

Aaditya Dar

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Education

- Ph.D., Economics, The George Washington University, Washington, DC, 2018
 - Dissertation title: Essays in development economics and political economy
 - Co-directors: Stephen Smith and Remi Jedwab; Readers: James Foster and Sarah Baird
- M.Phil., Economics, The George Washington University, Washington, DC, 2015
- M.A., Economics, The George Washington University, Washington, DC, 2014
- M.A., Development Studies, Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai, 2009
- B.A. (Hons.), Economics, Kirori Mal College, University of Delhi, Delhi, 2007

Research Interests

- Primary fields: Development Economics, Applied Microeconomics, Agricultural Economics
- Secondary fields: Political Economy, Environmental Economics, Public Economics

Employment

- Assistant to Managing Editor, Journal of Development Studies, 2018-present
- Visiting Graduate Student, Global Policy & Strategy School, UC San Diego, 2015-16
 - Faculty Host: Gordon McCord
- Research Assistant to Paul Niehaus, Karthik Muralidharan and Sandip Sukhtankar for “Evaluating Cash Transfers in lieu of the TPDS in Bihar”, Summer 2012
- Research Manager, Social and Rural Research Institute, IMRB International, New Delhi, 2009-11

Courses Taught

- Intermediate Microeconomics, George Washington University, Fall 2016
- Training Workshop in Operationalizing a Field Survey, Kurukshetra University, Haryana, 2013

Teaching Assistance Experience (at George Washington University)

- Econometrics-I (PhD) for Robert Phillips, Fall 2014
- Econometrics-II (PhD) for Robert Phillips, Spring 2015
- Introduction to Game Theory and Strategic Thinking for Kaushik Basu and James Foster, Spring 2014 and Spring 2013
- Principles of Microeconomics for Irene Foster, Fall 2013, Fall 2012 and Fall 2011
- Principles of Macroeconomics for Irene Foster, Spring 2012
- Development Economics (only grading responsibilities) for Stephen Smith, Spring 2013
- Development Economics (only grading responsibilities) for James Foster, Fall 2011, Spring 2012
- International Trade Theory and Policy (only grading responsibilities) for Maggie Chen, Spring 2018

Awards

- University fellowship (George Washington University), 2011-15
- John Whitefield Kendrick Graduate Endowment Fellowship in Economics (George Washington University), 2011-13

Research Grants

- Global Religion Research Initiative, University of Notre Dame, USD 11,000 (Co-PI with Rahul Verma), 2018-19
- Azim Premji University Research Grants, USD 22,000 (Co-PI with Ashwani Kumar), 2017-19
- International Growth Center, USD 26,000 (Co-PI with Chinmaya Kumar and Pankaj Verma), 2015-17
- Election Commission of India, USD 31,000 (multiple projects under aegis of Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai), 2013-17
- International Growth Center, USD 14,000 (Co-PI with Ashwani Kumar), 2013-16
- Sigur Center for Asian Studies, USD 6,000, 2014

Referee

- Journal of South Asian Development
- Journal of Development Studies

Seminars/Invited Presentations

- Southern Economic Association, Washington, DC, November 18-20, 2018 (scheduled)
- North East Universities Development Consortium Conference, Cornell University, Ithaca, October 27-28, 2018 (scheduled)
- DC India Politics Workshop, Washington DC, October 11, 2018
- SANEM-World Bank North America Discussion Forum, Washington DC, Sep 7, 2018
- Young Economists Symposium (YES), New York University, New York, Aug 9, 2018
- Annual Bank Conference on Development Economics (ABCDE), World Bank, Washington DC, Jun 25, 2018
- Midwest Political Science Association (MPSA), Chicago, Apr 6, 2018
- Annual Indian Political Economy Workshop, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Washington DC, Oct 28, 2017
- South Asia Colloquium, Department of Political Science, University of California, Berkeley, Sep 6, 2017
- The Annual Bank Conference on Africa (ABCA): The Challenges and Opportunities of Transforming African Agriculture, University of California, Berkeley, Jun 1-2, 2017
- ADRI International Conference on Bihar and Jharkhand: Shared History to Shared Vision, Patna, Mar 24-28, 2017
- IGC Bihar Growth Conference, Patna, Jul 16-17, 2016
- Toward Sustainable Groundwater in Agriculture - An International Conference Linking Science and Policy, San Francisco, Jun 28-30, 2016
- Environment and Resource Group, Department of Economics, University of California, San Diego, May 2, 2016
- ADRI International Conference on Development and Growth: Experience and Theories, Patna, Mar 26-30, 2016
- George Washington University Development Lunch, Washington DC, Apr 15, 2013; May 7, 2015; Apr 12, 2016; Aug 8, 2017; May 10, 2018

