



NAXALITE MOVEMENT IN UTTAR PRADESH: THE STATE'S RESPONSE

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Abstract

The abstract highlights the persistent concerns of Naxalism in Uttar Pradesh, contextualizing its historical origins from the Naxalite movement rooted in Marxist ideologies. While not as dominant as in other states, sporadic Naxal activities persist, particularly in eastern regions bordering Bihar and Jharkhand. The abstract outlines the geographical landscape of affected districts, notably Sonbhadra, emphasizing its transformation through developmental initiatives and increased investment, curbing Naxal influence. It explores the current scenario, where sporadic incidents prompt the government's response through security measures, developmental projects, and community engagement. Challenges like socio-economic disparities, historical grievances, and ideological appeal contribute to Naxalism's relevance, necessitating a holistic approach for inclusive development and sustained security measures. It also scrutinizes the strategies adopted by the state government and law enforcement to combat Naxalism, assessing their effectiveness and implications. The conclusion underlines the need for collaborative efforts between central and state governments to counter Naxal resurgence, focusing on inclusive growth and responsive governance.

Introduction

Naxalism, a socio-political movement rooted in addressing rural grievances and advocating for communist ideology, has been a persistent concern in various states across India for decades. At one point of time, the movement had affected almost more than 15 states to a varying degree ranging from critical to minor influence. Uttar Pradesh, India's most populous state, has

experienced sporadic Naxal activities, particularly in its eastern regions bordering Bihar and Jharkhand. While the state has not been a traditional Naxal stronghold compared to states like Chhattisgarh or Jharkhand, the movement's relevance in Uttar Pradesh continues to be a matter of concern and analysis.

Historical Context:

The Naxalite movement originated in the late 1960s in the village of Naxalbari in West Bengal, inspired by Marxist ideologies and aimed at addressing issues of landlessness, exploitation, and social inequalities prevalent among the rural poor. Over the years, the movement spread to various states, including parts of Uttar Pradesh. Naxalism emerged in Uttar Pradesh in the 1970s, inspired by the broader Naxalite movement rooted in Marxist ideologies. It is a well known fact that the Naxalite movement is continuing to persist in terms of spatial spread, intensity of violence, militarization and consolidation, ominous linkages with other subversive/secessionist groups and increased efforts to elicit mass support. The Naxalites operate in the vacuum created by absence of administrative and political institutions. They espouse the local demands and take advantage of the disenchantment prevalent among the exploited segments of the population and seek to offer an alternative system of governance that promises liberation of these segments from the clutches of 'exploiter' classes through the barrel of a gun.

The state's eastern regions, bordering Bihar and Jharkhand, witnessed its influence among marginalized communities grappling with socio-economic disparities and land-related conflicts. Issues of landlessness, poverty, and exploitation by landlords fueled discontent, aligning with Naxal agendas. Historical grievances, including land disputes and alienation of tribal communities from their traditional lands, contributed to the movement's growth. While not as pervasive as in other states, Uttar Pradesh experienced sporadic Naxal activities in districts like Sonbhadra, Chandauli, and Mirzapur. The government responded with security measures and developmental initiatives to address underlying grievances. Though the movement's intensity in Uttar Pradesh has remained relatively subdued, its historical impact echoes in occasional incidents, emphasizing the need for sustained inclusive development and resolution of socio-economic disparities to prevent its resurgence.

Geo-Strategic Location of Naxal Affected Districts in Uttar Pradesh

Sonbhadra, the second largest district in Uttar Pradesh, boasts unique geographical features and a border shared with four states. It is surrounded by Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, and Bihar, making it the only district in India with such distinct borders. Nestled

between the Vindhya and Kaimur hills, Sonbhadra's natural environment led Jawaharlal Nehru, India's first Prime Minister, to liken it to the 'Switzerland of India.'

The district's northern region rests on the Vindhya Range plateau, with its rivers, including the Belan and Karmanasha, flowing as tributaries of the Ganges. To the south, beyond the steep Kaimur Range, lies the Son River valley, traversing the district from west to east. In the southern part, hills dot the landscape, interspersed with fertile valleys formed by streams. The Rihand River, originating from Chhattisgarh's Surguja district, meanders northward to meet the Son River in the district's heart. The Govind Ballabh Pant Sagar, a reservoir on the Rihand, spans parts of Sonbhadra and Madhya Pradesh. East of the Rihand, the Kanhar River, born in Chhattisgarh, flows northward to join the Son River.

