

Part 1 *Armed Movements in India*

Chapter 3

Unconventional Politics: Prelude to a Critique of Maoist Revolutionary Strategy in India

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Abstract

This chapter argues that the Chinese strategy of Protracted People's War (PPW) may not be the most appropriate road to revolution in India today, for India is not a semi-feudal, semi-colonial country and the international context is totally different from what it was in the 1930s and 1940s. The Communist Party of India (Maoist)'s erroneous characterisation of Indian society and the failure of its PPW strategy are reflected in the fact that even after 48 years the fight is still in an initial stage of 'strategic defence' and the revolutionary forces have not been able to establish 'base areas'. This error stems from the Party's narrow conception of practice and the restricted range of vision attributed to Mao's practice theory of knowledge. Uneven development in an underdeveloped capitalist system with a strong oligopolistic segment and a sub-imperialist proclivity makes it doubly difficult to succeed in seizing power.

Vadkapur Chandramouli (comrade BK), a Central Committee (CC) member of the Communist Party of India (Maoist) [CPI(Maoist)] and a member of its Central Military Commission, and his comrade-in-arms and partner Karuna, a barefoot doctor and guerrilla fighter, were on their way to the Party's Unity Congress when they were arrested in the Eastern Ghats on the Andhra Pradesh (AP)-Orissa border, brutally tortured and assassinated on December 29, 2006. The Special Intelligence Bureau of the AP police (APSIB), which allegedly apprehended Chandramouli and Karuna, was however not able to extract even a clue from them as to the venue of the Party Congress, information that would have caused grave harm to the CPI(Maoist) (referred to as the Party from hereafter) and the revolutionary movement. This was the Party's first Congress after the coming together of two major streams – the CPI(Marxist-Leninist) (People's War) [CPI(ML) (PW)] and the Maoist Communist Centre of India (MCCI) – of the

Maoist movement in September 2004. It decided, among other things, to advance the Protracted People's War (PPW), turn some of the nine guerrilla zones¹ into base areas,² the guerrilla war into a mobile war, and further develop the People's Liberation Guerrilla Army (PLGA) – that insurgent comrades like Chandramouli and Karuna had helped build – into a People's Liberation Army (PLA).

A decade after this union of the main Maoist streams, the Party is nowhere nearer to achieving its objectives; indeed, after the launch of Operation Green Hunt (OGH) by the Indian state in September 2009, some of its guerrilla zones have almost reverted back to 'white areas.'³ Soon after the formation of the new Party in September 2004, from January 2005 onwards, the APSIB, having (probably) infiltrated the Party's political structure, together with the province's elite counterinsurgency force, the Greyhounds, began apprehending and either incarcerating or (allegedly) assassinating the leadership of the revolutionary movement in AP. Concurrently, civil vigilante groups, secretly sponsored and supported by the police, spread terror and killed many leaders of the Party's mass organisations. The repercussion was a severe setback to the Party and its mass organisations, so much so that north Telangana no longer has any guerrilla zones. The same counterinsurgency tactics have been adopted with some success elsewhere in India too.⁴ The net result is that the number of CC and Politburo members of the Party elected at the Unity Congress in January 2007 has been dwindling as comrades are arrested or killed. The few who remain outside have been forced to scatter in isolated Party cells. But sheer determination, sacrifice and commitment has, in the past, brought the movement back from the brink of disaster. There is no reason not to expect that the Maoists will retreat, regroup, learn from their mistakes, and fight on to ensure that their comrades didn't die in vain. It is remarkable that right in the midst of the civil war the Maoists have put in place *Janathana Sarkars* – people's governments in an embryonic form at the primary level – in their guerrilla bases, pockets in the Dandakaranya guerrilla zones where their writ runs and which serve as a kind of 'rear' for the guerrillas (Navlakha 2012).

The quest of the original Party – the CPI(ML) whose formal existence dates to April-May 1969 – for an area-wise seizure of political power began even before it was formed. The armed struggle

originated in Naxalbari⁵ in March-May 1967 and in Srikakulam⁶ later that year. A few years later, learning from early setbacks, a section of revolutionaries led by Kondapalli Seetharamaiah and his close associates in north Telangana created mass organisations of writers, performing artists, students, youth, women, peasants and mineworkers.⁷ They then tried to integrate ‘mass-line’ politics and mass organisations as necessary complements to armed struggle, for, as Mao (1934) had put it, ‘the revolutionary war is a war of the masses; it can be waged only by mobilizing the masses and relying on them.’

With some success on this score, the Maoist movement spread into parts of the districts of Nizamabad, Adilabad, Karimnagar, Warangal, and Khammam in north Telangana. It further extended into segments of Dandakaranya, the forest area situated on the border and adjoining tribal districts of the states of AP, Chhattisgarh (then part of Madhya Pradesh), Maharashtra and Orissa.⁸ Merger with another Maoist stream, the CPI(ML) (Party Unity), in 1998 strengthened the Maoist camp in Jharkhand and Bihar, and the movement then unrolled in Jangalmahal in West Bengal. Besides, it had already fanned out into the forest areas of the East Godavari and Vishakhapatnam districts of AP, and the Malkangiri and Koraput districts in the province of Orissa. In AP, apart from some strongholds in north Telangana, the movement had also made inroads into sections of the Nalgonda, Mahbubnagar, Medak and Rangareddy districts in south Telangana, and in the Nallamala hilly-forest range (a section of the Eastern Ghats) of the Mahbubnagar, Guntur, Prakasam, Kurnool and Cuddapah districts.

Parts of north Telangana were turned into guerrilla zones in 1995,⁹ as well as parts of the old Bastar district, then in the province of Madhya Pradesh (now in Chhattisgarh), and a People’s Guerrilla Army was formed in 2000. One of the main achievements of the Maoists in their guerrilla zones was that they helped transform class-power relations. A section of the workers, the poor peasants and landless labourers, dalits and the tribal people stood up – they now had a voice of their own, with the courage to speak out against oppression and exploitation, and fight against their domination. The merger of the CPI(ML) (PW) and the MCCI, and the formation of the CPI(Maoist) in September 2004, catapulted the Maoist armed struggle into an orbit where

expectations ran high. It helped consolidate the armed struggle in north Bihar and the Magadh (central Bihar), and in Jharkhand. Moreover, the movement had also, by now, taken root in pockets (a few villages in some districts) of the Western Ghats in Karnataka and in Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand.

