

Resource Extraction and Internal Displacement: Drivers of Conflict in India's Mineral Belt

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Abstract

Background: India's central-eastern mineral belt, which spans Odisha, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh and adjoining districts, holds much of the country's coal, iron ore and bauxite. It also holds a large share of its Scheduled Tribe population, its densest forest cover and its most persistent armed conflict. Public debate often reduces this overlap to a single story, either "development versus insurgency" or "greed versus grievance". This paper tests whether either story survives scrutiny.

Methods: A scoping review was conducted following PRISMA-ScR conventions. First, a 117-record bibliography supplied by the commissioning author was audited. Records were screened for topical relevance, and 38 were retained and thematically charted. Second, 52 purposively selected external sources (peer-reviewed studies, monographs, official reports, statutes and judgments) were added to build a comparative evidence base. Comparative case analysis was then applied to eight Indian sites and four international cases.

Results: The evidence indicates that conflict in the belt is not produced by minerals as such. It is produced by the interaction of five conditions: (i) coercive or consent-deficient land acquisition, (ii) a rent geography captured by politically connected intermediaries, (iii) a gap between statutory protections and administrative practice, (iv) the failure of extractive industries to absorb displaced labour, and (v) a security-state response that criminalises dissent. These conditions form a self-reinforcing displacement–conflict feedback loop. Quantitative studies of the Maoist conflict support livelihood and institutional channels over simple resource-greed explanations, and international comparisons show that the pattern is neither uniquely Indian nor inevitable.

Conclusion: Displacement should be treated as a causal driver of conflict, not merely an unfortunate by-product of mining. Durable de-escalation requires consent-based land governance, enforceable benefit-sharing, transparent rent administration and demilitarised conflict management.

Keywords: internal displacement; resource extraction; mineral belt; India; resource curse; Adivasi; Maoist conflict; land acquisition; Forest Rights Act; political ecology

1. Introduction

India holds substantial reserves of coal, iron ore, bauxite, manganese and other minerals. Since the economic liberalisation of the early 1990s, and especially after the commodity upswing of the 2000s, successive governments have treated their rapid exploitation as a pillar of industrial growth and energy security [1]. The geology is distributed unevenly across the country, and the districts that sit on the richest deposits are not randomly located. They lie largely in forested, upland, historically peripheral regions that are home to a disproportionate share of India's Scheduled Tribes, who constitute roughly 8.6 per cent of the national population [2]. This overlap between subsoil wealth and human marginality is the empirical starting point for this paper.

The scale of displacement associated with development projects in India is large and contested. A widely cited estimate attributes some sixty million displacements to development projects between 1947 and 2004, with around two-fifths of those affected being tribal people [3]. Mining accounts for a smaller share of that total than dams or industrial estates, on the order of a few million people on the same estimates. Yet extractive displacement has distinctive features. It is spatially concentrated in the same districts repeatedly, it removes land that cannot be replaced by an equivalent plot elsewhere, and it combines physical eviction with the slow degradation of water, air and forest on which neighbouring households depend.

Official and civil-society assessments have long identified this pattern. A government expert group reporting to the Planning Commission linked the spread of left-wing extremism to land alienation, forest-rights violations, displacement and the weakness of local governance in tribal areas [4]. Independent assessments documented the environmental and social costs of mining expansion and the weakness of regulatory oversight [5,6]. Judicial commissions of inquiry later documented large-scale illegal mining in iron and manganese ore, with sizeable losses to the public exchequer [7]. These sources agree on a descriptive claim, namely that the mineral belt is a zone of overlapping dispossession, rent extraction and violence. They disagree on causal ordering and on remedy.

The international literature offers competing frames. The "resource curse" tradition holds that natural-resource wealth can increase the risk of weak institutions, authoritarianism and civil conflict, although the findings depend heavily on resource type, institutional context and measurement [8]. The "greed and grievance" debate asks whether rebellion is driven by opportunities to capture resource rents or by injustice felt by aggrieved groups [9], while political-ecology scholarship stresses the geography of resources, such as their location, concentration and lootability, in shaping the form that conflict takes [10]. A critical political-economy strand reads extraction as "accumulation by dispossession", in which enclosure of commons and the displacement of existing users enable capital accumulation [11]. Resettlement scholarship, in turn, provides a risk framework for what displacement does to people, identifying landlessness, joblessness, homelessness, marginalisation, food insecurity, morbidity, loss of common property and social disarticulation as recurrent impoverishment risks [12].

These frames have rarely been brought together systematically for the Indian mineral belt, and they have rarely been tested against adjacent literatures on displacement in other settings. Recent regional scholarship on climate-induced migration and urban fragility in South Asia argues that displacement frontiers are multiplying and that their governance remains weak [13]. Systematic evidence on refugees and internally displaced persons in Africa shows that conflict-linked displacement carries a heavy burden of trauma-related mental ill-health [14]. The Indian mineral belt is rarely analysed with these comparators, even though its displaced populations face comparable psychosocial and institutional conditions. Globally, internal displacement is a growing humanitarian and governance problem, and international monitoring bodies track conflict, disaster and development-related movements as distinct but overlapping categories [15]. The Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement define internally displaced persons broadly enough to include those uprooted by development projects, and they set standards on protection against arbitrary displacement that Indian practice only partially meets [16].

Research problem. The central problem is that policy discourse in India treats extraction-linked displacement and extraction-linked conflict as separate issues, handled by different ministries under different legal regimes, while the empirical record suggests they are causally entangled.

Objectives. The paper pursues five objectives:

- To map the existing research on extraction, displacement and conflict, and to report its principal results.
- To identify the drivers through which extraction generates displacement and conflict in India's mineral belt.
- To compare Indian cases with international cases in order to separate what is specific from what is general.
- To evaluate competing perspectives on the problem fairly.
- To derive testable propositions and policy implications.

Contribution. The paper offers three contributions: a transparent evidence-mapping procedure, an integrative causal model (the displacement–conflict feedback loop), and a set of explicit propositions that future empirical work can test or falsify.

2. Conceptual Framework

2.1 Resource abundance, institutions and conflict

The resource-curse literature has moved from the claim that abundance itself harms development to a more conditional position. Whether resources help or hurt depends on the institutions that govern them. A well-known formal and empirical contribution argued that where institutions are “grabber-friendly”, resource wealth diverts entrepreneurs into rent-seeking, whereas “producer-friendly” institutions allow wealth to be channelled into productive investment [17]. This insight matters for India, which combines strong formal institutions (courts, a free press, competitive elections) with weak local enforcement in remote, forested districts. The upshot is a dual polity. In metropolitan centres, rule-bound institutions

function reasonably well, while in mineral-bearing tribal districts discretion by officials and companies is far greater.

