



New data on Indian security force fatalities and demographics

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ABSTRACT

National and state-level security forces across India operate against insurgents, criminals, and external threats. These operations are politically consequential, yet these forces tend to be quite opaque. This article provides new data on the fatalities that these forces have suffered in order to explore the location and nature of political violence in India. We create several new datasets of security force fatalities extracted from commemorative security force “martyrs” documents and online databases published by Indian state-level police organizations, the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA), and the Ministry of Defence, as well as semi-official sources. The data vary wildly in quality and detail, and there are serious limits to their use. Nevertheless, they allow us to – with caveats – measure the location and incidence of violence, as well as the demographic underpinnings of the Indian Army, the two largest MHA paramilitaries, and several state police forces. Caveats aside, we anticipate that subsets of these data are sufficiently high in quality, facilitating future rigorous quantitative analysis on political violence in India. The entire dataset will be made publicly available.

Introduction

India’s domestic and external security forces have confronted a plethora of insurgencies, foreign threats, and criminal groups since the country’s independence in 1947. However, we lack granular data on the costs that these state-based organizations have borne over this time period. Existing sources of conflict data in India either cull event-level data from press accounts,¹ which can be limited by reporting biases and limitations in coverage, whereas others provide highly-aggregated data on conflict fatalities in a relatively nontransparent manner.² We take a different approach to understanding these dynamics of violence, drawing on government and semi-official sources, some of which have only become available in the last several years.

Specifically, we gather data on security fatalities from official commemorative publications produced by the Border Security Force (BSF) and Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF), the Ministry of Home Affairs’s

Indian Police “Martyrs of the Indian Police” website, various state police websites, and the semi-official book *Amar Jawan*, which provides Indian Army fatality data through 1997. Throughout this article, we focus on internal security operations, distinct from India’s interstate wars. This is not a substitute for other forms of data collection, since it provides no information on civilian or militant deaths in internal security, but it does establish a reasonably firm basis for measuring the costs borne by the state itself. We outline broad patterns of security force losses across space and time – overall, there are 13,171 fatality observations – and then combine the various sources to offer a detailed examination of several conflict environments.

We are also able to offer new insights into the composition of these forces. Some of the sources, especially those from the BSF and CRPF in recent decades, provide detailed data on the demography of the forces by listing the district and/or state of origin of killed force members. We supplement this casualty data with other MHA and Ministry of Defence (MOD)-provided data on the demographic breakdown of the security forces, allowing a broad examination of the social base of India’s coercive apparatus. This illuminates more clearly who serves, and who dies, in India’s security forces. Consistent with prior work, we show substantial over-representation from particular states in the Army. A new contribution shows similar, though not identical, patterns in the large, and growing, MHA internal security forces. Some of this overrepresentation is an intentional strategy, but some of it seems to also have historical roots.

We begin this article by discussing our sources of fatality data. We then present general patterns including the frequency of deaths over time as well as fluctuations in the distribution of conflict types where fatalities occurred (e.g., conventional war or counterinsurgency operations) across security forces. The subsequent section presents data on specific conflict contexts, including the Punjab, Jammu and Kashmir, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Maharashtra, and Nagaland. We then present novel data on the demographic composition of Ministry of Home Affairs paramilitaries and the Indian Army (though within different timeframes and from different sources). We discuss what these demographic data suggest about both operational dynamics and the broader political implications of identity-imbalanced security forces. We conclude by highlighting how these data can facilitate future research.

Data sources: Fatalities and demographics

The main sources for our data on security fatalities are numerous state and central-level security forces’ publications and websites honoring their “martyrs” killed in action.³ To the best of our knowledge, these have not been

systematically compiled into usable quantitative data, but they provide remarkable resources for scholars of Indian internal security.

For instance, the Indian Ministry of Home Affairs's Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) published a booklet entitled *Warriors Remembered* in 2015, documenting all of its service members killed in action since the organization's inception in 1939.⁴ These include fatalities from all types of conflict settings, including conventional warfare, counterinsurgency operations, and clashes with criminal organizations. Here is one example of a CRPF service member killed in Punjab, India on July 12, 1990:

62 Bn was deployed in Firozpur district of Punjab to assist the state police to combat militancy. On 12 July 1990, a section of the Unit was detailed for naka duties for screening vehicles based on an input that armed militants were expected to pass that way. On seeing an approaching motor cycle, the Party Commander tried to flag down the vehicle. Instead of stopping the militant riding pillion opened indiscriminate fire on the troops. L/Nk [Lance Naik] Sada Ram was injured in the firing and made supreme sacrifice of his life in the line of duty.⁵

The document goes on to note Ram's birthday as November 16, 1953 and home location as: Village Ghugrod, PO-Chandpur, PS-Bilaspur, District-Bilaspur, State: Himachal Pradesh.⁶ Other fatalities include the Border Security Force's (BSF) cross-border firing with Pakistani troops:

Regt. No. 062542832 Ct. Devendra Singh of 09 Bn BSF attained martyrdom on 5 Jan 2015 at BOP NSP Khora, Samba (J&K) while performing IB Duty. Born on 1 July 1984, Ct Devendra Singh joined BSF on 20 Nov 2006. On 5 Jan 2015, at about 1502 hrs, Pakistan Post Lumbriyal started heavy volume of Mortar fire targeting own BOP NSP Khora. Ct Devendra Singh who was coming from Jawan barrack for camp guard at Morcha immediately took position amid mortar shelling and fired 7-8 rounds from AGS on Pakistan Post Lumbriyal. Due to his effective and accurate fire, Pak Post Lumbriyal stopped firing but another Pak Post Akram Sahid started firing [mortar] shell on BOP NSP Khora. In this mortar shelling Ct Devendra Singh sustained splinter injury on head and later succumbed to his injuries. His next of kin Smt Reeta Devi (wife) resides at VPO-Muharani, PS-Iglas, Distt-Aligarh, Uttar Pradesh.⁷

Specifics about each armed force fatality enabled us to geocode all observations and include information about the alleged hostile actor, the type of operation, and demographic details, that is, state and district of origin.

Although the CRPF and MHA documents are the most detailed, we used a variety of other sources as well. A recently-created website (<http://police.gov.in>) run by the DGPs/IGPs Conference Secretariat of the MHA provides a compilation of state police force fatalities in its "Martyrs of the Indian Police" section.⁸ Many individual states have their own websites and documents that list personnel killed in action; these are mostly in English, with a few in Hindi.⁹ The book *Amar Jawan*, which lists Indian Army killed in action (KIA) and was published in 1997, is not an official government

document.¹⁰ However, its preface and acknowledgments show very substantial official cooperation and so we treat it as a semi-official publication. We only coded the fatalities from internal security operations, rather than interstate wars (which are also included in the book), using this source.

Our approach draws on official accounts of security force martyrdom, which has numerous advantages vis-à-vis the alternatively-available official figures that the Government of India publishes in its yearly *Crime in India* report, Ministry of Home Affairs Annual Reports, and in documents produced by the Home Ministry's Left Wing Extremism (LWE) division. First, *Crime in India* (CII) releases state-level figures for murders resulting from "Extremism/Naxalism," but it does not distinguish between civilian and security force fatalities, nor does it provide sufficient granularity regarding the precise date and locality within which the fatality occurred.¹¹ Figures on security force fatalities published in the Ministry of Home Affairs's *Annual Reports* similarly lack the granularity we provide in this dataset. For example, the annual report for 2016–17 provides yearly security force fatality counts for the most conflict-prone regions of India, yet these figures do not shed light on levels of violence across localities and districts within states, and they do not indicate within-year temporal trends in violence.¹² In contrast, our data exhibit a much higher level of geographic and temporal granularity. They also exclusively home in on security force fatalities and illustrate the differential burden of warfighting faced by the central government's security forces, on the one hand, and state-level police forces on the other.

Building a dataset using these types of official sources also has important benefits when contrasted with numerous existing scholarly conflict datasets. Conflict event datasets drawn exclusively from press accounts are often deeply flawed due to reporting biases.¹³ In many contexts, press coverage is often highly-correlated with population density, and, therefore, rural conflict dynamics are often systematically underreported. Furthermore, journalists often have limited access to localities where extremely intense fighting is underway, undermining the quality of data drawn on reports from these areas. In contrast, security force organizations seeking to honor their members killed in action have strong incentives to ensure that all members are accounted for, regardless of the fatality's location or nature. This is, of course, not a substitute for fuller data that includes civilian and militant casualties, but we believe it is on a broadly firmer grounding than purely press-based reporting.

However, we also need to transparently identify areas of weakness. First, the amount and quality of information drawn from our sources varies widely. The Army data from *Amar Jawan*, for instance, stops in 1997 and provides limited data about each incident. The CRPF and BSF data are more detailed in the post-1990 period than before 1990. Some state police sources are simply lists of names and dates, while others provide highly detailed

information; the time frames also vary across these sources. This all means that creating a single, comprehensive dataset on India's internal security force fatalities is impossible from our sources. Another challenge we encountered were a few instances where state police websites' information did not align with the MHA-managed central police martyrs website. For instance, the Chhattisgarh data is far more comprehensive on the state website than the MHA site; by contrast, hundreds of police fatalities in Manipur are listed in the MHA site but not the Manipur state police site.

Anit Mukherjee has shown that even the Indian Army's earlier efforts to collate fatalities data suffered from serious problems,¹⁴ and, therefore, challenges in record-keeping and consistency at the state police level and in state-central sharing of fatalities data would be unsurprising. These challenges are reflected in one of our coding decisions. Specifically, we created two dummy variables, one indicating whether we extracted a fatality observation from a state police source and the other indicating if the observation was also drawn from the MHA site.¹⁵ This transparently distinguishes when state and central-level sources are in agreement, as well as areas of inconsistency across sources.

A third challenge entailed the dearth of fatality data from several large Indian states, including Uttar Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, and West Bengal, as well as from the Assam Rifles, a paramilitary force with a critical role in the Northeast. These entirely or largely are lacking from the MHA central site, updated since our data collection, and/or state-level websites. Efforts to acquire these data in other ways have not succeeded. No emails we sent to any central or state-level law enforcement agency requesting data received any kind of response. Data that was published since our data was gathered can, however, be added to future versions of the dataset along with other sources not yet available.

Finally, we draw the bulk of our demographic data from the same sources as the fatalities data; often, records indicate the state, district, and/or city/village of origin or next of kin of the killed servicemember. Consequently, we assume that personnel from certain states and districts are not deployed to conflict zones at systematically higher rates than personnel from other regions; the demography of those killed in action reflects the demography of the organizations as a whole. In other words, we assume that a CRPF recruit from Kerala is as likely to be deployed to and killed in Manipur as someone from Haryana or West Bengal. While a reasonable assumption, given the history of these security force organizations, future research is necessary for validation.

