

Naxals in Kerala

Their Networks, Resources, Legitimacy and Solutions for Curbing Future Growth

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New Delhi



KNOWLEDGE WORLD
KW Publishers Pvt Ltd
New Delhi

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ISSN 23939729

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CLAWS Army No. 33098

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www.kwpub.com

Published in India by

Kalpna Shukla

KW Publishers Pvt Ltd

4676/21, First Floor, Ansari Road, Daryaganj, New Delhi 110002

Phone: +91 11 23263498 / 43528107 email: knowledgeworld@vsnl.net • www.kwpub.com

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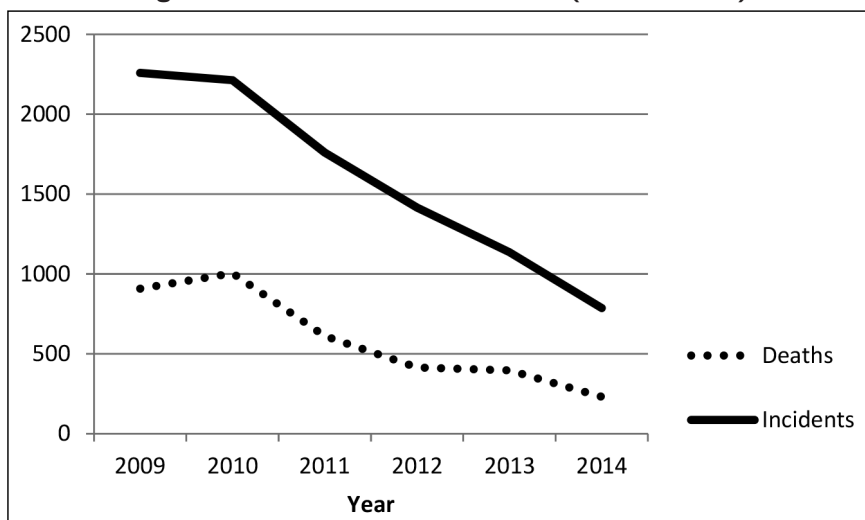
Naxal Silence as Phase of Transformation and Reconstruction

The origin of 'Naxalism' as a term can be dated back to 1967 with the uprising in the village of Naxalbari in West Bengal. This incident prepared the base for a revolution that continues even today in which the political and socio-economic agrarian scenario in the country has been transformed into an armed struggle¹. The term *Naxalism* is also used interchangeably with 'Maoism' to compare with a more global phenomenon as it appears to fellow Mao Tse-tung's approach which ideally looked at the agrarian class, rather than the working class, as the key revolutionary force which could transform the capitalist society towards socialism. In India, this movement, under the slogan 'Lal Salam' (Red Salute) has existed for four decades now and the era of Naxals has been characterised by periods of both silence and violence. Silence is usually perceived as defeat or stabilisation. But, Nayak and Subramaniam in the book *The Naxal Threat*, outline a history of similar armed uprisings that occurred before the Naxalbari incident, during the British rule and even before that,² which suggests, that in the past, whenever and wherever such revolts occurred, the government was successful in suppressing the rebellion down to a tolerable level. The authors argue that in the present time, the government has not effectively used the breathing-time available between the uprisings to address the root causes. For India, it is not the physical strength of the nation that is at test here, for it commands one of the largest armies; but it must be remembered that today, wars can be fought without conventional security forces. Certainly, it is also the morale and rationale that are critical to a government's legitimacy and these are at question today.

The Naxals operate at the grassroots level for that is where the government machinery is absent or is malfunctioning to a great degree. It is easy for them to obtain legitimacy from the people of these regions by providing them services like justice and security which the government

has failed to provide. They have managed to draw support and sympathy from men and women of all age groups by promising to address the socio-political problems faced by them. Their causes may be termed as populist but democracy is designed to accommodate such populism. There are bound to be groups with opinions different from the government's stand – that is the beauty of democracy. But the problem arises when these protests turn violent and into armed struggles, like the country has seen several times in the past, both while under colonial rule and post-independence. The Maoists have managed to influence the very same tribals from whom the government has faced resistance, for the same reasons of 'welfare and development'. A more interesting fact is the pace at which the Maoists have managed to gain influence and legitimacy from these 'conservative' communities. A lot of it may be attributed to the already built-up feelings of injustice and vengeance inside them, triggered by the power that they are suddenly able to wield because of the rebels' support. As an alternative method of warfare, not necessarily with arms, understanding the local causes may help to devise a more effective multi-dimensional approach which is not necessarily generic for the whole nation.

However, recent trends show that the Maoists have been lying low as their actions have reduced and so have the killings (See Fig.1). There has been an overall reduction in the statistics of sabotage and siege of infrastructure such as schools and power stations, though they continue to damage road connectivity in the rural areas³ to prevent access to their guerrilla zones. This can be seen as a defensive move rather than an offensive one.

Fig 1: Recent LWE Trends in India (2009 to 2014)

Source of data: Ministry of Home Affairs (India), 2014.

The past experiences in the country show that when the Maoists have not been active in terms of violence, they have been using the time for improving their organisational strength by *recruiting, recuperating, striking new alliances and looking for newer ways of raising funds and acquiring weapons*.⁴ It is their perseverance to grow that has enabled the struggle to continue for so long despite their asymmetry of power against the nation state.

While there has been a weakening of the Naxalites in the Red Corridor, there has been substantial growth in places like Kerala.⁵ Their classical strategies are being reinforced and innovated with new knowledge of rebellion and combat tactics, along with an understanding of politics, economics and organisation which is going to make them more resilient to withstand the government efforts. Unless the government traces the very roots of the movement, the issue cannot be fully addressed. The Maoists' events directory, accessed from the South Asia Terrorism Portal for the years 2013 and 2014, has been used for mapping and carrying out the analyses as cited henceforth. Data such as of forest cover has been remote sensed using Google maps, and locations of mineral deposits have been obtained from the Department of Mining and Geology (Kerala). Related issues are mapped and overlayed to bring out the spatial correlations and patterns that are used in ascertaining location specific explanations.

Key Arguments

- The Maoists have moved back to the strategic defence stage.
- They can continue unarmed propaganda and agitations.
- The methods of warfare have diversified and no longer comprise just a game of numbers or weapons.
- The grassroots approach is required, but that is not necessarily generic for the whole nation.