Conferences/Workshops Attended

- Urban Economics Association Meeting, New York, Oct 12-13, 2018
- American Political Science Association Meeting, Boston, Aug 30-Sep 2, 2018
- Northeast Workshop in Empirical Political Science, Princeton University, September 11, 2017
- American Political Science Association Meeting, San Francisco, Aug 31-Sep 3, 2017
- Berkeley Conference on Political Economy and Governance, Berkeley, Sep 8-9, 2017

Other

- Membership : American Economic Association (AEA), Agricultural & Applied Economics Association (AAEA), Urban Economics Association (UEA), American Political Science Association (APSA), Midwest Political Science Association (MPSA)
- Computer : Stata, Python, LaTeX, ArcMap, Git, Open Data Kit (ODK), SurveyCTO
- Languages : English (fluent), Hindi (fluent), German (advanced)

References

Stephen Smith Professor of Economics and International Affairs George Washington U. Washington, DC - 20052 Email: ssmith@gwu.edu	Remi Jedwab Associate Professor of Economics George Washington U. Washington, DC - 20052 Email: jedwab@gwu.edu	James Foster Oliver T. Carr Professor of International Affairs and Professor of Economics George Washington U. Email: fosterje@gwu.edu
Ethan Kaplan Associate Professor of Economics University of Maryland College Park, MD - 20742 Email: kaplan@econ.umd.edu	Ram Fishman Assistant Professor of Public Policy Tel Aviv U. Tel Aviv, Israel Email: ramf@post.tau.ac.il	Gordon McCord Assistant Professor School of Global Policy and Strategy, UC San Diego, CA - 92093 Email: gmccord@ucsd.edu

Working Papers

“Parachuters vs Climbers: Economic Consequences of Barriers to Political Entry in a Democracy” (Job Market Paper)

How does political selection impact local economic growth? I study the role of a legislator's background prior to joining politics and conduct primary research to compile an original dataset of politicians' biographies. Observing the entry route of politicians allows me to classify them as 'parachuters' – those who are hereditary/dynastic or are part of the local socio-economic/cultural elite – and 'climbers', those who have made their way by rising up the ranks. I document three key results: one, barriers to political entry and post-colonial elite persistence have perverse economic consequences. Findings from a close election regression discontinuity design indicate that electing parachuters leads to 0.2 percentage point lower GDP growth per year compared to constituencies where climbers are elected. Two, a leader's entry route is a significant feature of political selection, even after controlling for conventional ascriptive identities such as sex, religion and ethnicity. Three, there is suggestive evidence that the impact is driven by misallocation of bureaucratic resources and neither regulation of technology adoption nor factor price manipulation are the underlying mechanisms.

“Diffusion of modern crop varieties associated with 20th century infant mortality declines” (with Gordon McCord, Ram Fishman, Nathan Mueller, Prabhat Barnwal and Jan von der Goltz) Revise and Resubmit.

There is considerable debate on the potential for modern staple seed varieties (MVs) to advance nutrition, and little is known about the contribution of MV diffusion during the Green Revolution to the global reduction in mortality achieved during the 20th century. Here we provide global scale estimates of the relationship between MV diffusion and infant mortality between 1960-2000 by constructing a novel, spatially-precise indicator of MV diffusion and leveraging child-level data from nearly 600,000 children across 18,138 villages in 36 developing countries. Results indicate that the diffusion of MVs reduced infant mortality by 3.7-4.2 percentage points (from a baseline of 17%), with stronger associations for male infants. These results are robust to a host of statistical controls and alternative measures of MV diffusion that reduce potential confounding. The sizable contribution of MV adoption to improved welfare should inform global food and development policy.

“Electoral Cycles in Food Prices: Evidence from India” (with Pranav Gupta and Rahul Verma)

Do prices of essential food commodities vary with the timing of elections? Using weekly retail price data of 16 food items between 1993 and 2012 in 28 cities across India, we find robust evidence for existence of a political price cycle in onions and not in other commodities, confirming a commonly held but (hitherto) empirically untested view that onion prices are an electorally salient issue. These cycles are strongest when: (a) incumbent state governments are aligned with the centre, (b) incumbents win with large majorities, and (c) in periods when the market is unregulated and governments do not have access to legal instruments to control prices. The findings can be explained by a model that emphasizes the role of informal regulatory strategies and trader’s expectations.

“Reducing Corruption in Bihar’s Public Distribution System (with Chinmaya Kumar and Pankaj Verma)

India spends 1 percent of its GDP on providing food at subsidized rates (one-tenth of the market rate) to the poor. However, since people often rely on the shopkeeper to inform them about the arrival of food-grains in the village, there is a significant scope for arbitrage and black-marketing. The main objective of the study is to estimate the prevalence of corruption in the Public Distribution System (PDS) in Bihar and examine possible mechanisms through which an information campaign can increase transparency. We randomize 175 villages in Bihar, a low-income setting in northern India, to receive an automated voice call a day after the food-grains have arrived at the shop. Findings suggest that relaxing household’s information constraints might be one way to empower them and reduce corruption.