Map of Naxal Affected Districts in Uttar Pradesh

(According to 2019 MHA Press Release)



Current Scenario:

In recent years, Uttar Pradesh has witnessed sporadic incidents linked to, the intensity of Naxal presence in Uttar Pradesh is relatively low compared to states like Chhattisgarh or Jharkhand, where the movement has a more significant influence due to a history of tribal and land-related conflicts.

Presently, Naxalism in Uttar Pradesh persists as a sporadic concern rather than a dominant force. While the intensity of Naxal activities remains comparatively low in Uttar Pradesh,

sporadic incidents occur, often related to land disputes, marginalized communities' grievances, and sporadic clashes with law enforcement.

The state government has responded by deploying security forces and undertaking developmental initiatives to address underlying issues. Efforts have been made to improve infrastructure, provide basic amenities, and enhance connectivity to remote regions, aiming to alleviate the vulnerabilities that Naxal groups exploit.

According to an official release from the State Government Sonbhadra district in Uttar Pradesh, once notorious as a stronghold of Naxalites, has emerged as the second most pivotal district in the state's development journey, following in the footsteps of Noida. According to the official release, a total of 43 investment projects, with a cumulative value of around Rs 79,000 crore, are poised for implementation in Sonbhadra.ⁱ

It is now poised to become the second growth engine after Noida driving the progress of Uttar Pradesh. The construction of essential infrastructure and improved connectivity have not only eradicated Naxal activities in Sonbhadra but have also positioned the district as a focal point for Uttar Pradesh's development. It is worth mentioning here that despite its abundant natural and mineral resources, industrialists were wary of investing in Sonbhadra because of the extortion threats from Naxals. Sonbhadra faced decades of lawlessness and Naxal activities, which deterred major companies from investing in the district in the past. However, the district is currently undergoing significant transformation with investments pouring in through the groundbreaking ceremonies. The same entrepreneurs, who were once scared of investing in the district due to demands for extortion from Naxalites, are today queueing up to invest in the district. Following the Global Investors Summit-23, where Uttar Pradesh secured investment proposals totalling Rs 40 lakh crore, Sonbhadra has emerged as a key focus area, attracting the second-highest investment after Noida.

The upcoming investments are poised to not only catalyze development in Purvanchal but also contribute to the overall progress of the state. Notably, two substantial projects in the energy and renewable energy sectors, amounting to about Rs 35,000 crore, are on the verge of initiation in Sonbhadra. "These include the launch of a 2x1600 MW Super Thermal Power Plant at Obra and the expansion of the Thermal Power Plant at Singrauli. Apart from this, the 3660 MW off-stream closed-loop pumped storage project will also prove to be a boon for Sonbhadra. These three big projects have been approved by the government. The investments in Sonbhadra assume significance in view of the fact that the present government is focusing on attracting investments to all 75 districts of the state.

"In the first phase of the Global Investors Summit (GBC), Noida takes the lead with projects worth Rs 1.96 lakh crore poised for investment. Notably, Sonbhadra district follows closely in second place. Jhansi is gearing up for the implementation of 175 projects valued at approximately Rs. 63,000 crores. The remarkable surge in Sonbhadra's position has captured widespread attention. Additionally, in the Naxal-affected districts of Chandauli and Mirzapur, substantial investments are ready for implementation in the initial phase. Chandauli is slated to receive projects worth Rs 17.4 thousand crores, while Mirzapur is set for the launch of development projects totalling Rs 6,000 crore.

Despite these measures, Naxalism's relevance in Uttar Pradesh persists due to historical grievances, socio-economic disparities, and sporadic discontent among certain marginalized sections. The movement's occasional resurgence in specific areas underscores the need for sustained attention toward inclusive development and addressing grievances to prevent its escalation.

Overall, while Naxalism in Uttar Pradesh does not dominate the state's landscape, its sporadic presence underscores the necessity for continued efforts to address socio-economic disparities and historical grievances to curb the potential growth of Naxal activities in the state.

Government Response:

While coming out with a policy to deal with the Naxal problem, the Union Home Ministry said that it was not a mere law and order problem. According to it, the emphasis has to be laid on security, development and public perception management, all in a very holistic manner. Special focus has to be on accelerated socio-economic development of the backward areas to restore people's faith and confidence in the government machinery. Mass media also needs to be extensively used to highlight the futility of Naxalite violence and loss of life and property caused by it.

