

Partisan Alignment, Insurgency and Security: Evidence from the Indian Red-corridor*

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Abstract

In this paper we examine whether political alignment causally affects public good provision. We focus on the Naxalite insurgency in India, an issue of significant public security. Using a regression discontinuity (RD) design, we find that constituencies in which an aligned candidate barely won display significantly lower levels of violence relative to those where an aligned candidate barely lost. This effect is driven by constituencies located close to mining areas. These findings confirm the relevance of political alignment in delivering security within constituencies, and the crucial role of local mining activity.

Keywords: Political alignment, Naxalite insurgency, security, mining, India

JEL classification: H11, H41, H56, D72

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1 Introduction

It is argued that better economic outcomes prevail when governments at different hierarchical levels are politically aligned. There is, for example, a large literature on distributive politics that investigates whether and how the alignment of local governments with upper-level governments increases intergovernmental transfers or grants allocated to local areas (see, for example, [Ansolabehere and Snyder Jr, 2006](#), [Solé-Ollé and Sorribas-Navarro, 2008](#), [Arulampalam et al., 2009](#), [Hsieh et al., 2011](#), [Brollo and Nannicini, 2012](#), [Albouy, 2013](#), [Asher and Novosad, 2017](#), [Fafchamps and Labonne, 2017](#), [Shenoy and Zimmermann, 2022](#), [Mahadevan and Shenoy, 2023](#), [Hahn et al., 2026](#)). This literature contends that politicians maximize electoral advantage both by delivering goods and services to their own constituencies, and by reducing service quality in opposition held constituencies.

In this paper we examine how political alignment affects the delivery of public goods, specifically, security. Our focus is on the Naxalite insurgency (or Left Wing Extremism) in India, an ongoing conflict between the government of India and Naxalite insurgents.¹ The scale and gravity of this insurgency is amply demonstrated by the assertion by the former Prime Minister of India, Dr. Manmohan Singh, in 2009, that the *Naxalite insurgency is the single biggest internal security threat facing the country*. [Nilakantan and Singhal \(2011\)](#) argue that the Naxalite insurgency has reduced economic output in the affected states (called the *Red-Corridor* of India) by almost 12%, a number that becomes particularly relevant because the region affected by this conflict is possibly among India’s poorest.² A large literature identifies Naxalite activity at the district level as being correlated with poverty, illiteracy, land inequality, forest cover, rainfall shocks, mineral prices and population share of marginalized castes and tribes.³ According to the 2011 Census of India, the states in the *Red-Corridor* was the home of 493 million Indians (40.7% of the total population) .

What is political alignment and why does it matter? State (provincial) legislative assemblies

¹See Section 2.2 for more on the background of the Naxalite movement in India.

²Of the 140 most backward districts of the country, more than 50% are in the *Red-Corridor*. 29% of all districts in the country are located in the *Red-Corridor* (Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Maharashtra, Odisha, Telangana and West Bengal) These states account for 98.77% of all Naxalite insurgency related violent incidents. The states of Assam, Karnataka, Kerala, Ladakh, Madhya Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Uttar Pradesh account for the remaining 1.23% of the incidents. Panel A of Figure A1 presents the locations of violent events across the country.

³See for example [Borooah \(2008\)](#), [Iyer \(2009\)](#), [Hoelscher et al. \(2012\)](#), [Gomes \(2015\)](#), [Kennedy \(2015\)](#), [Ghatak and Vanden Eynde \(2017\)](#), [Gawande et al. \(2017\)](#), [Dasgupta et al. \(2017\)](#), [Khanna and Zimmermann \(2017\)](#), [Vanden Eynde \(2018\)](#), [Mukherjee \(2018a\)](#), [Mukherjee \(2018b\)](#), [Shapiro and Vanden Eynde \(2022\)](#).

in India are made up of elected members from different constituencies. The party (or coalition) with most elected representatives forms the state government. Our measure of political alignment is based on the partisan affiliation of the state government and that of the elected members of local constituencies. Formally, we define a constituency as *politically aligned* if its locally elected representative to the state legislative assembly, also known as the Member of Legislative Assembly (MLA), belongs to the same party/coalition as the ruling party/coalition of the state legislative assembly.⁴ Locally elected members represent their constituency in the state legislative assembly, and recommend projects to be funded within their constituencies. Recommendations or suggestions made by politically aligned members have a greater chance of being approved by the state cabinet, which ultimately decides which projects to fund.

Such alignment becomes especially meaningful in the context of our study because state governments in India are responsible for public safety and security, provision of law and order and managing counter-insurgency efforts within their territory.⁵ Insurgency-related attacks typically result in deaths of civilians, and the state government is held responsible for not being able to provide adequate security.⁶ As the intermediary between the citizens and the state government, the local member is deemed responsible for the delivery of this public good. Alignment with the state ruling party can provide the local representative with greater ability to deliver this public good at the constituency level.

To account for the fact that the election of politically aligned candidates is not random, we use a Regression Discontinuity (RD) design. Focusing on states within the *Red-Corridor*, we compare constituencies (or electoral districts), which were narrowly won by politically aligned candidates against those narrowly won by non-aligned candidates.⁷ Our RD results show that constituencies where a politically aligned candidate barely won have significantly

⁴Note that we do not consider alignment across different levels of government (for example the central and state governments, the state governments and the district, sub-district or village councils.)

⁵‘Police’ and ‘public order’ are state subjects under the 7th schedule to the constitution of India. It is the primary duty of the state governments to prevent, detect, register and investigate crime and prosecute the criminals. The central government supplements the efforts of the state governments by providing them financial assistance for modernization of their police forces in terms of weaponry, communication, equipment, mobility, training and other infrastructure including deployment of the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF). See [Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India](#).

⁶For example, the narrative that law and order had improved under its rule was one of the key factors in the re-election of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) government in the state of Uttar Pradesh in 2022. The party campaigned on improved law and order in the state during the period 2017–2022 and warned voters that returning the opposition Samajwadi Party to power would mean a the return of the poor law and order environment. The voters concurred. See [India Today](#).

⁷Following [Asher and Novosad \(2017\)](#), ruling party status is defined *ex post*, i.e. alignment is defined after the election results are announced.

fewer incidents of insurgency-related violence over the electoral term relative to constituencies where a politically aligned candidate barely lost. Relative to the pre-period, incidents of insurgency related violence are higher in both politically aligned and politically non-aligned constituencies, but the increase is greater in politically non-aligned constituencies. These results are consistent with a differential in public good delivery between aligned and non-aligned constituencies. However, it should be noted that the data does not allow us to distinguish between whether this reflects active security provision in aligned constituencies or strategic reallocation of resources away from non-aligned ones.

Linking these results to the literature on the retaliatory nature of violence (Jaeger and Paserman, 2006, 2008, Haushofer et al., 2010), we also show that government-initiated violence is primarily retaliatory in nature, and that the driver of the overall decline in violence is the reduction in Naxalite-initiated violent incidents in aligned constituencies, possibly because of the threat of retaliation.⁸

Our analysis also reveals interesting patterns on the spillover effects of political alignment on violence in a given constituency. Spillovers have different dimensions. We show that the election of an *ALIGNED* candidate in the nearest neighbor constituency does not have a statistically significant spillover effect on violence in an index constituency. However, we observe that the benefits of alignment (in the form of increased security) are amplified where politically aligned constituencies are spatially clustered. This finding suggests that aligned clusters potentially have strong bargaining power within the state government, as well as enhanced capacity to generate positive externalities, which may lead to stronger public good (i.e. security) provision, and therefore, less violence.

We consider two potential mechanisms. *First*, since the *Red-Corridor* is also rich in mineral deposits, we utilize the links between mining and the Naxalite insurgency to understand the mechanisms underlying our baseline estimates.⁹ In India (Hoelscher et al., 2012), as in other parts of the world (Berman et al., 2017), mining is identified as a significant driver of conflict, both by contributing to the outbreak of conflicts and by providing financial support. There is a widespread belief that Naxalites benefit from the mining industry, by extorting mining revenues as well as by facilitating illegal mining activity (Prakash, 2015).¹⁰

⁸See footnote 15 for details on how we assign initiator.

⁹Panel B of Figure A1 presents the locations of the mines in the country. Nearly 78% of the country's mines are located in the states in the *Red-Corridor*.

¹⁰Illegal mining entails miners operating outside of the area for which a company had received environmental clearance (*excess mining*), or continuing operations after the expiration of their lease. In 2010, the erstwhile Home Minister of the Indian state of Maharashtra claimed that *the Naxal movement is being*

Additionally, there is a third actor: government officials and political leaders. Miners are reported to pay protection money to the police and other government officials to ensure that their illegal activities can continue unhindered. The simultaneous involvement of government officials and Naxalites has raised concerns that the insurgency may exist and thrive with government support.

This possible three way nexus between mining companies, Naxalities and government agents (including local politicians) provides us with an interesting lens to examine the relationship between political alignment and insurgency-related violence. On the one hand, the government has to be seen to be *doing things*, particularly in aligned constituencies, which may motivate elected leaders to push for the delivery of public safety and security. On the other hand, local leaders stand to gain financially and through other means, albeit informally, from *not doing anything* and letting the status quo persist. Which of these effects dominates ultimately depends on the relevance and intensity of such formal and informal relationships between the different actors.

Our empirical examination finds that aligned constituencies close to mining areas (*near-neighbor* constituencies) display the largest differential in violence relative to their non-aligned counterparts. We do not observe any effects in constituencies located further away from mining areas (the *distant-neighbor* constituencies) or in mining constituencies. These findings portray the delivery of the public good of safety as the outcome of strategic decisions made by politicians. On the one hand, through their actions in constituencies surrounding mining areas, local representatives show that they care about law and order. On the other hand, they are willing to let the status quo persist in mining constituencies, where they may benefit from the informal three-way nexus. Non-mining constituencies far from mines are poorer with less resources to extract, and receive limited attention from politicians; alignment has no effect on security in these constituencies.¹¹

funded by a section of the cash-rich mining industry. See [Times of India, May 21, 2010](#). Successive national governments in India have argued that state governments have not paid sufficient attention to the problem and have not fully internalized the disruption (economic and otherwise) caused by the insurgency. This is exacerbated by the fact that states are responsible for law and order within their territory. In 2014, the outgoing chief of the Central Reserve Police Force, a centrally funded force that assists the state police, accused “some states” of *wanting Maoists to continue*. See [Times of India, November 28, 2014](#).

