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Maoist ideology in the contemporary world: From rural uprising to shaping political discourse

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Abstract

This paper analyzes the enduring relevance of Maoist ideology in contemporary times, which could be reflected in various political uprisings in different parts of the world. Despite its origins in China, which occurred during the mid-20th century under the initiation of Chairman Mao Zedong, Maoism as a political ideology has evolved beyond China's political scenario, which could be reflected in the reinterpretation of Maoist ideology as a whole during contemporary movements. The purpose of this study is to investigate how Maoist principles have been applied by insurgent groups, particularly in rural areas that have been marginalized over the years in Nepal, India, where the main purpose of the Maoist movement is to serve as a framework for anti-state mobilization. By tracing the ideological trajectory to the practical application of Maoist thoughts in shaping political discourse, this research highlights the ideological framework of Maoism as a whole, to its dynamic role in shaping socio-political struggles.

Keywords: Maoist ideology, political uprisings, anti-state mobilization, contemporary maoism, socio-political struggles, insurgent movements

Introduction

Maoism is a reinterpretation of communism that was used in the context of the indigenous situation of China during the mid-20th century. This ideology represented a revolutionary base of China during the mid-20th century- a period in which China had serious crises from problems of reunification to the expulsion of foreign infiltrators. "Maoism may have its roots in China, but Mao Zedong's theories of class struggle and guerilla warfare spread around the globe in the second half of the 20th century, igniting revolutions and armed uprisings in places as diverse as India, Peru, Malaysia and western Europe" (Review | Maoism: A Global History – How China Exported Revolution Around the World, 2019). In countries like India and Nepal, Maoism still haunts the domestic policies, highlighting that Maoism as an ideology not only highlights the history of China but also reflects global insurgencies, indoctrination by various stakeholders over time. The main purpose of this analysis is to find out how Maoism has evolved and adapted in the contemporary socio-political landscape.

Research Questions

- 1) How has Maoist ideology been adapted in the contemporary movement of countries such as South Asia?
- 2) What are the core elements of Maoism that remained relevant in the ideological framework of these movements?
- 3) How do contemporary elements of Mao's principles align with India's and Nepal's political scenario during the 20th century?

Objective

The main objective of this paper is to critically evaluate the ideological continuity of Maoism and its evolution in the contemporary world through the analysis of case studies and ideological adaptation incorporated by various regions around the world. The primary objective of this paper is to highlight the ideological transformation of Maoism from Mao Zedong's era to contemporary political struggles, emphasizing how Maoism as an ideology in contemporary times shapes the socio-political narratives of a region.

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This research paper covers the political protests in India and Nepal- how these protests played a crucial role in the framing of domestic policies of a nation, also reflecting how these protests align with Maoist principles, highlighting an ideological continuity of Maoism as a whole.

Methodology

This research involves a qualitative approach combining literature reviews and understanding of case studies with emphasis on historical analysis to explore the evolution of the ideology as a whole and understand its contemporary relevance. This research methodology involves ground-root tracing of Maoist ideology to its contemporary political relevance.

The research follows a descriptive analytical design using aggregation of historical and present data to understand how Maoist ideology has transitioned into a strong political narrative over time. It involves a detailed understanding of strong ideological shifts regarding Maoist interpretation across time and regions, identifying recurrent ideological socio-political scenarios of various regions, which involve inequalities, class struggles, conflict concerning anti-capitalist market, etc. and assessing how Maoist rhetorics are used in various regions (their ideological similarities and differences).

Selected case studies have been highlighted in this research. India.

Nepal

Review of Literature

The ideological tracing of Maoist politics and its evolution has been documented in various journal works, which are

Maoism: A global history: This book mainly outlines how Maoism as an ideology has extended beyond China over time, highlighting Maoism as a global lens that has been adopted according to various political landscapes.

Road to liberation: This journal extensively deals with the theoretical framework of Maoism and its idea of the Mass Line, highlighting how this strategy has impacted the Protracted people's war in Nepal and the rural-centric model, putting a special emphasis on the idea of armed struggle in mobilising the masses.

In the context of India's interpretation of Maoist ideology, Roychowdhury's (2018) essay in *The Indian Express*, titled

Naxalbari: How a peasant uprising triggered a pan-India political movement, traces the Naxalbari movement from its grassroots cause and how Maoist ideology played a pivotal role in shaping the conflict. It critiques the movements' dependency on violence and armed resistance

Shakeel Shoban's 2025 article titled India: 60 Years of Maoist insurgency and its human cost further highlights the impact of Maoism as a whole on India's social' political scenario and how the state in contemporary times has responded to Maoist insurgencies. This essay also delves into key operational zones for Maoist forces in the current times.

