

Fighting in the red corridor

The Naxalites and Indian government's obstacle to reach the
negotiation table

Abstract

The intrastate conflict between the Maoist inspired rebel group the Naxalites and the Indian government have been active since the late 1960s. This qualitative case study, use parts of Jacob Bercovitch's framework 'Contingency Model of Mediation' to interpret the obstacles found in this case, in order to reach a successful negotiation situation. Six different factors in the conflict were analysed. According to the framework and the findings the conflict is unsettled due to; its long duration, wide power disparity between the parties, unfriendly and disputable past and their different view of the conflicts issues. The Naxalites view the conflict as ideological, whereas it is viewed as a conflict of security by the Indian government. Ideological issue conflicts are least prone to be negotiated, compared to conflicts regarding security issues, which are more prone to be negotiated according to Bercovitch's study. The conflicts regime type and intensity of the conflict showed some more promising results towards possible negotiation. Altogether, the six factors being measured concludes that the case have low probability of reaching a successful negotiation according to Bercovitch's framework.

Key words: Naxalites, Maoist, Asymmetric Conflict, Ripeness, Intrastate Conflict, India, Contingency Model, Indian Government, Conflict Resolution

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List of abbreviations

CPI	- Communist Party of India
FARC	- Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia
IDP	- Internally Displaced Person
LWE	- Left Wing Extremism
MCCI	- Maoist Communist Centre of India
MEO	- Mutually Enticing Opportunity
MGNREGS	-Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme
MHA	- Ministry of Home Affairs
MHS	- Mutually Hurting Stalemate
M-L	- Marxist-Leninist
NGO	- Non-Governmental Organisation
NSA	- National Security Act
PWG	- People's War Group
WGHR	- Working Group on Human Rights in India and the UN

1 Introduction

1.1 Research issue

The world is historically familiar to and currently facing a variety of intrastate conflicts all over the globe. Some conflicts have managed to get a closure, sometimes through e.g. a military victory or through different kinds of negotiations. Other conflicts are long on-going with no means of reaching a peaceful settlement in the near future. Many intrastate conflicts are asymmetrical, with major dissimilarities between the conflicting parties regarding e.g. power, military resources and economic financing. One example is rebel groups fighting an established government (Ramsbotham, Woodhouse, & Miall, 2016, p. 27). The asymmetry contributes to further difficulties to reach negotiation between parties since the weaker, often a non-state actor, has fewer options and is more restrained and limited in its power than a stronger state actor (Aggestam, 2002, p. 69). But how come some of these conflicts last for so long whilst others are settled relatively soon after their breakout?

Recently one such asymmetric conflict involving a state actor and a rebel group finally reached a peace agreement after more than half a century of conflict. In 2016 the Colombian government and the rebel group Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) managed to reach a ceasefire after four years of negotiation. Later the same, year a referendum took place in Colombia with the backlash result of a small majority voting no to the peace treaty draft. This led to changes being made in the peace pact, which then two months later were approved by Colombian lawmakers and the conflict resolution in Colombia could therefore continue (Partlow & Miroff, 2016). The President of Colombia Juan Manuel Santos received the Nobel Peace Prize 2016 for his efforts to bring peace to this long on-going conflict (Nobel Media AB). This conflict shares many similarities with still on-going conflicts. It is of scientific and societal interest to research why some conflicts manage to reach a negotiation and others do not. This thesis will focus on a single case in order to develop an understanding of why long on-going asymmetrical conflicts seem so hard to settle. The choice of case is one that shares many variables with the conflict in Colombia, but it is a conflict that has not been able to successfully reach negotiations.

In parts of eastern India, the population has for over 50 years suffered from an internationally neglected conflict between the Indian government and a rebel group commonly known as 'the Naxalites'. The on-going intrastate conflict emerged already in the late 1960s. The rebel group is a far-left movement with

Maoist-communist ideology and the group resides in the central and northeast part of India. Civilians are often caught in-between the conflicting actors and due to oppression and threats from both of the conflicting sides, it is difficult for the civilians to stay neutral and outside of the conflict. Both conflicting parties have been accused of human rights violations such as torture, killings and forcing internal displacements of civilians (Human Rights Watch, 2008, p. 5). The Naxalite violence was in 2006 described as India's biggest internal threat since the independence, by the Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh who served in power 2004-2014 (Burke, 2010).

1.2 Present situation

The Republic of India consists of 29 states with a total of 716 districts (Government of India, a). Since the outbreak of the conflict many of the districts have been affected by the conflict in one way or another. This affected area is sometime referred to as the 'Hot belt' or 'Red corridor'. Between 2010 and May 2017 an estimated 2457 civilians and 930 security force personnel have been killed by the Naxalites in different parts of India (Government of India, b), with other sources suggesting 10,000 casualties and over 12 million internally displaced between 1980-2011 (Al Jazeera, 2011). The Naxalites are, since 2009, considered a terror group under 'The Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (1967) in India. In 2015, the Indian government further intensified the fight against the Naxalites by adopting the 'National Policy and Action Plan', which aimed at addressing Left Wing Extremism (LWE) in the country (Tripathi, 2018). The Indian government has been consistent in trying to defeat the Naxalites with police and military forces, apart from some minor attempts to meet at the negotiating table. These have however not brought any positive outcomes so far and both sides have been accused for not being sincere in their efforts to reach peace without violence. In chapter 4.1 a more detailed description of the history of the conflict will be presented, as well as the current kind of violence and negotiation attempts.