The launch of the PPW strategy in India goes back 48 years. Now, if one were to date the beginning of the PPW undertaking to where it originated in the Hunan province of China in 1927, then the ‘new democratic revolution’ (NDR) took 22 years, from 1927 to 1949, to bring the Communist Party of China (CCP) to power in mainland China.¹⁰ If 22 years of people’s war deserves the appellation ‘protracted,’ then the passage of 48 years in India in the first stage of the PPW, that of the ‘strategic defensive,’ calls for a critique of the choice of such a strategy – the whole set of politics, the forms of political organisation, the entire question of how to take power in a country like India. While revolutionary violence is a necessary evil, I do not think that the PPW of the Chinese Revolution can be successfully copied to bring about revolution in India. In the PPW model, the PLA and the Communist Party rely on peasants and rural proletarians to build rural base areas, carry out ‘land to the tiller,’ ‘full rights to the forests,’ and other social policies in these areas (run democratically as miniature, self-reliant states) thereby building up a political mass base in the countryside to finally encircle and ‘capture’ (politically win over) the cities. There is thus territorial dual power in the course of the revolution, with the communists in power in these self-administered, liberated areas.

I argue that the Indian revolution cannot be a repeat of such a model, for India is not a semi-feudal, semi-colonial country, and the international context is totally different today¹¹ from what it was in the 1930s and 1940s. But first it is necessary to state a clear view of history and the present, since the here and now is the outcome of more than four centuries of the history of capitalism, right since its beginnings in the process of primitive accumulation. Capitalism, based as it is on the exploitation of the labour of human beings and of nature, generates inequality and, when it works with ‘the gloves off’, as it does today, exploitation is greatly exacerbated. It has created islands of wealth, luxury and civilization in a vast sea of poverty, misery and degradation. On the one hand, there are what Samir Amin (2003) has called the ‘precarious

classes' (they constitute more than 90% of the workforce in India) that are denied the right to live and work with dignity, and on the other, a minority that has appropriated for itself – and for those who manage the system on its behalf – most of the wealth, luxury and fruits of civilisation that human labour and ingenuity has produced, and now, humanity and other forms of life are heading towards catastrophe as a result of the cumulative ecological degradation that capitalism has caused.

People's Wars and revolutions – costly in terms of human lives and suffering – are not as much a matter of preference as of necessity; they spring from the internal contradictions of the capitalist-imperialist system. Tragically, so far, they have not succeeded in doing away with the very system (capitalism-imperialism) that breeds them. The dominant classes have managed, by doing all they could (including armed counter-revolution), to preserve their monopoly over wealth, privilege and power. The question therefore is not whether revolution will take place but how, this time around, it can possibly succeed in doing away with the system that continues to breed it.

In India, the costs of maintaining the status quo are atrociously extortionate for the exploited, the dominated and the oppressed – who constitute the majority – and yet there is an overwhelming bias in elite circles against revolutionary violence, which has become a tragic necessity. Need we remind the elite that the costs to the exploited, the dominated and the oppressed of going without a revolution are accumulating at an atrocious rate, including the tragedies of the victims of Hindutvadi proto-fascism and the long army occupations of the Kashmir Valley and parts of the North-East.

Let us then come to the layout of this chapter. Section 2 critically comments on the Party's understanding of Maoism and pleads for a fresh approach in which Maoism is conceived of as open-ended and adaptable to new and changing historical situations. Such a perspective calls for a widening of the range of vision attributed to Mao's practice theory of knowledge. Sections 3 and 4 critically examine the Maoist thesis that India is semi-feudal and semi-colonial. India is an underdeveloped capitalist country¹² with one of the most dynamic bourgeoisies in the periphery

of the world capitalist system. Section 5 argues that India is exhibiting tendencies that seem to suggest that it is on the road to emerging as a sub-imperialist power.

From all this it is clear that the principal contradiction is certainly not what the CPI(Maoist) claims it is, namely, the contradiction between caste-based semi-feudalism and the broad masses of the people. Section 6 contends that the Party's wrong identification of the *principal* contradiction among the set of four major contradictions – internal conflicts tending to split the functionally united Indian socio-economic system – compounds its errors in the strategic realm. The Party's errors in understanding the nature of Indian society, the character of the state, the main contradictions and in pinpointing the principal contradiction leads it seriously to underestimate the stability, power and strength of the Indian state, the economy, and the ruling classes. Uneven development in an underdeveloped capitalist system is fundamentally different from uneven development in a semi-feudal, semi-colonial one, which makes it doubly difficult to succeed even in the first stage of the PPW, 'the strategic defensive,' and establish base areas. Given that the Indian system is not semi-feudal and semi-colonial, its internal logic and contradictions have not produced the main characteristics that semi-feudal, semi-colonial China had in its pre-revolutionary period. Section 7 puts together the various elements of this prelude to a critique of Maoist revolutionary strategy in India and suggests that the Maoists need to attribute a wider range of vision to Mao's practice theory of knowledge and take a hard look again at the abyss that is India – its history, economy, society and polity, and potentialities – and then, after a radical self-critical review, reformulate their political programme, strategy and tactics anew.¹³

An Approach to Maoism

'Marxist-Leninist-Maoist theory' has been the main guiding light in the CPI(Maoist)'s understanding of Indian society, its class structure and contradictions, and the nature of the Indian state. This theory has provided the basis for the Party Programme that has guided the formulation of strategy, which in turn has shown the way to tactics. Given this logical framework of the Party's approach to revolutionary strategy and tactics, we first need to examine the

CPI(Maoist)'s understanding of Marxism-Leninism-Maoism.

According to the Party, Marxism, founded by Marx and Engels, was developed by Lenin and Stalin into Marxism-Leninism (M-L), and Mao later took the doctrine to its present (third) stage (CPI(Maoist) 2004). Mao is considered the true interpreter of Marx, Lenin and Stalin. His 'strategy and tactics,' 'military science,' 'theory of New Democracy' and the New Democratic Revolution (NDR), his 'theory regarding the nature and the path of the revolution for the colonial, semi-colonial and semi-feudal countries' of 'following the path and the principles underlying the strategy and tactics of the Chinese revolution,' his 'basic method of leadership' in the 'mass line,' his 'three magic weapons' – the Party, the PLA and the four-class Revolutionary United Front (RUF) – his further development of Lenin's ideas on imperialism and the national question, etc. are all considered the latest 'proletarian science.' The Party tract concludes thus: '*Maoism is the Marxism-Leninism of the present-day*'. Indeed, '[t]o negate Maoism is to negate Marxism-Leninism itself' (2004: 39; my emphasis).

What does one make of this 'ideology'? At one time Joseph Stalin was considered the infallible 'applier' of M-L, the great social engineer; now, it is Mao, more than 75 years after he formulated some of his main ideas. Indeed, if what is important to Marxism is its method, then even this is reduced to orthodoxy, for it is Mao's 'On Contradiction' (1937) and 'On Practice' (1937) that are considered the last word on such method.

