Lanjigarh (Padel and Das 181)—or through the government leasing land to companies to develop it for the public purpose through a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), the minerals seem to be making their way out of the ground in east/central India in particular.

All of this semi-legal activity happens due in large part to the futures market, which is one of the millstones of today’s modern speculative capitalism. In anticipation of procuring minerals, futures stocks are traded, prices fluctuate, and money moves about. All this happens before the minerals have even been touched. Therefore, there is an increased pressure on various actors within India to make sure the minerals make it to market, one way or another.

The government of India has been quite eager to facilitate the movement of minerals, but also the movement of people. P. Chidambaram, who was previously the Finance Minister of India but now holds the post of Home Affairs Minister, has stated that he wants to get 85% of Indians off their land and into the cities to facilitate India’s growth (Roy 34). Internal migration is happening at huge levels in India, although efforts to produce hard numbers have been difficult. That being said, every major Indian city has large slums that are made up primarily of migrants from the countryside. The Republic of India is not only extracting minerals from the land, it is also extracting people.

Even so, the living conditions of the poor and middle sections of people in India have been going down due to the rising prices of essential commodities due to the increasing devaluation of the rupee, which is driven in large part by an increasing demand for imports (Central Committee CPI (Maoist), “Political Resolution” 50). Couple this reality with the fact that 90-95% of all *Dalits* are either landless peasants, poor peasants, or rural laborers (Central Committee CPI (Maoist), “Political Resolution” 19), and it is quite clear that capitalism has not brought promised wealth to the majority of people in India. In fact, it has brought more poverty, especially in the rural areas. In 2003, 80% of farmers, as compared to 66% from 40 years before that, were either landless, land poor, or tenants having an average of .21 hectares (just over half an acre) (Basole and Basu 7, 9, 77), cited in (Weil 11)). The number of people without any land at all is nearly 300 million, which is more than the entire middle class (Weil 11).

This huge mass of rural poor is mirrored in the cities, where slum dwellers more than doubled from 1981 to 2001, growing at a rate that is nearly two and a half times more than the entire population growth in India (Weil 12)! These facts demand a shift in the very image of India in one’s mind. Instead of “Shining India,” the India of IT parks and a 27-story residential building for a single family, India in the mind should be a reflection of the reality of the vast majority of Indian people. India is a land of perpetual famine, slum living in houses smaller than many American SUVs, and rural destitution. This is a clearer picture of India, but the most important fact is that India is quickly becoming—or perhaps has always been—the land of resistance. All of the poverty and inequality breeds, above all else, resistance.

### **What Is to Be Done?**

The CPI (Maoist) has stated that the path of the Indian revolution will and must follow the path of the Chinese Revolution due to the similarity in situation in India today as compared with pre-1949 China (Central Committee CPI (Maoist), “Party Programme” 26), but with more emphasis on towns and industrial areas than during the Chinese Revolution due to a slightly more industrialized country (Central Committee CPI (Maoist), “Strategy and Tactics of the Indian Revolution” 71). Despite this difference, the aim of the Party is to carry through new democratic revolution in India (Communist Party of India (Maoist), “Constitution of the CPI (Maoist)” 1). The Party has clearly situated itself in relationship to a complex historical legacy.

Keeping the particularities in mind, what was the path of the Chinese Revolution? The path-breaking strategy for revolution in China developed by Mao Zedong was called “New Democracy,” and was not socialism, but rather a strategy to build a society that could transition to socialism with relative ease after the new democratic revolution. If capitalism, as all modes of production, bears both the birthmarks of the past and the seeds of the future (socialism) then New Democracy is something of a “sprouted seed” that has not yet grown into socialism.

What are the defining characteristics of New Democracy? Perhaps most importantly, for Mao New Democracy was a strategy to make revolution leading to communism in a

country that was semi-feudal and semi-colonial (Mao, “On New Democracy” 341). Capitalism is a system that is more productive than feudalism, which is the chief reason why it supplanted feudalism in Europe. However, as capitalist countries became imperialist and exported production and collection of resources to other, more backward countries an odd relationship developed. It became beneficial for capital to maintain the productive relations of feudalism in large part—while creating islands of wage labor for embryonic capitalist production—in order to maintain a society from which capitalists could extract more profit from the labor of workers by paying workers less for their production than the imperialist country would have paid in the imperialist country itself. It is for this reason that semi-colonialism (foreign industries dominating a country’s production, particularly industrial) and semi-feudalism (a large portion of the country’s agricultural production being done in a feudal style with landlords with large landholdings and serfs/peasants as workers/sharecroppers) are actually inseparable. The main target of New Democracy is therefore the semi-colonial and semi-feudal mode of production and oppression. Further, as Mao argued, communist revolution in semi-feudal, semi-colonial countries occurs in two stages: the first being the throwing off of foreign domination and interference, along with feudalism (through new democratic revolution) and the second being the building of socialism (Mao, “On New Democracy” 342). Still, New Democracy is about making a revolution that is linked up with the international struggle of the proletariat (Mao, “On New Democracy” 344). New Democracy is thus a particular type of bourgeois revolution.

In such a semi-colonial semi-feudal society, there emerges a class called the “national bourgeoisie,” which is basically a domestic class of capitalists that embody the embryonic national capitalism as opposed to the more developed foreign capital that controls the vast majority of the country’s capitalist production. The relationship of this class to NDR, therefore, is two-sided. Mao discussed how, on one hand, the national bourgeoisie is in conflict with foreign capital because the country is only developing production as an auxiliary support to the imperialist country, and the oppressed country’s true productive capacity cannot be unleashed; yet, on the other hand, capital has no borders and the national bourgeoisie would still be linked into the global capitalist economy following a national revolution (Mao, “On New Democracy” 348-349). The presence of the national bourgeoisie as a class in a country is therefore indicative of its semi-colonial semi-feudal nature.

Further, due to the dual nature of the national bourgeoisie, it is a class that has a certain revolutionary character that can be united with, but also has a reactionary character that must be struggled against, and this struggle becomes particularly acute as the NDR transitions from its first stage of throwing off imperialist oppression to the second stage of establishing socialism. The other revolutionary classes that Mao described were the petty bourgeoisie (intellectuals and professionals), the proletariat, and the peasants, and these constituted the main forces that determined the fate of NDR in China and in semi-colonial semi-feudal countries more broadly (Mao, “On New Democracy” 350). Due to

this four class alliance,<sup>3</sup> the political leadership in a society under New Democracy is a joint dictatorship of the revolutionary classes founded on the basis of democratic centralism (Mao, “On New Democracy” 352). This idea reinforces the notion that every state has a class character as opposed to being wholly representative of all people in an amorphous way. As such, the government features participation from various political parties, but with the Communist Party being primary—this is necessary to advance towards the second stage of New Democracy, building socialism. Since the national bourgeoisie is part of this alliance, New Democracy actually nurtures capitalism and the interests of the national bourgeoisie—though not at the dramatic expense of the other classes—until it is time to transition to socialism, and the machinery, both in a literal and figurative sense, gets absorbed by the state as part of the new socialist mode of production. Both the political system and economic system of the two stages of communist revolution in semi-feudal, semi-colonial countries are therefore intertwined and advance jointly, both under New Democracy and socialism.

On the cultural front, Mao argued that New Democracy embraces a culture that is scientific (opposed to all feudal and superstitious ideas and seeking objective truth) and democratic (it should serve the masses and be representative of their interests), and this culture is one that develops out of and in preparation for the struggle to uproot both imperialism and feudalism (Mao, “On New Democracy” 381-382). The cultural front is extremely important because if New Democracy is about working towards socialism, which itself is about working towards communism, it is necessary to have a culture that engages the broad masses of people to be conscious of their class interests and why they *need* to overthrow the capitalist-imperialist world system.

To summarize, New Democracy is the first part of a two-stage revolution that overthrows the semi-colonial semi-feudal order, establishes a state based upon the joint dictatorship of the four revolutionary classes (national bourgeoisie, petty bourgeoisie, proletariat, and peasantry), establishes an economy that is in the interest of the four classes but one that is not fully socialist, and builds a culture that is scientific and democratic. This first stage of the revolution lays the ground for the transition to socialism. These two stages precede communism. Ultimately, New Democracy is a path to socialism, and therefore communism, in an oppressed and backward country.

## **History and World Economy**

The CPI (Maoist) has broadly summed up the experience of the globalization of production as one that has intentionally reduced industries in backward countries to minor parts of the global factory, and the Party further argues that the flow of speculative capital—which creates a shadow economy not reflective of the real economy based upon production—has been the driving force behind the increasingly chaotic and disruptive

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<sup>3</sup> The flag of the People’s Republic of China, which has fully restored capitalism today and is no longer socialist, features one large star surrounded by four smaller stars. These four small stars represent the four revolutionary classes outlined above coming together under the leadership of the Communist Party of China.

patterns of production that fuel economic uncertainty (Central Committee CPI (Maoist), “Political Resolution” 16).<sup>4</sup> However, this relatively recent growth of speculative, capitalism-imperialism is not a recent phenomenon. Rather, the CPI (Maoist) argues, it is a development within a larger historical period.

The CPI (Maoist) presents this historical period as one that developed particularly after World War II. The Party argues that the Soviet Union emerged from WWII victorious, showing the flexibility of a socialist economy and was rather popular during this period for many around the world. The Maoists further explain that more socialist countries began to emerge: the Eastern European states that were closely aligned with the Soviet Union, North Korea, North Vietnam, and China. The growing power and popularity of socialist countries was happening alongside the near-total collapse of capitalism elsewhere, particularly in war-ravaged Western and Central Europe. However, due to the privileged position of the United States and strength of its economy in the post-war era, capitalism was saved through US imperialism (Central Committee CPI (Maoist), “Political Resolution” 12-13). Even more, as the Indian Maoists argue, the leadership of various countries that had recently become independent from direct colonialism was beginning to realign with the interests of capitalism-imperialism (Central Committee CPI (Maoist), “Political Resolution” 12-13), thus allowing for growth of capital.

Further, as capitalism was restored in all the socialist countries minus China and Albania in the 1950s—of particular consequence was the coup led by Khrushchev in the Soviet Union, which saw the USSR become both state-capitalist and social-imperialist<sup>5</sup>—capitalism-imperialism, led by the United States, got a further boost and easier market access; this growth period from the 1950s until 1973 was a time of capitalist frenzy. The ongoing rebuilding of Western Europe and Japan, various imperialist wars in Asia that generated demand for arms (Vietnam in particular), the emergence of peace-time arms economies, continued export of finance capital to the Third World, the rapid development of technology in older industries and the creation of whole new industries through new technology, and the intervention of the capitalist state in economies as a buyer/consumer and expander of credit all mark this period from the 1950s-1973 as one of capitalism running rampant (Central Committee CPI (Maoist), “Political Resolution” 12-13).

The CPI (Maoist) further argues that this period began to end in the 1970s due to the failure of Keynesian economics and increasing competition among multinational corporations alongside decreasing productivity/profits, which led to the embracing of the neoliberal consensus in the 1980s as a solution to the crisis (Central Committee CPI

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<sup>4</sup> The CPI (Maoist) also predicted in the same document cited that the real estate market was heavily enmeshed with speculative capital and that it would crash just as the dotcom market did in the early 2000s; the Party made this prediction in 2004, which was shown to be true in The Great Recession.

<sup>5</sup> For a deep analysis of how and why socialism was overthrown in the Soviet Union and the subsequent implications, see *The Soviet Union: Socialist Or Social-Imperialist Part I* and *Part II*. These books are the text of a debate between Maoist political economist and scholar Raymond Lotta and Albert Szymanski



(Maoist), “Political Resolution” 14). Further, there were other factors such as the oil crisis that exacerbated the crisis in capitalism.

The so-called “Washington Consensus” which marked the embracing of neoliberal principles by the main economic actors in the world in the 1980s was a consensus of sorts. While the leadership of many countries began to agree to play by new rules, the Consensus was in many ways actually a path to conflict between capitalist countries. While the CPI (Maoist) does not use the term “Washington Consensus” the Party does argue that, today, it is much more difficult for capitalist-imperialist countries to cooperate, mostly due to the rising strength of different blocs of such countries (the European Union in particular); however, the US still maintains unrivaled control of the world’s military might (Central Committee CPI (Maoist), “Political Resolution” 8). Therefore, for the capitalist-imperialist countries/blocs the Maoists argue, “collusion is temporary and relative while contention is permanent and absolute” (Central Committee CPI (Maoist), “Political Resolution” 27).

In its synthesis of these broad historical developments, the CPI (Maoist) has come to the conclusion that there are three main, worldwide contradictions today: between imperialism and oppressed nations/people, between the bourgeoisie and proletariat within the advanced capitalist-imperialist countries themselves, and between imperialist countries/monopoly capitalist groups (MNCs) and other imperialist countries/monopoly capitalist groups (Central Committee CPI (Maoist), “Political Resolution” 17-18).

The Party’s above claims deserve a bit of extrapolation. There are contradictions between imperialist countries and the countries whose production is controlled largely by foreign capital (this has to do with the internal productive capacity that is being held back by imperialist capital, along with the people in an oppressed country), and this contradiction is what the first one listed above is pointing to. Further, there are always inherent contradictions between the bourgeoisie and proletariat in the imperialist country (owners want to pay workers less and workers want more, and contradictions like this) that Marx delved into in depth. These three contradictions constitute the broad worldview of the CPI (Maoist).

## **Structure and Membership**

The CPI (Maoist) is made up of people from the working class, peasantry, and petty bourgeoisie; if someone from an exploiting class wishes to join the Party, that person must first forfeit all property to the Party (Communist Party of India (Maoist) 2-3). Further, these members are obligated to fight against parliamentarianism and revisionism within the party (Communist Party of India (Maoist) 4). The chairperson of the CPI (Maoist) is Ganapati (also spelled Ganapathay).

The CPI (Maoist) is arranged hierarchically in a democratic centralist system, as follows:

- The Party Congress: meets for sessions depending on the situation

- The Central Committee: When the Congress is not in session, the Central Committee is the highest body of the Party
- Special Area Committee/Special Zonal Committee/State Committee
- Regional Committee
- Zonal Committee/District/Divisional Committee
- Sub-Zonal/Sub-Divisional Committee
- Area Committee
- Local level committees: village, factory, university, etc.
- Party cell: the basic unit of the CPI (Maoist). Cells can be formed area-wise, profession-wise, or production-wise. They have a minimum of three and maximum of five people. Each cell has a secretary that is elected by the cell members. Most day-to-day activities are conducted in and through the cell (Communist Party of India (Maoist) 9-10)

### **Class: The Nexus Of Capitalism And The Reason For New Democratic Revolution**

The CPI (Maoist) says that the targets of new democratic revolution are imperialism, feudalism, and the comprador bureaucratic big bourgeoisie (Communist Party of India (Maoist), “Constitution of the CPI (Maoist)” 1). Imperialism and feudalism have both been discussed already, but their intertwined nature, along with the nature of the comprador bureaucratic big bourgeoisie, will become apparent through the evaluation of class in India that the CPI (Maoist) has put forward. What follows in this section will be a presentation and synthesis of the Maoists’ position on class in India.