1.3 Purpose and research question

This study aims to shed light on this 'forgotten conflict' which does rarely reach the news in Europe (Svenska Freds- och Skiljedomsföreningen, 2010). It is not well known and hopefully this study can bring an interest to the reader to learn more about this long on-going conflict. The study will work as a contribution to the already existing literature on the subject of conflict resolution and this conflict

in particular. By using a theoretical framework that looks at the different variables present in a conflict, intension is to draw conclusions from other cases that have been studied. This is in order to facilitate the understanding of why this conflict is still on-going. This research will focus on one case of conflict resolution namely an asymmetrical conflict of rebel versus government and its difficulties to reach successful negotiation. The following research question will help interpret the issue and structure the thesis:

- *Why is the conflict between the Naxalites and the Indian government still unsettled?*

1.4 Disposition

The introduction chapter forms the basis of knowledge for the reader regarding the topic. The second chapter entails the previous research and theoretical framework, explaining how parts of the framework will be used to analyse the selected case. The third chapter presents the methodological design of this study and describes the choice of case, limitations and delimitations. The analytical part in chapter four begins with a history overview of the conflict together with a summary of relevant negotiation attempts. Thereafter the framework with its six different subcategories are analysed in regards to the specific case. The results are thereafter discussed and concluded in chapter five, with some minor suggestions regarding future research.

2 Previous research and theoretical framework

2.1 Conflict resolution and ripeness for mediation

There are several theories regarding how to solve a conflict. Most of these theories are now covered in the subject referred to as conflict resolution which evolved out of the realistic theories of conflict management. Where conflict management focused on how to delimit already existing conflict, conflict resolution moved towards a more holistic approach to why the conflict was difficult to solve. Researches saw the need to understand underlying issues to the conflict, in order to get a transition into peace that would last in the long-run. The contemporary conflict resolution field has moved from the initial ideas of stopping violence to also cover how to create the best conditions for peace, where reconciliation, justice and conflict management systems have gained greater attention (Kriesberg, 2009, s. 16). Peter Wallensteen defines conflict resolution as a situation “where the conflicting parties enter into an agreement that solves their central incompatibilities, accept each other’s continued existence as parties and cease all violent action against each other” (Wallensteen, 2002, p. 8). Conflict resolution is in that manner more than peace or simply the absence of war. William Zartman is one of many researchers who have examined what needs to be present to make parties of a dispute willing to solve a conflict. Zartman’s theory of ripeness suggests that there is a moment when the conflict is ripe for negotiation or mediation. In this theory, the conflicting parties need to reach a situation with push and pull mechanisms that will put pressure on the parties. The push is what Zartman refers to as the ‘Mutually Hurting Stalemate’ (MHS) that pushes the parties into negotiation. The MHS is when the parties define a situation where continuation of conflict will no longer benefit them. The pull is a ‘Way Out’, which also has to be present so parties of a conflict can see a positive pathway after the negotiation. If the push and pull elements are not present or combined it will be difficult to reach what Zartman describes a ‘Mutually Enticing Opportunity’ (MEO); the stage when parties have the best foundation to make sustainable agreements (Zartman, 2008, p. 232). The theory of ripeness has its strengths and limitations as it is only a condition. It is a condition that must be seized by the parties or potential mediator whilst the condition is there. A ripe moment is nothing that is self-implementing and it does not always turn into negotiations (Zartman, 2000, pp. 3-4). It is therefore relevant and of importance to

understand in which settings peace talks and negotiations would be most likely to proceed, and to seize that moment before it is lost. Jacob Bercovitch elaborates on this situation of 'ripe moment' and 'readiness', explaining the element that need to be present in order for mediation to take place. The disputants must be mutually interdependent, have resources the other party wants or needs, as well as view the alternative to mediation as much worse than the possible mediation settlement. This is the moment when mediators can enter the conflict, and shed light on the relationship between the disputants, while shifting focus from only power and rights (Bercovitch, 2002, p. 259).

2.2 Asymmetry

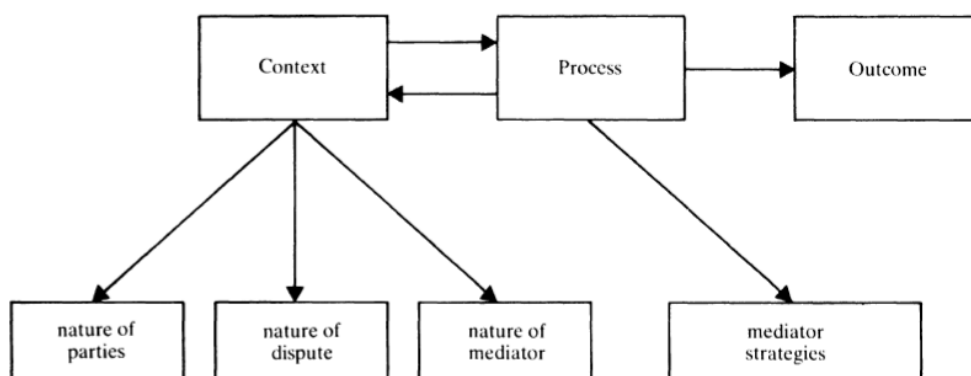
Conflict resolution has during the last decades turned more attention towards how to solve intrastate conflicts, as they have replaced the number of conflicts in-between states. Many of these intrastate conflicts are widely asymmetric, since the conflicting parties have huge dissimilarities connected to e.g. military resources and economic financing. As mentioned in the introduction chapter, it can for instance be rebel groups fighting an established government. One prominent issue that arises is whether the weaker party would be motivated to negotiate if they perceive that they cannot get anything out of it due to their position. This paradox is well interlinked with Zartman's 'Way Out' as both conflicting parties must be able to see a possible positive opportunity in order to enter negotiations. There are different views on this subject. Some argue that the asymmetry creates an unfavourable foundation for peace talks, while other scholars claim that asymmetry can create a more productive condition for negotiation. Some studies show that equal parties are not a precondition for successful negotiations (Zartman & Rubin, 2002, p. 271). When there is symmetry, the conflict parties may end up in a deadlock due to them both wanting to defend their status. Situations like this may even produce and prolong the negotiations, and be in need of a mediator to come in and break the deadlock (Zartman & Rubin, 2002, p. 272). Karin Aggestam notes that most studies on this topic and the connected subject of ripeness have been based upon cases of interstate conflicts. The difference when it comes to intrastate conflict is how the stronger party enjoy the state authority, legitimacy, sovereignty as well as holding the economic, military and political power. This often leads to a situation where the stronger part may set the rules of the situation and possible negotiation. The oppositional weaker side of the conflict, often rebel groups, most often lack these kinds of resources. Instead they need to find other ways and mobilize support through e.g. ideological, ethnic, religious and nationalist grounds. Weaker disputants also compensate through other strategies. Some groups tend to seek international support and recognition, as well as shed light on the stronger disputant's enforcements of international law

