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# Authoritarian Stability and Restrictions on International Civil Society

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> *So let this be a weapon hanging on the wall and that never fires.*
>
> *—Aleksandr Tarnavsky, co-sponsor of Russia's 2015 Undesirable Organizations Law*[1]

LDS Charities—the official humanitarian wing of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormons)—has long struggled to obtain permission to legally provide its humanitarian services in countries ruled by dictators. The organization offers a variety of services, including neonatal resuscitation training, wheelchair delivery, eye exams, disaster relief, and direct assistance to local orphanages, leprosariums, and medical centers, but its legal status is often ambiguous. Beginning in the early 1990s, the LDS Church worked with Egypt's now-former president Hosni Mubarak to allow LDS Charities to formally register as a foreign charity. Year after year, Mubarak would signal his approval, with the caveat that his Coptic Christian council would ultimately have the final say. However, this council regularly denied all requests for legalization until finally conceding in 2007. Why did Mubarak, an ostensibly omnipotent dictator, defer to his Christian advisors? He had the legal right to approve the request on his own, and given that Egypt was not a democracy, there was arguably little need to show deference for such a small decision.

Conversely, the Open Society Foundations (OSF)—a philanthropic organization backed by American billionaire George Soros—has promoted democratization throughout the world since at least the early 1990s, and has paid particular attention to pro-democracy advocacy and activism in the former Soviet states of Eastern Europe. OSF

1. https://meduza.io/en/feature/2015/05/21/pure-pragmatism-nothing-personal

funds an array of initiatives and programs intended to improve education, strengthen independent media, bolster respect for human rights, and otherwise build democratic values in less democratic nations. However, more authoritarian states such as Russia have long criticized OSF for meddling in domestic affairs, controlling grassroots NGOs, and imposing foreign values in their countries. Despite this criticism, OSF has generally been able to continue supporting its programs and regularly funds and supports local NGOs working on these core issues. Surprisingly, in December 2015, OSF ceased all operations in Russia after being labeled an "undesirable organization"—a legal designation created by a 2015 law that allowed the government to blacklist and expel any organization it deemed too dangerous. President Vladimir Putin had finally found a way to remove OSF from the country. But why had it taken so long?

LDS Charities and the Open Society Foundations are radically different organizations, but they share a common experience of facing a dynamic and unpredictable regulatory environment in the countries they work in. It is likely that Mubarak used LDS Charities and other humanitarian INGOs as pawns in domestic politics. Coptic Christians account for 10–15% of Egypt's population and are both politically active and fearful of persecution. By giving Coptic leaders some say in trivial decisions, Mubarak could, in a way, placate them and help maintain the stability of his regime. Copts, in turn, appeared threatened by foreign Christian groups that could change the balance of Eastern Christian dominance in the country, and thus did not want more Western Christian organizations to work in the country. Though the foreign organizations requesting access dealt with innocuous issues that posed little threat to his regime, Mubarak benefitted from imposing restrictive regulations on certain types of INGOs. Conversely, OSF and other foreign-backed NGOs played an outsized role in Russian domestic politics, as Russian leaders feared creeping Western influence. By restricting these organizations' operations and kicking them out of the country, Putin likely hoped to stabilize his regime and protect it from external threats.

These two organizations' experience in working under harsh and capricious regulations reflects a broader trend. Over the past decade, international nongovernmental organizations (INGOs) have become increasingly active in authoritarian regimes as they respond to emergencies, assist with development, or advocate for human rights. However, these services and advocacy can challenge the regime—INGOs that provide essential services such as public health or education can undercut the regime's role as a provider of public goods, and INGOs that advocate for human rights can challenge and embarrass regimes that regularly violate those rights. Despite these risks, the overwhelming majority of authoritarian countries continue to permit INGO activities. How do these regimes limit their exposure to the risks of INGOs? What determines when an autocrat will restrict civil society in their country?

This paper investigates these questions, ultimately seeking the determinants of international civil society regulations in authoritarian regimes. After briefly reviewing

the existing literature on authoritarian institutional balancing, and arguing that civil society (and international NGOs in particular) can be treated as a political institution, I lay out a theory to explain how authoritarian regimes determine and adjust the regulatory environment for civil society organizations. I then use a series of statistical models to test my theory's hypotheses. Due to the nature of the data I use, the statistical analysis hints at the determinants of general civil society restrictions and does not distinguish between the regulatory environment for domestic and international NGOs. To better understand the determinants of *international* civil society regulations, I conclude by tracing the history and development of key INGO-related legislation in Russia, testing the implications of my hypotheses throughout the case study.

## The institutional dynamics of civil society in authoritarian regimes

Contrary to conventional wisdom, scholars such as Blaydes (2011), Levitsky and Way (2010), and Gandhi and Przeworski (2007) have argued that modern authoritarian regimes adopt quasi-democratic political institutions such as free elections, an independent judiciary, or autonomous central banks in ways that seem counterintuitive to democratically minded Western observers. This research has shown that authoritarians delegate authority to these institutions in part to maintain their own power, offsetting domestic pressure and boosting their international reputation.

Little research, however, has attempted to explain authoritarian treatment of domestic and transnational civil society through a similar institutional lens. By viewing civil society as yet another institutional actor that autocrats have to balance, we can begin to answer the key question in this paper: what determines how autocrats regulate civil society in their borders?

### Authoritarian institutional balancing

A growing literature on the nuances of autocracy shows that authoritarianism is not simply a transitional phase before democracy, but an altogether distinct regime type where autocrats must carefully balance external actors and institutions to remain in power (Levitsky and Way 2010), a phenomenon I term *institutional balancing* (see Figure 1). This theoretical strain emphasizes the fact that authoritarians are often very precariously positioned—regimes can collapse if they are unable to balance their rivals (Heiss 2012; Svolik 2009). In this view, authoritarianism is a complex multi-level game played by the regime, elites, the opposition, international actors, activists, and social movements. Instead of looking at a monolithic autocrat who rules over everything in the polity with impunity, authoritarianism is best viewed as a dynamic form

of governance, with constant legislative, constitutional, and other pseudo democratic institutional reforms (Stacher 2012, 31).

