Impact of security expenditures in military alliances on violence from non-state actors: Evidence from India

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ABSTRACT

In this paper, we investigate the impact of security expenditures from military alliances involving third-party intervention on violent incidents from non-state actors. Our main learning is a rather surprising fact that at a lower level of security expenditure in the violence affected area, an increase in security expenditures leads to an increase in violent incidents (rather than a decrease); and only at higher level of security expenditure in the area, an increase in security expenditure leads to a decline in violent incidents. For the analysis, we use a novel dataset on naxalite violence obtained directly from the police head-quarters of the three most affected states in India. The data consists of 64 districts spanning over years 2001 till 2013 and includes information on the annual number of violent incidents and the size of the security forces allocated specifically to curb the naxalite violence. We use negative binomial regression model with the number of violent incidents as the dependent variable and lagged size of security forces as the independent variable, while controlling for other relevant variables. Further, to address issues of potential reverse causality, we use a propensity score matching technique to infer the causal nature of such an association.

We also argue that when the union government intervenes as a third party to support the state governments to fight the naxalites, the latter may be under-funding by free riding. However, despite such under-funding, if the overall contribution is positive and continued, eventually the concentration of security forces in an area will overwhelm the naxalites and reduce the incidents.

Lastly, we highlight that though the mainstream literature on civil wars has used per capita income as a proxy for security expenditures, it becomes inappropriate when a more direct measure of security expenditures is used.

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1. Introduction

Naxalites are radical communists, driven by Maoist political ideology, engaged in an armed conflict with some states of India. The insurgency has caused more than 15000 deaths since its beginning in 1967 till 2013 (see Fig. 1). Therefore, the naxalite insurgency has been recognized by the government of India as the single biggest challenge to the internal security of the country and since 2001 the Union government has increased its security expenditure to the states fighting this insurgency resulting in allocation of more than a hundred thousand policemen.[1]
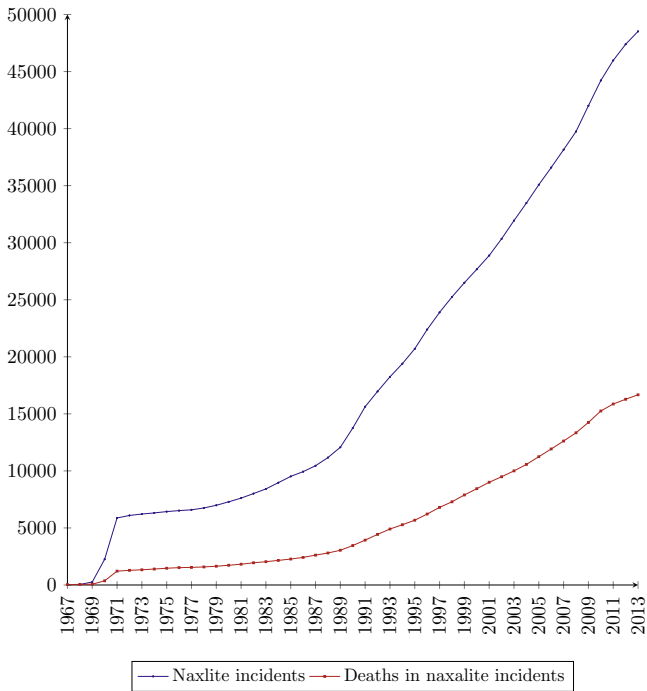
Our paper is motivated by a surprising empirical observation made in Fig. 2, in the context naxalite insurgency in India. In this figure, we show the annual number of naxalite incidents that occurred and the security forces allocated during 2001–2013 in three naxalite affected Indian states of Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, and Odisha. We see that during 2001–2009, the naxalite incidents were increasing, while the security forces have been increasing. However, between 2009–2013 as the security forces continue to increase, the naxalite incidents decreased. While it is expected that an increase in security forces should lead to a decrease in naxalite incidents, the trend between 2001–2009 is surprising. In this paper, we explore this empirical relationship in greater depth.

There are three essential features of the anti-naxalite effort: (i) it involves a local government fighting non-state actors, (ii) it involves a larger and more powerful third-party in a military alliance with the local and a much smaller government and (iii) the stalemate has continued for a long period of time. These features make it similar to other military alliances in the world that are

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[1] Sharma, A. (2014, July 8). Fighting biggest national security challenge: Home ministry asks State governments to target top leaders of CPI (Maoist). *The Economic Times.* Available at: http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/naxalism-biggest-threat-to-internal-security-manmohan/article436781.ece.