and agreements. The weaker part may also use the strategy of withholding negotiations desired by the stronger actor, in order to even out the perceived asymmetry (Aggestam, 2002, pp. 70-71). When parties of an asymmetric conflict are to negotiate, the risk of potential spoilers may arise. According to Stephen John Stedman, there are several types of spoilers that can disrupt negotiations. Some may have limited goals, while others wish to pursue total power (Stedman, 1997, p. 6). There are ‘inside spoilers’ who sit at the negotiation table and disrupt the negotiations from within. The ‘outside spoilers’ on the other hand are individuals or groups that feel excluded from the negotiation process. It might also be international stakeholders who benefit from the continuation of conflict that does not want the negotiations to succeed (Heger & Jung, 2017, p. 1208).

2.3 Bercovitch’s ‘Contingency model’

It is difficult to measure both the power asymmetry and to analyse if a conflict has reached ripeness. Therefore this study will further implement an analytical framework to help interpret the case and its outcome. Parts of Jacob Bercovitch’s ‘Contingency Model of Mediation’ will be used as the analytical framework. The framework as presented in the article *Some Conceptual Issues and Empirical Trends in the Study of Successful Mediation in International Relations* shows how the result of mediation is dependent on both the context of the conflict and the mediation strategies used (Bercovitch, Anagnoson, & Wille, 1991, p. 11). The model examines a dataset of international conflicts between two states occurring in-between 1945 to 1989 where mediation had been attempted.

Fig. 1. A Contingency Model of Mediation



Due to the lack of occasions leading to serious mediation in the chosen case, only the context parts ‘Nature of Parties’ and ‘Nature of Disputes’, seen in figure 1, will be used. To look at the mediator’s strategies and its nature is not relevant or applicable in this study since the role of mediator has not been initiated or used for a longer time in this case. By using these two contexts variables and its

subcategories I intend to analyse the chosen case. In the analysis chapter, it will be clear to see what type of variables are present or not in the chosen case. Conclusions can then be made regarding this and its correlation to a positive or negative foundation for negotiation. The framework is based on conflicts between two states and different mediation attempts. This creates some interpretive issues when applying the framework to an intrastate conflict. In the original dataset both conflicting parties were categorised in e.g. regime types. In the chosen case, only one of the parties is a state actor and therefore a categorisation of the other party cannot be made in that variable. Bercovitch operationalised the research as follows, by putting the context variables in different subcategories:

- Nature of Parties
 - Regime types (monarchies, one-party states, military regimes, multi-party states and a residual category)
 - Relative Power
 - Previous Relations (friendly, antagonistic (without experiencing conflict), conflictual (i.e. having experienced lower intensity conflicts in the past not meeting specific criteria of inclusion as disputes), parties with one past dispute and parties with more than one past dispute.)
- Nature of Dispute
 - Duration
 - Intensity
 - Issues (sovereignty, ideology, security, independence and a residual category of other issues)

In conclusion, Bercovitch's study found that the nature of the dispute, mediator strategy and the disputes intensity played a crucial role in the success of the cases that reached mediation. A more detailed review of the subcategories and its definitions as well as the framework's results will be clarified in the analysis chapter. This is done in order to help the reader to have the definitions and information close at hand, and in connection to the different subcategories that will be analysed.

3 Research design

3.1 Method

3.1.1 Qualitative case study

This research will focus on a single case study instead of multiple cases. Choosing multiple cases would have been preferable in a comparative study, but that is not the intention here. The choice of using only one case is interlinked with my choice of doing a qualitative study. There is often a tendency that case studies are associated with qualitative types of studies. Although, case studies could just as well be done with quantitative measures. Case studies are however most often associated with qualitative types of studies as the researchers often favour that methodology as it helps to research the chosen case intensively and in detail (Bryman, 2012, p. 68). That is as well the intention with this case study, not to compare it in detail with a similar or divergent case, but to fully examine and in detail understand this particular case. But by using this particular framework, one could also argue that comparisons are built into the research, as the framework is made out of research of multiple cases and their specific variables. This is however a side effect that could bring interesting conclusions, but is not the primarily choice of method. My research will in that way also resemble with what George and Bennet describe as structured, focused comparison. This method of using specific categories to help focus the research is applicable to try adding other cases in the future. In that way, the possible limitation of only using one case at this time can become a comparable study in an extended research. The method is structured in such way that the questions asked reflect the research objective and makes it systematic comparable. The study is focused since it deals only with certain aspects of the chosen case. George and Bennet further explains “The requirements for structure and focus apply equally to individual cases since they may later be joined by additional cases” (George & Bennett, 2005, p. 67).

The advantages of doing a qualitative study compared to a quantitative study is the possibility to use the chosen data more comprehensively and in-depth. A quantitative approach would not help me analyse the case with the chosen framework, as it would not help answer the type of questions I am looking for in the sources. However, the framework was developed through a quantitative study comparing plenty of cases. In this study the aim is to use that theory and see how it could, or perhaps could not, help explain this case study done with qualitative research methods. It is not general data that is going to be studied, rather the

different factors facilitating the path to peace. When more understanding is gathered regarding this case, broader generalisations can be done in connection to other cases. One must be aware of that those generalisations will be more of a speculative manner.

3.1.2 Theory consuming and material

The thesis will be conducted as a qualitative desk study, with the conflict in India as the analysis unit. I will be using a theory consuming method, where the theoretical framework will be used to help explain the selected case of study. Compared to a theory testing method the aim of this thesis is not to prove the theory right or wrong. But instead use it to see if there are similarities or divergences found between the results made by the researchers who developed the framework and the chosen case. That way the study is neither producing nor testing the theory. Instead, when doing a theory consuming study one is trying to explain the factors present in this specific case, based on already existing theory. In a theory consuming study, choice of case comes at first hand, thereafter the choice of theories. In a theory testing method the case is chosen to fit into the theory of choice that has primarily been selected (Esaiasson, Gilljam, Oscarsson, Towns, & Wägnerud, 2017, pp. 42-43).

