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The Securitisation of Development Projects: The Indian State's Response to the Maoist Insurgency

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**The Securitisation of Development Projects: The Indian State's Response to
the Maoist Insurgency**

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Abstract

Over the last two decades, the Indian state machinery has used a conventional counterinsurgency approach in response to the left-wing extremist (LWE) Maoist insurgency in central and eastern India, to varying degrees of success. Simultaneously, the state h

List of Acronyms:

COIN- Counterinsurgency

CPI (Maoist)- Communist Party of India, Maoist

FCAS- Fragile and Conflict-affected States

LWE- Left-Wing Extremism

MHA- Ministry of Home Affairs

MNREGA- Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act

NITI Aayog- National Institution for Transforming India

PIB- Press Information Bureau, Government of India

PMRDF- Prime Minister Rural Development Fellowship

ST- Scheduled Tribes

TADA- Terrorist and Disruptive Activities Act

UAPA- Unlawful Activities Prevention Act

WHAM- Winning Hearts and Minds

1. Introduction:

Left-Wing Extremism (LWE) periodically reappears in the Indian political discourse every few years, especially post- 2005, when the newly formed

I aim to explore the ways in which the discursive formations as manifested through various policies have contributed to the legitimization of brutal counterinsurgency measures that have devastated Adivasi communities

3. Literature Review:

3.1. Securitisation Theory:

Ongoing academic research in the field of securitisation theory has focused extensively on the role of foreign interventions in fragile and conflict-affected states (FCAS), as a response to the counter-terrorism political discourse in the post-9/11, War on Terror era (Duffield, 2001). Securitisation theory, as conceptualised by the order to legitimise the use of exceptional force to neutralise said threat. The framing of securitisation theory by the scholars from the Copenhagen School comprises of three pivotal dimensions - a successful speech act, the establishment of an existential threat and the legitimate use of violence to address this threat (Buzan, Waever and de Wilde, 1998). I will be using this conceptualisation of securitisation discourse as the main theoretical framework for policy analysis and the critical exploration of narratives construction.

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civilians that the state requires to undertake an extraordinary response in order to eliminate the constructed threat (Eroukhmanoff, 2017). Speech acts such as the famous Bush administration statements legitimising the invasion of Iraq post-9/11, serve as useful examples of the political will to identify, as well as define a common enemy against whom the nation will accept state brutality (Howell & Lind, 2009). The Indian state makes use of repeated press releases and highly selective terminology in order to securitise the threat posed by the Maoist insurgency, which shall be further explored in the analysis section.

Although securitisation theory is critiqued for its Eurocentrism and vaguely broad domain (Stritzel, 2007), it can -2000s, several governments at the central and state levels have used successful speech acts to securitise the Maoist threat of a protracted war to establish a more benevolent state, as a legitimate cause for an aggressive, kinetic counterinsurgency (Ahlawat, s to human security, such as poverty, illiteracy and right-wing terrorism that are far more predominant in the country, are not prioritised with as much vigour by the state (Duffield, 2001). This lies in contrast to views asserting the linkages between human security and securitisation of development, which shall be further explored in the next section.

3.2. Underdevelopment as a Security Threat:

“I argue that we will not enjoy development without security, or security without development.”

-Kofi Annan, Secretary General of the United Nations (United Nations, 2005).

The above quote encapsulates the institutionalised perception of the various threats that underdevelopment poses to both nation states and the global economy, further reinforcing the one-dimensional securitisation of development. Within this framework, securitisation occurs through the instrumentalisation of development discourse pertaining to foreign aid, peace-building and post-conflict reconstruction of FCAS in order to achieve secu

The heightened and asymmetrical interdependence (Castells, 1996) between the Global North and South under globalised, capitalist world systems is reflected in India in the post-liberalisation era, where the core (the central