We supplemented the available demographic information in two ways. First, we used state-level data on security force recruitment, retired service members, and widows to provide insights into the regional distribution of the Indian Army's social base. Second, we supplemented the CRPF and BSF data with qualitative information from MHA statements about strategies of recruitment into paramilitary forces, as well as the Ministry's own data on the

proportionality of the major paramilitary forces. These are drawn from ministerial responses to Lok Sabha questions in recent years. For many state-level police, however, we lacked any reliable evidence on the intra-state spatial patterns of either fatalities or recruitment.

Ministry of Home Affairs fatalities

India's Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) controls five different armed forces devoted to distinct national security issues. Among these, the Border Security Force (BSF) and Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) are the larger forces that undertake border security operations and counterinsurgency missions. These are enormous security forces, much larger than many states' conventional militaries and growing in size and funding in recent decades.¹⁶ Both organizations published commemorative booklets documenting their personnel killed in action, whether in areas with active insurgencies, cross-border firing, or while undertaking operations against smugglers and criminal organizations.

Border Security Force

Formed in December 1965, the Border Security Force (BSF) has grown to 186 battalions and a total sanctioned strength of 257,363 personnel as of December 2016.¹⁷ The BSF published a booklet entitled, *BSF Martyrs: A Legacy of Pride and Valour*, documenting 1,527 personnel fatalities from the organization's inception in 1965 to the time of publication in 2015.¹⁸ The acknowledgements section in this handbook make it quite clear that the Ministry of Home Affairs, and the BSF in particular, devoted significant resources to this data collection project by forming an entire team of personnel to collect this information.¹⁹ Given the resources the BSF devoted to this project and the organizational incentives to honor all members killed in action, this booklet is likely far more detailed and comprehensive than any potential dataset based on press reports of BSF fatalities. The three figures break these fatalities down by time period (Figure 1), by the Indian state within which the fatalities occurred (Figure 2), and type of operation (Figure 3).

These figures illustrate several key trends vis-à-vis the BSF's operations and security burden. First, the vast majority of fatalities have occurred from 1990 onward, primarily due to the intensifying insurgency in the Kashmir Valley in the early 1990s and again in the early 2000s. Among the pre-1990 years, 1971 is an outlier as nearly one hundred personnel were killed in the 1971 war against Pakistan. The tables show that the overwhelming number of BSF fatalities occurred in the state of Jammu & Kashmir and resulted amid counterinsurgency operations, primarily in the Kashmir Valley. We use N/A to refer to missing data (Tables 1 and 2).

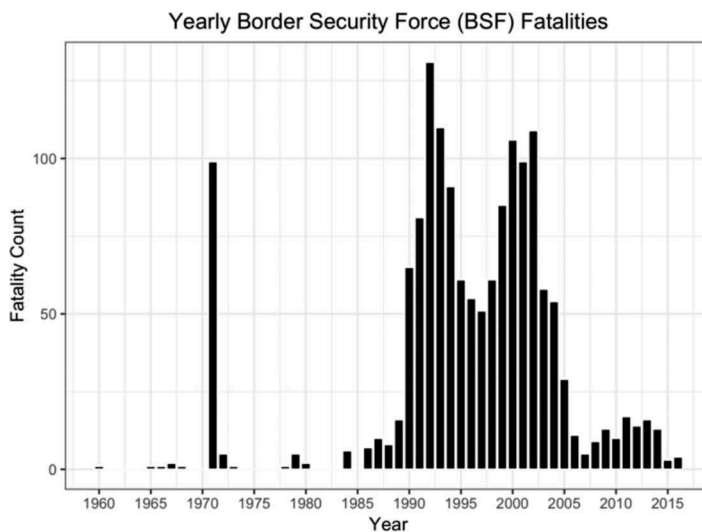


Figure 1. Yearly Border Security Force (BSF) fatalities.

Border Security Force (BSF) Fatalities by State

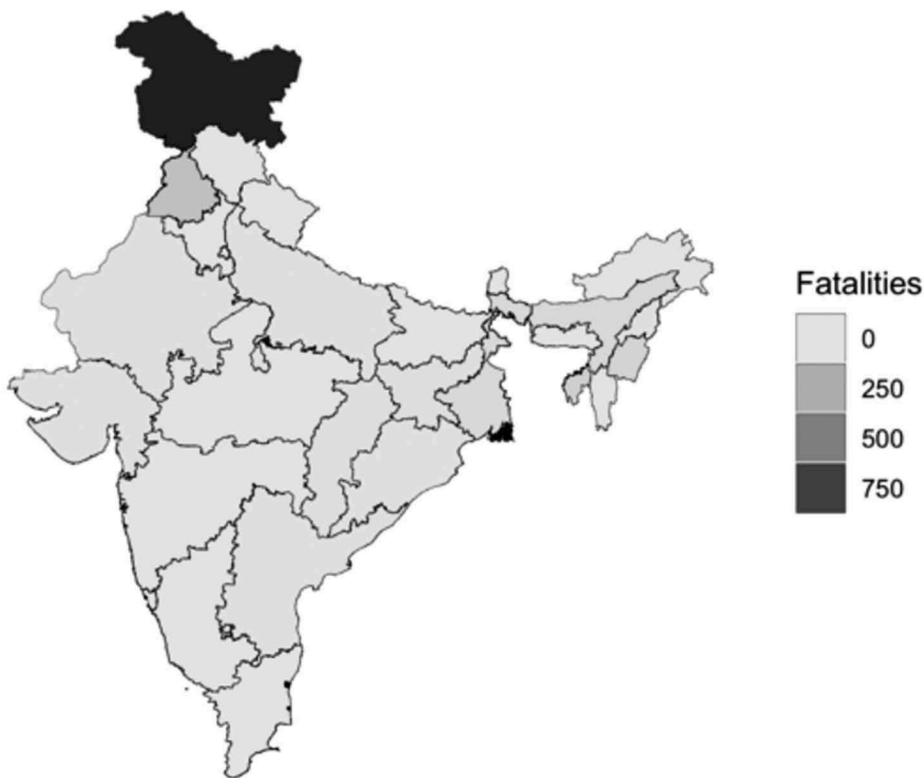


Figure 2. BSF fatalities by state.

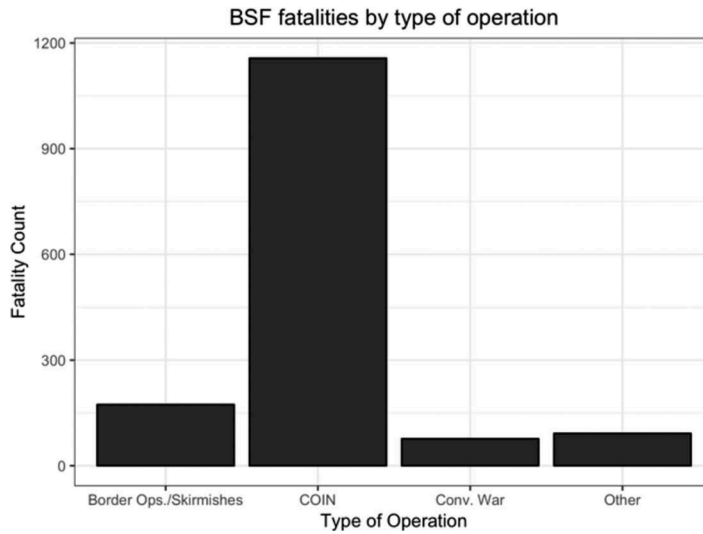


Figure 3. BSF fatalities by type of operation.

Table 1. Deadliest states, BSF.

State	# fatalities
Jammu and Kashmir	951
Punjab	152
Tripura	88
Manipur	69
Assam	48
West Bengal	46
Meghalaya	44

BSF, Border Security Force.

Table 2. Bloodiest districts, BSF (N/A = 96).

District	# fatalities
Srinagar	257
Baramulla	121
Rajouri	67
Kupwara	65
Pulwama	61
Anantnag	54
Amritsar	25
Ferozpur	44
Doda	38

BSF, Border Security Force.

Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF)

The Indian government formed the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) in 1949 by repurposing the erstwhile British Raj-era Crown Representative's Police into a domestic security force. Currently comprised of over 300,000

active personnel, the CRPF documents 2,025 fatalities in its *Warriors Remembered* martyrs booklet.²⁰ Similar to the BSF booklet, the CRPF devoted an entire team of personnel at the Prime Minister of India's direction and intended to present a copy of the booklet to the family of each CRPF member killed in action.²¹ The CRPF also faced similar organizational pressures to ensure comprehensive reportage of these fatalities.

As expected, the spatial distribution of CRPF fatalities is different from the BSF. While CRPF also incurred an inordinate number of fatalities while conducting counterinsurgency campaigns in Kashmir, it has borne the burden of conducting operations in Maoist-affected states such as Chhattisgarh, as well as in India's Northeast and in the state of Manipur in particular. Figures 4, 5, and 6 display the fatalities by year, state, and mission-type, respectively. The deadliest states and districts for CRPF operations are listed in Tables 3 and 4.

The first period of sustained losses for the CRPF began in the early 1960s through the early 1970s, primarily while fighting against Naga and Meitei insurgents in Northeast India, in what are now the current Indian states of Manipur, Nagaland, and Assam. The most intense period of CRPF fighting began in the late 1980s, continuing for the next 20 years. While the conflict in Kashmir inflicted most CRPF fatalities during this stretch of time, the CRPF incurred substantial costs in counterinsurgency operations in Maoist-affected regions in Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, and Bihar, as well as in various Northeast Indian states.

Indian army internal security force fatalities

The Indian Army has fought in several interstate wars but also been engaged in long-term counterinsurgency operations in Jammu and Kashmir and various parts of the Northeast, as well as a substantial role in battling the Sikh militancy in Punjab. Our fatalities data are limited to the 1947–97 period; as a result, we cannot address the very bloody late 1990s/early 2000s in Kashmir or the

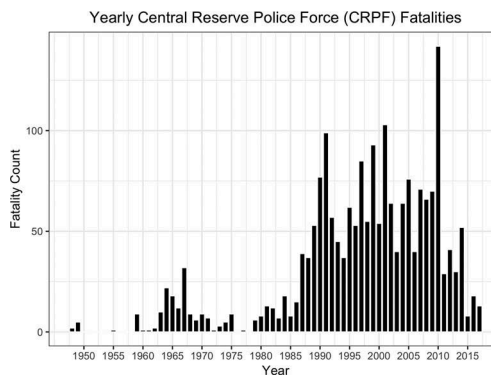


Figure 4. Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) Fatalities by Year.

Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) Fatalities by State

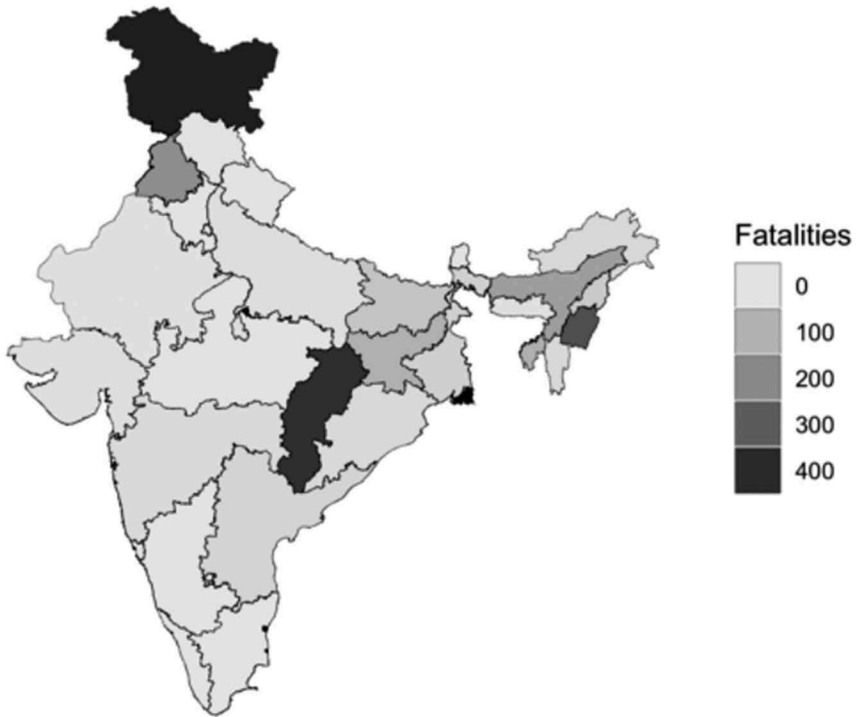


Figure 5. Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) fatalities by state.

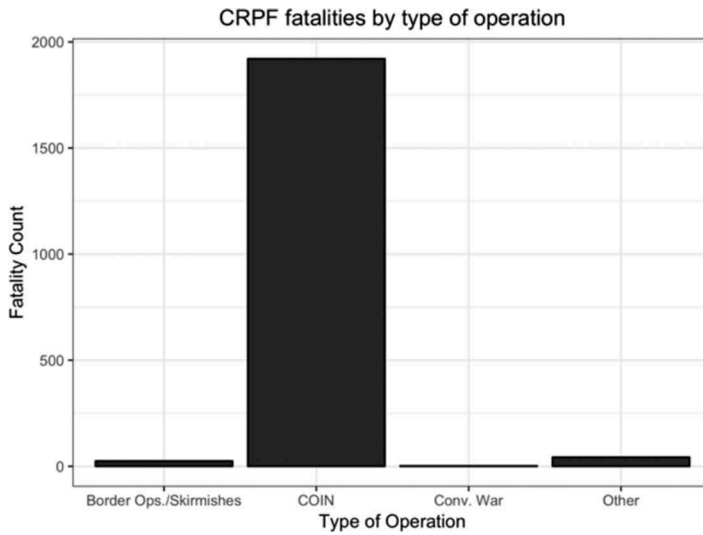


Figure 6. CRPF fatalities by type of operation.

Table 3. Deadliest states, CRPF.

State	# fatalities
Jammu and Kashmir	443
Chhattisgarh	384
Manipur	321
Punjab	197
Assam	151
Tripura	113
Jharkhand	109

CRPF, Central Reserve Political Force.

Table 4. Deadliest districts, CRPF (N/A = 421).

District	# fatalities
Srinagar	207
Dantewada	163
Bijapur	80
Amritsar	50
South Tripura	47
Tarn Taran	43
Narayanpur	39
Pulwama	39
Imphal	37

CRPF, Central Reserve Political Force.

grinding, ongoing operations in the Northeast. We also lack the fine-grained data on district and origin of kin that the MHA publications provide. Nevertheless, we can gain insight into when and where the Army has bled most heavily in internal security operations prior to 1997, reflected in [Figure 7](#) and [Table 5](#).

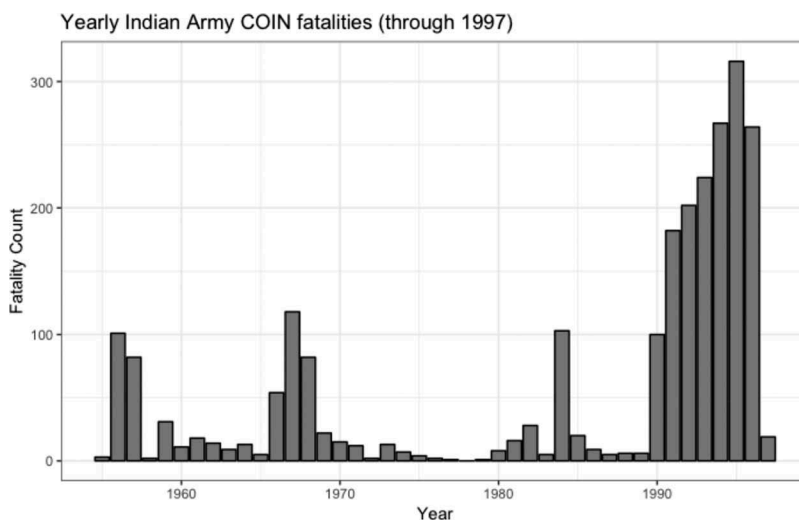
**Figure 7.** Yearly Indian Army Counterinsurgency fatalities (through 1997).

Table 5. Army counterinsurgency deaths by state, 1947–97.

State	# of fatalities
Jammu and Kashmir	1249
Nagaland	568
Mizoram	235
Manipur	128
Punjab	114
Assam	106
Tripura	3
Sikkim	3
East Bengal	1
Total	2408

Police data

In the aggregate, the state police data are the least comprehensive and lowest quality: some states are missing, others have data that is clearly incomplete, or state-level sources conflict with information on the central MHA website on police martyrs. Furthermore the process through which this data has been collected is less clear, in contrast with the CRPF and BSF booklets that had research teams dedicated to the task of compiling fatality information. For instance, the Indian Police website includes a sizable database of individual-level fatality information for each state in India, though it does not indicate the process through which this data has been collected.²² We found similar opacity regarding data collection by state-level police organizations.²³ Nevertheless, we suspect that for certain states, organizational incentives have compelled them to report these fatalities in a relatively comprehensive manner. This means that certain state police figures must be treated with substantial skepticism until more reliable data emerges.

Nevertheless, it is possible to explore broad patterns, and in some instances, within-state analysis is feasible for the few states with relatively high-quality coverage. Table 6 shows the total number of fatalities recorded for each state, the time period for which we appear to have some data, and the yearly number of incidents. Figure 8 displays the states' annual fatalities rate when adjusting for the state's population. The Jammu and Kashmir Police stand out as having been particularly intensely involved in counterinsurgency operations compared to other state forces.

Fatalities by region and conflict setting

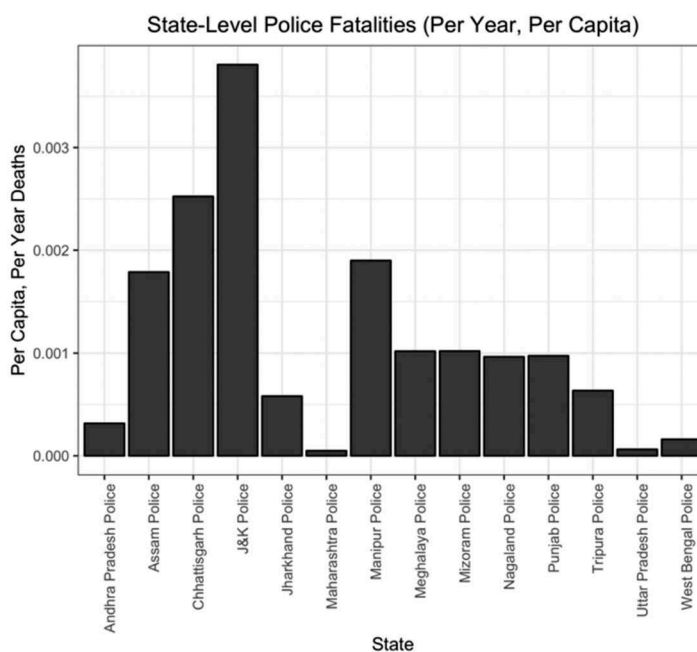
Jammu and Kashmir

Local separatists declaring Kashmir's independence from India initially organized in the late 1980s, crossing into Pakistan for weapons procurement and training.²⁴ The Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF) spearheaded this initial secessionist conflict and recruited young Kashmiri men to join its

Table 6. Overview of STATE POLICE DATA.

State Police Force	Fatalities	Coverage	Fatalities Per Year
Mizoram Police	56	1966–2015	1.12
Nagaland Police	63	1982–2014	1.91
Meghalaya Police	118	1977–2015	3.03
Uttar Pradesh Police	163	2003–15	12.54
West Bengal Police	176	2005–16	14.67
Manipur Police	179	1982–2014	5.42
Maharashtra Police	261	1970–2016	5.55
Jharkhand Police	326	2000–16	19.18
Tripura Police	357	1964–2016	6.74
Assam Police	384	1956–7, 1986–2001	21.33
Punjab Police	1037	1981–2016	28.81
Chhattisgarh Police	1096	2001–17	64.47
Andhra Pradesh Police	1418	1964–2016	26.75
J&K Police	1577	1984–2016	47.79

J&K, Jammu and Kashmir.

**Figure 8.** State-Level Police fatalities (per year, per capita).

ranks and fight for “azadi” (independence) from India. Despite the JKLF’s initial materiel support from Pakistan, this militant group – unlike other Kashmir-based insurgents who would later fight in the region – sought complete independence without acceding into Pakistan.

Our data on Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) Police fatalities suggests that the JKLF-led insurgency escalated in 1990, when nearly 50 J&K police were killed. While not fine-grained enough to show spatial patterns of police fatalities in the region, we are reasonably confident in the temporal

coverage. This initial phase of separatist conflict deescalated as the JKLF fragmented and eventually lost support from its Pakistani sponsors.²⁵ However, other more cohesive insurgent organizations filled the void left in the wake of the JKLF's fragmentation, namely the Hizbul Mujahideen (among others). Unlike the JKLF, among the Hizb's ranks included scores of Pakistani fighters as well as an objective to secede from India and join Pakistan.²⁶ The J&K police fatalities data in [Figure 9](#) suggest that the next phase of the conflict escalated far beyond the levels of violence brought about by JKLF attacks. In both 2000 and 2001, for example, the J&K police suffered 148 fatalities. These trends are echoed by CRPF and BSF fatalities data in [Figure 10](#) as well as the more temporally-limited Indian Army fatalities data in [Figure 11](#). Separatist conflict steadily deescalated since its peak in 2000 and 2001, though recent events in the Kashmir Valley suggest that insurgency may be intensifying.²⁷

[Table 7](#) shows the deadliest districts for the BSF, CRPF, and J&K police to give a sense of the spatial patterns of fatalities over time (N/A refers to fatalities that occurred in J&K about which lack district-level data). District-level data are not provided for the Army fatalities. We see Srinagar as the deadliest district for all three forces – while J&K is generally thought of as a rural insurgency waged in the mountainous periphery, there has also been substantial violence in and around urban areas that is not captured in a rural-focused understanding of the conflict. The spatial patterns of fatalities diverge substantially for the forces afterward, suggesting different force deployments.