Contrary to the Party, in my view, Maoism, based, as it was, on a particular version of the M-L of Lenin's and Stalin's times, evolved in the context of China's backwardness and its peasant-based, militarised communist party-led revolutionary movement. A Marxist understanding of it (D'Mello 2010: 21-54) is perhaps the best way to begin. From such a study, in my view, the distinctive features of Maoism are the following:

- An '-ism' that is (or rather, *should be*) open-ended and adaptable to new and changing historical situations, wide open to empirical evidence and thus able to grapple with social reality as it unfolds;

- The postulation of open-ended interrelations among and between the forces of production, the relations of production, and the superstructure;
- Stress on egalitarianism even where the forces of production have not yet been developed enough to produce and satisfy all reasonable human needs (notion of the ‘iron rice bowl’);
- A ‘practice theory of knowledge’ – ‘practice, knowledge, again practice, and again knowledge,’ ‘repeating itself in ... cycles,’ but, with each cycle, the content of practice and knowledge raised to a higher level (Mao 1937);
- In a semi-feudal, semi-colonial country, the poor peasantry and rural landless wage-workers of the interior rather than the urban proletariat constitute the mass support base of the revolutionary movement;¹⁴
- The central idea that contradictions – the struggle between functionally united opposites – at each stage drive the process of development on the way to socialism, which is sought to be brought about in a series of stages, where the existing stage, at the right time, is impregnated with the hybrid seeds of the subsequent one, thereby dissolving the salient contradictions of the former and ushering in the latter;
- A theory of revolution by stages as well as ‘uninterrupted revolution,’ implying a close link between successive stages and an imperative that the political party and other organisations of the revolutionary classes leading and continuing the revolution must be free of all the debilitating influences coming from the exploiting classes and need to maintain their independence and uncompromising opposition to those classes if the revolution is to be taken to its logical end;
- An incisive critique of Stalin’s philosophy, politics and economics, and especially, a rejection of the Stalinist practice of ‘primitive socialist accumulation’ which was against the interests of the peasantry and, in fact, dealt a severe blow to the worker-peasant alliance in the Soviet Union, and led to the build-up of a many-times-more repressive state there;
- Progression from land to the tiller to mutual aid teams, and then to *elementary* cooperatives (where incomes are based on productive capital ownership *and* on labour time committed to cooperative production with the ratio of the labour to capital share of net output increasing over time), followed by *advanced* cooperatives (wherein the capital share of net

output is done away with), and, over a period of time, turning the latter into larger units of collective economy and government – the communes;

- Democratic centralism (‘freedom of discussion, unity of action’) *plus* the ‘mass line’ (the leadership principle ‘from the masses, to the masses’) thereby ensuring that ‘democracy’ doesn’t take a backseat to ‘centralism’ and the Party vanguard genuinely legitimises its guidance of the people by following certain participatory democratic methods of programme formulation and implementation (Mao 1943; Young 1980). Practice of the mass line must also be seen as a process of collective learning and an application of Mao’s practice theory of knowledge;
- In the period of transition to socialism, the need for a series of Cultural Revolutions (CRs) – mass mobilisation and initiative on the part of students, workers and peasants in major ‘class struggles’ against a powerful and privileged stratum that has a tendency to emerge in the party, the government, the enterprises, the communes, the educational system, and so on, and which develops a stake in maintaining its favoured position and passing it on to its progeny (a ruling class in the making);¹⁵
- For semi-feudal, semi-colonial countries, the stage of NDR, which does away with semi-feudalism, frees the country from imperialist domination, and renders the big bourgeoisie politically impotent by expropriating its wealth, thereby making capitalism much more compatible with democracy, and aiding the transition to socialism;
- For the NDR, the revolutionary path and strategy is one of PPW with the PLA and the Communist Party at its core, which (as already mentioned) relies on the peasants, builds rural base areas, carries out ‘land to the tiller’ and other social policies in these areas (run democratically as miniature, self-reliant states) thereby building up a political mass base in the countryside to finally encircle and ‘capture’ (politically win over) the cities;
- A conception of ‘base areas’ – self-administered, liberated areas, miniature ‘new democratic’ republics of the revolutionary forces, albeit under siege, but serving as places of refuge and remobilization for the PLA – and the way to establishing them;
- The importance of women’s emancipation (‘women hold up half the sky’) even during the NDR; and,

- ‘Capturing’ (winning mass support in) the cities by demonstrating a brand of nationalism that is genuinely anti-imperialist, thereby re-orienting an existing mass nationalist upsurge in favour of the completion of the NDR.

What emerges is not simply the application of Marxist-Leninist principles in the Chinese context, but an ‘-ism’ that is collective, international and universal in its connotation. And, in keeping with its openness, it then becomes a guide to revolutionary change not merely in semi-feudal, semi-colonial countries, but all over the periphery of the world capitalist system.

But in the context of its application to understanding and changing Indian society, it might be relevant to highlight the –ism’s practice theory of knowledge (Mao 1937). What is meant by the Maoist maxim ‘learn truth from practice?’ As I understand it, the saying exhorts us to learn truth ‘from history, from economics and politics ... from the real world of social relations and class struggle’ (Sweezy 1985: 1) in combination with and from one’s own political practice. In keeping with this, Maoists need to take a hard relook into the abyss that is India – its history, economy, polity and society, and potentialities while formulating their strategy and tactics. The failure of the PPW to advance even within the initial stage, that of the ‘strategic defensive,’ after 48 years of the practice of armed struggle calls for a radical, self-critical review of the same. Mao offered no one revolutionary path for all times and places, but he left us with his *Weltanschauung*, his method of analysis – materialist dialectics– his values and his vision.

Knowledge which is subordinated to practice, narrowly conceived, will be incapable of guiding it to achieve its goals. This is precisely because if knowledge has to serve the goals of a particular practice, it needs a wider range of vision than the one defined by the immediate goals of that specific practice. I mention this because I think that Maoist knowledge *and* practice in India have suffered due to a reluctance to even admit to, let alone transcend the restricted range of vision attributed to Mao’s *practice* theory of knowledge. Take, for instance, the Maoist thesis that Indian society is semi-feudal – which I will look at next – formulated mainly from knowledge derived from their political practice in the most underdeveloped areas of rural India. Instead of concluding from their deep knowledge of such districts that Indian society as a whole

is semi-feudal, a wider vision would suggest that the process of capitalist development is marked by persistent disparities across regions – and even spatially within regions – in the levels and rates of socio-economic development, and that such uneven development is an intrinsic characteristic of the capitalist economic process itself. Marx’s method tells us that the truth is in the whole, arrived at from an explanation of ‘facts’ generated through historical and empirical research. It cannot be arrived at solely on the basis of the fragments of knowledge derived from one’s own practice alone.

Let us then move on to the main Maoist formulations on India.

Is Indian Society Semi-Feudal?

