The Political Consequences of Racial/Ethnic Tension: Theory and Evidence

Kerim Peren Arin\textsuperscript{1}, Kemal Akoz\textsuperscript{2}, and Christina Zenker\textsuperscript{1}

\textsuperscript{1}Zayed University – United Arab Emirates
\textsuperscript{2}New York University, Abu Dhabi – United Arab Emirates

Abstract

By counting the number of articles published in major US newspapers containing carefully selected keywords, we construct a time varying measure of racial/ethnic tension. Then, we empirically test the predictions of a theoretical model by using the aforementioned measure, and investigate how ethnic/racial tension affects presidential approval ratings by different racial groups. Our results show that while ethnic/racial tension decreases the approval by white voters, the opposite is true for the approval by African American voters. Further scrutiny reveals that this maybe explained by the fact that government transfers to African Americans increase as a result of higher ethnic tension.

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