Note: The data has been obtained from Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India

Fig. 1. Cumulative naxalite incidents and deaths in naxalite incidents in India.

third-party interventions. For example, in Afghanistan, NATO is supporting the local government in fighting the Taliban and Al Qaeda; and in Philippines, Yemen and Somalia, USA is supporting the established government in fighting them. While our findings are drawn from the Indian context, we believe that they could provide some insights for such military alliances in an international context as well.

In fighting the naxalite insurgency, the union (or central) government is the larger third-party supporting the state (or local) governments through a military alliance to fight the naxalites for a long period of time. Our main conclusion, while supporting the initial observation leads to a rather surprising finding that *at lower levels of security expenditure in the violence affected area, an increase in security expenditures leads to an increase in violent incidents (rather than a decrease); and only at higher levels of security expenditure in the area, an increase in security expenditure leads to a decline in violent incidents.* Therefore, it is useful for the policy makers to start with higher security contributions than lower. However, if higher contributions are not forthcoming immediately, then security contributions should be continuous for long enough to see the desired impact. One reason that this is not happening is because the state governments affected with naxalite insurgency are not contributing adequately to the military alliance, free riding the union government. Though a complete understanding of this phenomenon is not within the scope of this paper, in Section 8, we support the above-mentioned argument with macro level data on security expenditures (police) from states and union government.

For this study, we have collected data from three Indian states of Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, and Odisha. We use the number of battalions of Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) allocated by the
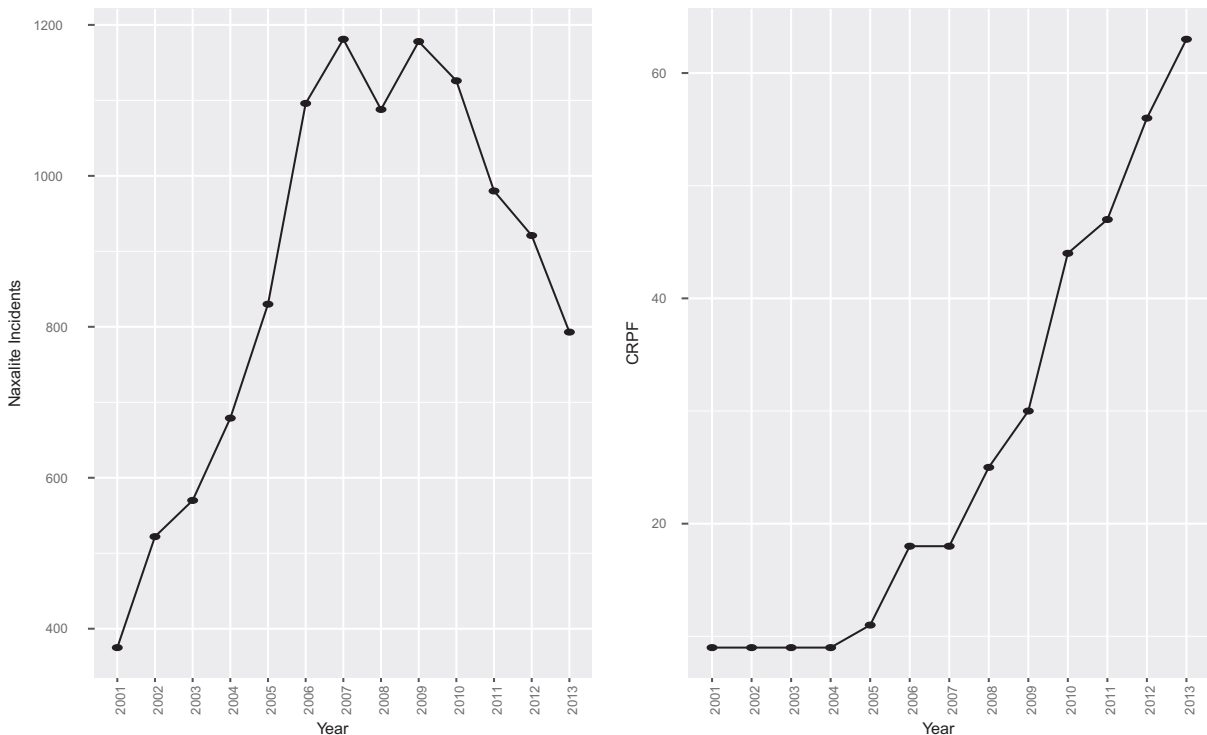
Note: Data has been obtained from the police headquarters of Governments of Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand and Odisha, and verified with vernacular media, where possible. As mentioned in section 5.2, CRPF is the main security force allocated by the Government of India for the purpose of fighting naxalites.

Fig. 2. Total naxalite incidents and CRPF aggregated annually for the states of Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand and Odisha.