Historical institutional legacies deepen this duality. Evidence from colonial India shows that districts where land revenue was collected through landlords rather than cultivators experienced lasting differences in agricultural investment and public goods provision [18]. Many of the mineral-belt districts were administered through intermediary arrangements, indirect rule or exclusion, and they entered the post-colonial state with thin administrative capacity and customary land systems that were poorly recorded. This matters for displacement because insecure or unrecorded tenure makes compensation and rehabilitation difficult to deliver, and gives the state and developers an informational advantage.

2.2 Political ecology, slow violence and the environmentalism of the poor

Political ecology rejects the notion that environmental conflict is merely about scarcity. It examines who controls access to resources, who bears the costs of their exploitation, and how power shapes both. One influential line of work describes “slow violence”, meaning harm that unfolds gradually and out of sight, such as contamination, depletion and the progressive loss of livelihood, and that rarely commands attention until a dramatic event occurs [19]. A related body of work documents an “environmentalism of the poor”, in which resource-dependent communities mobilise not as abstract environmentalists but because their survival is threatened [20]. Studies of violent environments emphasise that conflict is produced by the political economy of access, not by ecological stress as such [21]. Reviews of mining’s environmental politics likewise show that conflicts concentrate where the costs of extraction (land loss, water diversion, waste) fall on groups that have little say in the siting decision [22].

These perspectives help explain why many mining protests in India begin as defensive struggles over land, water and sacred sites, and why many remain non-violent for years before any militarisation occurs.

2.3 Displacement and impoverishment

The impoverishment-risks-and-reconstruction model identifies eight characteristic risks of forced resettlement and argues that reconstruction requires reversing each of them [12]. Mining adds further complications. Mining-induced displacement can be protracted, occur in stages as pits expand, and affect people who are not formally “displaced” but lose access to the commons, a phenomenon sometimes called displacement in place [23]. It also tends to be underreported because official statistics count only households whose titled land was acquired, thereby overlooking landless labourers, forest-dependent households and those relying on seasonal common-property resources.

2.4 Law, justice and epistemic standing

Displacement is not only a material process but also a legal and epistemic one. Socio-legal scholarship argues that law is both an instrument of social control and a site of contestation, so that the same statute can be used to legitimise dispossession or to resist it [25]. Debates on

judicial philosophy, particularly on how courts interpret constitutional text and balance competing rights, shape how far Indian courts have been willing to protect Adivasi land and cultural rights against development imperatives [26]. Decolonial sociology adds that the categories used to evaluate mining projects (market value, productive use, “wasteland”) systematically discount indigenous knowledge and relationships to land, which means that affected communities are structurally disadvantaged in procedures that claim to include them [24].

2.5 Integrated framework

Drawing these strands together, this paper proposes a five-driver framework in which (D1) acquisition and consent deficits, (D2) rent capture, (D3) legal–administrative implementation gaps, (D4) livelihood and ecological erosion with labour-absorption failure, and (D5) securitised governance interact through a feedback loop. Displacement is the pivot because it simultaneously generates grievance, weakens community institutions and provides the pool of aggrieved, dispossessed people on which armed groups can draw. The framework is tested, in a plausibility-probing sense, against the evidence in sections 4 to 7.

3. Methodology

3.1 Design and reporting guideline

A scoping review design was chosen over a conventional systematic review because the evidence base on the topic is heterogeneous. It combines econometric studies, ethnographies, legal judgments, official reports and policy analyses, and it cannot be meaningfully pooled statistically. Scoping reviews are suited to mapping such landscapes, clarifying concepts and identifying gaps [27,28]. The reporting follows PRISMA-ScR [27–29], and flow-diagram conventions are adapted from PRISMA 2020 [30]. The review was not registered, which is acknowledged as a limitation.

3.2 Research questions

- RQ1: What does existing research report about the relationship between mineral extraction, displacement and conflict in India?
- RQ2: Which drivers recur across cases, and how do they interact?
- RQ3: How do Indian patterns compare with those in other extractive regions?
- RQ4: How do competing perspectives interpret the same evidence?

3.3 Sources and eligibility

The evidence base had two components.

Component A: audit of a supplied bibliography. The commissioning author supplied a reference list of 117 numbered entries. Each entry was assessed against three inclusion criteria: (a) conceptual relevance to displacement, conflict, environmental or climate-induced change, land, law and justice, state power, structural inequality, or research methodology and integrity;

(b) availability of sufficient bibliographic information; and (c) scholarly rather than purely devotional or instructional content. One entry was unusable because of incomplete metadata. Of the remaining 116, 78 were excluded as topically unrelated: contemplative and yoga studies, higher-education accreditation, Hindi-language cultural essays, clinical and hospital-management topics, and digital-culture studies, among others. Thirty-eight were retained.

Component B: purposive additions. Because the supplied bibliography contains little on mining, resettlement or Adivasi politics specifically, 52 additional sources were purposively selected to cover the canonical and most-cited work on the resource curse, resettlement, Indian mining conflict, indigenous land law and international comparators. These comprise journal articles, monographs, official reports, statutes and judgments. This selection was not a systematic database search. It reflects judgement about influential and verifiable sources, which introduces selection bias (section 10).

3.4 Charting and synthesis

Retained sources were charted by theme, type, contribution and relevance to each of the five drivers. Charting was based on bibliographic metadata and titles for Component A items, and on the content of the publications for Component B items. Narrative thematic synthesis was used, supplemented by a comparative case matrix (Table 2). No statistical pooling was attempted, and no formal quality appraisal was undertaken, which is consistent with scoping review practice but limits inferences about effect sizes.

3.5 Flow of evidence

Table 1. PRISMA-ScR-style flow of the evidence base

Stage	Description	n
Identification	Entries in supplied bibliography	117
Identification	Purposively selected external sources	52
Pre-screening removal	Duplicates	0
Pre-screening removal	Unusable entry (incomplete metadata)	1
Screening	Supplied records screened	116
Excluded (topical irrelevance)	Contemplative / yoga / Indian philosophical studies	31
Excluded	Higher education, accreditation and education policy	11
Excluded	Hindi-language cultural, linguistic and Gandhian essays	5
Excluded	Clinical, hospital management and healthcare AI	13
Excluded	Digital culture, media, and work-life studies	12
Excluded	Other (contracts, organic food, corporate learning, nostalgia and identity, civic sense, India–China relations)	6
Included from supplied bibliography	Displacement, migration, disasters and trauma	6

	Urban, environmental, climate and gender	6
	Law, justice and state power	11
	Political economy, precarity, stratification, geopolitics	6
	Epistemology and decolonial theory	1
	Research methods and integrity	6
	Health burden and epidemiological transition	2
Subtotal (supplied)		38
Included from purposive additions		52
Total evidence base		90

3.6 Research integrity and originality

Research ethics principles for social-science work (honest reporting, avoidance of misrepresentation, and respect for communities who are the subject of research) guided the conduct of this review [31]. The paper was written afresh, with all claims attributed and no verbatim reproduction of source text. Standard guidance on plagiarism detection and prevention was followed [32–34]. Authors should nevertheless run the final manuscript through an institutional similarity-checking tool before submission.

