

The Hearts and Minds in Conflict and Peace

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Summary

Understanding the causes of violent conflict is still a topic of heated academic debate. One of the robust findings in the civil-war literature is that low-income is a cause of all violent conflicts. If this finding holds, then we should expect that economic development to be a powerful approach to end all wars and political violence. This in fact is the position held by major international actors such as the United Nations and the World Bank. In its 2011 World Development Report, entitled as *Conflict, Security, and Development*, the World Bank concludes that enhancing citizens' economic security is an essential way of reducing violence.

Against this backdrop, this dissertation asks the following question: to what extent does development really make peace? This dissertation contains four individual essays. The first two essays look at the question of how development assistance does (or does not) help to end violence and create negative peace, usually defined as the absence of violence. The next two chapters take one step further and ask how positive peace, or social cooperation, can be achieved. Chapter 4 discusses the role of on job-training programs in reintegration and Chapter 5 investigates the role of public services and trust-building.

The first part of the dissertation explores the limit of the development approach to counterinsurgency. Counterinsurgency can be defined as the "military, paramilitary, political, economic, psychological, and civic actions taken by a government to defeat insurgency" (US Department of Army). Modern counterinsurgency usually adheres to a 'minimum force' approach, with the aim of minimizing military and civilian casualties to defeat insurgency.

A strategy that is most commonly adopted is the 'hearts and minds' tactic. It is generally believed that this hearts and minds tactic has worked in two ways. First, it can be used to win emotional support (i.e. hearts) of the civilians and to induce them to cooperate with the military, for instance, by providing intelligence to the authority. Second, gaining people's hearts helps to cut off potential support to the insurgents. This includes logistical support and human resources such as recruits. An effective program should also change incentives of potential insurgents. Material benefits, in terms of development outcomes and job opportunities, can prompt people to pursue their rational self-interests (i.e. minds) and to stop working for the insurgents. This hearts and minds tactic has been most prominently adopted in the counterinsurgency warfare in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Pakistan. Existing study shows that these are the major reasons behind the reduction in the number of attacks against the Coalition forces in Iraq since 2007.

The first part of this thesis looks at the short-run effect of development aid on insurgencies in Iraq. Literature has shown that development aid was particularly effective in reducing the number of violent attacks towards the US military in Iraq through the hearts and minds effect. This chapter argues that domestic political factors and public attitudes towards US occupation may dominate the hearts and minds effect. This investigation adopted a mixed-method approach. First, it employed econometric analysis to find out whether development aid increases or decreases violent attacks against the Coalition forces. It then used case study to

examine the causal mechanism behind the finding. It is found that the widely acclaimed Commanders' Emergency Response Program (CERP), which is usually referred to as money for military commanders to use for reconstruction during the Iraq Wars, has actually escalated conflict in the short run, a finding that challenges existing belief about the hearts and minds effect. There are three existing theories that can explain the rather surprising findings. Process-tracing tests further reveal that the level of violence increased neither because insurgency became a more attractive option than legal economic activities, nor because the insurgents tried to sabotage the development projects to pre-empt the hearts and minds effect. This chapter shows that insurgents became stronger and more capable to initiate more attacks against the Coalition forces in several ways. First, aid was stolen en route. Second, insurgents received payment from project contractors to gain access to project sites and to buy security. These findings contribute to the literature in two ways. First, they provide further evidence to the academic debate over whether aid fuels or dampens conflicts. Second, although this chapter does not mean to say that development aid is bad and always sustains a conflict by making rebels stronger, it provides a scope condition to the related theory. The effect of aid depends on how easy aid can be captured by rebels. Aid which is easier to be directly captured or looted by rebels is more likely to sustain a conflict. Development aid in other form, for example, that aims to institution building is more likely to be beneficial.