Ray Chaudhury's 2004 essay on Bengal land reforms further highlights how Maoist forces in India played a pivotal role in shaping land reforms in Bengal, reflecting the large inequalities in landholdings, which were prevalent during the 1960s.

The varying interpretation of Maoism can be reflected in the

research paper "The Maoist Insurgency Of Nepal: Origin And Evolution", written by SD Muni, which mainly highlights the origins and evolution of Maoist interpretation in Nepal as a whole, highlighting Maoist influence in shaping Nepal's national politics.

It is important to note that a large amount of government files available online have been used during research to trace official information, impacted regions, affected areas, etc.

Key findings

Chapter 1: Emergence of Maoism as an ideology

"Maoism, a form of Marxism-Leninism adapted to the specific historical, social, and economic conditions of China, represents a significant ideological and political force in the 20th century. Named after Mao Zedong, the founding father of the People's Republic of China, Maoism has been influential not only in China but also in various revolutionary movements worldwide." (Review | Maoism: A Global History – How China Exported Revolution Around the World, 2019). It is important to note that China during the mid-nineteenth century was a feudal and semi-colonial country, and China had faced problems such as social, political, and economic unrest. It was an agrarian economy, and a large section of the population lived in rural areas. Mao Zedong, a prominent leader of the CCP, recognised these problems that China faced during the mid-nineteenth century and came up with his approach to deal with China's specific problems. Mao's insights involved the peasantry as a key revolutionary force. Similar to Karl Marx, he agrees that a proletariat revolution is essential for society to change. As opposed to Marx, who states that the factory workers should revolutionize, Mao felt that the farmers in China were the ones in need of this revolution (n.d.), and he argued that the selection of technique (war technique) should be based on the socio-political circumstances of a region. "Mao's theories and practices, developed during the Chinese Revolution, particularly during the Long March and the Chinese Civil War, shaped the ideological framework that would later be known as Maoism."

Review - Maoism: A Global History – How China Exported Revolution Around the World, 2019. Over a while, Mao's approach underwent major changes, most prominently in the form of a cultural revolution - the effects of Maoism underwent a radical change.

To deal with various problems confined to China during this period, Mao argued that a socialist revolution was necessary in the context of China's agriculture and pre-industrial society. The philosophical and ideological difference between Maoism and Marxist-Leninism is that Mao argued that the peasant class was the leading class and the revolutionary vanguard in pre-industrial society. A claim that Mao Zedong had applied Marxist and Leninist philosophy based on the indigenous situation of China, and he had used it in a fundamental way, which could be witnessed in various forms of protest in contemporary times in various regions. Mao's idea of revolution also highlighted effective strategies on the ground, which were.

1) Guerilla warfare

"Guerrilla warfare became the cornerstone of Mao's military strategy. He believed in using the terrain to the advantage of the revolutionary forces, engaging in hit-and-run tactics, and avoiding large-scale confrontations with a

better-equipped enemy (n.d.), he argued that for a revolution to be successful Guerilla units needs to be decentralised to allow quickness he also elaborates regarding different guerilla units and how each unit play a detrimental role for a successful insurgency.

2) Mass mobilization

His ideology highlighted that winning the support of the masses was crucial for any revolution. Mao's idea of Mass mobilization could be reflected in the Cultural Revolution of China, where he used the Red Guards, a student-formed paramilitary unit. These units were used to promote his ideology, as a result, Mao was able to establish his hegemony for almost two decades.

Maoism as an ideology incorporates several key feature that makes Maoist ideology different from classical Marxism-Leninism. Each principle played a crucial role in shaping to Maoist politics in China. These are

1) Mass line

Mao famously believed that revolutionaries must first organize the masses. "The basic orientation of the mass line is that, as Mao said, 'the people, and the people alone, are the motive force in the making of world history.'" This is more than a statement: it's an outlook, meaning that as revolutionaries, we draw upon the experience of people and aid them in liberating themselves. The mass line is not only a tactic applied to mass movements; it is also an important tool for revolutionaries to prepare the minds of the masses for the revolutionary transformation of society."(n.d.) This theory looks at people as revolutionaries, more importantly, the peasant class in a semi-feudal society like China during the mid-nineteenth century, because Mao argued that people learn from experiences, and active leadership cannot work without inactive audiences. This process follows three crucial steps-

- a) Gathering of ideas
- b) Synthesis of ideas
- c) Implementing policies based on synthesis

These processes play a crucial role in understanding a problem in a society and then coming up with an agenda and focus to deal with these issues, thereby establishing collective campaigning concerning the various experiences of the masses. In this process, Mao argued that leadership plays a crucial role, and these leaders should be elected by the people themselves. This ideology of Mao Zedong played a crucial role in the success of the CCP in China, where Mao played a very important role in articulating the experiences of the rural population in China during the Chinese Revolution.