4. Related Research: Reviews, Results and Outputs

This section synthesises what existing studies have found. The aim is to report their outputs and to identify where they agree, where they diverge and where the evidentiary gaps lie.

4.1 Displacement and resettlement research

The foundational empirical contribution on India's development displacement is the estimation work that produced the sixty-million figure [3]. Its principal result is that displacement has been large, repeated and socially skewed, with tribal and other marginalised groups bearing a disproportionate share, and that rehabilitation has been partial. Critics note that these figures rely on extrapolations from project-level data of uneven quality, so they should be read as order-of-magnitude indicators and not as precise counts.

The impoverishment-risks model [12] is the most influential theoretical output of resettlement research. Its central finding is that displacement tends to produce impoverishment unless risks are explicitly addressed in project design. Subsequent applications to mining stress the specific risks associated with long project lifespans, open-pit expansion and the loss of common property [23].

Analyses of India's land-acquisition law found that the colonial-era Land Acquisition Act of 1894 gave the state broad powers to take land for "public purpose" with limited compensation and no consent. They proposed reforms that tied compensation to market value and strengthened consent and rehabilitation obligations [35]. The Indian government's own high-level committee on tribal communities reported that tribal groups continued to lag behind

national averages in health, education and income, and that displacement and forest-rights non-implementation were major compounding factors [36].

Summary of outputs: displacement is large; its burden is socially concentrated; rehabilitation is weak; legal reform has been incremental. **Gap:** few studies track displaced households longitudinally, so the long-term trajectories of mining-displaced families remain poorly documented.

4.2 Resource curse and civil-conflict research

Cross-national work has examined whether resource wealth raises the risk of conflict. A major review concluded that the relationship is conditional: oil is most reliably associated with authoritarianism and with conflict in low-income and separatist settings, while the evidence for minerals is more mixed and depends on whether deposits are concentrated, lootable or located in marginalised regions [8]. The “greed and grievance” empirical literature found that dependence on primary commodity exports correlates with civil-war risk, but the interpretation (opportunity for rent capture versus grievance) is contested [9]. Political-ecology work argued that the form of conflict depends on resource geography, with point-source and distant resources associated with different dynamics than diffuse, proximate ones [10].

India-specific econometrics has attempted to bring these arguments to the Maoist conflict. A district-level analysis of the Maoist insurgency used a new dataset of violent incidents to examine socio-economic, geographic and resource-related correlates [37]. Another study analysed how shocks to forest-based, renewable livelihoods relate to conflict intensity in the Maoist belt, supporting the argument that livelihood conditions provide a transmission channel from economic stress to violence [38]. A third study found that mining booms are associated with the election of politicians facing criminal charges in mining districts, which is consistent with the interpretation that mineral rents attract and reward actors skilled in the informal exercise of power [39].

Summary of outputs: the evidence suggests that resource-conflict links in India run through livelihoods, political selection and institutions, and not through a simple “minerals cause rebellion” mechanism. **Gap:** most quantitative work uses district-level data, which cannot resolve whether displaced individuals are the ones joining or supporting armed groups.

4.3 Ethnographic and political-ecology research

Ethnographic work provides the richest account of mechanisms. A history of the conflict in Bastar documents how state-backed vigilante campaigns, village displacement and the militarisation of forest districts reshaped local society and escalated violence [40]. A study of Jharkhand examines how indigenous politics, environmentalism and insurgency intersect, and how marginalised groups navigate between state institutions and armed movements [41]. A study of the bauxite sector in eastern India describes the political economy of aluminium extraction and the Adivasi resistance to it, treating the Niyamgiri hills as a site of sacred landscape and not merely a mineral deposit [42]. An edited volume on coal in India places

mining within histories of colonial extraction, labour migration and ecological transformation, and shows that the coal belts have long been sites of conflict and compromise [43].

Anthropological reviews of mining show a consistent set of themes: contested property regimes, contested definitions of benefit and compensation, community divisions produced by company–community negotiations, and the diverse strategies of local actors, from resistance to bargaining [44]. Comparative work on Latin America found that mining conflicts are not simply “for or against” struggles but involve ambiguous aspirations in which communities weigh potential benefits and risks and express concern about who controls the terms of engagement [45]. A classic ethnography of the Narmada valley demonstrated that tribal opposition to dam-induced displacement was grounded in livelihood, cosmology and political dignity, which is a pattern that recurs in mining settings [46]. A broader argument about upland societies suggests that highland groups have historically tried to evade state incorporation, which helps explain why state-led enclosure of upland resources provokes particular resistance [47].

Summary of outputs: ethnographies converge on the finding that resistance is rooted in livelihood loss, ecological relationships and demands for recognition, and that violence is rarely the first response. **Gap:** ethnographic work is place-specific, and generalisation requires comparative synthesis such as that attempted here.

4.4 Legal and judicial research and outputs

Judicial decisions have created the legal architecture within which mining displacement is contested. A landmark Supreme Court judgment held that transfers of tribal land in Scheduled Areas to non-tribals, including for private mining leases, were invalid under the applicable protective regulation, and it directed that tribal land be used for tribal benefit [48]. In the Niyamgiri case, the Court required that the religious and cultural rights of forest-dwelling communities under the Forest Rights Act be determined through village assemblies before a bauxite mining project could proceed [49]. The subsequent village assemblies rejected the project, which illustrated that statutory consent mechanisms can function when properly invoked.

Statutes provide the formal rights framework. The Forest Rights Act recognises individual and community forest rights and gives gram sabhas a role in managing forest resources [50]. The Panchayats (Extension to the Scheduled Areas) Act of 1996 requires consultation with gram sabhas before land acquisition in Scheduled Areas and gives them powers over minor minerals and local resource management [51]. The Right to Fair Compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement Act of 2013 introduced social impact assessment, consent thresholds for certain categories of acquisition and enhanced compensation [52]. The Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Act, as amended in 2015, created District Mineral Foundations intended to channel a portion of mining revenue to affected communities [53].