On the developmental front, the Central Government provides financial assistance for 70 Naxal affected districts in the 10 (ten) States of Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Orissa, Jharkhand, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal under the Backward Districts Initiative (BDI) component of the Rashtriya Sam Vikas Yojana (RSVY) & IAP (Integrated Action Plan).

For effectively dealing with the problem, the Central Government has already undertaken the task of modernization of State Police Forces. The Security Related Expenditure (SRE), a special scheme applicable to all the identified 70 Naxal affected districts in 10 States, has also been revised and the reimbursement under the scheme has been raised from 50 to 100 percent.ⁱⁱ New items like insurance scheme for police personnel, community policing, rehabilitation of

surrendered Naxalites, expenditure incurred on publicity to counter the propaganda of Naxalites, other security related items not covered under the Police Modernization Scheme, etc., are covered. Under the scheme, funds are released to the Naxal-affected States and to the Central Para Military Forces engaged in anti-Naxalite operations.

Under Security Related Expenditure (SRE) Scheme funds are provided to LWE affected states for capacity building of the States through provisions of ex-gratia to the family of civilian/security forces killed in LWE violence, training and operational needs of security forces, rehabilitation of surrendered LWE cadre, community policing, compensation to security force personnel/civilians for property damage by left wing extremists, etc. Under the scheme, funds are not released district-wise but state-wise. Balaghat, Mandla and Dindori districts of Madhya Pradesh and Gadchiroli district of Maharashtra are covered under the scheme. Rs.1485 crore have been released to the LWE affected states in last 05 years. This includes Rs.14.05 crore for Madhya Pradesh and Rs.91.63 crore for Maharashtra.ⁱⁱⁱ

The Uttar Pradesh government has also taken various measures to counter Naxalism by deploying security forces, initiating development projects in affected areas, and attempting to address socio-economic grievances. Efforts have been made to improve infrastructure, provide basic amenities, and enhance connectivity to remote regions, aiming to reduce the vulnerabilities that Naxal groups often exploit.

The Uttar Pradesh government has implemented various measures to counter the sporadic presence of Naxalism in the state:

Deployment of Security Forces: The government has deployed police and paramilitary forces in Naxal-affected regions to maintain law and order and prevent the escalation of Naxal activities.

Developmental Initiatives: Efforts have been made to focus on development projects in affected areas. This includes improving infrastructure, providing basic amenities such as schools, healthcare facilities, and roads, and enhancing connectivity to remote regions to address socio-economic disparities and reduce the vulnerabilities that Naxal groups exploit.

Community Engagement and Awareness: The government has initiated community engagement programs aimed at building trust among local populations. These programs involve interactions, awareness campaigns, and dialogue with villagers to understand their grievances and address them effectively.

Intelligence and Coordination: There's an emphasis on intelligence gathering and coordination among various law enforcement agencies to track Naxal movement, identify their networks, and prevent any potential attacks or recruitment drives.

Legal Measures: Stringent legal actions are taken against individuals involved in Naxal activities. Efforts are made to enforce the rule of law and bring perpetrators to justice.

Focused Operations: Targeted operations are conducted against Naxal groups to dismantle their networks and disrupt their activities. These operations aim to neutralize the threat posed by Naxal elements in the affected regions.

These collective measures by the Uttar Pradesh government signify a multi-pronged approach, combining security measures with developmental initiatives and community engagement to address the underlying issues contributing to Naxalism in the state.

Challenges and Relevance:

While Naxalism may not dominate Uttar Pradesh's socio-political landscape, its relevance cannot be dismissed entirely. The movement continues to find traction among marginalized communities facing issues of land alienation, poverty, and lack of access to basic resources. Moreover, the ideological appeal of Naxalism persists among certain sections discontented with existing socio-economic structures.

The challenges and relevance of Naxalism in Uttar Pradesh present a multifaceted landscape. Despite not being as prominent as in some other states, sporadic Naxal activities persist, especially in the eastern districts bordering Naxal-affected regions. The movement's relevance stems from several challenges:

Socio-Economic Disparities: Uttar Pradesh grapples with deep-rooted socio-economic disparities, particularly in rural areas. Issues like land disputes, poverty, and lack of basic amenities create fertile ground for Naxal ideology to resonate among marginalized communities.

Historical Grievances: Historical grievances, including land alienation and exploitation of tribal communities, continue to fuel discontent among certain sections of the population. These grievances align with Naxal agendas and contribute to their relevance in pockets of the state.

