

Anthony Comegna: Hello again everyone. It's Ideas in Progress from the Institute for Humane Studies. And today is the conclusion to our showcase of new faculty research. Today, we pick up with our political scientists, Gary Uzonyi and economist, Kathleen Sheehan.

Anthony Comegna: Now, Gary, last week you were talking about the important contributions that you think classical liberal scholars could or should be making about the kinds of political organizations and let's say counter organizations that people form. And as I understand it at the research workshop, you're presenting some ongoing research that you're doing or working paper that you're writing up about the formation of different rebel groups and the way that counterinsurgencies impact that. What can you tell us about that research?

Gary Uzonyi: This research is a response to a traditional way in which we think about a rebel formation and where civil war occurs. Traditionally, we think that there is a opportunity theory at civil war. What this means is that rebel groups are likely to form where it's easier for them to do that. This tends to be in the mountains or in the periphery along international borders, dense forest or jungles. But more recently, as we've looked around the world, we're seeing urban rebellions formed in places like Iraq, with the Ahmadi army in Baghdad. We also saw opposition groups form in Damascus and fight in Aleppo and in Syria and Benghazi, and the move to Tripoli. We saw Libya.

Gary Uzonyi: And so there's some ideas that the future is urban rebellions. And this is quite a break from the way in which we traditionally think about where opposition groups form an arm against the government. And the reason for this is because in those urban areas, and especially in capital cities, we think this is where the government should have the most capacity to put down these opposition groups. And so what my research does is it asks a few related questions. The first is, well, have urban rebellions actually been increasing over time? It asks, which groups are likely to form in urban areas? And lastly, it asks, what does this mean for how counterinsurgency is conducted and the success of both these opposition groups and the counterinsurgency themselves?

Anthony Comegna: What are your findings so far?

Gary Uzonyi: One of the things or where I start this project is to note that once we actually gathered data on where rebel groups form, they tend to form into periphery like our traditional view expects. We do see urban rebellions but not to the rate in which some recent scholarship has feared in terms of an increase in ... So two things to note here. Somewhere between 60% and 80% of all civil war, since the end of world war II have begun in the periphery. This is that traditional model opportunity model of civil war. However, when we have urban rebellions forming, what's interesting is that these tend to occur in large cities. About 100,000 or more individuals or in megacities. So this is the million person mark. And when they form in these large or megacities, 50% of those are forming in the capital city where the government has the most capacity. So even though

these types of rebellions are not the most common, they actually raise important implications and puzzles for us in understanding opposition to regimes.

Gary Uzonyi: This doesn't appear that these groups were being opportunistic and looking for areas of weak government capacity to form up and act like predatory bandits in some way, but rather they're forming in the heart of the government's control.

Gary Uzonyi: What's interesting though is that there is no difference since the end of World War II, since the end of the Cold War or even since the beginning of the US war and terror on whether or not we have more or less urban conflict. And I said that the ratio of urban to rural wars is not increasing or decreasing, it's thing the same. So we have this variance over time.

Gary Uzonyi: What is happening is that these urban-initiated rebellions, the stock of those is actually decreasing since the end of the Cold War in that megacity mark. So the exact place where policymakers and scholars have raised concerns about the increasing level of urban rebellion, that's where we're seeing a decrease in the stock, even though the onset is not changing. And so I think what becomes an interesting question is, which rebel groups are the ones that are willing to take the gamble in forming in these capital cities?

Gary Uzonyi: And even as I say take the gamble, I think this isn't quite right. That's the traditional way of thinking this opportunity model. Instead, what I'm positing is something that I and a coauthor or [inaudible] at Indiana called the Political Origins of Rebellion. So this is just the idea that rebel groups are political organizations, just like political parties. We sometimes think of them being different because they're not legal and they use violence, but their legality and their turn to violence is often just a political decision imposed on them by the government. So we argue that there is no real difference. These are political organizations that have constituencies and those groups that have constituencies that tend to exist in urban areas are the ones that then become urban rebellions. They're not going to go out in the periphery where they don't have a network of support, but rather they're going to engage in their politics around their constituency.

