

Development or Rent-Seeking?

How Political Influence Shapes Infrastructure Provision in India

BY

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3600 Market Street, Suite 560 (5th floor) ♦ Philadelphia, PA 19104**



ANJALI THOMAS BOHLKEN is an Assistant Professor in the Sam Nunn School of International Affairs at the Georgia Institute of Technology. She is a political scientist specializing in comparative politics and political economy with an emphasis on India. Her current research focuses on the politics of infrastructure and public service provision in India. Her previous research focused on the causes of local governance, on party politics and democratic accountability, and on the link between economic conditions and ethnic conflict.

About the Lecture:

How do incumbents with influence over infrastructure programs balance their incentives to gain electoral support with their proclivities for rent-seeking? Anjali Thomas Bohlken argues that government elites in parliamentary systems manage this trade-off by concentrating rent-seeking opportunities in their own hands while facilitating efficient public goods provision in the constituencies of their more junior partisan colleagues. Analyses using fine-grained data on road construction in India based on a variety of causal inference strategies support the argument. While ruling party incumbents showed higher levels of road provision in their constituencies regardless of ministerial status, road projects in ministers' constituencies showed higher levels of rent-seeking than those in the constituencies of other ruling party legislators. Moreover, consistent with the mechanism, ruling party legislators' diminished access to rent-seeking opportunities is shown to be largely driven by the influence of co-partisan ministers. The findings illuminate how politicized distribution can sometimes mitigate inefficiencies in infrastructure provision.

About CASI

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