

Effect of diplomatic recognition and other diplomatic efforts on access to justice, rights and public services

The diplomatic pressures with the threat of invasion had a moderate positive impact on African government's presence in ungoverned areas and so capacity to improve access to justice.

Geographical region: sub-Saharan Africa

Effect size: Moderate Effect (g= 0.109)

Confidence in study findings: Low confidence (1 study; 6 ES)

Short summary

The study in this cell evaluates U.S. foreign policy's impact on African governance post-9/11, specifically the threat of invasion if African governments did not exert control in ungoverned areas of the country. There was a moderate impact on relevant outcomes such as government employment and voter turnout had a moderate effect on the outcomes. The cell is rated low confidence due to the limited number of studies.

Long summary

The intervention

The intervention being evaluated was U.S. foreign policy during the Bush administration post-9/11, pressuring nations, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa, to reduce terrorist safe havens by expanding state capacity and governance in ungoverned spaces. This was enforced through deterrence strategies, including the threat of U.S. military intervention, which was deemed credible following the invasion of Afghanistan and Iraq.

How the intervention is expected to work

This intervention was based on deterrence, where the U.S. demanded that nations, particularly in Africa, reduce terrorist safe havens by expanding governance in ungoverned spaces. The policy assumed that the credible threat of U.S. military intervention would compel governments to strengthen their territorial control, improve state capacity, and enhance public service delivery. By establishing a stronger state presence, these regions would become less hospitable to terrorist groups, reducing threats to global security. The approach expected that increased governance would foster stability, improve access to justice, and promote economic development, ultimately bolstering state legitimacy and reducing reliance on external military actions.

The evidence base

The cell consists of one study which employed a quantitative design using a difference-in-differences approach to analyze the impact of U.S. interventions on governance. It focused on 764 provinces across 49 African countries.

Evidence findings

Diplomatic efforts - with the threat of force - had a moderate positive impact on access to justice, rights, and public services.

Included study

Downey (2021) evaluates the effectiveness of U.S. foreign policy during the Bush administration in encouraging African governments to govern ungoverned spaces as part of the global war on terror. The study examines the Bush administration's foreign policy post-9/11, emphasizing deterrence through the global war on terror. The administration demanded that nations actively reduce terrorist safe havens under threat of U.S. intervention. This policy was intended to pressure governments to expand territorial control and state capacity in ungoverned or minimally governed spaces. The study analyses data from 49 African countries. The author uses a difference-in-difference strategy to test for evidence of government expansions, using subnational data on conflict, government presence, and public goods in Africa. The results show that African states did not engage in these expansions into ungoverned spaces. There was limited impact on public goods provision with no significant change for World Bank projects (-0.085, $p > 0.10$), water projects (0.013, $p > 0.10$), and sanitation projects (-0.034, $p > 0.10$), while infrastructure projects (-0.091, $p < 0.01$) significantly declined in low-governed areas. However, there was a moderate impact on relevant outcomes for access to justice such as government employment and voter turnout. The study rated as low confidence quantitative study due to the lack of depth qualitative analysis limit the understanding of the underlying factors affecting governance in ungoverned spaces. Overall, broad-based deterrence is an ineffective diplomatic policy strategy to reduce ungoverned spaces.

Confidence assessment

We have low confidence in the cell due to reliance on indirect measures, endogeneity, flawed assumptions, weak generalizability, and data constraints.

Other outcomes in the study/cell

- Community and state governance/Government performance
- Human security/Food security and nutrition & health security