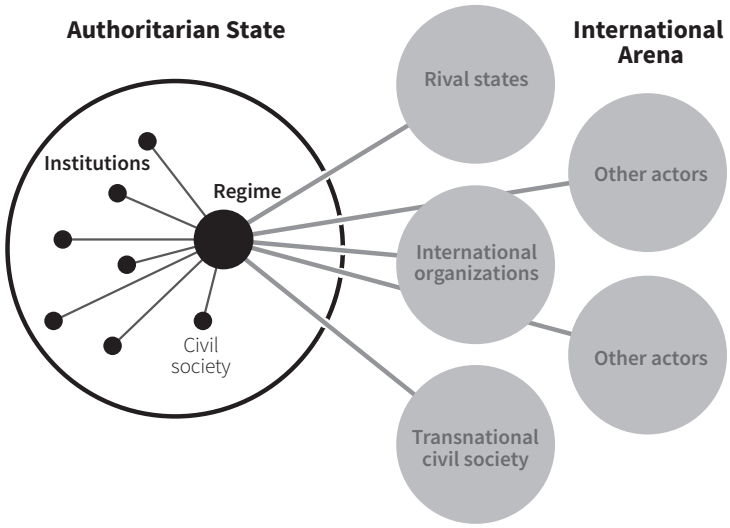


Figure 1: Example of an authoritarian regime balancing multiple domestic and international institutional actors

Political institutions lie at the core of modern authoritarianism. An autocrat interested in maintaining power over their population without turning to absolute totalitarianism can either (1) outlaw opposition to their policies through political repression, or (2) improve the popularity of their policies by manufacturing political loyalty (Wintrobe 1990). Institutions are the primary mechanism for both of these strategies. Autocrats can establish narrow institutions like consultative councils and executive cabinets to give voice to elites and build patronage, or create democratic-appearing institutions like legislatures, elections, or civil society to create popular loyalty and mitigate threats from society or the opposition (Kendall-Taylor and Frantz 2014; Gandhi and Przeworski 2006, 2007). In either case, if "rulers counter [threats to their rule] with an adequate degree of institutionalization, they survive in power" (Gandhi and Przeworski 2007, 284). Ultimately, the persistence or collapse of authoritarian regimes depends on the quality and management of their institutional restraints and rivals (Brownlee 2007, 202), not the magnitude of repression or violence against their citizens.

Because it is infeasible and costly to rely solely on violent oppression to maintain power, autocrats typically allow for a degree of institutional dissonance and competition (Brumberg 2002). However, this dissonance creates an interesting (and potentially destabilizing) dynamic. If the political institutions in a regime are competitive

enough, opponents and activists can use them as a means for obtaining actual power within the government (Frantz and Kendall-Taylor 2014). Under this form of competitive authoritarianism, there is genuine competition for power through elections, though the playing field is generally skewed toward the incumbents (Levitsky and Way 2010). Political competition under authoritarianism is "real but unfair" (5)—but still real. Efforts to influence, control, or diminish opposing institutions can often backfire, highlighting the bidirectional relationship between the regime and external actors.

### INGOs: yet another actor to be balanced

Authoritarian institutional balancing is not limited solely to domestic institutions. States today confront a complex stew of domestic and international issues and actors, where activists, bureaucrats, legislators, judges, firms, civil society organizations, international organizations, media organizations, and foreign states interact and influence domestic policy and behavior (Linos 2013; Slaughter 2004). INGOs can provide particularly acute pressure against authoritarian regimes, especially as they work in concert with domestic NGOs to pressure and shame states that behave poorly. Domestic NGOs that are restricted or blocked by their government will turn to allies in the international NGO community, who will in turn lobby their home states to convince international organizations like the UN to put high-level pressure on the offending regime, thereby creating an opening for the original domestic civil society organizations to advocate for policy changes. This relocation of advocacy power follows a boomerang pattern, moving from domestic NGOs to INGOs to foreign states and international organizations to domestic NGOs again (Keck and Sikkink 1998).

With repeated boomerang-like pressure from domestic NGOs and INGOs, responses to individual issues can evolve into human rights norms, resulting in the institutionalization of new policies and practices within an offending state. Risse and Sikkink (1999) describe this process of norm socialization as a spiral, or a sequence of repeated boomerang effects. Domestic actors repeatedly turn to INGOs and transnational networks for help in their advocacy and slowly wear down the state. Initially the state denies the accusations of repression and claims that foreign human rights norms are invalid, but with repeated domestic and international pressure, the regime will begin to make concessions to the human rights network. Continued pressure helps formalize these concessions into actual legislation, and as politicians adhere to these policies (again because of domestic and international boomerang effects), they internalize the human rights norms that underpin the policies, thus resulting in long-lasting reform.

Relying on non-state actors as part of domestic institutional balancing is fraught with risk—INGOs are wildcards in authoritarian regimes (DeMars 2005). INGOs

have real effects on domestic politics and policies and pose significant risks to the regimes that allow them to operate. Close networks of development NGOs and INGOs in countries with weak national governments can marginalize the state: in South Asia and Eastern and Southern Africa, nations are far more dependent on aid than trade in part because of the activities of development INGOs (Stiles 2002), while INGOs in countries like Haiti and Afghanistan vie for control over territorial "fiefdoms" and rival the central government in power and influence (Schuller 2012).

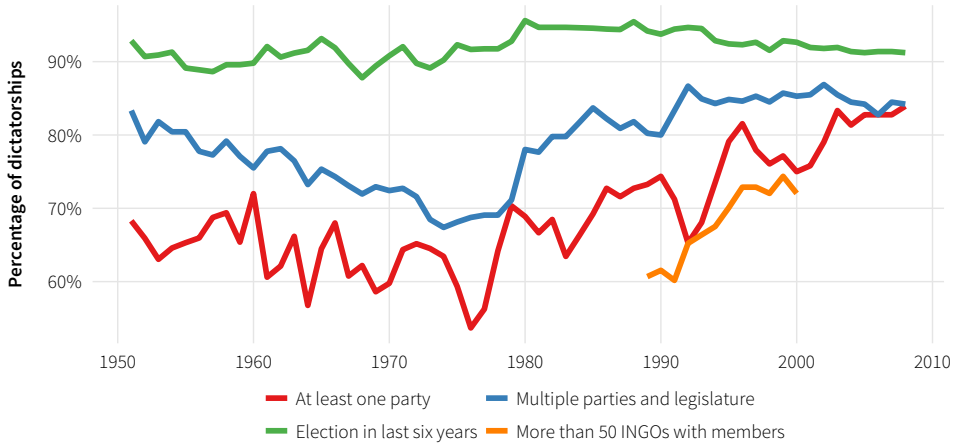


Figure 2: Percent of dictatorships that allow domestic and international institutions

In spite of the risks of dealing with INGOs, authoritarians are increasingly opening up their countries to INGO advocacy and services. Kendall-Taylor and Frantz (2014) show that in general, institutionalization in authoritarian regimes has increased over the past century, as dictatorships permit pseudo-democratic electoral institutions, such as party politics and competitive elections. In Figure 2 I add a fourth measure of institutionalization: the percentage of dictatorships that have citizens who are members of more than 50 different INGOs, shown in orange.[2] As seen in the figure, international associational life has also grown more active in more of the world's authoritarian regimes since 1990.