As has already been discussed, the revolutionary alliance of classes that the CPI (Maoist) is actively working to build is made up of the proletariat, the peasants, the urban petty bourgeoisie—a class that is a reliable ally—and the national bourgeoisie—which can be an ally in certain periods and to certain extents. Of this group, the Party argues the workers and peasants—particularly the landless and poor peasants, distinctions that will be gone into depth in this section—constitute the “motive forces of the Indian revolution” (Central Committee CPI (Maoist) “Strategy and Tactics of the Indian Revolution” 9). For the Indian Maoists, then, the course of the revolution will be determined most critically by the mobilization and participation of the workers and peasants—the vast, vast majority of the Indian population.

What, then, is the alliance of classes that the revolutionary alliance for New Democracy will have to fight to overthrow? The Maoists argue that at the helm of the ship of the contemporary Indian state is the comprador bureaucratic bourgeoisie class (CBB). For the Maoists, after Indian independence from the British Empire, a particular type of capitalism developed in India—and many other post-colonial states—that was not independent national capitalism, but capitalism that was heavily tied to imperialism and powerful capitalist-imperialist countries for its survival; further, this capitalism got wrapped up with feudalism (as opposed to having a highly contradictory relationship with it, as was the case in countries that developed capitalism internally over long periods) and has come to serve to increase the profits of imperialists. The CBB, as a class, is one that lives off of this imperialist process of exploitation, but is lives in the

oppressed country (Central Committee CPI (Maoist), “Strategy and Tactics of the Indian Revolution” 21).

This idea deserves more explanation. We can understand that, just as the capitalist lives off of the profits expropriated from the labor of the workers, the CBB lives off of the profits expropriated from the labor of workers by capitalist-imperialists. However, it must also be noted that these CBB are not simply administrators of an imperial order, although they do serve that role as well. Quite often, they are also capitalists themselves. The crucial difference is the connection to imperialism: this connection is what allows the CBB to function, as opposed to being capitalists in a state of competition with the other, foreign capitalists. To illustrate these ideas further, in 2011 it was estimated that more than a quarter of the capital in India was foreign, and that from 2001-2010 fiscal years foreign investment grew ten-fold ((Frontier), cited in (Weil 18)). The ideological line on class put across by the Party certainly seems to have a logic to it.

In the rural areas, the landlords constitute the semi-feudal piece of India’s status as a semi-colonial semi-feudal society. As defined by the Party, these landlords are the class that exists in alliance with the CBB and maintain feudal productive relations in the countryside. The Maoists elaborate that this class can be indentified by the following characteristics: owning considerable tracts of land and instruments of production but not engaging in labor or only to a very small extent, living through exploiting peasants and laborers (bonded/attached laborers, wage-laborers, or otherwise), leasing land to peasants at high rates and often engaging in sharecropping (feudal production), and acting as rural usurers (Central Committee CPI (Maoist), “Strategy and Tactics of the Indian Revolution” 20).

For the Maoists, there are more divisions to this landlord class than the CBB, mostly due to the interplay of capitalism and feudalism in a semi-colonial, semi-feudal society. The Party says that there is therefore a section of landlords that possesses very modern instruments of production, employs agricultural laborers nearly exclusively, supervises cultivation, produces for the market, and reinvests a portion of profits back into agriculture as capital to further increase production and profits—this section of landlords is usually also tied up personally in some sort of industrial enterprise, and thus while it represents “capitalism in agriculture” it is also a perpetuator of feudal values (Central Committee CPI (Maoist), “Strategy and Tactics of the Indian Revolution 20).

Why might the CPI (Maoist) argue that this section of landlords perpetuates feudal values despite being essentially capitalist? Since the vast majority of agricultural production in India is done under feudal production, most of the workers are coming from feudal backgrounds and likely live in feudal environments when they are not laboring for the capitalist landlord. Further, since the capitalist landlords conspire with imperialism, it is in the interest of such landlords to not have capitalist production spread fully through agriculture as it is more productive than feudal production due to increased mechanization, increased inputs, etc. In this sense, the relationship between capitalist landlords and imperialism retards the growth of capitalism itself in Indian agriculture, and thus capitalist landlords have minimal conflict with feudalism.

The Party makes two more distinctions within the landlord class. It argues that there is an extremely small section of landlords that has been able to emerge from the backward castes for complex reasons and these landlords have actually formed the basis for various caste-based political parties (Central Committee CPI (Maoist), “Strategy and Tactics of the Indian Revolution” 21). Again, for the Maoists, as a virtue of class position, it is in the interests of these landlords to maintain feudalism. The Party also adds that, there is another small class that exists essentially to collect land rent for landlords, administer the property of landlords, and perform other tasks for landlords that exploit the peasants; this class is paid for their administrative duties by what the landlords expropriate from the peasants and should thus be treated similarly as landlords for the purposes of revolution (Central Committee CPI (Maoist), “Strategy and Tactics of the Indian Revolution” 21).

### **Revolutionary Alliance: A Deeper Understanding**

The CPI (Maoist) has taken Mao’s basic formulations on class in a semi-feudal, semi-colonial country, explained them, and supplied quantitative information on the distribution of classes in the Indian state.

For the Maoists, the proletariat—which is always a class that lives through the sale of its labor power as a commodity to capitalists who own the means of production—is a reflection of the current development of capitalism in India. The number of proletarians in the organized public and private sectors, according to the Maoists, is about 2.6 crores (crore = 10,000,000), and there are about 4 crores of proletarians in small-scale industries, construction work, and contractual/casual labor; in sum, India has nearly 7 crores of proletarians (Central Committee CPI (Maoist), “Strategy and Tactics of the Indian Revolution” 24). India’s population was estimated to be about 1,210,193,422 in the 2011 census (Government of India, Ministry of Home Affairs), so taking both of these figures at face value means that about 17% of India’s population can be called proletarians.

Even so, there are a few more intricacies within the Indian proletariat according to the Party. The vast majority of this class is from a poor peasant background, and while proletariat in India is mostly urban, there is a sizable rural proletariat of farm workers—these workers generally labor for the landlords that represent capitalism in agriculture or even for the imperialists that own plantations (Central Committee CPI (Maoist), “Strategy and Tactics of the Indian Revolution” 24). Furthermore, the Party states there is a small section of the working class that is made up of trade union bureaucrats who, for the most part, get bribes from employers and represent bourgeois tendencies within the working class; while these bureaucrats generally oppose working class struggles and would instead confine them to economist movements, they can still be allies in times of acute crisis (Central Committee CPI (Maoist), “Strategy and Tactics of the Indian Revolution” 24). In this characterization on behalf of the CPI (Maoist), there is a visible tendency against economism. Economism is, broadly speaking, a method of making revolution that ends up confining the working class to struggling for better wages,

benefits, etc. It is important to see the positions that develop as a result of the formulation of line, in this case the line on class.

The Party postulates that there is another class that exists under the proletarian umbrella is the semi-proletariat, a class that is basically composed of peasants that work as handicraftsmen, carpenters, masons, mechanics, rickshaw pullers or autorickshaw drivers, temporary laborers, servants, etc.; the key point here is that these people sell their labor power to make wages, and they are constantly becoming a part of the larger proletariat (Central Committee CPI (Maoist), “Strategy and Tactics of the Indian Revolution” 25). It can be safely assumed that much of this class is composed of migrants due to the type of work being done. As such, it would make logical sense that the semi-proletariat occupy a transitory state and move about through various productive systems as they aspire towards true proletarian status due to regularity of wages and (relative) job security, at least compared with the jobs they would work as a semi-proletariat.

Peasants constitute the vast majority of India’s population. Detailed figures from the 2011 census are not yet available, but in 2001 the total rural population was put at 742,490,639 while the total population was 1,028,737,436 (Government of India, Ministry of Home Affairs). As of 2001, then, about 71% of India’s population lived rurally. It is difficult to pin down exactly the distinctions within the rural populations, but it is common knowledge that there are a small amount of landlords while the vast population in rural areas is of peasant background. The CPI (Maoist) has estimated figures for internal divisions within the peasants, and understanding the characterization of the peasants of the Party is critical because the perceptions the Party is working off of are what directly inform the development of line within the Party.

The poorest section of the peasantry in India is the poor and landless peasants. The Party says that landless peasants work mostly as agricultural laborers (selling labor power) and poor peasants may own very meager amounts of land but are also very likely to rent; poor peasants will also work as laborers for periods as well (Central Committee CPI (Maoist), “Strategy and Tactics of the Indian Revolution” 25). The CPI (Maoist) estimates that poor and landless peasants make up about 65-70% of the rural population, and based on the population figures from 2001 from the Ministry of Home Affairs, this means about 482,618,915-519,743,447 people in India can be classified in the category of poor and landless peasants.

It is difficult to say whether or not this figure would have gone up or down since 2001 because, on the one hand, as time goes on and the debt load increases on peasants due to rising input costs and wildly fluctuating market prices the peasants will often be forced into selling their land as it becomes the only remaining form of wealth they have left. On the other hand, many peasants are also migrating into cities, becoming either semi-proletarians or proletarians. Numerical fluctuations aside, for the Party the poor and landless peasants are the firmest ally of the proletariat in the Indian revolution (Central Committee CPI (Maoist), “Strategy and Tactics of the Indian Revolution” 25), due in no small part to crushing poverty.

The peasants that are somewhat better off than the poor and landless peasants are the middle peasants. As the Party defines them, the majority of the income of middle peasants comes from their own labor as opposed to from exploiting the labor of others, but middle peasants do not generally sell their labor power either; some middle peasants may own a bit of surplus land they occasionally hire labor to work on, and some may lend small amounts of money at interest (Central Committee CPI (Maoist), “Strategy and Tactics of the Indian Revolution” 25-26). The CPI (Maoist) notes that in some ways the middle peasants can be thought of like the rural petty bourgeoisie and make up about 20-25% of the rural population, or about 148,498,128-185,622,660 people based on 2001 census data. As part and parcel of their middling position, the middle peasants can be a vacillating group—and the Party views them as such—but their interests are impacted negatively by imperialism and feudalism on the whole.

Above the middle peasants are the rich peasants. The Party says this group owns considerable amounts of land (sometimes owning part and leasing another and sometimes leasing all land), engages in labor but makes most of its income through exploitation of others in the form of rent or hiring labor (if a household’s income comes from more than 50% exploitation, this is a marker of rich peasantry), and this class may lend considerable amounts of money and engage in small business (Central Committee CPI (Maoist), “Strategy and Tactics of the Indian Revolution” 26-27).

Although the territory between landlord and rich peasant seems somewhat murky, it is likely that the distinction the Party would make is that rich peasants will generally still labor while landlords will live wholly on rents, money lending, etc. This difference is due in large part to the fact that landlords will own much more land than rich peasants, which allows landlords to extract more rent to live on than rich peasants would be able to. The Party argues that the rich peasantry has become increasingly reliant on the market for procuring inputs for agriculture in recent years (as well as for selling goods), and as such is running up against the exploitation of the Indian market by the CBB and imperialism; thus it is expected that a portion of the rich peasants will ally with the revolution, a portion will remain neutral, and a portion will join the reactionary classes in the hopes of become wealthier through the existing system (Central Committee CPI (Maoist), “Strategy and Tactics of the Indian Revolution” 26-27).

Switching to urban India, the petty bourgeoisie is an ally of the proletariat and peasantry in the revolution. The petty bourgeoisie is composed of those engaged in small scale production (such as handicraftsmen), small traders, intellectuals and students, various professionals (such as doctors, lawyers, etc.), clerks, teachers, etc.; the key point for the Party is that the income of the petty bourgeoisie is derived mainly from the mental or manual labor that they perform (Central Committee CPI (Maoist), “Strategy and Tactics of the Indian Revolution” 27-28). Although people that are petty bourgeois may exploit in some small amounts through money lending in particular, they primarily rely on wages they earn through their labor to survive.

There are three distinct tendencies outlined by the Maoists within the petty bourgeoisie that reflect varying levels of economic security. The wealthiest section—which is also the

smallest section in terms of numbers—gets enough in earnings that it saves a substantial surplus and desires to advance to the status of being bourgeoisie (specifically national bourgeoisie), the middle section of the petty bourgeoisie is self-supporting and makes up half of the Indian petty bourgeoisie, and the lower section finds it difficult to make ends meet and is nearly as numerous as the middle section (Central Committee CPI (Maoist), “Strategy and Tactics of the Indian Revolution” 27-28). Logically, the wealthiest section of the petty bourgeoisie is most apprehensive about revolution, whereas the lower section is the most supportive. Regardless of these differences, in times of acute revolutionary crisis (such as when the revolution is actually powerful enough to be openly dismantling the Indian state) the Party postulates that the entire petty bourgeoisie will tend towards supporting the revolution due to its conflicts with the semi-colonial semi-feudal nature of the Indian state (Central Committee CPI (Maoist), “Strategy and Tactics of the Indian Revolution” 27-28).

The final class in the revolutionary alliance is the national bourgeoisie, which has already been discussed in some depth. To quickly summarize the Party’s position, this class is of middle and small bourgeoisie (owners of the means of production) that is oppressed by imperialism, feudalism, and the CBB in that the national bourgeoisie is an embryonic expression of national capitalism; this class does not have a share in state power or state funds, has few ties with imperialism, and exists as part of a national market that is under constant threat from imperialism (Central Committee CPI (Maoist), “Strategy and Tactics of the Indian Revolution” 29). The national bourgeoisie therefore has enough conflict with the enemies of the Indian revolution that it can be an ally to the other revolutionary classes, but it is still a vacillating class.

The final class in existence in India today, as the Party theorizes class at least, is the lumpen proletariat. The Maoists argue that this class is one that is denied all opportunity to participate in production, and is essentially a mass of unemployed people; this class numbers about 100,000,000 people and are often used as strikebreakers, disrupters, or mercenaries by the ruling classes in India (Central Committee CPI (Maoist), “Strategy and Tactics of the Indian Revolution” 30). This class is tricky to analyze in terms of its affinity towards revolution. The Maoists have a shaky position on this class. For the Party, while the lumpen proletariat is cast off more than any other class in India by the system, it is also economically desperate enough that the ruling classes can bait it into the camp of counter-revolution. Ideologically, then, it could potentially be very difficult to win over this class of people due to this contradiction.

### **Special Social Sections**

There are distinctions in India among the people that are not just class-based, however. In particular, gender, caste, religion, and belonging to an *adivasi* population come to mind. How do these special social sections relate to revolution, and perhaps more importantly, how can these social distinctions ultimately be overcome?

For the most part, all of the oppressed social sections (women, backward castes, religious minorities, *adivasis*, etc.) are oppressed by the current order that has its basis in

imperialism and feudalism. In this sense, these special social sections therefore have an enemy in the current state and are ready-made allies for the revolutionary struggle—with consideration of their class, as well. It is not hard to conceive that, in order to rally social sections to the cause of revolution, there has to be a general push against working within the existing system and working through opportunist leadership, such as caste-based political parties run by *Dalit* leaders that are from exploitative classes and will, ultimately, perpetuate the system of oppression against those from low caste backgrounds. The CPI (Maoist) argues, however, that issues such as oppression of certain castes should be taken up through mass organizations without forming separate caste-based organizations (Central Committee CPI (Maoist), “Strategy and Tactics of the Indian Revolution” 128).