The study will be directed by a qualitative content analysis looking at specific variables in the research on this topic and analysing the material that is used. Content analysis has a long history, and it could be applied to any type of text. It is most commonly used in social studies to find the meaning and significance of the texts being researched. Usually content analysis is interlinked with quantitative studies, but it can also be done in a qualitative way without measuring or counting the presence of specific words (Bergström & Boréus, 2012, pp. 49-50). Qualitative text method, compared to quantitative text method, is about bringing out the essential in the content. For the researcher using qualitative text analysis the central context is what one seeks to find, by thorough and active reading of the texts (Esaiasson, Gilljam, Oscarsson, Towns, & Wägnerud, 2017, pp. 211-212). In this study a quantitative content analysis would not help answer the research question or help analysing the subcategories of the framework. A qualitative content analysis is therefore preferable, searching the texts for answers and explanations in specific areas. The following categories from the chosen theoretical framework this study is constructed around will be looked into to operationalise the study: Regime Types, Relative Power, Previous Relations, Duration, Intensity and Issues.

This is a text analytical study based on the writings of others. Using secondary sources compared to information gathered at first hand may arise some concerns regarding reliability and validity. Therefore the choice of highly reliable material is essential. Material will foremost be retrieved from peer reviewed articles from recognized scientific journals such as Economic and Political

Weekly, International Journal of Conflict and Violence and Journal of Conflict Resolution. Further information will also be found in text retrieved from additional newspapers, books and online sources and from different governmental and Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) reports, university publications and other approved research sources. In some cases material received from the Indian government (one party of the conflict) will be used and clearly presented, most often when it comes to statistics regarding the conflict or the way they address the conflict. Even though the intention is to analyse this topic in an objective manner, one must be aware of the possible biased picture any source might bring. Together with the previous personal understandings of the world, the implementation of the study and choice of material is done with much respect to these given factors.

In the theoretical chapter writings of foremost I. William Zartman, Jeffery Z. Rubin, Peter Wallensteen, Karin Aggestam and Jacob Bercovitch form the basis of knowledge regarding the chosen theoretical approach.

3.1.3 Selection of India as a case

One thing that is important when doing a case study is to determine what specific phenomenon that is being investigated (George & Bennett, 2005, p. 69). In this study, the phenomenon is conflict resolution and the chosen case is one where this phenomenon has failed and still not been achieved. There are many interesting factors relating to this conflict, and much study has been done on different angles of the conflict. What seems to be the research gap is an overarching study with this particular framework looking at why the Naxalites and the Indian government have not managed to successfully carry out any serious negotiations.

The case is chosen due to the interesting factor that it resembles other conflicts but has another outcome. For example, the conflict in Colombia with FARC, as mentioned in the introductory chapter and the Maoist insurgency in neighbouring state of Nepal are conflicts with similar features. The cases share many similarities regarding e.g. timespan the conflicts have been on-going, political ideology, type of warfare, similarities in nature they reside and social involvement in the surrounding area. In Nepal the Maoist movement, inspired by the Naxalites, led to a ten year long civil war ending with a peace treaty and overthrowing of the Nepalese royal family. The Maoists in Nepal are now present in the political elite and have, through their struggle, managed to reform the state into a republic. These are two examples of cases that have reached a settlement in one way or another. These two cases are also often mentioned in the debate regarding the Naxalites, but the big difference is that the case with India and the Naxalites is still after half a century unsettled. It is also an interesting case as it in many ways is an internationally neglected conflict that does not get much attention in at least the western media.

3.1.4 Limitations and delimitations

The first delimitation made in this study is the focus on a single case study of one particular conflict. It would be possible to gather information and data from the late 1960s up to present day, since that is how long the conflict has been going on. However, it would be difficult to find sources from the 1960s to the 1990s, especially online; as such documents have not been digitalized to the same extent as those of recent years. Also, due to its relevance, I will have to limit the material and timespan that will be looked into. The material that is being used will be as up-to-date and new as possible, to be relevant to understand the present conflict in 2018. But, to fully understand the conflict one must understand the history and conditions from which it evolved. In this part of the thesis some older sources will be used, and examples of how the conflict has developed through the decades. I have chosen to delimit the time frame to cover the last 20 years of the conflict from 1998-2018. During these last 20 years, a lot has happened on the international agenda, like 9/11 in New York and the massive ‘hunt for terrorists’ that came in the aftermath of that attack. It would be interesting to see if changes in the Indian context could be traced to other events in world politics. Also during this period different Naxalite groups merged and formed the Communist Party of India-Maoist (CPI-(Maoist)) in 2004 which was later banned as a terror organisation. Further interesting events that had an important role in this conflict also emerged during these years, which are to be further explained in the analysis chapter 4.1. Delimitations are also done since only specific variables will be analysed, when using the chosen framework. This study does not aim to look at all mediation attempts and specific events that have occurred, but instead try to see the big picture and understand underlying issues to why the conflict keeps going on.

Due to limitations regarding research time only a delimited amount of literature can and will be analysed. Also, as it is impossible for me as a writer to read all kinds of sources, written in e.g. Hindi or other Indian languages I will be limited to examining only texts in English and Swedish. Nevertheless, a lot of sources regarding this conflict are available in English. Since English is one of the Indian government’s administrative official languages most governmental sources are available that way. Many Indian newspapers are also available in English. Also, the Naxalites have a homepage available in English, which makes also their statements accessible. However, one must be aware of the biased picture the research might bring, in case not enough material covering the view of both conflicting sides can be found in English.

This study will not portray any specific person or group negatively but instead focus on the current and previous stages regarding this conflict. Therefore there is no required need to consider any specific ethical considerations.