2) Protracted people's war

This concept was used by Mao during the Chinese Revolution, and it was also used as a military strategy by Mao against Japan. "What Mao puts forward is that a guerrilla movement must be able to maintain the support of the people for long enough to wage a long war against an enemy, hence protracted. Mao also said that by moving into the countryside, the people's army could stretch the supply lines of the enemy thin and break their will to fight. This is a very broad definition, and we will go into a more detailed one later on." (n.d.). His theory of protracted people's war focused on the countryside as a primary hub for revolution, and it is important to note that this idea of Mao was

effectively used by countries such as India, Peru, and Nepal during the Maoist movement in their respective countries. Mao argued that a protracted people's war is a long-term affair, and it requires tactical understanding at various stages.

3) Theory of contradiction

The theory of contradiction plays a crucial role as far as Maoist ideology is concerned. He argues that each society is marked by certain contradictions, which could be reflected in its historical development, but it could largely be understood as

Antagonistic Forces

Non-Antagonistic Forces

Classes are opposite, and Mao argued that the only solution to deal with such a contradiction is through revolution. This theory reflects Mao's basic understanding of material dialectics, a core principle of Marxism. He argues that these contradiction in any society plays a very crucial role in leading a social change, and every society recognises these contradictions in order to drive a revolution.

4) Continuous revolution

Mao's idea of continuous revolution was used in the context of the Cultural Revolution, which was established in China. He argued that revolution should not be a one-time process; rather, it must be continuous because what can be gained in a revolution could be easily lost if revolutions are not continuous. Because revolution can betray itself if stagnant. Mao believed in the idea of continuous revolution to prevent the aristocracy within the CCP regime

Chapter 2: Maoist influence in shaping Indian politics

The rise of Maoist politics in rural uprising (Naxalbari-case study of India)

These core principles of Maoism played a crucial role in laying a socialist foundation of China, but more importantly, they had a profound influence in shaping domestic policies in India, where the origins of the Naxalite movement in India still haunt the country's internal security. A spark which began in 1967 in Naxalbari village in India, but now, as decades passed by, it has been witnessed that Maoist ideology has spread into states which include Bihar, Jharkhand, Uttar Pradesh

1) Understanding the rise of Maoism in India

Located in the hills of Darjeeling, the Naxalbari movement lit a fire that would burn till today in India in what we know as the Maoist movement. During 1967, the peasants of Naxalbari, who mainly worked on tea plantations and at large estates, had for centuries been exploited by the landowning classes and the moneylenders. On March 25, 1967, when one of the sharecroppers in the village tried to till the land from which he had been illegally evicted, the landlord got him brutally beaten up and took away his belongings. Exasperated by the exploitation of the landlords, peasants across the village got together and rose in rebellion." (Roychowdhury, 2018). This rebellion was led by Charu Mazumdar and Kanu Sanyal, who emerged as voices against the oppression of feudal landlords. This movement gave a voice to the marginalized and oppressed community and also challenged the country's power structure. This movement had a ripple effect on the socio-political effects of the country. "Drawing on the ideas of

Mao Zedong and the unresolved socio-economic tensions of rural India, the uprising marked the beginning of a militant, armed struggle that challenged both feudal structures and the political establishment” (Singh, 2025).

Historical context

After independence, the Indian agrarian structure was highly unequal. Although land reforms such as the West Bengal Land Reform Act were designed to remove the hierarchical structure in the agrarian sector, there was a lack of administrative inertia when it came to dealing with problems regarding the Indian agriculture sector. “As a result, sharecroppers declined drastically from 16% of rural households in 1952–53 to a mere 2.9% by 1961–62 while the proportion of landless agricultural laborers surged (Census of India 1961, 1971). This transformation not only highlighted the deep polarization between rich and poor but also set the stage for mass peasant discontent.” (Singh, 2025). These conflicts led to the rise of economic insecurities within the nation.