Courts have also addressed the security dimension. The Supreme Court held that the deployment of tribal youth as special police officers in counter-insurgency, in the Salwa Judum

context, was unconstitutional [54]. In a separate line of cases concerning coal-block allocations, the Court found the allocation process arbitrary and illegal, which exposed the extent of discretionary rent allocation in the sector [55]. A rights-organisation investigation of a bauxite mine and refinery in Odisha reported adverse effects on local communities and challenged the adequacy of consultation processes [56].

Summary of outputs: the formal legal protections are substantial, and where invoked they have altered outcomes, but implementation is uneven. **Gap:** research on the compliance rate with consent and impact-assessment provisions is limited.

4.5 Adjacent literatures from the supplied corpus

The 38 retained items from the supplied bibliography are not primarily about mining. They are relevant because they provide comparative evidence on the mechanisms that appear in mineral-belt conflict: environmental displacement, health burden, legal and structural inequity, state surveillance, precarity and spatial injustice.

Disaster displacement. A series of Asia-focused analyses examine the causes and dynamics of floods, their socio-economic impacts, and the vulnerability and adaptation patterns of affected populations [57–59], as well as their consequences for health and healthcare systems [60]. Although flood displacement differs from mining displacement in origin, these studies show that exposure to hazards is socially patterned, that recovery depends on institutional capacity, and that the poorest households bear the largest relative losses. The same logic applies to mining-affected communities, which face environmental hazards such as flooding of pits, tailings failure, subsidence and contaminated water.

Health burden. Analyses of disease burden and epidemiological transition in India provide the national backdrop against which mining-district health outcomes should be assessed [61,62]. Socio-legal work on health disparities in Punjab, which documents structural inequities and legislative gaps, offers a regional analogue of how legal frameworks can fail to translate into equitable services [63]. A parallel study of educational disparities points to similar structural and legislative gaps in the education sector [64].

Law, corporate responsibility and accountability. Scholarship on corporate social responsibility and the law considers how legislation can promote ethical business practice [65], which bears directly on the CSR and DMF obligations of mining firms. Work on health legislation examines how legal frameworks strengthen or fail to strengthen health systems [66]. Analyses of negligence in tort law outline the principles through which firms and public bodies may be held liable for foreseeable harm [67], a principle with obvious application to environmental damage from mining. Analyses of the rights of an accused under Indian law set out procedural protections against arbitrary detention and prosecution [68], which are relevant to the many activists and villagers charged in connection with anti-mining protest. A study of police misconduct in the registration of first information reports documents how duty can become deviance in policing practice [69], which is relevant to the reported pattern of delayed, refused or selective registration of complaints in conflict districts.

Digital state power. Studies of techno-authoritarianism in the Global South analyse how digital surveillance reshapes sovereignty and citizen–state relations [70], and work on cyber-diplomacy examines how states weaponise digital infrastructure in geopolitical conflict [71]. In mineral-belt districts, similar logics appear in drone surveillance, biometric identification tied to welfare, and the monitoring of dissenters, though documentation remains thin.

Precarity and stratification. Analyses of platform poverty and algorithmic invisibility among gig workers [72], of gig-economy precarity and worker identity [73], and of algorithmic bias and social stratification [74] are not about mining. They are relevant because they show how labour markets can systematically exclude or devalue certain groups, which parallels the failure of extractive industries to absorb displaced, low-skill, and often tribal workers in stable employment. A study of the US–China contest in global supply chains is relevant to the geopolitics of critical minerals, because it frames the strategic pressure on resource-rich states to expand extraction [75]. Studies of the sociological implications of the National Education Policy 2020, which examine awareness, attitudes, equity and stratification [76,77], provide additional evidence of how nominally universal policies can reproduce structural inequality, a point that bears on whether benefit-sharing schemes in mining areas will reach those who most need them.

Urban and environmental justice. Research on gentrification and digital displacement analyses how technology-driven change reshapes community belonging [78], and work on smart cities addresses spatial justice and social divides [79]. Both show that displacement is not restricted to rural or mining settings and that “development” frequently redistributes access to space. Analysis of urban sprawl and its effects on local ecosystems adds the environmental dimension [80]. Work on how environmental agreements are redefining global power blocs places extraction within a wider climate-geopolitical context [81]. Cross-cultural research on climate anxiety and youth activism documents emerging forms of mobilisation around environmental harm [82], and work on women’s contribution to environmental conservation emphasises gendered knowledge and labour in resource stewardship [83].

Summary of outputs: the supplied corpus contributes comparative evidence on mechanisms (hazard exposure, legal gap, state surveillance, labour exclusion, spatial injustice) and not on mining per se. This distinction is important for honest interpretation. These sources support analogical and mechanistic arguments and cannot substitute for direct empirical evidence on mining districts.

4.6 Synthesis of the review

Four conclusions follow. First, the literature agrees that displacement is substantial, unequal and inadequately remedied. Second, the quantitative evidence supports institutional and livelihood channels more than simple resource-rent greed. Third, the legal framework is strong on paper, and where invoked it has altered outcomes, but implementation depends on community capacity and judicial intervention. Fourth, the empirical base has clear gaps: longitudinal data on displaced households, household-level evidence on the pathways into armed mobilisation, and systematic compliance data.

5. Context: India's Mineral Belt

5.1 Geography and demography

The core of the mineral belt runs through the Chota Nagpur plateau, the Eastern Ghats and the Dandakaranya forest region. It covers much of Jharkhand, Odisha and Chhattisgarh, and it extends into adjoining parts of West Bengal, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Telangana and Andhra Pradesh. The belt hosts a large proportion of India's iron ore, bauxite and coal. The region also has a high proportion of Scheduled Tribe residents relative to the national average [2], and, as the government's own expert groups have noted, it displays high poverty, low literacy and thin infrastructure in many districts [4,36]. National policy frames the expansion of mining as a pillar of industrial growth and import substitution [1].

5.2 Legal architecture

Land and mineral governance in the belt is shaped by overlapping regimes whose logics partly conflict.

The constitutional framework designates Scheduled Areas under the Fifth Schedule for tribal protection and Sixth Schedule areas for autonomous district councils in parts of the north-east [86]. Mining titles are governed by the Mines and Minerals Act [53], but land for coal may be acquired under a separate colonial-era-style statute, the Coal Bearing Areas (Acquisition and Development) Act of 1957, which allows acquisition with a different procedural and consent logic from the general land-acquisition law [84]. Forest land diversion is regulated under the Forest (Conservation) Act of 1980, which requires central approval for non-forest use of forest land [85], and since the Forest Rights Act, evidence of settlement of rights has been a precondition for diversion in principle [50]. The PESA Act adds a consultative role for gram sabhas in Scheduled Areas [51], and the 2013 land acquisition law adds social impact assessment, consent and rehabilitation entitlements in its domain [52].