These hypotheses, however, have been critiqued by scholars exploring the linkages between service provision and violence in conflict zones. The expectation that service delivery can improve state legitimacy and contribute to state building, has been strongly challenged by Mcloughlin, who argues that such propositions frequently fail to take into consideration the shifting expectations of citizens, therefore problematising the simplified notion that social contracts are reinforced through the mere provision of basic services (2015). Similar research conducted specifically into the impact of anti-poverty programmes such

contributing to the process of increasing official state legitimacy while simultaneously serving its security goals (Kamra, 2019). They contribute to the construction of public infrastructure, such as government administrative buildings, schools and national highways, that are physical symbols of state authority which subsequently become easy targets of Maoist attacks (Biswas, 2014). Fisher and Anderson, on the other hand, adopt a far more critical approach to how securitisation of development is instrumentalised to gain state legitimacy through

- states utilise the securitisation discourse in order to legitimise state-sanctioned violence against civilians (2015). T

that justify its securitisation as a legitimate policy response. Narratives serve certain functions, despite their failures - they influence how action is oriented towards the social and material world that we perceive, they offer simplistic explanations of highly complex problems and subsequently they enable the implementation of technical, apolitical, unilinear solutions (Autesserre, 2012). Furthermore, the application of certain frames in order to construct problems in an easily identifiable manner, is relevant to the propagation of discourses through narratives; frames determine which problems deserve attention and action, therefore contributing to the naturalisation of certain practices that are developed as legitimate responses to those problems over time (Autesserre, 2012). I will be making use of narrative framework in order to identify how specific narratives have been framed within the securitisation of development discourse that has been adopted by the Indian state. These include two dominant and complimentary narratives- *Holistic counterinsurgency as a legitimate policy response* and *State building through service provision*.

I will scrutinise the relationship between policy and language and the manner in which this reproduces power relations of the social world which legitimise the policies implemented (Foucault, 1981). As a result, the dominant discourses become the frame through which certain policies becomes optional or normalised. Based on the language used to frame the narrative, a development intervention is presented with minimal room for

e it creates

a demarcation between policy and practice, which eventually permits for the assigning of blame on the implementation phase rather than the conceptualisation of the policy itself (1984). I will attempt to challenge the naturalised presentation of policies by revealing the discourses implicit in their formulation and implementation.

4.3. Evidence:

Data collection will be based on a mixture of qualitative and quantitative secondary sources. No primary data collection shall be undertaken due to the risk associated with the process. The main sources of evidence has been grey literature such as government reports on Maoist-inflicted violence since 2005, new strategies of official COIN that is periodically upgraded, as well as official state reports on data pertaining to service delivery of schools, health care centres, road construction and tribal community development. These include annual reports on internal security published by the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA), Government of India, press publications by Members of Parliament regarding specific government schemes in LWE affected districts. Reports compiled

between government data and academic research-based data. These are predominantly sourced from reports published by the South Asia Terrorism Portal (SATP).

Economic and political economy-based primary academic studies are a source of data that measure concepts such as the impact of service delivery through COIN on state legitimacy and pacifying violent conflicts. Secondary academic studies explore the discursive formations of theoretical concepts such as the securitisation

“I believe violence and conspiracy like this has only one answer - development. The trust that will arise from the development will be able to get rid of violence.” (NDTV, 2018).

This serves as a strong representation of state ideology functioning un

COIN strategy as a legitimate policy response to address the security threat posed by Maoist insurgents, as well

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Report, the review on the internal security threat posed by the Maoists is concluded with the following statement,

On the other hand, the glorification of counterinsurgency policy fails to take into consideration the reduced number of civilian deaths of those caught in the crossfire or the improvement of other development indicators as a product of a holistic counterinsurgency policy. Significantly, marginal increases in the number Maoist fatalities in comparison to security force fatalities cannot be taken at face value as a representation of improved security levels or subsequent improvements in development indicators in LWE-affected districts (SATP, 2013). This can be attributed to the high incidence of fake encounters where paramilitary forces have been accused of murdering civilians in order to reach targeted kill numbers, a phenomenon that became dominant under the infamous -led ambush of Tadmela village in Chhattisgarh in 2011 (The Wire, 2018).

Lastly, the state legitimises the security-development nexus by reinforcing the benefits of securitisation on delivering developmental outcomes, such as improving the availability of employment opportunities, as is demonstrated below. However, there are thinly veiled undertones that imply the cultural hegemony of course on development with enforced social inclusion.