Surely, encouraging people to actively struggle against oppression through mass movements is critical in building a consciousness towards revolution. Yet, what is the basis, historical or otherwise, for pushing against the formation of caste-based organizations? The CPI (Maoist) particularly mentions this type of group as one that should not be formed. Would the Party push against the creation of women’s organizations or tribal organizations? It is further argued by the Party that the question of social oppression is essentially a class question and that the material base for social oppression lies in class oppression (Central Committee CPI (Maoist), “Strategy and Tactics of the Indian Revolution” 125).

There is undoubtedly a material reason that, for example, women became subordinate to men over time—there is always a cause tied to every effect. This gendered oppression can perhaps be traced back to a time when women would gather while men hunted due to the material necessity that women be close to children in order to nurse them when the children are young—bringing a child along while hunting animals would have been highly ineffective due to the crying of a child altering game to the presence of hunters. This “basic” contradiction, from times near immemorial, obviously warped and shifted over time to come to embody the modern social oppression of women in the world today. This social relation has come to take on a life of its own.

Particularly after the experience of the Soviet Union, Marxists-Leninists (and the Maoists-to-be) began to deal with the idea that socializing the means of production was not enough to achieve full liberation in their societies. Mao particularly contributed in understanding the superstructural relations (and how the superstructure in fact acts back on the base), and this extension has come to be theoretically solidified as the “4 alls.” These 4 alls are what communism seeks: “the abolition of all class distinctions, of all production relations on which those class distinctions rest, of all the social relations that correspond to those production relations, and the revolutionizing of all the ideas that correspond to those social relations” (Revolutionary Communist Party, USA 10). Social relations are, therefore, intimately bound up with class. Yet, it would be foolish to think that by simply focusing on eliminating class that oppressive social relations and ideas would just melt away. These relations must be engaged with directly and in tandem with class relations. To argue that all social questions are essentially class questions, as the CPI (Maoist) does, is too reductionist.



The insistence of the CPI (Maoist) on educating the masses that questions of oppressive social relations are essentially class questions may serve to limit the potential for mobilization of oppressed groups. Building class consciousness is critical for a communist revolution, but putting class on a pedestal above oppressive social relations may limit immediate mobilization and limit the long-term impetus for people from oppressed social groups to struggle at a personal level with oppression that has an ideological base both tied in with and at the same time distinct from class. The past experience of socialist revolutions has shown that socializing the means of production, and thus taking the first steps to creating a classless society, has not simply triggered some latent ideas in the minds of the masses to oppose oppressive social relations. Rather, advances towards destroying such social relations has been made by mobilizing the oppressed to make active struggle in daily life to revolutionize the minds of those around them.

Compare the position of the CPI (Maoist) with that of the original Maoists in China. Building peasants organizations and women's organizations was essential as the Communists constructed the counter-state in the countryside.<sup>6</sup> Caste was not, of course, something that the Chinese Communists had to deal with. However, the oppression of women in China—which was perhaps the most severe in the world, as evidenced by foot binding—was a social relation outside of class that the Chinese Communists worked to eliminate by supporting local women's organizations. In this sense, the Indian Maoists are deviating from the historical legacy of the Chinese Communists with regard to the treatment of non-class social relations. It should be noted that the CPI (Maoist) has not argued against women's organizations in the same section that they directly argue against caste-based organizations, however.

### **Summarizing “Why”**

It has been shown that, due to India's position as a semi-colonial semi-feudal society and the corresponding relations of classes, New Democracy has emerged as the answer to both national liberation and as an answer to class oppression more generally by taking the road to socialism and communism. The particular strategies of NDR will be gone into further on, but it is specifically due to the role of imperialism and feudalism in Indian society that a revolution of this type has been able to emerge.

## **HISTORICAL TRENDS AND THE CPI (MAOIST)**

### **A Note on Available Data**

It seems that the best example available of the interpretation of history on behalf of the CPI (Maoist) is a document titled “Hold High the Bright Red Banner of Marxism-Leninism-Maoism,” at least as far as documents available in English are concerned. While there may be other documents, they have not been made accessible as of yet. This

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<sup>6</sup> William Hinton's classic account of the Chinese Revolution *Fanshen* details such organizations in-depth and how crucial they were for the Revolution

document therefore is the best data to use to understand if/how the CPI (Maoist) fits into the three-trend framework.

## **Marx and Engels**

The CPI (Maoist) briefly summarizes the contributions of Marx and Engels in the “Hold High” document. The summary is not intensive, but it does not misrepresent Marx’s basic ideas on class struggle, the dictatorship of the proletariat, etc. What the CPI (Maoist) notes in particular, though, goes beyond just Marx’s theoretical contributions to understanding capitalism and making revolution: by waging struggle against various opportunist tendencies that represented interests opposed to those of the proletariat (represented by Bakunin, Blanqui, etc.), Marxism’s ideological territory was firmly established in its first stage of development in the era of pre-monopoly capitalism, and this point is important for the Party as it seeks to historically place and understand Marx. In addition, the Party argues that during this period the methodology of Marxism was firmly established (Central Committee CPI (Maoist), “Hold High the Bright Red Banner of Marxism-Leninism-Maoism” 13).

While the CPI (Maoist) does not elaborate on the specifics of the methodology of Marxism mentioned the exact meanings of the Party on this point has to be inferred. It is safe to assume that the dialectical method in general, but also the dialectical method of understanding theory and practice, is what the Party is referring to. A general understanding of dialectics is that one thing acts upon another thing, and these two (or more) things have an contentious/antagonistic relationship. Due to this relationship, one must overcome the other.

Applying this concept to the theory-practice dynamic will make it more clear. Whenever a person sets out to do some activity, that person is entering into the situation with some notions and ideas about how the activity will go. As s/he does the activity, her/his previously held ideas will either be proven correct or proven incorrect. If s/he was incorrect, then the ideas the s/he had will be changed. To ground this relationship in history, the Party does mention the experience of Marx with regards to the Paris Commune.

Marx was able to theorize about how the working class would seize power, but after the experience of the Paris Commune, Marx was able to concretely say that the proletariat cannot simply take control of the bourgeois state machinery and utilize it for its own purposes; rather, as the CPI (Maoist) summarizes on this point, it must smash the old state or the proletariat will not be able to maintain power (Central Committee CPI (Maoist) “Hold High the Bright Red Banner of Marxism-Leninism-Maoism” 13). Whatever Marx’s conceptions were before the experience of the Paris Commune, he was able to concretely express after it was destroyed that the proletariat must take certain measures to guard against the remnants of the bourgeois state. Marx’s theory therefore underwent a change through practice and understanding the practice of the Paris Commune, which then made a new, more revolutionary theory emerge. This method of

both theorizing and making revolution is, perhaps, Marx's greatest contribution—and this is something the Party seems to agree with.

## **Lenin**

Leninism emerged as the second stage of development of Marxism, which was marked by the period of monopoly capitalism and imperialism, which are both linked as part of the growth of capitalism. Lenin famously declared that imperialism was the highest stage of capitalism, and subsequently it created the most fertile environment for revolution. Monopoly capitalism and imperialism were not the norm for capitalism when Marx was alive, so Lenin's theories represent an application of Marxism to new conditions.

The CPI (Maoist) briefly summarizes why this new development of Marxism was necessary to advance revolution in the age of imperialism in "Hold High the Bright Red Banner of Marxism-Leninism-Maoism." Following this theme, it is noted by the Party that one of Lenin's particular contributions was the Soviet form of government—which was developed from the experiences of the Paris Commune and October Revolution—as the method of the dictatorship of the proletariat built upon an alliance of the oppressed classes, and this "...dictatorship of the proletariat is the highest type of democracy, the form of proletarian democracy, which expresses the interests of the majority of the masses" (Central Committee CPI (Maoist), "Hold High the Bright Red Banner of Marxism-Leninism-Maoism" 16).

What should be made of this characterization of the dictatorship of the proletariat on behalf of the CPI (Maoist)? While the Party does note in the same document that the dictatorship of the proletariat is an instrument of class oppression (the proletariat oppressing and eliminating the bourgeoisie), it couches this characteristic in the notion of "democracy." Democracy is a concept that emerged most noticeably from Enlightenment thinkers, who were bourgeois thinkers. Bourgeois democracy or liberal democracy is, in fact, a certain type of class dictatorship that is suited to the development of capitalism, as the present world situation certainly indicates. Bourgeois democracy came to embody the political expression of the development of capitalism against feudalism in Europe, and bourgeois democracy ended up facilitating further capitalist development in Europe, uprooting feudalism as the dominant mode of production.

The point here is that democracy is not a concept in and of itself. It is inseparably tied to class, so therefore any type of democracy is a democracy for a certain class/classes and not for others. While the CPI (Maoist) does acknowledge in the above quote that the Soviet form of government was an embodiment of the dictatorship of the proletariat and thus represented proletarian democracy, the postulation that it was the "highest form" of democracy is incorrect. Democracy has no "highest form" because it is always an expression of certain class interests, so there are simply different types of democracy. This differentiation is not to say that certain types of democracy are not better for more people—indeed, proletarian democracy benefits the masses of people as opposed to the capitalist owners of the means of production—but to divorce class and democracy in any way does not make sense. The Party does not, however, take this position.

To understand this more deeply, what a communist society actually is be addressed. Even at its simplest, communist society is a classless society. Ultimately, democracy itself is something that will disappear as there will be no classes in a communist society. The concept of democracy is a concept that comes out of class society itself and is a reflection of class society. Understanding the “4 alls” as the guidelines for communism gives yet more proof as to why democracy does not exist in the abstract. The “4 alls” are: “the abolition of all class distinctions, of all production relations on which those class distinctions rest, of all the social relations that correspond to those production relations, and the revolutionizing of all the ideas that correspond to those social relations” (Revolutionary Communist Party, USA 10). The last portion shows that all ideas and concepts are a result of certain developments within social relations, which in turn are built upon certain production relations. Democracy is an example of one such idea that must be revolutionized.

The CPI (Maoist) is by no means abandoning the concept that a state is a mechanism of rule of one class over another so strongly advanced by Lenin. Even so, because the ideological line of a Party will ultimately determine the path forward in revolution, coming out with clear ideas on what democracy is is crucial to making revolution and building a communist society.

The Party acknowledges one of Lenin’s major achievements as explaining the transition of capitalism from the pre-monopoly stage to the monopoly and imperialist stage (Central Committee CPI (Maoist), “Hold High the Bright Red Banner of Marxism-Leninism-Maoism” 15-16). However, the CPI (Maoist) devotes much, much less space to explaining this aspect of Lenin than the room it gives to the discussion of the development of the state by Lenin. This semi-ommission is interesting, especially given that it was Lenin that made Marxism applicable to—what we now call—the developing world. The Indian Maoists do not discuss in any real depth why Lenin’s ideas about “the weakest link in the chain,” and how Lenin essentially positioned the developing world to be the most able part of the world when it came to making revolution due to imperialism. The missing engagement with Lenin’s theses is even more remarkable given that modern India has seemingly become the poster-child of the invasion of imperial capital and the subsequent exploitation of workers.

## **Stalin**

The historical figure and legacy of Stalin has caused, understandably, much confusion in the international communist movement. On the one hand, the Soviet Union was legitimately socialist under Stalin’s leadership, and after Stalin’s death and the coup of Krushchev the Soviet Union became social-imperialist and reembraced capitalism, albeit in a new guise of leadership under the supposedly communist party. Yet, on the other hand, Stalin’s formulations of what a socialist society was were incorrect and played a huge part in the purges and repression that came along. Stalin played down the role of class struggle in a socialist state, and subsequently there was an inappropriate amount of suppression in art and culture particularly, but also in politics.

The USSR was confronting, for the first time, how to deal with the emergence of political lines in a socialist society that would have restored capitalism in the country. This problem was completely uncharted territory and had never been dealt with. Instead of encouraging mass criticism of incorrect lines (as would be done later under Mao's leadership in China, and such criticism was also not without problems), there was a tendency towards simple repression of ideas. Such repression does not, in fact, serve the goals of advancing to communism. All people have to be politically aware enough to advance to and sustain a classless society in the future, so engaging the masses in criticism of incorrect lines that would result in the restoration of capitalist represents, in a very concrete way, a valuable learning experience. So the repression under Stalin was not, ultimately, the way to move a socialist state forward.

Even so, there were great achievements. Agriculture was collectivized, education made accessible, and the cause of women advanced more than ever before. The Russian Empire was called the "prison house of nations" due to its aggressive control of minorities within its borders, but the Soviet Union actively combated such racism and discrimination, especially putting effort towards ending the discrimination against Jews.<sup>7</sup>

There is, therefore, much to uphold and also much to criticize about socialism in the Soviet Union under Stalin given the goals of the Maoists.<sup>8</sup> The lessons drawn from such criticisms allow for the prevention of mistakes from being repeated in the future. Yet, the CPI (Maoist) devotes four short paragraphs to the history of Stalin, essentially summing up the leadership of Stalin as defending Leninism and defeating the lines of Trotsky, Zinoviev, and others (Central Committee CPI (Maoist), "Hold High the Bright Red Banner of Marxism-Leninism-Maoism" 20).

It is not to say that this document of the CPI (Maoist) should go into a deep analysis of the leadership of Stalin or the experience of the Soviet Union, but there should be at least some dynamic of both "upholding and criticizing." This is especially true since Mao himself deeply criticized the Soviet Union and the leadership of Stalin (to a degree). If we take Mao and the Chinese experience to be the standard of comparison, the Indian Maoists have in fact made a break on the topic of Stalin and the Soviet Union with Mao. Particularly during and after the Great Leap Forward in China, during which Mao and the Chinese Communists began to develop an alternative model of socialist development from the Soviet Union, Mao began to criticize some of the Soviet experience and practice. Such an example is *A Critique of Soviet Economics* by Mao. It appears that the Indian Maoists have instead decided to emphasize what are perceived to be the positive

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<sup>7</sup> Russia was famous for its grotesque pogroms against Jews particularly in the 19<sup>th</sup> century/late imperial era.

<sup>8</sup> An excellent source for an in-depth analysis of this "both upholding and criticizing" from another party in the international communist movement, the Revolutionary Communist Party, USA, on Stalin's leadership and the experience of socialist revolution broadly is "Conquer the World? The International Proletariat Must and Will" [http://revcom.us/bob\\_avakian/conquerworld/](http://revcom.us/bob_avakian/conquerworld/)

contributions of Stalin and the USSR to the international communist movement in place of the criticisms that Mao himself offered.

Since this “Hold High” document is the seminal piece on the development of communism ideologically over time from the CPI (Maoist), the lack of discussion of the problems associated with Stalin and the USSR that Mao identified is noteworthy. Has a discussion taken place at the levels of leadership in the Party, or has it not? Unfortunately, no information is available on which case is true. Either way, the CPI (Maoist) has not offered criticisms as Mao did.

## **Mao**

Since the CPI (Maoist) is a self-defined Maoist party, it is obvious that the Party draws heavily from Mao’s philosophies and strategies. Perhaps most central to the Indian situation in its immediate context is Mao’s New Democracy, which has already been explained in depth earlier.