Fig 2: Pattern of Left Wing Extremism (LWE) Incidents in Kerala (2013)

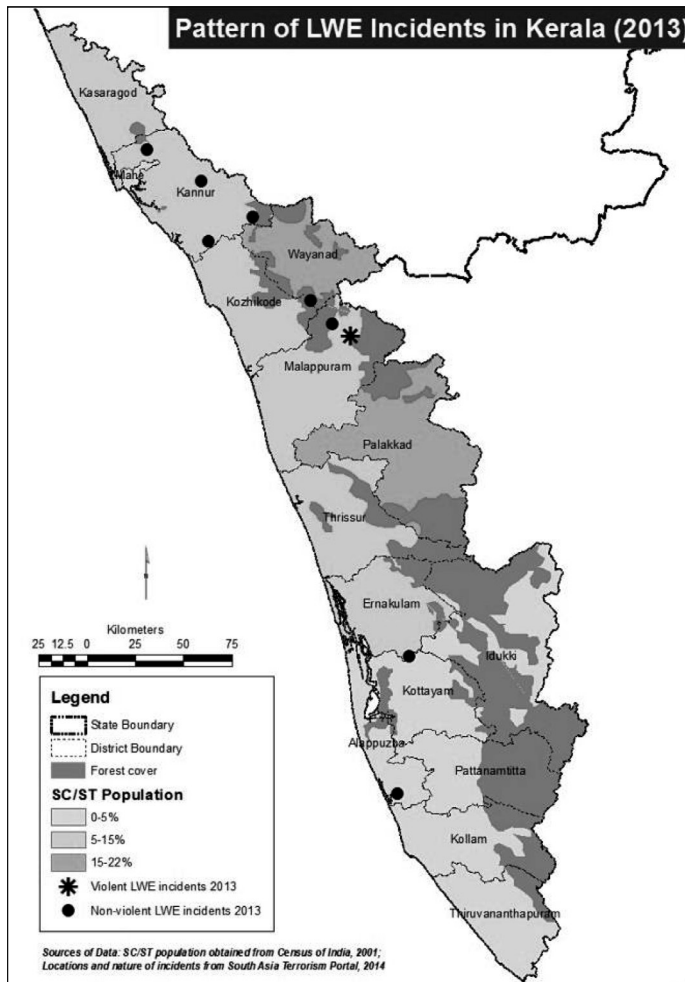
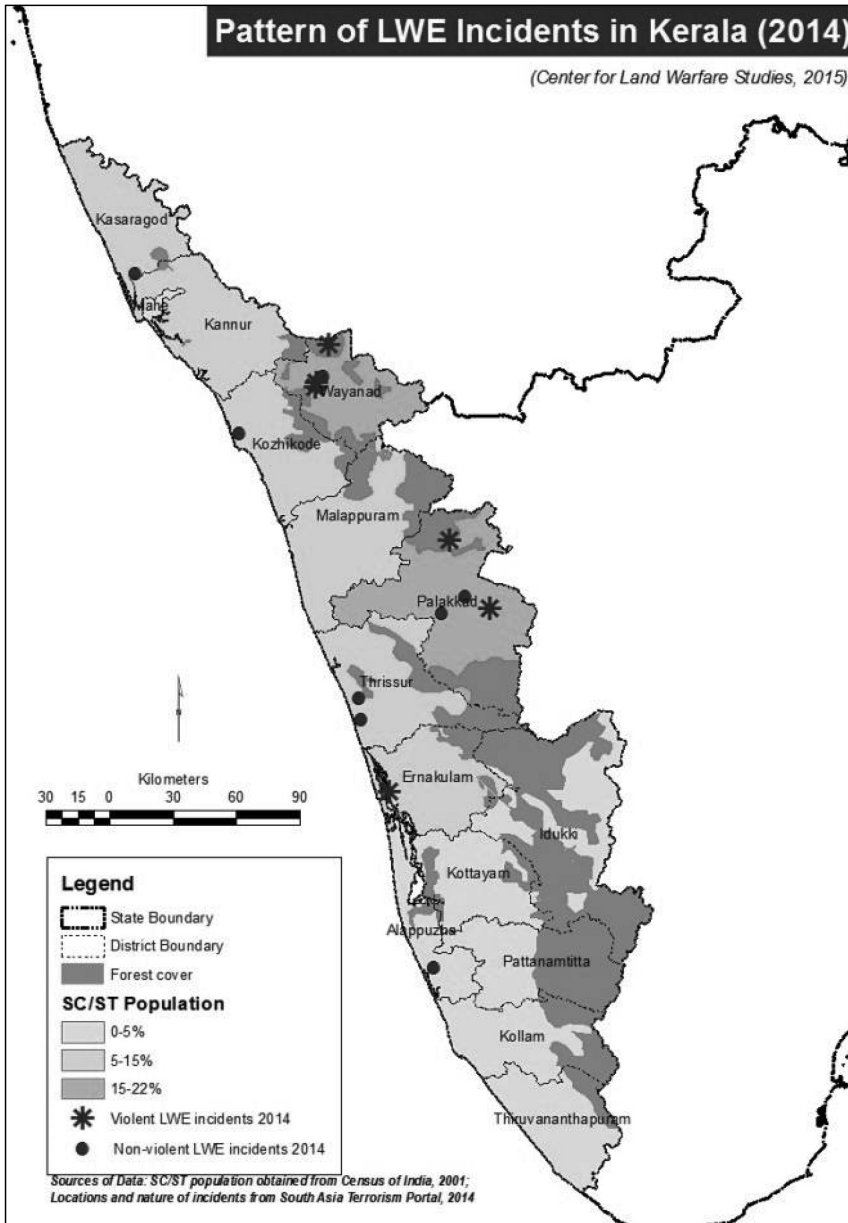


Fig 3: Pattern of LWE Incidents in Kerala (2014)



Naxals in the South Indian Region: Cornering Them in Kerala

Tracing the recent events in the southern region, the areas around the point of confluence among Karnataka, Kerala and Tamil Nadu record most of the events related to the Naxals. In March 2014, Tamil Nadu announced that the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) had successfully managed to stop new recruits from the villages and CRPF IG (Inspector General) of the southern state, Vishnuvardhana Rao was convinced that Maoism would soon end in the state.⁶ About a month later, in Kerala, a group of four armed men threatened dire consequences to officials of the three southern states (Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Kerala) if they tried to prevent their activities in the tribal areas. Two things were clear: the Maoists' interest was in the southern states and they were dependent on support from the tribals. The threats would have also been a message to the tribals in the southern region that they could look towards the Maoists for lending and receiving support. After the loss of their cadre pools in Tamil Nadu, the Maoists may have been looking for the same in Kerala.

