

Compound Inequalities and Political Violence in India

Prosperity Amidst Poverty and Inequality

India-China Institute, New School

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Inequalities in an Emerging Economy

- Significant increase in income inequality over the last twenty years
- India has highest number of poor in the world (OECD Estimate)
 - 42 % of Indians live on less than \$1.25 a day
- Planning Commission estimate: 30% of Indians below poverty line

I. Regional Concentration

- Bihar
 - Jharkand
 - Chattisgarh
 - Orissa
 - W.Bengal
 - Uttar Pradesh
 - Rajasthan
 - Madhya Pradesh
- These states, except W. Bengal are at the bottom of the HDI list since 1999-2000
 - HDI Ranking based on:
 - Life expectancy at birth,
 - Education indices based on literacy and mean years of schooling,
 - Monthly per capita consumption adjusted for inflation

II. Community Specific

- Concentrated in:
 - Scheduled Tribes
 - Scheduled Castes
 - Some groups in the Backward Castes
- 81% of STs
- 66% of SCs
- 58% of OBCs
- Multi-dimensionally poor

III. Overlaps

- 56% of Scheduled Castes & 55% of Scheduled Tribes population of the entire country lives in:
 - Bihar
 - Chattisgarh
 - Jharkand
 - Orissa
 - Parts of West Bengal & Andhra Pradesh

Bihar

- Fast growing economically
- Lowest per capita income
- SC form one-fifth of state's population
- Incidence of poverty in rural and urban areas is significantly higher than state average and the corresponding national average for the community.
- In HDI SCs fall far behind other groups in the state and SC national population

Chattisgarh

- STs and SCs are 50 % of the state's population
 - 10% of national ST population, majority live in Dantewada and Bastar
- Incidence of poverty among SC and ST households in the state is higher than other social groups in the state & higher than national averages
 - Fourth highest incidence of poverty of SCs after Bihar, Jharkand and Uttarakhand
- 50% ST women malnourished
- Higher % of underweight ST children
- ST's in Dantewada and Bastar are most illiterate
- School drop-out ratios of ST children higher than other districts

Jharkand

- Vast natural resources but economically backward
 - Provided 70 per cent of the domestic product of Bihar before 2000
- SC and ST are 19% and 21% of state's population
 - 4% and 10% of national population
- Incidence of poverty for SC and STs higher than corresponding all-India level
- Large number of ST and SC children are malnourished
- Literacy rates lower than the state and national average

Orissa

- Abundance of natural resources
- One of the poorest states
- SC and ST population is 40 % of the total population of the state
 - ST 10 % of ST population of entire country
- Incidence of poverty of STs is the highest in the state
- Health conditions of both are far worse than other social groups in the state
- Less than 50% of STs are literate

Andhra Pradesh

- Doing well economically
- SCs and STs make up 25% of state population
 - And 9% and 8% of national SC and ST population
- Incidence of poverty among rural STs and urban SCs and STs significantly higher than state and national averages
- Health indicators are poor for the STs and SCs in the tribal areas and in the drought prone southern districts
- Literacy rates for these communities lower than state and national average
 - 67.7 % vs 74 %

Contingent Nature of Poverty

- Poverty outcome of a morally arbitrary factor of birth into stigmatised and excluded communities
- Causal relation between lack of caste/social status and material deprivation

Redistribution and recognition

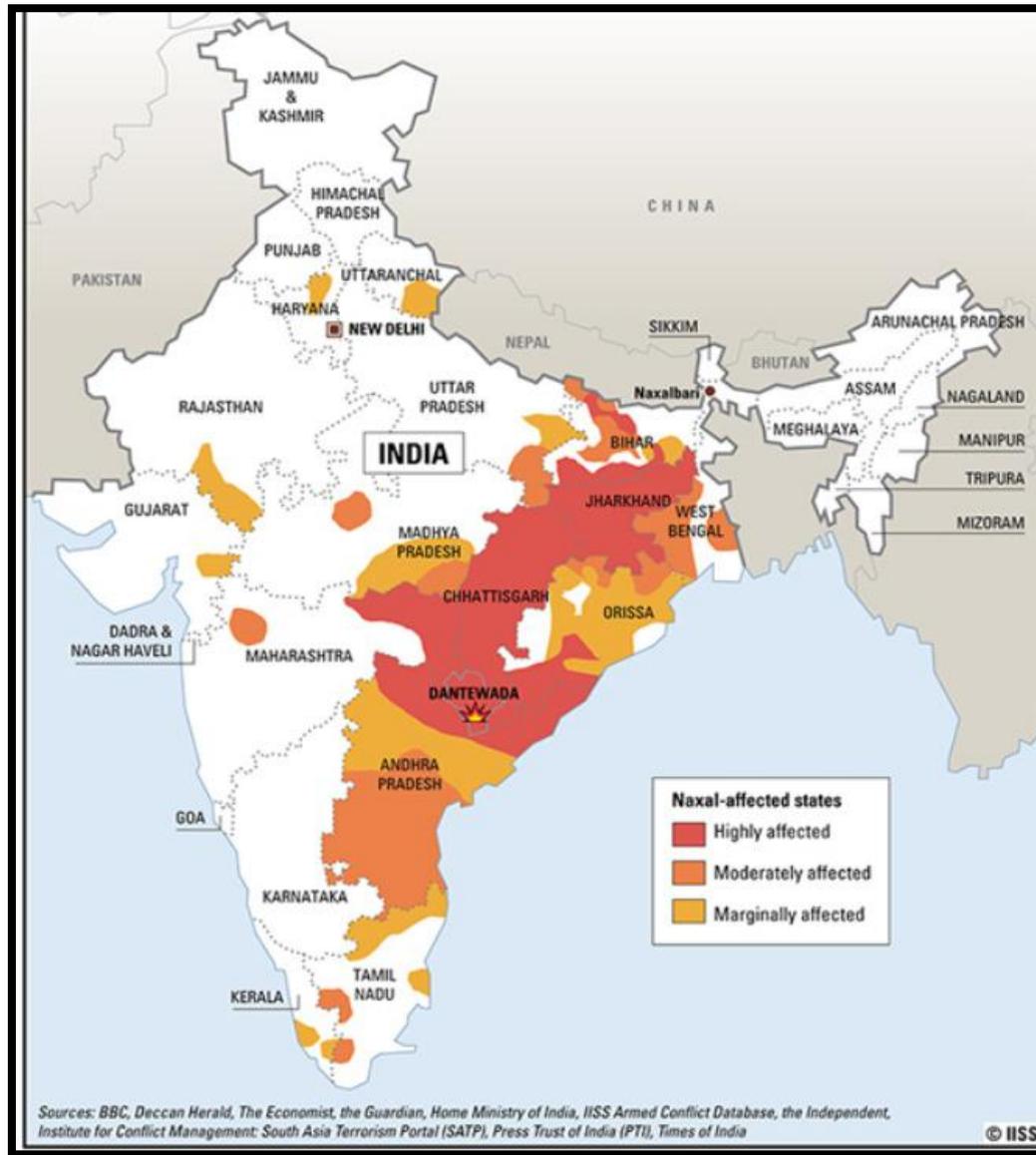
- Affirmative Action Policies lead to redistribution but do not ensure recognition
 - In Chattisgarh, Jharkand, Bihar and Orissa sections of SCs and STs left out of both
- Social stigma and material deprivation reinforce each other
- Also prove semi-autonomous
- Mix of reinforcement and semi-autonomy is Compound Inequality