## When do dictators restrict civil society?

As with other institutions, autocrats engage with international organizations and transnational civil society selectively, depending on rational calculations of how that engage-

2. Data collected from the Yearbook of International Organizations and provided in Murdie (2013). Unfortunately data is only available from 1990–2010. I plan to expand this dataset in the future.

ment might be beneficial to the regime. Authoritarian regimes in particular tend to follow international norms and allow INGO operations only when doing so "allows the regime to [(1)] shore up its authority and legitimacy and to [(2)] deflect international pressures" (Hawkins 1997, 407–8). Through regulations and legislation, autocrats can use INGOs and other non-state actors to stabilize and reinforce their political power at home.

Key to harnessing this institutional dissonance for stability, however, is the autocrat's ability to manage and control these external actors. When dealing with domestic challengers and institutions, dictators have a wide array of policy choices to manipulate and control their influence, ranging from formal legislation against certain activities to imprisoning and torturing recalcitrant legislators, judges, or activists. Autocrats have a more limited menu of policy options for controlling international actors, however, because of their nationality. While it maybe be easy to harass and imprison the family of a native activist, attempts to jail or torture international advocates or aid workers are far more risky, as foreigners often have the legal and political backing of their home states. Though there are a handful of instances of authoritarian regimes attempting to formally prosecute foreigners (e.g. in 2013 an Egyptian court convicted 16 American NGO workers, and the government continues to detain reporters and cameramen from the Al Jazeera news network), dictators generally only have one type of policy lever to control INGOs: increasing or decreasing legal restrictions related to INGO advocacy and service provision.

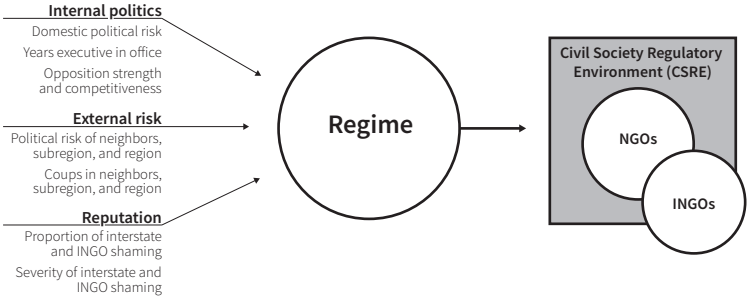


Figure 3: Theory of the determinants of a regime's civil society regulatory environment

I argue that the restrictiveness of a regime's civil society regulatory environment (or CSRE) is a function of three overriding factors (see Figure 3), each directly related to the challenge of authoritarian institutional balancing and each potentially threatening regime stability.

First, tensions and conflict *within* a regime pose serious threats to regime stability, and, as discussed previously, regimes can collapse under the threat of competitive elections, intensification of ethnic conflicts, or revolutions and uprisings (Heiss 2012; Svolik 2009). It therefore follows that in times of domestic instability, authoritarian regimes will be more wary of institutional actors like civil society (both domestic and international), and will attempt to tighten up institutional dissonance, leading to the following hypothesis:

> $\mathbf{H_1}$: The regulatory environment for civil society in autocracies constricts as regimes become more internally unstable

Threats to regime stability are not limited to domestic, internal events. As seen during the string of revolutions and uprisings in the Middle East beginning in 2011, regional instability has a tendency to spread. Additionally, ethnic and political conflicts can spill over to neighboring states—the complicated fallout from the ongoing Syrian civil war provides a potent example, with Lebanon, Turkey, and Jordan deeply entangled in the humanitarian, political, and military crises of their neighbor. Regimes wary of the destabilizing influence of foreign actors will attempt to insulate and protect themselves and change how they regulate domestic actors. Thus:

> $\mathbf{H_2}$: The regulatory environment for civil society in autocracies constricts as regimes' geographic neighbors and regions become unstable

Governments do not operate in a vacuum, and the domestic policy choices of a regime are often directly influenced by the preferences of foreign nations. New research shows that states are quite concerned with their international reputations, and condemnation, shaming, and public pressure from abroad can induce changes in domestic policies. Public reports and rankings issued by INGOs and governments often have a direct effect on policies: countries are more likely to criminalize human trafficking in response to the US State Department's annual Trafficking in Persons report (Kelley and Simmons 2015; Kelley 2016), more likely to conduct fair elections when monitored by foreign organizations (Kelley 2012), less likely to receive foreign direct investment when condemned by INGOs (Barry, Clay, and Flynn 2013), and more likely respect human rights when cajoled and censured by INGOs (Murdie and Davis 2012; Murdie 2014a).

Anecdotal evidence shows that regimes also care about how their civil society regulations are perceived internationally. For example, as Kazakhstan mulled over a more restrictive NGO law in 2005, American diplomats met with Kazakh officials and used the spectre of international reputation to argue that "the best way for Kazakhstan to

distinguish itself from its neighbors" was to respect international and domestic institutions, conduct fair presidential elections in 2006, and not pass the NGO law.[3] This leads to my final hypothesis:

> $H_3$: The regulatory environment for civil society in autocracies improves in response to international shaming and condemnation

## Data and methods

To determine the relationship between internal regime stability, the stability and risk of neighboring countries, international shaming, and the restrictiveness of the regulatory environment for global civil society, I construct a new time-series, cross-sectional dataset of 143 countries from 1991–2014, compiling a set of variables from several well established and innovative data sources.

### Dependent variable

Systematically measuring the severity and extent of civil society legal restrictions is a difficult task. There are a handful of measures that scholars have used, including the CIVICUS Civil Society Index (CSI),[4] the Global Civil Society Index (GCSI),[5] global and regional public opinion surveys, and the CIRI Human Rights Data Project,[6] but each variable faces substantial issues with validity and consistency.