This did not deter the Karnataka and Tamil Nadu police, and they remained on alert and periodically combed the forest areas in the tri-junction whenever they suspected Maoist presence. On the other hand, Kerala, that had earlier witnessed largely the non-violent propaganda of the Maoists, now faced a number of armed encounters with them (see Figs. 2 and 3 for pattern of LWE incidents). All three states faced the Maoist presence and made continuing efforts to track them, but, clearly, the rebels were more comfortable in Kerala, particularly in the districts of Wayanad and Palakkad. A few months later, the Karnataka government announced a package with monetary benefits in return for the surrender of the Maoists.⁷ This attempt was possible as the intelligence report had estimated that only about 20 Naxals were present in the entire state.⁸ Thereafter; the Karnataka police carried out operations in the Naxal affected villages of Chikmagalur, and continued combing the forests of vulnerable areas to ensure the discomfort of the Naxalites. Thus, it is clear that the Maoists have felt the effects of

security actions in Karnataka and Tamil Nadu, and have been cornered in Kerala. This seems to be their last stronghold in the southern region as they are using firepower to sustain their grip in these areas.

The violent incidents comprise not just police-Maoist encounters but also offensive moves by the rebels, again, not focussed on just the state forces or departments (like the forest aid post in Kunjomunder Vellamunda police station in Wayanad district) but including private targets as well (like the KFC outlet in Palakkad city).⁹ Brian Michael Jenkins, in 1971, had elucidated the five stages of guerrilla warfare¹⁰ in which random violent moves comprise the first step in order to publicise the guerrillas' existence. Thus, the Maoists are not just defensive, but interested in setting up a base for future growth in Kerala.

The growth has been centred on the tri-junction of the three states and it is not the first time that the Maoists have attempted such a strategy: Orissa-Andhra Pradesh-Madhya Pradesh and Jharkhand-Bihar-Orissa-West Bengal, both in the 1970s, are examples of the same measures adopted by the Maoists and these areas continue to be infested even today. Thus, the strategy has shown significant resilience. The south Chhattisgarh tri-junction (Chhattisgarh-Telangana-Odisha) is a current hot spot, with the security forces frequently engaging with the Maoists. In the case of the 'tri-junction' of Kerala-Tamil Nadu-Karnataka, the Maoists have a myriad favourable conditions that they need to thrive (see Fig.4): the forests offer them invisibility; the rough terrain hinders the accessibility of the security forces; and the administrative boundaries offer administrative limitations and create confusion between the government departments in terms of accountability and execution of action. There are possibilities of the Maoists obtaining their arms from local manufacturers in villages around the forests. The Tamil Nadu police arrested two local arms manufacturers and later an arms dealer after they found a country-made gun in an abandoned jeep in Nilgiri district of Tamil Nadu. The tribal population in settlements around these forests is vulnerable to Maoist propaganda, and, hence, the areas comprise favourable ground for guerrilla warfare.

Kerala is most vulnerable in the sense, that the Naxal activities have increased in the state in terms of both propaganda and armed encounters over the last few years. The physical depth of Kerala being low, the Maoists

can plan attacks from the tri-junction till the coast. Kochi city, which is along the coast, witnessed such an attack in November 2014, when a gang of nine members suspected to have been Maoists, vandalised the corporate office of Nitta Gelatin India Limited (NGIL). The propaganda has also amplified near the coast of Kerala after they started operating from this location. The police now estimate that there are more than 100 Maoist armed recruits in the region. The rebels are being gathered not only from within the state but also from other states into the tri-junction.¹¹ They may consider making one or more compact revolutionary or guerrilla zones in these forests.

Fig 4: Security Forces Cornering the Maoists in Kerala Tri-junction



Sources of data: Imagery from Google; location and description of events from SATP.

Key Arguments

- The tri-junction approach has helped the Maoists survive for over half a century in several regions across the country
- The environment is favourable for the Maoists in the Kerala tri-junction; the forests offer invisibility, the rough terrain aids inaccessibility, administrative limitations create confusion, and local manufacturers in villages around the forests are sources of arms.
- The low physical depth of Kerala may facilitate attacks based on the forests up to the coast.

Possible Grounds for Maoists' Legitimacy in the Region

The Naxalites bring up, and advocate, a number of local issues and causes to motivate the people into supporting them. They include facets such as entitlement, dignity and freedom from structural morals. Local legitimacy serves a critical role for recruiting cadres and the much needed local services for medical aid, cloaking measures, food, shelter and, most importantly, for setting up a non-cooperative offence as a protective shield in the area. Critically, it is the people who comprise the Maoists' goal and not just the land, as without their support, a state can never be formed and the revolution will collapse. This is the primary reason why the Maoists have no interest in southern Kerala as of now, because the minority groups are few in numbers (see Figs. 2 and 3 for tribal population) and will not provide them the required support for functioning.

In Kerala, the Naxalites have managed to draw focus on a number of such issues and causes in an effort to engage people belonging to different strata and age groups.

They have engaged different groups by highlighting different concerns:^{12, 13}

- *Adivasis* and *Dalits*: Land and dignity issues; displacement of tribals due to tourism projects and wildlife sanctuaries e.g. the miserable condition of tribals in Manjeri in Malappuram district.
- *Women*: discrimination; gender empowerment; dignity against exploitation.
- *Youth*: moral policing; child rights.
- *Environmental Pollution*: mining and quarrying activity, exploitation of natural resources, alleged high-handedness and misdeeds of forest and police officials; use of endosulfan.

The main reason for this strategy working is that none of the political parties is ready to raise a voice for the minorities, who comprise the marginalised people who do not benefit from democracy and, thus, need to mobilise themselves. When this revolution, fuelled by vengeance, occurs,

it has historically never been without a non-violent attempt to mobilise the victims under a strong leadership.¹⁴ Thus, the phase of non-violent propaganda cannot be ignored and the leaders comprise the key to suppress the revolution.