¹¹This suggests that there is both a direct effect of violence and a spillover in violence to other areas, consistent with evidence from other countries. For example, [Dell \(2015\)](#) finds evidence of both direct and spillover effects of Mexican policy towards drug trade. She shows, using a regression discontinuity design that drugs related violence increases substantially after close elections of PAN (the conservative National Action Party that has spearheaded the efforts to combat trafficking in Mexico) mayors. However, [Dell \(2015\)](#) also finds that there is a spillover of violence to other areas as drug traffickers find new routes to move their illegal goods to the key markets.

Our *second* channel utilizes the argument that *ALIGNED* constituencies receive more resources from the state government in lieu of maintaining public security (including reducing crime). This is likely to take the form of more security personnel being assigned to *ALIGNED* constituencies. In the absence of actual data on deployment of police and security personnel (either because it is not released or is available at a level of aggregation that is too high for our purposes), we resort to examining this mechanism indirectly, by using district-level data on crime. Using an instrumental variables approach, we show that that a 10 percentage points increase in the fraction of *ALIGNED* winners in the district leads to a 1.65–2.28% reduction in the average incidence of crimes during the year. These results are consistent with our hypothesis that more resources are assigned to *ALIGNED* constituencies: a higher share of *ALIGNED* constituencies results in greater resources (for example, police personnel) assigned to a district, and this in turn generates a large and statistically significant reduction in crime.

This paper contributes to different strands of the literature. *First*, we contribute to the literature on the effects of political alignment at hierarchical levels of government. We add to the literature that investigates the effects of political alignment on government transfers by examining the effect of political alignment on security.

Second, through the examination of mechanisms underlying the baseline findings, we contribute to the large literature on the relationship between resource abundance and violence. Starting with [Collier and Hoeffler \(2004\)](#), much has been written on how rapacity, especially associated with natural resource appropriation, has contributed to violence in resource-rich countries (see, for example, [Brückner and Ciccone, 2010](#), [Dube and Vargas, 2013](#), [Lei and Michaels, 2014](#), [Bazzi and Blattman, 2014](#), [Berman et al., 2017](#), [Shapiro and Vanden Eynde, 2022](#)). Our work adds to this literature by documenting how the dynamics of violence can differ between resource-rich *vs* resource-adjacent and non-adjacent geographies. Specifically, we show that while the rapacity mechanism may be at play in mining constituencies, the effects of political alignment on delivering security have different dynamics in resource-adjacent constituencies.

The rest of the paper is organized as follows. Section 2 presents background information on state politics and security in India (Section 2.1) and on the Naxalite movement in India (Section 2.2), describes the different data sets used in our analysis and presents selected descriptive statistics (Section 2.3). Section 3 discusses the empirical framework and the validity of the regression discontinuity design. The results are presented in Section 4. Section 5 discusses whether there is any evidence of spillover effects of political alignment

on security across constituencies. The two mechanisms are discussed in Section 6. Finally, Section 7 concludes.

2 Background, Data and Descriptives

2.1 State Politics and Security

India is a federal republic with two levels of parliamentary system of government: the national parliament and state assemblies. In this paper, our focus is on state assemblies. Elections are conducted under a *first past the post* system, where voters indicate the candidate of their choice on a ballot, and the candidate who receives the most votes wins. Generally multiple candidates (either nominated by parties or independents) stand for election from each constituency. The candidate receiving the most votes wins the seat and represents the constituency in the state assembly. The party or the coalition with the largest number of seats in the assembly forms the government in the state. Elections are typically held every five years, unless the assembly is dissolved before the government completes its five-year term. This structure essentially means that any particular constituency may or may not be represented in the assembly by someone that belongs to the ruling party/coalition.

The Indian constitution provides significant legislative and administrative power and authority to state governments. These state governments play a key role in the allocation of government inputs: they have administrative control over police, public goods provision, land rights, public service (state level) and the civil service, with state legislators having considerable power and control over central bureaucrats based in the state. Citizens view the state government as being responsible for the provision of public goods and security and can reward or punish them for improvement or deterioration of law and order in the state.

Although most elected assembly members have little formal power and most decisions are taken by the executive, the elected members of legislative assemblies play an important role as intermediaries between the citizen and the state. Being seen as well connected and “getting things done” is crucial for future electoral success of these assembly members. Given that state governments are responsible for public safety and security, it is thus in the interest of the assembly member to ensure that the electorate is kept safe from violence.

The delivery of this public good requires central support and resources, and it is easier to ensure a smoother flow of resources should the assembly member be aligned with the party in government.

2.2 The Naxalite Movement in India

The Naxalite movement traces its roots to Naxalbari, a small village in West Bengal, where in 1967 a tribal farmer was attacked by local landlords over a land dispute. An armed uprising (known as the Naxal movement) across several states of India, though primarily focused in West Bengal, followed. The primary objective of the Naxals was overthrowing the state and establishing a communist regime (Gupta, 2007, Ramana, 2009). The response from the state was brutal and the Naxalite movement in West Bengal ended in failure. Overtime, ridden by internal conflicts, the movement splintered into various sub groups, moved away from the glare of public view and quietly migrated from the urban centers to the more remote “tribal” areas. The exploitation of the tribal people (the *adivasis* or local tribes, acknowledged as some of the most disadvantaged people in India) in India provided a strong base for the Naxalites. Guha (2006) explains the allure of the Naxalites to the *adivasis* as follows: *Worse off than the Dalits (the “untouchable caste”), and without effective leadership of their own, many adivasis saw in the Naxalites an agency somewhat more welcoming (at any rate less oppressive) than the state.*

The period 1970–2000 period was marked by a high level of conflict between the different Naxalite groups. However, in 2004, the major Naxalite factions merged to form the Communist Party of India–Maoist (CPI–Maoist). This led to a marked intensification of the insurgency and a shift towards more direct confrontations between the state and the Naxalites (Kujur, 2009). On paper, the aim of the movement is to establish a *people’s democratic state under the leadership of the proletariat* (Harriss, 2010), and they aim to do so by overthrowing the Indian state through armed struggle. The continuing popularity and strength of the Naxalite movement is often said to stem from chronic underdevelopment (Borooah, 2008). At the heart of the conflict is land (land rights, land acquisition and unequal distribution of land).

Naxalites operate in marginalized, rural communities that rely heavily on subsistence agriculture, and the violence associated with the Naxalite groups is typically contained in rural areas. The Naxalites and the government compete for civilian collaboration. The gov-

ernment offers substantial rewards for tip-offs that lead to the death or arrest of Naxalite leaders (and sympathizers). Governments at different levels have designed programs to encourage low-ranking Maoists to surrender and provide information. The Naxalite groups react to these attempts to elicit collaboration (or desertion) by killing or destroying the property of police informers. Given the rural nature of the conflict, the Naxalites extract income by charging levies on local economic activity (on agricultural output, in particular) to fund their activities. However, mineral resources also form an important component of the Naxalites' tax base. The three way relationship between mining companies, government agents/officials/politicians and the Naxalites is of crucial importance in our analysis.

2.3 Data and Descriptives

Election Outcomes, Vote shares and Margin of Victory

We use a number of different data sets in our analysis. The first is the data on election outcomes. Election reports published by the Election Commission of India provide rich and extensive constituency-level information about the candidates (including their party, votes received and margin of victory), the size of the overall electorate, the number of electors who voted, and the type of the constituency (whether or not the constituency is reserved), along with the date the election was held in that constituency.¹² This allows us to compile a data set comprising of all state elections held in the period 2004–2019 in the states of the *Red-Corridor*.¹³

¹²Seats are reserved for some of the most disadvantaged population groups in the country: the Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs). While registered voters from all social groups can vote, only an SC (ST) candidate may contest elections in SC (ST) reserved seats.

¹³The constituency boundaries changed in 2008 as a part of the recommendation of the 4th Delimitation Commission. However, the focus in our empirical analysis is on violent events during the term of the elected representatives. Hence, changes in constituency boundaries do not impact our estimates. In India, the Delimitation Commission is the only legal mechanism for changing constituency boundaries and SC/ST reservation status for seats. There was one in 1972, which defined the constituencies until the next Delimitation Commission in 2008. Delimitation Commissions were originally supposed to be formed after every census, but part of the 42nd Constitutional Amendment delayed the next commission until after the 2001 census. Prior to 1972, Delimitation Commissions were established in 1952 and 1962.

Insurgency and Violent Incidents

We match the election data to those on violent events related to the insurgency. This data comes from the Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP).¹⁴ The UCDP data provides detailed information on the parties involved (including the initiator), along with the date, location (geocode) and the number of deaths for each violent incident. We restrict ourselves to violent incidents where one of the two parties involved is either the Communist Party of India–Maoist (CPI-Maoist) or the People’s War Group (PWG) and the incident happened in the *Red-Corridor*.¹⁵

Figure 1 presents the cumulative death toll of this insurgency over the 20 year period for which UCDP data is available, i.e., 1989–2019, both in aggregate terms, as well as by initiator. The total number of (reported) deaths due to the insurgency is almost 8,000; the majority of deaths are from Government-initiated incidents while the remaining are from Naxalite-initiated incidents. We observe a sharp increase in the number of deaths after 2004.¹⁶ We restrict our analysis to the period 2004–2019.¹⁷

In the data, all deaths in Naxalite-initiated incidents are categorized as civilian deaths. For Government-initiated incidents the data allows us to distinguish between the deaths to the different parties: the government (police and security forces), the Naxalites and civilians. The aggregate is the sum of all deaths during the year. On average, there are more deaths in Government-initiated incidents compared to Naxalite-initiated incidents (3.23 *vs* 1.42), although civilian deaths are higher in Naxalite-initiated incidents (see Figure A4). Many of the civilian deaths due to the Naxalite-initiated incidents are killing of (suspected) police