Philosophically, the CPI (Maoist) upholds Mao’s conception that the fundamental law of motion of nature, society, human thought, etc. is that all contradictions exist in a state of both unity and struggle; this notion is called “the unity and struggle of opposites” (Central Committee CPI (Maoist), “Hold High the Bright Red Banner of Marxism-Leninism-Maoism” 21).

This deserves a deeper explanation. This law of contradiction is essentially that, while opposite things exist, they only exist in their oppositeness. For example, the idea and feeling of “hot” only gains meaning through the existence of its opposite, “cold.” If this dichotomy did not exist, then there would be no sense of temperature. Yet, these aspects are in contradiction. This law of contradiction, of matter in motion, explains how things change. This law, of course, was extended to communism and human society more broadly by Mao. To understand how a revolution could be reversed in a socialist country—one of Mao’s biggest philosophical wranglings—one had to understand that the country itself existed in a state of the struggle and unity of opposites, and this relationship also gained expression in the revolutionary party. While some within a revolutionary party might advocate for policies that were ultimately capitalist in nature, and thus opposed to building socialism and eventually communism, there would also be some that would advocate for genuinely socialist policies. These policies are joined in that they gain meaning from their oppositeness, but one of the policies must also come to govern the line of the party itself.

As the CPI (Maoist) addresses, Mao therefore went further in his argument and said that there is both a particularity and universality of a contradiction. The “struggle” piece of the dialectical relationship is ultimately fundamental, and the policy of the party will either end up being hot or cold. Even more, something that was once revolutionary can easily “turn into its opposite.” Unity and identity is therefore “...temporary and relative, while the struggle between opposites is constant and absolute which marks [‘]breaks in continuity[’] and new leaps” (Central Committee CPI (Maoist), “Hold High the Bright

Red Banner of Marxism-Leninism-Maoism” 21) [emphasis in the original]. While opposites can exist within anything for a time, ultimately their differences will force a “dialectical battle” during which one will win out over the other; this battle most critically applies to the battle for the correct line in a party. The Indian Maoists say that it was during the Cultural Revolution in China that Mao formulated most succinctly the idea that “one divides into two” instead of the incorrect idea of “two combine into one” (Central Committee CPI (Maoist), “Hold High the Bright Red Banner of Marxism-Leninism-Maoism” 23) in order to show that capitalism and socialism could not be fused into one, but rather were in direct conflict with each other.

The CPI (Maoist) applies this understanding of Mao’s philosophy in its treatment of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution (GPCR). The CPI (Maoist) interprets the GPCR was an effort to prevent the restoration of capitalism in a socialist society, to prevent this restoration from coming from within the Party in particular, and to establish the fact that there remained a contradiction between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie and subsequently there was class struggle in socialist China (Central Committee CPI (Maoist) “Hold High the Bright Red Banner of Marxism-Leninism-Maoism” 37). The two “outstanding achievements” of the GPCR were the development of a new method in Marxism-Leninism-Maoism to prevent the restoration of capitalism and the making of a “higher leap” in defending the dictatorship of the proletariat combined with the deepest exercise of proletarian democracy in world history (Central Committee CPI (Maoist), “Hold High the Bright Red Banner of Marxism-Leninism-Maoism” 37-38).

The CPI (Maoist) notes that its revolutionary strategy is taken directly from Mao’s formulations, particularly in terms of armed struggle. The Party formulates its strategic stages as strategic defensive, strategic stalemate/strategic equilibrium, and strategic offensive (Central Committee CPI (Maoist), “Hold High the Bright Red Banner of Marxism-Leninism-Maoism” 29). These stages were developed by Mao in the course of people’s war in China to generally demarcate stages of military struggle, with the defensive stage being the time during which the revolutionary forces were weakest, and thus the forces would have to act defensively against the state while bringing more of the masses into the struggle and building both popular and military strength. The stage of equilibrium was when the revolutionaries could begin to establish more stable base areas under the control of the revolutionaries and begin to construct the new state in such areas. In order to do so, the revolutionary forces had to be at enough strength to be able to withstand the direct onslaught of the reactionary state forces. These first two stages would therefore make up the majority of the people’s war.

As Mao developed it, the final stage of offensive would see the revolutionary forces deliver the finishing blow to the state’s armed forces, fully seizing the cities from the countryside and establishing revolutionary authority over the country (the practice of new democratic revolution and protracted people’s war, which the CPI (Maoist) upholds, will be gone into more deeply in the following section on practice). The CPI (Maoist) argues that Mao’s strategies of revolution in semi-feudal, semi-colonial countries came to enrich the experience of the October Revolution because, until the success of the Chinese revolution, the only successful path to socialism appeared to be the method of the Soviets

which was, speaking very generally, marked by massive insurrections by the working class in mainly urban areas leading to the seizure of power (Central Committee CPI (Maoist), “Hold High the Bright Red Banner of Marxism-Leninism-Maoism” 27). In a semi-feudal, semi-colonial country like China or India, the urban proletariat is relatively small, and thus could be crushed by the forces of the state easily. Mao’s path, therefore, gave a new tool to communist revolutionaries.

A concentration of this “new tool” is brought forward by the CPI (Maoist) in its “Three Magic Weapons,” which are the party, army, and united front (Central Committee CPI (Maoist), “Hold High the Bright Red Banner of Marxism-Leninism-Maoism” 30)—these three elements of revolution constitute, quite literally, the weapons that proletarian revolutionaries have in the struggle for revolution. The revolutionary party works to ideologically guide and administer the revolutionary movement; the army works to advance and defend the struggle against the semi-feudal, semi-colonial state; and the united front is the alliance of the revolutionary classes that forms the social base of the revolution (the proletariat, the peasantry, the petty bourgeoisie, and the national bourgeoisie).

The CPI (Maoist) also heavily emphasizes Mao’s development of the dynamic between theory and practice. The Party presents Mao’s contribution on the methodological front of forming correct ideas in the leadership of a revolutionary party by “...taking the ideas of the masses and concentrating them, and again going to the masses, persevering in the ideas and carrying them through” (Central Committee CPI (Maoist) “Hold High the Bright Red Banner of Marxism-Leninism-Maoism” 29). By highlighting this as one of Mao’s big contributions, the CPI (Maoist) is upholding the dialectical nature of theory-practice and outlining how it will go about forming political line.

One particularly sharp complexity that is left aside by the CPI (Maoist) is the situation regarding art and culture in Mao’s China. This situation remains contentious among leftists and Maoists generally today. On one hand, there was an incredible involvement of the masses in producing new and revolutionary art that served to empower the people. Model operas, for example, featured powerful women in lead roles, seriously challenging the centuries of oppression women had faced in China. There was a tremendous push to give everyone access to culture, instead of just the elite. On the other hand, there was a tendency to see the relationship between art and politics as one in which politics had to take absolute command, which obviously had a stifling effect on artistic experimentation. Along these lines, many artists and intellectuals were denounced during the Cultural Revolution as being “capitalist-roaders” working for the restoration of capitalism in China and the reversal of the revolution. To make art completely subordinate to politics will only lead to the, quite frankly, discontent of many people. The argument surrounding art in socialist China requires a lot of nuance for Maoists. The question of whether or not the policies on art in socialist China served to advance the goals of the Maoists is still an open one. Unfortunately Mao himself was not able to offer retrospective advice on the experience, given that the Cultural Revolution ended with his death in 1976.



The situation surrounding art in socialist China as characterized above is not presented in the same way by the CPI (Maoist). There is only an upholding of the way art and culture functioned in socialist China. The Party even goes so far as to say the governing philosophy of socialist culture in China was "...[l]etting a hundred flowers blossom and a hundred schools of thought contend..." (Central Committee CPI (Maoist), "Hold High the Bright Red Banner of Marxism-Leninism-Maoism" 34). This phrase, which was the slogan for what is now known as the Hundred Flowers Movement, was well-intentioned on Mao's behalf. When the movement was initiated, it was truly a push to have a "renaissance" in socialist China. Yet, many people, intellectuals in particular, ended up criticizing socialism itself. This criticism was met with a harsh response from the socialist state, which was still under constant assault from external enemies. When citizens started questioning the basic premises and direction of the country, the state reacted strongly by persecuting many intellectuals during the Anti-Rightist Movement that followed. The response of the state was a heavy-handed approach to building socialism, particularly in the arts and intellectual arenas, because of a perceived threat from "the academy." There certainly were people that would have liked to see socialist China go down, and this threat should not have been waved off, but excessive action by the state serves only to dissuade people from wrangling with deep questions and struggling for correct answers—and struggling against the legacy of capitalism. Such an aggressive response of the socialist state did not serve to create an environment that fostered growth and debate—all things that are necessary for people to consciously move towards communism. All of the historical complexities around this one phrase from Mao are simply not addressed by the CPI (Maoist), and a clear lack of historical engagement is evident.

Mao himself was constantly pushing for criticism from the people. Mao, in fact, initiated the Cultural Revolution with a call to "bombard the headquarters." This call referred to the Chinese Communist Party and was an effort by Mao to call for mass criticism against the possibility of Party members becoming a new, privileged class in socialist China. This summons to shake up the Party leadership was unprecedented in the international communist movement, and Mao's reputation is one of not shirking from criticism.

The lack of engagement with history does not just apply to the cultural front; on all levels of the analysis of the CPI (Maoist) of the experience of socialist China and Mao, the "upholding and criticizing" dynamic is instead just about "upholding." In relation to history, the Indian Maoists are in fact not being very Maoist in their lack of criticism.

### **The Three-Trend Framework: A Lack of Criticism, A Lack of Engagement**

In the final analysis, based on available information, it can be seen that the CPI (Maoist) has a very particular treatment of the history of the first wave of socialist revolutions. Its seminal document on the history of the proletarian ideology, "Hold High the Bright Red Banner of Marxism-Leninism-Maoism," is aptly named due to the entirely positive characterization of the history of socialist revolutions. The CPI (Maoist), therefore, clearly fits into one of the trends from the *Manifesto* of the Revolutionary Communist Party: that of "those who refuse to critically examine the historical experience of the communist movement" and "carrying out the handed-down wisdom." This lack of criticism is rather

unlike Mao's own efforts. By not learning from historical experience in a deep way, the CPI (Maoist) risks repeating the same mistakes of the past, and thus puts its own revolution and the world revolution in jeopardy.

## **THE PRACTICE OF NEW DEMOCRATIC REVOLUTION IN INDIA**

### **Theory-Practice**

The theory of New Democracy has already been discussed, but how does this theory translate into practice? By illuminating how the theory of the CPI (Maoist) concentrates itself in practice, the dialectic between theory and practice in the context of a revolutionary communist movement will become apparent.

The CPI (Maoist) upholds Mao's line on both the nature of contradiction and how theory and practice are related (see the subsection on Mao in the historical trends section). It is crucial to grasp what this dialectical relationship between theory and practice means for the CPI (Maoist). The Party starts out with a theory about how revolution should proceed given the basic overall conditions in India that it has analyzed. The theory translates into certain practical efforts (which will be gone into here) for the revolutionary struggle. Depending on how the struggle develops as a result of the theory of the Party, the Party will then be able to emerge from the practice portion with new ideas and conceptions that can be used to alter and sharpen the overall line and theory of the Party for moving the struggle forward yet again.

The point is that both theory and practice are constantly in motion. It can therefore be difficult to pin down what exactly constitutes the exact theory and practice of a revolutionary movement at any given moment because events are always developing. Still, what follows will be a basic summary of how the struggle for revolution in India is conceptualized by the CPI (Maoist).

### **Two Paths to Revolution**

The CPI (Maoist) has put forward two general formulas for revolution depending on the type of country the revolution must take place in, and these formulas are also upheld by other communist parties around the world today.

The first path is what can be called the October Road, a reference to its being the general method and approach followed by the revolutionaries in Russia to establish the Soviet Union. A country that should take the October Road, according to the CPI (Maoist), is one in which there is a developed capitalism and bourgeois democracy is the political system. The Maoist revolutionaries in India argue that the working class will be prepared by the vanguard party through mostly open, legal struggles such as parliamentary, trade union, general strikes, political agitation, etc. with the goal of organizing a country-wide insurrection at the hour of revolutionary crisis, seizing power first in the major cities and extending it throughout the country (the vanguard party will still maintain a secret party apparatus and combines secret, illegal, and semi-legal activities with its open and legal

struggles) (Central Committee CPI (Maoist), “Strategy and Tactics of the Indian Revolution” 37).

The other path can be termed the Chinese Road. Such a method should, according to the Party, be followed if a country is ruled either directly or indirectly by a foreign imperialist power and is also semi-feudal in nature, and the vanguard party must focus on mobilizing people for armed struggle in the backward rural areas from the beginning of the struggle—therefore the rural areas become the main centers of work with the peasantry as the main force of revolution, while the army and militia work to defend and eventually advance revolutionary gains with the aim of encircling and capturing the cities (Central Committee CPI (Maoist), “Strategy and Tactics of the Indian Revolution” 37-38).

These two roads are, of course, ideal types. They will both borrow tactics from the other, depending on how a revolution develops in any country, but their broad outlines reflect certain objective conditions in a country. The Chinese Road characterizes the situation in India and is the strategy of the CPI (Maoist), and will thus be gone into more deeply here.

### **People’s War and Armed Struggle**

Due to the particular development of capitalism in a semi-feudal, semi-colonial country and the subsequent arrangement of classes, the power of the comprador bureaucratic bourgeoisie and the reach of the formal state structure are most concentrated in the cities of India. While it is difficult to define what it means to be an urban dweller versus a rural dweller in India, due in no small part to the huge numbers of migrant workers constantly moving to the cities and back to the countryside daily, a good estimate of rural dwellers in terms of percentage of the Indian population is 70%, while 30% are urban dwellers (Central Intelligence Agency). Further, an often-cited fact is that India has more poverty than all the sub-Saharan African countries combined in terms of raw numbers of poor people. There is a wealth of information on poverty in India, but for the purposes here, imagining India as highly rural country with many of its people living below the poverty line—and remembering that there are more people hovering right above this line—and that 43.5% of children under the age of five in India are underweight gives a mental snapshot of the absolutely desperate conditions the masses in India have to deal with (Central Intelligence Agency).

The CPI (Maoist) has, as a result of the objective conditions in Indian society briefly mentioned above, upheld and seeks to follow Mao’s line of protracted people’s war as a means for carrying forward the Indian revolution, a revolution that will be built from the rural areas with the goal of encircling the cities before seizing power totally from the Indian state (Communist Party of India (Maoist) 1).

This broad strategy of encircling the cities from the countryside is more complex than it might appear at first glance. The immediate task of the Indian revolution (according to the CPI (Maoist)), and one that characterizes the situation it is currently in, is to develop the People’s Liberation Army (PLA) and base areas in the countryside by transforming

the guerilla zones and guerilla bases (Communist Party of India (Maoist) 1). There is currently no PLA in India; rather, there is a People's Liberation Guerilla Army (PLGA). This difference is important for the CPI (Maoist). It has been estimated that there are up to 20,000 members in the PLGA with an additional 50,000 members of various militias (Chakravarti), (The Economist UK); cited in (Weil)). The most important difference between a PLGA and a PLA is mobility. While any revolutionary army must always be highly mobile due to the advanced military capabilities of the state it is fighting against, a PLGA has very little territory that it is able to "settle down in." The CPI (Maoist) has yet to completely establish control over any area in India, despite its near-constant presence in some places, Dandakaranya and other jungle areas in particular. This lack of a base area is therefore reflected in the guerilla nature of the PLGA. The immediate task for the CPI (Maoist) to establish both base areas and a PLA are therefore intimately tied together.