The CSI evaluates domestic civil society structure and values using country experts' opinions regarding four dimensions,[7] scores each dimension on a 1–3 scale, and provides a final summative index—countries with a higher score ostensibly have a stronger civil society sector. However, CSI data has been collected in a few 2–3 year waves in only 30–50 countries, and has not been updated since 2012, making it difficult to use in annual cross-sectional analysis. In 2004, the Johns Hopkins Center for Civil Society Studies created the GCSI as a rival index. Similar to the CSI, the GCSI rates civil society along three dimensions[8] and provides a final summative index to represent the strength of a country's civil society. However, the GCSI has not been

3. "KAZAKHSTANI MFA 'DISAPPOINTED' WITH CERTIFICATION DECISION," State Department Cable 05ALMATY1938, https://wikileaks.org/cable/2005/05/05ALMATY1938.html

4. See http://www.civicus.org/csi/

5. See http://ccss.jhu.edu/publications-findings?did=360

6. http://www.humanrightsdata.com/

7. Specifically, "(1) the *structure* of civil society, (2) the *external environment* in which civil society exists and functions, (3) the *values* practiced and promoted by civil society, and (4) the *impact* of activities pursued by civil society actors."

8. Specifically, (1) the sector's *capacity*, size, and amount of effort, (2) the sector's resources for financial and strategic *sustainability*, and (3) the sector's social, economic, and political *impact*.

updated since 2004, and it only includes a handful of non-OECD countries, which makes it unsuitable for studying civil society in authoritarian regimes.

Scholars have also used public opinion surveys such as the World Values Survey (WVS)[9] or regional projects like the Arab Barometer,[10] Afrobarometer,[11] and Asian Barometer[12] to measure and analyze individual perceptions of associational life and participation in domestic and international NGOs (Jamal 2007; Bernhard and Karakoç 2007). However, these surveys are not conducted annually (the WVS is done every 5 years; regional barometers are done every 3–5 years) and like the CSI and GCSI, are not suitable for large-*N*, country-level analysis.

Finally, the CIRI Human Rights project provides indices of human rights restrictions based on close readings of annual US State Department *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices* (Cingranelli, Richards, and Clay 2014). Among the rights measured by CIRI is a measure of the restrictions on the freedom of assembly and association, or how easily citizens can participate in trade unions, cultural organizations, or domestic and international NGOs. Countries can receive one of three scores each year—severely restricted, limited, and unrestricted—based on the severity and universality of civil society restrictions within each country. CIRI data is available for nearly 200 countries annually since 1981, making it ideal for cross-sectional analysis. However, with only three possible outcomes the data is sluggish and not granular, and it fails to pick up on slight changes in the regulatory environment.

These difficulties with data quality are not limited to civil society measures—many democracy-related indicators, including elections, judicial independence, and legislative activity, have spotty and inconsistent coverage over time and are not always reliable. A new project—the Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem)—however, attempts to address these issues. V-Dem uses a sophisticated Bayesian measurement model to aggregate existing published data and opinions from more than 2,500 country experts to provide hundreds of robust democracy-related indicators and indexes. Most importantly, in contrast with the CSI, GCSI, public opinion surveys, and CIRI, V-Dem indicators are available for most countries from 1900–2014 and display variation over time.

V-Dem includes many variables related to the regulatory legal environment for civil society, including measures of entry and exit regulations, repression, participatory environment, and the level of women's participation in associational life. Scholars associated with V-Dem used these indicators to generate a Core Civil Society Index (CCSI), which measures the strength of civil society in a country given (1) the or-

9. http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/
10. http://www.arabbarometer.org/
11. http://www.afrobarometer.org/
12. http://www.asianbarometer.org/

ganizational environment for civil society organizations and (2) the level of citizen activism (Bernhard et al. 2015).

Following this lead, I construct my own Civil Society Regulatory Environment (CSRE) index to measure only state constraints on civil society, ignoring citizen participation in associational life, based on the CCSI's indicators for civil society organizational environment: (1) the level of state repression of civil society organizations and (2) the level of state control over civil society organization entry and exit into public life. The CCSI was constructed by aggregating several V-Dem variables using Bayesian factor analysis; for the sake of simplicity, my CSRE index uses only a simple sum of the relevant V-Dem indicators.

While V-Dem's unique combination of Bayesian modeling and detailed expert opinion makes the CSRE index arguably more robust and reliable than any single measure, it also means that the index is more difficult to interpret, as it is essentially a sum of scale-less vectors of model point estimates. Figure 4 provides some helpful context for understanding this index, showing the average environment index for the five highest and lowest countries from 2000–2014. The index has a range between roughly −6 and 6, with more repressive countries receiving lower scores—the average index score for autocracies is 0.3, while democracies average 3.7.

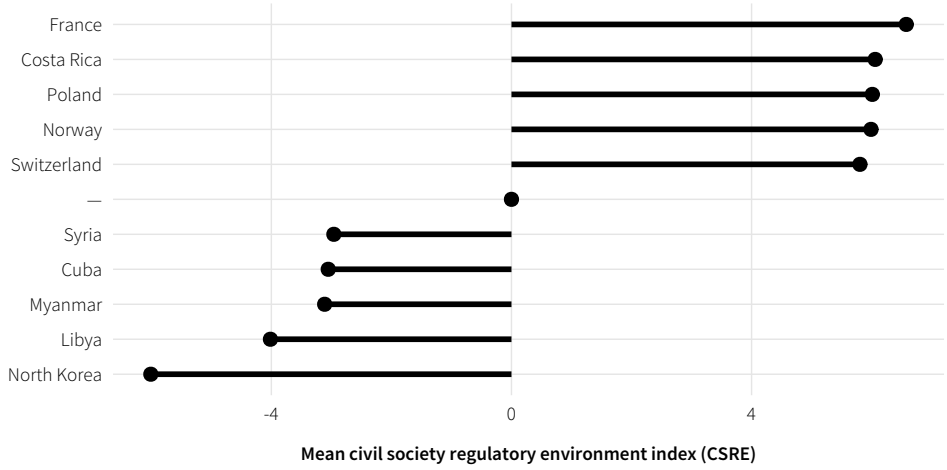


Figure 4: Mean CSRE for five highest and lowest countries from 2000–2014

Despite the CSRE index's methodological advances, it does not necessarily reflect the regulatory environment for *international* NGOs. There is unfortunately no systematic way to disentangle the application of the regulatory environment to domestic and international organizations, even though regulations apply unevenly to organizations depending on their home countries. Thus, following the statistical analysis in

which I this more general measure of the civil society regulatory environment, I qualitatively examine how Russia has imposed specific legal restrictions on foreign NGOs and compare the conclusions of this case study with the statistical results.

