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ECONOMIC COSTS OF NAXALISM: A STUDY OF INFRASTRUCTURE AND INVESTMENT

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Abstract

Naxalism, also known as Left-Wing Extremism (LWE), has been a major internal security challenge in India for decades. While its political and social impact is widely discussed, its economic consequences, particularly on infrastructure development and investment, require deeper analysis. This study examines how Naxal violence disrupts public infrastructure, discourages domestic and foreign investments, and increases government expenditure on security. Attacks on railways, roads, power grids, and industrial projects have significantly hindered economic growth in Naxal-affected regions. Furthermore, industries and mining operations face threats, extortion, and destruction, leading to capital flight and reduced business opportunities. The research highlights the rising economic burden on the government due to counter-insurgency measures and the diversion of development funds. To mitigate these economic setbacks, a multi-pronged approach involving security measures, infrastructure development, and employment generation is essential. Strengthening governance, improving public services, and encouraging private investment in these regions can help break the cycle of violence and underdevelopment.

Keywords – Naxalism, Left-Wing Extremism (LWE), economic impact, infrastructure damage, investment decline, industrial disruption, mining sector, foreign direct investment (FDI), security expenditure, counter-insurgency, regional underdevelopment, economic growth.

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Naxalism, also referred to as Left-Wing Extremism (LWE), began in 1967 in Naxalbari, West Bengal, as a peasant movement against land injustice and social exploitation. Over the years, it evolved into an armed insurgency, spreading across several Indian states, particularly in the Red Corridor, which includes Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Odisha, Bihar, Maharashtra, and Andhra Pradesh.

Initially driven by agrarian and tribal grievances, Naxalism has transformed into a significant security and economic challenge. The movement has led to large-scale violence, attacks on infrastructure, and the disruption of

industries and businesses, causing severe economic setbacks.

1.2 The Economic Perspective

The economic impact of Naxalism extends beyond security concerns. It hinders infrastructure development, discourages investments, disrupts industries, and increases government expenditure. The consequences include:

- Destruction of public infrastructure (railways, roads, power grids, telecom networks).
- Obstruction of industrial and mining projects, leading to business losses and unemployment.

- Decline in foreign and domestic investment due to security concerns.
- High government expenditure on counter-insurgency operations and security measures.

1.3 Research Objectives

This research aims to:

1. Analyze the impact of Naxalism on infrastructure development in affected regions.
2. Examine its effects on domestic and foreign investment.
3. Assess the financial burden on the government due to security-related expenses.
4. Explore potential solutions to mitigate the economic impact of Naxalism.

1.4 Research Methodology

This study is based on:

- Secondary data analysis from government reports, economic surveys, and media sources.
- Case studies of infrastructure and industrial projects affected by Naxal violence.
- Comparative analysis of economic growth in Naxal-affected and nonaffected regions.

2. Economic Impact of Naxalism on Infrastructure

2.1 Destruction of Public Infrastructure

Naxalites often target public infrastructure as part of their strategy to disrupt governance and security forces. Key areas affected include:

- **Railways:** Tracks and trains are attacked, affecting goods transportation and trade.
- **Roads and Bridges:** Many projects face delays or destruction, isolating villages from economic hubs.

- **Power and Communication:** Electricity towers and telecom networks are damaged, affecting businesses and daily life.

Example: In Chhattisgarh and Jharkhand, multiple railway lines have been blown up or disrupted, causing transport delays and financial losses.

2.2 Hindrance to Industrial and Mining Projects

Many mineral-rich states such as Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, and Odisha are strongholds of Naxalite groups. Industries face severe challenges, including:

- Attacks on coal, iron ore, and bauxite mines, leading to huge economic losses.
- Extortion and illegal taxation imposed by Naxalites on companies.
- Fear among industrialists, leading to the withdrawal of business projects.

Example: The Essar Steel pipeline in Chhattisgarh was repeatedly attacked, causing heavy financial losses.

3. Impact of Naxalism on Investment

3.1 Decline in Foreign and Domestic Investment

Naxal-affected areas see low levels of investment due to:

- Uncertainty and high security risks for businesses.
- Frequent attacks on industries and infrastructure, leading to financial losses.

- Increased cost of operations, including security expenses and extortion payments.

3.2 Increased Cost of Doing Business

Companies working in these regions must spend extra on:

- Hiring private security for staff and facilities.
- Paying extortion money to avoid attacks.
- Repairing damage to property and transport networks.

Example: The mining industry in Dantewada, Chhattisgarh, has suffered significant losses due to constant Naxal threats.

4. Financial Burden on the Government

4.1 High Security Expenditure

- The Indian government spends billions of rupees on paramilitary forces, counter-terrorism units, and intelligence agencies.
- Security forces like COBRA and Greyhounds require constant funding for operations.

4.2 Delay in Development Projects

- Many road, railway, and power projects get delayed or canceled, affecting economic growth.
- Funds meant for development are diverted to security operations.

5. Strategies to Reduce Economic Impact

5.1 Development-Based Approach

- Investing in education and employment programs to reduce Naxal recruitment.
- Building better infrastructure in remote areas to improve connectivity.
- Encouraging businesses to invest with government incentives and security guarantees.

5.2 Strengthening Governance and Law Enforcement

- Improving local governance to reduce corruption and ensure fair distribution of resources.
- Strengthening intelligence networks to prevent attacks and safeguard industries.

5.3 Community Engagement and Economic Reforms

- Empowering tribal communities through land reforms and social programs.
- Providing alternative livelihoods to reduce dependence on illegal activities.

6. Conclusion

Naxalism continues to pose a major economic challenge for India, especially in terms of infrastructure development, investment, and government expenditure. The destruction of public utilities, disruption of industrial activities, and security concerns have slowed down economic progress in affected regions. However, a balanced approach combining security measures, economic reforms, and social development programs can help reduce the economic costs of Naxalism and promote long-term stability and growth.

Future Scope of Research

Further research can explore:

- The role of technology and smart policing in counter-insurgency.
- The effectiveness of government rehabilitation programs for ex-Naxalites.

REFERENCE

1. Severity of Economic Impact of the Maoist Movement

This article discusses how Naxalism has led to substantial business losses, infrastructure damage, and environmental degradation, resulting in a chronic economic decline in affected areas.

2. Naxal-hit States Get ₹3,450 Crore in FY24 for Improving Infrastructure

This report highlights the Indian government's allocation of ₹3,450 crore in the financial year 2023-24 to enhance public infrastructure in the most LWE-affected districts across eight states, aiming to eradicate left-wing extremism by March 31, 2026.

3. Understanding Left Extremist Militancy as a Threat to India's National Security

This analysis estimates that the economic cost of damage to roads, bridges, mobile towers, and electric transmission due to Naxal activities is about ₹20 billion per annum, with the total economic cost of Naxalism in the

country around ₹200 billion per annum as of 2019.

4. Economic Determinants of the Maoist Conflict in India

This paper reviews the emerging literature and provides descriptive evidence from a district-level dataset on Maoist conflict, indicating that the relationship between underdevelopment and Maoist activity cannot be explained in simple economic terms.

5. Infrastructure in India's Internal War

This thesis explores how infrastructure development in rural and underdeveloped districts affects the number of fatal attacks by Naxalites, suggesting that such development could potentially decrease insurgent activities.

6. The Deadly Naxal Problem of India

This article examines how Naxal activities, such as siphoning funds from local sources and destroying infrastructure, perpetuate the cycle of poverty and hinder social mobility in affected regions.

