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Research Statement

I am mainly interested in the following question:

“Which economic policies promote peaceful socioeconomic development?”

In my research I am explicitly or implicitly guided by social market economic thought. The concept of the social market economy developed in Germany in the 1930s amidst great political turmoil. In Germany and Europe, socialism was on the rise in response to the social problems created by 19th century capitalism. After World War II, fascism emerged as an alternative to both capitalism and socialism. Beginning with the 1930s, a group of German economists began to develop the concept of the Social Market Economy as a response to all fascism, socialism, and laissez-faire capitalism. The concept of the Social Market Economy eventually guided Germany’s post World War II recovery, and ultimately shaped Europe’s economic constitution.

In Social Market Economics, the idea of the human being is characterized by both self-interest and social responsibility. This distinguishes Social Market Economics from laissez-faire capitalism and socialism, whose philosophies rest on assumptions regarding the idea of a human being that are characterized exclusively by self-interest and social responsibility, respectively.

The focus of Social Market Economics is on principles of economic policy. These principles, in turn, are closely related to the field of Economic Humanism and the School of Freiburg with its concept of “Ordoliberalism.” In essence, “Ordoliberalism” is a set of state-constituting, state-political, market-organizational, and market-failure correcting principles, which ideally guide economic policy to assure that the freedom in the market drives equitable social development.

In my research I typically identify a certain socioeconomic challenge and examine it in the context of deviations from Social Market Economic principles. I have written on the relationship between food insecurity and political instability, showing how insufficient social safety nets and non-market conform social policies (such as price ceilings for food items) contribute to political instability. Another research focus has been the question why so many foreign fighters join the so-called Islamic State. Again, we find that insufficient social safety nets, specifically that passive labor market programs promote expat jihadism more than active ones. My academic research is mostly data driven.

While it is important to write for an academic audience, and certainly is necessary to stay current, I believe it is equally important to make research available to non-academic audiences and public policy. In addition to my academic research, I also have conducted contracted research projects for the World Food Program, the United Nations Economic and Social Division for Western Asia, the Food and Agriculture Organization, and the Konrad Adenauer Foundation.