“Designing Policy in Weak States: Unintended Consequences of Alcohol Prohibition in Bihar (with Abhilasha Sahay)

We study the impact of an alcohol-prohibition policy on crime in the Indian state of Bihar, where nearly 1.5 percent of the world’s population lives. Using a difference-in-difference empirical strategy, we show that banning the sale and consumption of alcohol led to an increase in crime, even after adjusting for prohibition-related cases. The rise in violent and property crime is highest in districts with greater black-market prices of country liquor. Since state capacity and supply of police is fixed, diverting law enforcement resources towards implementing the alcohol ban effectively reduces institutional bandwidth to prevent crimes. The findings can be reconciled with a model where crime is deterred by both police enforcement and collective action. In places where public support for the policy was strongest, we find that the rise in crime was the smallest. Our results caution against ‘big-bang reforms’ in states with weak institutions.

“The Groundwater Constraint: Responses to Falling Water Tables in India” (with Ram Fishman and Meha Jain)

The objective of this paper is to examine the trends in groundwater depletion in India and analyse their short-term consequences by studying their impact on area under irrigation. We document the groundwater depth between 1996 and 2012 and find that overall trends mask important regional and temporal heterogeneity. In the period of concentration, 1996-2001, water tables were falling rapidly in the north-western and southern parts of the country. The diffusion phase, 2002-2007, is characterized by a decline in the magnitude of the trends as the epicentre of the problem shifts eastwards, before a resurgence in 2008-2012. Analysing the impacts of falling water tables, using over 100,000 observations and high-resolution spatial data, we find that a 1 meter fall in November’s water table leads to a decline in irrigated area by approximately 0.1 percentage points. Given that the magnitude of the impact is a third of the average annual gains India has made in irrigation since independence, this implies that the groundwater constraint is strict and binding.

“Historical Causes of Agricultural Development in India”

How does history impact economic development? Much of the literature has focused on role of extractive institutional arrangements with respect to land (and labour coercion arising thereof) as a pathway to explain poor development outcomes we observe today.

I propose an alternative mechanism: historic investments in irrigation networks coupled with a laissez-faire colonial policy in Indian agriculture meant that at the time of independence, there were already some areas that were better endowed than others. When the country was presented with an opportunity to adopt technical change in the agricultural sector, the initial take-up was biased towards places which had infrastructure for surface irrigation, implying that control over water is an important channel through which history has persisting effects.

Non-Academic/Policy Research

- Tata Institute of Social Sciences (2017) "Engaging Indian Overseas Electors: Online Competition Results and Survey Findings". Submitted to Election Commission of India, New Delhi.
- Tata Institute of Social Sciences (2015) "Inclusive Elections in India: A Study on Domestic Migration and Issues in Election Participation". Submitted to Election Commission of India, New Delhi.
- Tata Institute of Social Sciences (2013) "Analysis of KABBP surveys". Submitted to Election Commission of India, New Delhi.
- Social and Rural Research Institute (2011) "Monitoring and evaluation of ASHA project". Submitted to PepsiCo India, Gurgaon.
- Social and Rural Research Institute (2011) "Research on KHUSHI clinics at petrol pumps". Submitted to Transport Corporation of India Foundation, Gurgaon.
- Social and Rural Research Institute (2011) "Assessing the effectiveness of integrated health education in microfinance". Submitted to The David and Lucile Packard Foundation, New Delhi.
- Social and Rural Research Institute (2010) "Assessing private partnerships in development". Submitted to International Finance Commission (IFC), Washington, DC.
- Social and Rural Research Institute (2010) "Young health survey in 5 resettlement and rehabilitated colonies in Delhi". Submitted to Plan International (India Chapter), New Delhi.
- Social and Rural Research Institute (2010) "Baseline survey for Maternal and Newborn Health Survival Initiative (MANSHI) in Jharkhand". Submitted to American India Foundation, New Delhi.
- Social and Rural Research Institute (2010) "Behavioral surveillance survey in 35 districts in Maharashtra". Submitted to AVERT Society, Mumbai.
- Social and Rural Research Institute (2009) "Participatory vulnerability analysis from a child rights perspective in a slum in Mumbai". Submitted to Plan International (India Chapter), New Delhi.
- Social and Rural Research Institute (2009) "Impact assessment of Digital Equalizer programme in Punjab". Submitted to American India Foundation, New Delhi.