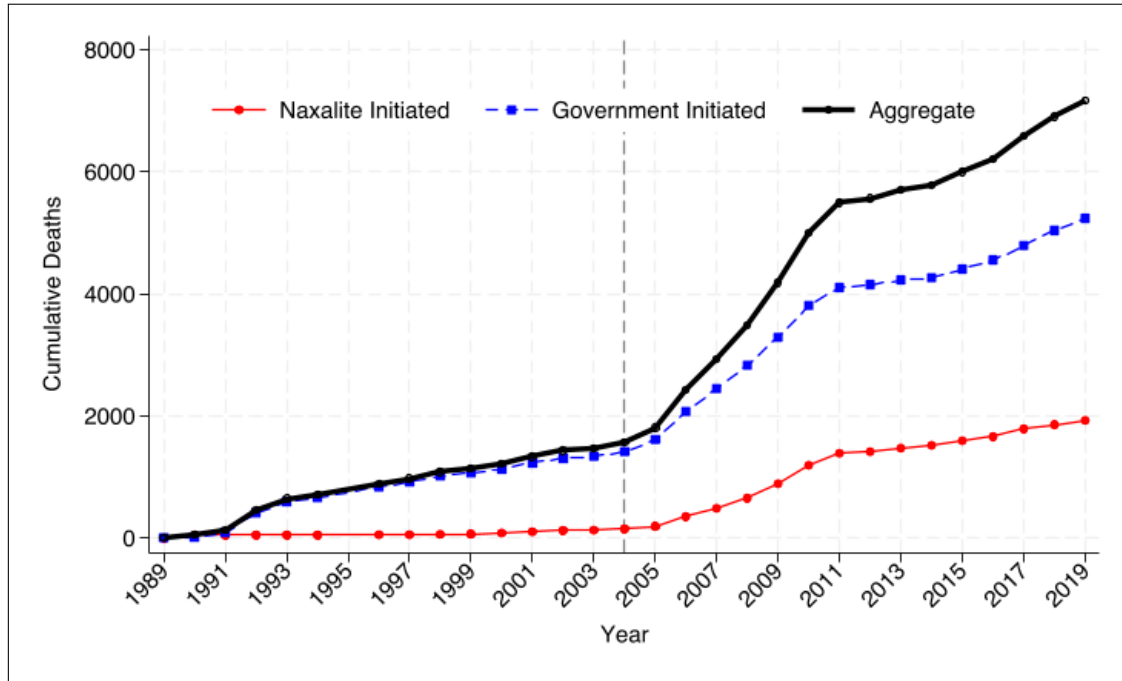
¹⁴The UCDP data set is ideal for our purpose because it covers a longer period, allowing us to focus on a longer sample period, i.e., from 2004–2019. While the alternative Armed Conflict Location and Event Data set (ACLED) also provides data on violent events, ACLED data for India is only available from 2016. The South Asia Terrorism Portal (SATP) also provides data on violence but does not come with actual locations (geocodes) of incidents, with “district” being the most disaggregated level. Additionally, SATP does not provide data on incidents and resulting deaths by initiator, an aspect that is crucial for our analysis.

¹⁵The UCDP data categorizes incidents of conflicts as dyads. We restrict ourselves to the following dyads: CPI-Maoist – Civilians and Government of India – CPI-Maoist. For non-state conflicts (CPI-Maoist – Civilians), we can reasonably assume that they were Naxalite-initiated. We *assume* that the state conflicts (Government of India – CPI-Maoist) are government-initiated.

¹⁶In Figure A2, in the Appendix, we present the yearly count of Naxalite related and other incidents in the *Red-Corridor* during the period 1989–2019. Until 2004, the count of the two kinds of incidents are the same; post 2004, we see a large increase in the number of Naxalite related incidents, but the number of other incidents remain unchanged.

¹⁷The upper panel of Figure A3, in the Appendix, presents the distribution of incidents by year, irrespective of who the initiator is, while the lower panel of Figure A3 shows the corresponding distribution by initiator. The sharp increase in the number of incidents from 2004 on wards is apparent here as well.

Figure 1: Cumulative Deaths



Notes: Figure shows the number of deaths attributed to insurgency related violence initiated by Naxalites and the Government, as well as in total, aggregated over all incidents during each year.

informers. 6% of incidents result in no deaths and the average number of deaths in any incident is 2.4.

For the majority of our empirical analysis, we restrict ourselves to the set of events recording at least one death.¹⁸ We generate separate count variables for violent incidents initiated by (a) Naxalite insurgents and (b) the government, by constituency. We also generate an indicator of the total number of violent incidents in a constituency, irrespective of initiator. Our primary estimation sample consists of 3,024 incidents, of which 1,395 are initiated by Naxalites and 1,629 by the Government of India.

¹⁸Figure A5 presents the distribution of the number of deaths in each incident. The large majority of incidents had one death. This is true for all violent incidents and also separately by initiator. Our results are robust to using events recording alternative numbers of deaths. See discussion in Section C.3 in Appendix C.

Mining

We obtain data on mining activity from the SNL Minings and Metals database. This data set provides geocoded locations of mines, which enables the aggregation of mining activity at various geographic units. We match the mine locations with the state assembly constituencies and generate a time-invariant binary indicator = 1 if at least one mining property was recorded in the constituency over the sample period, and zero otherwise. The set of constituencies for which this time-invariant indicator is = 1 are termed *mining constituencies*.¹⁹

Figure 2 presents the constituencies in our sample, before and after the delimitation of 2008. We mark the constituencies with at least one incident of violence (resulting in at least one death) and also the location of the mines. We observe that constituencies with high levels of violence are also rich in mineral resources. For the purpose of our analysis, we sub-divide constituencies with no mining activity (non-mining constituencies) based on their geographic distance from mining constituencies: non-mining constituencies located within 100 km of the centroid of a mining constituency are considered *near-neighbor constituencies* and non-mining constituencies located 100–200 km away from the centroid of a mining constituency are considered *distant-neighbor* constituencies. We discuss these further in Section 6.1.

3 Empirical Framework: Regression Discontinuity Design

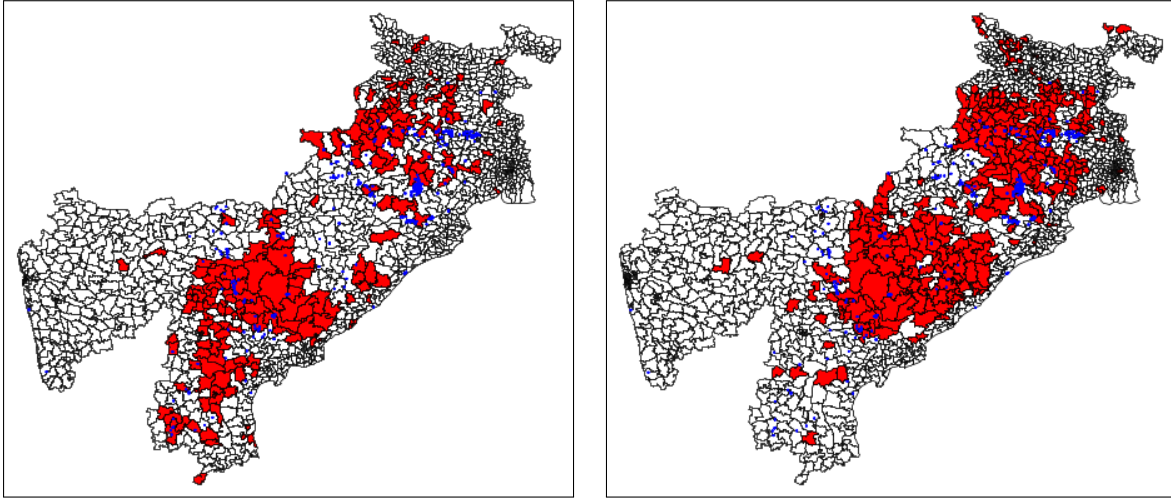
Our focus is on the causal identification of the effect of political alignment, i.e., electing a state ruling party aligned politician, on insurgency-related violence and the provision of security, at the constituency level. The main empirical challenge we face is that the victory of ruling party aligned politicians in a constituency is likely to be non-random, since ruling party success could be correlated with unobserved factors that affect both violence and security. For example, constituencies with certain pre-determined characteristics may have a tendency to elect representatives from specific parties. Additionally, exposure to violence could affect the vote. To address this challenge, we use a regression discontinuity (RD)

¹⁹Note that we do not take into account opening and closing of mines since that could be influenced by Naxalite violence. See Section 6.1 for more details.

Figure 2: Assembly Constituencies: Incidents and Mines

Panel A: Pre-2008

Panel B: Post-2008



Notes: The red shaded constituencies are those with at least one incident (initiated by Naxalites or Government). The grey shaded constituencies are those without any incident. The blue dots denote the location of the mines. The dots denote the location of mines. Separate figures are presented for the pre- and post-2008 (pre and post-delimitation) period because the constituency boundaries changed.

design based on close elections between the ruling party and the opposition, comparing constituencies barely won by the ruling party candidate, against those barely lost by the ruling party candidate. The underlying assumption of the regression discontinuity design is that a constituency barely won by the ruling party candidate is similar to a constituency barely lost by the ruling party candidate on all unobserved characteristics that are correlated with the dependent variable (Lee and Lemieux, 2009).

The RD design allows us to exploit a discontinuity in the assignment of treatment to identify the causal effect of a treatment variable. In our setting, the assignment of the treatment, i.e., whether the winner is aligned with the ruling party or not (*ALIGNED*), is determined solely on the basis of a cutoff value, $c = 0$, of the forcing variable, i.e., the victory margin (*MARGIN*). The margin of victory is defined as follows: in each constituency i , state s and election year y , let v_{isy}^a , v_{isy}^n and v_{isy}^T denote the number of votes received by the aligned (ruling party) candidate, the nearest non-aligned candidate and the total number of votes cast respectively. Then the margin percentage is defined as

$$MARGIN_{isy} = \left[\frac{v_{isy}^a - v_{isy}^n}{v_{isy}^T} \right] \times 100$$

The treatment assignment follows a known deterministic rule, $ALIGNED = 1(MARGIN \geq 0)$, where $1(\cdot)$ is an indicator function. Constituencies that fall below the cutoff ($MARGIN < 0$), the control group ($ALIGNED = 0$), elect a non-aligned candidate who won against an aligned runner-up. The victory margin in these elections is the difference between the vote shares of the aligned runner-up and the non-aligned winner. Constituencies that fall above the cutoff ($MARGIN \geq 0$), the treatment group ($ALIGNED = 1$), elect an aligned candidate, who won against a non-aligned runner-up. The victory margin in these elections is the difference between the vote shares of the aligned winner and the non-aligned runner-up. Therefore, at the victory margin of zero, the alignment status of a constituency changes discontinuously from non-aligned to aligned. Crucially, nothing else should vary discontinuously at the threshold. As a result, constituencies that barely elected a non-aligned politician in a close election serve as a valid counterfactual for constituencies that barely elect an aligned politician.²⁰

Formally, we consider the following specification for estimating the RD treatment effect of electing an aligned candidate to state legislative assemblies relative to a non-aligned candidate:

$$INCIDENT_{i,s,t+\tau} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 ALIGNED_{i,s,t} + f(MARGIN_{i,s,t}) + \varepsilon_{i,s,t+\tau} \quad (1)$$

$$\forall MARGIN_{i,s,t} \in (c - h, c + h)$$

Here $INCIDENT_{i,s,t+\tau}$ is the number of incidents in constituency i in state s between t and $t + \tau$, where t is the election year and $\tau > 0$ (typically $\tau = 5$ since the term of an elected member is 5 years before they face the electors again). We do not include the number of incidents in the election year t as these could be driven by the previous candidate.²¹

The variable $ALIGNED_{i,s,t}$ is the treatment, $MARGIN_{i,s,t}$ is the forcing variable, and h is the neighborhood around the cutoff $c = 0$ (or the bandwidth). The control function $f(MARGIN_{i,s,t})$ is some continuous function, usually a n -order polynomial in the forcing variable on each side of c . Finally, $\varepsilon_{i,s,t+\tau}$ is the error term. The coefficient of primary interest, β_1 , gives us the causal impact of a constituency electing an aligned politician to

²⁰Since alignment (and ruling party) status is determined by the *ex post* winner, there could be a concern that a single seat could tip the balance. In this case, the assumption that a constituency's result is independent of the state ruling party determination will not be valid. In all our elections, the seat margin for the ruling party is sufficiently large so that a single seat does not tip the balance of power. Figure A6 provides a graphical illustration of the temporal (and spatial) variation in barely aligned vs barely non-aligned constituencies in 2004, 2009, 2014 and 2018.