## Key independent variables

**Autocracies vs. democracies** I use two different methods to distinguish between democracies and autocracies. First, I use data from the Polity IV project, which assigns democracy scores ranging from −10 to 10 (Marshall and Jaggers 2014). Regime type labels are then assigned based on this score: autocracies (−10 to −6), anocracies (−5 to 5), and democracies (6 to 10). However, while these categories of democratization are useful at large magnitudes (i.e. there is a clear difference between a country that scores a −8 on the Polity IV scale and one that scores a 6), marginal changes in democratization scores are often meaningless (i.e. a change from a level 5 anocracy to a level 6 democracy is rather imperceptible and more susceptible to rater subjectivity). The Unified Democracy Score (UDS) scale was created in 2010 to address the uncertainty inherent in measuring democratization (Pemstein, Meserve, and Melton 2010). This innovative scale uses Bayesian estimation and simulation to generate aggregate democracy scores based on 10 other standard measurement scales (including Polity IV). Instead of assigning each country a single score, the UDS provides every country-year with a posterior score distribution, including a mean and a median score, a standard deviation, and 95% confidence intervals. UDS scores range from −2 to 2, with more democratic nations receiving higher scores. For this working paper, I only use the mean point estimates in my analysis, but in the future I will use UDS scores in Monte Carlo simulations to capture more uncertainty in regime type classification.

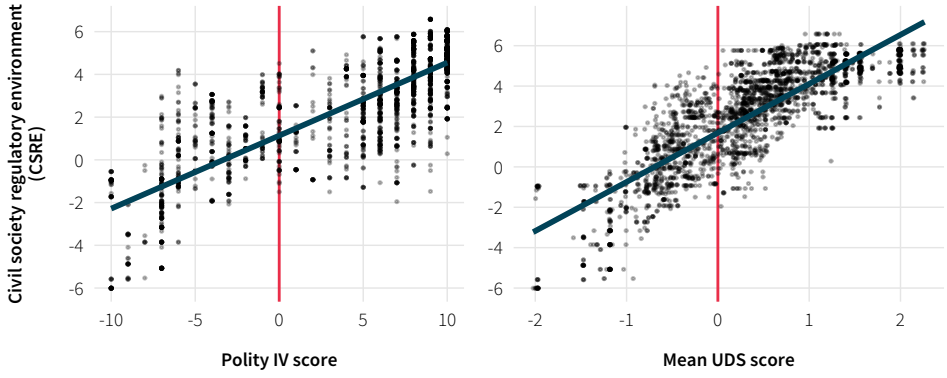


Figure 5: Civil society regulatory environment index across range of regime types

For the sake of analytic simplicity, I use a cutoff point of zero in both polity and UDS to roughly classify countries as democracies and autocracies. As Figure 5 shows, In both cases, the CSRE is quite correlated with regime type ($r \approx 0.8$)—very few countries below the zero-based threshold have highly restrictive civil society regulations.

**Internal regime stability** As explained above, I hypothesize that regime stability and competitiveness predict restrictions on civil society. I measure stability in multiple ways. First, I use data from Political Risk Services' International Country Risk Guide (ICRG) to measure the internal risk and stability of a regime (Political Risk Services 2014). ICRG provides a monthly political risk rating for 143 countries based on a weighted collection of indicators, including government stability, corruption, ethnic tensions, and conflict.[13] Risk ratings range from 0–100, with the most stable and least risky countries receiving the highest scores, and the most unstable countries ranking around 30–40. As I am interested in *internal* regime stability, I omit the subcomponent of the score measuring external conflict, and to avoid issues with collinearity, I omit the subcomponent measuring democratic accountability, since I use other indicators of democracy, explained below. Having removed these subcomponents, I rescale the risk score to have a maximum of 100 to generate a final internal political risk index.

To demonstrate how shifts in internal stability and political risk are actually represented, Figure 6 shows the ICRG internal political risk index for three countries: Norway and Congo, which have seen the least amount of change since 2000 (though with extreme values of risk), and Syria, which has seen the most amount of change in the same time period. In the 10 years prior to the Syrian war, the country dropped 10 points in its risk score, representative of a slow deterioration and stagnation of internal stability, and from 2010–2014, the country dropped nearly 20 points to its current highly volatile and risky status. Few countries have seen such dramatic and precipitous drops in risk ratings—in general, the average difference between minimum and maximum internal risk score from 2000–2014 was 19.8 in democracies and 22.7 in autocracies. Globally, democracies tend to be more stable than autocracies (Figure 7), and the difference between average risk ratings for each regime type is statistically significant, but there is substantial variation across countries.

Beyond aggregate regime risk and stability, I include several variables directly related to domestic political institutions. I measure how many consecutive years the executive has been in office with data from the World Bank's Database of Political Institutions (Beck et al. 2001), which indicates the longevity of the regime. I also include measures of regime competitiveness (as authoritarian regimes are ostensibly

13. Specifically, the political risk rating comprises 12 subcomponents: government stability (12 points), socioeconomic conditions (12), investment profile (12), internal conflict (12), external conflict (12), corruption (6), military in politics (6), religion in politics (6), law and order (6), ethnic tensions (6), democratic accountability (6), and bureaucracy quality (4).