The CPI(Maoist) believes that Indian society is ‘semi-colonial and semi-feudal under a neo-colonial form of indirect rule, exploitation and control,’¹⁶ and in this it adheres to what the original CPI(ML) held in its first Party Congress in 1970. In the interplay of continuity with change, the Party seems to emphasise continuity rather than change. Indeed, if one looks at the Party Programme adopted by the original CPI(Marxist-Leninist) at its first Party Congress in May 1970 and compares this with the Party Programme established at the time of the merger and formation of the new Party in September 2004 (CPI(Maoist) 2004b) or the one passed at the first Congress of the CPI(Maoist) in 2007 (CPI(Maoist) 2007a), in the characterisation of Indian society as semi-colonial and semi-feudal, the character of the Indian state, the four major contradictions, the two fundamental contradictions, the principal contradiction, the character of the Indian big bourgeoisie, the stage of the Indian revolution, the four-class RUF, and so on, they are all essentially the same.

I do not agree with the CPI(Maoist)’s characterisation of Indian society as semi-feudal¹⁷ and the proposition that the contradiction between feudalism and the ‘broad masses of the people’ is the *principal* contradiction.¹⁸ The semi-feudal thesis has already been the subject of a scholarly debate in the 1970s,¹⁹ but we need to pose the main questions from a more radical perspective. Doesn’t the CPI(Maoist)’s understanding that unless ‘free labour’ (in the double sense)²⁰ in

Indian agriculture becomes generalised, the system is still semi-feudal, smacking of an 'ideal-type,' un-Marxist approach? As things stand, the big landlords own a relatively small proportion of the total arable land and semi-feudal tenancy is a minor part of the system of land tenure, though poor peasants eking out a living through intensive labour on the small plots of land that they own or lease, low crop yields, inadequate reinvestment of the surplus, caste oppression and subjugation, usury and high merchant margins, are all widespread (Basole and Basu 2011).

What then of the predicament of poor peasants? Are they subject to semi-feudal exploitation? Should we view the extraction of high merchant margins, usurious rates of interest, and for a small proportion of the poor peasants, extortionate rates of rent, all as forms of semi-feudal exploitation? In answering 'no,' I recall Marx's sharp comment on the plight of the small peasant in *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte, 1848-1850*:

... [I]n the course of the nineteenth century the urban usurer replaced the feudal one, the mortgage replaced the feudal obligation, bourgeois capital replaced aristocratic landed property. The peasant's small holding is now only the pretext that allows the capitalist to draw profits, interest, and rent from the soil, while leaving it to the agriculturist himself to see to it how he can extract his wages. (Marx 1937 [1852]: 64)

If this is, to an extent, the predicament of Indian poor peasants too, then, for all practical purposes, are not a significant proportion of them already virtually a part of the rural proletariat? We are reminded of the following comment from Lenin in the conclusion of chapter 2 on the 'Differentiation of the Peasantry' in his classic *The Development of Capitalism in Russia* (1899), made after arguing why a significant proportion of the poor peasants already virtually belong to the rural proletariat:

...our literature frequently contains too stereotyped an understanding of the theoretical proposition that capitalism requires the free, landless worker. This proposition is quite correct as indicating the main trend, but *capitalism penetrates into agriculture particularly slowly and in extremely varied forms*. ... In assigning the indigent peasants to the rural

proletariat we are saying nothing new. ...*the mass of the “peasantry” have already taken a quite definite place in the general system of capitalist production.* (Lenin 1964 [1899]: 178-179, my emphasis)

If we compare Lenin’s comment on the situation of poor peasants in backward Russian agriculture at the end of the 19th century to Marx’s astute reflection on the plight of peasants in the undeveloped French agricultural sector of the 1840s, the two remarks suggest that both Marx and Lenin chose to understand the predicament of French and Russian peasants in their historical transformation – for both authors those peasants were no longer subject to the feudal relations of production that they had historically emerged from. Nevertheless, the classic *peasant question* in a country like India, namely, how to draw the majority of the peasantry into a revolutionary movement, is more complex than elsewhere. For we have in the Indian middle and rich peasants, not only a combination of the proprietor *and* the worker, but also one imbued with *caste* consciousness, which drives him or her to strive to give up the use of family labour in tilling the soil and other manual tasks, and this is the biggest impediment to his or her solidarity with the poor peasant and the landless labourer. The institution of caste impedes class solidarity and class consciousness, and buttresses landlordism.

In this context, if one goes by the National Sample Survey (NSS) data on ‘Household Assets and Liabilities in India’ for the year 2002, then over the years 1981-2002 a new set of landlords in the form of ‘non-cultivating peasant households’ (NCPHs) have appeared on the Indian rural scene, except in Haryana and Punjab (Vijay 2012), and they appear to have emerged mainly from the ranks of rich peasants, even in areas like the Krishna-Godavari belt which used to be a bastion of the latter.²¹ Interestingly, the data also show a more or less stable proportion of agricultural labour households in total rural households – 14.6% in 1971, 11.3% in 1981, 14.2% in 1991, and 14.4% in 2002. Further, over time, land does not seem to be getting concentrated in the hands of the rich peasants. Village survey data (nine villages in Andhra Pradesh)²² show that although these NCPHs constitute 5.5% of the rural households, they own 19.6% of the land. They are the major player on the lessor side of the land lease market, where poor peasants are by far the largest lessees. And the NCPHs are the only net purchaser of land among the different categories

of households residing in the village.

What conclusion might one then draw from the facts in Basole and Basu (2011) and Vijay (2012) and the functional logic in Marx's and Lenin's writings with regard to the question of whether semi-feudalism or underdeveloped capitalism prevails in Indian agriculture? All we can possibly say is that capitalism has to be understood in its historical coming-to-be. Underdeveloped capitalism in the contemporary setting has retained 'un-free labour,' usurious credit, high absolute rent (in some pockets), and high trade margins. These modes of exploitation along with 'backwardness,' namely, the lack of development of the productive forces in agriculture and unorganised industry and services, make for low wages in the advanced part (the plantations and capitalist agriculture, more generally, and organised industry and services) of the economy, even though labour productivity is high there. Indeed, all these attributes are the markers of exploitation in an underdeveloped capitalist system, characterised as it is by various forms, including that of 'free labour.' The relations of production between landlords, old and new, and their poor peasant-tenants may appear to be semi-feudal, but the former are wholly oriented towards the national (and even, in some crops, the international) market and seek to maximise their profits – from credit, trade, and/or rent. Certainly, the significant prevalence of mercantile capitalist exploitation and 'semi-feudal' relations of production affects the accumulation (the saving of part of the surplus and its investment in agriculture and elsewhere) process, but at its core, this part of the business operation is an underdeveloped capitalist, and *not* a semi-feudal, one.

In the Maoist view, though, the existence of semi-feudalism is the reason for India's backwardness, and it is imperialism that explains the *persistence* of that backwardness, and underdevelopment. Hence the Maoists stress the need for the NDR, which will do away with semi-feudalism and free the country from the influence of imperialism thereby overcoming backwardness and underdevelopment.

Is India Semi-Colonial and Semi-Feudal?

