Accepted Manuscript

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PII: S0047-2727(17)30125-1

DOI: doi: 10.1016/j.jpubeco.2017.08.004

Reference: PUBEC 3798

To appear in: Journal of Public Economics

Received date: 6 November 2016 Revised date: 9 August 2017 Accepted date: 11 August 2017



Please cite this article as: Daniele, Gianmarco, Dipoppa, Gemma, Mafia, Elections and Violence against Politicians, *Journal of Public Economics* (2017), doi: 10.1016/j.jpubeco.2017.08.004

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Mafia, Elections and Violence against Politicians

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August 15, 2017

Abstract

Organized crime uses political violence to influence politics in a wide set of countries. This paper exploits a novel dataset of attacks directed towards Italian local politicians to study how (and why) criminal organizations use violence against them. We test two complementary theories to predict the use of violence i) before elections, to affect the electoral outcome; and ii) after elections, to influence politicians from the beginning of their term. We provide causal evidence in favor of the latter hypothesis. The probability of being a target of violence increases in the weeks right after an election in areas with a high presence of organized crime, especially when elections result in a change of local government.

Keywords: Organized Crime, Political Violence, Elections, Rent Seeking

JEL codes: H00, D72,

^{*}We are grateful to Toke Aidt, Pamela Campa, Giacomo De Luca, Jon Fiva, Sergio Galletta, Guy Grossman, Benny Geys, Gunes Gokmen, Roland Hodler, Dorothy Kronick, Julia Lynch, Brendan O'Leary, Luigi Pascali, Salvatore Piccolo, Amedeo Piolatto, Paolo Pinotti, Vincent Pons, Beth Simmons, Albert Solé-Ollé, Ragnar Torvik, Dawn Teele, Michael Visser and to seminar participants at the 2017 ASSA in Chicago, the 10th CES-Ifo Workshop on Political Economy, the 2017 EPSA in Milan, the University of Barcelona and the University of Pennsylvania for their helpful comments. Gianmarco Daniele gratefully acknowledges financial support from projects ECO2015-68311-R (Ministerio de Educaci.n y Ciencia) and 2014SGR420 (Generalitat de Catalunya).

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