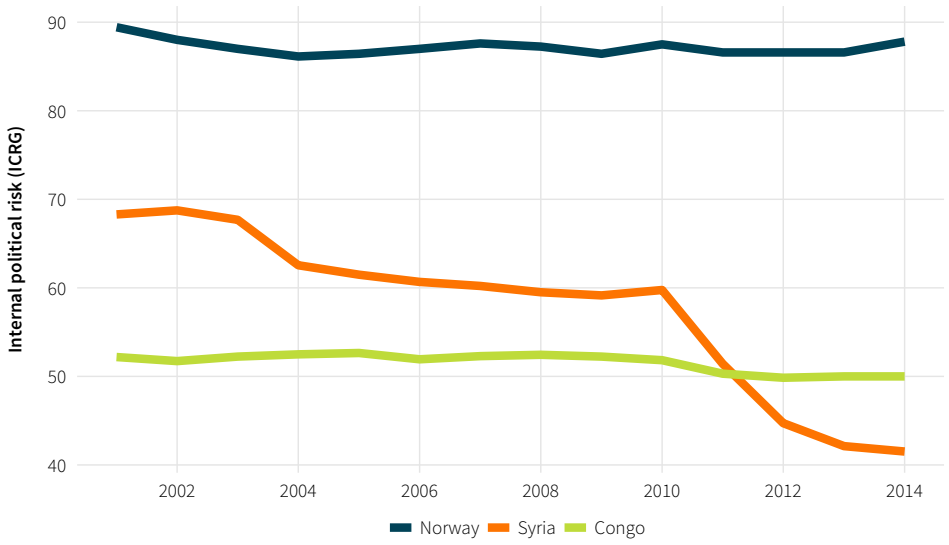


Figure 6: Changes in ICRG internal political risk index over time

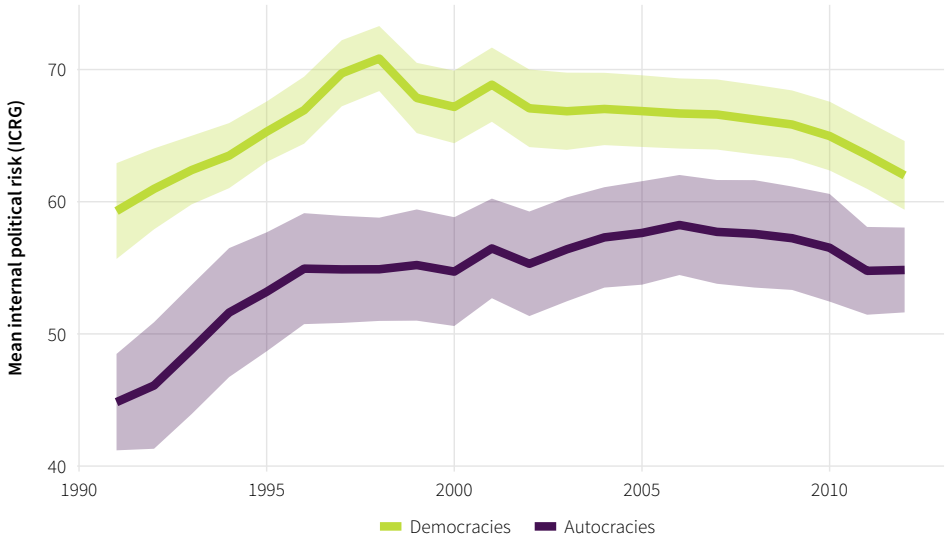


Figure 7: Mean internal political risk over time, group by regime type

less competitive). First, using data from the National Elections Across Democracy and Autocracy (NELDA) project (Hyde and Marinov 2012), I calculate the number of years that have passed since a country held a competitive election. Following Dupuy, Ron, and Prakash (2014), I consider an election competitive if opposition parties were allowed to participate, if more than one political party was legal, and if the ballot provided voters with a choice of candidates. Second, I count the vote share won by the largest opposition party, as measured by the Database of Political Institutions (Beck et al. 2001).

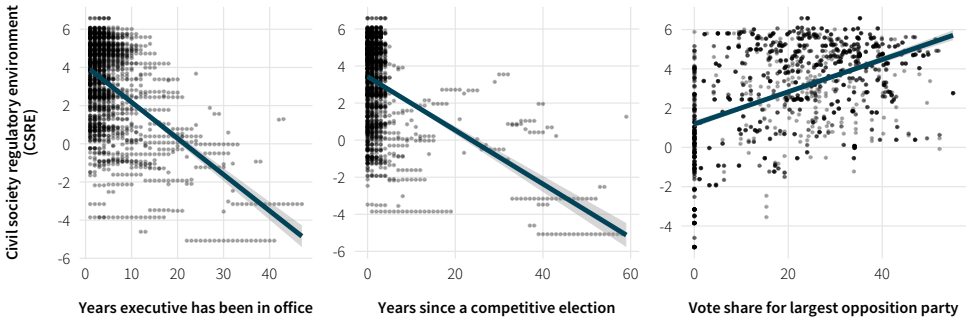


Figure 8: Civil society regulatory environment index across various measures of regime stability

Figure 8 shows that each of these institutional variables is moderately correlated to the CSRE ($r \approx \pm 0.5$). The left panel shows that while few regimes have had rulers in place for longer than 10 years, those with long-tenured executives tend to have stricter civil society regulatory environments. Following my theory, countries that have higher ICRG stability scores and executives with long tenure should be more likely to impose restrictions on the regulatory environment for civil society. The central panel shows that most countries—even those that impose severe restrictions on civil society activities—tend to not let too many years pass between competitive elections, likely indicative of the emergence and strength of competitive authoritarianism. Even the most restrictive regimes allow for some (limited) competition. Finally, the panel on the right demonstrates that countries with more restrictions on civil society tend to have very low opposition victory rates, while countries with fewer restrictions have much more variability in vote shares. In theory, countries that allow more time to lapse between competitive elections and have less successful opposition parties will enact stricter restrictions on civil society.

**Stability of neighboring countries** I also hypothesize that external stability affects civil society restrictions within states. That is, when a regime observes coups, revolutions, wars, uprisings, and general instability in nearby countries, it will crack down on

associational life and increase restrictions on civil society. I measure external stability in two ways.[14] First, for each country, I include the lowest ICRG internal political risk score from all other countries sharing borders, under the assumption that a regime will be influenced by events in the riskiest nearby country.[15] I also include the average internal political risk for each country in the country's geographical region[16] and subregion[17] to capture regional instability beyond a state's neighbors. Both of these external risk variables are correlated to a country's internal CSRE (see Figure 9)—civil society appears less restricted in countries located in more stable neighborhoods. Because neighbor and (sub)regional stability are closely correlated (r = 0.68), I do not include them together in any models.

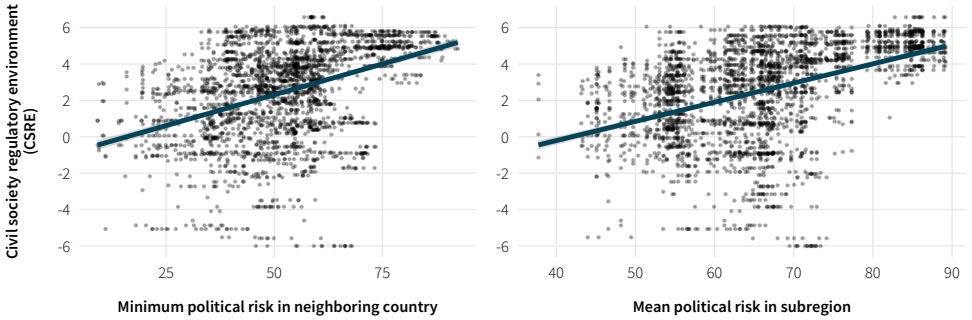


Figure 9: Civil society regulatory environment index across various measures of regime stability

Beyond neighboring and regional internal instability, actual destabilizing events likely influence a regime's decision making and survival strategy. Coups d'etat, in particular, represent the worst case scenario for executives working to stay in power. To this extent, I count all successful and unsuccessful coups in a state's neighboring countries, subregion, and region (Powell and Thyne 2011). In general, coup activity in both neighboring countries and subregion are associated with a more restrictive regulatory environment for civil society (see Figure 10).