This overlapping architecture creates three structural problems. First, the existence of multiple statutes with different procedural thresholds allows project proponents to select the most permissive route. Second, administrative responsibility is fragmented across mining, forest, tribal affairs, revenue and environment departments, so no single authority is accountable for the cumulative impact on a household. Third, enforcement depends on officials who are often under pressure to deliver revenue and investment, while affected communities have limited access to legal remedies.

5.3 The rent geography

The belt is also a rent geography. Judicial inquiry into illegal mining found systematic violations of lease conditions, over-extraction beyond permitted limits and under-reporting, with substantial estimated losses to the state [7]. The Supreme Court's findings on coal-block allocation exposed the discretionary nature of allocation before competitive auctions were introduced [55]. Quantitative evidence shows that mining booms are associated with a shift in local political selection toward candidates with criminal records [39]. Taken together, these

findings indicate that the belt is an environment in which formal rules coexist with a parallel economy of informal rent distribution, and the displaced are frequently the people with the least access to that rent.

6. Analysis: Drivers of Conflict

This section applies the five-driver framework to the evidence. The analysis is organised by driver and then integrated into a causal model. Table 2 summarises the comparative case evidence for Indian sites and international comparators.

6.1 Driver 1: Acquisition and consent deficits

The first driver is the manner in which land and forest access is taken. Historically, land acquisition in India relied on the doctrine of eminent domain with limited consent requirements and compensation tied to administratively determined values [35]. In tribal areas, customary rights were rarely recorded, so affected families could not demonstrate titles and were treated as encroachers. The result was a recurring pattern in which the largest losers, including landless labourers, forest users and tenant cultivators, received the least compensation or none.

The consent question is the most politically charged. Where formal consent mechanisms have been invoked, as with the village assemblies in the Niyamgiri hills, the outcome has been to block a project on the basis of cultural and religious rights [49]. This implies that consent is not an abstract ideal: when it is actually exercised, it can change outcomes. It also implies the reverse. Where consent is bypassed, whether by forged gram sabha resolutions, by invoking statutes that do not require it, or by acquiring land under alternative legal routes [84], resistance is more likely to escalate. The Samatha doctrine that tribal land should serve tribal interests [48] has been affirmed in principle but diluted in practice.

Analytical reality check. The claim that “all mining displaces without consent” is too strong. Some projects have secured negotiated agreements, and compensation packages have improved under the 2013 law [52]. The more defensible claim is that consent procedures are inconsistently applied and that the weakest procedures coincide with the most marginalised communities. The evidentiary weakness is that we lack systematic compliance data, so any statement about the proportion of projects with valid consent is an inference.

6.2 Driver 2: Rent capture and political selection

The second driver is the capture of rents by political and commercial intermediaries. The scale of illegal mining documented by judicial inquiry [7], the arbitrary allocation of coal blocks [55], and the empirical association between mining booms and the election of politicians with criminal records [39] together suggest that the belt has an institutional environment favourable to rent-seeking. In the language of the institutional resource-curse model, these are “grabber-friendly” conditions in which rent capture crowds out productive activity [17].

The District Mineral Foundation was designed to redirect part of the rent to affected communities [53]. The idea is sound, but its effectiveness depends on governance. Where

boards are dominated by officials and political nominees, and where affected-community representation is nominal, the funds risk being used for projects that do not address the needs of those displaced. Critical analysis here cannot rely on a single source, and the evidence on DMF spending patterns should be assessed in dedicated audits.

The rent dimension partially supports “greed” accounts, but it does so in an unexpected way. The greed that matters is not primarily that of rebels seeking to loot resources. It is that of political and commercial elites capturing rents under the formal state, which then generates grievance among those excluded. This interpretation reverses the standard greed–grievance dichotomy [9]: grievance arises from the greed of the legitimate order.

6.3 Driver 3: The implementation gap

The third driver is the gap between statutory protection and administrative practice. The Forest Rights Act, PESA and the 2013 land law collectively provide a robust rights framework [50–52]. Yet the government’s own committee noted persistent deficits in tribal welfare and rights implementation [36], and an expert group had earlier warned that unresolved land and forest rights fed local grievance [4]. Studies of the Forest Rights Act have repeatedly found that claims are rejected for technical reasons or are not processed, although this paper relies on the officially documented gap and does not provide a fresh audit.

The Supreme Court’s Niyamgiri decision shows what is possible when the law is enforced [49], and the earlier Samatha decision shows that the judiciary has long recognised the principle [48]. The policy lesson is that rights are only as strong as the institutions and communities that can invoke them. The socio-legal literature in the supplied corpus makes a parallel point for health and education, where structural inequities persist even when legislation exists [63,64], and where legal frameworks need to be examined for gaps between text and delivery [66]. The sociology of law holds that law’s effects depend on social context and power relations [25], and debates about judicial philosophy emphasise that interpretation shapes whether rights are enforced expansively or narrowly [26].

6.4 Driver 4: Livelihood loss, ecological erosion and labour-absorption failure

The fourth driver concerns what happens after land is lost. Resettlement research has long documented the impoverishment risks, among them landlessness, joblessness, food insecurity and loss of common property [12]. Mining aggravates these risks because it is capital-intensive and mechanised, and it does not generate employment commensurate with the number of people it displaces. A person who loses a farm and forest-product income may be offered a low-skill, short-term job or a modest cash payment, which is not equivalent to the lost livelihood.

The ecological dimension compounds the problem. Slow violence in the form of dust, contaminated water, noise and subsidence affects households that were never formally “displaced” [19]. The decades-long underground fire in the Jharia coalfield is an emblematic case of ecological hazard overlapping with relocation politics, and the diversion of forest in Hasdeo Arand has been a flashpoint for debate about forest and tribal rights versus coal supply.

Evidence on flood hazards in Asia, though from a different context, illustrates that exposure to environmental hazard is socially patterned and that recovery capacity depends on institutions [57–60]. The analogous pattern in mining districts is that the poorest communities live closest to pits, dumps and tailings, and they have the least capacity to adapt or relocate.

The labour-market dimension merits particular emphasis. Studies on platform and gig labour show how algorithmic and informal systems can render workers invisible and precarious [72,73], and how automated systems can entrench stratification [74]. The analogy to the mineral belt is that displaced low-skill workers enter labour markets that are formally open but practically closed, with contract labour, informal employment and migrant work as the available routes. The long-run result is a population that has lost land-based livelihood without gaining secure wage-based livelihood. This is precisely the “joblessness” and “marginalisation” risk identified in the impoverishment model [12].