Maoism does understand global capitalism as a system of dominating/exploiting and dominated/exploited national capitals together with their respective nation-states, yet it seems to be ambivalent with regard to the idea that the *Communist Manifesto*'s sequence of feudalism, bourgeois revolution, industrialisation, and class polarisation, followed by socialist revolution has to apply in each underdeveloped country too. In its view, imperialism exercises its political domination of the backward countries by striking alliances with the most reactionary classes – the native, big capitalists turned into compradors, and the landlords.²³ The former hinders the development of a *national* bourgeoisie thereby preventing *independent* capitalist development, and the latter preserves agricultural backwardness. Besides, imperialism also, directly and/or indirectly (the latter, via other junior partners and through local collaborators) provides armaments and trains the repressive apparatus of the 'semi-colonial' state; it culturally penetrates the educational system, media, etc., drawing the local intelligentsia into its hegemonic orbit. Thus, according to the CPI(Maoist), the other *fundamental* contradiction is between imperialism and the Indian people, in addition to the two other *major* contradictions – between capital and labour, and the internal contradictions among the ruling classes. The Indian state is the joint dictatorship of the big comprador bureaucrat bourgeoisie²⁴ (CBB) and the big landlords, the former collaborating with imperialism and allying with feudalism.²⁵

Following this, a few critical comments would now seem to be in order. First, can we agree with the Party's characterisation of the Indian big bourgeoisie as comprador? Certainly, an industrial bourgeoisie can possibly be comprador. According to Mao's (1926) criteria, if the majority of the Indian big bourgeoisie is an appendage of the international bourgeoisie, depending upon imperialism for its survival and growth, then that bourgeoisie would be comprador. This is not the place to look at the reality in detail, but I would find it difficult to characterise the Tata group, for instance, as comprador – in April 2007, Tata Steel Ltd acquired 100% of the equity capital of Corus Group Plc (UK) for \$12.695 billion, taking management control of the latter. Another Tata group company, Tata Motors acquired the South Korean truck manufacturer Daewoo Commercial Vehicles Company in 2004, and the British premium car manufacturer Jaguar Land Rover in 2008. Or take another Indian big business bloc, the Aditya Birla group – in May 2007,

its Hindalco Industries Ltd acquired 100% of the equity capital of Novelis Inc (US) for \$5.766 billion, placing itself in the saddle of the latter.

Frankly, we do not know of any historical instance of a comprador bourgeoisie acquiring companies of a significant size and market power headquartered in the imperialist countries. Indeed, in our view, the Indian big bourgeoisie is one of the most dynamic capitalist classes in the periphery of the world capitalist system. Yet, there is a long-standing relationship of subordination of the Indian state and the big bourgeoisie to imperialism, which deepened following the collapse of the Berlin Wall and the demise of the Soviet Union. The Indian government quickly made a somersault in its foreign policy and subsequently entered into a strategic alliance as a junior partner with US imperialism.²⁶

Unfortunately, the concepts ‘semi-feudalism’ and ‘semi-colonialism’ deployed by the CPI (Maoist) are *not* open-ended; neither have they been adapted to the new and changing historical situation since the 1970s. Hence, they do not seem to be of much use in an understanding of ‘the present as history,’ i.e. in comprehending what is new, along with the equally vital task of seeing the longer process. Today, the two most significant contemporary global capitalist triumphs are the imperialist system’s ability to attenuate inter-imperialist rivalry and to appear as the main promoter of political democracy worldwide.²⁷ The first deprives revolutionary forces like the CPI(Maoist) from taking advantage of inter-imperialist contradictions and consequent divisions within the country’s native big bourgeoisie, while the second poses a challenge and an opportunity for these forces, namely to prove in practice that the process of real democratisation (political *and* economic) is only possible with the transition to socialism. At present, this entails the Maoists in India adopting the position that political democracy (provision for a multi-party political system in their ‘New Democratic’ constitution) will be part and parcel of their ‘New Democracy’ – and indeed, the latter has to be a form of political *and* economic democracy qualitatively superior to bourgeois democracy.

At least on paper, India has instituted a liberal, political democratic system, but, in practice, the Indian big bourgeoisie has failed to complete the bourgeois-democratic revolution and instead, in

alliance with landlordism, is engaged in a conservative modernisation from above. This enterprise not only keeps the masses in poverty and degradation, but importantly, the state and the ruling classes, at best, can only practice a *decomposed* form of liberal-political democracy, never mind the tall claims made by their apologists.

Nevertheless, if India is not semi-feudal and semi-colonial, what are the main characteristics of its political-economic system?

Is India Becoming a Sub-Imperialist Power?

India is an *underdeveloped* capitalist country, permeated with the following characteristics, tendencies and trends, some of which are reinforcing its emergence as a *sub-imperialist* power:²⁸

- the emergence of a powerful ‘financial aristocracy’ (financial big bourgeoisie) – following the opening of the energy, mining, telecommunications, civil aviation, infrastructure (ports, highways, airports, etc.), banking, insurance, and other sectors to private capital – which is increasingly calling the shots in the corridors of power (Bernie 2012);
- Oligopolistic market structures in the modern industrial and services sector, buttressed, no doubt, by foreign capital;
- The increasing influence of foreign capital in modern industry²⁹ and services, especially in the financial system, and in information technology and business process outsourcing services,³⁰ especially from 2003 onwards, as also significant *outward* foreign direct investment (Indian transnational corporations)³¹ from 2005 onwards;
- Globalisation of the country’s financial markets³² – gross capital inflows and outflows as a percentage of GDP increased from 15.1% in 1990-99 to 53.9% in 2010-11 – and the imperative to follow conservative fiscal and monetary policies (Chandra 2008: 39-51);

- Rapid decline in the share of agriculture, relative stagnation in industry's share, and a rapid rise in the share of services, in gross domestic product from the 1980s onward but with the corresponding changes in the proportions of employment, especially that of agriculture declining much less, in turn, having serious implications for mass living standards (Patnaik 2011: 299-325);³³
- Huge wage-relative-to-labour-productivity gaps vis-à-vis the developed capitalist countries and, in the presence of disadvantageous export-import market structures,³⁴ consequent unequal exchange in international trade;
- An increasing proportion of exports of primary commodities, manufactured goods, and services routed via the trade and investment networks of transnational corporations;
- Outward 'temporary' migration of 'knowledge workers' under Mode 4 of the World Trade Organisation's General Agreement on Trade in Services, constrained by political restrictions in the recipient high-wage countries;
- A systematic dependence on import of technology as far as the islands of high productivity in the economy – in agriculture (including hybrid-seed R&D), industry and services – are concerned;
- *A La Grande Bouffe*, so characteristic of consumer society, confined to the local elite, which imitates the consumption patterns of its counterparts in the developed capitalist countries;
- Islands of undreamt wealth-luxury in a vast sea of poverty-misery (Bernie 2012; Chandra 2010: 279-317; Patnaik 2004: 9-35, 2010: 1-4; Shetty 2011: 86-147);³⁵
- Dispossession of the peasantry via class differentiation *and*, increasingly, through displacement and environmental degradation (Patnaik 2011a: 217-239);³⁶
- Political subordination to US imperialism and working with it to advance mutual strategic interests (Research Unit for Political Economy 2006);³⁷
- Bolstering of the semi-fascist project of the Hindutva forces (whose parliamentary political front, the *Bharatiya Janata Party* is now in power at the national level) following the US' 'war on terror' in the aftermath of 9/11; and,