3.2 Definitions

The Naxalites are referred to in many different ways depending on the text of analysis. ‘The Naxalites’, ‘Naxals’, ‘Maoists’, ‘Naxalite movement’ and ‘Maoist movement’. There are plenty of different names for the same group and phenomena, which is essential to know when reading this study. My intention is to refer to this group as the Naxalites throughout the thesis, but occasionally some of the other definitions are used as well. The Maoist or Maoist movement are international words that are most often used when comparing the Naxalites to other Maoist groups in other states such as Nepal and China. I will also use movement in some cases, drawing attention to the consistent re-formation of the group that have emerged and changed many times since its initial creation. The movement also draw connections to the Naxalites political progression both in terms of recruiting members, but also their spread across the country.

International dispute is defined in the framework paper as “an organised and continuous armed conflict between two states which resulted in at least 100 fatalities” (Bercovitch, Anagnoson, & Wille, 1991, p. 9).

Successful mediation is defined in the framework paper when “... it is given credit for making a great difference to or settling a dispute” (Bercovitch, Anagnoson, & Wille, 1991, p. 9)

Conflict in this paper is based on Peter Wallensteen’s definition “...a social situation in which a minimum of two actors (parties) strive to acquire at the same moment in time an available set of scarce resources”. He further concludes that “a conflict consists of three components: action, incompatibility and actors” (Wallensteen, 2002, p. 16).

4 Case study-Analysis

4.1 The Naxalites and the Indian Government

4.1.1 History and background

In India, over 200 million people are considered to belong to one of the ethnic minorities and low cast officially mentioned as 'scheduled castes' (Dalits). The Naxalites claim to be fighting for these people, who still suffer severely from discrimination. Within this group, the 'Adivasis' (meaning 'original habitant') are in particular a vulnerable group, compared to the rest of the Indian society. These indigenous tribal communities live in great poverty, often with low or no education, poor health and as a result struggle with a high degree of unemployment (Regeringskansliet-Utrikesdepartementet, 2017, p. 16). The Naxalites claim to be fighting for the Adivasis rights and the Indian government claim to secure the areas of Naxalites in favour of the civilians. In this conflict the Adivasis are often severely affected in this conflict, as they are stuck in between the conflict parties. The two sides forces civilians to choose side, and threaten civilians with violence as they think they hold information about the opponent's side. Naxalites depend on civilians help to keep them with shelter or information about the police forces, which the Adivasis can voluntary support with or being forced to provide due to pressure from the Naxalites. As mentioned the Adivasis are an economically neglected group, but their local knowledge of the rural and dense forest areas is valuable for both conflicting parties. So working for one of the sides may bring some income, but it is a dangerous task and the pressure to pick a side in the conflict might result in violence and casualties. Although, switching side when conditions change is not uncommon (Khanna & Zimmermann, 2017b, p. 121). When the choice is made only due to oppression or economic incitement it is not strange to find the supporters switching side to the one that will benefit them the most.

The Maoists movement in India got their name after an event that took place in the village of Naxalbari in the state West Bengal in 1967. The widespread disappointment towards the government to implement and fulfil its promises of development and equality to all citizens was the underlying fuel that lit fire that day in May in Naxalbari. An uprising of local farmers gained great support from the already existing communistic revolutionaries who later came to be popularly known as The Naxalites. The communist movement had already been present in India since independence, but this event is often referred to as an important factor

as the radical left split from the Marxist-communist ideology and later formed what is called the Maoist movement or the Naxalites in India. Time went on with numerous different left-wing groups being active in different parts of India throughout the upcoming decades, sometimes clashing into violent conflict with the local police and higher authorities. The conflict intensified in 2004 when two of the larger left-wing groups Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist) (CPI-(M-L)) People's war often referred to as the People's War Group (PWG) and Maoist Communist Centre of India (MCCI) merged and formed the political party CPI (Maoist) in general still recalled as the Naxalites. In 2006 the Indian Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) estimated that there were about 15,000 members active in the Naxalites (Khanna & Zimmermann, 2017b, p. 121). Other claims there are between 10,000-40,000 combatants active in the movement (Chandra, 2014, p. 414). During the last three years 2015-2018 the Indian MHA proclaim the Naxalite influence has been shrinking and affected states have decreased from 106 to 90 districts, spanning over 11 states. However, the Naxalites activities have spread to new district and states so the red corridor map has forcefully been redone, now also covering states in the south of India as Kerala and Andhra Pradesh (Tripathi, 2018).

4.1.2 Negotiation attempts

It has only been a few serious attempts to negotiation between the two parties of this conflict. Most of the attempts and ceasefires have simply been used as a means for the parties to catch their breath which resulted in violence just after a few days of rest. There have not been cases of any third party mediation, although it has been requested from international levels. Neither the Indian government nor the Naxalites seem to have shown sincere interest in solving this conflict by negotiation or mediation. Although, there has been some minor attempts the last couple of years to solve the conflict with dialogue instead of violence. To get an insight in how those attempts were brought about a couple of examples will be mentioned here.

After only four days at the negotiation table in October 2005 the Naxalites walked out the peace talks after accusing the government to be insincere in their efforts. It was the congress-led government in Andhra Pradesh who initiated the talks, but critics says it lacked preparation and political will. Already in its election manifesto 2004 the congress had promised to initiate peace talks with the Naxalites, but due to its lack of preparation before the peace talks began the negotiation was doomed to fail (Ramana, 2005).

In 2009 India's home minister tried to invite the Naxalites back to the negotiation table, but the Naxalites refused the offer (Khanna & Zimmerman, 2017a). They continued to refuse several attempts until 2014 when they outlined five demands that had to be met, before they would join any peace process. These five demands included stopping the security force operations against them,

releasing arrested leaders, declaring the CPI (Maoist) as a political movement, judicial inquiries regarding killings of their leaders and removing the prohibition of the organisation and its subgroups. The Naxalites on the hand did not want to sign up for the minimum demand from the government to stop violence for 72 hours (Routray, 2015, p. 21).

In 2017 the Indian Prime minister Narendra Modi once again reached out and requested the Naxalites to return to the negotiation table and lay down their weapons, but once again it failed since Modi could not give any governmental commitments in return. The ambushes from the Naxalites continued and two major attacks took place the same year with several fatalities including police forces and a state minister (Chowdhury, 2018).

