

Title

The Education Bulge: How Higher Education Attainment Drives Protest Onset and Outcomes

Abstract

While increased education attainment is well known to have a positive increase the likelihood of individual involvement in contentious politics, the role of education attainment in prompting mass protest onset is hotly debated while its influence in shaping protest outcomes is largely ignored. The resultant spread of mass protests in repressive regimes after the Jasmine Revolution and the unusual success rates of these protests has generated a panoply of explanations, few which substantively address the role of higher education attainment's influence upon both protest onset and outcomes. This paper offers a casual mechanism, the education bulge, by which both protest onset and outcomes are explained by the negative covariance of growth rates in university graduates and changes in returns on investment (ROI) of a university degree. A cross-country comparison of protest movement onset, as well as success outcomes (characterized by the conversion of legislative seats, government concessions to stated protest goals, and durability) will be conducted across authoritarian states that underwent destabilizing political protests between 2010-2016.

Key Words

Mass protest, protest outcomes, education, return on investment