Chapter 3

METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

3.1 Significance of the Problem

Naxalism in Andhra Pradesh has become a major cause for concern for the State Government as also the society at large. With its ideological moorings rooted in the formation of an egalitarian society, the Naxalites have sustained the movement for the past three decades. Violence, inherent in their ideology, has been on the rise impairing rural life. A few other State Governments have banned the extremist outfits also. To curb the movement, the State responded by using force and coercion, which led to an 'encounter culture' in the State. The National Human Rights Commission visited the State to assess the problem and enlist the opinions of the victims of Naxal violence. Later, it also issued directives to the State Government to change the procedure while probing encounter deaths. Similarly, Asia Watch, the international human rights group indicted the State Government on the issue of rural killings in Andhra Pradesh while Amnesty International brought out an issue on encounter killings in the State.

The Government constituted the Bhargava Commission while the High Court responding to a public interest petition appointed the Advocates Committee to examine the problem of Naxalism even as the political leaders of different shades voiced their concern over Naxalism. On the other hand, another Committee of
Concerned Citizens was also formed which toured the State and submitted its report to the Government. The State Government is seized of this issue.

Such violent expression of opposition to the ruling establishment that is manifest in wars, revolutions, separatist and insurgency activities has been a subject of debate from time immemorial in the media. The Andhra Pradesh Press has not lagged behind. In fact it witnessed a remarkable expansion compared to other parts of the country owing to a rise in the literacy levels, extensive news network and technological advancements etc. Two language dailies—Eenadu and Vaartha—are published from Nizamabad, Warangal and Karimnagar. Eenadu started its latest edition from Suryapat in Nalgonda district. Other Telugu and English dailies—Andhra Jyothi, Andhra Bhoomi, Andhra Prabha, Deccan Chronicle, Indian Express, Andhra Pradesh Times and The Hindu—have their presence in all major towns and district headquarters. The Naxal conflict is acute in the districts of Nalgonda, Adilabad, Karimnagar, Warangal, Khammam and Nizamabad, while the tribal agency areas in the coastal districts of the State are also affected by the problem.

3.2 Statement of the Problem

Conflict is generally accepted as a news value. Newspapers tend to pay greater attention to events involving conflict as such news is sensational in nature and has the potential to attract immediate readers' attention.

Conflicts erupt due to several factors but the operation of the Press is put under constant watch when the conflict involves the State and insurgency. In such a climate of conflict, the Press makes strenuous effort to collect information on events involving conflict. The warring parties in the conflict have a vested interest in either withdrawing or publicising information. In both the cases, the
professional responsibility of the Press gets affected. Also, the Press coverage tends to have a bearing on the conflict as such. This makes it imperative for the Press to be objective so as to uphold the professional standards of the Fourth Estate and also for societal good. Therefore, Press coverage in the event of conflict is evoking considerable professional interest. This is testified by the fact that the Press Council of India has studied the working of the Press in Punjab and Kashmir conflict. However, these studies have a limited objective of identifying professional problems seeking solutions to them.

In this context, the academic study assumes greater importance to have a comprehensive and in-depth understanding of the phenomenon - the three-decade-old Naxal conflict. The Press interface with the conflict has intensified owing to the expansion of the rural news network, especially that of the Telugu Press. There is hardly any academic empirical study that probes the working of the Press in the State-Naxal conflict in Andhra Pradesh. However, the problem has been researched in other disciplines like Political Science as a political phenomenon and Sociology as a social phenomenon.

The pertinent questions raised and the manner through which data is collected to seek answers to these questions is discussed in the following pages. The study aimed at examining the working of the Press in the climate of insurgency with focus on Naxalism in Andhra Pradesh.

3.3 Objectives

The objectives of the study include
1. To examine the various dimensions of the Naxal conflict such as those which impinge on the working of the Press,

2. To study the problems of the Press--Organisational and individual, in covering Naxalite activities,

3. To enlist the police opinions on the Press coverage and Naxal conflict;

4. To record the ideologues' opinions of the Press and its coverage of the Naxalite activities, and

5. To qualitatively analyse the news reports against the rhetorical traditions and application of dramatist and mythic approaches to news, including the editorials and analytical reports.

