

Panel 17: Violence, Public Authority and the Bargaining State in South Asia

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Abstract: In this panel we seek to counter the popular argument that the presence of armed, terrorist or criminal groups automatically leads to state decay. Although the emergence of armed groups can pose a substantial security threat to the state, it does not always have to be the case. As this panel will demonstrate, these 'criminal' or 'terrorist' agents of power can function as a tool for the state to bargain its way back into society. Especially in a context in which the formal state has been struggling to control internal dynamics in society, seeking (temporary) alliances with local 'criminal' or 'terrorist' agents of power can help to increase the governability of particular regions. Although such bargained type of statehood might be miles away from the Weberian idea of state, a better understanding of such everyday politics is requisite to understand how public authority is being constructed, affirmed and consolidated in contexts where the state has not been able to monopolize public power. For this panel, we invite papers that specifically focus on these links between formal stakeholders and non-state 'criminal' or 'terrorist' agents, and how such interplay affect our understanding of the everyday state and public authority within South Asia. We would like to encourage papers based upon extensive ethnographic fieldwork.

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