The PLGA is composed of three forces (Central Committee CPI (Maoist), "Strategy and Tactics of the Indian Revolution" 102):

1. Main forces: Platoons, companies, and central/state special action teams; these forces are highly mobile and move anywhere to participate in people's war
2. Secondary forces: local guerilla squads, special guerilla squads, platoons and district/division level action teams
3. Base forces: people's militia (self-defense squads)

Throughout the struggle, the people's militia will be large numerically and constitute the principal recruitment source for other higher forces (Central Committee CPI (Maoist), "Strategy and Tactics of the Indian Revolution" 102).

To develop the PLGA into the PLA, the CPI (Maoist) argues a few general things have to be done: increasing the number of soldiers, developing good discipline, imparting a high level of political and military training, and acquiring better and large numbers of arms and ammunition (Central Committee CPI (Maoist), "Strategy and Tactics of the Indian Revolution" 105). While the development of the PLA and more solidified base areas may not proceed in lock-step, it is not hard to imagine that both situations will develop mutually due to their connected nature.

### **The Three Big Struggles: New Naxalbaris?<sup>9</sup>**

Struggles over the past five years have shown that special economic zones (SEZs) seem to be the match that lights the powder keg of Indian revolution, and struggles against the SEZs have served to increase the link between the CPI (Maoist) and the people. Special economic zones are essentially pockets of land that become, effectively, the territory of multinational corporations because the government has lifted labor protections, regulatory rules, etc. on the land. The company operating there has near free-rein to do whatever it sees fit. These SEZs have become a new model for "development" and are

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<sup>9</sup> Robert Weil's article *Is the Torch Passing? The Maoist Revolution in India.* Socialism and Democracy 25.3 (2011): 1-81 is the best synthesis of the very recent struggles in India and remains one of the only sources available on the topic; it will be cited extensively in this section

present in nearly every country in the world, particularly in poor countries. In India, it so happens that these zones tend to be placed in areas where the poorest of the poor live, particularly the rural poor. The struggles at Singur, Nandigram, and Lalgah (all in West Bengal) are the best examples to examine how the CPI (Maoist) is integrating itself into mass struggles.

Singur was to have about 1000 acres of highly fertile land taken up by Tata motors in 2006—which is often painted as the quintessential domestic Indian company, except that now about 70% of its revenues come from abroad—and when the locals started resistance organizations, the then ruling party of West Bengal (the Communist Party of India (Marxist) (usually shortened to CPI (M)), a parliamentary communist party) had the state police and paramilitary groups beat and kill demonstrators all while ensuring the property in the SEZ was well-protected (Weil 22-23). For one, this incident shows how participating in parliamentary politics has a sneaky way of making supposedly communist parties defend the interests of imperialism and capitalism while instead attacking the resistance movements of the masses. While the CPI (Maoist) did provide support for the resistance, the movement was organic. Tata abandoned the SEZ after public outcry against the brutality employed to defend the plant (Weil 23).

The next big struggle occurred in Nandigram, a CPI (M) stronghold, where the parliamentary communists tried to create another SEZ by taking over more than 10,000 acres for a chemical facility for the Salim Group—a conglomerate in Indonesia financed by Dow Chemical—which would have resulted in around 100,000 people being displaced (Weil 24). The story is similar, but when resistance organizations began to form from coalitions of various other groups, the CPI (Maoist) included, the result was more severe than in Singur. The goons of the state reacted with their usual violence, but also made a clear point of including mass rape in their warfare tactics. The CPI (Maoist) has been declared a terrorist organization by the Indian state, but what is the goal of mass rape if not terror? Is it not the Indian state that is being a “terrorist”?

Semantics aside, Nandigram was held by the people for nine months and the state forces were driven out; at the end of these nine months, the CPI (M) launched a campaign that killed dozens, burned and looted villages, took hundreds prisoner, again carried out mass rapes, and sequestered somewhere between 10,000 and 15,000 into refugee camps, the jungle, or simply drove them out of the area entirely (The South Asian), cited in (Weil 25)). Due to the factionalism that prevailed in Nandigram between various participating organizations, the people were unable to repel hold on to power. Still, the CPI (Maoist) learned that despite any intentions, it could not rely on parliamentary leftist parties and that the people needed to be better armed to defend against the state forces (Weil 25).

The CPI (Maoist) was able to emerge from this struggle with a renewed sense of how to work in alliances and maintain its independence, both for the survival of its cadre and for effectively leading the people against the Indian state. The Jindal Group was granted 4,500 acres at Salboni in West Bengal after the struggle at Nandigram, and when CPI (Maoist) fighters bombed the caravan carrying the then Chief Minister of West Bengal Bhattachary on its way back from the unveiling of the SEZ for the Jindal Group in 2008,

the CM barely escaped alive (Weil 26). Although such a strike seems to conjure up thoughts of *foquismo*, the state forces decided to strike back against the people of the neighboring region of Lalgah. The people of this region also rose up as the people did in the other previous regions, but instead of creating a coalition the people established a new organization called the People's Committee Against Police Atrocities (PCAPA) that forced potential members to join as individuals instead of representatives of any political party or other group (Weil 26).

The ground the PCAPA was founded on appears, then, to have been something the CPI (Maoist) could not integrate itself with due to the push against coalitions with other groups or parties. The CPI (Maoist) had been active in this region for quite a while, so there surely was a lot of social network overlap. Even so, the PCAPA began demonstrations and the tipping point came in June 2009 when after days of protests and a rally against the rape of *adivasi* women, the state forces again attacked and were able to disperse the demonstrators which in turn led to a Maoist squad coming to defend the protesters (Weil 27). This squad was victorious against the security forces, and the next day tens of thousands of *adivasis* began mass protests, seized control of the whole of the local areas, attacked and burnt down CPI (M) offices, killed some of the members of that party, and destroyed the mansion of the most powerful of the local CPI (M) leaders—all of this was done with the acceptance of the protection of the CPI (Maoist) by the locals (Weil 27).

These three events show that the CPI (Maoist) has not been the agitator in many of the local struggles. Rather, the Party has participated in joint struggles with other groups and sought to integrate itself with the people who are already resisting. The masses should be understood as agents that are working to transform their lives, and not simply as puppets for the manipulation of the CPI (Maoist) as it comes across, particularly, in bourgeois media reports. Lalgah in particular shows how the Party is able to work with those cast off by the system who are already fighting the state. By using its organized squads to protect the masses, the CPI (Maoist) is working to build a positive reputation among the masses in order to further develop the revolutionary struggle. Still, the Party will have to build upon trust in order to be able to eventually organize mass struggles that are larger in scope, especially as the revolution seeks to push forward and seize state power. It appears, though, that the path of integrating with the spontaneous struggles to build trust and bring more people to the cause of the CPI (Maoist) will prove to be an effective strategy for the immediate future. Lalgah is, in many senses, the modern Naxalbari for the CPI (Maoist).

### **Methods and Stages of Revolutionary Warfare**

The CPI (Maoist) draws heavily from Mao's guiding formula of strategic defensive, strategic equilibrium, and strategic offensive when it comes to describing the stages of the armed struggle.

As the Party says, the first stage in people's war is that of guerilla warfare, during which there are no protracted battles, operations are quick, when the enemy advances the PLGA

retreats, when the enemy camps the PLGA harasses, and when the enemy tires the PLGA attacks (Central Committee CPI (Maoist), “Strategy and Tactics of the Indian Revolution” 108-109). This method of revolutionary warfare most characterizes the current stage of the struggle in India.

The Maoists continue by saying that the second stage is that of mobile warfare. A regular army wages war by concentrating its forces in a large area with constantly changing battle-fronts and deployments—this army attacks the enemy at vulnerable spots and withdraws quickly, does not aim at capturing or retaining territories, but rather focuses on wiping out enemy troops and thus during this stage if the Party loses advantage in a territory the territory will immediately be vacated (Central Committee CPI (Maoist), “Strategy and Tactics of the Indian Revolution” 110-111).

The CPI (Maoist) characterizes the final stage as that of positional warfare. During this stage there are fixed positions and the revolutionary forces will aim to capture and retain territory; this stage concludes with the seizure of state power on behalf of the revolutionary forces (Central Committee CPI (Maoist), “Strategy and Tactics of the Indian Revolution” 111). This type of warfare clearly demands that the PLA be highly developed, both in terms of soldiers and in terms of weaponry.

It is important to note that there is not a sharp division between each stage. Revolutionary struggles advance and get set back constantly. The tactics of each stage are therefore fluid and in near-constant use. This three step formula concentrates a rough outline of how to proceed with people’s war.

Outside of these tactical intricacies of people’s war, what is so important about this strategy of revolution? Mao wrote “On Protracted War” in 1938, during the time of the Japanese invasion of China, and this piece is an in depth explanation of protracted warfare (which has come to be referred to as people’s war more commonly today). One of the central problems that Mao was dealing with during this time was how to resist—and ultimately defeat—the powerful Japanese military that had invaded China. This problem, however, was compounded by the fact that the Chinese were severely disadvantaged by a lack of weaponry and the general material capabilities to resist Japan in a “traditional” way. Mao, therefore, argued for a protracted war against Japan. This strategy would eventually transition into the civil war after the defeat of Japan in 1945 and ultimately led to the defeat of the Nationalist Party and the establishment of the People’s Republic of China in 1949.

Mao was therefore confronting the material problems associated with resisting and defeating a much more powerful foe and resolved this issue through the use of a drawn-out war to whittle down the strength of the enemy gradually. But even more, the highly rural nature of China mean that the formal state had little reach and power in many rural areas (at least when compared to the cities). So part and parcel of waging protracted war was building up base areas of communist power—a counter-state—within the Chinese countryside.

Mao himself said in “On Protracted War” that “[t]he richest source of power to wage war lies in the masses of the people” (186). Therefore, the political work associated with building of the new state in the countryside was in fact inseparable from the military/strategic component of people’s war. It is not difficult to see why. In the war against Japan (and the civil war with the Nationalist Party after), the Communists were consistently up against a stronger foe in terms of military might. In order to conduct the protracted war, the Communists had to rely on the good-will of the masses in the countryside. In order to have any safe space whatsoever, the masses had to be supportive enough of the Communists to be willing to give them shelter, supplies, etc. In addition, in order to gradually build the strength of the People’s Liberation Army, the Communists would have to have the masses willing to become full-time soldiers or citizen-soldiers/militia members. Blurring the line between the masses and the Party/Army was, in fact, an important component of people’s war due to the basic necessities of the situation.

People’s war as developed by Mao, is, therefore, not just a military strategy. The nature of the military engagement in fact requires a deeply political component that demands integration with the rural masses.

### **Understanding Contradiction**

Tied in with the strategy of people’s war is the analysis of the CPI (Maoist) that the principal contradiction in Indian society is between feudalism and the masses, and while imperialism is still very present and is a major contradiction, as the Indian Maoists argue, India is not being invaded by a foreign force nor, is it a neo-colony under the direct authority of a imperialist power (Central Committee CPI (Maoist), “Strategy and Tactics of the Indian Revolution” 10). Since the CPI (Maoist) has identified this as the principle contradiction in Indian society, it is yet another reason why the revolution must begin in the countryside. The place where a contradiction is most sharp will mean that the area is the most fertile for building a revolutionary movement, and feudalism is headquartered in the countryside. Yet, the CPI (Maoist) does not separate feudalism and imperialism. It is precisely the interwoven nature of feudalism and capitalism/imperialism in India—as represented by the comprador class being the main supporters of feudalism in the countryside—that necessitates a new democratic revolution through people’s war and the subsequent transition to socialism as opposed to an intervening stage of national bourgeois democracy (Central Committee CPI (Maoist), “Strategy and Tactics of the Indian Revolution” 32).

### **But What About the Cities?**

Even though India is far and away a rural society, the cities clearly cannot be ignored by the Indian revolutionaries. Even though the urban population might only be around 30% of the population, 30% of over a billion people is still a large number. There are great numbers of urban Indians who could advance the revolutionary struggle significantly.



While the CPI (Maoist) advocates strongly for following the Chinese Road, the Party recognizes that there must be more emphasis on towns and industrial areas than during the Chinese Revolution due to a slightly more industrialized country (Central Committee CPI (Maoist), “Strategy and Tactics of the Indian Revolution” 71). How then does the link between rural and urban struggle play out?

Firstly, the Party argues, the struggles in urban areas must be coordinated with and complementary to the rural struggles, which are the more important of the two; there must be a resistance against forming insurrections in urban areas until the city has been encircled from the countryside (Central Committee CPI (Maoist), “Strategy and Tactics of the Indian Revolution” 72). The rural struggle is clearly the most important for the CPI (Maoist), and the urban struggle is always subordinate to the needs of the revolution in the countryside—at least until the final hour of the revolution. The Party argues that it must develop its apparatus secretly in the urban areas, including urban guerilla squads and militia which can mobilize the support of the urban masses in support of the revolutionary struggle (Central Committee CPI (Maoist), “Strategy and Tactics of the Indian Revolution” 72) along with being ready for armed insurrection at the appropriate moment.

As the Party says, any sort of urban military action will therefore remain defensive in nature until the final stage of people’s war and the urban forces must be focused on providing logistical information and supplies (Central Committee CPI (Maoist), “Strategy and Tactics of the Indian Revolution” 140-141) along with mobilizing and organizing the masses (to prepare for the eventual seizure of the cities so that the revolutionary forces are welcomed openly) building the united front of revolutionary classes, and small military tasks—of these final three, the first task is the most important (Central Committee CPI (Maoist), “Strategy and Tactics of the Indian Revolution” 136).

### **Theory and Practice: Joined in Struggle**

The conditions in India, a country that the CPI (Maoist) has evaluated to be semi-colonial and, demand a revolutionary struggle that is rurally focused, and the CPI (Maoist) is doing just that. By putting forward a line that has analyzed the class structure of Indian society to be in accordance with the semi-feudal, semi-colonial thesis, the CPI (Maoist) has positioned itself to follow the Chinese Road in its revolutionary struggle. The use of Mao’s theories and applying them to the Indian context has forced the Party to make its revolution accordingly, and thus the unity between its theory and line on class and the structure of both the Indian and world economy and the practice of the revolutionary struggle of the CPI (Maoist) are joined and will continue to develop dialectically. It is reasonable to expect that the CPI (Maoist) may develop even more concrete formulations that are more unique to making revolution in India given the differences it has with pre-revolutionary China.

The Indian revolutionary struggle is still young in that no base areas have been established yet. Robert Weil has characterized the situation in India compared with the experience of China as “a Hunan but not a Yan’an” (Weil 27). During the Chinese

Revolution, Hunan was the first area that the CPC was able to establish itself in. Yet, the Party was ultimately chased from Jiangxi and eventually established its first true base area in Yan'an in the north of China after undertaking the Long March. The Indian revolutionaries are, in a way, in a constant state of "long marching" in that their territory of control is constantly shifting due to assaults from the Indian state. Once the CPI (Maoist) establishes its own Yan'an, it will surely develop both its theory and practice of revolution in India further as it begins the embryonic development of its state.