The present study is limited to the State-Naxalite conflict in Andhra Pradesh with focus on the daily Press. Due to the vast and unexplored nature of the phenomenon under study, the researcher preferred to have an exploratory design in the form of raising some pertinent questions and seeking answers to them.

3.4 Design of the Study

The exploratory design is flexible enough to permit the consideration of many different aspects of a phenomenon.

According to Singh (1985:99) the exploratory study is "systematic, scientific and at times the only way through which a researcher can check whether an idea, that sounds promising to him has much appeal, if at all, in reality or not." This design helps in gaining familiarity with a phenomenon or to achieve new insights.
into it besides helping in the development of a hypothesis rather than its testing. It can be considered as the first step in the continuous research process and is undertaken with the explicit purpose of formulating a problem for more precise investigation. This method attempts to see what is there rather than to predict the relationship that will be found.

Against the backdrop of the preceding discussion, it is found that the case study method would be appropriate for the study. Wimmer and Dominick (1994: 155) state that "Case Study uses as many data sources as possible to investigate systematically an individual, group, organisation, or event." Yin (1984: 156) defines a case study as an "empirical inquiry that uses multiple sources of evidence to investigate a contemporary phenomenon within its real life context in which, the boundaries between the phenomenon and its context are not clearly evident."

Simon (1969: 157) says "case study is particularly advantageous to the researcher who is trying to find clues and ideas for further research. Case studies are performed when a researcher desires to understand or explain a phenomenon and he wishes to obtain a wealth of information about the research topic."

Wimmer and Dominick (1994: 156) further state that the "case study method also affords the researcher the ability to deal with a wide spectrum of evidence. Documents, historical artifacts, systematic interviews, direct observations, and even the traditional survey can all be incorporated into a case study. The more data sources that can be brought to bear in a case, the more likely it is that the study will be valid."
In view of this, the researcher has undertaken a qualitative content analysis and combined it with the dramatistic analysis and mythic approach to news. A discussion on the qualitative, dramatistic analysis and mythic approach to news is presented in the subsequent pages.

The study was undertaken in stages as suggested by Wimmer and Dominick. After having decided on the exploratory design, other stages of research namely pilot study, data collection and data analysis were undertaken.

3.5 Qualitative Analysis -- A Discussion

As mentioned, review of documents while collecting data is well within the limits of the case study. The study focuses on qualitative examination of the coverage given to the Naxal conflict in select newspapers in Andhra Pradesh. Content analysis as a method has quantification emphasis but the study has adopted accepted qualitative analysis permitted within the parameters of Content analysis methods. George (1959, 7) says qualitative content analysis has been defended, though not solely, for its superior performance in problems of applied social science. He further concludes that 'qualitative analysis of a limited number of crucial communications may often yield better clues to the intentions of a speaker at one moment in time than more standardised techniques.

Morris (1946) points out that the major source of disagreement among those defining Content Analysis is whether it must be applied to manifest content-surface meaning of the content or can Content analysis be used to analyse the deeper layers of meaning embedded in the content. This manifest-latent controversy can be considered at two levels. The requirement of objectivity...
stipulates that only those symbols and combination of symbols actually appearing in a message be recorded. In other words, the coding process cannot be one of reading between the lines. The second aspect of this issue concerns the interpretation of results. This debate is essentially one concerning the dimensions of communication which may be properly analysed.

On the other hand, proponents of qualitative techniques also question the assumption that for the purpose of inference, frequency of assertion is necessarily related to the importance of assertion. These critics suggest that the single appearance or omission of an attribute in a document may be of more significance than the relative frequency or other characteristics.