**International shaming** Finally, I argue that less-threatening pressures from abroad (i.e. not coups and not revolutions) can also influence a state's civil society regulatory

14. For now. I'm planning on adding data on uprising and revolutions once I find reliable data.

15. For example, in 2012 Kenya bordered Ethiopia, Somalia, Tanzania, and Uganda, and thus receives Somalia's political risk (22.9).

16. Africa, the Americas, Asia, Europe, and Oceania

17. Eastern Africa, Middle Africa, Northern Africa, Southern Africa, Western Africa, Caribbean, Central America, South America, Central Asia, Eastern Asia, Southern Asia, South-Eastern Asia, Western Asia, Eastern Europe, Northern Europe, Southern Europe, Western Europe, Australia and New Zealand, Melanesia, Micronesia, and Polynesia.

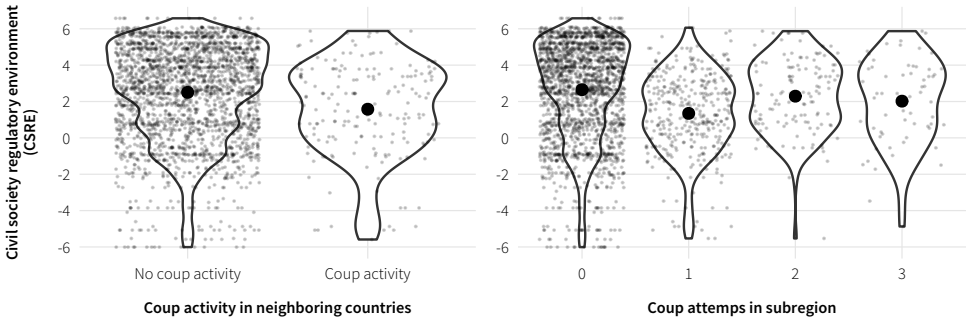


Figure 10: Civil society regulatory environment index across various measures of regime stability

environment. In an attempt to capture the broadest possible definition of international shaming, I use event data methods to construct new measures of diplomatic and NGO conflictual engagement with a given state. Event data uses computational natural language text algorithms to parse a text and determine *who* did *what* to *whom* *where* and *when*. After feeding millions of news media stories into this algorithm, the resulting data identifies the main actors, actions, and locations in a story, and can be used to track civil wars, popular protests, and even instances where INGOs target governments through shaming campaigns. In addition to *counting* events, the *nature* of the events is also determined algorithmically and coded along a −10 to 10 point scale (also called Goldstein scores) measuring how conflictual or cooperative the event is—the higher a score is in absolute value, the more intensely conflictual or cooperative it is.

I use event data from DARPA's Integrated Conflict Early Warning System (ICEWS),[18] which provides more than 14 million events from 1995 to 2016. I include only events where the target actor (the "to whom") is a state and where the source actor (the "who") is either a state (for measures of diplomatic shaming) or an international NGO (for measures of global civil society-based shaming), resulting in 4.6 million interstate and 7,000 state-INGO interactions. I then aggregate these daily events by country and year and create two standardized measures to represent the level and intensity of international and INGO-based shaming towards a country in a given year: (1) the percent of all events in a country-year that are conflictual, and (2) the average Goldstein score of all conflictual events in a country-year (as the absolute value, so that events with higher numbers are more conflictual). These two measures capture different aspects of international shaming. For example, nearly 60% of all interstate activity in Iraq in 2003 were conflictual, with an average Goldstein score of roughly 7, likely due to the

18. https://dataverse.harvard.edu/dataset.xhtml?persistentId=doi:10.7910/DVN/28075

start of the US-led invasion. However, many countries have seen more severe conflict, but less often—only 16% of events in Azerbaijan in 2009 were conflictual, but with an average severity of 9.2.

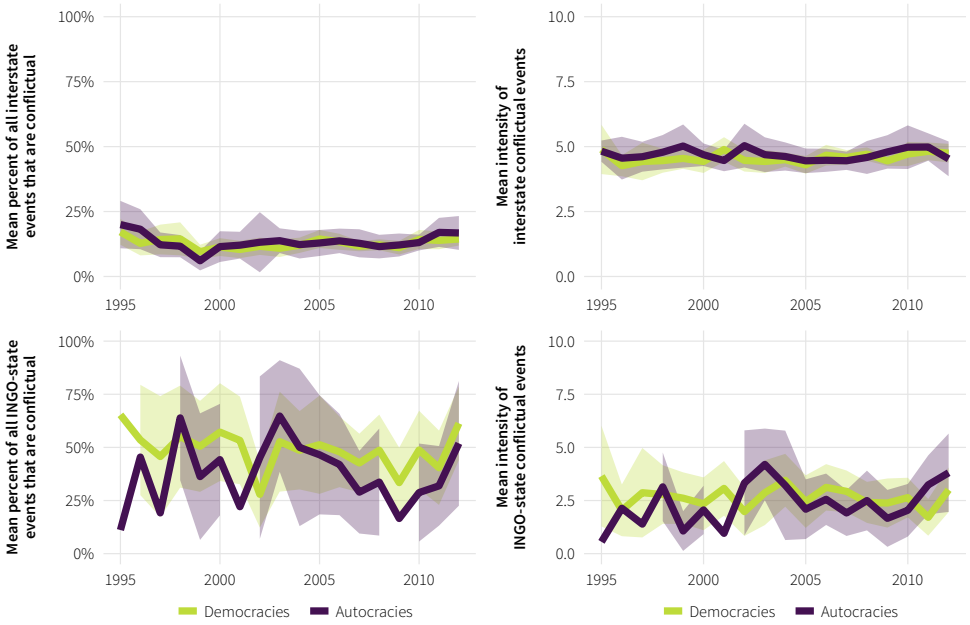


Figure 11: Average proportion and intensity of conflictual events

Figure 11 shows the average proportion and intensity of interstate and INGO-state interactions in the ICEWS database. In general, a greater proportion of INGO-state events are conflictual, likely because INGOs are more likely to engage with a state to condemn regime action (also, there are far more interstate events, meaning that the average proportion of conflictual events is dampened). However, interstate conflictual events tend to be more intense, arguably because states have more powerful tools for coercing states (i.e. militaries), while INGOs are limited to reports and press releases. Notably, there is no statistically significant difference in conflictual proportion or intensity in autocracies or democracies.