In 1967, the United Front government came to power in Bengal. The new administration promised a proletarian revolution as the problem was not only confined to the peasants of the Naxalbari regions, but it also reflected a greater rural divide. The movement over time turned violent as the peasants seized land, burnt official records to clear off their debt, and also began to form peasant committees. Under the guidance of Charu Mazumdar, within a few weeks, it started an armed struggle against the centralist forces. “The schism eventually paved the way for the formation of the Communist Party of India (Marxist–Leninist) (CPI-ML) in May 1969, as organized militant groups sought to consolidate their revolutionary agenda outside the constraints of parliamentary politics (Chatterjee 1998).” (Singh, 2025). For a large number of peasants, the Naxalbari movement highlighted a voice for the marginalized community. It gave rise to India’s far-left political insurgency movement, where the Naxalbari movement evolved over decades and across various parts of India.

“In the wake of the uprising, the state’s response was swift and severe. The government mobilized police and paramilitary forces to crush the rebellion. Notable operations, such as the 1972 crackdown that led to the arrest and subsequent death of Charu Majumdar in police custody, signaled the state’s determination to restore order. Despite these efforts, however, the movement had far-reaching consequences” (Singh, 2025).

State response and the spread of Maoism in India

In response to this mass discontent, the State during the 1970s initiated certain land reform programmes, reshaping India’s socio-economic foundation

Operation Braga: This initiative was introduced by the United Front Government of West Bengal, ensuring better distribution of products between the landlords and peasants and ‘confiscated surplus landholdings from big land-owners and distributed part of this to the poor farmers.’ (Raychaudhuri, 2004). This land reform policy by the United Front government ensured that it incorporated anti- eviction measures, but also ensured the sharecroppers would receive a fair share of the crop. But also to deal with the problems of Naxals in Bengal, the State incorporated violent

measures- “On July 1 to August 15, 1971, the Government of India along with the concerned state governments undertook joint operations, code named ‘Operation Steeplechase’, by the army and the police in the bordering districts of West Bengal, Bihar and Odisha.¹⁹ It was a big setback for the Naxalites. They were almost flushed out of the areas. A large number of Naxalites were arrested from various states. It is estimated that a total of 8,400 Naxalites were put in the bars.²⁰ The topmost Naxal leaders, including Kanu Sanyal, Nagbhushanam Patnayak, and Ashim Chatterjee, were arrested” (Dubey, 2013). This Naxalbari incident in the West gave rise to Leftist politics where Naxalites drew attention to the plight of Adivasi and Dalits, who were often exploited, and the issue of displacement for tribal communities became a National issue.

The Naxalbari movement of 1967 and its core ideological alienation to Maoism

The Agrarian issue

Following Mao’s focus on agrarian revolution, Charu Mazumdar, a prominent leader of the Naxalbari movement, continued the ideological legacy of Maoism, highlighting that since India is a semi-feudal and semi-colonial country, violent overthrow should be incorporated. Where Mao argued that the peasant class should be the leading class in a revolution, the Naxalbari movement also highlighted that the basis of any revolution should be established in the countryside, where issues regarding the seizure of and distribution of land are essential for mobilizing the rural masses. Later, the Naxalbari uprising, which began as a peasant revolution, became a strategic armed struggle against a centralist force. It is important to note that “Charu Mazumdar interpreted Mao’s ideas in the context of West Bengal and framed strategies to suit his surroundings. Mao’s Historic Eight Documents propounded the Naxal ideology and were instantly popular among the early rebels.” (50 Years of Naxalbari Movement: Classic Case of Fight for Right Cause with Wrong Means, 2017). Drawing inspiration from Mao’s idea of protracted people’s war, the Naxalbari movement too carried out a strategic method to encircle the urban zone from rural hubs, where the peasant class was the revolutionary class

The Naxalite movement in Bengal aligns with Maoist principles as this movement was a movement of greater class struggles in a rural economy, and the primary revolutionary class here was the peasant class, who were determined to dismantle India’s feudal structure, which was prevalent during the 1960s and 1970s. This movement reflected India’s underlying demographic struggle, and it highlighted that India as a nation has witnessed an aristocracy of class and caste in the agrarian sector. Charu Mazumdar’s interpretation and incorporation of Maoism played a crucial role in mobilizing the rural masses. It created a legacy that today can be recognised as left-wing politics.