The content data is compared to some standard of adequacy or performance. Many studies have employed 'apron' standards, defined implicitly by the investigators' preference. Even when 'apriori' standards are made explicit, the problems of defining them operationally, like 'bias', have rarely been dealt with in a satisfactory manner. Owing to this reason, an alternative to this deductive approach has been found by trying to derive standards inductively from the content data. A representative sample of messages produced by a class of communicators may provide norms against which the products of any single communicator may be compared. In the attempt to probe beneath the surface of written accounts, interpretive research is forced to consider the minutiae of symbolic forms. The technique has often been used in mass media research—the content of a given newspaper, magazine or network is compared with the performance of the medium as a whole.
3.5.1 Procedure Followed for Content Analysis

The researcher selected *Deccan Chronicle*, *The Hindu* (English) and *Eenadu* (Telugu) privately owned leading newspapers in terms of circulation. They represent the mainstream and widely read Press.

*Eenadu* has 10 district editions, two published from the north Telangana districts *Deccan Chronicle*, in addition to the Hyderabad edition has three editions published from Vijayawada, Vishakapatnam and Rajahmundry. *The Hindu* is published from Hyderabad and has one edition from Vishakapatnam. Other dailies English and Telugu published from Hyderabad, *Indian Express*, *Newstime*, *Andhra Prabha*, *Andhra Bhoomi* and *Andhra Jyothi* were not included as they have limited circulation. *Udayam*, once owned by a Congress Member of Parliament has folded up. *Vaartha* was launched a couple of years back.

The period chosen for the study was from January 1990 to December 1996 during which time the Naxalite outfits were under intermittent spells of ban imposed by the State Government. The researcher, who was an active journalist based on his understanding and experience felt that empirical scrutiny of regular coverage of routine activities of the Naxalites may not generate valid and relevant inferences. Also because, only select news stories are ‘treated’, ‘slanted’. Given this fact, the researcher studied the coverage in relation to specific events/issues/development related to Left Wing Extremists and that of the Government in each successive year. This has helped the researcher arrive at substantive conclusions.
The Unit of analysis was a news story, editorial or opinion column, edit article and analytical report. The researcher identified 30 news stories and 25 editorials, edit articles and analytical reports from the three newspapers. The content of news stories was categorised into those relating to Naxalites and the State based on the Rhetorical traditions as identified by Picard (1989). These content categories were submitted to a panel of four judges who included journalism educators and journalists to ensure reliability.

Major incidents for the Government included decisions of the Government, the acts/approach/decisions of the law enforcement machinery, while for Naxal related events, reports included killing of police personnel above the rank of DSP or over five policemen, kidnaps, landmine blasts and bandh call extending to more than three districts.

The news stories were examined with regard to their positioning, headlines, slant, if any, anti-State or anti-Naxalite, the type of sources and the nature of follow up stories.

The editorials were analysed to examine whether they dealt with - Government policy towards the PWG, violence-State/Naxalites, causes and suggestions to the Government, people and the Naxalites. The approach of the Government to tackle Naxalites can be a causal factor which has been dealt under the head causes.

The study has followed the method of inductive analysis wherein the underlying message in the coverage of an issue, event, and development related to Naxalites and that of the Government were examined. The technique followed was to draw...
inferences systematically and objectively identifying specified attributes in news messages based on the Rhetorical traditions employed by journalists.

The information tradition, which emphasises factual information and documentation of events or a calm and dispassionate conveyance of the information. In this tradition, the accuracy of description of overt occurrences is generally high. The sensationalist tradition presents material in ways that emphasise alarm, threat, provocation, anger and fear. Such a tradition works well in reporting of conflict and terrorism, is likely to bring an emotional response and contains inherently dramatic and tragic elements that can be reported. The feature story tradition contains symbolism and often focuses on individuals as heroes or villains, victims or perpetrators. This type of story focuses on individuals to provide a context that helps to put news events and larger issues into a personal perspective. In the reporting of terrorism, this can take the form of stories about what it was like to be a hostage or what it is like to live in a repressive nation in which individuals are striking at the government. The didactic tradition stresses explanation and education about how and why things work. Articles about the tactics of terrorists or authorities often fall into this category. A news report about any incident can be constructed by employing any of the traditions.

