Stabilization and Development in Insecure Spaces
United States Institute of Peace and Empirical Studies of Conflict Meeting

Summary Report

SUMMARY
“Stabilization and Development in Insecure Spaces—An Empirical Studies of Conflict Meeting” was hosted at the US Institute of Peace on May 21-22, 2015 in Washington, DC. The meeting assembled academic researchers and experts from the Department of Defense, U.S. military, USAID, USIP, and NGOs, linking topical research on security issues to the needs of policymakers. We had 95 participants and speakers attending over the two days.

BACKGROUND
The American Government and our allies face a tremendous need to better understand how our efforts to rebuild social and economic order in conflict and post-conflict regions can effectively reduce violence. This need is growing more critical as the world’s major powers emerge from the aftermath of the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, and seek to build stability with smaller military footprints in those and other regions. Given the gravity of the human suffering in conflict-ridden regions, the personal sacrifices made by many military, diplomatic, and aid professionals, and the financial cost of aid interventions, academics feel a duty to employ their most innovative research tools to study and evaluate these interventions. While most policymakers embrace an approach that combines security provisions (by U.S. forces and allies), economic development and political development, neither the general strategy nor the particular tactics have been methodically evaluated, with exception of a few recent studies, including some by our Empirical Studies of Conflict (ESOC) team.

Over the past five years, a group of economists and political scientists have established and developed ESOC to address these needs. We are a network of researchers aspiring to raise the bar for security research by combining a broad range of research methodologies on specific questions with improved data collection, and then making data those data publicly available for replication and scrutiny. Our research methods range from interviews, to randomized trials, to econometric studies, as appropriate, to evaluate specific governance and development efforts in unstable regions. Effective studies in this area require researchers to also have a good understanding of the local realities facing policymakers, military actors, and local citizens. Building strong ties between these groups is thus critical to finding better solutions.

ESOC researchers are committed to dual objectives: (1) making substantive contributions to the academic literature and (2) providing the results to policy makers and practitioners in accessible and meaningful ways. ESOC members and affiliated researchers routinely brief leaders in the U.S. government, military, and development agencies on the results of our analyses. The team also strives to provide similar support to host-nation officials, government and non-government organizations in the countries where research is conducted.

1 Funding for the first day of the meeting was provided by USIP. Funding for the second day was provided by the Department of Defense Minerva Research Initiative. USIP generously provided the venue and meals for both days.
As part of that effort, ESOC researchers convene annually to discuss the latest findings, and to connect with policymakers to understand and address their need for topical security research.

PROGRAM CONTENT

MORNING RESEARCH ROUNDTABLES

Dynamic Inconsistency and Government Service Provision: Experimental Evidence from Polio Vaccination Drives in Pakistan
MICHAEL CALLEN (Harvard University)
JAMES ANDREONI (UC San Diego)
KARRAR JAFFAR (University of Southern California)
YASIR KHAN (International Growth Centre-Pakistan)
CHARLES SPRENGER (UC San Diego)
Discussant: JUAN VARGAS (Universidad del Rosario)

Oversight of vaccinators is important in controlling polio, as they often shirk or miss targets. The authors investigated the time preferences of polio workers in Pakistan based on the intertemporal allocation of door-to-door vaccinations during a two day long vaccination drive. Comparing the decisions of vaccinators allocating tasks three days in advance of the drive with those allocating on the morning of the drive permits a between subject test of dynamic inconsistency. Time preference estimates are then used to construct tailored contracts with the same workers, matching contract terms to individual time-discounting patterns. The authors document time-inconsistency among vaccinators and find that tailored contracts achieve the intended policy objective of smoothing intertemporal allocations of effort. The benefits of individually customized incentives in terms of smoothing effort provision are largest for vaccinators making their allocation on the morning of the vaccination drive when the effort cost is immediate. The results should help manage future vaccination drives in achieving higher coverage rates.

The Long-term Economic Impact of US Bombing in Cambodia
ERIN LIN (Princeton University)
Discussant: JEFFREY PETERSON (US Military Academy)

A challenge to policy is that post-conflict political communities vary substantially in the speed and consistency with which they create economic growth following war –with many seemingly stuck at very low productivity. There are many existing explanations for this variation, including capital flight, death tolls, loss of social capital, weakened institutions, and the role of international intervention, particularly in natural resource governance, aid flows, and military peace-keeping. This paper offers a new explanation for the recovery rate of agrarian economies, based on the effect that unexploded ordinance has on long term agricultural production. Drawing from a historical dataset of 114,000 sites targeted in 231,000 US Air Force sorties flown over Cambodia from 1965 to 1973, the paper identifies the location and type of ordnance, and correlate them with the agricultural output of and harvesting decisions made in 3,759 geo-referenced household plots from the 2012 Cambodia Socioeconomic Survey.
Bombing in high fertility land results in a contemporary decline in rice production and an increased likelihood of subsistence farming. The results indicate that unexploded ordinance makes farming such a dangerous activity that it compromises long term growth.