Even without any successful outcome the government has been consistent in continuing their military and police force pressure. New development schemes and aid packages have been implemented in hopes to keep civilians from joining the Naxalites (Chandra, 2014, p. 418). Skills development centres, training and placement of tribal youth has not hindered the spread of the Naxalite influence in the tribal areas. However, the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) is one of the first development programs in the Naxalite areas that have shown good results in creating and rebuilding trust among the civilians and subsequently making them more prone to help the government forces in the conflict. The MGNREGS guarantees 100 days of minimum wage employment per year for each household, an important economic incentive for the tribal communities. The program not only provides households with income, but has projects that benefit the rural communities such as irrigation and drought proofing, as well as improving the infrastructure. Study of the effects of the development program concluded that the areas which received the program experienced a rise in attacks from the Naxalites. The Naxalites started to attack civilians which had not been their target before, accusing them of being police informants. However, in the long run, the Naxalite influence seemed to decreased in the area, as the government forces gained more trust and support among the civilians and won more battles against the Naxalites. In that way, the areas slowly became less violent (Khanna & Zimmermann, 2017b).

4.2 Nature of Parties

4.2.1 Regime types

As Bercovitch explains in the study, one traditional hypothesis in international relations have been that, the more democratic a state is, the less prone it is to start violent interactions with others. The framework dataset was divided into five types of regimes: monarchies, one-party states, military regimes, multi-party

states and a residual category. Results showed that disputes involving multi-party regimes were slightly more prone for mediation than the other types of regimes. Based on the data of interstate conflicts the notion was made that a conflict where both disputants were multi-party states the probability of successful mediation was even higher (Bercovitch, Anagnoson, & Wille, 1991, p. 10).

India could easily be categorised under the type of multi-party state since its parliamentary system of government includes several political parties. Due to its rank as the second most populous country in the world, India is also considered the world's largest democracy (BBC News, 2018). The Indian government describes the Indian nation as a "Sovereign, Socialist, Secular, Democratic Republic" (Government of India, c). India has been labelled as 'Free' for almost 20 consecutive years by the organisation Freedom in the World. This gives them a status among other states that in general uphold the civil liberties as well as political rights. But the electoral processes in India are not flawless. Vote buying and corruption as well as harassments are reported (Bhatia, 2017). According to Transparency International, India ranks at number 81 out of 180 states on the level of corruption (Transparency International). As Bercovitch suggests, democratic and multi-party states would be more prone to solve a conflict in a democratic and non-violent way. However, this is not the case in India, as the Indian government has mostly tried to subdue the conflict with the Naxalites with violent military and police force efforts. There are several levels of democracy and one could argue that despite India's title as the world's biggest democracy, it is not comparable with other democratic states that have e.g. low amount of corruption and less socio-economic varieties. According to one study 49.3% of the world's population lives in some form of democracy while only 4.5% of people live in full democracies (McCarthy, 2018). India fell from its 32nd position previous year to reach 42nd place in 2018 in the Economist Intelligence Unit's Democracy Index. India is being ranked as a 'flawed democracy', in comparison to the top three 'full democracies' which are Norway, Iceland and Sweden. Furthermore, as a growing superpower India continues to put much effort in its military capacities, ranked by Global Firepower as number 4 out of 133 states on the list for Military Strength Ranking (Global Firepower, 2018).

Categorisation of India as a multi-party state would in theory show the best foundation for peaceful strategies being used, according to Bercovitch's theory. But, India's flawed democracy advocates that it is less prone to mediation than many other multi-party states.

4.2.2 Relative power

When it comes to relative power it can be compared to the discussion regarding asymmetry. Some argue that the smaller power disparity between the disputants the more effective is the mediation. Others argue that in cases where the asymmetry or differences in power are high and acknowledged, the likelihood that

the conflict will be solved is also higher (Bercovitch, Anagnoson, & Wille, 1991, p. 10). Bercovitch's study found that this is one of the most important elements in the framework. In disputes between unequal powers, no mediation occurred in 48% of the cases. Only 6% of the unequal power conflicts that were mediated were successful. The probability of reaching a successful mediation was over five times higher (32%) when the cases had roughly the same power disparity. The best chances of a successful mediation were highest (40%) when the power disparity was as equal as possible, but also when both disputing states were both weak states (Bercovitch, Anagnoson, & Wille, 1991, p. 11).

As mentioned earlier regarding regime types, the Indian government possess the fourth greatest military in the world. It is quite clear that they hold a greater deal of armed capacity than their counter part. Even though, the Naxalites have been referred to as the biggest internal threat in India, the conflict is most often dealt with on a local level. The federal structure in India has in many ways hindered the central government to take action in a coherent way with a national strategy, as law and order are considered a state responsibility. Military forces cannot intervene in afflicted states if it is not a request from the state or near a complete breakdown of public order (Ganguly, 2009, p. 42).

The Naxalites grab power in ways that are possible for them. Due to their lack of combatants and weapons compared to the police and military force, they use more daring and deadly strategies, striking with large numbers of rebels with basic guerrilla tactics. Attacks on trains, police stations, state offices, mining operation and companies as well as hijackings has become their way of operating (The Economist , 2009). The Naxalites reside in the dense forest areas, which are rather difficult to operate in. In some places they have also been able to create 'parallel societies' in the absence of proper state institutions and community services in these areas. This creates opportunities for them to gain power in these areas by putting up their own local administration (Svenska Freds- och Skiljedomsföreningen, 2010). Furthermore 85% of India's coal deposits and 90% of the iron-ore, together with other gems, ores and minerals are found in the areas affected by the conflict. The Naxalite hinders industries and mining operations by attacking police and companies, as a tool to seek power and in that way even out the power disparity. If the Naxalites were to be defeated, it could allegedly unlock \$80 billion of investment in eastern and central India, according to a report in 2010 (Pradhan, 2015, p. 22).

Based on this information, the conflict can be seen as widely asymmetric based as the Naxalites are fighting against one of the world's most powerful military states. However, there are local differences and levels in power disparities depending on the degree of activity and power the Naxalites hold. Considering this, the probability of reaching mediation is low, according to Bercovitch's theory due to the gap of power disparity between the disputants.