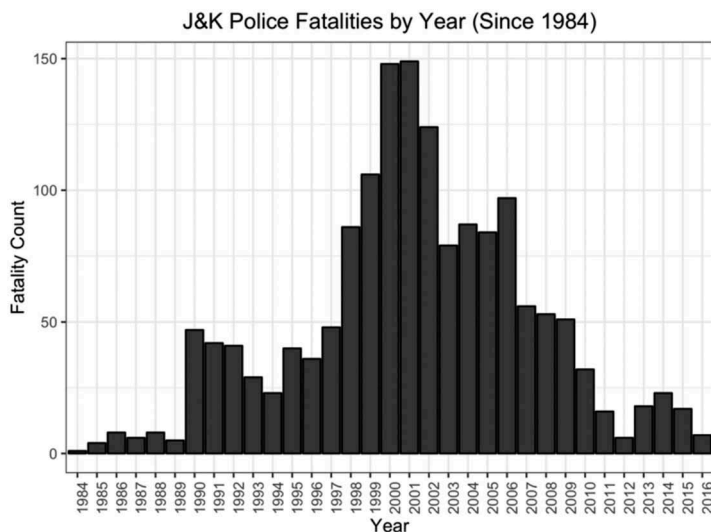


Figure 9. J&K Police fatalities by year (Since 1984).

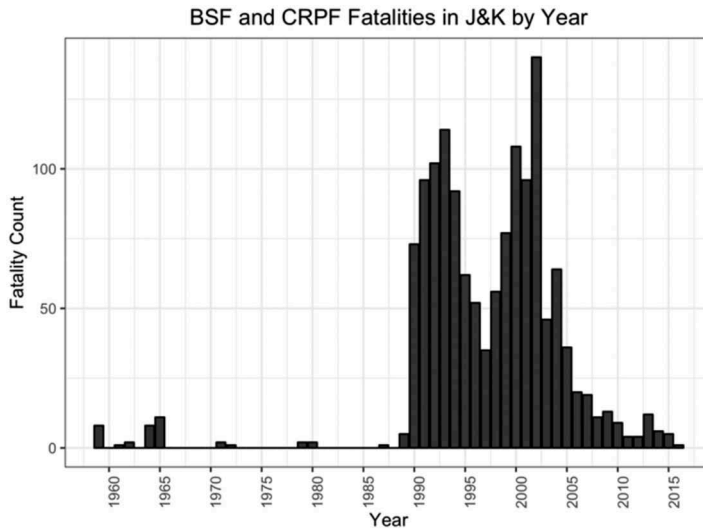


Figure 10. BSF and CRPF fatalities in J&K by year.

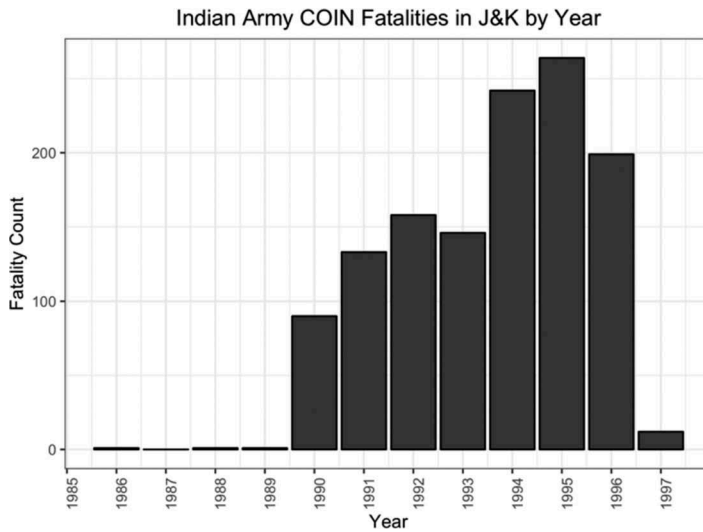


Figure 11. Indian Army Counterinsurgency fatalities in J&K by year.

Table 7. Deadliest districts, J&K.

BSF	CRPF (N/A = 58)	J&K Police (N/A = 300)
Srinagar: 257	Srinagar: 207	Srinagar: 330
Baramulla: 121	Pulwama: 39	Baramulla: 138
Rajouri: 67	Doda: 28	Jammu: 135
Kupwara: 65	Anantnag: 27	Anantnag: 91
Pulwama: 61	Baramulla: 25	Ramban: 81

J&K, Jammu and Kashmir; BSF, Border Security Force; CRPF, Central Reserve Political Force.

Punjab

The fatalities we coded during the period of counterinsurgency in Punjab, India during the 1980s and early 1990s comprises, among all of our data, perhaps the most comprehensive accounting of security force fatalities in a single conflict zone in India. While most conflict settings in India include security force organizations for which we have no data – for example, Assam Rifles in Manipur, Assam, and Nagaland (among other states) – we collected data on counterinsurgency fatalities in Punjab for the Punjab Police, Indian Army, BSF, and CRPF. Unlike the conflict in Jammu and Kashmir, for which we do not have any Indian Army fatalities data after 1997,²⁸ our coverage encompasses the entire conflict for all organizations.

Figures 12 and 13 illustrate the temporal and spatial variation in fighting in Punjab from 1980 to 1995. Figure 14 shows the temporal variation in Punjab police fatalities, in particular, over the same time period. The conflict's intensity reached its peak in 1990 and 1991, but quickly deescalated after the Director General of the Punjab Police coordinated a ruthless counterinsurgency campaign against the Sikh separatist organizations.²⁹ Despite some Sikh militant groups surviving the conflict, their organizational structures were largely decimated, and groups restrict their activities primarily to clandestine organizing without carrying out insurgent attacks.³⁰

Security force fatalities occurred throughout the state but were most heavily concentrated in the northwest districts of Tarn Taran, Amristar, and Gurdaspur. These districts bordering Pakistan also experienced quite high levels of arms

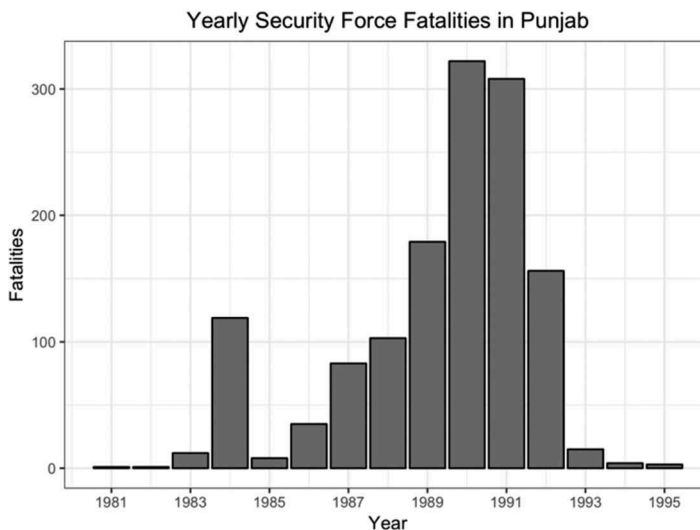


Figure 12. Yearly Security Force fatalities in Punjab.

Security Force Fatalities in Punjab by District (1980-1995)

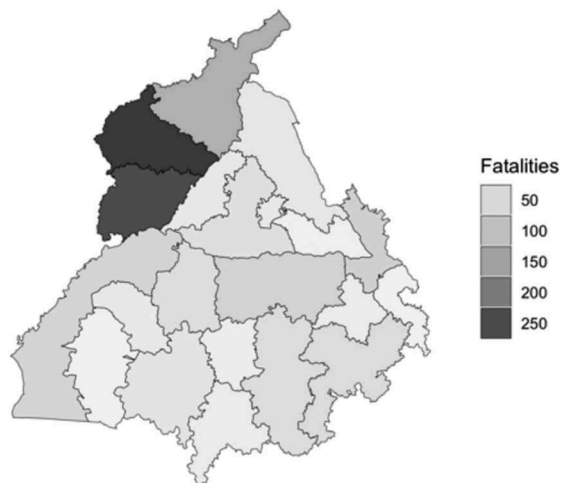


Figure 13. Security Force fatalities in Punjab by district (1980–1995).

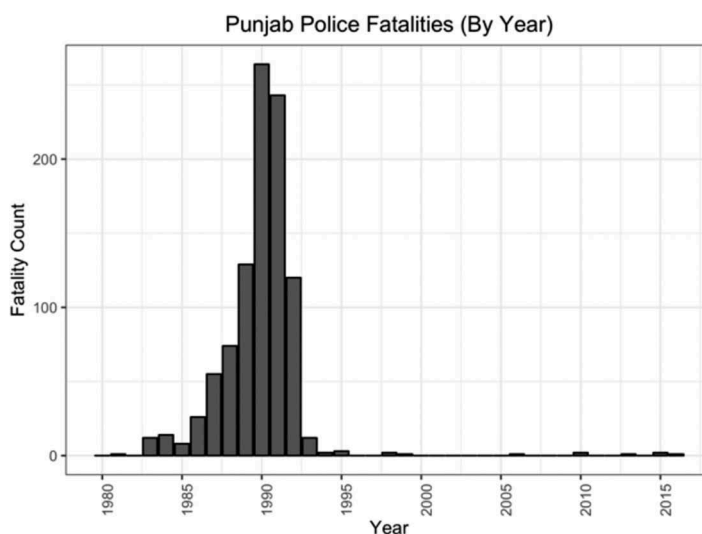


Figure 14. Punjab Police fatalities (by year).

smuggling and other materiel transfers from Pakistan in order to foment the conflict.