The health consequences are also significant. Systematic evidence from African settings shows that displacement is associated with high prevalence of trauma-related mental disorders [14], and while that evidence cannot be transposed directly to India’s mineral belt, it indicates the psychosocial burden that displacement and conflict can impose. National analyses of disease burden and epidemiological transition suggest that India’s health system faces a dual burden of communicable and non-communicable disease [61,62], which means that already stretched services in mining districts are poorly placed to absorb additional trauma, respiratory disease or injury burdens.

Gender adds a further dimension. Work on women’s role in environmental conservation highlights that women are often principal users and custodians of forests, water and common resources [83]. Loss of access to the commons therefore falls disproportionately on women’s labour and income, while compensation and employment are typically directed to male household heads.

6.5 Driver 5: Securitised governance and criminalisation

The fifth driver is the state’s security response. Ethnographic accounts of Bastar document how counter-insurgency practices, including the use of local vigilante groups, contributed to village displacement and violence [40]. The Supreme Court’s finding that the use of tribal youth as special police officers was unconstitutional [54] is a judicial acknowledgement that state security practice itself can violate rights and aggravate conflict.

Criminalisation of dissent is the associated mechanism. When protest is treated as a law-and-order problem, activists and villagers face charges, and the legal protections available to the accused become critical. Analyses of the rights of an accused person in Indian law set out the safeguards that should apply [68], while research on police misconduct in the registration of complaints shows how institutional deviation can deny citizens access to justice [69]. The negligence principles of tort law offer an additional, underused route for holding firms and public bodies accountable for foreseeable harm [67], and the CSR statute reflects an expectation that firms integrate social responsibility into operations [65]. Yet voluntary CSR cannot substitute for enforceable remedies.

Digital surveillance extends the security logic. Analyses of techno-authoritarianism argue that digital tools can enable states to monitor and control populations in ways that affect sovereignty and civil liberties [70], and work on cyber-diplomacy shows how digital infrastructure is increasingly a domain of state power [71]. The extent to which such tools are deployed in mineral-belt conflict is not well documented, so this paper treats it as a plausible but under-researched dimension.

The feedback logic is straightforward. Displacement produces grievance, grievance produces protest, protest is securitised, and securitisation produces further displacement (through village evacuations and flight), distrust of the state and recruitment opportunities for armed groups. The first-order cause, land loss, is thereby reinforced by the response to its political consequences.

6.6 Comparative case matrix

Table 2. Comparative case matrix: selected Indian and international extractive conflicts

Case	Setting	Principal extractive stake	Displacement / dispossession pattern	Legal or institutional hinge	Conflict form	Outcome / lesson
Niyamgiri hills, Odisha	Forested Scheduled Area; Dongria Kondh	Bauxite for a refinery [42,56]	Threat to sacred hill and forest livelihoods ; refinery-side displacement	Forest Rights Act; Supreme Court direction for gram sabhas [49]	Sustained non-violent resistance and litigation	Village assemblies rejected the project; consent can be decisive
Kalinganagar, Odisha	Industrial complex in tribal area	Steel and associated mining	Land acquisition for industry; tribal protest	Land acquisition law; compensation disputes	Fatal police firing on protesters (2006)	Shows lethal escalation where consent is absent
Bastar / Dantewada, Chhattisgarh	Dense forest; Maoist influence	Iron ore and other minerals	Village displacement from conflict and counter-insurgency [40]	Special police officers ruled unconstitutional [54]	Armed insurgency and state counter-insurgency	Securitisation deepens displacement
Jharkhand coal and iron belts	Chota Nagpur plateau	Coal, iron ore [41,43]	Repeated displacement; contested	Coal-bearing-areas acquisition	Mixed: protest, insurgency	Overlapping legal routes

			resettlemen t	[84]; Forest Act [85]	y, bargaining	weaken consent
Jharia coalfield, Jharkhand	Long- establishe d coal mining	Coal	Undergrou nd fire; hazardous residence; relocation	Relocation planning and rehabilitatio n	Chronic hazard and slow violence [19]	Environme ntal exposure produces displaceme nt without formal eviction
Singrauli (MP/UP)	Coal and power complex	Coal for power stations	Multi-wave displaceme nt; limited rehabilitati on	Rehabilitatio n policies of public-sector projects	Pollution and livelihood grievances	Repeated displaceme nt of the same households
Karnataka –Goa iron ore	Non- tribal, politically contested	Iron ore	Limited tribal displaceme nt; large illegal extraction	Judicial inquiry into illegal mining [7]; court- ordered curbs	Corruptio n scandals and regulatory crisis	Rent capture can drive conflict without mass displaceme nt
Coal-block allocations	National	Coal	Indirect, via project siting	Supreme Court cancellation of allocations [55]	Institution al rather than armed conflict	Discretion ary allocation exposes rent politics
Peru, Andean highlands	Indigenou s and peasant communit ies	Gold, copper, silver [45,90]	Land and water loss; historical forced labour legacy	Contested consultation	Social conflict and protest	Historical extraction leaves lasting poverty [90]
Niger Delta, Nigeria	Oil- producing minority regions	Oil [87]	Pollution; livelihood loss	Revenue sharing disputes	Militancy and state securitisat ion	Rent politics and grievance combine
Bougainvil le, Papua New Guinea	Island copper mine	Copper [88]	Land and environme ntal damage	Mining royalties and landowner rights	Secession ist civil war	Environme ntal and benefit- sharing grievances can escalate to war

Eastern DRC	Conflict-affected mineral zones	Minerals [89]	Violence-induced displacement	Fragmented authority	Local armed conflict	Local disputes drive violence; international framing insufficient
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Reading the table. Three patterns stand out. First, in every case where the conflict became armed, consent and benefit-sharing disputes preceded escalation. Second, securitisation (Kalinganagar, Bastar, the Niger Delta, Bougainville) is associated with the worst human outcomes. Third, the Karnataka–Goa and coal-allocation cases show that conflict over rent is not limited to tribal areas, which supports the view that rent capture is a general institutional problem, whereas displacement is the specific amplifier in tribal areas.

6.7 The displacement–conflict feedback loop

Integrating the five drivers produces a causal model with the following stages.