3.5.2 News as Drama

Burke (1966) explored the concept of dramatism, an understanding of man as a symbol - using animal who acts in a world on the basis of meanings that symbols hold for him. According to him, 'man is defined literally as an animal characterised by his special aptitude for 'symbolic action,' and drama is
employed, not as a metaphor but as a fixed form that helps us discover the implication of the terms 'act' and 'person'.

Through Burke's conception of dramatism, news can be studied as a symbolic act, dramatic portrayal of a dramatic event. Study of news as drama was mentioned by Lippman (1922, 34) who said, news 'is not a first hand report of the raw material. It is a report of that material after it has been stylised. Mead G. H. (1934) also recognised the news as drama. The vast importance of media of communication such as those involved in journalism is seen at once,' he wrote, since they report situations through which one can enter into an attitude and experience of other persons. The drama has served this function in presenting what have been felt to be important situations.

The present study has drawn the symbolic and dramatic aspects of news stories on the kidnapping of a legislator and the killing of a top Naxalite leader. The method is a dramatistic analysis, based on the work of Kenneth Burke who wrote that 'dramatism is a method of analysis. Burke's method begins by breaking down a story into its essential dramatic elements. These elements form a pentad actors, acts, scenes, purposes and agencies. Thus the news stories on the kidnapping of a Congress legislator in Vishakapatnam district

3.5.3 Elements of the Pentad

**Actors:** Isolates and identifies all characters in the news story. How is the individual actor described by the story? Does the actor appear to represent a larger entity such as a group, nation, or the public. What role does the actor play?
**Action:** Dramatism pays attention to the portrayal of action. The choice of words used to describe the individual action is studied. The pattern of action within each news story—the plot—is examined for its logic and assumptions, origins and conclusions.

**Scenes:** The analysis notes the setting of the news story—whether it is friendly, forbidding, foreign or familiar. Does the scene play a role in the action? If so, in what way? Is the individual scene placed in a larger, global context?

**Purposes:** Dramatism studies the motivations and intentions of the actors. The analysis notes whether these purposes have been expressed by actors or offered by the news story. Does the story portray the purposed in positives, negatives, or neutral terms, or not at all?

**Agencies:** The study examines the means, tools and channels that the actors use to pursue their intentions. Are the agencies effective and successful? Does the news story portray the agencies in positive, neutral terms, or not at all?

Dramatistic analysis provides a means for the detailed consideration and categorization of the integral elements of a news story. It is an attempt to organize and make plain the structure and content of a text. It is particularly apt for news analysis. Besides its sensitivity to possible dramatic aspects in news, dramatism offers an intriguing comparison between the elements of the pentad and the traditional "five Ws and H"—who, what, where, when, why and how.

### 3.5.4 Mythic Approach to News
A mythic approach to news explores the news story as a symbolic narrative that attempts to give meaning to the events selected and described. A mythic approach might provide insight into the dramatic aspects of news stories about a terrorist victim. Breen and Corcoran (1982) in ‘Myth in the Television Discourse,’ say that one of the functions of myth is to create models for society by translating one person's life history into an archetype for others. Lawrence and Timberg (1979) suggest that the selection and presentation of terrorist news coverage is strongly affected by myth. Davis and Walton (1983) find mythic aspects of consensus and closure in international coverage of terrorist killing of Italian Premier Aldo Moro.

The present study has applied the mythic approach to analyse the news coverage of the killing of DIG Vyas.

### 3.6 Conduct of the Study

#### Stage I

In the first stage, keeping in view the diverse objectives of the study, the researcher undertook a pilot study. During this stage, the researcher held extensive discussions with journalists, academicians, political analysts, sociologists, human rights activists and those who are avid observers of the Naxal conflict. This helped the researcher identify key players to the conflict and the Press and give a sharper focus to the problem.