Jharkhand

Jharkhand state formed in 2000 when the erstwhile Bihar state split into northern and southern halves, with the southern portion becoming Jharkhand.³¹ Facing numerous governance and conflict challenges,

Jharkhand has contended with Naxalite insurgent activities since its creation. The Jharkhand state police force made available its list of martyrs as well as detailed information regarding the location of each fatality, enabling us to geocode each police personnel casualty. Our police fatalities data (Figures 15 and 16) suggest that insurgent conflict in Jharkhand remained at quite low levels from 2014 to 2016, while the most intense years of conflict occurred in 2002, 2004, and 2008 when 57, 35, and 35 police fatalities occurred in each of those years, respectively. The three districts in Jharkhand with the highest number of police fatalities from 2000 to 2016 are Latehar (41 fatalities), Pashchimi Singhbhum (33 fatalities), and Palamu (32 fatalities). Figure 17 reflects the temporal variation in BSF and CRPF fatalities in the state, in particular, while Figure 18 aggregates data from all security forces' fatalities in Jharkhand.

Chhattisgarh

Southern Chhattisgarh has for decades been a hotbed of fighting between left-wing Naxalite insurgents and numerous Indian security forces. A constellation of left-wing rebel units under the broader banner of the Naxalite movement control territory and maintain civilian governance structures in these localities, most notably in Bastar division in Chhattisgarh.³² The Chhattisgarh police provided granular information on its personnel killed in fighting against Naxalites in the state. Consistent with qualitative accounts of the conflict, most Chhattisgarh police force fatalities are concentrated in the southern part of the state (see Figure 19), Dantewada district in particular. Reflected in Figure 20, fighting in the state reached its most intense stage from 2006 to

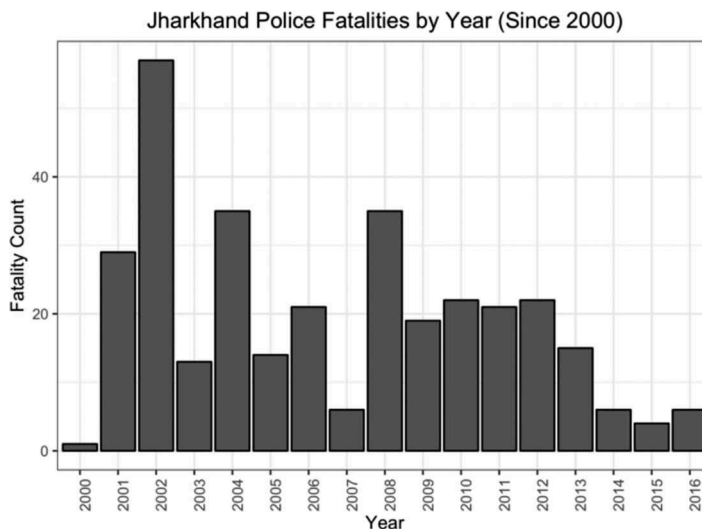


Figure 15. Jharkhand Police fatalities by year (since 2000).

Jharkhand Police Fatalities by District (2000-2016)

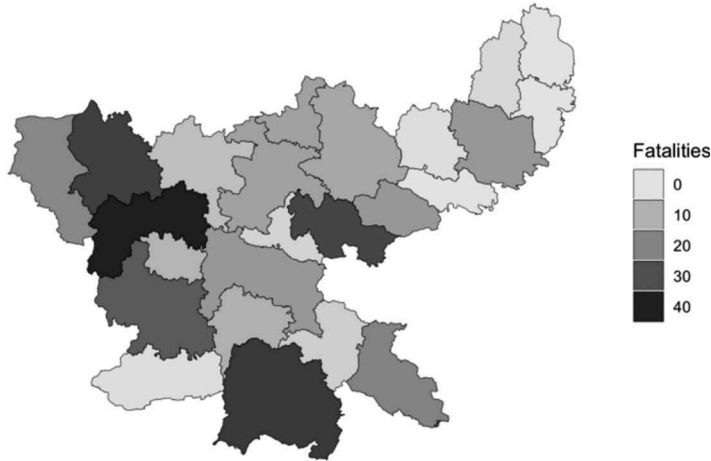


Figure 16. Jharkhand Police fatalities by district (2000–2016).

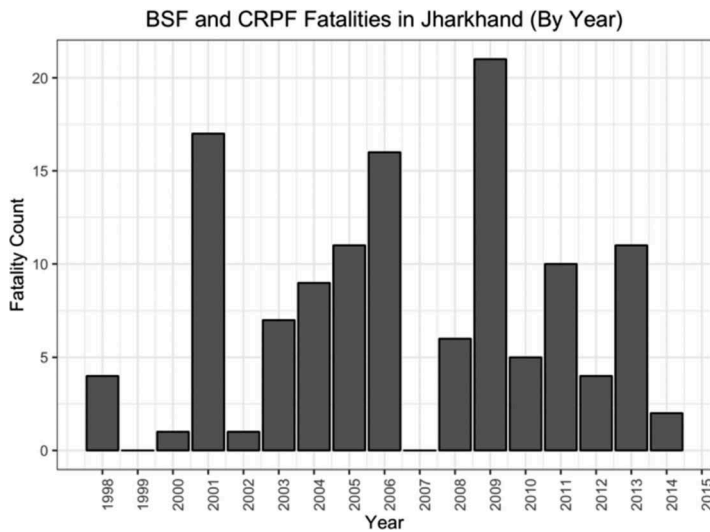


Figure 17. BSF and CRPF fatalities in Jharkhand (by year).

2011 – with over 175 police fatalities in 2007 and 2010 – but has since deescalated to a degree. Central security force fatalities are illustrated in Figure 21, while annual aggregate fatality counts in Chhattisgarh are shown in Figure 22.

Maharashtra

Maharashtra has been the site of fairly substantial Naxalite influence over the decades, above all in the eastern district of Gadchiroli. The Maharashtra Police

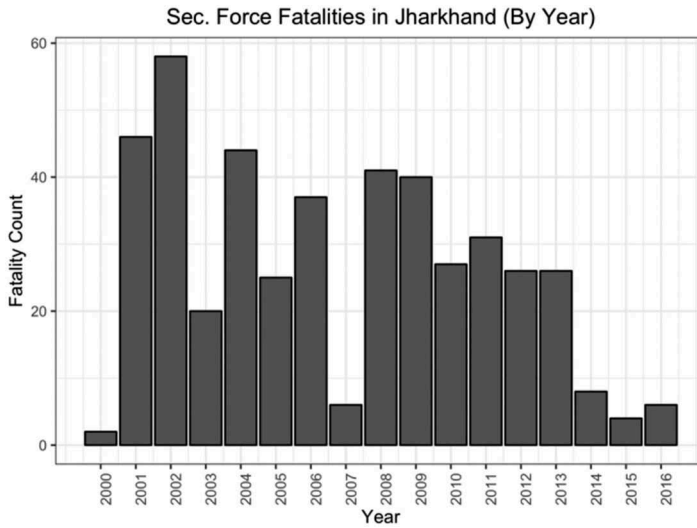


Figure 18. Security Force fatalities in Jharkhand (by year).

Chhattisgarh Police Fatalities by District (2001-2017)

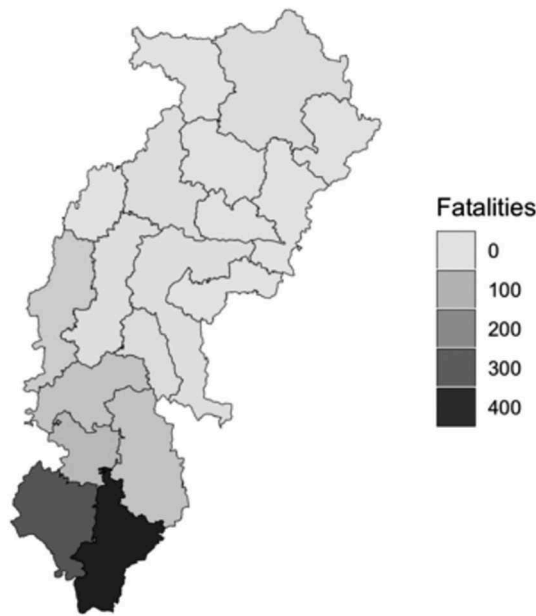


Figure 19. Chhattisgarh Police fatalities by district (2001–2017).

suffered nearly two-thirds of their total fatalities in Gadchiroli in anti-Naxal activities, illustrated by Figure 23. The CRPF has also taken losses in Gadchiroli. Both the state police and CRPF fatalities track the increase in Naxalite operations – and consequent government counterinsurgency – in the 1990s and 2000s (see Figure 24). The rise and subsequent reduction in

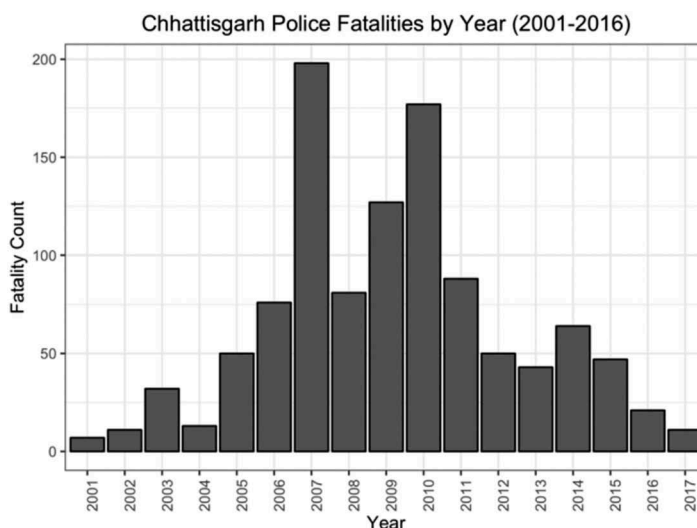


Figure 20. Chhattisgarh Police fatalities by year (2001–2016)

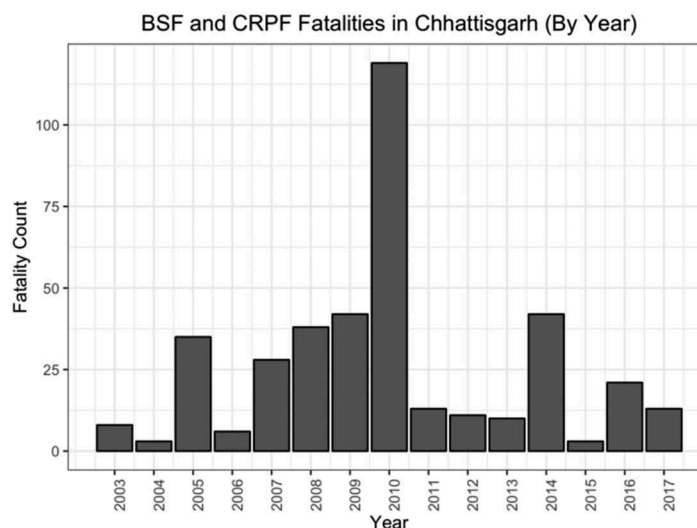


Figure 21. BSF and CRPF fatalities in Chhattisgarh (by year).

