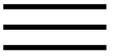


Hands off my regime! Governments' restrictions on foreign aid to non-governmental organizations in poor and middle-income countries.

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Hands Off My Regime! Governments' Restrictions on Foreign Aid to Non-Governmental Organizations in Poor and Middle-Income Countries

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Summary

Many resource-strapped developing country governments seek international aid, but when that assistance is channeled through domestic civil society, it can threaten their political control. As a result, in the last two decades, 39 of the world's 153 low- and middle-income countries have adopted laws restricting the inflow of foreign aid to domestically operating nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). Governments recognize that such laws harm their international reputations for supporting democracy and may invite donor punishment in terms of aid reductions. Yet, they perceive foreign aid to NGOs as supporting political opponents and threatening their grip on power. In

the aftermath of competitive electoral victories, governments often take new legal steps to limit these groups' funding. We test this argument on an original dataset of laws detailing the regulation of foreign aid inflows to domestically operating NGOs in 153 low- and middle-income countries for the period 1993–2012. Using an event history approach, we find that foreign aid flows are associated with an increased risk of restrictive law adoption; a log unit increase in foreign aid raises the probability of adoption by 6.7%. This risk is exacerbated after the holding of competitive elections: the interaction of foreign aid and competitive elections increases the probability of adoption by 11%.



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Key words

NGOs; civil society; regulations; foreign funding; elections; development aid

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