

Mining, Displacement and Conflict in Maoist India

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Abstract:

This multi-methods thesis presents the hypothesis that revolutionary conflicts in federal democracies have unique characteristics that are distinguishable from other types of civil wars. To test this hypothesis, I examined how India's federal framework and natural resource extraction policies influenced local and national dimensions of the long-running Maoist conflict in central India. The relationship between mining, conflict and development was studied to explore how governments, insurgent groups, non-state actors and citizens acted in revolutionary conflict. I found that decentralization of political power to local elites encouraged policies that favored their personal gain, negatively affecting social cohesion, land rights and development schemes. This also encouraged companies in the conflict zone to use conflict-related loopholes within India's federal democratic structures for corporate gain. Political prioritization of mining interests bolstered Maoist support in terms of ideological backing, funding, and recruitment, and increased violence and conflict intensity. Grievances were rooted in the vertical inequalities that pro-mining policies created, and the Maoists capitalized on how mining activities exacerbated horizontal inequalities against Scheduled Caste/Scheduled Tribe communities. The five articles that constitute this thesis assess these conflict dynamics from the micro- to macro- levels of analysis.