Some of the key issues in the region are highlighted below.

Entitlements

Post-independence, the Kerala Land Reforms Act 1963, gave land to the tiller, and thus, the immigrant labourers who were working on the tribal, land became the landlords, reducing the local tribals to being landless.¹⁵ Many tribals or *adivasis* also sold their inherited land to non-tribal settler farmers for meagre sums or due to debts.¹⁶ These areas are reportedly not included in Schedule 5 that prevents the transfer of land to non-tribals. The inclusion of these lands in Schedule 5 is one of the demands of the tribal population today in Kerala.¹⁷

The tribal population of Kerala has long been affected by the problems of land alienation. Yet, what is really unique about Kerala is that the matter has not been addressed for 40 years, even though there is an Act on it. The Alienated Tribal Land (Restoration) Act, 1975, which has also been included in Schedule 9 of the Constitution, explicitly advocates treatment of “alienated land” as stolen property, and orders its restoration to the owners.¹⁸ However, the Act has not been implemented due to lack of political will as also lack of influence of the tribals. The dearth of land to cultivate and the lack of employment, in a few decades resulted, in the starvation deaths of about 200 people in the tribal belts of Kerala, in Muthanga, in 2001.¹⁹ This tragedy became a landmark as it brought both national and international attention to the tribals’ plight in the state, which compelled political action and the tribals were promised land by the chief minister through an agreement.²⁰ But hereon the conflict began from the forest and revenue perspectives. The tribals, through force, tried to encroach on forest lands for their survival and, at the same time, the government used brutal force such as *lathi* charge, teargas and firing to prevent them from doing so, resulting in the imprisonment of about a 1,000 tribals.²¹ Thus, the inability of the government to address the land issue and the tribals’ dire need for survival has become one of the major reasons for Maoist activities gaining ground. Shashank Ranjan, a senior fellow at the

Centre for Land Warfare Studies, explains policing as consensual control of the people rather than of territory.²² Areas like Wayanad and Palakkad are vulnerable, with a significant number of tribals who have been victims of land alienation, along with the humiliation and harassment that follows while claiming their rights amid a poor delivery system.²³ Scholars caution that a similar situation may arise in the case of the endosulfan affected regions, but so far, the Maoist effort on that has been low key.

Marginalisation

Marginalisation comes with social humiliation, indignity and injustice. Dignity and justice are among the basics that the state should provide its subjects. Marginalisation is an offshoot of the hierarchical set-up of society. But hierarchy is often respected for its achievements rather than as a part of an ascribed framework such as caste and religion that is structural. A more recent phenomenon that stirs similar emotions is bureaucratic status. A lot of literature is available on the social indignity that is caused within the state²⁴ and the underlying concept can be identified as one of labelling. Studies in criminology and deviant behaviour suggest that social labels such as ‘criminals’ often lead to further criminal behaviour²⁵ and, indeed, the branding, profiling and witchhunts of people, who are activists, intellectuals, lawyers, without any evidence, is an unnecessary harassment and waste of time, as the courts have quashed several such cases in the recent past, such as that of the Swiss national.²⁶ It becomes a sensitive issue when the police picks up *adivasi* and *dalit* boys on mere suspicion, and also people working among the tribals, and human right activists – sometimes just because they “look like Maoists”.²⁷ In February 2015, about 1,000 *adivasis* (tribesmen) from several tribal villages in Bastar (Chhattisgarh) staged a protest against such behaviour by the police.²⁸ The use of force (sometimes for unscrupulous reasons) not only causes the government to lose legitimacy but is also a major deterrent to its efforts of increasing its expenditure and its policy plans to develop the tribal areas.²⁹

Table I: Plan Outlay and Expenditure for Tribal Development Programmes in India

| (Rs. in crores) | | | | |
|------------------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------|-----------------------------|------|
| Sr. | Plan Period No. | Total Plan Outlay | Total Development Programme | % |
| 1. | First Plan * (1951-56) | 1,960 | 19.93 | 1.00 |
| 2 | Second Plan* (1956-61) | 4,672 | 42.92 | 0.60 |
| 3 | Third Plan* (1961-66) | 8,577 | 50.53 | 0.60 |
| 4 | Annual Plan* (1966-69) | 6,756 | 32.32 | 0.50 |
| 5 | Fourth Plan** (1974-79) | 15,902 | 75.00 | 0.50 |
| 6 | Fifth Plan** (1974-79) | 39.322 | 1,182.00 | 3.01 |
| 7 | Sixth Plan** (1980-85) | 97.500 | 5,535.00 | 5.67 |
| 8 | Seventh Plan** (1985-90) | 1,80.000 | 12,000.00 | 6.67 |
| Note * Expenditure ** Outlay | | | | |

Source: Ministry of Home Affairs, Occasional Papers on Tribal Development, 1996, Extracted from Padhi, 2015, p.1, 19-20.

The police require evidence to make such arrests and enquiries must be carried out with cooperation. Such evidence is what will matter in the courts and, thus, the security professional, even at the ground level, must be trained in tactical communication.

It is not possible to predict and monitor an individual's behaviour on the ground but when such events do come to light or turn into protests, the government must address them on priority as the people are only voicing their concerns and must not be offended further by the passing of unnecessary remarks, which again, are just words, without relevance in the courts. Bad behaviour by public officials is the key for the Naxals to make their way in. The task is difficult and government forces cannot make it easy for themselves. It is a war between ideologies and will certainly be lost by the ones that forget their own.

Education

The leaders of uprisings have not always been from among the local people. For instance, Alluri Sitaram Raju who led the Paderu rebellion between 1922-23, was a non-tribal who mobilised guerrilla combat against the British for their penalising of the *Podu* (slash and burn) cultivation method, and the eviction of tribal settlements from inside dense forests.³⁰ This was the first time that the tribals were introduced to this kind of resistance. Often, outsiders are the source of the tribals' information about the law and their rights, and propagating new ideas through cultural contacts. Raising their educational standards will not only increase the economic options for the tribals, but will also create civic awareness, which is a must as an ill-informed local population is more vulnerable to exploitation.