Naxalite activities in Gadchiroli is visible in the data for both state police and MHA forces. Furthermore, BSF and CRPF annual fatalities in the state are reflected in Figure 25.

Nagaland

The Naga insurgency escalated less than a decade after India's independence in 1947, as Angami Zapu Phizo led the Naga National Council (NNC) and its

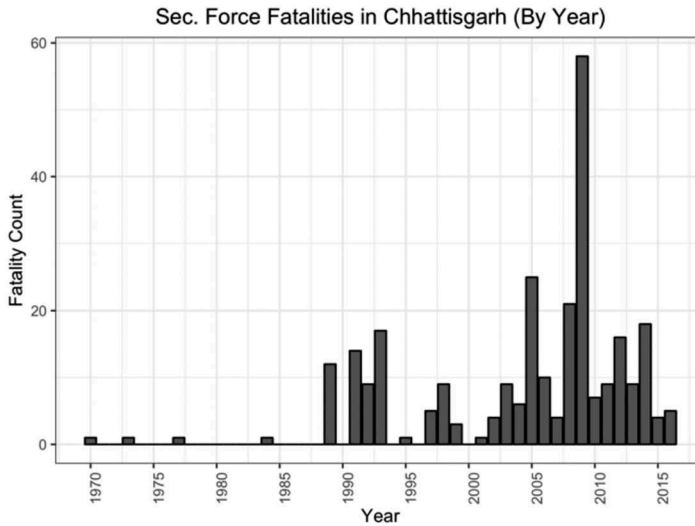


Figure 22. Security for fatalities in Chhattisgarh (by year).

Maharashtra Police Fatalities by District (1971-2016)



Figure 23. Maharashtra Police fatalities by district (1971–2016).

fighting wing, the Naga National Army (NNA), against Indian security forces.³³ While our data lack granular location information regarding each fatality incurred by different Indian security forces, we are generally quite confident that our data paint an accurate picture of the temporal ebbs and flows in the Naga conflict from the mid-1950s through 1997 when the Government of India signed a ceasefire with the main Naga insurgent groups, the National Socialist Council of Nagaland (Isak-Muivah) and (Khaplang) factions and when *Amar Jawan*'s data on Army fatalities end.

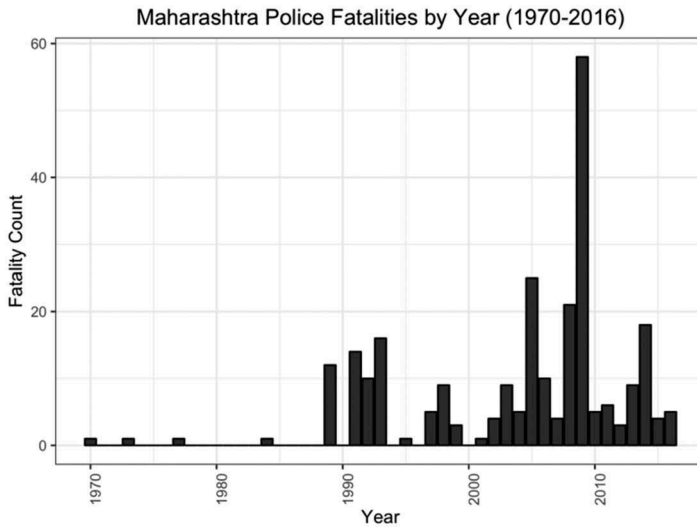


Figure 24. Maharashtra Police fatalities by year (1970–2016).

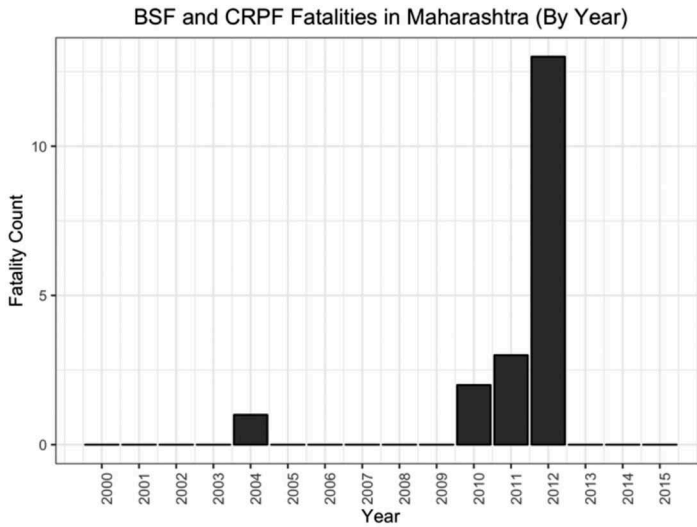


Figure 25. BSF and CRPF fatalities in Maharashtra (by year).

Our data – compiled from BSF, CRPF, Indian Army, and Nagaland Police sources – indicate that the years with the most intense fighting occurred in 1956 and 1957 when 101 and 82 members of these security forces were killed in each respective year (Figure 26). The NNC reached a peace deal with the Indian government in 1975, after which the Naga conflict subsided for several years. After the NSCN(IM) and NSCN(K) formed and intensified their fighting against security forces, the conflict between these new Naga insurgent groups and the Indian government peaked from 1993 to 1996,

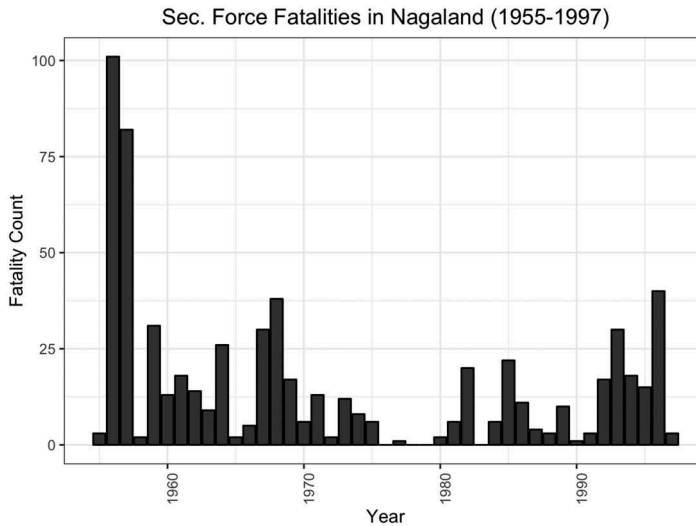


Figure 26. Security Force fatalities in Nagaland (1955–1997).

a period which saw 103 security force members killed in action. We unfortunately lack data on Assam Rifles losses, which surely were quite substantial given the organization’s major role in the Northeast’s conflicts.

Notably, of the data we do have, the Indian Army has borne the heaviest set of losses in Nagaland (Table 8), illustrated by Figure 27, in comparison with the BSF and CRPF losses in the state (Figure 28). The Nagaland Police data – which is likely to be missing substantial data (it is drawn from the MHA site and only extends into the mid-1980s) – show remarkably few losses, especially since approximately 20 of these deaths occurred when deputed to anti-Naxal activities in Chhattisgarh in 2006–7 (see Figure 29). If these data are even remotely accurate, the contrast with the J&K Police and its very deep, lethal involvement in COIN is striking. The generally different posture of COIN operations and much more pervasive ceasefires in Nagaland also play a key role in accounting for this difference.³⁴ We lack substantial data on district-level fatalities for this conflict context.

Table 8. Losses in Nagaland, by security force (1955–97).

Force	# fatalities
Army	568
Nagaland Police	63
CRPF	52
BSF	7

CRPF, Central Reserve Political Force; BSF, Border Security Force.

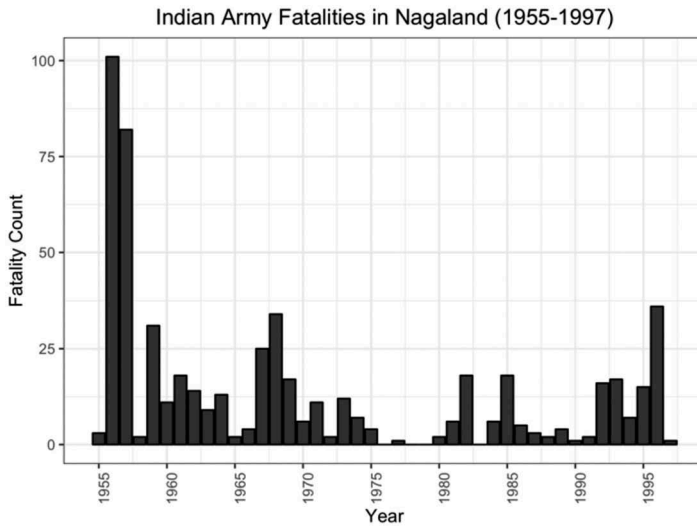


Figure 27. Indian Army Fatalities in Nagaland (1955–1997).

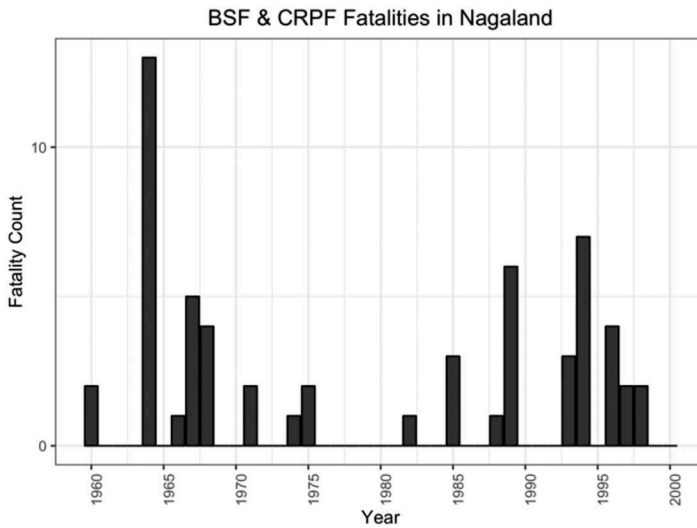


Figure 28. BSF & CRPF fatalities in Nagaland.

