**Preparing for Genocide: Quasi-Experimental Evidence from Rwanda**

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**Abstract:**

This paper provides evidence for how an institution of political community meetings can facilitate large-scale mobilization into mass violence. We analyze a Rwandan mandatory community program that required citizens to participate in community work and political meetings every Saturday in the years before the 1994 genocide. We exploit cross-sectional variation in meeting intensity induced by exogenous weather fluctuations, and find that a one standard-deviation increase in the number of rainy Saturdays resulted in a 16 percent lower civilian participation rate in genocide violence. The natural placebo test -- rainfall on all other weekdays -- yields no statistically significant results. Moreover, the effect appears to be driven by the last six months before the genocide, and we find evidence that the community meetings were particularly important in more sparsely populated and less compact areas. Our robust findings shed light on the potentially detrimental role of government-ordered community meetings. Its importance derives, at the very least, from the resurgence of similar practices in sub-Saharan Africa.