- **Entry:** a mineral deposit is identified and a project proposed, with land and forest rights unrecorded or unrecognised (D1, D3).
- **Acquisition:** land is taken through a route that minimises consent, and compensation reaches only titled holders (D1).
- **Rent allocation:** leases and approvals are allocated through discretionary or informal processes, rewarding politically connected intermediaries (D2).
- **Livelihood rupture:** the displaced and neighbouring households lose land, forest access and water quality, and they do not gain stable alternative employment (D4).
- **Mobilisation:** grievance is expressed through protest, petitions and litigation. Where gram sabha or judicial channels work, the project may be modified or halted.
- **Securitisation:** where channels fail, protest is treated as a security threat, leading to arrests, policing and in some districts counter-insurgency operations (D5).
- **Escalation:** violence causes additional displacement, deepens distrust and creates space for armed groups to recruit from aggrieved populations.
- **Reinforcement:** insecurity discourages state service delivery and community-institution functioning, which increases the implementation gap (D3), restarting the loop.

This loop does not claim that every project follows this path. The Niyamgiri case shows that the loop can be broken at stage five, and international evidence shows that political settlement can interrupt it [88].

6.8 Propositions for future testing

To make the analysis citable and falsifiable, six propositions are advanced.

- **P1 (Consent proposition).** Where legally valid, informed consent from gram sabhas is obtained before land acquisition, the likelihood of armed escalation is lower than where it is bypassed, holding resource value constant.
- **P2 (Livelihood-substitution proposition).** Conflict intensity is inversely related to the proportion of displaced households that obtain stable alternative livelihoods within a defined period after displacement.
- **P3 (Rent-capture proposition).** Mining districts with higher proportions of discretionary lease allocation will show greater local political criminalisation and lower community-benefit expenditure [39].
- **P4 (Securitisation proposition).** Securitised responses to protest will increase subsequent displacement and reduce the probability of negotiated settlement.
- **P5 (Implementation-gap proposition).** The distance between statutory entitlement and recorded delivery (for example, forest-rights titles recognised versus claims filed) predicts local grievance better than the absolute level of poverty.
- **P6 (Displacement-in-place proposition).** Households affected by pollution and loss of commons without formal eviction will report grievance and health burden comparable to formally displaced households, and they will be omitted from official displacement counts [23].

7. International Comparative Perspective

International cases help distinguish what is general about the Indian pattern from what is specific.

Peru and the Andes. Research on mining in Peru shows that conflicts rarely reduce to a simple pro- versus anti-mining dichotomy. Communities express ambivalent aspirations and negotiate over the distribution of benefits and risks [45]. Historical evidence from the colonial mining labour system shows that districts subject to forced mining labour have lower household consumption and worse child health centuries later [90]. The implication for India is that extractive histories can leave persistent institutional and economic scars, which should make policy-makers sceptical of narratives that new mines will quickly “lift” affected districts.

Niger Delta. Oil extraction in the Niger Delta has been analysed as a case in which resource governance, rent distribution and state security converge. The state and companies shape the political economy of oil, and local communities contest it through protest and militancy [87]. The parallel with the mineral belt lies in the combination of environmental degradation, perceived injustice in revenue distribution and a militarised response.

Bougainville. The Panguna copper mine in Papua New Guinea became the focal point of a secessionist civil war in which land damage, benefit-sharing disputes and customary landowner grievances escalated into armed conflict, and the later peace process emphasised local reconciliation [88]. This case is relevant because it shows how environmental and benefit-sharing grievances, when unaddressed and met by force, can escalate dramatically.

Eastern Congo. Analysis of violence in eastern DRC argues that international narratives focusing on “conflict minerals” overlook local land, identity and power disputes that drive

much of the violence [89]. The relevance to India is a caution against mono-causal accounts: in the mineral belt, as in Congo, the presence of minerals is a necessary background but not a sufficient explanation.

Cross-case synthesis. Four generalisations are supportable. First, grievances over land, environment and benefit-sharing are common precursors to armed conflict in extractive settings. Second, the institutional context (the strength of local consent mechanisms, revenue transparency and credible dispute resolution) mediates whether grievance becomes violence [17]. Third, securitised responses tend to worsen outcomes. Fourth, resource type and geography matter, as political-ecology work suggests [10], which is why coal in an accessible, populated district differs from bauxite on a forested plateau.

What is specific to India is the scale of the Scheduled Tribe population in the mineral belt, a constitutional framework that explicitly recognises tribal land protection [86], and a highly active judiciary and civil society. The combination means that India is more likely than many comparators to have legal tools available but also more likely to produce intense litigation and politicised contestation.

Comparative evidence from the supplied corpus on displacement in different settings reinforces this point. Climate-induced displacement in South Asia is generating new frontiers of movement and urban fragility [13]. Conflict-related displacement in Africa produces severe mental-health burden [14]. Global trackers distinguish conflict, disaster and development displacement but acknowledge that these categories overlap [15], and international principles protect against arbitrary displacement, including by development projects [16]. For India, the relevant lesson is that mining displacement should be analysed alongside, and not apart from, climate and conflict displacement, because the same households are often affected by more than one.

8. Competing Perspectives

A credible analysis must present the strongest versions of the major perspectives before evaluating them. Each is presented here in the way its proponents would put it.

8.1 Developmentalist state perspective. Proponents argue that India needs coal for power, iron ore for steel and bauxite for aluminium, and that import dependence is strategically and economically costly. They argue that mining generates revenue, employment and infrastructure in backward regions, that displacement is a regrettable but necessary cost of national development, and that improved compensation and the DMF mechanism now provide mitigation [1,53]. Global supply-chain competition makes domestic mineral capacity strategically valuable [75]. *Evaluation:* the strategic argument is genuine, but the evidence reviewed suggests that the distributional costs fall on a narrow, vulnerable group and that benefits to that group are not demonstrated. Strategic need does not entail the current method of acquisition, and the argument has weak purchase on the question of consent.

8.2 Market and investor perspective. Proponents argue that regulatory uncertainty, delays in environmental and forest clearances, and litigation raise costs and deter investment. They argue

that transparent auctions, introduced after the coal-block judgment, reduce corruption, and that predictable rules benefit both investors and communities [55]. *Evaluation:* auctions reduce discretion in allocation, which addresses driver D2, but they do not address consent or livelihood. A faster clearance process without stronger community safeguards would likely increase conflict.

8.3 Rights-based legal perspective. Proponents argue that the Forest Rights Act, PESA and the 2013 land law embody a rights-based settlement that should be implemented as written, and that Niyamgiri demonstrates its power [49–52]. *Evaluation:* the empirical record supports this view where implemented, but the legal framework cannot self-execute. Sociolegal analyses remind us that law operates within power relations [25], and that interpretive choices by courts shape outcomes [26]. Rights-based approaches also face the challenge that communities are not homogeneous, so gram sabha processes can be captured by local elites.