Security force demographics

Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) and Border Security Force (BSF)

The CRPF and BSF are comprised of personnel from across India. Despite the relatively broad geographic scope of their personnel recruitment, certain regions within India are overrepresented in both organizations. Information provided in Lok Sabha questioning as well as the demographic information we extracted from the CRPF and BSF martyrs booklets both corroborate and

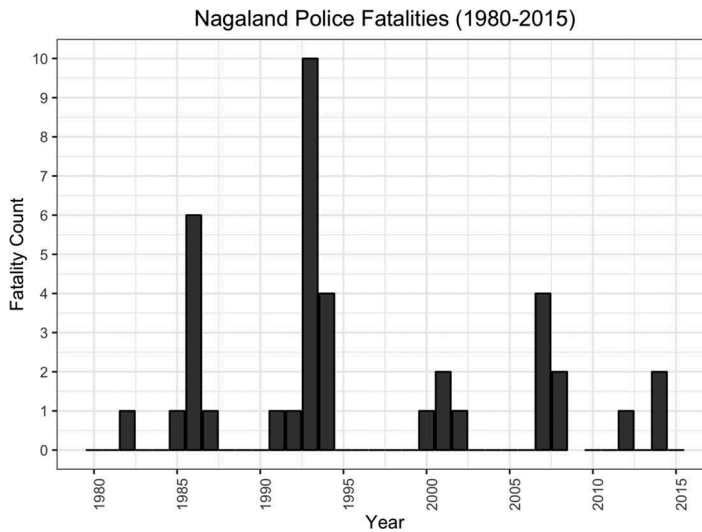


Figure 29. Nagaland Police Fatalities (1980–2015).

undermine each other. It is worth quoting at length the Indian Home Minister’s 2015 response to a question in the Lok Sabha about Central Armed Police Force (CAPF) recruitment:

As per the quota approved by the Cabinet, the vacancies in the rank of [constable] are distributed among the States/Union Territories and also among the Border Districts and militancy affected areas as follows:

- (1) % of vacancies are allotted amongst States/UTs on the basis of population ratio.
- (2) % of vacancies in the Border Guarding Forces (BGFs) (BSF, ITBP, SSB, & Assam Rifles) are allotted to border districts, which fall within the responsibility of the Force.
- (3) % of vacancies in BGFs are allotted to areas affected by militancy i.e. J & K, North Eastern States and naxal affected areas. The districts/areas affected by militancy are notified by the Government from time to time.
- (4) In Forces, other than BGFs, 40% vacancies are allotted to militancy affected areas, i.e., J&K, North Eastern States and naxal affected areas. The districts/areas affected by militancy are notified by the Government from time to time.³⁵

The CRPF martyr booklet included information on each personnel’s state – and sometimes district and village – of origin. Using these details, [Figure 30](#) plots each Indian state’s percentage of the total population of India against the proportion of CRPF members killed in action from that particular state. States

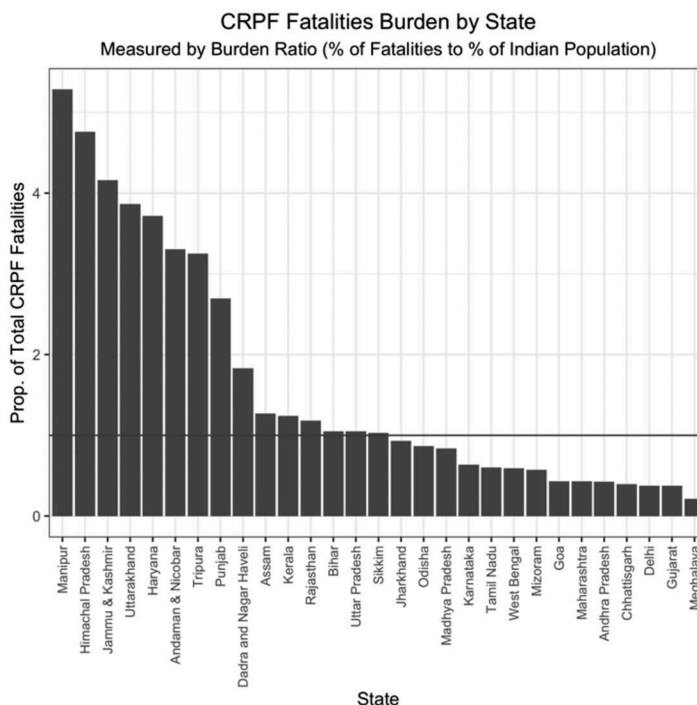


Figure 30. CRPF fatalities burden by state.

that are overrepresented in the CRPF lie above the black horizontal line. As expected, several states that have experienced extended periods of militancy are overrepresented, namely, Tripura, Manipur, Jammu & Kashmir, Punjab, and Bihar. However, states like Haryana, Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, and Himachal Pradesh are overrepresented in the CRPF fatalities despite not being the “militancy affected areas” that warrant disproportionate recruitment for CRPF. Some of the most underrepresented states include Gujarat, Maharashtra, Chhattisgarh, and Andhra Pradesh. That the latter two are underrepresented is particularly surprising given the Lok Sabha source indicating that these Naxalite affected areas should be overrepresented in the CRPF.

BSF data (Figure 31) is less reliable in the early decades in providing demographic information, but we see similar disproportionality. The intentional over-recruitment of border states, many of which have also experienced conflict, and what we suspect are historical networks of recruitment in traditional martial states has driven a large divergence in the social base of the BSF compared to India’s overall population. Haryana, Punjab, J&K, Rajasthan, and Uttarakhand stand out in their over-representation, while large states like Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, and Tamil Nadu are substantially under-represented. As with the CRPF and Army, of course, there are

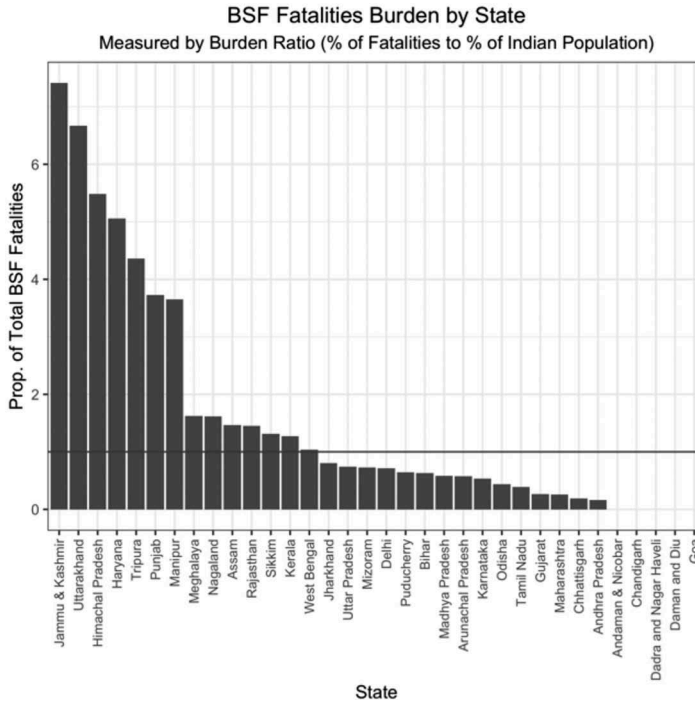


Figure 31. BSF fatalities burden by state.

exceptions: Kerala is slightly over-represented and Bihar slightly under-represented, for instance.

The Indian Army

The demographic composition of the Indian Army has been an object of deep interest because of its implications for Hindu-Muslim relations, regional presence, and civil-military dynamics.³⁶ The Army, however, resists such inquiry because of its concern over introducing divisiveness and politics into its internal organization. The *Amar Jawan* book we use to gather Army data includes no demographic data, unlike the BSF/CRPF publications.

However, the Ministry of Defence has been repeatedly approached by politicians asking for information on the composition of the Army, which provides some rough indication of the state-level breakdown of the force, with the caveat that we do not have direct access to the government's Recruitable Male Population assessment that would guide recruitment. Thus, we can only broadly assess proportionality within India's overall male population. Figure 32 uses an MOD answer to a Lok Sabha question on the location of ex-servicemen to identify which states are over/under-represented as a function of their proportion of the Indian population.³⁷

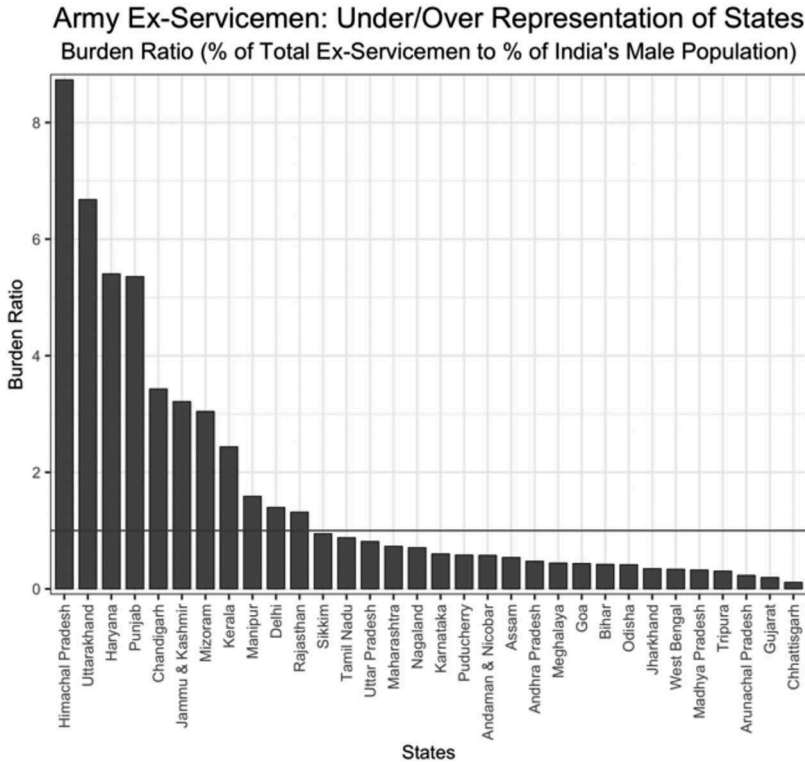


Figure 32. Army ex-servicemen: under/over representation of states.

Traditional “martial” areas of north India, as well as border states, are over-represented. From South India, Kerala punches above its demographic weight.

This is aggregate data that does not capture change over time. However, there is some evidence that there remains over/under-representation. Data on the state/UT-level recruitment of JCOs and other ranks (not officers) for recruiting years 2011–12, 2012–13, and 2013–14 continues to show imbalances, even when accounting for male population as a share of total population.³⁸ The Northeast, Uttarakhand, J&K, Punjab, and Kerala are over-represented in these data; states of south, central and western India are comparatively under-represented, though there is substantial heterogeneity. While it can be hard to tell exactly what the composition of the Army is at any given point in time, our findings align with Wilkinson’s argument that there remain deep imbalances in its composition.

These findings for the Army, BSF, and CRPF show the extent to which different parts of Indian society disproportionately bear the burden and reap the rewards of security force service. While these are very crude and purely spatial measures (caste, religion, and socioeconomic class would be other

important data), they reveal the extent to which a mix of intentional recruitment strategies and historical legacies have built security forces that are not representative of India. Whether this is a problem or not is of course a different question, but the findings open new research and policy questions about the causes and consequences of these regional imbalances in the composition of the security apparatus.