In the state of Kerala, with a literacy rate at 90.92 percent, that of the Scheduled Tribes stands at only 64.5 percent.³¹ Professors from the M.E.S Asmabi College, Kodungallur, in Kerala, have highlighted the importance of schools in not only moulding the basic ideas, habits and attitudes of children but also in keeping children away from social evils. However, the schools in the state face the challenge of the 'drop-out' phenomenon³² or students who discontinue their education. A survey conducted by academicians in the institute revealed that the main reason for students dropping out is lack of interest in studies, an issue which can be addressed by enhancing teaching capabilities and curricula. A vital point raised by the same survey is that the teachers sometimes have little knowledge of the tribal culture and environment, which causes students to feel isolated, and they withdraw from education. The lack of interest has also been attributed by the authors to the high level of exclusion and the low level of political empowerment that renders tribals with little or no participation in development matters or any form of decision-making at a higher level due to which they fail to realise the importance of education. Economic problems also contribute significantly as many drop-outs are daily wagers who are compelled to leave their studies due to a stressful economic situation at home. A Deb, in his master's thesis observes that activities that increase the 'time-pressure', creep into the productive time of individuals.³³ Household responsibilities and distance from school are mentioned by V A Haseena and A P Mohammed as factors that adversely affect the education of the tribals, leaving them with no free

time to invest in education. Provision of transportation and easier access to water supply, and provision of cooking fuel and electricity can help them find time for education. Deb argues that while prioritising for such projects, preference should ideally be given to areas wherein industrial or tertiary development is planned.

Modernisation may deplete the social capital and may even change the structure of the economy from an agrarian to an industrial one but new kinds of networks will emerge, and if supplemented by adequate livelihood opportunities, will enhance and improve people's lives.

The flipside to this theory is portrayed in the urban Maoists who use their education to strategise the movement, influence others with the ideology and assess their vulnerabilities. They are suspected to infiltrate into workers' groups, social forums, Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and act from within,³⁴ for purposes of agitation and carrying out propaganda. Kerala has recently witnessed several of these propaganda efforts (see Figs.2 and 3). These can be looked at as the Maoists' entry level activities which range from distributing material related to the Maoist ideology to holding rallies after which they encourage protest demonstrations and ultimately trigger violence.³⁵

The urban Maoists have come into focus and priority rather recently, but they have been the pioneers. Knowledge about Marxist ideas and the strategies of Mao Tse-tung comes through literature that is within the reach of the educated only. Also, a local protest can offer entry into a locality, but an agenda on a national scale requires people with knowledge and understanding of international affairs and politics. These leaders can operate from afar, especially from the cities as it gives them anonymity. Outsiders can be easily singled out in a rural community which is close knit, but cities which harbour waves of migrant population every year are the ideal residences of these leaders. At present, the Maoist aspiration of capturing cities through an armed rebellion might seem a little far-fetched as they do not have enough hold even in rural areas, but attacks on cities are possible through other means of unconventional warfare. The last thing the Maoist leaders would want is for the government to crack down on the cities in which they live, and, hence, they would target other towns, not the one where they live, as witnessed in Palakkad city or Kochi.

As the network of the Maoists revolves around the tri-junction, the cities which are popular tourist spots and have in the last five years seen major construction and sectoral development, thus, increasing in-migration, may become targets for such leaders who are looking after the growth of the Maoist movement in Kerala.

The idealogues are the ones who wield the power due to their control over the funding infrastructure. They remain unknown and unaccountable to the law. A strategy to absorb them into mainstream politics and education can be an alternative, provided they show an inclinations towards the same. Given the present stubborn attitude of the Maoist leadership, such a possibility seems to be bleak.

Key Arguments

- Land comprises the cause of the conflict between local and national interest, causing humiliation and harassment to the tribals.
- Ill-informed people are more vulnerable to Maoist propaganda – awareness and education are the answers.
- Schooling methods can be improved by integration of tribal values and infrastructure development .
- High-handed behaviour by officials is the key for Maoists to step in; public officers and security personnel need to be trained in tactical communication.
- The urban Maoists are the roots of the movement; cities with high migration rates serve as sanctuaries as they provide anonymity and invisibility.
- There is need of a strategy to absorb the Maoist leaders in mainstream politics.

Resource Potential of the Maoists in the Region

As of now, the Maoists are cornered and are expected to operate from the Kerala side. What are the resources in these areas that they can exploit and use to their advantage? The forests seem to be their first order resource, followed by the coast. The forests also have minerals deposits that can be of use to the rebels as sources of generating funds. This section will also discuss various other sources of funds that can help them.

A personal ethnographic experience with the fisherman community in the west coast of India has revealed that the fishermen have strong labour unions which provide them insurance, security and also regulate their employment. The fishermen community is almost autonomous, with minimum intervention from the government. The Maoists are not very likely to make inroads here but if they do manage to create good relations, they may be able to gain logistical access to other landmasses via the sea route and would improve their communication with similar groups from other countries.

P.K. Agrawal in the book *Naxalism: Causes and Cure* has listed the sources of income of the Maoists:³⁶

- Ransom: kidnappings targeted at government officials and the rich.
- Usurpation: of land from the rich.
- Subscription: collecting from local people by luring them.
- Lease: of government or forest land.
- Levy: from traders, businessmen and government officials.
- Sale: of forest or mineral produce.

In the tri-junction, the Maoists' main hold is in the forests as of now. Hence, the paper delves into a detailed inquiry about the resources they can obtain from the forests and also the presence of minerals of value. Control over these resources by the Maoists means not only a loss of revenue for the government and the people, but a regular source of finance for the rebels to sustain their struggle and procure arms and ammunition.

Forests

Taking precedents from other parts of the country with regard to the Maoists' interests in the forests, it can be noted that while they have restricted the entry of government initiatives and disregarded the licences to entrepreneurs for establishing enterprises like paper mills and extraction of other forest resources such as wood and bamboo, they have, at the same time, struck deals with businessmen in parallel, imposing their own terms.³⁷ Many businessmen who have struck deals with the Maoists, have had to pay the Maoists twice the price for extracting the forest products that they would have had to, to the government, to be able to continue with their business without violence.³⁸ The Maoists have reportedly collaborated with them, though on their own terms; they have also insisted on including the tribals in the work in terms of the labour required by the enterprises, so that the tribals get the benefit of employment. While they are vocal about the welfare of the tribals in this, a large percentage of the money gained by the Maoists is used to fund their future expansion plans.