²¹As a robustness check, we also consider the cumulative number of incidents 1, 2, 3 and 4 years post-election. See discussion in Section C.5 (Appendix C).

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics

	Full Sample			Top-2 (Mixed-Sample)		
	Obs.	Mean	Std. Dev	Obs	Mean	Std. Dev
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Number of violent incidents [†]	22960	0.13	1.10	14173	0.14	1.17
Number of Government-initiated violent incidents [†]	22960	0.07	0.72	14173	0.08	0.83
Number of Naxalite-initiated violent incidents [†]	22960	0.06	0.54	14173	0.06	0.51
Aligned Vote Share	3572	44.49	9.75	3572	44.49	9.75
Number of Candidates	5036	10.84	5.30	3572	10.51	5.16
Turnout	5036	68.98	13.13	3572	71.39	12.64
Log Valid Votes	5036	11.90	0.25	3572	11.91	0.24
Log Electorate size	5036	12.29	0.25	3572	12.26	0.24
SC Reserved	5036	0.04	0.19	3572	0.03	0.18
ST Reserved	5036	0.02	0.15	3572	0.02	0.12
Female Winner	5036	0.09	0.28	3572	0.09	0.29
Female Runner-up	5036	0.09	0.29	3572	0.09	0.29
Winner’s age	4831	49.96	10.33	3382	50.41	10.26
Runner-up’s age	4829	49.60	10.46	3382	49.97	10.36
Winner’s Education Level	5036	3.95	2.44	3572	4.01	2.46
Runner-up’s Education Level	5036	3.98	2.38	3572	4.09	2.37

Notes: Full sample includes constituencies irrespective whether one of the top 2 is an aligned candidate or not. Top-2 mixed sample includes constituencies where either the winner or the runner up is an aligned candidate. †: Number with at least one death.

the state assembly on the incidence of violence. Note that the identification of this causal effect relies on fairly weak conditions on the conditional distribution of the error term ε , which is assumed to be a continuous function of the forcing variable (*MARGIN*).²²

We report the descriptive statistics of the key variables in Table 1, separately for the full sample (columns 1–2) and the Top-2 mixed-sample (columns 3–4). Here, the full sample includes constituencies irrespective of whether one of the top-2 candidates (winner or runner-up) is an aligned candidate or not. The top-2 mixed-sample includes constituencies where either the winner or the runner-up is aligned. The outcome variables are all at the constituency-election level. For example, the number of violent incidents refers to the number of incidents (irrespective of the initiator) in the constituency during a particular election term (excluding the election year). Given that constitution boundaries changed in 2008, our data typically consists of one election term pre-delimitation and 2–3 election terms post-delimitation.

²²We estimate a local linear regression (Imbens and Lemieux, 2008) as it allows for a suitable bandwidth with a linear control function. Our preferred bandwidth specification follows the optimal bandwidth algorithm proposed by Imbens and Kalyanaraman (2012).

We conduct a series of test to ensure the validity of the RD Design. We briefly summarize what we do here and details are presented in Appendix B. *First*, we conduct the balance test on a set of pre-determined characteristics. As the results presented in Table B1 in Appendix B show, while there are a few statistically significant differences between the aligned and non-aligned candidates in the top-2 mixed sample (i.e., where one candidate is aligned and the other is not), these become insignificant when we look at the sample of close elections within the 5% margin.

Second, we show that the RD treatment effect is not singular to a specific preference point, but representative of a more heterogeneous constellation of political circumstances. Preferences for the *ALIGNED* party are therefore continuous over the threshold. See Figure B1 in Appendix B.

Third, we conduct the McCrary (2008) density test for a discontinuity at the cutoff in the density of the forcing variable. Figure B2 in Appendix B shows that the density of the victory margin above and below the cutoff is not statistically significantly different: the estimated size of discontinuity in margin of victory (log difference in height) is -0.0685 ($SE = 0.0627$).

Finally, we examine whether observed pre-determined constituency level characteristics are continuous around the cut-off. While the characteristics for aligned and non-aligned constituencies might be different over the full sample, with the exception of the treatment, no other variable should be discontinuous around the cut-off. Table B2 in Appendix B presents the RD estimates of *ALIGNED* on the number constituency level characteristics. There are no statistically significant differences in the observed covariates around the cutoff.²³

These results together imply that the assumptions underlying the RD design are valid in this setting.

²³Figure B3 illustrates the corresponding balance tests graphically.

4 Results

4.1 Baseline Estimates

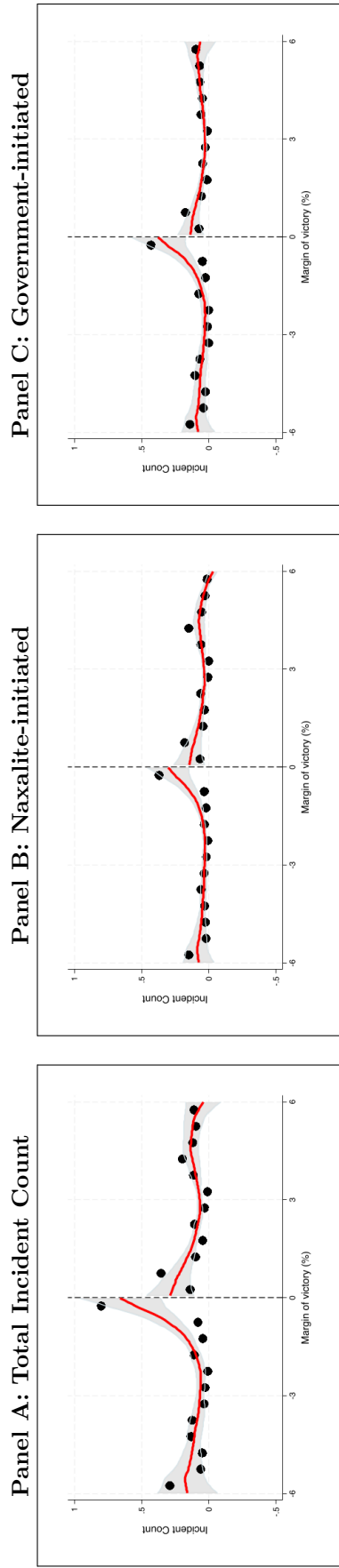
Figure 3 presents a graphical illustration of the RD effect of an *ALIGNED* constituency (i.e., electing a winner who belongs to the state ruling party). We plot the total number of violent incidents during the term against the margin of victory of the aligned candidate (Panel A), the number of Naxalite-initiated incidents (Panel B) and the number of Government-initiated incidents (Panel C). The scatter plot shows the averages for successive intervals in the margin of victory, on either side of the cutoff. The solid lines present a weighted local linear estimate (of the effect of margin on violence) on the data on either side of the discontinuity, based on a triangular kernel. Positive margins of victory indicate a constituency in which an aligned candidate won against a non-aligned candidate, while a negative margin shows that the non-aligned candidate won and the aligned candidate is the runner-up. The vertical difference between the two curves at the cutoff (i.e., at $MARGIN = 0$) reflects the estimated causal effect of electing an aligned candidate on the number of insurgency-related violent events. Panels A, B and C all show a discontinuity at the cutoff, with constituencies that barely elected an aligned candidate displaying lower levels of total violence, Naxalite-initiated violence, and Government-initiated violence over the election term, relative to constituencies that barely elected a non-aligned candidate. ²⁴

The corresponding RD regression results are presented in Table 2.²⁵ Here the dependent variable is the total number of incidents (Panel A), the total number of Naxalite-initiated incidents (Panel B) and the total number of Government-initiated incidents (Panel C) during the assembly term, excluding the year of the election. Column 1 presents the results using the optimal bandwidth, while Columns 2 and 3 provide estimates based on half and double the optimal bandwidth. In Column 1, the RD estimates show that the total number of incidents, the total number of Naxalite-initiated incidents and the total number of Government-initiated incidents are all significantly lower, over the election term, in

²⁴Considering the potential underlying mechanism of resource allocation, it is likely that barely aligned constituencies receive more resources, for example through the deployment of higher numbers of police personnel, which will lead to lower overall violence. On the other hand, barely non-aligned constituencies will receive less resources from the state, and the lack of such resources may lead to higher overall violence.

²⁵For the sake of comparison, in Table A1 in the Appendix C we present the corresponding OLS regression results. The key explanatory variable is *ALIGNED* Constituency, which takes the value = 1 if the winner is aligned with the ruling party in the state and 0 otherwise. The regressions control for year fixed effects and we present results both with and without constituency fixed effects. The OLS estimates for *ALIGNED* are never statistically significant.

Figure 3: Vote Margin of *ALIGNED* Winner and Insurgency-Related Violence



Notes: Effect of electing an *ALIGNED* candidate on total incident count (Panel A), incidents initiated by Naxalites (Panel B) and incidents initiated by the Government (Panel C). The forcing variable is the margin of victory of an *ALIGNED* candidate. The variable on the y-axis is the count of incidents. The dots in the scatter plot depict the average of the count of incidents over each successive interval of 0.5% of margin of victory. The solid lines represent local linear regressions fit separately for positive and negative margins of victory, using a triangular kernel and the optimal bandwidth criterion as proposed by [Imbens and Kalyanaraman \(2012\)](#). The shaded area depicts 95% confidence interval.