“The developmental outreach by the Government of India has resulted in an increasingly large number of LWE cadres shunning the path of violence and return to the mainstream.” (MHA, 2018).

By bringing tribal youth into the mainstream, the different state machinery is fostering a development ideal that promotes livelihoods security with re-establishing state legitimacy and lowering political support for the Maoist insurgency. This strategy therefore instrumentalises the existing security-development nexus, in order to fulfill state obligations towards civilian populations inhabiting conflict zones. In addition, the wide-held belief that unemployment presents a security threat is co-opted by the state which is the securitising actor, armed with the capacity to frame the Maoist insurgency as the more urgent security threat to be addressed.

5.2. State-building through service provision:

excessive use of paramilitary and police forces (Kamra, 2019). However, as the rise of extrajudicial killings and large-scale human rights violations of civilian populations by security forces gained public attention (Human Rights Watch, 2009), this produced a response that aimed to manage the public image of the Indian government o-economic causes of the Maoist insurgency, which was a deeply developmental issue (Kamra, 2019). Despite a counterinsurgency strategy on the ground that -affected states of Maoist cadres (SATP, 2014), Prime Minister Manmohan Singh declared that,

Amongst the various development-related schemes designed by the state to be implemented in LWE affected states such as Chhattisgarh, I will be focusing on the Integrated Action Plan (IAP), different literacy schemes centred around establishing boarding school education systems for children in Maoist-controlled territories and the controversial Civic Action Programme (CAP), which also includes an active Media plan aimed at disseminating state propaganda against Maoist ideology. Most importantly, by highlighting certain key statements made by different state institutions pertaining to these schemes, the tacit intentions of the Indian state to quell the insurgency rather than its declared aims of addressing lack of o

provided to LWE affected district-level administrations in the hopes of state-building, proved to be unsuccessful. This is largely due to the failure of the central government to account for the dominance of the Maoist cadres who controlled the decision-making regarding the selection of government-

and hostels for children belonging to tribal communities at far distances away from their homes in conflict zones, thus effectively cutting ties with their socio-cultural roots (Abrol, 2018) in order to facilitate their easy
o complementary and reinforcing
results- it not only helps improve paramilitary-civilian relations through the WHAM strategy, but also effectively breeds ignorance about a very active political movement as well as an entire lifestyle that future generations cannot relate to. Furthermore, it forms an important aspect of the overall strategy used by the state to downplay the highly politicised issue of erasure of indigenous culture (Woodman & Kroemer, 2018), in favour of presenting a logical, technical soluti

6. Conclusion:

In conclusion, t

around the securitisation of development discourse in order to rebuild its legitimacy and authority in LWE affected districts in Chhattisgarh. The instrumentalisation of the security-development nexus to further its counterinsurgency operations reveals the hidden functions of the official multi-pronged approach adopted by different state apparatus. The securitisation of development projects is undertaken through the operationalisation of the WHAM approach, by which the delivery of basic services under the supervision of paramilitary forces or the disastrous combing operations that involve the large-scale human rights violations of civilians suspected of being Maoist sympathisers, is legitimised as the extraordinary measures necessary to usher in development and improve state-civilian relations.

The two key narratives analyse the official state responses that instrumentalise the security- development nexus in order to improve performances on development indicators, not for their intrinsic purpose of improving the living standards and democratic rights of Adivasi communities, but for increasing state control amongst populations that have historically mistrusted state *Holistic counterinsurgency as legitimate policy response* examined how ostensibly holistic counterinsurgency policies formulated by the central government prioritised capacity building of states through the improvement of security apparatus over the *State-building through service provision* narrative demonstrates the way the language framing schemes significantly hides the hidden political functions served by depoliticised development policies.

This study aimed to explore the manner in which a well-popularised nexus that usually functions between donor states in the Global North and recipient states in the Global South is demonstrated by the Indian state towards threats to its system of parliamentary democracy. Further research needs to be conducted into the variation of responses amongst Adivasi communities towards an insurgency that claims to address its developmental woes. Lastly, an acknowledgement by the Indian state of the nuanced political views held by ST populations under Maoist control, would enable it in addressing the threat of underdevelopment as a priority over its current

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