

Politics and International Relations Honors Conference

Political and Economic Development

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- What I learned:
 - About the importance and proliferation of NGOs during the comparatively democratic window in Bangladesh between 1991 and 2001.
 - ↑ NGOs → modest ↓ voter turnout.
- Nice features:
 - Thoughtful discussion of the Bangladeshi context.
 - Careful data cleaning, especially with respect to geocoding NGOs, and consideration of data limitations.

Some thoughts

- Discussion of effect sizes:
 - Coefficients correspond to marginal effect of 1 additional NGO. On average, 1.3 and 1.2 additional NGOs/district.
 - Qualitative discussion of effect size is accurate.
- How should we interpret the overall effects on turnout if:
 - **Radical** NGOs promote/increase turnout
 - but **apolitical** NGOs do not?
- Implications for **politician** strategies vis-a-vis regulation of or support for NGOs?

Williams: Overview

- What I learned:
 - The origins of the Guyanese party system and the “ethnicization” of parties.
 - About interventions that prime **genetic similarity** to promote intergroup cohesion.
- Nice features:
 - Nice to read a paper on Guyana!
 - Great original data collection.
 - Interesting to link feelings toward outgroup to **policy proposals** of outgroup-associated parties.

Some thoughts

- Is this a **hard test** of the genetic similarity prime?



- How strong is the treatment?
 - How much do Guyanese already know about shared genetic heritage?
 - Is 7-12% shared genetic ancestry a lot?

- What I learned:
 - Post-war reconstruction aid and intrastate violence are positively correlated, at least Iraq c. 2004-2005.
- Nice features:
 - Nice use of data visualization to inform analysis, present results.
 - Succinct summary of early Iraq war.

Some thoughts

- Direction of the **causal arrow**:
 - **Your story**: Reconstruction aid delegitimized government to insurgents, increasing intrastate violence.
 - **Alternate**: The US targeted aid to places where the threat of intrastate violence was most severe.
- What is the US **trading off** when offering reconstruction aid?
 - Right now: aid costs US \$, increases intrastate violence.
 - But might this aid also promote economic development or fund new infrastructure?
 - Perhaps more useful to think in terms of policy-relevant trade-offs even if aid → intrastate violence.

Tagle: Overview

- What I learned:
 - No robust evidence that FDI decreases average worker wellness in a subset of OECD countries.
- Nice features:
 - Neat example of having a strong (directional) expectation tempered by (basically) **null findings**.
 - Worker wellness (and rights) are underexplored in political science.

Some thoughts

- Isn't the OECD a very hard case for argument \uparrow FDI \rightarrow \downarrow worker wellness?
 - These countries have comparatively strict labor regulations.
 - What this does mean for effect sizes?
- What is the role of local firms here?
 - If FDI firms need to compete for workers, workers' outside options may determine what FDI firms can extract.
 - Could 996 exist if local firms treated their workers better?

- What I learned:
 - No evidence that EU accession of Croatia increased growth/employment relative to non-member Serbia.
 - ... but there seem to be some differential effects across coastal and non-coastal **regions** within Croatia.
- Nice features:
 - Thorough and clearly written.
 - Pairing of the two analyses—Croatia vs. Serbia/coastal vs. central Croatia—enriches the project.

Some thoughts

- Defining **treatment**: the process or destination?
 - Croatia spent 10 years preparing to enter the EU, including many reforms.
 - What changes with membership specifically that would be relevant to economic growth?
- Croatia and Serbia are non-trivial trading partners → implications for research design?
- Are differential effects by region increasing or decreasing **between-region inequality**?
 - Aside from tourism, is coastal Croatia richer or poorer to start with?