ALIGNED constituencies. There are 0.37 fewer incidents (Panel A), 0.16 fewer Naxalite-initiated incidents (Panel B) and 0.25 fewer Government-initiated incidents (Panel C) in constituencies that barely elect a candidate aligned with the ruling party as compared to those constituencies that barely elected a candidate who is not aligned with the ruling party in the state assembly. To interpret the magnitude of these effects, given that on average there are 0.14 violent incidents per year, 0.08 Government-initiated violent incidents per year and 0.06 Naxalite-initiated violent incidents per year in the Top-2 mixed constituencies (Table 1), 0.37 fewer incidents over the election term implies a 53% differential in violent incidents $(-0.37/(0.14 \times 5))$ between aligned and unaligned constituencies, 53% fewer Naxalite-initiated incidents of violence and 62.5% fewer incidents of in Government-initiated violence.

These effects remain consistent in Columns 2 and 3 of Table 2, where we halve $(1/2 \times h)$ and double $(2 \times h)$ the optimal bandwidth respectively. In Column 2, when the bandwidth is halved, the point estimates increase in magnitude, suggesting that the effect of alignment on violence is strongest close to the discontinuity threshold, though the standard errors also increase due to the smaller effective sample. In Column 3, when the bandwidth is doubled, the estimates are more precisely estimated (with smaller standard errors reflecting the larger sample), but the point estimates attenuate, consistent with the inclusion of observations farther from the cutoff introducing greater bias. For example, comparing the point estimates in Columns 1 and 3 in Panel A, doubling the bandwidth approximately halves the effect of political alignment on insurgency-related violence. This pattern reflects the standard bias-variance tradeoff in RD designs, where narrower bandwidths reduce bias at the cost of precision, while wider bandwidths improve precision but risk attenuating the estimates through increased bias.²⁶ Finally, in column 4 of Table 2 we present the results for the polynomial of order 2 ($p = 2$). The results in column 4 are qualitatively and quantitatively similar to those in column 1: there are fewer total number of incidents, total number of Naxalite-initiated incidents and total number of Government-initiated incidents, over the election term, in *ALIGNED* constituencies.

Together, these estimates suggest that aligned constituencies experience significantly fewer incidents of insurgency-related violence relative to non-aligned constituencies over the election term. Relative to the pre-period, incidents of insurgency related violence are higher in both politically aligned and politically non-aligned constituencies, but the increase is

²⁶In Section C.1, we experiment further by varying the bandwidth between a factor of 0.5 and 2 of the optimal bandwidth, in increments of 0.1. The estimates remain fairly stable over the range of bandwidths.

Table 2: *ALIGNED* Constituency and Incidents at the Constituency Level. Regression Discontinuity Estimates

	h	$\frac{p=1}{1/2 \times h}$	$2 \times h$	$\frac{p=2}{h}$
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Panel A: <i>Total Incidents</i>				
<i>ALIGNED</i> Constituency	-0.3752** (0.1769)	-0.4689*** (0.1616)	-0.1850* (0.1118)	-0.5315** (0.2625)
Observations	10,601			
Bandwidth (h)	1.965			
Effective Observations (N_h)	1230	599	2481	1230
Panel B: <i>Naxalite-initiated Incidents</i>				
<i>ALIGNED</i> Constituency	-0.1595* (0.0968)	-0.1937** (0.0901)	-0.0729 (0.0657)	-0.2137* (0.1203)
Observations	10,601			
Bandwidth (h)	1.891			
Effective Observations (N_h)	1197	571	2343	1197
Panel C: <i>Government-initiated Incidents</i>				
<i>ALIGNED</i> Constituency	-0.2472** (0.1065)	-0.2476*** (0.0831)	-0.1351* (0.0722)	-0.2967* (0.1665)
Observations	10,601			
Bandwidth (h)	1.728			
Effective Observations (N_h)	1099	520	2145	1099

Notes: RD estimates of *ALIGNED* Constituency presented. *ALIGNED* Constituency = 1 if the winner is aligned with the ruling party in the state. Sample restricted to incidents with at least one death. Includes incidents during the period 2004–2019. Estimates are based on a local linear regression using a triangular kernel. Optimal bandwidth h computed using the [Imbens and Kalyanaraman \(2012\)](#) approach. Standard errors, clustered at the State×Year level, are in parentheses. Significance *** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$.

greater in politically non-aligned constituencies.²⁷

We next draw on the growing literature on retaliatory patterns in conflict to better understand the process underlying this finding. This literature characterizes conflict as a non-zero sum game in that each side may choose to threaten violence in order to deter/incapacitate the opponent, or to exact revenge. (Jaeger and Paserman, 2006, 2008, Haushofer et al., 2010). Many conflicts have been characterized as *vicious cycles of vengeful violence from which it is impossible to escape* (Jaeger and Paserman, 2008, page 1591). Other conflicts can be viewed as deterrent mechanisms. Whether conflicts are retaliatory in nature, leading to an endless cycle of violence, or whether violence by one side is designed to deter the opposition from engaging in future violence is an open question, which needs to be examined empirically.

To investigate whether (and what) patterns of retaliation are observed within this insurgency, where the Naxalites and Governments have long engaged in continuous violent attacks, we follow the approach adopted in Haushofer et al. (2010). Essentially, this approach investigates whether Naxalite-initiated incidents “Granger caused” Government-initiated incidents and vice versa, through a series of vector autoregressions (VAR).²⁸ Here we regress Naxalite-initiated incidents and associated fatalities (in week t) on previous Naxalite and Government-initiated incidents and fatalities, up to a pre-specified lag. Likewise, we also regress Government-initiated incidents and associated fatalities in week t on previous Naxalite and Government-initiated incidents and fatalities again up to a pre-specified lag. More details on the approach are presented in Appendix D.

Table 3 presents the results on the retaliatory patterns of insurgency-related violence, the estimating equations for which are given in equations (D1) and (D2) in Appendix D. In this Table, incident captures the extensive margin, while level captures the intensive margin. Panel A of Table 3 implies that there are a significantly higher number of government-initiated incidents in response to civilian fatalities due to Naxalite-initiated incidents; the

²⁷While these results are consistent with a differential in delivery of security (public good) between aligned and non-aligned constituencies, it should be noted that we are unable to distinguish from these results alone whether this reflects active security provision in aligned constituencies or strategic reallocation of resources away from non-aligned ones.

²⁸In this setting, X Granger causes Y if a model that uses current and past values of X and current and past values of Y to predict future values of Y has smaller forecast error than a model that only uses current and past values of Y to predict Y . In other words, Granger causality answers the following question: does the past of variable X help improve the prediction of future values of Y ? While it provides insight into it, Granger causality does not conclusively establish/demonstrate that there is a true causal relationship between the two variables.

Table 3: Retaliation

Panel A: Government Retaliation				
Test Statistic	Incidents to Incidents		Incidents to Fatalities	
	Level	Incidence	Level	Incidence
F	1.48 [0.1104]	2.60 [0.0015]	2.34 [0.0037]	3.69 [0.0006]
Test Statistic	Fatalities to Incidents		Fatalities to Fatalities	
	Level	Incidence	Level	Incidence
F	0.95 [0.4990]	1.91 [0.0258]	0.89 [0.5715]	1.68 [0.1099]

Panel B: Naxalite Retaliation				
Test Statistic	Incidents to Incidents		Incidents to Fatalities	
	Level	Incidence	Level	Incidence
F	0.73 [0.6011]	0.31 [0.9517]	1.60 [0.1732]	1.54 [0.0858]
Test Statistic	Fatalities to Incidents		Fatalities to Fatalities	
	Level	Incidence	Level	Incidence
F	0.85 [0.5150]	0.79 [0.5958]	0.90 [0.4640]	1.47 [0.1101]

Notes: Estimating equations are given by equations (D1) and (D2) in Appendix D. Test statistics for the test of the null hypothesis that the lagged coefficients on the respective other variable are jointly equal to zero. Significant statistics (p-values ≤ 0.05) can be interpreted as retaliation by one party for previous violence from the other side. p-values in square brackets.

likelihood of a government response (through a Government-initiated incident) is significantly higher following Naxalite-initiated incidents and civilian fatalities. Panel B suggests that evidence of any Naxalite retaliation is weak. What is then evident in Table 3 is that, within this insurgency, retaliatory violence primarily emanates from the Government and not from the Naxalities.²⁹

Our analysis suggests that the driver of the results in Table 3 (fewer incidents of violence (overall, Government-initiated and Naxalite-initiated) in constituencies that barely elected an aligned candidate, compared to those that barely elected a non-aligned candidate) is the fewer Naxalite-initiated incidents in response to possibly the *threat* of Government response. Aligned constituencies have stronger connections with state governments, and possibly have stronger retaliatory capacity in terms of security (police) and financial resources, relative to non-aligned constituencies. This differential in retaliatory capacity may explain the lower levels of Naxalite-initiated incidents in aligned constituencies, which in turn Granger causes a decline in Government-initiated incidents and leads to an overall differential in violence between aligned and non-aligned constituencies.

4.2 State Specific Estimates

Recall that state governments in India are responsible for ensuring security and managing counter-insurgency efforts within their territory. In this context, are the baseline results consistent for all states in our sample, or are there any state-specific factors that drive our estimates? We examine this question by considering the heterogeneity of our baseline estimates by state. The regression results are presented in Table A2 in the Appendix.³⁰

Reassuringly, we observe that the direction of the effect is consistent with the baseline estimates for most states i.e., constituencies that barely elect an aligned candidate record fewer incidents of violence compared to those that barely elected a non-aligned candidate. This holds for Bihar, Chhattisgarh and Odisha. Considering the point estimates in Column 1, in Bihar, *ALIGNED* constituencies experience 0.66 fewer violent incidents, while in Chhattisgarh the effect is stronger at 2.34 fewer incidents. In Odisha, the effect is somewhere in between, at 1.61 fewer incidents. For Jharkhand and Maharashtra, the overall incident count, the count of Naxalite-initiated incidents and the count of Government-initiated incidents are not significantly different in *ALIGNED* constituencies at the optimal bandwidth;

²⁹Table D4 in Appendix D.1 presents the corresponding analysis by state.