4.2.3 Previous relations

The framework study found that mediations were more prone to happen and be successful if the conflicting parts had a previous friendly relationship. The previous relations were categories as friendly, antagonistic (without experiencing conflict), conflictual (i.e. having experienced lower intensity conflicts in the past not meeting our criteria of inclusion as disputes), parties with one past dispute and parties with more than one past dispute. A mediator entering into a dispute between before friendly disputants had almost twice the chance of success compared to all mediation done in cases of other previous relations. Cases with more than one dispute received the most mediation attempts, but also showed the lowest probability of success (16%). These are interesting findings, which indicates that a conflictual relationship may enhance the current conflict and complicate the ways to solve it (Bercovitch, Anagnoson, & Wille, 1991, p. 12).

The relationship between the disputants in this conflict has never been friendly. The Indian government have continuously dealt with the conflict using police and military force. Since the conflict is still on-going it has not proven to be a very successful strategy. The Indian government have used several different tactics in their way to subdue the Naxalites. 'Salwa Judum' (meaning 'purification hunt'), a counter-insurgency campaign by the state-sponsored militia was implemented in 2005 in the state Chhattisgarh with hopes to fight the Naxalites and subdue their territorial power. It led to heavy militarising and great losses of civilians and combatants. Over 40.000 villagers were forced to move to internally displaced person (IDP) camps during three most intense years of the conflict and tens of thousands had to flee to neighbouring states. Instead of decreasing the presence of the Naxalites, Chhattisgarh became a key base area for recruitment and operations for the Naxalites and a frontline for the conflict between the Indian state and the Naxalites (Miklian, 2009, p. 442). The Indian government went on to banning the CPI (Maoist) party in 2009 by invoking Section 41 of the *Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act* against it, and branding them as a terrorist organisation. *The Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act* enables the Indian Government to declare an association as unlawful, and every person active in the Naxalite movement is therefore considered a terrorist (Kujur, 2009, p. 1). The application of the terror legislation has been widely criticised by human rights organisations as the Working Group on Human Rights in India and the UN (WGHR). The *National Security Act (NSA)* allows detention of people who are suspected to be a national security threat up to one year, without any legal trial (Regeringskansliet-Utrikesdepartementet, 2017, p. 7). In the same year as the Naxalites were branded as terrorists, the Indian government launched their joint counterinsurgency called 'Operation Green Hunt'. National paramilitary forces worked together with the state police to end the armed resistance from the Naxalites. Human Rights Watch has repeatedly documented the extensive abuses by the Indian government forces, including torture, illegitimate killings and arbitrary arrests when operating against the Naxalites (Human Rights Watch,

2009). 2009 became an intense year for the conflict, with more casualties than ever before (Svenska Freds- och Skiljedomsföreningen, 2010).

In 2015, the Indian government implemented the *National Policy and Action Plan* addressing Left Wing Extremism (LWE) in the state (Tripathi, 2018). The Indian government has in that way tried to improve their coordination of police forces, towards those states that are most affected by the Naxalites.

This case is clearly one conflict with more than one past dispute between the parties. This suggests according to Bercovitch's framework that the probability of reaching successful negotiation is at the lowest level.

4.3 Nature of Dispute

4.3.1 Duration

Bercovitch writes "To be effective, mediation must take place at the right moment" (Bercovitch, Anagnoson, & Wille, 1991, p. 12). The difficulty is to know when such a moment is taking place. Some argue that this must be sized at an early stage of the conflict, while others proclaim that mediation can only be effective if certain stages of conflict have passed. The framework study shows that, the longer a conflict continues, it is generally more difficult to settle. Mediation attempts taking place one to three months into the conflict showed greater chance of success than if the attempt were initiated during the first month. When the conflict had been ongoing for more than twelve months the chance of success was found to be low (19%). Data also showed that there was a slight increase in the probability of success when there had been one or two previous attempts. But in a conflict that had more than two attempts, the chances decreased drastically. As for the cases where many attempts had been resisted, the likelihood was high that the disputants continued to resist future attempts to come (Bercovitch, Anagnoson, & Wille, 1991, p. 13).

In this case, the conflict has been ongoing for more than half a century. According to Bercovitch's study it would not be a solid foundation for negotiation and mediation to occur. There have been several negotiation attempts in the past, as mentioned in the previous section, Negotiation attempts 4.1.2. The likelihood that similar attempts will be refused in the future is high, according to Bercovitch study. As the framework study states, the mediation must take place at the right time, just as the theory of ripeness states. To determine whether or not these two conflicting parties have reached the 'Mutually Hurting Stalemate' at all or been able to see a 'Way Out' is difficult to say. The analysis can only be speculative regarding this, as it is nearly impossible to measure and research what the disputants have felt during the conflict. As for the matter of readiness and the stages where disputants must be mutually interdependent, and have access to

resources the other party want or need, is not fully fulfilled. The disputants are independent and in that way the conflict can go on. Although, the disputants hold resources the other party wants. The Naxalites e.g. hold local power in the mineral rich areas, and the Indian government hold the political power in the state.

A decade long conflict does not facilitate the negotiation process, since it has long passed the recommended 'right time', according to Bercovitch study. However, according to the ripeness theory the right moment is not bound to any specific time limitation. A moment for successful mediation may arise, but has not yet come into force.

4.3.2 Intensity

The intensity of a conflict is closely interlinked with the factor of duration in Bercovitch's framework. This is also a much debated factor, where some scholars suggest that the higher intensity the conflict may have, the more prone the disputants are to meditation. Others suggest that with high intensity the conflicting parties become more polarised, and even more reluctant to any attempts of mediation. Bercovitch's study measured the intensity of the conflicts by categorising the number of fatalities in each case. The result was that mediation was a much more possible scenario in cases with low-intense conflicts with 100-500 deaths annually. Rising numbers of fatalities in a conflict proved to be a correlating decline in the possibilities for a successful mediation (Bercovitch, Anagnoson, & Wille, 1991, p. 13).

