

Migdal, J. S. (1988). *Strong societies and weak states: State–society relations and state capabilities in the Third World*. Princeton University Press.

Sellers, J. M. (2011). State-society relations. In M. Bevir (Ed.), *The Sage handbook of governance* (pp. 124–141). Sage.

Vincent Ekow Arkorful

*Department of Government and International
Studies, Hong Baptist University
Kowloon Tong, Hong Kong
E-mail: saintvincentino@gmail.com*

Anshuman Behera and Hippu Salk Kristle Nathan, *Negotiating Development at the Margins: Natural Resources, Conflicts, and People’s Movements in Odisha*. Routledge, 2023. 148 pp., ₹1,295. ISBN: 9781032425245 (Hardback).

DOI: 10.1177/09722661241260626

As opposed to a crude categorisation of all conflicts present in the major tribal-inhabited, resource-rich areas of the state of Odisha as a security or a law-and-order problem related to Maoist violence, a standpoint that dominates both the state response and much scholarly engagement with the topic, *Negotiating Development at the Margins* attempts to look at the multiplicity of the nature of conflicts that abound the region, through the perspective of resource deprivation and subsequent alienation of the native populations. In doing so, it takes a step back from our assumptions of linking development with mere economic indicators and questions the sustainability of the approach of prioritising resource harnessing over people’s wellbeing, especially in the sensitive ecologies of the Scheduled Areas of Odisha.

Pointing out that it is no coincidence that the tribals make up a mere 8% of the population, yet account for over half of the Internally Displaced Population due to development projects, Behera and Nathan attribute this systematic and continuous deprivation to three factors of manipulation of land records, illegal transfer of land to non-tribals and encroachment and interference by government officials, private contractors and, at times, local Maoist leadership. The effect of this nexus is especially manifold on the already vulnerable tribals. Even though Behera and Nathan do point to the Constitutional safeguards, such as the PESA Act or the Right to Fair Compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement Act of 2013 in particular, which include procedures to make sure that the development of such tribal areas is inclusive and participatory in nature, a significant portion of the book details cases of faulty application of such laws, which is highlighted as a cause of continuous suffering of the tribal population. A case detailed is that of Utkal Alumina International Limited (UAIL) in the Rayagada district, which brazenly ignored the opposition and large-scale mobilisation by the Prakrutika Sampad Suraksha Parishada (PSSP) that passed a referendum with 96% villagers in opposition to the project. Consultation with the

Palli Sabha (at Gram Sabha level in villages) and the consent of at least 80% of the affected population, procedures guaranteed by the aforementioned Acts, were not honoured, with no exception to the routine marginalisation of the tribal population.

However, some cases of successful and democratic movements by the tribals have been brought forth. A case highlighted is that of Niyamgiri Movement against the establishment of the Vedanta Aluminium Refinery in the Kalahandi district, where non-violent protests were carried out by the locals forming human chains around the Niyamgiri Hills, against the green signal the project had received from the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change. Highlighting the different and sometimes competitive approaches adopted by various levels and arms of the state as well, the book delineates how the locals had to face the State Government of Odisha, who took the matter to the Supreme Court. What Behera and Nathan underline by pointing out such details is the patchy nature of development where each case is negotiated and appealed through mobilisation and, at times, violent protests even after the presence of Constitutional safeguards that should otherwise have sufficed.

The locals do not see the rampant exploitation of the resources as a mere loss of ownership of land and resources in question, but rather as an attack on their identity too. In many cases, such as the Niyamgiri Movement, the hills were considered the abode of the local deity and therefore the source of identity for the locals. Such contextualisation helps the reader to view the responses from the tribals to such developmental activities as 'people's movements'. Behera and Nathan underscore the need to delink the tribal movements from the Maoist violence and rather look at them as grassroots mobilisations against a continuous cycle of resource deprivation that they are caught in. Pointing out the paradox, they trace that most development projects are of the least benefit to the tribals, who are appeased under the emotional appeal of 'sacrificing for nation building' but evidently not only end up losing ownership but also face multiple displacements as well as unfair, delayed or no compensation and rehabilitation in the aftermath of the commencement of large-scale development projects. A striking contribution of the book is how it sheds light on heterogeneity within the marginalised sections such as the tribals and the Dalits, as in the Kandhas–Dambas conflict, who are involved, not ironically, in competition and conflict over resources with each other, despite being in a state of marginalisation given their relative position of precarity compared to land-owning classes and castes, respectively. Such narratives are either understudied or lumped together to suit a security-driven narrative that sees all as factions within Maoists. Behera and Nathan bring out the relative deprivation each section faces around the socio-economic situations, land ownership in particular, which can offer better explanations for such long-sustaining community clashes.

The book lays special emphasis on the philosophy of Shankar Guha Niyogi, which moves beyond the mere application of revolutionary ideas of Marxism or new social movement theory but rather acknowledges the right of the tribals in mobilising against injustice and exploitation while adding an important component of constructive work that must accompany any peaceful movement. Along the same lines, Behera and Nathan offer recommendations that call for fairer

implementation of Constitutional Acts along with a deeper and democratic understanding of the rights such Acts guarantee the tribal population. In doing so, the book emphasises the need of political reforms on all levels, wherein the established networks of tribal associations can be used for awareness and not just to be labelled as security threats that are to be dealt with force or dismissed.

ORCID iD

Zarnain Manzoor  <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1414-2491>

Zarnain Manzoor

*National Institute of Advanced Studies
The University of Trans-Disciplinary
Health Sciences and Technology (TDU)
Bengaluru, India
E-mail: zarnainmanzoor56@gmail.com*