³⁰These regressions cannot be estimated for West Bengal due to low sample size.

though for Jharkhand, the estimates are statistically significant at $\frac{1}{2}h$ (columns 2, 5 and 8).

Interestingly however, we observe the opposite effect for Andhra Pradesh, where aligned constituencies experience more violence.³¹ Specifically, these constituencies experience 0.31 more total attacks over the election term (0.17 more Naxalite-initiated incidents and 0.14 more Government-initiated incidents). There are two potential reasons as to why the patterns of violence might be different here.

The first relates to some of the more recent policy decisions. Of the states affected by the Naxalite insurgency, only Andhra Pradesh raised a separate police force, called the *Greyhounds*, whose main purpose was to combat the Naxalite insurgency in the state (see [Singhal and Nilakantan, 2016](#)). It was established in 1989 as a separate administrative unit, and is an elite commando force specially trained in counterinsurgency methods, well-equipped and have their own intelligence network and other support units. While there is little or no quantitative evidence on the effect of the Greyhounds on Naxalite violence, its existence does suggest that the relationship between the state and the Naxalites is more adversarial in Andhra Pradesh. The higher number of incidents of violence that we observe in Andhra Pradesh in aligned constituencies is possibly a consequence of this more adversarial relationship. We investigate this further by conducting the retaliation analysis restricting our sample to Andhra Pradesh. The results are presented in [Table D2](#). Here we find some evidence of retaliatory behavior on the part of the Naxalites at the extensive margin, and these patterns of retaliation are quite different to those for the full sample ([Table 3](#)) and the other states ([Table D4](#) in [Appendix D.1](#)).³²

The second reason relates to the persistent effects of British colonial institutions (see [Mukherjee, 2021](#)). The parts of Andhra Pradesh where Naxalite activity is concentrated were historically part of the princely state of Hyderabad, where the Nizam’s rule (via despotic extraction) created lower levels of development and high levels of land inequality.³³ Consequently, this region witnessed a series of class conflicts: the Telangana peasant

³¹Note that the state of Telangana was established in 2014 when it separated from Andhra Pradesh. For the purpose of our empirical analysis, we combine these two states.

³²While state interventions against organized violence may sometimes work to improve security, often they lead to violence. This has been observed in the US (existing evidence documents a positive relationship between drug enforcement and violence ([Werb et al., 2011](#))), Mexico (policies of the Mexican government has been the primary cause of the large spike in violence in the recent years ([Calderón et al., 2015](#), [Dell, 2015](#))) and Brazil ([Magaloni et al., 2020](#), [Barnes, 2022](#)). The Andhra Pradesh evidence is consistent with this argument.

³³British rule in India during the period 1857–1947 was characterized by two kinds of territories: Pres-

rebellion of 1946–49, the CPI-Marxist- Leninist movement in 1967–72, and finally the People’s War Group (PWG) Maoist insurgency in the 1980’s. Andhra Pradesh thus has a longer history (possibly the longest of any state) of Naxalite insurgency.

4.3 Robustness and Heterogeneity

We conduct additional regressions to examine the robustness of our key results to a number of alternative specifications. We briefly summarize the results here (details are presented in Appendix C): (i) results are stable over the range of bandwidths $0.5h - 2.0h$ in intervals of $0.1h$ (Figure C1); (ii) results are robust to donut RD estimates excluding observations very close to the cut-off i.e., focusing only on constituencies that won or lost by a clear margin (Table C1); (iii) the point estimates remain similar to the baseline estimates (which considered at least one death) when we change the definition of violence (Figure C2); (iv) the results remain consistent when outcome variables are normalized per 10,000 voters (Table C2); (v) there is an overall decline in violence that occurs over the election terms though the patterns are quite different for Government-initiated and Naxalite-initiated violence (Figure C3); and (vi) election of an aligned candidate has stronger effects on security in a reserved constituency and the results are consistent in spirit to Pande (2003) (Table C3).

5 Spillover Effects of Political Alignment

Is there any evidence of spillover effects of political alignment in delivering security across constituencies? For example, does violence in constituency i respond to the alignment status of its neighboring constituencies? On the one hand, when an *ALIGNED* politician is elected in a given constituency, violence may relocate to neighboring constituencies, leading to more violence in constituencies surrounding *ALIGNED* constituencies. On the other hand, it could also be that the politically *ALIGNED* constituencies are spatially clustered in a way that amplifies the benefits of alignment, leading to fewer incidents of violence in neighboring constituencies as well. A third possibility is that alignment of

idencies and Residencies. Presidencies, were the direct rule areas where the colonial British government) had complete control over the administration. Residencies, also known as the indirect rule areas or princely states, were territories which the colonial government only oversaw through a representative of the government or a resident (Rudolph, 1963).

neighboring constituencies is not relevant in explaining violence in a given constituency.

To approach this question, we first identify, for each constituency, the *nearest neighbor constituency*. The *nearest neighbor constituency* for constituency i is the one with the shortest distance between centroid of constituency i and that of all its geographical neighbors. With this demarcation, we are able to identify the winner’s margin of victory, as well as the alignment status, of the *nearest neighbor constituency* for each index constituency.

In Table 4, we examine the spillover effects of political alignment in two ways. *First*, in Panel A, we examine the pure spillover effect of political alignment on violence in neighboring constituencies, using a variant of equation (1). Specifically, we examine the effect on violence in constituency i due to the election of an *ALIGNED* candidate in constituency j , where j is the nearest neighbor for i . Note that the election of an *ALIGNED* candidate in the nearest neighbor constituency is also quasi-random given the RD design and that the election results in the two constituencies are independent. The RD estimates (Table 4, Panel A) show that the election of an *ALIGNED* candidate in the nearest neighbor constituency does not, by itself, have a statistically significant spillover effect on violence in the index constituency i .

Next, we examine the heterogeneous effects of neighbors’ alignment on violence in an *ALIGNED* constituency. For this purpose, we re-estimate equation (1), but separately for two sets of constituencies, as shown in Panel B of Table 4. In Panel B1, we estimate equation (1) but the sample is restricted to *ALIGNED* constituencies whose nearest neighbor is also politically *ALIGNED* with the state ruling party. The combined effect of these dual dimensions of political alignment is an amplification of effect on violence: there are 0.50 fewer incidents of violence in these constituencies, larger in absolute terms when compared to the effect size of 0.37 in the baseline estimate (Column 1 of Panel A in Table 2). This amplifying effect is also observed when considering violence by initiator, in Columns 2 and 3.

In Panel B2, we conduct the same exercise, but the sample is restricted to the set of *ALIGNED* constituencies where the nearest neighbor is not aligned with the state ruling party. The baseline effect dissipates in this context. Although these constituencies, by themselves, are politically aligned, the non-alignment of their neighbors negates the pacifying effect of *ALIGNMENT* on violence that we observed in the baseline.

In Panel C of Table 4, we go a step forward and exploit variation in the “barely” *ALIGNED*

Table 4: Spillovers in Violence. Regression Discontinuity Estimates on Violence in Near Neighbor Constituencies

	Total	Naxalite Initiated	Government Initiated
	(1)	(2)	(3)
Panel A: Effect of nearest neighbor’s alignment on violence in a given constituency			
Nearest Neighbor <i>ALIGNED</i>	0.0637 (0.1190)	0.0436 (0.0919)	0.1190 (0.1066)
Observations	10,601	10,601	10,601
Panel B: Heterogeneous Effects of Nearest Neighbors’ Alignment on Violence in <i>ALIGNED</i> Constituency			
B1: <i>ALIGNED</i> constituency; nearest neighbor is <i>ALIGNED</i>	-0.5022** (0.2045)	-0.1864* (0.1094)	-0.2989** (0.1166)
Observations	7,712	7,712	7,712
B2: <i>ALIGNED</i> constituency; nearest neighbor is not <i>ALIGNED</i>	0.1390 (0.1379)	0.0169 (0.1072)	0.0976 (0.0601)
Observations	2,889	2,889	2,889
Panel C: Heterogeneous Effects of Nearest Neighbor Barely Aligned or Not on Violence in <i>ALIGNED</i> Constituency			
C1: <i>ALIGNED</i> constituency; nearest neighbor is barely <i>ALIGNED</i>	-0.0915* (0.0544)	-0.0626 (0.0475)	-0.0214 (0.0228)
Observations	656	656	656
C1: <i>ALIGNED</i> constituency; nearest neighbor is barely not aligned	-0.2649 (0.3119)	-0.5159 (0.4035)	0.1345* (0.0805)
Observations	591	591	591
Panel D: Effects of Cluster of <i>ALIGNED</i> Constituencies			
<i>ALIGNED</i> in a Cluster	-0.3122** (0.1404)	-0.1268 (0.0899)	-0.1792** (0.0871)
Observations	5,164	5,164	5,164

Notes: RD estimates presented. In Panel A, Nearest Neighbor *ALIGNED* = 1 if the winner of the nearest neighbor constituency is aligned with the ruling party in the state. In Panel B, *ALIGNED* Constituency = 1 if a winner is aligned with the ruling party in the state. In Panel B1, the sample is restricted to the set of constituencies for which the nearest neighbor constituency is also politically *ALIGNED* with the ruling party in the state, while in Panel B2, the sample is restricted to the set of constituencies for which the nearest neighbor constituency is politically not aligned with the ruling party in the state. In Panel C1, the sample is restricted to the set of constituencies for which the nearest neighbor constituency is also politically *ALIGNED* with the ruling party in the state, within a bandwidth of 2% (i.e. “barely” *ALIGNED*), while in Panel C2, the sample is restricted to the set of constituencies for which the nearest neighbor constituency is politically not aligned with the ruling party in the state, within a bandwidth of 2% (i.e. “barely” non-aligned). In Panel D, the sample is restricted to constituencies for which more than 50% of its neighbors within a 150 km radius are identified as politically aligned with the ruling party in the state. Sample restricted to incidents with at least one death. Estimates are based on a local linear regression using a triangular kernel. Optimal bandwidth h computed using the [Imbens and Kalyanaraman \(2012\)](#) approach. Includes incidents during the period 2004–2019. Standard errors, clustered at the State×Year level, are in parentheses. Significance *** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$.

status of the nearest neighbor constituency. To do this, we first identify, based on the margin of victory, whether the nearest neighbor is barely *ALIGNED* or barely not aligned. We use a bandwidth of $\pm 2\%$ to define the nearest neighbor as barely *ALIGNED*. We then re-estimate our baseline specification, but this time stratifying the sample depending on whether the nearest neighbor is barely *ALIGNED* or barely not-aligned. Estimates in Panel C1 imply that there are fewer incidents of (overall) violence in an *ALIGNED* constituency when its nearest neighbor is also barely *ALIGNED*. The sign of the coefficients remain negative when we separately consider Naxalite-initiated and government-initiated violence, although these are imprecisely estimated, potentially due to the low number of observations. In Panel C2, we consider the effects in an *ALIGNED* constituency, when the nearest neighbor is barely non-aligned. In this case the number of Government-initiated incidents over the electoral term is significantly higher (0.13 additional government-initiated incidents of violence). The effects on the number of overall and Naxalite-initiated incidents is not statistically significant.