**Hard Traveling: Redistributive Effects of Commuting Costs in the Second Palestinian Uprising**

ALEXEI ABRAHAMS (Brown University)

Discussant: LAURA ZIMMERMAN (University of Georgia)

Improving roads to lower transport costs is often considered to be a high return development investment. Yet changing transport costs can generate welfare losses as well as welfare gains, reducing job access for some while letting others seize vacancies. The paper models and tests this idea by accessing confidential, spatially disaggregated Palestinian censuses of the West Bank, where the Israeli army deployed hundreds of road obstacles during a violent uprising (2000-2007) in an effort to defend Israeli settlements. Instrumenting for Palestinian locations' exposure to geolocated obstacles with proximity of settlements to commuter routes, 2SLS regressions find almost a one-to-one transference of employment as obstacles' labor-protecting effect (3.84%) largely mitigates their job-obstructing effect (-4.28%), with peripheral areas losing employment and population to core areas. Nighttime lights, firm census, and fatalities data indicate neither firm redistribution, trade, nor conflict are driving results.

**POLICY SESSIONS**

**Lunch and Keynote**

Introduction: ETHAN KAPSTEIN (US Institute of Peace)

Speaker: ANNE WITKOWSKY (Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Stability and Humanitarian Affairs, US Department of Defense)

DASD Witkowsky discussed the definition of stabilization and DoD policies on achieving it.

**Getting Back to Normal: Approaches to Healing Combatants and Communities**

Chair: ETHAN KAPSTEIN (US Institute of Peace)

Discussant: TJIP WALKER (US Agency for International Development)

*Reducing Crime and Violence: Experimental Evidence on Adult Noncognitive Investments in Liberia*

JULIAN C. JAMISON (US Consumer Financial Protection Bureau)

CHRISTOPHER BLATTMAN (Columbia University)

MARGARET SHERIDAN (Harvard University)

An open question in postconflict settings is how to best rehabilitate violent individuals. This paper shows that noncognitive skills and identity are malleable in adulthood, and that
investments therein can reduce costly antisocial behaviors. The authors recruited 999 Liberian men engaged in crime and violence, and randomized half to eight weeks of group cognitive behavioral therapy to decrease antisocial behavior and to foster a noncriminal self-image. The authors also randomized a $200 grant. Cash improved outcomes in the short-run but not long-run. Therapy increased self-control and noncriminal values and led to large, sustained falls in crime and violence. Therapy’s impacts were greatest when followed by cash, likely because it reinforced behavioral changes via prolonged practice.

*Can the Wounds of War be Healed? Experimental Evidence on Reconciliation in Sierra Leone*
OEINDRILA DUBE (New York University)
JACOBUS CILLIERS (Oxford University)
BILAL SIDDIQI (World Bank)

Wars destroy not just physical capital but also social capital and psychological wellbeing. Post-conflict recovery seems contingent on healing individuals and restoring their social ties. This paper asks the question: Can social renewal only occur alongside psychological renewal? The authors experimentally evaluate community-level reconciliation in Sierra Leone. As a part of the intervention, victims detail war atrocities, and perpetrators confess to war crimes. The authors find that reconciliation led to greater forgiveness of former perpetrators. It also forged social capital: social networks were stronger and people displayed more community-oriented behavior including higher contributions to public goods. Yet, the process also worsened psychological health, increasing depression, anxiety and post-traumatic stress disorder. These impacts, positive and negative, persisted for nearly three years after the intervention. The results of the paper suggest that individual healing is not a pre-condition for reconciliation to renew social ties: on the contrary, social capital grew at the expense of psychological wellbeing.

*Developmental Approaches to Managing Conflict: Steady State and Emergency Responses*

Chair: JACOB SHAPIRO (Princeton University)
Discussant: LYNN CARTER (MSI International)

*Guns and Butter? Fighting Violence with the Promise of Development*
LAURA ZIMMERMAN (University of Georgia)
GAURAV KHANNA (University of Michigan)

There is a growing awareness that anti-poverty programs may be important as counterinsurgency strategies in developing countries, but existing papers find support for a variety of explanations. Using a regression-discontinuity design, this paper analyzes the impact of the world's largest anti-poverty program, the Indian NREGS, on Maoist conflict intensity. The authors find short-run increases of insurgency-related violence, police-initiated attacks, and insurgent attacks on civilians, and discuss how these results relate to a number of established theories in the literature. One mechanism consistent with the empirical results is that NREGS induces civilians to share more information with the state, improving police effectiveness.
Expanding Governance as Development: Evidence on Child Nutrition in the Philippines
ELI BERMAN (UC San Diego)
MITCH DOWNEY (UC San Diego)
JOSEPH FELTER (Stanford University)

Worldwide, extreme poverty is often concentrated in violent, unstable, ungoverned spaces. Researchers and practitioners struggle to effectively reach these areas with traditional development assistance. Expanding governance through coercive intervention may have both benefits and costs for local residents. These authors estimate for the first time whether a large counterinsurgency program improves development outcomes, exploiting the staggered roll-out of the Philippines' Army program (“Peace and Development Teams”), which treated 12 percent of the population between 2002 and 2010. Though treatment increased violence, the program also substantially reduced child malnutrition: by almost 40% in treated villages, after six years. That reduction is comparable to those of conventional child health interventions, which might anyways be infeasible in the ungoverned spaces of the rural Philippines. These findings invite an evidence-based discussion of expansions of governance, the extensive margin of development.

Dinner and Keynote

Introduction: ROBERT JENKINS (Deputy Assistant Administrator; Bureau for Democracy, Conflict and Humanitarian Assistance; US Agency for International Development)

Speaker: NANCY LINDBORG (President, US Institute of Peace)

Nancy Lindborg and Robert Jenkins provided an off-the-record explanation of the challenges facing senior officials in implementing policies abroad. They echoed the call for more academic engagement, and for digestible, actionable recommendations.

Many participants remained for the Empirical Studies of Conflict sessions on the following day.