In the southern region, many of the Maoist encounters and spread of propaganda have been around the forests and rural areas of the three states around the tri-junction and along the borders of Kerala and Karnataka. The Maoists seem to have been left with little choice other than to operate from the districts of Wayanad, Malappuram and Palakkad as they are close to the tri-junction of the bordering states of Karnataka and Tamil Nadu, which gives them the much needed smokescreen and allows easy escape in case of a police pursuit. Added to this, the forests are protected areas that restrict the entry of people, making these pockets ideal hiding and training grounds for the Maoist cadres. The forests also have resources like wildlife, wood, herb ingredients or narcotics that the groups use as sources for funds.

Teak (99 percent of hardwood plantation) and eucalyptus (82 percent softwood plantation) which form the main species of wood in Kerala and are extensively used for construction, are the two most valuable forest resources of Kerala.

In a study conducted by the Kerala Forest Research Institute in 2004, among the wildlife divisions, some 11,097 ha of forest plantations were found in the Wayanad Wildlife Division followed by the Parambikulam Wildlife Division which has 8,872 ha of forest plantations.³⁹ In both these divisions,

teak was the major species (Table 2). Wayanad has the highest density of teak plantations, and sandalwood and ivory are the other products of its forests and wildlife respectively. In Wayanad, territorial divisions comprised 78 percent of teak plantations while the remaining 22 percent was under the purview of the protected area management. Thus, protected forests not only make it more conducive for Naxalites to find refuge, but coincidentally, have valuable resources that they can smuggle or trade in, to generate financial streams.

Table 2: Extent of Forest Plantations (ha) in Different Wildlife Divisions, 2000

| Name of Division | Hardwood | | Softwood | | Mixed | Bamboo | Plantation Crops | Total |
|--------------------|----------|-------|------------|-------|-------|--------|------------------|--------|
| | Teak | Total | Eucalyptus | Total | | | | |
| Agasthyavanam | 42 | 45 | 158 | 200 | 627 | 70 | 11 | 950 |
| Thiruvananthapuram | 10 | 10 | - | - | 915 | 54 | 6 | 984 |
| Shenthuruni | - | - | - | - | 209 | 114 | - | 324 |
| Idukki | 293 | 305 | - | - | 1,329 | 54 | - | 1,688 |
| Eravikulam | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | 35 |
| Peerumedu | - | - | 6,847 | 6,847 | - | - | - | 6,847 |
| Thekkady | - | - | 173 | 173 | 75 | - | - | 248 |
| Peechi | 385 | 385 | - | 157 | 892 | 91 | 100 | 1,625 |
| Parambikulam | 8,569 | 8,569 | 53 | 53 | 216 | - | 35 | 8,872 |
| Silent Valley | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Wayanad | 7,427 | 7,487 | 430 | 2,548 | 1,062 | - | - | 11,097 |
| Aralam | 292 | 292 | 167 | 167 | 50 | - | - | 509 |

Source: M. Sivaram, 2004.

Minerals

Kerala has rich deposits of minerals but gets only one percent of its State Domestic Product (SDP) from it. Fig 5 shows LWE groups that are operating in the area of mineral deposits. The map was plotted with the mineral deposits overlaid by the Naxal activities to observe the prevailing pattern in the vulnerable state of Kerala.

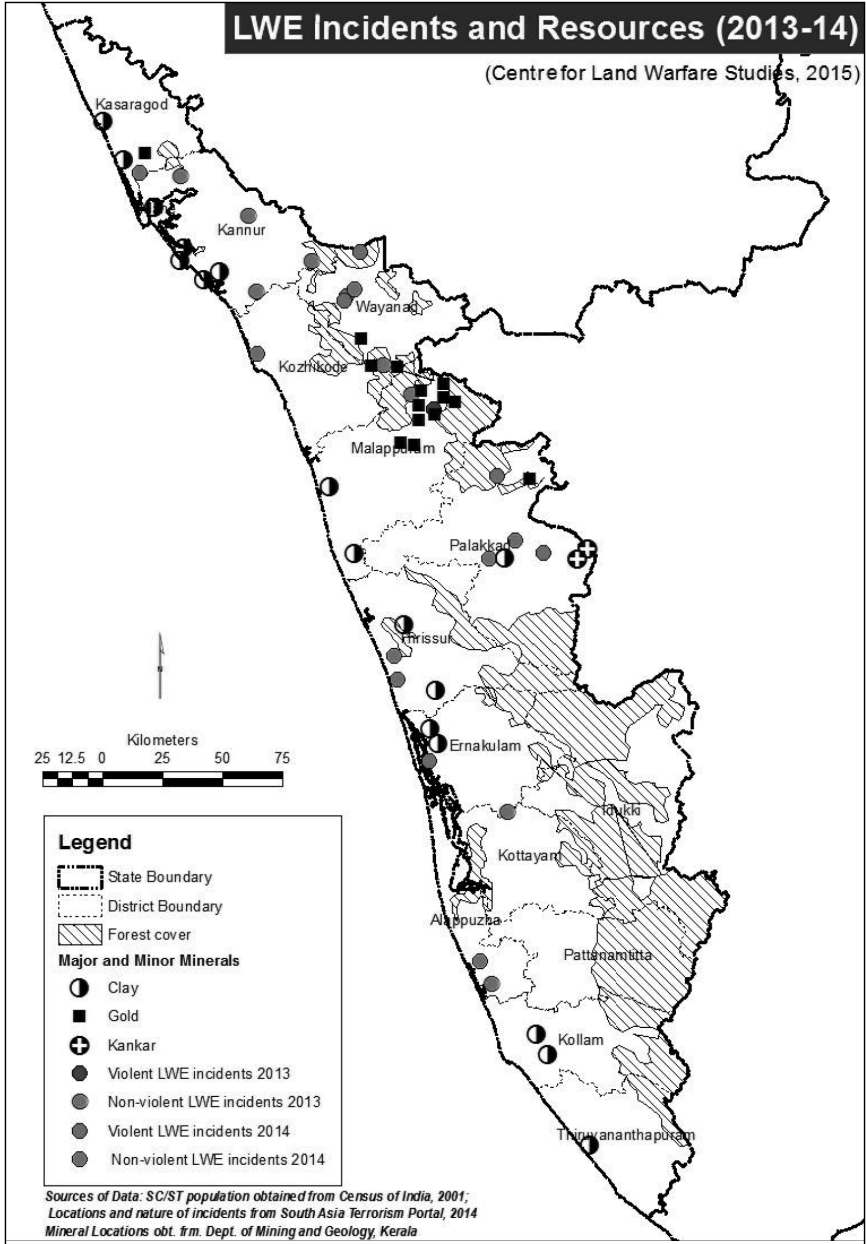
The forest areas in Malappuram which are known as the shelter grounds for the Naxalites, have deposits of gold. Recently, in 2013, a goods van carrying grass from a government seed farm was attacked in this region by a group suspected to be Maoist cadres who questioned the driver to confirm the police presence in the area and later assaulted him for not cooperating. Other incidents like attacks on the stone quarry in Kannur and torching