Finally, we examine the effects of the alignment status of *all* neighbors (as opposed to the nearest neighbor) of a given constituency. For this purpose, we identify *aligned clusters* of constituencies, based on the share of neighboring constituencies which are politically *ALIGNED*. We then conduct the same RD estimates as in the baseline, but only for the set of constituencies for which we identify more than 50% of neighbors as being *ALIGNED*. Estimates are presented in Panel D of Table 4. There are significantly fewer total number of violent incidents and the number of Government-initiated incidents over the electoral term if an *ALIGNED* constituency is a part of a politically clustered set of *ALIGNED* constituencies. While directionally there are fewer incidents of Naxalite initiate violence though the difference is not statistically significant.

Our analysis then reveals an interesting pattern in the spillover effects of political alignment on violence in a given constituency. The findings suggest that, although the pure spillover effects of alignment may not be obvious, the differential in violence between aligned and non-aligned constituencies is amplified where politically *ALIGNED* constituencies are spatially clustered. *ALIGNED* clusters potentially have strong bargaining power within the state government, which may lead to greater resource allocation relative to non-aligned clusters.

6 Mechanisms

We now turn to the mechanisms that drive our results. *First*, we examine the role of mining. No discussion of the Naxalite violence (or Left Wing Extremism) in India can be made independent of the symbiotic relationship between insurgency, mining and the government. The Naxalites need funds to operate. They sometimes impose taxes on the civilian population but, given that these are some of the poorest regions of the country, this tax base is limited. As such, mineral resources form an important component of the Naxalites' tax base. The dynamics of violence in the mining regions is also systematically different. [Vanden Eynde \(2018\)](#), using a district-year panel of Naxalite incidents in India during the period 2005–2011, finds that deficient rainfall spurs targeted Naxalite violence against civilians and against government security forces. While the attacks against civilians increases irrespective of whether or not the district is a mining district or not, attacks against security forces increases only in mining districts. Concurrently, there is growing evidence (including anecdotes and media reports) that the mining companies pay the Naxalites to continue engaging in illegal mining. Government officials and local leaders get a portion of this “cut-money” to turn a blind eye to illegal mining. See [Prakash \(2015\)](#), [Vanden Eynde \(2018\)](#) and our discussion on Page 3 (Introduction).

Given this three way nexus between mining companies, Naxalites and Government agents (including local politicians), it would be of considerable interest to examine how political alignment plays out in this environment. On the one hand, the government has to be seen to be doing things, particularly in aligned constituencies, to maintain an image of being pro-active in the law and order space. On the other hand, local leaders stand to gain from doing nothing and allowing the status quo to persist. The role of mining is discussed in greater detail in Section 6.1.

Second, in the previous sections of this paper we argue that one of the possible explanations for the differential in resources that state governments allocate to aligned *vs* non-aligned constituencies in lieu of maintaining public security.³⁴ This is likely to take the form of more security personnel being assigned to *ALIGNED* constituencies. Ideally, we would examine this hypothesis using data on central police forces deployed in the *Red-Corridor*. However, this data is not released by the Indian government.³⁵ Data on number of police

³⁴This is common in other countries as well. For example [Dell \(2015\)](#) argues that in Mexico, PAN politicians (aligned to President Calderon) received more military assistance than their non-PAN counterparts and were also provided with newer, more sophisticated military hardware.

³⁵This, again, is consistent with the restrictions imposed in other countries. For example in Mexico

stations and police personnel assigned to police stations is only available at the state level, which is too high a level of aggregation for our purposes.

In the absence of actual data on deployment of police and security personnel, therefore, we resort to examining this mechanism indirectly, by using district-level data on crime released by the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) of the government of India. This channel is discussed in Section 6.2.

6.1 Mining as a Potential Mechanism

To examine the role of mining in the delivery of security amidst the insurgency, we first identify the constituencies which engaged in mining activity during the sample period. We generate a time-invariant binary indicator which equals 1 if at least one mining property was recorded in the constituency over the sample period. Such constituencies are classified as *mining* constituencies.³⁶ Constituencies for which this indicator is 0 are categorized as *non-mining* constituencies. If the government wants to show that they are doing something and yet not overturn the apple cart (i.e., maintain the three way nexus), the differential in violence between *ALIGNED* and non-aligned constituencies we observe in Table 2 will be driven by *ALIGNED*, but non-mining constituencies.³⁷

Figure A8 presents the effect of electing an aligned candidate on insurgency-related violence in mining constituencies (Panel A) and non-mining constituencies (Panel B). We observe that, for mining constituencies, the vertical difference between the two curves at the cutoff is slightly positive for total violence and for Government-initiated violence (Columns 1 and 3), and slightly negative for Naxalite-initiated violence (Column 2). By contrast, for non-mining constituencies, the vertical difference between the curves is always negative at the cutoff. These demonstrate that the differential in violence between aligned and non-aligned constituencies is concentrated in non-mining constituencies.

municipality-level data on military and federal police deployments are not released.

³⁶It is important to note here that, for the purpose of our analysis, we are only interested in identifying whether a constituency has mining potential or not. The mine locations data provides a reasonable proxy for such mining potential. It is also for this same reason that we do not factor in the opening or closing of mines, the decision of which may be endogenous to insurgency-related violence. In this sense, our approach is similar to Berman et al. (2017) and Amarasinghe et al. (2021) who also use a time-invariant mining indicator as the identifier.

³⁷Incidents of violence (total and by initiator) are higher in mining constituencies compared to non-mining constituencies. See Panels A and B of Figure A7.

These results are corroborated by the RD estimates presented in Panels A and B of Table 5. In non-mining constituencies (Panel B), the election of an *ALIGNED* candidate results in significantly fewer total number of incidents (0.60), Naxalite-initiated incidents (0.26) and Government-initiated incidents initiated (0.38). On the other hand, the election of an *ALIGNED* candidate in a mining constituency (Panel A) has no effect on the total number of incidents and the number of Naxalite-initiated incidents and the number of Government-initiated violence is slightly higher (0.40). We return to our explanation of the results for mining constituencies below.

To better understand what drives these results in the non-mining constituencies, we subdivide these constituencies based on their geographic distance from mining constituencies. We categorize non-mining constituencies into *near-neighbor* constituencies (the nearest mining constituency is 0–100 km away from its centroid) and *distant-neighbor* constituencies (nearest mining constituency is 100–200 km away from its centroid).³⁸

Panels C and D of Table 5 present the estimates for these two groups of constituencies.³⁹ We observe that there are significantly fewer incidents of violence (overall and separated by initiator) in near-neighbor constituencies following the election of an *ALIGNED* candidate. The effects, following the election of an *ALIGNED* candidate is not statistically significant in distant-neighbor constituencies.

How do we explain these differential patterns for mining, near-neighbor and distant-neighbor constituencies? One possible explanation is as follows. There are very few incidents in the distant-neighbor constituencies (see Figure A7). The links between the Naxalites, mining companies and state actors are likely to be considerably weaker in distant-neighbor constituencies. Hence, while electing an *ALIGNED* candidate may bring other benefits to these constituencies, there are no security effects.

In the near-neighbor constituencies, the links between the Naxalites, mining companies and state actors are likely to be stronger (though possibly weaker than in the mining constituencies). While the incident count in these constituencies is lower than in the mining constituencies, they are sufficiently large for the government to benefit from playing the security card. We find that near-neighbor constituencies that barely elected an *ALIGNED* candidate experience fewer incidents of violence relative to those that barely elected a non-

³⁸Incidents of violence (total and by initiator) are higher in near-neighbor constituencies compared to distant-neighbor constituencies. See Panels C and D of Figure A7.

³⁹Figure A9 presents these estimates in graphical format and corroborate the results in Table 5.

Table 5: *ALIGNED* Constituency and Violence at the Constituency Level. Mining, Non-Mining, Near-Neighbor and Distant-Neighbor Constituencies

	Total Violence			Naxalite-initiated Violence			Government-initiated Violence		
	h	$1/2 \times h$	$2 \times h$	h	$1/2 \times h$	$2 \times h$	h	$1/2 \times h$	$2 \times h$
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
<i>Panel A: Mining Constituencies</i>									
<i>ALIGNED</i> Constituency	0.5080 (0.3179)	1.0059** (0.5075)	0.2568 (0.2455)	0.2946 (0.1941)	0.5019 (0.3125)	0.1096 (0.1466)	0.3984* (0.2340)	0.5267 (0.3627)	0.1309 (0.1599)
Observations	1,108			1,108			1,108		
Bandwidth (h)	4.116			3.480			3.235		
Effective Observations (N_h)	262	132	528	224	114	443	212	114	413
<i>Panel B: Non-Mining Constituencies</i>									
<i>ALIGNED</i> Constituency	-0.6038*** (0.2328)	-0.7190*** (0.1961)	-0.3407** (0.1652)	-0.2623** (0.1099)	-0.3164*** (0.0846)	-0.1425* (0.0827)	-0.3779** (0.1497)	-0.3452*** (0.1129)	-0.2242** (0.1091)
Observations	9,493			9,493			9,493		
Bandwidth (h)	1.695			1.659			1.516		
Effective Observations (N_h)	951	454	1905	933	445	1866	863	411	1688
<i>Panel C: Near-Neighbor Constituencies</i>									
<i>ALIGNED</i> Constituency	-0.6648** (0.3075)	-0.9317*** (0.2681)	-0.3614 (0.2209)	-0.2643* (0.1472)	-0.3892*** (0.1096)	-0.1333 (0.1144)	-0.4276** (0.1942)	-0.5521*** (0.1767)	-0.2599* (0.1415)
Observations	5,701			5,701			5,701		
Bandwidth (h)	1.890			1.807			1.792		
Effective Observations (N_h)	680	326	1322	625	299	1241	625	299	1229
<i>Panel D: Distant-Neighbor Constituencies</i>									
<i>ALIGNED</i> Constituency	-0.1106 (0.0970)	-0.1173 (0.1232)	-0.0429 (0.0562)	-0.0987 (0.0990)	-0.1140 (0.1204)	-0.0525 (0.0578)	-0.0126 (0.0128)	0.0000 (0.0000)	0.0067 (0.0113)
Observations	3,135			3,135			3,135		
Bandwidth (h)	1.289			1.229			1.329		
Effective Observations (N_h)	228	101	434	211	97	418	240	109	443

Notes: RD estimates of *ALIGNED*. The samples are defined as follows. Mining constituencies: constituencies that have mining activity; Non-Mining Constituencies: constituencies with no mining activity; Near-Neighbor Constituencies: Distant-neighbor constituency: non-mining constituencies with the nearest mining constituency 100-200 km. *ALIGNED* Constituency = 1 if the winner is aligned with the ruling party in the state. Sample restricted to incidents with at least one death. Includes incidents during the period 2004-2019. Estimates are based on a local linear regression using a triangular kernel. Optimal bandwidth h computed using the [Imbens and Kalyanaraman \(2012\)](#) approach. Standard errors, clustered at the State \times Year level, are in parentheses. Significance *** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$.

aligned candidate, as indicated in Panel C of Table 5.