Gary Uzonyi: This is just reapplying the idea that Clausewitz had mentioned a long time ago that war is an extension of politics. And so we're bringing this idea back into the forefront of civil war. And so what we find is that which groups are likely to have urban constituencies are those that care more about military, the place of the military and society. So these are groups that are formed out of the military or groups that had preexisting political parties that were then banned by the government, so these groups that already tend to exist in cities with their constituencies there. They're the ones that pick up arms. And so I've extended this research and what I'm going to be talking about at the upcoming event is in what does this mean for the success of counterinsurgency?

Gary Uzonyi: And what I argue here is that when groups form in those key urban centers, in those capital cities or in regional centers, they are forming in areas in which the government has more strategic and symbolic value to holding onto. Strategic value, this is where roadways tend to be, where economic centers tend to be, where major ports are. So governments want to control those because it helps them maintain political order and their symbolic values. Who controls a major urban areas is a sign of that group's likely success or their ability to fly their flag. And this is especially true in the capital city. So if the government loses urban areas, they're likely to be punished by their constituency. And if they lose the capital, they're likely to get tossed out by the rebels anyway.

Gary Uzonyi: And so what this means then is that when you have these groups who have constituencies in the urban centers and in the capital city in particular, what you tend to get are more violent and longer civil wars that end in extreme outcomes. So groups are not willing to bargain some kind of power sharing when it comes to urban centers. It's either a complete victory or a complete failure, like fight to the bitter end.

Gary Uzonyi: What's interesting is that I find that both government victory and rebel victory are more likely relative to bargaining. So we don't see that the government is better able to defend these centers, nor I find that rebels are more likely to succeed in these centers than one another. But rather relative to bargaining, when you're in those urban centers, you're just going to lay it all out there. And so both governments and rebels achieve this victory.

Anthony Comegna: All of this reminds me very much of the kind of literature I've read about say pirates in the golden age of Atlantic piracy. You know, starting out as privateers on the government delve essentially to attack the Spanish and then they get seasonally laid off and congregate at the port towns, the major urban centers of the day. And it's essentially a battle between who's going to control the military hardware. And I wonder, do you have to draw any distinctions between rebellion and a coup?

Gary Uzonyi: Yeah, I think there's two different ways of thinking about this. Some folks argue that a coup is not the same as rebellion because it's conducted by the state's military apparatus. And so if the military steps away from the regime, that's something different than an opposition group forming. However, I think of them as rather similar. So a coup is conducted by military personnel that have specific interests. These military interests. And they have a specific constituents, which is the rest of the military, or at least a segment of the military.

Gary Uzonyi: And so one of the types of groups most likely to form in urban areas are coups. These are military agents who decide that the government, for one reason or another, is not performing the way it should. And in terms of causing issues for the military's ability to be successful and to persist. And so if we think about what opposition groups are, is they are political organizations that have specific interests where they don't think the government is meeting those interests. And

so they look for ways in which to change government policy. That's exactly what a coup. You have a political organization that has a specific interest. This is a military interest. They think the government is not a meeting that interest and so they look for a way to change that and the way they're going to change that is by ousting the regime.

Gary Uzonyi: I think one of the big difference is, is that coups tend to be the case in which the opposition has as much or even more military might than the government. So that has implications for the duration, the success, and maybe the severity of fighting. But the underlying logic I believe is the same.

Anthony Comegna: All right, Professor Sheehan, you're the economist we have designated for this program, and of course at IHS that's traditionally one of our largest disciplines. We have the most students perhaps, right up there tied with political science. Yet given your research, I expect you might have a fairly novel answer to this question, but what do you think the point of PPE is?

Kate Sheehan: Yeah, for me, the point of PPE is kind of do good economics. So understanding PPE is going to shape the questions that we ask and how we go about answering those questions. If we look maybe more at the history of economics, it's originally called political economy.

Kate Sheehan: When Adam Smith is going through in the *Wealth of Nations* and talking about all of the benefits of maybe these trades or our self-interested behavior, one of his underlying condition is a tolerable administration of justice. And to discuss what a tolerable administration of justice is, we're going to have to look outside of just what economics can do.