Cultural movement and the Naxalbari movement

Though both India and China differed geographically and culturally, both movements reflected a shared commitment to advocating for a larger class struggle and its profound role in mobilizing the masses. Here, one of the core ideological principles of both revolutions was their anti-revisionist stance to remove extreme bureaucratization and

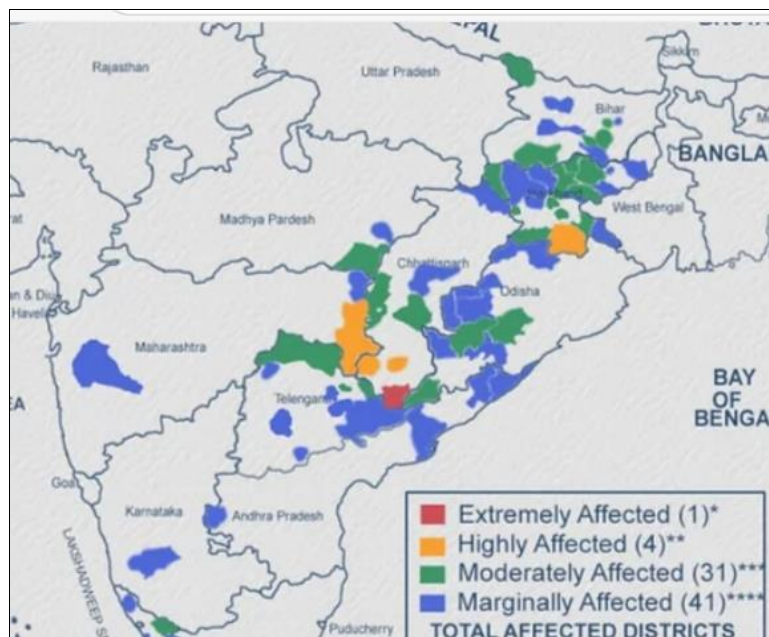
hierarchical structure. Both movements mobilized the youth to challenge the social and political hierarchy. The Naxalites witnessed a large number of student participants from colleges like Jadavpur University and Presidency College who rejected the traditional academic practices, thereby joining hands with rural campaigns. It is important to note that both movements saw violence as a crucial means in establishing a successful revolution. The main idea behind this was to diminish the old ideological rule to a clear proletarian culture.

The naxalbari movement in Bengal and its symbolic alignment to Maoist principle reflects that Maoism has been interpreted and adopted over time, but most importantly this movement laid down the foundational aspects of Naxalite movement which was witnessed later in states of Bihar and Jharkhand- where the the main idea of a Naxalite movement is heavily based on Maoist ideology.

Chapter 3: The Maoist strategy in India

It has been witnessed that the Maoist strategy is increasing in India over time and space. “The Maoists have already

spread into almost one-third of the country’s geographical area. So far as time is concerned, they have managed to sustain the movement for almost 40 years” (Dubey, 2013b). Their presence in the forests of Karnataka, Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, and Kerala hasn’t gone unnoticed by Indian media. “Maoists have succeeded in penetrating the National Capital Region (NCR). Moreover, it is now no more secret that some Maoists have been arrested in Delhi, the national capital, as well.48 Recent reports in the media indicate their presence in Northeast India, too.49 Maoist cadres, under the umbrella of the Upper Assam Leading Committee (UALC) of the CPI (Maoist), have already sneaked into Dhemaji, Tinsukia, Dibrugarh, Sonitpur and Chirang districts of Assam and Lohit and lower Dibang valley districts of Arunachal Pradesh” (Dubey, 2013b). Reportedly, their vision of mobilization has been a central issue of India's internal threat, where Maoist forces still draw massive support from the tribal population, who have witnessed issues of land displacement and state neglect. Maoist forces in India have positioned themselves as the defender of Tribal rights and autonomy



(n.d.). sapulse.com

Fig 1: As of February 2019, 90 districts have been affected by left-wing extremism, which includes

Table 1: State-wise Distribution of Districts Affected by Left-Wing Extremism (LWE) in India