8.4 Critical political-economy perspective. Proponents argue that extraction is a form of accumulation by dispossession, in which commons are enclosed to serve capital, and that the state acts as an agent of enclosure [11]. They see Maoist and non-Maoist resistance as expressions of the same underlying struggle. *Evaluation:* this perspective is analytically powerful on the structural drivers and consistent with the ethnographic evidence [40–42]. Its limitation is that it can underplay heterogeneity: some communities accept or seek mining, as comparative work on ambiguity in community responses shows [45], and some state actors act to protect rights.

8.5 Insurgent and movement perspective. Armed movements frame their struggle as a defence of tribal land and resources against exploitation, and they present themselves as protectors. *Evaluation:* ethnographic and judicial evidence shows that the state has committed serious abuses [40,54], which gives the grievance narrative real purchase. The same sources show that armed groups also impose costs on communities, including violence, coercion and disruption of services, so the idea that insurgents straightforwardly represent community interests is not supported. The econometric evidence points to livelihood channels as important in explaining violence [38], which fits neither a pure “greed” nor a pure “ideology” account.

8.6 Community-livelihood and ecological perspective. Communities and environmental advocates stress the cultural, spiritual and ecological value of land and forest and argue that these cannot be monetised [20,42]. The decolonial critique adds that dominant evaluative frameworks erase indigenous knowledge and standing [24]. *Evaluation:* this perspective helps explain why compensation-only approaches fail, since cash cannot replace sacred landscapes or common-property livelihoods. Its practical challenge is how to translate non-monetary values into decision procedures.

8.7 Corporate-responsibility and technocratic perspective. Proponents argue that CSR obligations, environmental management plans and community development programmes can mitigate harm [65]. *Evaluation:* mandatory CSR is a useful supplement, but it is not a remedy for coercive acquisition, and tort-based liability principles [67] would offer firms a stronger incentive to internalise foreseeable harm.

Integrative assessment. These perspectives are partially complementary. The developmentalist and investor perspectives are right that mineral development is a legitimate national interest. The rights-based, critical and community perspectives are right that the manner of development determines whether it causes conflict. The evidence reviewed here supports a “conditional extraction” position: mining can proceed with legitimacy where consent is real, rents are transparent, and displaced households are guaranteed a livelihood, and it generates conflict where these conditions are absent.

9. Policy Implications

The analysis suggests six policy directions, each linked to a driver.

9.1 Make consent real (D1). Consent processes should be verifiable, with video-recorded gram sabha proceedings, independent observers and public posting of resolutions. Land for mining should not be acquired through statutory routes that bypass consent where the 2013 law’s standards would otherwise apply [52,84]. The Niyamgiri model demonstrates that consent can be exercised effectively [49].

9.2 Close the rent loop (D2). Competitive, transparent allocation should be maintained, and illegal-mining findings should be followed by enforcement [7,55]. DMF governance should include affected-community representation with real voting power and should be audited for spending on the needs of displaced and neighbouring households [53].

9.3 Enforce rights before extraction (D3). Forest-rights settlement should be completed and independently verified before any forest diversion [50,85]. Administrative accountability should be unified, with a single nodal authority responsible for tracking the cumulative impacts on each affected household.

9.4 Guarantee livelihood substitution (D4). Compensation should include land-for-land or durable income-generating alternatives, a guarantee of local employment with skills training, and recognition of common-property losses [12,23]. Gender-sensitive provisions are required so that women receive entitlements in their own right [83]. Health surveillance should incorporate trauma and respiratory outcomes in mining districts, drawing on evidence about the psychosocial burden of displacement [14] and health-system weaknesses [61–63].

9.5 De-securitise governance (D5). The Supreme Court’s ruling on special police officers should be implemented comprehensively [54]. Procedural protections for accused persons should be enforced [68], and complaint registration should be monitored [69]. Surveillance technologies should be subject to legal oversight [70]. Negotiated settlement mechanisms should be established, as international cases suggest local reconciliation processes can matter [88].

9.6 Build the evidence base. The research gaps identified in section 4 should be filled by longitudinal tracking of displaced households, standardised data on consent compliance and forest-rights delivery, and household-level studies of the pathways into protest and armed

mobilisation. Registration of review protocols and open data would improve the transparency of future work [27,28].

10. Limitations

Six limitations qualify the conclusions. First, the review is a scoping review and not a systematic review. No database search strings were run, so the purposive selection of the 52 external sources reflects judgement and may omit relevant work, and it may over-represent English-language, widely cited sources. Second, the 38 retained sources from the supplied bibliography were charted from titles and bibliographic metadata, and they have not been appraised at full-text level. They are used for comparative and mechanistic arguments only, and their findings should not be read as direct evidence on mining. Third, no formal quality appraisal or statistical pooling was undertaken, so conclusions about causal strength are limited. Fourth, where details of external studies are summarised (study designs, directions of findings), they were drawn from the author's knowledge of the literature and should be verified against the originals before publication. Fifth, case-matrix entries are qualitative, and several (such as numbers affected) are deliberately not quantified because reliable, harmonised data are not available. Sixth, the causal model is a plausibility-probing framework. It offers propositions that need empirical testing and not demonstrated results.

11. Conclusion

The central finding of this review is that conflict in India's mineral belt is better understood as the product of institutional interactions than of mineral wealth as such. Land acquisition without verifiable consent, rent capture by connected intermediaries, a persistent gap between statutory rights and administrative delivery, failure to replace lost livelihoods and a security-heavy response to dissent reinforce one another in a displacement–conflict feedback loop. Displacement is the pivot of this loop because it simultaneously creates grievance, erodes community institutions and produces a population exposed to both state coercion and armed mobilisation.

The review also corrects several common simplifications. The greed-versus-grievance dichotomy is too crude, since the “greed” that matters most is that of the legitimate order and not of rebels. The claim that all mining is imposed without consent is too strong, since consent mechanisms have worked where invoked. The assumption that legal reform alone will suffice is also too optimistic, since rights require institutions and communities able to claim them. International comparisons in Peru, the Niger Delta, Bougainville and eastern Congo show that the pattern is general in its drivers but contingent in its outcomes. This contingency is the hopeful finding, because it means that conflict is not predetermined.

For researchers, the immediate agenda is to test the six propositions advanced here with longitudinal, household-level and compliance data. For policy-makers, the agenda is to make consent verifiable, rents transparent, rights enforceable, livelihoods guaranteed and security responses accountable. Extraction that proceeds on those terms can be legitimate. Extraction that does not will continue to generate the displacement and conflict that the mineral belt has already experienced.

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