

ABSTRACT:

Aid and radicalization: the case of Hamas in the West Bank and Gaza

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In this paper we study how militant political factions use material aid to secure support. We focus on the case of Hamas, a militant faction in the Palestinian Authority. We exploit a unique dataset that includes the sources and extent of assistance received by Palestinian households, data on Israeli and Palestinian fatalities, and data on the level of support for particular Palestinian factions. We find that residents of districts that receive aid from religious charities are more likely to support Hamas, even though this support is relatively small in monetary terms. These support patterns are in line with existing theory on armed religious groups as club good providers. By comparison, residents of districts who receive more material aid from Palestinian Authority agencies are more likely to support Fatah, except in the Hamas-controlled Gaza Strip. Finally, aid from international organizations is associated with support for moderate factions and decreased support of radical factions. While it is possible that charities only target districts and households that support them, testing for reverse causality by regressing charity support on lagged political preferences yields no such evidence.