



India's wild East: crime and politics in resource extraction

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ABSTRACT:

In the 21st century, many parts of the South Asian subcontinent are being conquered by unruly, illegal, forms of capital. Unlike the Wild West 'the Wild East' is developing after several decades of electoral democracy and functioning states; it is not a territorial expansion but an expansion of commodities and raw materials for energy and construction. Whereas the Wild West saw a vast expansion of settler farming, hunting, mining trade and transport and of values of settler equality and democracy, the wild east brings with its expansion the opposite: environmental degradation and predatory politics. But like the Wild West, the Wild East is continuously on the move. Driven by profit; it brings social transformations in its wake; in many parts of India, for example, it is coercing local tribal people into the labour force, destroying their resource base.

In this talk, four case studies will be presented : illegal coal and fire in Jharkhand; illegal riverbed sand in Tamil Nadu and hydro-criminality in the Himalaya of Arunachal. The economic structure and labour processes of criminal resource extraction will be related to party political funding and behaviour. In each case admitting criminal politics challenges the orthodox narrative of the politics of these states.

READING LIST:

Berenschot, W. (2011) 'On the Usefulness of Goondas in Indian Politics: 'Moneypower' and 'Musclepower' in a Gujarati Locality', *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies*, 34(2): 255-275

Harriss-White, B. (2003) '*India working: essays on society and economy*', Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

Jaffrelot, C. (2002) 'Indian Democracy: the Rule of Law on Trial', *India Review*, 1(1): 77-121

Jha P. S. (2013) 'How did India become a predatory state?' unpubd

Kumar, A. (2014) '*Criminalisation of politics*', Delhi: Rawat Publications

Michelutti, L . A. Hoque, N. Martin, D. Picherit, P. Rollier, A. Ruud and C. Still. (n.d) *Mafia Raj: The Rule of Bosses in South Asia* (Unpublished Manuscript)