Weekend links: Tehran, the nature of the state, industrialisation, inequality in Mexico, indicators, and effective altruism debated

Author: Terence Wood and Camilla Burkot

Date: July 10, 2015

Starting with opportunities possibly squandered, Barack Obama sounds a pessimistic note on a nuclear deal with Iran. And Robin Wright has a good primer on opponents to the deal in both Tehran and Washington.

For those with an interest in debates about the nature of the state, whether the state can promote development, and if so how, Pranab Bardhan's working paper (soon to be published in the Journal of Economic Literature) is excellent. Although, of course, the future and the past are different places, so to speak. And Dani Rodrik has an interesting blog post on why past models of industrialisation (and industrial development) may not prove feasible in a future, more tech-heavy world. Duncan Green also has a great summary of a talk Rodrik gave on this (with some good debate in the comments section).

Beyond industrial policy, Green's blog is brimming with good content at present including a great post on corruption and what aid can (or can't) do about it, and a mind-boggling guest post on inequality in Mexico.

Further to issues of corruption and governance (something of an inadvertent theme in this week's links!), check out this excerpt from a new book, The Quiet Power of Indicators, authored by a trio from New York University. They offer a valuable reminder that indicators, particularly those related to governance (the book's primary focus), can be sly creatures; they 'smuggle theories of corruption, rule of law, and development into apparently neutral systems of measurement.'

Finally, we've mentioned 'effective altruism' in passing before in our weekend links. If you (like me [Camilla]) are still mulling the concept over, you may be able to find some answers in this month's Boston Review Forum. It features a opening statement from Peter Singer, and nearly a dozen responses (including several heavyweight development thinkers). Among the key issues raised are the measurement, sustainability, and politics underlying the effective altruism movement.