Name	Number of districts	Name of districts
Andhra Pradesh	6	East Godavari, Guntur, Srikakulam, Visakhapatnam, Vizianagaram, West Godavari
Bihar	16	Arwal, Aurangabad, Banka, East Champaran, Gaya, Jamui, Jehanabad, Kaimur, Lakhisarai, Munger, Muzaffarpur, Nalanda, Nawada, Rohtas, Vaishali, West Champaran
Chhattisgarh	14	Balod, Balrampur, Bastar, Bijapur, Dantewada, Dhamtari, Gariyaband, Kanker, Kondagaon, Mahasamund, Narayanpur, Rajnandgaon, Sukma, Kabirdham
Jharkhand	19	Bokaro, Chatra, Dhanbad, Dumka, East Singhbhum, Garhwa, Giridih, Gumla, Hazaribagh, Khunti, Koderma, Latehar, Lohardaga, Palamu, Ramgarh, Ranchi, Simdega, Saraikela-Kharaswan, West Singhbhum
Kerala	3	Malappuram, Palakkad, Wayanad
Madhya Pradesh	2	Balaghat, Mandla
Maharashtra	3	Chandrapur, Gadchiroli, Gondia
Odisha	15	Angul, Bargarh, Bolangir, Boudh, Deogarh, Kalahandi, Kandhamal, Koraput, Malkangiri, Nabrangpur, Nayagarh, Nuapada, Rayagada, Sambhalpur, Sundargarh
Telangana	8	Adilabad, Bhadradi-Kothagudem, Jayashankar-Bhupalpally, Khammam, Komaram-Bheem, Mancherial, Peddapalle, Warangal Rural
Uttar Pradesh	3	Chandauli, Mirzapur and Sonbhadra
West Bengal	1	Jhargram
Total = 90		

(Naxal Affected Districts, 2019)

“The insurgency is concentrated in certain states, primarily in the mineral-rich 'red corridor' region, which comprises the states of Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Odisha, Bihar, and parts of Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, and West Bengal. The term "red corridor" refers to the prevalence of left-wing extremism in the area. The region's wealth of natural resources, dense forests, and challenging terrain has made it a focal point for protracted conflict. These regions are home to a large section of Adivasi people who, over time, faced several issues such as displacement of land, loss of livelihood, etc. (Shakeel Sobhan, 2025).

State response

With Narendra Modi's BJP government promising to end left-wing extremism, India as a nation aims to pull out all in victory against the military forces. “At the same time, Gera said, "the state is now trying to push a vision of itself as more benevolent and inclusive and is succeeding in drawing some people towards itself. Plus, of course, the state has far greater military power, which is attractive in and of itself." (Shakeel Sobhan, 2025). The government aims to stamp out Naxalism by 2026 as the current Upi government firmly believes that Maoist politics in the context of India is standing as the biggest barrier in remote villages, as it prevents inclusivity, education, development, etc. “The government of India has adopted a zero-tolerance approach towards left-wing extremism, and with 100% implementation of government schemes, it seeks to fully develop the LWE-affected areas” (Naxalmukt Bharat Abhiyan: From Red Zones to Growth Corridors, 2025).

To deal with the problem of Naxalism in certain remote villages of India, the government laid down two important procedures

- 1) To establish the rule of law in Naxal-affected areas
- 2) Quickly compensate for the loss of lives and property due to displacement

Over a while, it has been witnessed that the government has adopted a zero tolerance policy while dealing with Naxal forces, as the Upi government that Naxals as a barrier to their vision of an inclusive government.

While the nature of Maoism in India is multidimensional, including elements of class, caste, etc, thereby giving rise to Naxalite, the same interpretation of Maoist ideology varies in the context of Nepal, which will be discussed in Chapter 4.

Chapter 4: Rise of Maoist politics in Nepal

Even after the end of Mao Zedong's regime in China, the echoes of Maoism can still be heard in Nepal during 2006, when the Maoists in Nepal played a crucial role in determining the upcoming political struggle of Nepal. Nepal is a landlocked country between India and China. The kingdom is known for its natural mountains and cultural tolerance. The ideological issue regarding the masses eventually led to numerous splits among the Maoist faction. Inspired by Mao Zedong's idea of a People's war, the Maoists in Nepal led a fierce people's war from 1996-2006, thereby eliminating the Monarchical system. “The Maoist insurgency of Nepal has been a product of its socio-economic and political context Muni, (2010). Landholding in Nepal remained highly unequal due to the feudal mode of production.. Until the 1990s, a large number of migrations were witnessed in Nepal. With the rise of democracy in

1990, there was a ray of hope among the Nepali masses however, the results were disappointing. Also, socially, there was a large division between the Brahmins, Chetris, and Newars. Also, there was a large social divide in Nepal between the Paharis and Madeshi, where the small elites of Paharis accumulated large amounts of wealth. “The Maoists' 'people's war' was launched in February 1996 in Nepal's mid-west region, constituted by Rukum, Rolpa, Jajarkot, Salyan and Gorkha districts of the Rapti Zone (Muni, 2010). Establishing the base of people's war in Rolpa and Rukhum districts regions which faced the prospects of economic backwardness for a long period. Social issues such as alienation, marginalization, and high economic inequalities sparked a communist base in Nepal, thereby escalating into a people's war. Also, besides social inequalities and economic underdevelopment, there was a lack of political representation for the minorities who were scattered all over the country. It was the failure of the monarchical regime in Nepal that gave rise to the Maoist movement, which mainly believed in changing Nepal's power structure.