- Intensification of coercive institutional mechanisms internally³⁸ *and* extra-territorially, as regards the latter, where the Indian state teams up with Indian business to advance mutual interests, influence and power beyond its national borders, for instance, in Nepal,³⁹ Afghanistan⁴⁰ and Sri Lanka.⁴¹

All this cannot be elaborated upon here, and the Maoists too touch on some of the above characteristics, tendencies and trends. The question however is: where would the contradiction between caste-based feudalism and the broad masses of the people, what the Maoists say is the *principal* contradiction among the set of four major contradictions, figure as an explanation for the tendencies and trends mentioned above? The answer is, almost nowhere. Further, and in order to emphasise the point: is this contradiction the most critical and the most decisive one in terms of the main consequences/tendencies/propensities outlined above (for, after all, a system's *tendencies* are a function of its very *character*)? Is this the contradiction according to Mao (1937) 'whose existence and development determine or influence the existence and development of the other contradictions?'⁴² Emphatically, the answer is no.

Main Implications of the Wrong Characterisation of Indian Society

Clearly, this point of disagreement with the Maoists is a fundamental one – it has revolutionary implications. The CPI(Maoist)'s programme has followed mainly from the party's class analysis of the society, the character of the Indian state and understanding of the major contradictions, the two fundamental ones from among them, and from these two, identifying the principal contradiction, and strategy has been formulated based on that programme. However, if there is a major error in understanding the class structure and nature of class relations, the character of the state, the nature of the main contradictions, and in pinpointing the principal contradiction, then the party programme and consequent strategy and tactics would be inappropriate and erroneous, as they would be based on a serious underestimation of the stability, power and strength of the Indian state, the economy and the ruling classes. Uneven development in an underdeveloped capitalist system is fundamentally different from the same in a semi-feudal, semi-colonial setup,

making it doubly difficult to succeed in even the first stage⁴³ of the PPW and establish a series of base areas from which the movement can then be steered to move beyond the stage of the ‘strategic defensive’ and expand further.

Moreover, the CPI(Maoist) and its PLGA do not have the ‘socialist’ *rear* that they may have had if Maoism had not been abandoned in China, nor do they, as yet, have base areas. Unlike China during the period 1927-49 when the CCP was fighting its PPW, in India today there are no imperialist enclaves (the imperialist powers had seized and ‘leased’ parts of Chinese territory, and exacted huge indemnities), no *numerous* unequal treaties, no imperialist control of important trading ports, all of which gave rise to inter-imperialist rivalry that bitterly divided the Chinese big bourgeoisie.⁴⁴

In India today, unlike in China then, there are no vast stretches of country where the writ of warlords prevails; the system of land tenure is nothing compared to landlords (who were also military and political officials) owning a significant part of the total arable land and leasing large parts of it under semi-feudal tenancy (poor peasants – who together with farm labourers, comprised 70% of the rural population – were subject to high rates of rent and the millstone of usury) with the bulk of the peasantry (poor and middle peasants) eking out a living by intensive labour on small plots of mainly leased in land. There is no widespread military authoritarianism, no ‘failed state’, not a semblance of the semi-colonial political-economic influence that inhibited China’s industrial development then – factors, in addition to the above, that made the PPW more feasible in semi-colonial, semi-feudal China, but are absent in underdeveloped-capitalist India today.

The contradictions between India and the collective triad of imperialist powers (the United States, Western Europe, and Japan) led by the US, within the Indian ruling classes, between the Centre and the States, and between the political parties of the Establishment are not of the same kind or intensity as the contradictions between China and the imperialist powers, within the *Guomindang* (GMD), and between the GMD and the warlords between 1927-1937. It was the

latter contradictions that made it possible for Red base areas to exist in China even when they were almost completely surrounded by White areas. If the Indian system is semi-colonial, semi-feudal, as the CPI(Maoist) thinks it is, then its internal logic should have produced at least some of the main characteristics that China had in its pre-revolutionary period.⁴⁵

Thus the conditions that the Maoist revolutionaries in India are facing are very unfavourable and this has been the case from the very start of the movement in 1967 right up to the present. In taking on the might of one of the most powerful capitalist states and ruling classes in the periphery of the world capitalist system, the CPI(Maoist) is inevitably getting increasingly militarised in the course of the PPW. Indeed, as Gautam Navlakha's chapter shows, the Party now shapes and orients its mass organisations in accordance with the advance or retreat of the armed struggle. Frankly, if it persists in viewing the role of mass organisations and mass struggles within such circumscribed limits, it will not make much headway in the struggle to gain the support of the 90% that Maoism claims as its constituency in semi-feudal, semi-colonial countries. As it is, working class, peasant and middle-class Maoist intellectual leadership has nowhere come to the fore in the political, cultural and ideological realms across the country. But without this, the Revolutionary United Front, which seeks to win over the working class, the peasantry, the middle class and the 'national bourgeoisie' – the 90% – will not grow. Importantly, it is only through winning widespread legitimacy that the revolution can be accomplished with a minimum of violence. The CPI(Maoist) is not yet a major party, national in scope, even 46 years since the formation of the original party; the Maoist movement is yet to win widespread legitimacy among the people. Except in some pockets in the guerrilla zones, the Party's mass-line politics has nowhere emerged as the real-life alternative to India's rotten liberal-political democracy.

Conclusion

This chapter has argued that since India is an underdeveloped capitalist country emerging as a sub-imperialist power in South Asia, and *not* a semi-feudal, semi-colonial country akin to China

in the late 1920s, and considering that the international context is also very different, the Chinese path of PPW may not be the most appropriate road to revolution here in the 21st century. In its erroneous characterisation of Indian society as semi-feudal and semi-colonial, the CPI(Maoist) has seriously underestimated the stability, power and strength of the Indian state, the economy, and the ruling classes, especially the Indian big bourgeoisie. The resilience of the latter, the very formidable repressive apparatus of the Indian state, and the institutions of Indian civil society increasingly coming under the ideological hegemony of the ruling classes, are the main reasons why the Maoist movement in India, despite the practice of PPW over 48 years, has still remained in the initial stage of the ‘strategic defensive’ and has not been able to establish base areas. Uneven development in an underdeveloped capitalist system with a strong oligopolistic segment and a sub-imperialist proclivity is fundamentally different from the same in a semi-feudal, semi-colonial one, making it doubly difficult to succeed in the area-wise seizure of power. The CPI (Maoist) continues to apply Mao’s *practice* theory of knowledge as the only way to foolproof knowledge *and* correct revolutionary practice, but, as we have suggested, the theory itself needs a wider range of vision.