of an earth mover in Kozhikode support the thesis of Maoist interests in controlling the mineral resources.⁴⁰ The resources can fund their cause or personal greed but more importantly, signify the control in the region, which is their main goal.

Unlike the forest resources, mineral extraction and processing requires a higher level of technical skill, along with equipment. To benefit from these resources, the Maoists must not only find appropriate markets or buyers but also people who can offer the technical knowledge. Consequently, they allow industrialists to set up enterprises for extraction of mineral resources but subject them to extortion and levies.

Kerala also has an abundance of minerals that require neither heavy technical skills nor very complicated networks to reach a market. Minor minerals such as clay, *kanker*, lime shell and silica sand are easy to mine and can be used both locally, as well as outside the state. These are mostly building materials that are universally in demand and as much as 75 percent of the government's mineral revenue is obtained from the extraction of minor materials.

Fig 5: LWE incidents and Resources (2013-14)



Other Financial Streams

Sympathisers from urban areas sponsor the Maoist movement. There are NGOs that are run by the insurgent groups and are unknowingly funded by the public sector. The difficulty lies in identifying such groups – the intelligence agencies have found 128 such organisations and are tracking them.⁴¹ But the challenge lies in differentiating between the set-up of an armed rebellion and those who are mere sympathisers. The urban network of the Maoists has been the hardest to crack due to the volatility of its nature but an outline will be presented later in the paper. In an interview, a resident of Kolkata (source kept anonymous) who has lived through the times of the Naxal aggression in the urban area observed that they may also have invested in establishments like hotels and other ventures through which they can earn funds to run the movement. These establishments may be within or outside the country.

The apprehension is that the organisation may opt for criminal means to raise funds. The ideologues may have identified the means of generating funds which would give them legal cover, but the same cannot be said for the grassroots leaders as their actions may be driven by personal gains, fuelled by opportunists who are ready to strike deals with them, dodging the state, as discussed in the paper under forest and mineral resources. Deb in his article “Communism, Chaos and Capitalism,” hints towards illegal activities like sale of liquor and narcotics, and prostitution, which may become a steady source of income for the Maoists as there are demands for these in the society, even as the government loses out on the revenue by not recognising them.⁴² In a way, society indirectly empowers the rebels who come back to haunt it another day.

Other than extraction and supply of resources, hotels and mining industries along with all other businesses that make good profits are vulnerable to extortion or levy⁴³ by the Maoists. The resorts in the Silent Valley of Kerala have already witnessed their aggression in the past year (the suspected Maoist attack on the stone quarrying unit in Kannur district of Kerala in 2015). Tourist resorts in Wayanad too are often vandalised by the Maoists, stating several causes,^{44, 45} but the aim of the rebels is probably to gain control of these areas. Wildlife sanctuaries amid the rainforests of Wayanad and Pulanathodu temple in Palakkad are among the popular tourist spots that fall within the proximity of Naxal presence. Tea gardens too are

targeted as they are owned by those who can afford large land holdings – people of the higher income group are the prime targets for abduction and extortion. But the Maoists' methods are quite calibrated and rational when it comes to business. They extort money before the start up of the projects, because if they wait for the project to begin, it could lead to enforcing of security measures by the state and firmer political will to crack down on them.

Key Arguments

- Natural resources are finance streams – gold deposits and teak wood stock in forests.
- The resource extraction may be carried out by a third party who can be levied.
- Tourism enterprises like hotels are vulnerable to extortion and levy.
- Minerals that need low skills and technology for extraction are more useful for the rebels.
- NGOs and hotels are legitimate sources of income.

Expanding the Network to Improve Capabilities in LWE Groups

The Maoist movement has local roots, but a widespread effect across the country. The Kerala movement is not happening in isolation as the Maoists have a national agenda as well. Thus, it is necessary to take into account certain distinct evolutionary changes that are occurring elsewhere to predict how these may shape the movement in Kerala. Two such evolutions are in the areas of medical capabilities and formation of alliances.

The Maoist leaders long ago acknowledged the power of knowledge and this attitude has allowed them to absorb ideas and be a part of a global movement. The guerrilla fighters are reportedly acquiring training in medical practice. The surgical kits and books seized from Abhujmand in Chhattisgarh have suggested that they have, at least, training in, if not practice of, treating lesions, and removing bullets from the human body, along with minor surgical processes.⁴⁶ In 2013, when rebels in Chhattisgarh planted an Improvised Explosive Device (IED) in a Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) personnel's abdomen after surgically removing the internal organs,⁴⁷ the precision and the daring attempt could only mean that they are upgrading not just in combat but in all facets of strategic warfare. This also explains why the Maoists are interested in not only rescuing their injured comrades but also the dead. While tutoring for complex surgical methods might need a more elaborate set-up in places like Wayanad and Palakkad, the rebels can be expected to be equipped with basic medical training or self-training in first aid.

It must be noted that the rural areas suffer from a lack of medical infrastructure. A district-wise analysis has revealed that the districts of Kasargod and Wayanad have the lowest proportion of medical institutions.⁴⁸ Having knowledge of medical practices can give the Maoist significant leverage in these areas to compete with, and challenge, the government's authority. However, no matter how good and informative the books and open sources are, the Maoists will still need medical experts or aides with some level of

exposure to the subject for their plans. By a cost-benefit logic, it is unlikely that these would be doctors – nurses, assistants, etc. instead, who have a lower entry cost, are more likely.