## **IMPLICATIONS FOR INDIA AND THE WORLD REVOLUTION**

Theory is an understanding of the world, and working with theory necessitates a synthesis. No theory can encompass every minute aspect of lived life, and so the theory-practice dynamic is utilized to constantly readjust theory to be truly reflective of objective conditions while still moving towards the goal of world revolution for the CPI (Maoist) and the international communist movement broadly.

Even so, professing to be working towards communism does not mean that any group or individual is objectively moving the world in that direction. In this sense, whether a party is consciously or unconsciously revisionist is of little importance because both possibilities negatively impact the revolutionary struggle. Herein lies the reason why Mao said, "The crux of the matter is line." If a revolutionary movement is not constantly and consciously making sure that its line is objectively working in favor of communism, then the movement is working against the world revolution.

The CPI (Maoist) has evaluated the situation in India to be one of semi-colonialism and semi-feudalism that is very similar, though with some differences, from that of pre-revolutionary China. If the CPI (Maoist) continues to integrate itself with the masses as it has done with the Lalgah model, then by all indications the popularity of the movement will continue to grow. The countryside of India is perhaps the world's most fertile ground for revolution, so despite the arduous struggles that have been taking and will continue to take place, the revolutionary movement is objectively favored in India. The establishment of a revolutionary base area for the international communist movement, something that has been lacking since Mao's death, would advance revolutionary struggles the world over.

Leaving aside the argument on whether or not the CPI (Maoist) is objectively advancing the world towards communism, the Party certainly does not hold true to Mao's critical spirit. By all available indications, the CPI (Maoist) has not engaged with the historical experience of socialist societies and socialist revolutions enough to bring forward criticism alongside its praise. Is the goal to simply recreate a revolutionary China in India, or is the goal to take both the positive experiences of China, the Soviet Union, etc. and the negative experiences and learn from them both in order to advance the world revolution further than revolutionary China ever did? If mistakes are not learned from, then they will surely occur again. Whether a party is upholding everything without criticism or disowning the whole socialist experience, both of these trends can certainly damage the international communist movement.

Despite the uncritical historical engagement of the CPI (Maoist), there is nothing stopping the Party from taking up engagement in a “more Maoist” way. In fact, doing so could very well serve to enhance the leadership and direction of the CPI (Maoist), something that would further any revolutionary movement’s objectives of seizing, and maintaining, state power. Theory and line—and the way that they guide practice—are what will determine the ultimate success of not just the revolution in India, but also the revolution internationally.

## **NEPAL: A REVOLUTION BETRAYED?**

### **An Introduction to the Revolution in Nepal**

Just as in India, the Unified Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) (UCPN (M)) is also a product of many splits within the communist movement in Nepal. Until recently, the UCPN (M) was referred to as the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) and received the “unified” piece after merging with another communist party in the country, the Communist Party of Nepal (Unity Centre-Masal).

The then CPN (M) followed a strategy of people’s war as a means of revolutionary seizure of state power based upon the analysis of Nepal’s being a semi-colonial, semi-feudal society. How the CPN (M) managed to integrate itself with the masses and ultimately created liberated base areas in the countryside, following Mao’s strategies, puts forward examples for the CPI (Maoist) as it attempts to more fully integrate the PLGA with the masses in the countryside and begin the forming of base areas and a deepening of people’s war.

The reason why the Nepalese revolution and the Indian revolutions are so important in a comparative context is because the Nepalese situation developed much more fully than the Indian situation as it currently stands. The CPN (M) managed to consolidate control over nearly the entire countryside and successfully encircled the country’s major city and capital, Kathmandu. Yet, the revolutionaries could not manage to spark an uprising in the city that would have overthrown the ruling class and its state. The CPN (M) then capitulated in its revolutionary armed struggle and took the parliamentary road, becoming the ruling party in 2008. In 2009, to further consolidate power, the merger with the CPN (Unity Centre-Masal) took place.

The UCPN has argued that its choice to take the parliamentary road has been a tactical maneuver to advance its overall strategy of revolution in Nepal. The Party has attempted to coalesce its path from people’s war, to parliament, to overthrow of the bourgeois forces as “Prachanda Path,” named for the chairman of the Party. The implications of Prachanda Path and the overall philosophy of the UCPN represent breaks with Marxism, particularly on the topic of the state and class character of states.

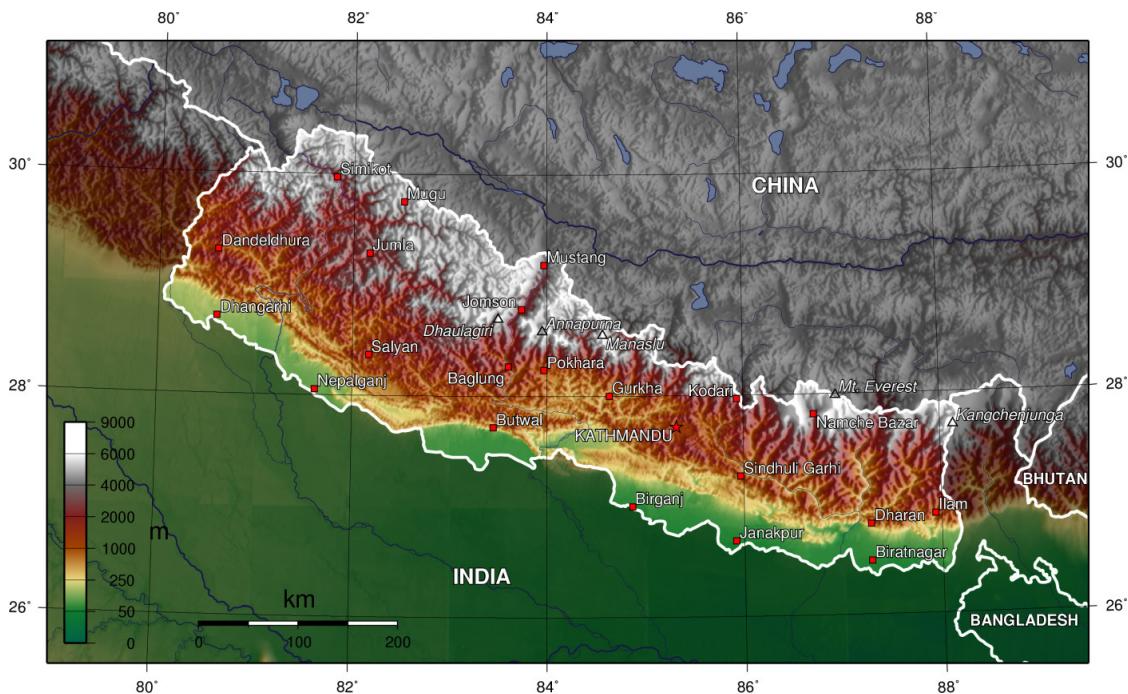
Putting the Nepalese and Indian revolutions side-by-side shows possible paths that can be taken by the Indian revolution as it advances, but this comparative method also exposes

deeper tendencies within international communist movement after the collapse of socialist China. South Asia is quickly becoming one of the world centers of modern Marxism and the philosophical complexities of making revolution in a shifting world.

## **WHY A MAOIST REVOLUTION IN NEPAL?**

### **Conditions for Revolution**

South Asia has a strong history of armed leftist movements (Naxalbari took place not far from the India-Nepal border in West Bengal) and Nepal's particular geography gives this tradition fertile ground due to the mountainous terrain that is favorable to guerilla warfare—these factors combined with the desperate rural conditions and disaffection for the political system in Nepal on behalf of the masses created a fertile environment for a revolutionary movement (Pfaff-Czarnecka 170-171).



(Wikimedia Commons)

Further, in the western regions of Nepal, capitalism was the least developed, and feudal relations of production were prominent (Onesto 84). All of the exploitation that seems to come with feudal productive relations, usury in particular, added to the other conditions that existed in western Nepal to serve as one of the CPN (M) strongholds throughout the people's war from 1996-2006 (the districts of Rolpa and Rukum in particular).

### **Two-fold Imperialism**

In addition to the semi-feudal productive relations that dominated Nepal, imperialism was also an active force. The United States began funding the Royal Nepal Army (RNA) in its post-9/11 drive to fight terrorism (Miglani). Despite the fact that the CPN (M) had no

links to Islamic fundamentalism, Nepal's overall backwardness would be a useful factor for the export of capital to seize upon for cheap production. This familiar situation led to the US's seeking to defend the status quo in Nepal through shoddy logic that really just served to secure capital's security within the country. Multinationals from various countries had staked claims in Nepal, but this was not (and is not) out of the ordinary for less developed countries in today's world.

What was, and remains, much more unique to the imperial element in Nepal is not just the involvement of the US and other "traditional" imperialist forces. India has traditionally viewed Nepal as a buffer zone between itself and China, and Nepal has thus been considered to be in India's sphere of influence. India's history of involvement in Nepal is long, but a series of incidents in the late 1980s and early 1990s gives a concentration of Indian policy. There were many forces pushing for the dismantling of the *panchayat* system (essentially a hierarchical system of officials meant to organize the largely rural government structure) and the creation of a bourgeois democratic system in Nepal around that time as opposed to the monarchy-led *panchayat*. While these democratic movements led to the creation of a constitutional monarchy in Nepal in 1990, it was not without strong Indian intervention. India imposed a trade embargo on Nepal for not having a bourgeois democratic system, and offered to end the embargo through a treaty, which specified that Nepal would not import arms or raise more military units without Indian approval; Nepal would not enter into military alliance with another country; Indian companies would be given first preference in any economic and industrial projects in Nepal; and India would be supported in the continued exploitation of the "commonly shared rivers" in Nepal (Shah 204). The trade embargo before the treaty obviously increased the ire of the Nepalese people pushing for bourgeois democracy against the monarchy, which India tactically desired to happen.

It is unsurprising that the government that came into power when the parliament was created was much more pro-India and that India wrangled many favorable business deals and treaties from this new government (Shah 203). Since Nepal is landlocked, it relies significantly on its neighbors for trade, and India is in a powerful position to assert its regional influence over Nepalese politics and economics. India has used this method of subjugation by treaties before, most notably in Bhutan, which has been even more heavily bombarded by Indian treaties than Nepal (Shah 201). The Indian government has proved that it is more than willing to support monarchial or bourgeois democratic regimes so long as its geopolitical interests as hegemon of South Asia can be maintained.

The Indian comprador bureaucratic bourgeoisie are, therefore, not simply administrators of semi-colonial semi-feudal order within India itself. Rather, they are active in their pursuit of capital investment and extraction opportunities in other countries in South Asia. This "two-fold imperialism" at work in South Asia is important to note, because there is a tendency to see poor countries as all on the same level. Structurally, however, the position of Nepal is different from that of India due to the dual nature of imperialism within the country. Such particularities bring to mind world-system's notions of core, semi-periphery, and periphery. Imperialism is not just simply a dichotomous matter of the oppressors and oppressed, but rather a complex mix of certain classes playing similar

roles across national boundaries while state structural positions remain different as a result of the movements of capital.

There is a case to be made for India as a semi-peripheral country in the world economy, while Nepal could be called peripheral. In terms of relating this to imperialism, it becomes a matter of understanding how much foreign capital is extracting resources and profit from what would otherwise be the national economy, the growth of which is always kept chained by imperialism. The problem, though, with only seeing states in structural positions is that the concept of class often gets left aside. To talk of states being exploited becomes problematic because states are composed of people, and people are grouped in classes within states. There are, of course, those who benefit from imperialism in India and Nepal and are thus structurally of similar class positions in their relationships to imperialism. Imperialism in Nepal might be two-fold, but it is still imperialism despite this difference.

### **Different Place, Same Answer**

Feudalism predominated throughout Nepal (particularly in its western regions) before the people's war led by the CPN (M) began in 1996, and the particular type of two-fold imperialism in Nepal allowed for some comprador capitalist growth in the Kathmandu. While much of feudalism in Nepal was organized into small landholdings with small landlords due to the physical terrain in the country, the *Terai* region (for the most part the southern region of Nepal that borders India and is a fertile plain area as opposed to being mountainous like much of Nepal) had more concentrated landholdings (Onesto 67).

Overall, then, the situation within Nepal was quite similar to that of India in that the economic and social structure was semi-feudal and semi-colonial in nature. The nature of Nepalese society was, just as in India, what ultimately created the environment in which a revolutionary movement could emerge, and a revolutionary Maoist movement in particular. The CPN (M) claimed that it was working for a new democratic revolution in Nepal to overthrow bureaucrat-capitalism, imperialism, and feudalism before moving on to socialism, just as the Chinese communists did and as the CPI (Maoist) is attempting to do currently. The class analysis of a semi-feudal, semi-colonial society was, therefore, quite similar to the analysis already addressed earlier with regard to India. In addition, the strategy for making revolution in India was also similar: people's war through the seizure of power in the countryside by developing revolutionary base areas, encirclement of the cities, a united front of four revolutionary classes, etc. New Democracy was to be the program for the revolution in Nepal, and the path first charted by Mao was more or less followed from 1996-2006.

### **The People's War Condensed**

Through the entire period of people's war from 1996-2006, the Maoists staged many strikes on both economic and political targets throughout the country. However, the entire time that the cities were being gradually encircled during this period, there was simultaneously a building up of base areas in the countryside.

The revolutionary transformation of the base areas and the building of the revolution itself will be focused on here.

After the CPN (M) declared the beginning of people's war and began organizing more heavily in the countryside, the Maoists quickly gained a kind of moral superiority in Nepal (Shah 207). The government, by 2006, was granting more and more treaties to the benefit of India specifically and other counties as well. The Maoists, by going to the most backward regions of the countryside, were seen by many as a heroic force that was resisting imperialism through the organization of mass actions like strikes and, most prominently, the people's war. By the mid 2000s, the support for the Maoists was cresting—many intellectuals and even high-level government workers were expressing support for the Maoists, or at least for their goals of ending feudalism and foreign domination. (Onesto 9). Nepal's geopolitical status was longstanding, and the Maoists were able to tap into both true revolutionary desires of many, along with elements of patriotism that were essentially anti-imperialist in nature.

The global communist movement has had a mixed reputation with regard to intellectuals, so the mobilization of many intellectuals to hold seminars in order to spread political knowledge that was pro-CPN (M) (Onesto 52) was quite a feat. It was also representative of the fact that the CPN (M) was actively working to build a united front for new democratic revolution successfully. While the CPN (M) was of course strong among the peasants, who made up the bulk of the People's Liberation Army, to be able to successfully mobilize sections of the intelligentsia and petty bourgeoisie more broadly signifies that the building of the revolutionary front, and the revolution itself, was quite developed by the mid-2000s.

In the urban areas, there were two main sectors of workers: service sector (hotel, trekking, transport; mostly linked to tourism) and production workers—the latter type were being increasingly decreased due to the globalization of capital and overall imperialist exploitation in Nepal (Onesto 51). Further, there were two types of unions in Nepal: those that were revolutionary and were working actively with the CPN (M) and those that were aligned with the government (Onesto 51). Again, to have this split was in and of itself an achievement that enabled the CPN (M) to organize resistance movements in the cities, particularly in the form of mass strikes (which were frequent during the people's war).