For instance, to elicit the perspective of the ideologues, the researcher felt that the ideologues can be grouped into the following groups.

1. Members of front organisations
2. Activists who have surrendered

3. Underground activists

4. Sympathisers

5. Militants working overground

However, access to underground activists was not possible. Hence the findings should be understood against this limitation.

The effect of the Naxalite operations falls in the realm of law and order due to the violent methods. Since the Naxalite groups profess scant respect for the constitution and lay emphasis on forcibly capturing political power throwing asunder the democratic system, the Naxalites lock horns with the police, who are ultimately the enforcers of law and the defenders of the Constitution. In the process, not only the acts of the police but also those of the Naxals also come under the glare of the Press.

Hence, the researcher has identified the law enforcement agency and its representatives to be most crucial to the functioning of the Press in the climate of conflict besides other players. The researcher identified the following groups among the police to be included as respondents:

1. Senior police officials posted in the Naxal infested districts

2. Retired police officials who had worked in these areas
3. Officials heading the Special Anti-Naxal squads and also Officials of the special police forces, police officials who had worked in Naxal infested areas but later transferred to other places.

4. The Head of the police machinery in the State

Journalists working in the Naxal infested areas are the vital link providing news about Naxal/police activities to the general newspaper reading public. The researcher has grouped them under the following categories:

1. Those working in mandals called as stringers in professional parlance

2. Journalists reporting from district headquarters

3. Journalists reporting from the City but specialising in the area of militant movement.

Keeping in view the objectives, the researcher prepared a set of questions for the interviews for the pilot study. The questions were of broad nature and the pre-testing helped the researcher to eliminate and also ensure the validity of the questions.

Stage II

In the second stage, the researcher toured the north Telangana districts and interviewed various respondents over a period of three months. Purposive and incidental sampling method was followed as the endeavour of the researcher was not to collect representative data nor to make any generalisations. In all, 25 police officials, 32 journalists and 20 ideologues were included in the sample.
3.7 Data Gathering Instrument

Focussed in-depth interview was the data gathering instrument and the researcher has overcome the handicap of the respondents' unwillingness to speak on the subject. This helped in eliminating irrelevant areas and in providing a richer range of responses and interpretative information.

The researcher recorded the experiences and answers of the various categories of respondents who were asked different questions covering their areas of operation.

Besides focussed in-depth interviews the researcher also consulted other sources of data like documents, reports etc. Vast literature on conflicts in general and similar conflicts in particular was also surveyed to provide a broad context to the study being undertaken. The literature surveyed is organised in two places. Major portions of it is included under the chapter on Survey of Literature while the remaining literature is integrated with the primary data to give a contextual reading to the dissertation.

Regarding journalists, questions were on the nature of problems they face from the Naxalites, district administration including the police and from the managements.

To enlist the opinions of the police, the questions included the following aspects:

- On the coverage given to Naxalite activities, both in the English and the Telugu Press, the general tone/attitude of the Press towards Naxalism, Press reports and escalation of violence, infiltration of Naxals into the rank and file of the Press, legal framework if any to deal with newspapers favourable to Naxalism,
desirability of placing curbs on journalists/ media, response of the police to negative coverage; Police- Press relations in general and in Naxal infested areas

Ideologues were asked on the nature of the Press, strategies to reach the Press, Press relations; whether State repression affects their relationship with the Press and perceptions of the Naxals on Press coverage of their activities
3.8 Operational Definitions

Case Study: Case Study investigates systematically an individual, group, organisation, or event. Case Studies are undertaken when a researcher desires to understand or explain a phenomenon. Case study is an empirical inquiry that uses multiple sources of evidence to investigate a contemporary phenomenon within its real life context in which, the boundaries between the phenomenon and its context are not clearly evident.

Conflict/s: Refers to conflicts in general across the country and the Naxalite conflict in Andhra Pradesh. The Naxalite conflict is termed as insurgency where the Naxalites aim at overthrowing the State and establish an egalitarian society.

