

Why Not Merge the Social Sciences? A Political Science Perspective

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Some thoughts:

- Main point of interest is in explaining various suboptimal macroresults - war, protectionism, environmental degradation
 - Nobody wants war but it happens anyway
 - Protectionism by each country leads to less economic growth for all countries
 - Despite desire to preserve species, we over-exploit them
 - Essentially, same dynamic as Keynes' "invisible hand" in which each firm seeking profit leads to all minimizing them
- Assumption of "rational" (i.e., goal-seeking) microbehavior of states, so particularly surprising - how can bad outcomes arise in a realm of hyper-rational actors
- Essential question is "why don't states cooperate to overcome these suboptimal outcomes?" Lots of opportunities for joint gain that are not being realized. Why not?
- Insight that outcomes may not be the result of intentions, due to structure. I.e., structure drives a wedge between intentions and outcomes
- Dominant model of structure producing undesirable outcomes in political science has been PD models and in environmental politics has been ToC models
 - Elegant model that explains how suboptimal outcomes can arise, even when ALL participating actors view that outcome as suboptimal
 - Pronounced tendency to see all problems as PD or ToC, even when they aren't
- Realization that not all problems involve PD type incentives
 - Coordination problems proposed as explanation of a subset of non-cooperation - two types
 - Benign coordination problems - just need to find rules and then don't need to worry about compliance. Here the explanation is basically one of transaction costs. Identifying a set of rules to agree on may be difficult and time-consuming.
 - Malign coordination problems - WHICH set of rules is adopted for coordination has distributional impacts which makes coordination very difficult, especially in a world of rational but POSITIONAL actors
 - who care how they are doing relative to others, not just absolutely compared to the past
 - PD and Coordination problems have dominated literature
 - Common assumption that all problems fit one or other model
 - All desire to cooperate - explicit assumption
 - All could cooperate if they wanted to - implicit assumption
- Additional structures can contribute to bad macro-results - now being realized
 - Asymmetric externalities - not everyone agrees that cooperation is desirable. Not everyone is made better off by the distribution of costs and benefits entailed in cooperation (e.g., current state of play with respect to whaling)
 - Positive externalities plagued by incapacity - everyone agrees that cooperation is desirable and all would do so if they could, but some can't. Problem is not one of incentives but one of capacity. Health regimes are an example. So are, apparently and arguably, drug control assistance to Bolivia and Colombia.

REAL PROBLEM =

- ❖ identified certain problems in the world,
- ❖ derived a simplified model from a subset of those problems,
- ❖ used that simplified model to explain those problems,
- ❖ now assume too readily that the model fits all problems, rather than merely a subset of the world's problems.
- ❖ Problem stems from forcing the real-world to fit the requirements of the model rather than forcing our model to fit the requirements of the real world