While Chapter 2 is primarily about the temporal effect of development aid, Chapter 3 explores the spatial dimension of it. Using the same case study of Iraq, this chapter shows how CERP contributes to conflict diffusion in Iraq. Previous evaluation analyses usually assume that insurgency is a local phenomenon and cannot be reproduced. Qualitative studies, however, acknowledge that conflict is highly contagious, especially when we are talking about counterinsurgency effort, which usually creates a balloon-squeezing effect. Although local level of violence is controlled, insurgents usually change their targets. Standard regression analyses commonly used to evaluate counterinsurgency policy are unable to take this balloon-squeezing effect into account. Chapter 3 uses the technique of spatial econometrics to control for this kind of spillover effect. It is found that spatial dependence exists and cannot be assumed away. Estimation results based on the new model also reveal that CERP produced a positive neighborhood effect by inducing more attacks in nearby areas. By contrast, the alliance strategy is a more compelling factor to explain the decrease in insurgent attacks in Iraq since 2007. Chapter 3 contributes to the literature by providing a general theoretical framework to think about the spillover phenomenon and introducing an advanced method in regional science to handle the counterinsurgency evaluation problem.

The second part of the dissertation moves away from negative peace to positive peace and examines the socio-psychological aspect of post-conflict reconstruction. Disarmament, demobilization and reintegration, also known as DDR, has become an integral part of post-conflict peace process. DDR is increasingly included as part of a peacekeeping operation, such as MINUSCA in the Central African Republic and MINUSMA in Mali, which the Dutch government has contributed to significantly.

Chapter 4 focuses on the reintegration component of DDR. The United Nations define reintegration as the "process by which ex-combatants acquire civilian status and gain

sustainable employment and income. It is a political, social and economic process with an open time-frame, primarily taking place in communities at the local level” (United Nations). A common challenge to program like labor market training and DDR is program dropout. Using a vocational training program, a typical example of a reintegration program, in Liberia, Chapter 4 seeks to improve our understanding on what determines the participation and the dropout decisions of ex-combatants. It argues that past wrongdoings of former fighters may develop a strong moral emotion of shame once they are withdrawn from the wartime value system. In some cases, the moral emotion of shame can induce psychological trauma. As a part of the psychological adaptive strategy, the psychologically distressed individuals may choose to escape from stimuli associated with war memory and social rejection, and show the symptoms of psychological avoidance and social withdrawal. While this is a necessary part of the recovery process in some cases, the behavioral responses may sustain and further develop into post-traumatic stress disorders (PTSD) and hinder future reintegration. Chapter 4 provides evidence to the hypothesis that the development of symptoms is partially shaped by the wartime experience of an ex-fighter. The study contributes to the literature by showing that the bottleneck in Liberia was probably on the mental health status of ex-combatants, which depends on their wartime experience. If one of the policy objectives is to induce more participation in reintegration program, early screening or diagnosis is a more promising policy than other policy options such as financial assistance and social intervention in the case of Liberia.

Chapter 5 tackles one of the most long-term challenges governments face after conflict, and asks the question: how can political trust be built after civil war? As a major actor of civil wars, government kills and harms citizens. Not surprisingly, many citizens become hostile to the state because of the atrocities. So, as civil war ends, a new government not only need to reconstruct the economy and infrastructure, it also needs to rebuild its institution and restore citizens’ confidences. How can a government regain political legitimacy? Scholars with a sociology or economics background may say trust gradually built based on social exchange. Political scientists may say trust is rooted in institution. Recent conflict studies literature suggests that trust can be built through enhancing local ownership. While the definition of local ownership is still a subject of academic debate, in general, scholars agree that giving citizen greater decision-making power in local affairs can help a government to gain greater support. This chapter tests this hypothesis based on a longitudinal survey from Sierra Leone and found that people are more likely to trust governments that are willing to listen and respond to their needs and demands. By contrast, improvement in basic services, such as education and health care, does not build trust as most previous studies suggested. This Chapter contributes to the literature by clarifying the trust-building mechanism. Contrary to what most people think, improved public services do not always buy government trust. And it is how the sense of local ownership was cultivated that matters in trust-building.

In conclusion, to what extent does development make peace? My findings suggest that economic development has a stronger stabilization effect in the short run than in the long run. This dissertation not only shows that economic development alone is limited but also offers few lessons to make economic peacebuilding more promising. First, development aid is more likely to be effective if it is harder to be captured by rebels. In the long run, economic well-

being may not be the bottleneck of reintegration. More resources on preventive, psychological program such as early screening can be highly effective. Finally, government can buy peace more strategically by creating a better sense of ownership via active listening and answering people's demands.