The Uppsala Conflict Data Program has annually measured the casualties of the Naxalite conflict since 2005, the year after they emerged in their current form. The data shows at least 200 casualties per year followed by a peak of 891 deaths, in 2010. In the intensive years of 2006-2010 the casualties were 510 to 891 per year (Uppsala Conflict Data Program). According to Bercovitch categorisation, the case could be viewed as both low-intense during the years where the deaths were 100-500 and then on an intermediate level of intensity where deaths were between 500-1000 deaths annually. The difference is that, in the years of low-intense conflict the scenario of possible successful mediation would be about twice as high (42%) compared to the intermediate level (24%).

Most of the conflicting years, the level of intensity have been low which according to Bercovitch, would be a more favourable situation for mediation and negotiation. However, considering the years with higher intensity the likelihood to reach negotiation decreased even further.

4.3.3 Issues

In the framework the issues of conflict were categorised as sovereignty, ideology, security, independence and a residual category of other issues. In the study each case was coded with only one category, although a conflict may be more complex and have multiple issues. There might also be differences in what the parties define to be the issue. Sovereignty, referred to the issue of specific territory, whereas ideology dispute referred to e.g. strong disagreements regarding basic values or political system. Conflict over frontiers, borders and territories were categorised as security disputes. Independence was about disputants that wanted to liberate themselves from the other disputant and control their own nation. The study showed, in contrary to many previous studies, that conflicts regarding territory were far more adaptable to reach mediation, compared to the ones including independence and ideology. The category that showed the highest degree of reaching a successful mediation was issues over security (Bercovitch, Anagnoson, & Wille, 1991, p. 14).

In this case, difficulties arise since the analysis is that the Naxalites and the Indian government have different views of what constitutes to be the issue of this conflict. The Naxalites, inspired by the writings of Mao Zedong, want to see the local and suppressed farmers lead way for a 'Peoples War' to encircle major cities like New Delhi and eventually seize power (Chandra, 2014, p. 415). By overthrowing the Indian state, they wish to create a liberated zone where living conditions are to be improved for the neglected tribal communities and farmers, by redistribution of land and income from the mining activities. (Khanna & Zimmerman, 2017a) The Naxalites main support comes from these tribal groups, as they feel neglected by the Indian state who has signed deals with multinational companies to use the land (The Economist , 2009). Their goal is a complete political and societal reformation, based on their ideology.

The Indian government on the other hand, deals with a security issue as they fight this rebel group that keeps intervening in their political and economic plans. The Naxalites are a security threat that attack mostly state personnel and state offices, police station etc. They hinder the plans of the state, spread fear among the civilians and increase violence in the affected areas according to the government. Hence in this case there are two divergent ways of seeing the conflict. If both disputants would see the conflict as an issue of security, the possibilities of reaching a successful mediation would be high according to Bercovitch. However, in this conflict the Naxalites are fighting an ideological war, which in Bercovitch's study showed to be the issue with the lowest possibilities of successful mediation. Considering that the two parts view the conflict in such different ways, negotiations are not likely to succeed as the parties cannot agree on the core issues of the dispute.

4.4 Summary

Summarising the findings in this chapter, the results show that most categorising variables are the least favourable when it comes to creating good conditions for successful negotiations. The long duration of the conflict and the bad previous relations between the parties are not advantageous. Neither is the fact that the disputants have an asymmetrical power relationship, with different views of the issue of dispute. This further creates difficulties for them to reach any settlement. However, the fact that the conflict has been categorised as mostly low-intense is incentive that successful negotiations would be possible. The categorisation of India as a multi-party state would also be a positive finding, indicating the high possibility of a conflict prone to using peaceful methods as negotiation. The Indian state is however a flawed democracy which does not show much interest in solving the conflict peacefully, but rather with military force.

5 Discussion and Conclusion

Findings in this study show that successful negotiation in the chosen case seems far away. After analysing the case with the chosen framework, it was clear that most of the variables that Bercovitch's study found important were not present in this case. Factors that hinder the conflict from reaching a peaceful settlement were the facts that the conflict has been going on for so long, with numerous clashes and disputes between the parties. The power disparity between these actors, together with their different views of the conflict, further complicates a peaceful settlement. The factor regarding intensity had a positive outcome, along with the factor of regime. In that way it two out of six subcategories argues that the conflict could be more prone to reach negotiation or meditation. However, arguably these two factors were not so simple to interpret. Regarding type of regime, India's categorisation as multiple-party state is accurate. But, one must keep in mind what the other types of states this categorisation refers to. Compared to them, India is very different from many other multiple-party states, as e.g. the Nordic states that are much higher on democracy and anti-corruption rankings than India. Another interesting finding regarding this is the fact that India has one of the world's most powerful militaries, and research could go further and elaborate on how India have dealt with other internal and international conflicts. The likelihood of negotiation based on India being a multi-party state, is therefore vague. When it came to intensity, the conflict was measured to be low-intense and in that way be more likely to reach negotiations than a high intense conflict. Some years of this conflict has been more violent and intense in regards to how many fatalities there have been. That result show that the likelihood of negotiations decreased even more during those periods.

There seem to be a deadlock in the conflict, but a ripe moment could still wait in the future. Finding this moment at the same time seems however hard, as none of the parties are willing to give up on their parts. Since the issue is dealt with mainly on local level, it is even more difficult to reach a joint strategy and reach the ripe moment as a whole state. But, if such a stage would occur, hopefully a mediator would be allowed into the talks. As history has shown, negotiations between the parties have not been successful. Allowing a mediator to join seem important in this case to break the deadlock, and find one that can shed light on the relevant aspects, and shifting the parties focus from power to rights.

In conclusion, the conflict between the Naxalites and the Indian government is still unsettled due to the many unfavourable components that make the situation unlikely to be solved with negotiation. This finding can be applied to

the bigger research question of why some conflicts are solved peacefully and others are not.

For future research it would be of interest to add on more intrastate cases using the same model as used in this thesis. A comparative study with the conflict in Colombia between FARC and Colombian government would be interesting due to its relevance in similarities and different outcome. The case of the Maoists in Nepal and their substantially different political outcomes, compared to the Naxalites is another that would be interesting to study. Through explaining the similarities and/or differences between the cases, using the contingency model of mediation, more can be learned about intrastate conflicts.

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