The major limitation in the LWE approach is that it works largely with a minority in a democracy but the rationality of their cause has also been their strength, for in a democracy, there will always be those who are in power as well as an opposition. The Maoists have recognised the advantage of forming temporary alliances with disgruntled and desperate politicians. The Bureau of Police Research and Development has reportedly pointed out evidence and cases of the nexus between politicians and the Naxalites, having mutually beneficial interactions. P.V. Ramana, a research fellow from the Institute of Defence Studies and Analyses, says that the scope of such networks is limited to the grassroots level.⁴⁹ The political leaders offer aid in logistics, legal protection and influencing government policies in return for help to capture power.⁵⁰ In a very prominent case, the Trinamool Congress was alleged to have worked with the Maoists to form a united front against the Communist Party – Marxist (CPM) in West Bengal, devastating the Singur Tata project and Nandigram Special Economic Zone (SEZ).⁵¹ These coalitions, however, are only temporary and occur when the agenda is purely in the Maoists' favour. The tribals in Kerala are guided by the strong leadership of C.K. Janu and others who have managed to mobilise large numbers of them through organisations like the Adivasi Gothra Mahasaba and Adivasi Dalit Action Council.⁵² Consequently, their demands match those which are being advocated by the Maoist groups. Thus, if the Maoists manage to influence these leaders, it may be a one-point victory for them to gain access to the huge population base of the already aroused tribals.

Largely because of these struggles that involve a local non-cooperative movement, the Maoists have immense denial capabilities, but out of the area of their influence, they have limited punitive capacities. In order to overthrow a government, they would need a different strategy, especially one with substantial punitive capacity. Thus, it is completely rational for them to seek political support or other alliances. A senior Maoist leader from Andhra named Ganapathi had earlier indicated such possibilities and the willingness of the Maoists to join international forces fighting against “globalisation and imperialism,” including the Islamic State in Syria (ISIS).⁵³ However, neither

globalisation nor imperialism is included in their strategy to gain legitimacy. The Maoists hold their support base by advocating justice and equality, and, thus, do not have enough common ground to collaborate with other groups that don't share their ideology. However, the Maoists are now consolidating their own scattered forces to form alliances with other Maoist groups to fight a more powerful opponent, i.e. the state. The merger of the CPI (Maoist) and the CPI(ML) at Naxalbari on May 01, 2014, is perceived to be a step in this direction.⁵⁴

Key Arguments

- Medical capabilities could grant the Maoists higher legitimacy due to the gaps in the rural infrastructure.
- Political alliances are only temporary and on the Naxals' terms.
- Possibility of the Maoists collaborating with religious ideological terror groups cannot be ruled out.

Conclusion

In the post-Cold War period, the possession of sophisticated technology and weapons by nation-states has rendered the once feared strategy of non-state groups, now toothless. A K Singh, writing in the book titled *Future Wars: Changing Nature of Conflict*, explains the emergence of smaller, irregular forces using terrorism and guerrilla warfare as the offshoots of asymmetric conflicts.⁵⁵ He also highlights the possible use of technology, cyber space and media but largely advocates that warfare today is growing more biased towards the moral dimension rather than attrition. While gross statistics show the decline of Naxalism, the grassroots presents a different picture as it still survives as a local phenomenon and has to be dealt with that way. The situation in the Kerala tri-junction is different from that in Chhattisgarh or Odisha.

The national approach to LWE outlined by the Ministry of Home Affairs entails security, development, ensuring the rights and entitlements of local communities, improvement in governance, and public perception management.⁵⁶ The time given for negotiations has reportedly been used by the Maoists to recover, and prepare for new attacks, and is, hence, a method that should be ruled out. However, states across the country have not yet found the right mix of all the dimensions to resolve the issue and continue to depend largely on the provision of security. Although, development efforts in areas like Andhra Pradesh, Jharkhand and Bihar seem to have worked,^{57,58} the issue in Kerala is not just of employment but involves the people's rights and entitlements that the state has not managed to protect. It is more due to lack of governance in issues like justice in cases of land alienation, employment, and endosulfan usage, rather than quantitative development of physical infrastructure like roads or hospitals.

The announcement of the surrender package in Karnataka was a patchwork response that targeted the victims of Naxalism and not Naxalism itself, and cannot be applied on a large scale. The low statistics on violence can allow one to question whether the Maoist problem is genuine or being exaggerated, to draw more funds. The issues raised by the 'Maoist wind' are

problems like endosulphan and land alienation which are presented with hard facts. It is the government's responsibility to deal with such situations even if there are no Naxals involved.

The solution to the tribals' problems continues to be viewed in terms of their rights on land and forests as these are expected to serve as the sources of their livelihood. Land is the ultimate form of security but it is also in short supply. While it is important to address granting of tribal rights, along with their resettlement and rehabilitation, resolving only the issues of land will not suffice. Malthus' theory of diminishing returns⁵⁹ reminds us of the shortcomings and, thus, even if the tribals get back their land, their society will collapse if left in isolation. A solution to this may be a shift of labour from the primary to the secondary and tertiary sectors in the economy, through education and skill development. This "dual economy model," suggested by Ranis and Fei⁶⁰ seems to be a way out and has been adopted globally to balance economic pressures. The tribals face social, cultural and economic resistance when moving into new areas where they can reap the benefits of national development. Resettlement and rehabilitation efforts are necessary to compensate for the loss of their land. But more important is to reduce the barriers that the tribals have to face in acculturating to a more global society. Whatever may be their political roots, the revolts have a direct correlation with disparity, indignity, injustice, and provision of security, which are related to the judiciary. Irrespective of whether the victim is a tribal or not, in our country, many people face these situations but not all think of rebellion and taking up arms. Fortunately, some have other options, unlocked through education and accumulated capital. Thus, educational programmes need to be encouraged among the vulnerable people.

Democracy has always allowed these uprisings to occur, both in the pre-colonial time and after independence, and these have shown the need, if not the ways, to distribute benefits equitably. The nation needed this movement to open its eyes and look towards those who are the least benefited from its policies and it needs to build mechanisms to improve the system so as to cater to the victims.

Key Arguments

- Problems like land alienation and endosulphan usage are substantiated with hard facts.
- Land is the ultimate form of security; resettlement and rehabilitation are required to overcome land alienation.
- Education of the tribal population is the key to shift the labour force from the primary to the secondary or tertiary sectors.

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