In 2005, an intense debate over line erupted within the CPN (M) (this will be gone into later on), but the CPN (M) was on the edge of victory at this point. The vast majority of the countryside had been liberated, and there were many battles between the People's Liberation Army and Royal Nepalese Army that the PLA was winning (Revolutionary Communist Party, USA, "On Developments in Nepal" 5). From the outside, it looked as if the new democratic revolution in Nepal would be victorious and that the monarchy would be overthrown.

In April 2006, there was a large mass movement in the urban areas against the monarchy and its denial of democratic rights. This mass movement resulted in the bourgeois

democratic forces and the foreign backers of the Nepalese monarchy abandoning the king, and the monarchy was ended (Revolutionary Communist Party, USA, “On Developments in Nepal” 8). Despite this mass upsurge, the CPN (M) was having a difficult time making the transition to seizing the urban areas of Nepal, particularly Kathmandu. The situation began to look as if the state forces would be able to outlast the PLA by maintaining urban control, setting up the PLA and CPN (M) for a further protracted war that would end in the demoralization and exhaustion of the communist forces. It was in this environment that the CPN (M) signed a peace agreement in November 2006 which led to the establishment of an interim government with the CPN (M) as a participant, the restricting of PLA forces to cantonments, and the setting of ground rules for the development of a Constituent Assembly that would write a new constitution (Revolutionary Communist Party, USA, “On Developments in Nepal” 8).

At the end years of people’s war, the CPN (M) seemingly made an about-face and established itself as a parliamentary party in Nepal’s new republican system. While the people’s war had managed to dethrone the monarch, the system that was put in place from November 2006 on was not new democratic in nature.

### **Similar Conditions, Particular Development**

While the revolutionary struggle emerged against the semi-feudal, semi-colonial nature of Nepal and is thus similar to the situation in India, the struggle had developed to a much higher level than the revolution in India has so far. Yet at the crucial moment in 2005-2006, as the people’s war seemed to be on the verge of victory, the CPN (M) could not carry through its revolution to the urban areas. This problem was dealt with by the CPN (M) by becoming a parliamentary party and an apparently betraying the principles of New Democracy. The CPN (M) won an electoral victory in 2008 and became the most represented political party in the Constituent Assembly under the banner of the UCPN (M).

## **LINE, PRACTICE, AND HISTORICAL TRENDS**

### **A New State (?) and Ideological Foundations**

While the shift to parliamentary politics on behalf of the CPN (M) seemingly came out of nowhere, there was in fact a deep ideological development within the Party that served as a foundation to the transition. The shift in line took place over the question of the nature of the state, for the most part.

In February 2004 the English language press organ of the CPN (M) *The Worker* published an article by Baburam Bhattarai called “The Question of Building a New Type of State.” Bhattarai is currently the Prime Minister of Nepal and a senior member of the UCPN (M). Before his rise to power, however, Bhattarai’s article emphasized elections and competing political parties as being at the heart of the socialist transition as a guarantee against capitalist restoration, advocated for the dissolution of the standing army and its replacement with militias, and held up the model of the Paris Commune (direct



elections/recall of officials most importantly) as being a better example for revolutionary transformation than the experiences of the Soviet Union and China (Revolutionary Communist Party, USA, “On Developments in Nepal” 6).

This article did not remain just an article for long, however. At the meeting of the Central Committee in October 2005 (during the crucial 2005-2006 period), the Central Committee of the CPN (M) adopted the core arguments of Bhattarai as official line in the form of aiming to establish a “transitional republic” (Revolutionary Communist Party, USA, “On Developments in Nepal” 7). This event marked a profound shift of the line of the CPN (M) from struggling for new democratic revolution to building a transitional state.

But what was to be the nature of this transitional state? During the same Central Committee meeting in October 2005, the nature of this new state was said to be essentially neutral. The CPN (M) argued that this transitional state would be pulled in one direction by the reactionary forces that would attempt to transform it into a bourgeois republic, while the CPN (M) and the proletarian forces would attempt to make it into a new democratic republic (Revolutionary Communist Party, USA, “On Developments in Nepal” 8). The state, therefore, had no class character inherently and would become a neutral apparatus that would be acted upon by reactionary and revolutionary forces, with either side winning out.

The line of a neutral transitional state put forward by the CPN (M) goes against basic Marxist notions of the state. Marx famously claimed in “The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte” that all previous revolutions had perfected the state machinery as opposed to smashing it. Communist society is, of course, a stateless society. In order to lay the groundwork for the transition to communism (and stateless society) from socialism, Lenin deeply developed Marx’s notion of the dictatorship of the proletariat, which was later expanded upon by Mao. Both Lenin and Mao were dealing with the contradiction that the proletariat would not be able to seize power all over the world in the same instant, and subsequently some areas would have revolutions before others. Yet, since capitalist states would still be in existence as the revolution spread, there would be a need to defend the gains of the proletariat in the areas where power had been seized and to prevent counter-revolution. The dictatorship of the proletariat, then, represented the rule of one class in alliance with other revolutionary classes over the reactionary bourgeoisie. The dictatorship of the proletariat became the means through which power would be maintained in some areas by the proletariat until power was seized globally.

Mao did not call for the immediate creation of the dictatorship of the proletariat in China. As was discussed, Mao’s notion of New Democracy instead called for a coalition of various classes and parties, and this coalition was reflected in the political (and economic) orientation of the state in China. As the economy was transitioned to socialism, the political system was also transitioned to reflect the dictatorship of the proletariat. Still, the direction was always towards socialism and the dictatorship of the proletariat (as expressed through the rule of the Communist Party) in China.

Curiously, the CPN (M) recognizes this basic element of Marxism and argues, “[i]t is the ABC of Marxism that state power is an inevitable means to apply dictatorship upon one class by another in a class society” (Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) 4). It appears then that the CPN (M) itself recognizes that its attempt to fuse two concepts that cannot be brought together (classlessness and the state), but the adoption of the natural state theory by the CPN (M) resulted in it adopting a subsequent practice of parliamentary politics. The CPN (M) is not calling for either the immediate establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat in Nepal. It is also not calling for the transitory, new democratic state that Mao developed.

### **Are Revolutions Strategic or Tactical?**

The CPN (M) argued that its pursuit of a transitional republic was a tactical choice in the larger strategy of its communist movement (Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist)). If tactics are meant to be flexible, as the CPN (M) argues while strategy is meant to give overall guidance to tactical choices, it would be expected that during a revolutionary movement tactical decisions should respond to particular circumstances as they arise. Tactical flexibility, then, is a necessary part of any revolutionary movement. Just the same, there certainly must come a point when tactical decisions stack, one upon the other in the name of pragmatism, and derail the overall strategy of the revolutionary movement.

Has the CPN (M) excused enough of its tactical choices that it has lost sight of its initial strategy of New Democracy, and by extension, communist revolution in Nepal? There is a wealth of recent news on developments in Nepal, and an examination of contemporary events will show the direction of the CPN (M) with regards to the strategy/tactics question.

After the peace agreement in 2006, the People’s Liberation Army was confined to cantonments—which are essentially prisons—as the people’s war was brought to an end and the CPN (M) worked with other political parties in Nepal to establish a new system of rule. For years, there was a constant back and forth on the question of what would happen to the weapons of the PLA, which were kept (under lock and key) in the cantonments. In September 2011, Prachanda (the Chair of the UCPN (M)) and Bhattarai (the current Prime Minister of Nepal and high-ranking member of the UCPN (M)) announced that they would hand over the keys to the arms containers and would also allow the peace-keeping forces (United Nations) to remove the arms completely from the cantonments (Republica, “Nepal: Maoists agree to hand over keys to arms containers”), (Ribellarsi, Updated—Breaking News from Nepal: “Major Protests Against Disarming of People’s Army”). Prachanda and Bhattarai, who have to concentrate the “establishment” faction within the UCPN (M) handed over the keys to the arms containers without going through channels of Party decision-making.

Just as the decision over what would happen to the arms was struggled over within the UCPN (M), by other political parties, and Nepalese society generally so to was the question of what would happen to the PLA soldiers who were confined to cantonments. It had been the goal of the CPN (M) to create some type of “united” force between former

RNA and PLA soldiers when the republic was established, and the conditions were constantly argued over for years after the peace agreement. However, in November of 2011 it appeared that the decision was finally settled. As the categorization process went on, about 60% of former PLA soldiers opted for voluntary retirement, while 40% chose to be integrated into the new army according to Balananda Sharma, coordinator of the Secretariat under the Special Committee (Chapagain). However, Sharma also said that out of 497 former PLA members from the Shaktikhor cantonment only around 20 soldiers opted for rehabilitation packages (which include vocational training and education) (Chapagain). The image that emerges is one of many former PLA members wanting to get as far away from the cantonments as they can without having much to show for their revolutionary struggle. Most former soldiers are probably eager to get home, and thus are unlikely to take advantage of any type of “rehabilitation packages.”<sup>10</sup>

Further, the question of an “integrated army” is also suspect. Since the UCPN (M) is proceeding forward with its neutral state thesis it would seemingly believe, by extension, that an army of a state that is class-neutral would also be a neutral force. An army, however, must protect certain interests within a state. When it comes down to it, an army will either be a defender of bourgeois interests in a state or a force to overthrow those interests—there cannot be a middle ground of half-defending and half-destroying bourgeois or proletarian interests. So even if a large number of soldiers from the PLA are integrated into this “neutral army” (which seems increasingly unlikely), they will likely come to find that the goals of the new army are quite different from the goals of revolutionary overthrow of the state that PLA members previously fought for. Either the former PLA members will become disillusioned and leave the new army or they will accept the new state and become defenders of the parliamentary system. In either case, the revolutionary quality of the former PLA soldiers will have been thoroughly routed.

The Prachanda/Bhattarai faction of the UCPN (M) also began pushing in September 2011 for the return of lands seized by revolutionaries during the people’s war to previous owners, while another faction within the Party threatened to stop such a re-redistribution (Pun). During the people’s war, land was routinely seized from landlords in order to more equitably distribute land to the peasants in various areas. This issue was particularly acute in Nepal, where the rugged terrain makes every scrap of arable land extremely precious. It would seem that landlords will be allowed to establish their landholdings through the supposedly neutral state, and thus will be reconstituted as a class. Not only does this issue bring into question—yet again—of a class-neutral state, but it also shows the lengths to which the UCPN (M) leadership is willing to go to adjust tactical decisions in pursuit of its strategy.

By just looking at the issues of the army and land in Nepal today, it can be seen that the UCPN (M) has made tactical decisions that effectively disarm the revolution by

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<sup>10</sup> As of April 14, 2012 it appears that the PLA has been totally liquidated on the order of Prachanda and Bhattarai (Ghimire). The cantonments have been totally cleared and the arms seized. What is unknown, at this point, is if the former soldiers will organize in any way after their removals from the cantonments.

eliminating its physical strength (the PLA) and its popular strength (through the return of land to former landlords). The UCPN (M), of course, claims that it is still working towards a larger strategy of communism in Nepal. However, the Party has consistently made tactical decisions that have set the revolutionary struggle in Nepal back, quite literally, decades. In its pursuit of seemingly pragmatic ways forward, the UCPN (M) has effectively put forward the thesis that revolutions are tactical, divorced from larger strategy.

### **Current Splits Within the UCPN (M)**

Although identifying the internal dynamics of political parties can be very difficult, there has been quite a bit of evidence emerging that there are two prominent factions within the UCPN (M). The faction that is most pro-parliamentary politics is led by Prachanda and Bhattarai (the same two who have been pushing many of the policies that have dismantled the PLA) and is pushing for the return of landlord landholdings (and advancing other policies that have generally served to undo much of what was attained during the people's war). This faction has been called the "establishment faction" in many news reports. The opposing faction is led most prominently by Mohan Baidhya (alais Kiran), one of the vice-chairs of the UCPN (M). While there are others allied with him, Kiran has seemingly come into the role of being the main opposition voice. This people in this faction are often referred to as the "revolutionary Maoists" (this could certainly be debated, and will be elaborated on below).

In October 2011, news broke that the revolutionary faction organized a secret meeting in Baglung, which attracted many Party leaders: Ram Bahadur Thapa (General Secretary) Netra Bikram Chand (Standing Committee member), Hitman Shakya (Politburo member), and Santosh Budhamagar (Republica, "Nepal: Baidya faction of revolutionary Maoists organizes secret gathering in Baglung"). While the meeting was boycotted by those from the establishment faction because it was organized outside official Party streams, such a strategy mirrors the one used by Prachanda and Bhattarai when they handed over keys to the PLA arms containers without going through Party channels. The factionalism has become so deep within the UCPN (M) that both factions are going outside Party channels to accomplish their goals.

The revolutionary faction has even begun separate training programs for its own cadre (nepalnews.com, "Nepal: Maoist hardliners launch separate cadre training programme"). While organizing separate meetings is certainly evidence of factionalism, creating new organizational structures with (seemingly) separate cadre suggests that the revolutionary faction may be preparing for a split from the UCPN (M).

There have been mass movements launched by the revolutionary Maoists, with a heavy focus on opposing the leadership of Prachanda and Bhattarai (Ribellarsi, "Nepal: A Sea of Torches that Refuse Surrender"). The revolutionary faction has also consistently opposed the turning over of the keys to the arms containers that was arranged by the establishment faction (The Next Front, "Arrests and Beatings at Nepal Protests Against Disarming Revolutionary Fighters"). The revolutionary faction has also called for and led

movements that were pushing for education reform, among other social issues. While pushing for such rights is undoubtedly necessary, the so-called revolutionary faction seems to be pushing for certain rights within the existing system that has been established as a neutral state. As opposed to calling for a return to New Democracy, for example, the revolutionary faction has been taking up struggles that are economist in nature (meaning that such struggles serve to carve out a better place in an existing system instead of making a revolution). The revolutionary Maoists have, however, firmly opposed the return of lands seized during the people's war to landlords and have taken to organizing families and forming struggle committees to oppose the land policies of the establishment faction (Nepal, Chaudhary and Budhair).

Despite the differences emerging between the establishment faction and the so-called revolutionary faction, Kiran has consistently spoken out in support of army integration and carrying forward the task of writing a new constitution along with other political parties in Nepal (The Next Front, "We condemn liquidation of People's Liberation Army: Full text of Comrade Mohan Baidhya's Press Statement"). So while the revolutionary faction may be angered with the actions of the Party led by the establishment faction, it would seem that the revolutionary faction is still supporting ideas of the neutral state thesis by its continued push for army integration and the writing of a constitution that is not new democratic in nature.

Chandra Prakash Gajurel (alias Gaurav), one of the UCPN (M) secretaries, has also aligned himself with Kiran. Gaurav has articulated the belief of the revolutionary faction that Prachanda and Bhattarai should be expelled from the UCPN (M) (nepalnews.com, "Nepal: Revolutionary Maoist Gajurel: 'Dahal and Bhattarai will be expelled'"). This call is evidence of a very definite split within the UCPN (M), but it also raises an important question. What would the removal of Prachanda and Bhattarai from the Party achieve? Since the revolutionary faction has not seemingly broken with the ideological developments that now guide the UCPN (M), the nature of the state and the army most importantly, it is unlikely that much would change without Prachanda and Bhattarai in the Party. While the former PLA soldiers may have gotten better "severance packages" with Kiran in command, the task of army integration and the question of its role would be resolved in the same way as it is now.