A priori, it is not clear how the effects will play out in mining constituencies. There are three possibilities. *First*, given the nature of the relationship between the mining companies, the Naxalites and the local leaders, there is possibly no incentive (for any of the players) to change the status-quo. Additionally, the election of an *ALIGNED* candidate might actually make it easier for the mining companies to influence the decisions of the state government. This implies that there should be no effect on the incidence of violence in these mining constituencies. *Second*, the arrangements and side-payments might include fewer incidents of violence so as to not attract attention. A *third* possibility is that greater security presence in near-neighbor constituencies with the election of an *ALIGNED* candidate would mean that the Naxalites are forced to reduce their operations in these constituencies, leading them to move to constituencies where the returns to their activities are higher. They might then choose to re-locate to the mining constituencies, which might lead to more incidents of violence in these constituencies. Overall which of the three effects dominate is an empirical question. The results presented in Panel A of Table 5 show that the first effect dominates. There is possibly no incentive (from any of the players) to change the status-quo and as a consequence the election of an *ALIGNED* candidate in a mining constituency does not result in more or less incidents of violence.⁴⁰

6.2 Public Security

Do *ALIGNED* constituencies receive more resources from the state government to maintain public security? In the absence of actual data on deployment of police and security personnel, we resort to examining this mechanism indirectly, by using district-level data on crime released by the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) of the government of India. The crime data is, however, only available at the district level, which is more aggregate than the constituency level, i.e., constituencies are nested within districts. Therefore, we aggregate up our constituency level treatment variables to the district level in such a way that the main treatment variable is the district level fraction of constituencies with an *ALIGNED* winner, while the outcome variable is district level incidence of crime. If our

⁴⁰That said, the point estimates for the mining constituencies (Panel A) of Table 5 are positive, though they are never close to being statistically significant. This could be interpreted as weak evidence that there is some movement of violence from the near-neighbor constituencies to the mining constituencies, in support of the third effect. However, the lack of any statistical significance means that we cannot conclusively argue in favor of this effect.

argument about increased assignment of security / resources to *ALIGNED* constituencies hold, then we expect to observe a fewer incidents of in crime in districts with a higher share of *ALIGNED* constituencies.

We use an IV approach to account for the potential endogeneity of the fraction of *ALIGNED* constituencies in a district: we cannot rule out the possibility of time-varying district specific unobserved characteristics being correlated with both crime and competitiveness (preference for one particular party). For example, some unforeseen event might make the district more competitive and also reduce reported crime. If such district level factors change over time that can make the treatment variable endogenous. We use the proportion of constituencies in the district where the *ALIGNED* candidate barely wins as the instrument for the treatment variable. More details of the estimation methodology adopted in this case is presented in Appendix E.⁴¹

Table 6: Impact of *ALIGNED* Winner on Crime in the District

	OLS	IV			
		Margin 2%	Margin 3%	Margin 5%	Margin 10%
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Share <i>ALIGNED</i> Winners in District	-0.498* (0.258)	-2.737*** (0.785)	-2.608*** (0.740)	-1.849*** (0.633)	-1.507*** (0.384)
<i>First Stage</i>					
Share Close <i>ALIGNED</i> Winners in District		0.841*** (0.197)	0.779*** (0.183)	0.721*** (0.124)	0.806*** (0.0753)
First Stage F		18.20 [0.00]	18.15 [0.00]	33.85 [0.00]	114.5 [0.00]
Anderson-Rubin Wald ($\chi^2(1)$) Test		22.61 [0.00]	18.62 [0.00]	9.185 [0.00]	15.03 [0.00]
Observations	663	663	663	663	663
R-squared	0.372				

Notes: Dependent variable is the log of the Number of reported crimes in the district in the years 2001–2014. Standard errors clustered at the district level presented in parenthesis. p-values associated with the first stage F and the Anderson-Rubin Wald ($\chi^2(1)$) test in square brackets.

Before presenting the IV results, it is useful to situate the district-level crime data within

⁴¹See Clots-Figueras (2012), Bhalotra and Clots-Figueras (2014), Bhalotra et al. (2014), Lahoti and Sahoo (2020), Jain et al. (2023), Baskaran et al. (2023), Prakash et al. (2024), Anukriti et al. (2026) for more on this approach to examine the effect of different characteristics of politicians on a range of different outcomes (at the district level) in the context of India.

our broader empirical setting. The UCDP data used in our baseline RD analysis records insurgency-specific violent events at the incident level, which we aggregate to the constituency level. The NCRB crime data, by contrast, covers reported crime under the Indian Penal Code and is only released at the district level, a more aggregate unit in which multiple constituencies are nested (on average 8.7 constituencies per district in our sample; see Table E1 in the Appendix for full summary statistics). The two data sources capture distinct categories of events rather than overlapping measures: insurgency incidents are recorded by UCDP based on conflict event criteria, while IPC crimes are recorded by NCRB based on police reports. Both outcomes, however, are plausibly shaped by the allocation of state security resources. If aligned constituencies receive greater deployment of police and security personnel, we would expect this to reduce both insurgency-related violence (our constituency-level RD result) and reported crime (the district-level outcome examined here). The district-level analysis therefore serves as an indirect but informative test of the resource-allocation mechanism.

Table 6 presents the OLS and the 2SLS regression results. For the 2SLS regressions we consider alternative definitions of close elections i.e., margin of 2% (column 2), 3% (column 3), 5% (column 4) and 10% (column 5). Across the OLS and 2SLS estimates, we find a statistically significant negative impact of the share of *ALIGNED* winners in a district on the total number of crimes reported during the electoral year. The 2SLS estimates in Columns 2–5 show that a 10 percentage points increase in the fraction of *ALIGNED* winners in the district leads to a 1.65–2.28% fewer reported crimes during the year. The OLS estimates (Column 1) are biased towards 0.

These results are consistent with our hypothesis of more resources being assigned to *ALIGNED* constituencies. A higher share of *ALIGNED* constituencies results in greater resources (such as police personnel) assigned to these districts, and this in turn generates a large and statistically significant differential in reported crimes between *ALIGNED* vs non-aligned constituencies.

7 Conclusion

In this paper, we examine whether political alignment — defined as the member of a particular constituency belonging to the same party that is in power in the state — affects the delivery of public goods. The specific public good that we consider is security in the

Red-Corridor of India, which has been subject to continuous violence due to the ongoing Naxalite insurgency.

The key challenge in causally identifying the effects in this context is that political alignment between the state and local levels is likely to be non-random. To address this challenge, we use a RD design that exploits the margin of victory in local elections. The underlying assumption in this identification strategy is that a constituency where the ruling party (*ALIGNED*) candidate barely won the election is not significantly different from a constituency where the ruling party candidate barely lost, on all unobserved characteristics that are correlated with the dependent variable. We confirm the validity of this assumption using a series of tests typically used in the literature.

Having thus confirmed that the pre-conditions of the RD design hold, we are able to causally identify the effect of political alignment on violence. We find that constituencies that barely elected an *ALIGNED* candidate display lower overall violence, recording 0.37 fewer incidents over the election term, relative to those that barely elected a non-aligned candidate. We observe a similar trend when considering violent incidents initiated by the Government as well as by Naxalites. We show that government-initiated violence is primarily retaliatory in nature, and that the driver of the overall fewer incidents of violence is that the number of Naxalite-initiated violent incidents are fewer. The effects are amplified when politically *ALIGNED* constituencies are spatially clustered, suggesting that such clusters may exercise higher bargaining power and enhanced ability to generate positive externalities.

To understand the underlying mechanisms, we *first* focus on the role of mining activity, especially since the Naxalite insurgency mostly affects the resource-rich *Red-Corridor* in India. While we do not observe any effects in mining constituencies *per se*, we find that the differential in violence between aligned and non-aligned constituencies is concentrated in constituencies located close to mining areas. Constituencies further away from mining activity are unaffected as well. These findings suggest that strategic decision-making related to mining activity affect the delivery of public goods. While local representatives show their care for law and order in constituencies surrounding mining areas, in mining constituencies they let the status quo persist, potentially to gain informal benefits. Non-mining constituencies far from mines are poorer with less resources to extract, and receive limited attention from politicians, with alignment having no effect on security in these constituencies.

Second, we examine whether aligned constituencies receive more resources, for example security personnel, from the state government. In the absence of constituency level data on resource allocation, we do so indirectly, by examining the effect on district level crime. Using an instrumental variables approach which exploits the share of politically aligned constituencies nested within districts, we find that districts with higher fractions of political alignment experience significantly fewer reported incidents of crime. This in turn suggests that politically aligned constituencies receive more resources from the state government, which facilitate better provision of the public good of security.

Taken together, this paper provides new and important insights on how political alignment shapes public good provision at the local level. Specifically, we find that in contexts with ongoing political violence, constituencies aligned with state governments display fewer incidents of violence relative to non-aligned ones, though these results alone do not enable to identify whether this reflects active security provision in *ALIGNED* constituencies or a strategic reallocation of resources away from non-aligned ones. Our analysis of underlying mechanisms, speak to the informal, yet strategic, nature of on-the-ground relationships which ultimately affect the dynamics of the consequences of political alignment. From a policy maker’s perspective, these findings provide important insights on how best to harness formal political relationships, as well as informal societal relationships, towards efficient resource allocation and effective public good delivery.

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