Future research directions

Understanding the history of political violence in India requires a broad mix of evidence, from detailed qualitative case studies to ethnography to large-scale quantitative data collection projects based on media reporting. Our contribution in this article is comparatively modest, but provides an additional source of insight. By taking advantage of new and/or under-used official and semi-official government sources, we have been able to offer new evidence of where and when Indian security forces died in internal security operations. The data are of the highest quality for the BSF and CRPF, followed by the Army, and then by the quite scattered and uneven state police forces. These data show spatial and temporal patterns in the loss of life by security forces, providing an imperfect but useful proxy for the intensity of political violence across time and space within India. They also offer new evidence about the composition of the enormous MHA internal security apparatus, especially the BSF and CRPF, which have been studied far less than the Army.

These data can be used in several ways moving forward. First, at the most basic level, they can be compared to other data sources on political violence in India to improve the quality of information we have about the human costs of conflict. The challenges of generating careful and thorough data on violence in conflict zones are enormous and increasingly well understood. Relying on thinktank datasets or press reports can create a wide variety of biases. We are reasonably confident in the BSF, CRPF, and Army data, and comparing these in a systematic and fine-grained way to existing data sources can increase or decrease our confidence in the quality of these other sources.

Second, these data can be integrated with evidence on civilian and militant deaths to explore the inter-relationship of these forms of violence. For instance, we can ask when and to what extent high levels of security force casualties correspond to high levels of civilian victimization and when instead civilian casualties are disproportionately higher than security forces losses; the same kinds of ratios can be explored (though with caveats about the quality of our data on militant deaths) when it comes to state-armed group confrontations. This data can also help us understand less violent state-group interactions; it may allow us to trace in a more fine-grained way the peaks and valley of cooperation, negotiations, and clashes in places like Nagaland and Manipur where violence waxes and wanes.

Third, these data can be treated as a dependent variable to combine with spatial and temporal data on variables like economic development, state presence and infrastructure, colonial legacies, geography, and electoral politics that may affect where we see the greatest level of security force losses. Recent studies have sought to capitalize on the “micro-turn” in political violence research, aiming to use sub-national data to explore the dynamics of violence at the local level.

Fourth, and more ambitiously, we need to study the relationship between ethnic imbalances in security forces and broader questions of representation and responsibility. We have plausibly shown quite substantial regional imbalances in the composition of India’s enormous internal security forces, which Wilkinson has argued is also true of the Indian Army.³⁹ These imbalances are in part intentional efforts to get recruits from affected areas, whether along borders or in conflict zones, and in part historical legacies. But regardless of their sources, it is worth exploring more deeply their consequences: do different regions view security differently as a result of differential exposure to security force involvement? What are the political and economic implications of radically different proportions of veterans and their families across states? What happens to democratic accountability when a subset of a country is disproportionately exposed to the costs and benefits of security force service?

Acknowledgments

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Notes

1. Ralph Sundberg and Erik Melander, “Introducing the UCDP Georeferenced Event Dataset,” *Journal of Peace Research* 50, no. 4 (2013): 523–32.

2. See, for example: 2018. “India Fatalities: 1994–2018,” South Asia Terrorism Portal, <http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/countries/india/database/indiafatalities.htm>.
3. We accessed all online data sources between June 2016 and January 2018. These include the state-level police martyrs websites as well as the central government’s online database of police martyrs.
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6. Ministry of Home Affairs, *Warriors Remembered*, 262.
7. Ministry of Home Affairs (Government of India), *BSF Martyrs: A Legacy of Pride and Valour* (New Delhi: Border Security Force (BSF), 2015), 35, <http://bsf.nic.in/doc/martyrs/e-book.pdf>.
8. Ministry of Home Affairs (Government of India), *Indian Police In Service of the Nation: Martyrs* (New Delhi: DGP/IGP Conference Secretariat, Ministry of Home Affairs, 2018), https://police.gov.in/content/martyr-detail/view_all_martyr.php.
9. For more details on all state-based martyr documents and websites used when developing this dataset, see Appendix Section I.
10. K.K. Nayyar, *Amar Jawan: A Book of Remembrance in Memory of Our Soldiers, Sailors, and Airmen Who Laid Down their Lives in Defence of their Country, India, 1947–1997* (Bombay: India Book House, 1997).
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13. For more on these biases in conflict data, see: Nils B. Weidmann, “A Closer Look at Reporting Bias in Conflict Event Data,” *American Journal of Political Science* 60, no. 1 (2016): 206–18.
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15. These binary indicators reflect overlap in the sources when we most recently worked with them and are subject to change in future iterations of the dataset when the MHA and state-level organizations update their archives.
16. Kapur, Devesh, “The Worrying Rise of Militarisation in India’s Central Armed Police Forces,” *The Print*, November 29, 2017, <https://theprint.in/opinion/worrying-rise-militarisation-indias-central-armed-police-forces/19132/>.
17. Ministry of Home Affairs, *Annual Report: 2016-17*, 176.
18. Ministry of Home Affairs (Government of India), *BSF Martyrs: A Legacy of Pride and Valour* (New Delhi: Directorate General, Border Security Force, 2015), <http://bsf.nic.in/doc/martyrs/e-book.pdf>.

19. For instance, see the following quote: “My sincere thanks are due to Shri KK Sharma, IPS, ADG(Ops) BSF and Shri Rajni Kant Mishra, IPS, ADG(HR) BSF for their valuable guidance and encouragement to make this endeavor a success. Not to mention Shri OS Jha, DIG, Faculty of Studies and his team for initial compilation of the data. Shri AD Abdali, DIG (IT), Shri P Koshy, DC (IT) for IT related support for data collection and compilation without whose efforts, this task could not have been accomplished. My heartfelt thanks to Ftr IsG and Commandants of all the Bns for sending valuable information regarding our Martyrs in a short span of time. My thanks to Shri AS Malik, DIG (Adm), Shri SS Chandel, Comdt (Coord), Shri Sanjay Sharma, 2IC (Adm) and staff of Adm branch for their painstaking and sustained efforts for fruition of this magnum opus ‘BSF Martyrs – A Legacy of Pride and Valour’”: MHA, *BSF Martyrs*, iv.
20. Ministry of Home Affairs, *Warriors Remembered*.
21. Press Information Bureau (Government of India), “PM releases book commemorating martyrs of CRPF, on Police Commemoration Day,” New Delhi, 2015, <http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=129896>.
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23. Punjab Police (State Government of Punjab), “Martyr’s Gallery,” Chandigarh, Punjab, 2018, <http://www.punjabpolice.gov.in/Martyrgallery.aspx>.
24. Overviews of the conflict include Manoj Joshi, *The Lost Rebellion: Kashmir in the Nineties* (New Delhi: Penguin India, 1999); Sumit Ganguly, *The Crisis in Kashmir: Portents of War, Hopes of Peace* (Washington, D.C.: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 1997); Sumantra Bose, *Kashmir: Roots of Conflict, Paths to Peace* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003); Paul Staniland, *Networks of Rebellion: Explaining Insurgent Cohesion and Collapse* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2014).
25. For example, see: David Devadas, *In Search of a Future: The Story of Kashmir* (New Delhi: Viking, 2007).
26. Joshi, *The Lost Rebellion*, 77.
27. “Jammu and Kashmir: Encounters Fuel Militant Hiring, Says Official Report,” *Indian Express*, June 9, 2018, <https://indianexpress.com/article/india/jammu-and-kashmir-encounters-fuel-militant-hiring-says-official-report-ramzan-ceasefire-burhan-wani-5196477/>; “Kashmir Saw 44% Increase in Local Youths Joining Militancy, Says Mehbooba Mufti,” *Indian Express*, February 6, 2018, <https://indianexpress.com/article/india/kashmir-saw-44-increase-in-local-youths-joining-militancy-says-mehbooba-mufti-5053439/>.
28. The Amar Jawan source only documents fatalities until 1997.
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37. Lok Sabha starred question no.223. to be answered on March 17, 2017, welfare of ex-servicemen.
38. Annexure: I referred in the reply given in part (a) of Lok Sabha unstarred question no. 140 for answer on 18.7.2014.
39. Wilkinson, *Army and Nation*.

Appendix

Section I: Sources of all fatalities information

BSF Martyrs: A Legacy of Pride and Valor, Border Security Force, Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India, 2015 <<http://bsf.nic.in/doc/martyrs/e-book.pdf>>

CRPF Warriors Remembered, Volumes I-IV, Central Reserve Police Force, Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India < <https://www.crfp.gov.in/CRPF-Veer-Gatha.htm>>

Martyrs Gallery, Meghalaya Police, Government of Meghalaya < <http://megpolice.gov.in/rollhonour.html>>

Martyrs of Indian Police, DGPs/IGPs Conference Secretariat, Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India <https://police.gov.in/content/martyr-detail/view_all_martyr.php>

Martyr of Assam Police, Assam Police, Government of Assam < <http://www.assampolice.gov.in/martyr-front.php>>

Martyrs, Manipur Police, Government of Manipur < http://globizsdemo.com/manipolice/?page_id=8>

Martyrs List, Andhra Pradesh Police, Government of Andhra Pradesh < <http://www.appolice.gov.in/jsp/martyrsList.jsp>>

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Police Martyrs, Jharkhand Police, Government of Jharkhand < <https://jhpolicy.gov.in/police-martyrs>>

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Salute to Martyrs, Tripura Police, Government of Tripura < <http://www.tripurapolice.gov.in/martyrs-police>>

“Salute to our Heros [sic], Parts I and II”, Maharashtra Police, Government of Maharashtra < <http://mahapolice.gov.in/Martyrs>>

Section II: ISFF dataset variable names:

battalion: battalion number/name

registration: registration number/code

rank: rank within respective security force

name: name of killed security force member

date_full: full date of fatality, with month, year, and day combined

month: month of fatality

day: day of month when fatality occurred

year: year of fatality

multi_year_bin: binary indicator of whether the government source included two years for the fatality date (0 if no; 1 if yes)

state_incident: Indian state where fatality occurred (using map of India at the time of the incident)

state_current: Indian state where fatality occurred (using current map of India)

vill_city_town: village, city, or town where fatality occurred

district: district where fatality occurred

type_ops: type of operation

urban_rural: indicates whether fatality occurred in urban or rural area

hostile_actor: alleged hostile actor carrying out the fatality

orig_state_incident: Origin of kin, State, using map of India at the time of the incident

orig_state_current: Origin of kin, State, using current map of India

orig_district: Origin of kin, district

notes: additional notes – e.g. links to original government sources

lat: latitude of incident

lon: longitude of incident

state_pol_bin: binary indicator of whether the fatality was listed in state-level police force source

mha_bin: binary indicator of whether the fatality was listed in MHA source

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