Couriers: Unlettered people who are live-wires of the PWG sending and receiving messages, doing the intelligence function in the villages etc.

Didactic Tradition: It stresses explanation and education about how and why things work. Articles about the tactics of terrorists or authorities often fall into this category.

Dramatistic Analysis: Symbolic and dramatic aspects of news stories broken into essential dramatic elements. These elements form a pentad: actors, acts, scenes, purposes and agencies.

Encounters: Killing of Naxalites by the police.

Exploratory Design: The exploratory study is systematic, scientific and at times the only way through which a researcher can check whether an idea, that sounds
promising to him has much appeal, if at all, in reality or not ' This design helps in
gaining familiarity with a phenomenon or to achieve new insights into it besides
helping in the development of a hypothesis rather than its testing.

**Feature Story Tradition** Contains symbolism and often focuses on individuals
as heroes or villains, victims or perpetrators. This type of story focuses on
individuals to provide a context that helps to put news events and larger issues
into a personal perspective. In the reporting of terrorism, this can take the form
of stories about what it was like to be a hostage or what it is like to live in a
repressive nation in which individuals are striking at the government

**Focussed In-depth Interview**: A face to face question answer session with
questions mainly focussing on the subject.

**Follow Up**: News stories filed on an incident over a period of time

**Information Tradition**: Emphasises factual information and documentation of
events or a calm and dispassionate conveyance of the information In this
tradition, the accuracy of description of overt occurrences is generally high.

**Informers**: Those who work for the police and supply them with strategic
information about the Naxals. They may be hired by the police or may be
deliberately planted in the Naxalite groups by the police or party renegades

**Ideologues**: Refer to Naxalites, their sympathisers, members of the front
organisations and those who have surrendered to the police and join the
mainstream society Naxalites in the study primarily refer to members of the
Peoples War Group and its front organisations
**Journalists:** They include stringers, correspondents, mofussil correspondents, staff reporters working in the Naxal infested areas and also those who have been specialising in this subject of Naxalites

**Left Wing Extremism:** Left Wing Extremism is a broader term including Left extremist activities of all the Naxal groups numbering around 13 in the State. It has been referred to as Naxalism in the study to avoid redundancy.

**Opinions:** Expression of an attitude towards Naxalism and its coverage in the Press.

**Police:** Also referred to as Law and Order machinery includes police officials working in Naxal infested areas, those who have worked or those heading special cells meant to tackle Naxalites and the top police brass.

**Qualitative Content Analysis.** Drawing inferences from messages based on certain attributes.

**Sensationalist Tradition:** Presents material in ways that emphasise alarm, threat, provocation, anger and fear. Such a tradition works well in reporting of conflict and terrorism, is likely to bring an emotional response and contains inherently dramatic and tragic elements that can be reported.

**Surrenders** Laying down arms and surrenderring of Naxalites before the State machinery

**State's Actions.** Steps initiated by the State's law and order machinery to tackle Naxalites
3.9 Limitations

Though Naxalism is spread over many parts of the State, intense Naxal activity is concentrated in the four Telangana districts of Adilabad, Karimnagar, Warangal and Nizamabad. Therefore, the researcher for feasibility purpose chose to confine the study in the North Telangana region as exploring a phenomenon where it is intense would provide better clues and ideas.

The study has been confined to the People’s War Group, the most predominant of the Left wing groups and its front organisations which have been under intermittent spells of ban by the Government. The researcher was handicapped as he could not meet underground activists and some senior police officials to gather information. However, this limitation, to a certain extent was overcome by interviews with surrendered ones, members of the front organisations who had gone through ideological indoctrination. Same was the case with regard to police.

Regarding content, dramatistic analysis and the mythic approach to news, the microscopic nature of the study is acknowledged as it isolates only a few incidents of coverage in select newspapers. Also, the findings have to be understood against the limitation that the newspapers chosen were the main editions published from Hyderabad. The zonal editions of Eenadu from Karimnagar and Suryapet were not covered in the study.