Now, even as I have pleaded for a fresh approach to Maoism as an –ism that ought to be open-ended and adaptable to new and changing historical situations and engaged in a prelude to a critique of the CPI(Maoist)’s political programme, strategy and tactics, I still admire its insurgent comrades – their simplicity, their singleness of purpose, their high spirits in the course of the fight, their sense of misery when one of their comrades gives up the fight or submits to the powers-that-be, their ever-willingness to excuse the gullibility of the masses but nevertheless still detest any signs of servility. The vital spark of the brutally assassinated couple, comrades Chandramouli and Karuna, with whom this chapter began, is still glowing; so is the self-confidence and determination to carry on to the very end – the fighting spirit of the Maoist movement is still alive and well. But, as suggested here, the Maoists need to go beyond their restricted range of vision in applying Mao’s practice theory of knowledge and take a fresh relook into the abyss that is India – its history, its economy, society and polity, its potentialities. Then, after acknowledging that India is an underdeveloped capitalist country with a strong monopoly

segment and a sub-imperialist proclivity, they must undertake a radical self-critical review and reformulate their political programme, strategy and tactics anew.

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Notes

1 These are the tracts where the agrarian revolutionary movement is strong, but where the party and its mass organisations are in power only as long as the guerrillas have the upper hand over the state's forces. Power reverts to the Indian state when the guerrillas are forced to retreat.

2 Base areas are self-administered, liberated areas, miniature 'new democratic' republics of the revolutionary forces, albeit under siege, but serving as places of refuge and remobilisation for the people's army.

3 Terms such as Red areas and White areas are from Mao (1938a). A White area is one where the enemy is in power, whereas a Red area is one where the revolutionaries are in the saddle. So the terms, Red Army and White Army also refer to the respective armed forces of the revolutionary and reactionary camps.

4 State-sponsored vigilante gangs – the Salwa Judum in Chhattisgarh, the Nagarik Suraksha Samiti and Gram Raksha Dal in Jharkhand, the CPI(Marxist)'s Gana Pratirodh Committee and Harmad Bahini, and the Trinamool Congress' Bhairab Bahini in Jangalmahal, the forest areas of the districts of West Midnapore, Bankura and Purulia in West Bengal, the Shanti Sena in Gadchiroli (Maharashtra) and parts of Orissa – routinely attack the leaders, members and supporters of the revolutionary movement. The big bourgeoisie supports these vigilante gangs – the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry has recommended that the Indian state continue to back such counterinsurgency tactics.

5 Naxalbari is an area in north Bengal bordering Nepal to the west, Sikkim and Bhutan to the north, and the then east Pakistan (now Bangladesh) to the South. For an account of the armed struggle there, see Banerjee (2008: chapter 4).

6 Srikakulam district is in North-Eastern Andhra Pradesh. For an account of the armed struggle there, see Banerjee (2008: chapter 5).

7 The Revolutionary Writers' Association in 1970, the Jana Natya Mandali in 1972, the Radical Students' Union in 1974, the Radical Youth League in 1975, and later, after the formation of the CPI(ML) (PW) in 1980, the Rythu Coolie Sangham, the Singareni Karmika Samakhya and the Mahila Vimukti Sangham.

8 The two main mass organisations are the autochthonous peasants and workers' Dandakaranya Adivasi Mazdoor Kisan Sanghatan and the autochthonous women's Dandakaranya Krantikari Adivasi Mahila Sanghatan.

9 For the CPI(ML) (PW)'s version of the Maoist movement, 1969-99, see People's March (1999).

10 See Mao's (1927) controversial 'Hunan Report,' presented to the CCP in January of that year.

11 With the 'great leap backward' to capitalism in China, the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, the reversion to capitalism in the former Soviet Union, 9/11 and the nakedness of US imperialism in its aftermath, the very idea of revolution as the road to human emancipation is being obliterated from the

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horizon of the present epoch.

12 An underdeveloped capitalist country is one in which (a) domestically, backwardness (a low level of development of the forces of production) prevails in significant parts of the economy, with these spheres dominated by mercantile (and credit) capital, this state of affairs concomitant with retrograde relations of production and sub-standard institutions of state and civil society, and (b) internationally, its state and capitalist class are largely dependent entities in the world system. This definition may seem ‘technological determinist,’ so I should clarify that I am postulating open-ended interrelations among and between the forces of production, the relations of production, the state and civil society.

13 Indeed, Dominique Caouette in this volume argues that this is what the Communist Party of Philippines has been able to do.

14 In the section on ‘Vanguards of the Revolution’ in his *Report of an Investigation of the Peasant Movement in Hunan*, Mao (1927) states: ‘Leadership by the poor peasants is absolutely necessary. Without the poor peasants there would be no revolution. To deny their role is to deny the revolution.’

15 CR is meant to prevent ‘capitalist restoration’; its focus is on the political, ideological and cultural superstructure – institutions that wield power and instil or alter the ideas and values held by individuals and classes in the transitional society.

16 The Party’s view on why it characterises India as semi-colonial and semi-feudal, its statement of the major contradictions in Indian society, the fundamental contradictions and the principal contradiction, the class character of the Indian state, and the targets of the Indian revolution are contained in CPI(Maoist) (2007: chapter 2).

17 For the Party’s semi-feudal thesis, see the sub-section ‘Why do we call India semi-feudal?’ in CPI(Maoist) (2007: chapter 2).

18 For the principal contradiction, see CPI(Maoist) (2007a: section 19).

19 Drawing, among other things, on Marx’s analysis of ‘primitive accumulation’ and his theory of ground rent, Lenin’s and Kautsky’s analyses of the development of capitalist relations in agriculture, and Mao’s investigation of the peasant movement in Hunan and his analysis of classes in rural areas in semi-feudal China, there has been a very rich debate on the mode of production in Indian agriculture. See Patnaik (1990), wherein I would like to particularly draw our readers’ attention to Rao’s (chapter 2:33-37) and Banaji’s (chapter 19:234-250) essays.

20 The notion of ‘free labour’ in the double sense is explained in chapter 6 of Marx’s *Capital, Vol.I*. Basically the labourer is free to sell her/his labour-power to the employer of her/his choice. She/he cannot realise the value of this labour-power in any other way because she/he does not have the means of production, in other words, because she/he has been ‘freed’ from ownership of the means of production.

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21 Besides these new landlords, there are, of course, those landlords who own land in the villages but reside in urban India, and this category of absentee landlords is not taken into account in the NSS data.

