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Dominic Rodner's title+abstract.

"Hidden Hostility: Donor Attention and Political Violence"

Abstract:

Political violence within countries has been on the rise for the last few decades. This paper examines a potential international dimension to this domestic repression and dissent. We focus on possible impacts from international attention on the behavior of governments and opposition groups. We consider that governments who depend heavily on foreign aid could be more likely to attack political opponents when international donors are distracted by their own major domestic events. In anticipation of this, opposition groups have incentives to reduce agitations that incite such crackdowns. We study this interaction in a simple strategic model, and scrutinize the predictions of this model using fine-grained data for Africa. The theory surmises that oppositions will reduce agitations when shocks are anticipated (elections). In contrast, when unanticipated shocks (natural disasters) hit, and when agitations are already under way, the theory predicts that the opposition will substitute visible forms of unrest (riots) for more covert operations on soft targets (targeted violence against civilians). This pattern is precisely reflected in the data.

International donor inattention hurts political oppositions through the out-of-equilibrium threat of increased repression, and observed political crackdowns may only represent the "tip of the iceberg". Enhancing international scrutiny would help safeguard public demonstrations of dissent, and reduce violence against civilians.