Lecture 7: Paths to peace, Part 1

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Weeks 8 and 9
We will look at some policy reports through our new lens
Week 8 and 9

• Splitting up
  – Groups 1-4 will attend class Mondays Nov 15 and 29
  – Groups 5-6 will attend class Wednesdays Nov 17 and Dec 1
Discussion memos

• Mechanics
  – 500-1000 words
  – Double spaced, 12-point font, wide margins — Facilitates online reading and comments

• Content
  – Avoid simple summarization of the books/reports
  – One way to approach: What are three insights you would like to bring to class?
    • Distill the core insights in an original, insightful way
    • Try to isolate the underlying theory
    • Do the major recommendations fit with what we’ve been talking about?
    • Are there policies or recommendations that you think would be ineffective or counterproductive?
    • Do the reports or analysis suggest we have been missing something?
Final project due Dec 10

• Mechanics
  – 750-1500 words
  – Double spaced, 12-point font, wide margins — Facilitates online reading and comments

• Akin to a long discussion memo
  – Note that a lot of work can go into just 750-1500 words, if the ideas are deeply thought through, and the

• Relatively free form – An opportunity to explore a topic interesting to you
  1. A critical review of a current policy report or a recent book
  2. A discussion of a popular peace building strategy
  3. The roots of a specific war of your choice
  4. The reasons a political rivalry of your choice did not go to war
Good memos are…

• Carefully thought out and written
  – This is not a stream of consciousness set of ideas
  – Thought should go into the arguments and organization

• Focus on your best ideas
  – Every idea you have after your best ideas probably lowers the average quality of the memo

• Persuasive
  – Criticisms and points should be clear and well developed

• Well organized
  – Reader always must know “how is this related to the overall argument?”
  – Consider use of
    • Paragraphs are about coherent ideas
    • Topic sentences – first sentences in the paragraph are the big idea, following sentences support it
      – Don’t bury the lede
    • Sections and subheadings
      – If you want to make three big points, separate and label those paragraphs accordingly
This week: Theory and evidence suggests four broad paths to peace

I. Interdependence
II. Checks and balances
III. Rules and enforcement
IV. Interventions
Interdependence: Key insights

• The standard model presumed we are indifferent to losses from the rival side
• But there are ways in which losses to the other side can enter our calculus
  1. The size of the material pie is a function of interrelationships
     • e.g. Relationships of specialization, production, and trade
  2. We have other-regarding preferences for the rival
     a) As a function of social interactions
     b) As a function of a shared identity
• Our identities are malleable, shifting with…
  – Technology
  – Economic systems and incentives
  – Elite manipulation
Checks and balances: Key insights

• Recall, from a few weeks ago, how overcentralized power
  – Leads to agency problems
  – Can augment commitment problems (because power is hard to divide)
  – Can increase the influence of a small group’s intangible incentives and misperceptions

• Democratization, in the form of elections, have not always been stabilizing
  – Meanwhile, many autocratic systems have remained stable

• Hypothesis: The important feature of power is that it is checked, divisible, with many centers of influence
  – Granted, the hard evidence here is mostly absent

• How have societies become more checked over time?
  – Changes in de jure rules
  – Widening of de facto power
Aside: Most of the time, regimes look like peaceful bargains between groups

- E.g. Africa and ethnic politics
- Francois et al show how the division of cabinets by ethnic group in Africa are nearly proportional to a proxy for political power: share of population
Rules and enforcement: Key insights

• States are among the most common form of institution that set rules and enforce them
  – Facilitate exchange of information
  – Provide commitment to deals
  – Provide carrots and sticks to minimize those who would commit violence due to material incentives, intangible incentives, or misperceptions

• But human societies in anarchy find numerous ways to accomplish similar objectives
  – Informal social norms
    • Feuding norms, cultures of honor
  – Hierarchical alliances, headed by hegemons
    • Gangs, states
Interventions: Key insights

• Interventions tend to work best when they address the causes of bargaining breakdown
  – Addressing potential causes of breakdown not the same as the causes of breakdown in that instance

• Often the root of the breakdown is uncertain, and requires trial and error

• During this trial and error, success will be inherently difficult to evaluate
  – Difficult to identify a comparison group
  – Hard-to-assess spillovers
  – Difficult to measure outcomes of interest

• Typically, we underestimate the effectiveness of peacebuilding interventions if we:
  – Focus on the failures
  – Overlook the selection problem in who receives assistance
Next class: Please come prepared to think about what peacebuilding strategies could be applied to these cases

- China—Taiwan
- Post-US Afghanistan
- India—Pakistan
- Israelis—Palestinians
Today: Breakout & discussion

What are the conceptual strengths and weaknesses of the following peace-building efforts?

1. Broad-based job creation program for violence-prone areas of a big city
2. UN-administered elections within a few years of a civil war peace agreement
3. Social contact programs to promote interaction between youths from different ethnic/religious groups
4. Including more women in peace processes
5. A post-war truth and reconciliation commission
6. A national firearm buyback program, plus a ban on private ownership of weapons
Some general tips for evaluating purported paths to peace

• What is the problem to which this path is the solution?
  – What’s the theoretical basis for the change or intervention?

• What is this path affecting?
  – Relative bargaining power?
  – The size of the pie?
  – The width of the bargaining range?

• How effective is this likely to be on the margin?