22 Vijay (2012) draws on Rao and Bharathi (2010).

23 For the Party's version, see the sub-sections 'Why do we call India semi-colonial?' (CPI(Maoist) 2007: chapter 2) and 'Comprador Bureaucratic Bourgeoisie' and 'National Bourgeoisie' (ibid: chapter 3).

24 'Bureaucrat capital,' in pre-liberation China, was capital unduly dependent on the state for its accumulation.

25 See the sub-section 'Class Character of the Indian State' (CPI(Maoist) 2007: chapter 2).

26 Imperialism, in my view, is a process whereby the main corporations and the state of a developed capitalist country get together to expand their activities, their interests, and their power beyond their borders. It has changed very significantly from the time when Lenin wrote about it.

27 See Amin (2010).

28 I first began theorising about this phenomenon 17 years ago. See D'Mello (1998: 38-40). A sub-imperialist power acts in the manner of an imperialist power in its regional setting and at the behest of an imperialist power, but can only do so as a junior partner in a strategic alliance with such a power. An example is Israel in the Middle-East as a junior partner of the United States. I have defined imperialism in footnote 26.

29 The TNCs reacted very favourably to the new economic policies of 1991 – in many cases, they ousted their Indian partners, acquired Indian enterprises, expanded and engaged in green-field entry in India's manufacturing sector (see Chaudhuri 1995: Section IV; Nagaraj 2003: Section V). Also see Chaudhuri (2012) on the enhancement of transnational management control and market power in the Indian pharmaceutical industry as a result of the reintroduction of strong product patent protection.

30 Recent economic growth has been led by services, and India is now a 'global player' in information technology (IT) and IT-enabled, including business process outsourcing, services exports. The share of the services sector in both inward and outward foreign direct investment has increased dramatically in the 2000s, and is poised to do so even further as India continues to liberalise policy related to banking, insurance, and other financial services, civil aviation, telecommunications, and retail trade.

31 See Nagaraj (2006).

32 I allude to the contradictions between India and international financial capital, the latter, not the 'finance capital' of Lenin's time. This capital is, relatively speaking, disengaged from any particular national capitalist interests.

33 An earlier episode was in colonial India from 1881 to 1931 (Patnaik 2011: 301).

Notes

34 The value of exports and imports of goods and services as a percentage of GDP has increased from 22.9 in 1990-99 to 50.4 in 2010-11. Note disadvantageous import and export market structures in the context of the Singer-Prebisch proposition with respect to exports of agricultural and mineral commodities, and its possible extension to exports of low-tech manufactured commodities in relation to imports of high-tech manufactured products, and in the context of the inroads that the trading arms of transnational corporations have made in India's commodities trade, including buyer-driven global commodity chains in low-tech manufactured goods. See Chandra (1997: 173-174).

35 Patnaik's (2010: 1-4) own estimates of the proportion of the rural and urban populations unable to reach the minimum nutrition norms in 2004-05 are 86.7% and 64.5% respectively.

36 Patnaik (2011a), among other things, links displacement due to special economic zones with rural landlessness.

37 What is of crucial significance is Washington's 'Pivot to Asia' strategy in the wake of China's rapid economic development over the last 30 years, Beijing's securing of international energy and raw material sources and transportation routes for the same, and her accompanying geo-political ascendancy, all of which have upset the long-established US imperialist dominated order in Asia. The US' strategic alliances with Japan, Australia and India are aimed at containing China through political, diplomatic and military means, and Washington's three strategic partners have in turn forged strategic ties with each other. As a junior partner of the US Navy, the Indian Navy is fast becoming the chief policeman of the Indian Ocean. And, the Indian military's dependence on the US military-industrial complex is increasing, this also via military hardware and software deals with Israel.

38 On the whole, this alludes to state repression of the nationality movements in Kashmir, Nagaland, Mizoram, Assam and Manipur, and, of course, the Maoists and their support base in parts of central, eastern and southern India, aided by laws such as the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act 1958, which gives the armed forces immunity from prosecution for rape, abduction, torture and summary execution in the course of the counter-insurgency in Kashmir and the North-East, and the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, which outlaws politics and political parties that threaten the status quo.

39 Since 2005, India has played a leading role in ending the Nepali Revolution. The question being asked in radical left circles today is whether the 12-point agreement of 22 November 2005 with the seven parliamentary parties (SPP), the 8-point agreement of 16 June 2006, the Comprehensive Peace Agreement of November 2006, the 18 June 2008 deal, and all the rest of the pacts, taken together, that the Nepali Maoists entered into were part of the Washington-New Delhi combine's grand design – in alliance with the SPP – to end the Nepali revolution. Earlier, following the murder of King Birendra on 1 June 2001, the US intervened militarily in Nepal, and India closely coordinated with US strategy to ensure the military defeat of the Maoist-led People's War there (Mage 1997). But later, at India's insistence, the US changed tack. Indeed, with the US-India strategic alliance that followed, on South Asian affairs, Washington does, on occasion, defer to New Delhi on matters of regional security.

Notes

40 In concurrence with Washington, and as part of the Indian state's ambition to establish itself as the number-one regional power in South Asia, since 2001, India has emerged as Afghanistan's fifth largest bilateral 'aid' donor, after the US, UK, Japan and Germany. Indian business and the Indian government are closely involved in infrastructural projects, the most important of which is said to be the highway that will link the Iranian port of Chabaha to Afghanistan's main highway network. This will then be the main transport route for Indian exports to Afghanistan, circumventing Pakistan. Moreover, in October 2011, New Delhi entered into a bilateral Strategic Partnership Agreement with Kabul that envisages armaments supply, counterinsurgency and high-altitude warfare training to the Afghan army, air force and police.

41 Not long ago, even as New Delhi kept placating public opinion in Tamil Nadu (bitter memories still linger of the despicable role of the so-called Indian Peace Keeping Force in Sri Lanka in the 1980s), it supported Colombo all the way in its vicious military campaign that wiped out the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam. The way has been cleared for a Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement with Colombo to be wrapped up; after all, most of India's foreign direct investment in South Asia is centred on Sri Lanka.

42 This is how Mao (1937) explains what he means by *principal* contradiction.

43 In Mao's (1938) theorisation of the PPW, in its first stage – the 'strategic defensive' – the see-saw of the enemy's 'encirclement and suppression' followed by the communists' 'tactical counteroffensive' ultimately takes the PPW into a state of 'equilibrium' and a 'strategic stalemate' is reached, which is stage-2 of the PPW.

44 This characterisation of the contrasting situation in China during its NDR relies on Mao (1939).

45 It may also be mentioned that the capacity to sustain a Long March, abandoning one but linking the other base areas in order to settle in and expand the base area with Yan'an as its capital in north-central China, is beyond the CPI(Maoist)'s military strength. And, revolution as national liberation from a colonial occupier, plus the provisional alliance with the GMD against Japanese occupation has no parallel whatsoever in India.