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Political agency, government responsiveness and the role of the media

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Abstract

The role of mass media in making governments responsive to the needs of citizens is a relatively neglected area in economics. We sketch a theoretical example with a role for media in enhancing government responsiveness based on asymmetric information between citizens and government. We then use data for the period 1958–1992 on the extent to which Indian state governments responded to food shortages via the public distribution of food, correlating these with proxies of media, political and economic development. We find that states that are more responsive tend to also be those with high levels of newspaper circulation, electoral turnout and literacy. In contrast, richer states do not tend to be more responsive than poorer states.



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JEL classification

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