Intractability

- Compound inequalities not addressed
- Or proved resistant to political interventions:
 - Social policy
 - Group Representation
 - Civil Society intervention

Armed Struggle

- Complexity of compound inequalities grasped and addressed by the extreme left
- Intensive armed engagement in southern part of Chattisgarh, Dantewada, Bastar, Kanker, Rajnandangaon, and Narayanpur districts



Deprivation, Neglect, and Armed Struggle

- Neglected by the government, and non-governmental organisations, and consigned to unmitigated exploitation, the tribal people initially gave the Naxalites succour but have now become their base.¹
- Anger and alienation of large number of people have been brought to a head by the armed struggle waged by the Naxalite movement. Movement active in about 125 districts spread over 12 states affects and influences thousands of people.²
- Persistent inequalities, “may lead to a situation where the discontented elements are compelled to organise themselves and the extreme tensions building up with the ‘complex molecule’ that is the Indian village may end in an explosion.”³

Footnote:

1. 2009 Draft report by Sub group IV of the Committee on State Agrarian Relations and Unfinished Task of Land Reforms, Ministry of Rural Development
2. 2008 ‘Development Challenges in Extremist Affected Areas’
3. 1969, ‘The Causes and Nature of Current Agrarian Tensions’

Has anything changed since 1967?

Context

- The 'biggest grab of tribal lands after Columbus in the making'
- The script of this has been authored by Tata Steel and Essar Steel who wanted 7 villages or thereabouts each, to mine the richest load of iron ore available in India

Has anything changed since 1967?

Agency

- Consolidation of CPI(ML) Peoples War and Maoist Communist Centre in 2004
- The Communist Party of India Maoist
- Territorial reach larger
- Military strength 9000- 10,000 armed fighters, 6,500 firearms,
- 40,000 cadres (Economist, 2006)

The Ambiguity of Political Violence

Violence is dehumanising but in these areas

- More denial of self-respect
- More infant mortality
- More malnourishment
- More ill health
- More illiteracy
- More premature deaths than the rest of the population

Two Pronged Strategy of Maoists

- Redistribution & Recognition
- Few defences against the political violence argument
- Empirical facts prohibit the taking of uncompromising stands

Political Violence and Maoism

- People and political mobilisation are the centre of radical ideology and strategy
- The richest source of power to wage war lies in the masses of the people.” Mao Tse-Tung

Political Mobilisation & Maoism in India

- Contested Loyalties
- Sustained political mobilisation needs time and space
- This is denied to the Maoists
- Armed wings constantly engaged with the military power of the state
- Surrounded by security forces, the Maoists have not succeeded in turning any of the guerrilla zones into base areas where they can establish a miniature state based on self-reliant economic development, and land to the tiller

The power of formal democracy

- Dramatically foregrounded the interests of the poorest of the poor, forgotten in the success story India wrote for itself
- But they
- Underestimate the legitimacy and the military power of the state
- Underestimate the ability of the system to reclaim lost ground

Can the Maoist project be rendered redundant?

- Launch of a People's War pre-empted by the onslaught of the security forces
- Immediate agenda of securing livelihood approximates the programmes of mainstream parties

Violence without politics

- Lack of sustained mobilisation diminishes Maoism to a development programme not cast in the revolutionary mould
- Without radicalisation of popular consciousness, use of political violence is also diminished

The danger...

- Unless politics controls violence, the reverse can also occur
- Spectacular acts of political violence are performative
- And people reduced to spectators

The paradox...

- Necessary preconditions of political violence gone missing
- The Maoist agenda has been reduced
- Will compound inequalities ever be broken?