In the 1991 election, the Maoist faction emerged as the third-largest party. “They mobilised civil servants and other professional groups to agitate for their demands against the government, but these agitations were put down strongly and both the dominant parties got almost united in treating the Maoists shabbily in and outside the parliament (Muni, 2010). The year is 1995 when Nepal citizens faced a ruthless police operation, and this period was used perfectly by the Maoist faction in Nepal to launch the People's War, and they used this operation of the state as an effective ideological tool to mobilize the masses and recruit more cadres. “This repression led the Maoists to submit a charter of 40 demands to the government in February 1996, giving 10 days to respond. But even before the expiry of the deadline, the 'people's war' was launched (Muni, 2010). Yet, by the end of 1998, the Maoist faction in Nepal was more successful in recruiting more cadres due to the rise of oppressive police operations under the state. As a result, they could expand their idea of a people's war in more than 40 districts by the end of 1998. Maoism in Nepal not only challenged the state hierarchy through armed resistance, but it also reshaped Nepal's political structure. By the early 2000s, the conflict reached a stalemate, but a decisive moment came in 2005 when Maoist forces in Nepal allied with the SPA to oppose King Gyanendra's direct rule, as both factions came together to oppose autocratic rule in Nepal. This movement played a crucial role in opening the doors for substantive political reforms, thereby ending the monarchical regime in Nepal.

The Maoist impact on Nepal's political discourse fundamentally reshaped the state's power and identity. The Maoist ideology in Nepal had emphasized that Nepal should be a federal country, which was later incorporated in Nepal's 2015 Constitution. More importantly this reflects that Maoism in the context of Nepal was not only an ideological movement but also a transformative force that eventually reconfigured the nation's political foundations.

Ideological similarities to Maoist principles

The Maoist movement in Nepal was led by the Communist Party of Nepal, which drew inspiration from the teachings of Chairman Mao. The very idea of the People's War in Nepal was to overthrow the feudal and monarchical

structure in Nepal. The people's war in 1966 reflected a clear adherence to Maoist principles, where the Nepali Maoists primarily focused on the rural districts that faced prospects of alienation and exclusion from equal representation. It included members of the Adivasi community, ethnic minorities, and women. Through this, a parallel administration was established, with local militias and cadets, courts, etc. Although the socio-political scenario of Nepal and China differed from each other, the ideological foundation of protracted people's war was used effectively to attract the rural population of Nepal. Mao Zedong argued that revolutions should be continuous in nature, a key argument which was witnessed in the context of Nepal's Maoist faction where the idea of People Revolution began from 1996 and then continued for a long time until 2005, a year where a strategic compromise was made by Maoist forces by forming a coalition with SPA. Instead of continuing the revolution, the Maoist forces agreed to compromise with a multiparty democratic framework. Nonetheless, this reflects the strategic adaptation of Maoist principles to Nepal's social and economic framework. The ideological evolution of Maoism was necessary to deal with Nepal's socio-political framework, thereby avoiding a

prolonged civil war.

A central thesis of Zedong's political doctrine is based on his belief in armed resistance in any revolution, arguing that meaningful change in a society could never be attained through peaceful negotiations. While framing the people's war by the Nepali Maoists in 1995, they deemed this revolution as a total revolution against feudal domination, capitalist domination, and caste hierarchy, where armed struggle became a central theme for Nepal's Maoist forces. The Nepal Maoists believed that the feudal production of Nepal was dominated by imperialist forces, and this relation could only be broken through Armed resistance. The Maoists in Nepal argued that the armed struggle is necessary to establish a new political order. The people's war began in 1996, when coordinated attacks on government offices and police administration were witnessed. These acts of violence, which were mainly noticed in Rolpa and Rukum districts, aimed to dismantle the hierarchical authority of various state institutions, and later it was observed that armed resistance was used as an effective weapon beyond Rolpa and Rukum districts. Later, the idea of Armed struggle became a defining feature for the CPI(M) forces in Nepal.