Security Concerns: While not pervasive, sporadic Naxal activities pose security challenges, necessitating continuous vigilance and deployment of resources to prevent any escalation of violence or recruitment drives.

Developmental Deficits: The uneven distribution of development and infrastructure projects remains a challenge. Efforts to address developmental deficits and provide inclusive growth are crucial to mitigating the appeal of Naxalism.

Ideological Attraction: The ideological allure of Naxalism persists among sections dissatisfied with the prevailing socio-economic structures, attracting individuals who feel marginalized or overlooked.

Addressing these challenges demands a holistic approach, combining security measures with sustained developmental initiatives, equitable distribution of resources, community engagement, and efforts to bridge socio-economic gaps. The sporadic relevance of Naxalism underscores the need for continuous efforts to address underlying grievances and prevent its resurgence in Uttar Pradesh

Future Prospects:

The trajectory of Naxalism in Uttar Pradesh hinges on the state's ability to address underlying socio-economic issues and provide inclusive development. Strengthening governance, ensuring equitable distribution of resources, and addressing grievances through dialogue and development initiatives are crucial steps to curb the potential growth of Naxal activities in the state.

The future outlook for Naxalism in Uttar Pradesh is contingent on the state's ability to address underlying socio-economic disparities and historical grievances. While Naxalism in Uttar Pradesh remains sporadic compared to other states, its potential resurgence is linked to persistent challenges.

Efforts aimed at inclusive development, equitable distribution of resources, and targeted developmental initiatives in marginalized regions will be pivotal. Prioritizing infrastructure, education, healthcare, and employment opportunities can diminish the appeal of Naxal ideology.

Sustained security measures, including intelligence gathering and strategic deployment of forces, are imperative to prevent any resurgence of Naxal activities. Collaborative efforts between the central and state governments, along with neighboring Naxal-affected states, are essential to combat cross-border Naxal operations effectively.

Community engagement and trust-building initiatives are critical. Engaging with local populations to address their grievances, involve them in decision-making processes, and provide platforms for dialogue can mitigate the allure of radical ideologies.

Political stability, effective governance, and responsive administration in Naxal-affected areas are essential. Transparent policies and accountable governance play a vital role in reducing vulnerabilities exploited by Naxal groups.

The future of Naxalism in Uttar Pradesh hinges on a holistic approach that integrates developmental endeavors, enhanced security measures, community engagement, and responsive governance. If these measures are effectively implemented and sustained, the likelihood of significant Naxal resurgence in the state can be minimized.

Conclusion:

Naxalism's relevance in Uttar Pradesh remains a complex issue intertwined with socio-economic disparities, historical grievances, and ideological leanings. While not as pervasive as in some other states, the movement's sporadic presence underscores the need for sustained efforts toward inclusive development and addressing the concerns of marginalized communities to prevent the escalation of Naxal activities in the state.

The relevance of Naxalism in Uttar Pradesh, though not as dominant as in some other states, persists due to underlying socio-economic disparities, historical grievances, and sporadic discontent among marginalized communities. While the movement's intensity remains subdued, its sporadic presence underscores the necessity for sustained efforts to address socio-economic inequalities, historical grievances, and security concerns

The state's future trajectory in countering Naxalism hinges on a comprehensive approach that amalgamates inclusive development, equitable distribution of resources, robust security measures, community engagement, and responsive governance. Efforts directed towards infrastructure enhancement, provision of essential amenities, and engagement with local populations are crucial to mitigate the appeal of Naxal ideologies.

Collaborative efforts between the central and state governments, along with neighboring Naxal-affected states, are pivotal in addressing cross-border challenges and ensuring a unified response. By prioritizing these initiatives and sustaining them over time, Uttar Pradesh can curtail the potential resurgence of Naxal activities and pave the way for lasting peace, stability, and inclusive growth in the region.

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Endnotes

ⁱ “ Formerly notorious for Naxal activities, UP's Sonbhadra set to become hub of development” dated 23 Nov,2023 available at <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/formerly-notorious-for-naxal-activities-ups-sonbhadra-set-to-become-hub-of-development/articleshow/105413564.cms?from=mdr>

ⁱⁱ “Assistance for Countering Naxal Activities” PIB release dated 14 december 2021 at <https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=1781306>

ⁱⁱⁱ “ Naxalite activities “ PIB release dated 08 Aug 2023 at <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleaselframePage.aspx?PRID=1946687>