Kate Sheehan: For me, within my research, I do comparative economics and public choice economics where I look at the different laws and regulations impacts on country's development or US state outcomes. And to do this style of research, it really has to be within kind of politics, philosophy and economics. So I use economic growth as a desired outcome a lot in my research. I can use traditional measures of why we want economic growth. It lowers motherhood, mortality rates, that increases our life expectancy, more children get education, environmental quality increases. But really the idea of why I initially liked the idea of using economic growth as a desired outcome has to come from philosophy. More economic freedom, more economic growth is going to lead to more liberty for people or more choices. And so that has to be kind of rooted in a larger discussion than just economics.

Kate Sheehan: If we're looking at political economic systems, we're going to have to use politics for that. We can't just operate with economics in a vacuum. It has to operate in the institutions that are operating within those states and countries.

Anthony Comegna: Do you think there's any role at all for a sort of cloistered economics where you don't get either in the philosophical clouds or mired in political muck?

Kate Sheehan: Sure. I mean, using the word cloistered might be kind of a bit strong for what I'm going to say here, but sure. I don't think that there's anything wrong with maybe doing a paper where you're only going to read what other economists have done and you're only going to reference other economic studies within your paper. So if I'm writing a paper on trade and service trade liberalization and the benefits of that, I think it's fine for me to go through and maybe only reference past econ papers on this study to talk about the economic theory of why trade is going to be helpful here, how it's going to allow for specialization, increased division of knowledge, comparative advantage, and ultimately to economic prosperity. Or to write a paper on how property rights are going to align people's incentives to allow for greater levels of human prosperity. But I can't stay cloistered within that too long. Any of my results are going to have policy implications. I have to understand PPE in order to not be dangerous in how I talk about those.

Kate Sheehan: If I'm writing a lot of models, I want to check that the base assumptions of my models aren't going to maybe be way out there to people in other disciplines because that's a nice fact checked or maybe smell test on the style of models that we're doing. It's helpful to have outsiders look at these models and what were the assumptions for making. Plus the environment in which I choose the questions that I'm going to study and how I go about discussing those questions is going to be shaped by the overall political environment, the philosophy, understanding that I have, the institutions, the culture, the history of a country are all going to matter for that. I also think that we can learn a lot from understanding how other people talk about our discipline.

Kate Sheehan: My understanding of maybe the knowledge problem and the role of incentives has increased a lot by listening and reading how maybe James [Addison] and Mark Pennington talk about it, and they are not traditional economists, they're going to be more philosophers or political scientists. My understanding of transaction costs, which are core to understanding economic models and theories is definitely increased by the work that Mike Munger has done. So understanding basic ideas behind my research can benefit from hearing others discuss those as well. Plus, it's just going to be more fun if you're talking to people outside of your discipline.

Anthony Comegna: Now speaking of, you'll spending most of your time at this program, listening to student presentations of their own research, but then you'll also be delivering your own presentation about a working paper that you have in progress right now. What could you tell us about that?

Kate Sheehan: Yeah, the paper that I'm going to be presenting this weekend is very much a working paper, but it's always fun to present those to students so that they can see how much we actually struggle in writing our papers ourselves. In this paper, we're really concentrating on the benefit of protective institutions for property rights and how they're important for economic growth. But in particular, this is a paper I'm working on with Dr. Colin O'Reilly, also from

Creighton University. In this paper, we're really looking at how many countries are only protecting the property rights of half of their citizens.

Kate Sheehan: In many countries, women do not have the same private property right protections as men. And so we're hypothesizing that limiting women's property rights is going to impede economic growth for these countries as well. So increasing property rights for women would lead to more economic growth, development, and prosperity for countries overall. And so in going through and doing this, we're using a new measure that Rosemarie Fike from the Fraser Institute has put up where she's using different measurements of where women don't have the same rights as men. For example, in 24 countries, women can't work at night time, or in 19 countries, women need their husbands permission to work at all. So that's definitely going to impact how those countries are growing and developing over time.

Anthony Comegna: And do you have any sort of initial findings?

Kate Sheehan: Yeah. And so for what we're finding, we kind of started hoping that we could just throw the measure in there into a traditional growth model and it would be a really strong result. But looking at the data in a little bit more detail, half of the constraints on women's property rights have disappeared in a way. So in 1960 to 2010, about half of those constraints have disappeared, which is great for women worldwide. It makes my data work a little bit harder because most of my good data doesn't start until the 1980s-1990s. So within the paper, what we're now doing is looking at the marginal effects of our factors of production.