### **Coalition Government's Historical Legacy**

There is a long and complex history of communist parties working with bourgeois parties, and even of socialist countries working with capitalist countries—the most prominent example being, of course, the Soviet Union during WWII in the worldwide struggle against fascism. The conditions under which communists cooperated with bourgeois parties have been wide-ranging, sometimes serving to advance the cause of the revolution and sometimes not.

Given that the UCPN (M) has presented its historical tasks as extensions of Mao's contributions and that most of the struggle until recently has been directly modeled on Mao's strategies and philosophies, what then is the historical basis within the experience

of the Chinese Revolution for cooperation between the Chinese Communist Party and other parties?

In the last few years of the 1920's, the Nationalist Party of China, the Guomindang (GMD; also romanized as Kuomintang/KMT,) led what has come to be known as the "Northern Expedition," during which coalition forces sought to reunify China. China at the time of the Northern Expedition was controlled mostly by various warlords in the northern half of the country, while Nationalist forces (GMD) had power in the south. The Communist Party of China, though by no means as prominent as it would come to be later on, was still an active force in the late 1920's and participated in this military campaign as part of unifying China to make it a sovereign state.

This unity policy was heavily influenced by Stalin, who essentially intended to use the military might of the GMD to ensure a unified China that would be friendly to the Soviet Union. The Chinese Communist Party, which had yet to develop much of an identity of its own (particularly ideologically) by the late 1920's, followed this policy.

However, much to the dismay of the CPC, the alliance built with the GMD during the Expedition was broken at the orders of Jiang Jieshi (Chiang Kai-shek), leader of the GMD. As the mostly Nationalist forces began to approach Shanghai to liberate it from its warlord, communists led the working-classes in an uprising in the city before the GMD forces had arrived. Once the Nationalist forces made it to the city, the Communist forces were ready to hand over control in keeping with the alliance. Jiang, who had grown suspicious of the CPC, instead ordered his troops to fire and slaughter the allied forces. This event led to a period during which the communists (who often had dual membership with the GMD at this time) were purged from the GMD, arrested, and executed. It therefore appeared that the policy of unity with a non-communist party had failed.

However, after complex developments and the invasion of the Japanese in the beginning of World War II, the CPC again pursued a united front policy with the GMD to resist the Japanese. This suspended the civil war between the GMD and the CPC until the Japanese were defeated by the efforts of the Chinese and other Allied forces during WWII. After the end of WWII, the GMD and CPC again entered into conflict, with the CPC ultimately emerging victorious and establishing The People's Republic of China in 1949.

In China, there was a real need to unite the country. The CPC's strength during the Northern Expedition was not enough to unify the country, so it worked with the GMD. During the second united front, the CPC again joined forces with the GMD in order to resist the onslaught of Japanese destruction.

Mao wrote an article called "On Coalition Government" in April of 1945 which serves as the best expression of the CPC's policy of unity. In order to understand the period of the second united front, in particular, this document is the best source that expounds on the basis for unity between the CPC and GMD, but also on the more general conditions under which unity between a communist and non-communist party/parties is appropriate and beneficial.

First, as Mao discusses in “On Coalition Government” repeatedly, there was a real need to unite everyone who could be united to resist Japan. The Japanese had developed a very powerful military, and the GMD had adopted a policy of appeasement out of fear. In order to have any hope in defeating Japan, there was an absolutely crucial need for China to stand unified against the invaders.

On the other hand, China could not be ruled by the GMD as it had been up to and during the Japanese invasion. The GMD had consistently reinforced the rule of the largest landlords and big bourgeoisie (Mao, “On Coalition Government” 229), and these classes were prepared to bargain with Japan instead of fighting the invasion—at the cost of Japanese soldiers committing mass killings, rapes, and other horrors against the Chinese people. Along the same lines, China could not develop a national, bourgeois-democratic system because the Chinese bourgeoisie was “very flabby economically and politically” and the Chinese proletariat had been politically awakened by the CPC, along with the Party giving leadership and political awareness to the peasantry, urban petty bourgeoisie, intelligentsia, and other democratic forces (Mao, “On Coalition Government” 229). Further, it would have been impossible for the Chinese to develop a socialist state during the 1940s due to the underdeveloped social and economic conditions along with the stranglehold of feudalism and imperialism still active in China (Mao, “On Coalition Government” 229). Due to the collective weakness of the Chinese bourgeoisie and the developed nature of class struggle in China led by the CPC during the Japanese invasion/WWII, there needed to be a new basis for unity to resist Japan while, for the CPC, still keeping China on the revolutionary road to socialism.

New Democracy emerged as a basis for unity, but it was not to be implemented during the Japanese invasion. It would have been politically impossible to restructure the government while Japan was pushing forward in wiping out all resistance, both Nationalist and Communist alike. Mao therefore called for the establishment of New Democracy after the defeat of Japan led by the working class (Mao, “On Coalition Government” 229). Such a united front would feature participation from various parties and class forces.

The state’s structure would be democratic centralist in nature (Mao, “On Coalition Government” 230). Such a structure was necessary to hold together the government that would be composed of various and contradictory interests. New Democracy, as discussed earlier, was not socialism and as such would develop the productive capacity of China in cooperation with the bourgeoisie. Such cooperation was therefore reflected by the participation of bourgeois democratic parties in the new democratic state. However, this state was not one that was devoid of class character. While the bourgeoisie participated, the state was “...under the leadership of the working class” (Mao, “On Coalition Government” 229). The class character of the new democratic state was, therefore, a reflection of the united front of revolutionary classes, with the Communist Party (as the representative of the working class) in the lead. The development of the productive capacity in China, even along capitalist/semi-capitalist lines had benefits for the Chinese proletariat compared to the semi-feudal, semi-colonial order. Yet, the new democratic

state was not socialist, and as such the political form of rule was not the dictatorship of the proletariat. The basis for unity in China was still a proletarian state, but a different form of proletarian state and one that was not as developed as the dictatorship of the proletariat that comes with socialism. New Democracy was both a political program (in the form of a democratic centralist state) and economic program, while socialism is an economic program with the dictatorship of the proletariat as its political counterpart. As New Democracy was designed to lead to socialism, it had strong seeds for socialism within its structure like the establishment of a state sector of the economy alongside cooperative sectors (Mao, “On Coalition Government” 232) (particularly in agriculture). This was mirrored, as addressed above, by the CPC/working class taking the lead—while not being the only group in leadership—in the political arena, again as a seed for socialist development. By extension, the army during the stage of New Democracy will be an embodiment of the interests of the working class, since that class is in command of the state (Mao, “On Coalition Government” 231).

This formulation by Mao and the CPC can be readily contrasted with the views of the UCPN (M) on a neutral state. On the surface, both the strategy of the UCPN (M) and the CPC might appear similar in that various non-communist forces and parties participate/d in the ruling of the country pre-socialism and pre-dictatorship of the proletariat. Yet the difference is critical. The state of the UCPN (M), according to the Party, has no class character while the new democratic state of the CPC was clearly one that was proletarian, with the working class in command through the CPC. The UCPN (M) has seemingly abandoned the struggle to build a new democratic state by trying to misapply the experience of New Democracy in China. Just as Mao linked the class nature of the new democratic state with the class nature of the army, the UCPN (M) has done the same—albeit in a different way, and the UCPN (M) would likely disagree. The supposedly classless nature of the current state in Nepal led by the UCPN (M) eliminated the people’s army, which says something about the class nature of the state and vice-versa. During Mao’s time, from the stage of New Democracy through socialism, the People’s Liberation Army was maintained. The link between state and army is yet another indicator that the UCPN (M) has abandoned New Democracy and communist revolution, or at least Mao’s theory and practice of it all while still claiming to be “Maoist.”

Historically, it is also important to point out that although there was unity in resisting Japan, the Nationalists and Communists never had any real form of coalition government. The CPC maintained their own areas of power with their own system, just as the GMD did. Understanding the link between the CPC and GMD during the Japanese invasion as a military alliance rather than a political coalition shows that there is little within the history of the Chinese Revolution for the UCPN (M) to draw upon as support for its parliamentary politics along with the bourgeois parties.

### **Summary: Nepal as the Switzerland of South Asia?**

The UCPN (M) has seemingly abandoned that which makes Maoists Maoists, but has not put forward a concise theoretical framework for making revolution in the 21<sup>st</sup> century given Nepal’s particular conditions. Instead, it has tried to eclectically blend the historical



legacy of communist revolution, and Mao's contributions in particular, to maintain a communist façade while not taking the necessary steps to really move Nepal towards socialism and communism. This piece of the practice of revolution of the UCPN (M) is linked directly to the difficulties the struggle encountered in transitioning the rural people's war to urban seizure of power, and such material difficulties prompted the UCPN (M) leadership to consciously choose to (tactically) excuse choices that do not serve the advancement of the strategy of new democratic revolution. The UCPN (M) was not able to theoretically and practically advance in the face of the urban problem, and altered their theory and practice to serve a capitulationist goal. The state's current lack of solidified working class leadership will serve the bourgeoisie and their foreign, imperialist counterparts instead of the vast majority of the people of Nepal.

The UCPN (M) has developed to a point of fitting in with the second trend of the three-trend framework. The UCPN (M) has either not engaged with or simply negated the deeper necessity of New Democracy in its political and economic forms as a means to advancing to socialism and communism. While the UCPN (M) may not directly uphold 18<sup>th</sup> century bourgeois political philosophers, its current practice and theory objectively demonstrates a discarding of the historical experience of socialist revolution, particularly the experience of China.

The path the leadership of the UCPN (M) seeks to take Nepal on is captured well in one of the election slogans from 2008. One of the chief platforms of the Party was, of course, economic prosperity for the people of Nepal. In order to demonstrate this, the Party called for making Nepal the "Switzerland of South Asia" as a hub of trade between China and India (Revolutionary Communist Party, USA, "On Developments in Nepal" 11). Switzerland's prosperity is owed to how it has positioned itself relative to global capital, particularly as a location where capital can be stashed and moved about discreetly. This slogan of the UCPN (M) concisely demonstrates the abandonment of revolution in Nepal.

## **SOUTH ASIA: THE KEY TO COMMUNIST REVOLUTION IN THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY?**

### **Overall Summary**

The revolutionary Maoist movements in both Nepal and India emerged from a similar analysis by revolutionaries of domestic conditions. The revolutionaries determined their countries to be semi-colonial and semi-feudal, and as such turned to Maoism as an ideology and method of revolution. The overwhelmingly rural nature of both Nepal and India created a strong pull towards Maoism as a means to make revolution in a semi-feudal, semi-colonial state.

Despite this similarity, both countries have particular material conditions that the Maoists have had to deal with. These conditions have permitted certain levels of development, the Indian revolution still being relatively underdeveloped while the Nepalese revolution advanced quite quickly. However, the problem of transitioning the revolution from rural people's war to urban insurrection presented difficulties for the

revolution in Nepal, and the Maoists instead altered their theory and practice to continue their existence in the face of difficulty. In the attempt to meet particular needs, the Maoists in Nepal have come to reject much of Marxism and Maoism. The Indian Maoists, however, have not managed to domesticate Maoism theoretically to the particular conditions of India. The relationship of the movements to history and theory is one of huge breaks (for Nepal) and one of little advancement and adaptation (for India).

### **Nepal and India as Ideological Battlegrounds**

The Maoists in India and Nepal have been confronting a problem of history. Both India and Nepal, at least on the surface, appear to have similar conditions to China when the Chinese Communists first began to crystallize as a revolutionary force. The central question that Mao dealt with during the Chinese Revolution remains the same for the Maoists in India and China: how can a party make a communist revolution in a country where the proletariat is relatively underdeveloped, especially when the peasantry constitutes the vast majority of the population and productive forces?

Maoism's historical legacy as the ideology and strategy of the most successful socialist revolution utilizing the peasantry as, frankly, the core of a revolution that seeks to represent the interests and outlook of the proletariat has left a deep imprint on revolutionaries. It is logical that communist revolutionaries in countries that remain largely rural and agrarian have sought to use Mao's philosophy and strategy to guide their struggles.

Just the same, Mao's philosophy and strategy came about as a result and method of dealing with very particular conditions in China. Conditions in India and Nepal today are very different from those that prevailed in China when Mao led the CPC. In Nepal, the contradiction in applying Maoism to particular conditions did not really emerge until the transition stage from rural people's war to urban insurrection. In the chaos and confusion, the Maoists took the parliamentary road. In a sense, the Maoists were doing what was necessary. There was a real need to adapt to the conditions of Nepal to lead the revolution to victory. Yet the path that was chosen has simply served to reverse revolutionary gains rather than to develop the revolution to a higher stage. What was the proper theoretical and practical orientation to maintain the gains of people's war in Nepal all while moving the revolution forward?

A similar issue of theory is lurking in India as well. Indian capital is extremely powerful, more so than Chinese capital ever was pre-1949. Yet the Indian Maoists have applied Mao's notion of the national bourgeoisie to the Indian context. The issue of the existence or nonexistence of the national bourgeoisie in India is one that is highly complex and deserves further study. Is there a bourgeois class in India whose interests are distinct from the interests of imperialist capital, or is the smaller domestic bourgeoisie of India inextricably tied up with foreign capital?

These big questions are just pieces of the problem of communist revolution in mostly agrarian/peasant societies under the conditions of heightened imperialist, parasitic

capital—in the guise of “neoliberalism”—in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century. It may look as if the Maoists in India and Nepal simply acknowledged that their countries had somewhat similar conditions to China pre-1949 and adopted Maoism in response. While such an assertion is rather reductionist, there is still some truth to it. The lack of theoretical wrangling with difficult questions of the character of the state and the question of New Democracy early on in the Nepalese Revolution ensured that such questions would later become catastrophic to the movement and the people of Nepal.

The Maoists in India have the benefit and struggle of a younger and less developed revolution. While the challenges are immense, there is also significantly more space to develop a revolutionary theory that builds upon Mao while reflecting the conditions in India. The crucial question that the CPI (Maoist) must answer is: what is the role of Indian imperialism/capital as related to the world system, and what implications does this relationship have for the building of a revolutionary class alliance in India? The overall “domestication” of Maoist theory has been quite low in India, but by dealing with big questions the CPI (Maoist) can make Maoism domestic and advance its revolution simultaneously. The UCPN (M) largely failed to deal with the crucial questions surrounding the movement in Nepal, and this will perhaps serve as a warning to the struggle in India.

It is hyperbolic to argue that the world revolution is dependent upon the situation in South Asia. Still, a dramatic change in South Asia—such as the establishment of a socialist state—would dramatically change the world capitalist system. What is at risk, though, is not just the state of the world system. The historical legacy and practical application of Maoism and its role in the 21<sup>st</sup> century’s increasingly proletarianized world is emerging out of South Asia. To conclude, it is most appropriate to turn to Mao himself:

“Now, there are two different attitudes towards learning from others. One is the dogmatic attitude of transplanting everything, whether or not is it suited to our conditions. This is no good. The other attitude is to use our heads and learn those things which suit our conditions, that is, to absorb whatever experience is useful to us. That is the attitude we should adopt.”

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