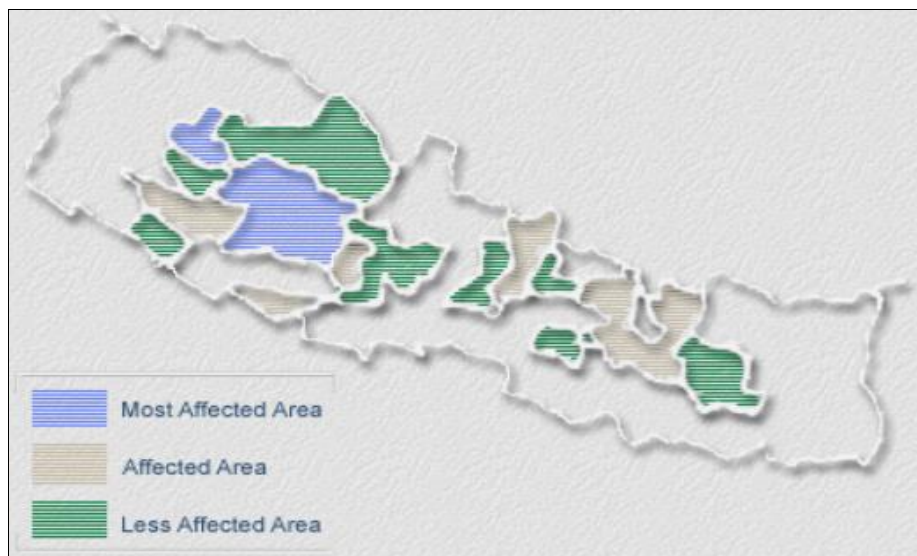


Fig 2: Nepal area affected by Maoist violence

“The Maoist insurgency initially commenced in the three districts of Rolpa, Rukum, and Jajarkot and eventually spread throughout Nepal. Maoists have very strong bases in Western and mid-Western regions and partially in the Eastern region”. Communist Party of Nepal Maoist (Communist Party of Nepal Maoist (CPN-M)/ (UCPN-M) Terrorist Group, Nepal, 2025). The Maoist technique of Armed struggle eventually became very effective in organizing the masses of Nepal, who faced various kinds of inequalities.

Maoist strategy in Nepal (in contemporary times)

According to contemporary media information, the Maoists in Nepal have established good contacts with the extremist left-wing parties of India since the outbreak of the People's War in Nepal. The communist party (Maoist forces) remains a very active opposition in Nepal's politics, where Maoist politics in Nepal has undergone a significant change. Over time, it has been witnessed that the Maoist forces in Nepal have undergone severe internal changes, which could be

reflected in their splits and factions. As of 2025, they remain the third-largest party in Nepal's parliamentary representation. With the rise in demand for a Hindu monarch among Nepal's masses, former Maoist leader Durga Prasai has emerged as a very prominent leader for this demand, and he argues that the “Maoist Centre can provide tough competition in the upcoming general elections if the party establishes itself as a strong opposition in Parliament (Out of Power, Maoist Centre Gears up for Reboot and Reunited Front, 2025). Despite the formal end of Maoist insurgency, Nepal continues to have political-economic instability, and thereby Maoism in Nepal underwent a significant transition over a short time.

Conclusion

This paper highlights the ideological trajectory of Maoism from shaping the rural insurgency to a potential political force reflecting an interaction between ideological frameworks, economic inequalities, etc. Most importantly, it highlights the ideological interpretation of Maoism as a

whole that it evolved, adapted, and changed itself in various circumstances. As the Maoist movement in various countries evolved, it highlights how this ideology remains a relevant force in shaping the geopolitical landscape of Asia. The discussion involves the legacy of Mao Zedong's ideology and its engagement within democratic spaces, raising critical questions about political legitimacy and state sovereignty. The discussion mainly highlights Maoism not only as a historical phenomenon but as a living discourse that plays a detrimental role in shaping the Global South. The discussions also highlights ideological tracing of Maoism as a whole along with its core principles, but with time it has laid a blueprint for various Maoist movements in Nepal and India. Despite its history, Maoism remains a very significant force in addressing socio-political issues of Nepal and India, highlighting a strong critique of inequality, exclusion, and exploitation. While its methods may vary from country to country, its core principles laid down by Mao makes Maoism as a living ideology that continues to influence the contemporary world.

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