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Conflict and Development

CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter provided an overview of how the relationship between conflict and development has been understood and analyzed in social science. It identifies two main strands. One strand views the lack of development as a cause of conflict and therefore sees development as a cure; the other conceives of development as generating conflict or as a conflictual process in itself. The chapter examined various attempts to make a causal link between underdevelopment and conflict, whether underdevelopment has been understood as the absence of economic opportunities or democracy, as inequality, or as ethnic diversity. The chapter then discussed conservative and radical claims that development might be associated with conflict. The conservative version warns against the destabilizing effects of rapid development, while the radical view understands development as an often violent redistribution of resources and power, calling to attention the violent past of Western capitalism.

Finally, the chapter considered international efforts—often called “peace-building”—to help reconstruct societies emerging from violence. Today, peace-building operations premised on the assumption that development and “state-building” are necessary tools to recover from violent conflict might be ceding ground to a more realist position, which sees large-scale transformation of war-torn societies as difficult or costly. Instead, from this viewpoint, conflict-ridden societies need to seek solutions in local and ostensibly traditional structures.

VIDEO RESOURCES

Peace. Jody Williams: A realistic vision for world peace.

http://www.ted.com/talks/jody_williams_a_realistic_vision_for_world_peace.html

Time 10:52

Nobel Peace laureate Jody Williams brings tough love to the dream of world peace, with her razor-sharp take on what “peace” really means, and a set of profound stories that zero in on the creative struggle—and sacrifice—of those who work for it.

Climate, conflict, and African development: Edward Miguel

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jemGxRn0Ea8>

Time 1:19

Edward Miguel is the Oxfam Professor of Environmental and Resource Economics and Faculty Director of the Center for Effective Global Action at the University of California, Berkeley, where he has taught since 2000.

Breaking the Cycle of Violent Conflict with Johan Galtung

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=16YiLqftppo>

Time 58:23

A noted pioneer in the field of Peace Studies, Johan Galtung makes the case for incorporating human rights as key to successful peace building around the world. Series: “Joan B. Kroc Institute for Peace & Justice Distinguished Lecture Series”

Human Development Report: Gains and Inequalities in Developing Countries

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iDz2TOwvhSI>

Time 7:01

The twentieth anniversary edition of United Nations (UN) Development Programme’s (UNDP) annual Human Development Report (HDR), launched 4 November in New York, shows extraordinary and often overlooked progress in health and education in most developing countries over the past four decades, as measured by the Report’s Human Development Index (HDI); UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon launched the report along with UNDP Administrator Helen Clark and Nobel Laureate Amartya Sen, who helped devise the HDI for the first HDR in 1990. Ban said that there was a direct link between the Report and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

How Humanitarianism went to war. Democracy now.

http://www.democracynow.org/2009/2/13/conor_foley_the_thin_blue_line

Time 10:52

Conor Foley has been a humanitarian aid worker in over a dozen conflict zones, including Kosovo, Afghanistan, and northern Uganda. His latest book traces the development of the doctrine of humanitarian intervention and how it has been used to justify the use of force by powerful states. It’s called *The Thin Blue Line: How Humanitarianism Went to War*.

Conflicts, Civil Society, and Democratic Development in Burma

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BrdR8vsPu9M>

Time 24:11

This event was recorded on 14 December 2010 in Sheikh Zayed Theatre, New Academic Building. The event was co-sponsored by Al Jazeera. Aung San Suu Kyi, the recently released Burmese opposition leader and Nobel Peace laureate, speaks live via videolink and telephone from Burma to an audience of LSE academics and students about Myanmar's generals, why they maintain power, the country's youth, and puts forward her vision for Myanmar.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Discuss the term “conflict trap” and how it relates to development.
2. Discuss the conception of the grand narrative from perspective of Marx
3. Discuss differences among the terms “violence,” “conflict,” and “war.”
4. How was ethnicity related to the violent conflict in Rwanda?
5. Discuss the term “conflict diamonds.”
6. Briefly explain symbolic violence.
7. What is the meaning of social change as a source of instability?

ANSWER KEY: REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. The term “conflict trap” is founded on the liberal theory of violence. It argues that countries in the post-civil war period are likely to return to violence unless the underlying causes of the conflict have been resolved. Based on this understanding of violent conflict as a symptom of deeper social, political and economic issues the “conflict trap” theory points to under-development as the main cause of conflict. (p. 401)
2. The grand narrative seeks to uncover the essence of the development process as it has unfolded historically. The classical scholar Karl Marx is one of the figures who has discussed this concept. Writing at a time of rapid change and much violence in Europe as well as beyond, they tried to understand “development” and the processes and patterns of social change. For Marx, development cannot be separated from conflict or understood as independent of it. Conflict is intrinsic to the development process, the motor that drives it forward as power and resources are redistributed to different classes and peoples. In a continuation of this grand narrative, Lenin also argued that imperialism was the highest stage of capitalism; the imperialist nations, the “most developed” in conventional terms, would then succumb to war against each other. (p. 402)
3. While related, each of the terms “war,” “conflict,” and “violence” is distinct and specific. Violence encompasses the “physical violence,” but also less obvious manifestations. Two alternative definitions of violence are “structural” violence or extreme systematic inequality, and “symbolic” violence, the internalization of humiliation by the weak, and the legitimation of inequality and hierarchy. Conflict does not necessarily involve violence and denotes the existence of tensions between opposing views, interests, or wills. Finally, war refers to a situation of extraordinary violence that can be either interstate or civil (domestic). During war normal rules do not apply and special rules take over such as international laws governing war. (pp. 402–403)
4. In Rwanda, 800,000 people were killed in 1994, most of them ethnic Tutsi by the Hutu. Though ethnicity is clearly relevant to this violent conflict it does not illuminate the whole situation. The situation must be understood within the historical context of Belgian colonial policy, which constructed ethnic identities and issued ID cards to institutionalize the separation of the Tutsi and Hutu. Some scholars argue that the ethnic divisions are interconnected with economic and political interests in complex ways, and are a legacy of colonization. The 1994 violence was triggered by disputes over issues such as power sharing in government and the distribution of economic aid as much as ethnic tension. (p. 408)
5. The term “conflict diamond” refers to the central role played by the lucrative diamond mining industry in the civil war in Sierra Leone. Some scholars argue that the civil war only lasted as long as it did, and with such intensity, because of the exploitation and sale of diamonds, the profits of which were used to finance violence. Others argue, however, that focusing solely on diamonds reduces the causes of war to simple greed and renders invisible the deeper political dimensions of the conflict. It is argued that many of the rebels in the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) were motivated by political exclusion and poor living conditions rather than greed for diamonds. (p. 411)
6. Symbolic violence is understood in the tradition of French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu as internalized humiliation among the weak and legitimation of inequality and hierarchy. In the following exploration, we will focus on physical violence, particularly war. (p. 403)
7. The competing paradigm is that periods of change are associated with conflict. Existing institutions come under pressure and may be unable to control or integrate new forces, demands, and collective actors. Change is likely to be uneven and create a sense of relative deprivation, injustice, and threat among the losers. Men rebel when they feel they are worse off than their relevant reference groups, and change is likely to produce precisely such differences. Rapid cultural

change likewise tends to create individual anxiety, the sociologist Émile Durkheim noted more than 100 years ago. When accompanied by rapid and uneven economic change, it may stimulate radical reactions. Contemporary versions of this argument often appear in relation to “globalization,” which has increased communication among societies but also accentuated the often unequal distribution of benefits. (p. 409)