Kate Sheehan: So what we're finding is that women not having property rights is mattering for economic growth in how it's affecting the utilization of the physical capital in the country or how it's affecting the level of entrepreneurship in the country. So women not having the same property rights as men, not having the same ability to work or not having the same ability to travel across the country is impacting how that country's human capital or how that country's level of entrepreneurship is actually helping their own economic growth and development.

Anthony Comegna: It sounds to me like when you didn't necessarily find exactly what you were looking for in the data, you sort of were able to just shift your question around a little bit and shift your focus around a little bit for something that did work better for the data that you had. Would you say that's pretty much accurate?

Kate Sheehan: Yeah, I mean we took that initial first step. We were just really optimistic and I think we actually have a better paper now. We've we've had to be more careful in how we are using our question, how we've refined our approach and then we went through a process of workshopping the paper a lot too. I presented the paper last November at the SCA meetings, the Southern Economic Association meetings and I got a lot of really nice but really critical feedback on the paper

there. And so that was helpful to kind of give us an idea of best ways that we might be able to move forward with it.

Kate Sheehan: The paper now is still in its development stages and I'm sure that the students this weekend will have some thoughts on where else we haven't looked or additional things that we might want to consider. So being able to refine our question as well as going to talk to other smart people about the question and the idea have helped us kind of go through and tackle what initially it wasn't working out really well for us.

Anthony Comegna: That leads me perfectly to my next question, which is, what do you think are some of the most important areas that classical liberal scholars could or should be making in say the next 5 to 10 years?

Kate Sheehan: Yeah, so this is a really hard question to kind of think about, what should classical liberals be working on in the next 5 to 10 years? One thing that I think we really need to do and maybe have a duty to do is go through and point out that the world is getting better. There is this overwhelming belief that the world is bad, policies are getting worse, we're going to maybe hell in a handbasket. But if we look at the data, if we look around us, the world is actually pretty great, and it's only getting better. And I think classical liberals really need to be pointing this out. We need to be pointing out that 80% of the population of the world has access to electricity, extreme poverty has halved recently, over 60% of girls in low-income countries have access to education, deaths from natural disasters are decreasing. Being able to point this out maybe isn't in itself a research agenda, but it's a really important starting point for being able to get into more discussions that maybe we want to about the importance of property rights or reducing overall regulations.

Kate Sheehan: We need to make sure that we're kind of starting from the same ground of understanding how these things can help understanding that prosperity is the unusual thing. Poverty was the norm. So we need to guard the things that have given us prosperity and make sure that we're encouraging those and honoring those across time. So we need to make sure we're explaining again how the knowledge problem comes into play with any new regulation, how any type of new law, the central decision maker never will have complete information. They can never see all of the intended and unintended results of their policy.

Kate Sheehan: And then I think another thing that we need to make sure that we're doing in particularly when we're talking to students about these ideas, is we need to make sure that we're being nice when we have these discussions with people that disagree with us. We need to make sure that we're starting from a commonality point and then being very generous to other people when we're stepping away from that. It's very easy to have a conversation about how we both want good environmental quality, and now where classical liberals might differ is how is the best way to achieve better environmental quality in this. Maybe it's not regulation because we're worried about the knowledge problem,

how incentives will come into play, the transaction costs of that. And making sure that we're being friendly to people when we're talking about maybe property rights would lead to and better environmental outcomes in this case so that you're really having a conversation with each other.

Kate Sheehan: Again, not a complete research agenda, but something I think we need to be really aware of in the next 5 to 10 years as we are shaping our new research projects.

Anthony Comegna: I think an academic who wants to assume good faith on the part of their interlocutors is a rare thing indeed. Thank you very much for being on the show Professor Sheehan.

Kate Sheehan: Thank you so much for having me.

Anthony Comegna: Our greatest thanks to all our faculty from this Graduate Research Workshop, Professors [Coleman 00:00:26:29], Uzonyi, and Sheehan, and while we're at it, a hearty cheer for our students as well. Subscribe to the show and toss us a rating and review while you're there. Thanks for listening.