## Control variables

I also control for a variety of domestic and international factors that could also influence a regime's decision to restrict civil society. Domestically, I control for a regime's propensity to violate the physical integrity rights of its citizens using data from the CIRI project. Governments that use torture, extrajudicial killing, disappearance, and

other violent tactics are likely to restrict associational life. I also control for each country's GDP per capita (in constant 2005 dollars) and population, both measured by the World Bank (Group 2015). I log both variables to account for their exponential distribution.

Internationally, I check to see how embedded regimes are in the global community. Following Dupuy, Ron, and Prakash (2014), I include the amount of development aid to determine the regime's dependency on foreign donors. I also include a count of the number people who are members or volunteers in international NGOs with branch offices in that country, following Murdie (2014b), using data from the Yearbook of International Organizations. More INGO involvement in a regime could mitigate the government's attempts at restricting civil society. Finally, I include the KOF Index of Globalization (Dreher, Gaston, and Martens 2008) to measure the regime's economic, social, and political international embeddedness.

### Modeling decisions

I estimate a series of frequentist ordinary least squares (OLS) models.[19] Each model is actually estimated twice—once for autocracies (Polity IV score < 0) and once for democracies (Polity IV score > 0)—to capture the interaction of regime type on all variables. The dependent variable in every model leads all covariates by one year to capture the lagged effect of all dependent variables. While this is admittedly a rough and naive identification strategy, these models are ultimately meant to demonstrate the conjoint determinants of the civil society regulatory environment and not the ultimate causal impact or treatment effect.

## Results

### Internal determinants

Figure 12 presents the estimates from three OLS models measuring the relationship between internal regime factors and the civil society regulatory environment (CSRE), and a table with detailed coefficients and standard errors for each of these models is included in the appendix.

In all three model specifications, internal political risk is significantly and positively associated with the CSRE in democracies, and the association is either weakly positive or negative in autocracies (though not statistically significant). In general, as political risk improves, the regulatory environment for NGOs also improves. The left panel of Figure 13 demonstrates this effect visually, showing the predicted CSRE across a range of hypothetical values of political risk for both regime types, with all

19. Though in the future I will use Bayesian generalized linear regression models.

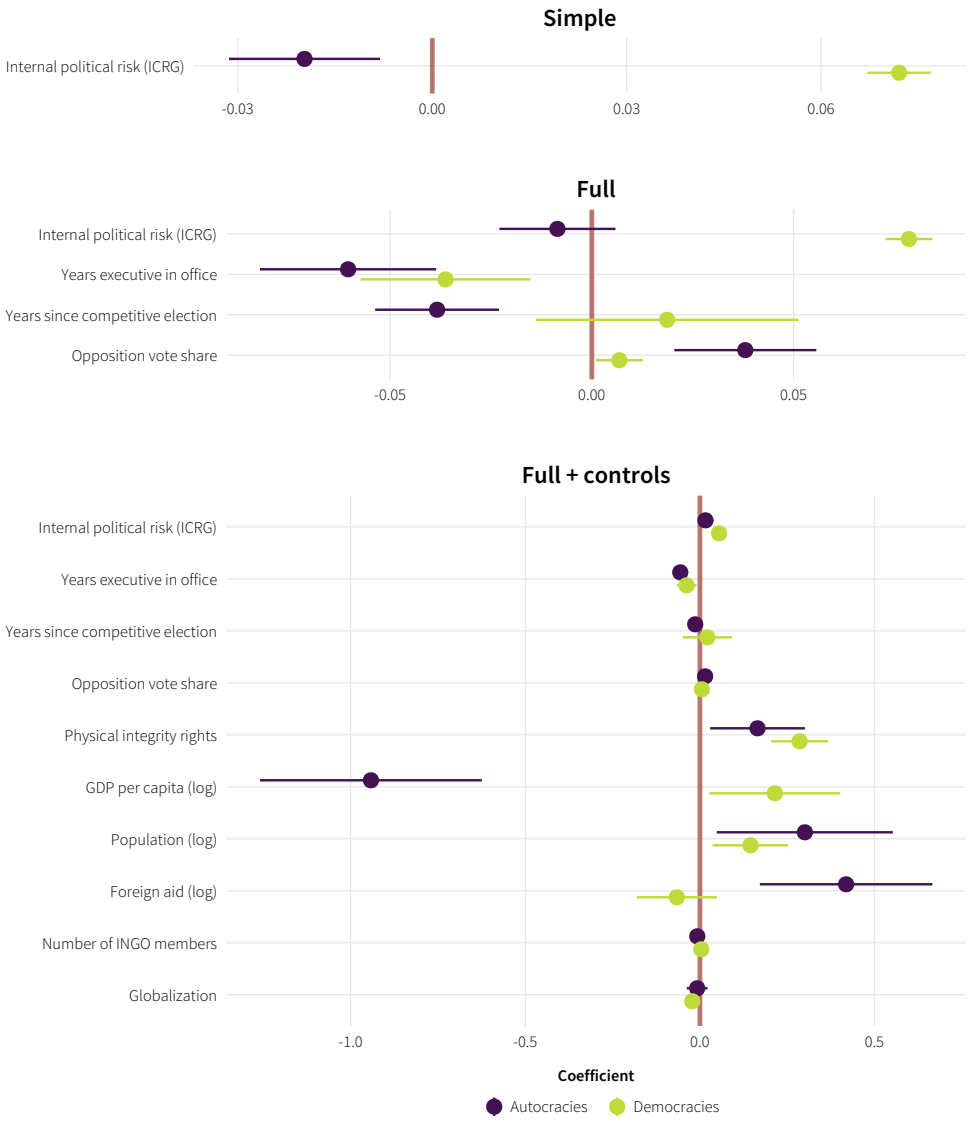


Figure 12: Internal determinants of the civil society regulatory environment

other model parameters held at their mean or modal values. The regulatory environment is substantially more responsive to improvements in political stability in democracies than in autocracies, where there is almost no effect.

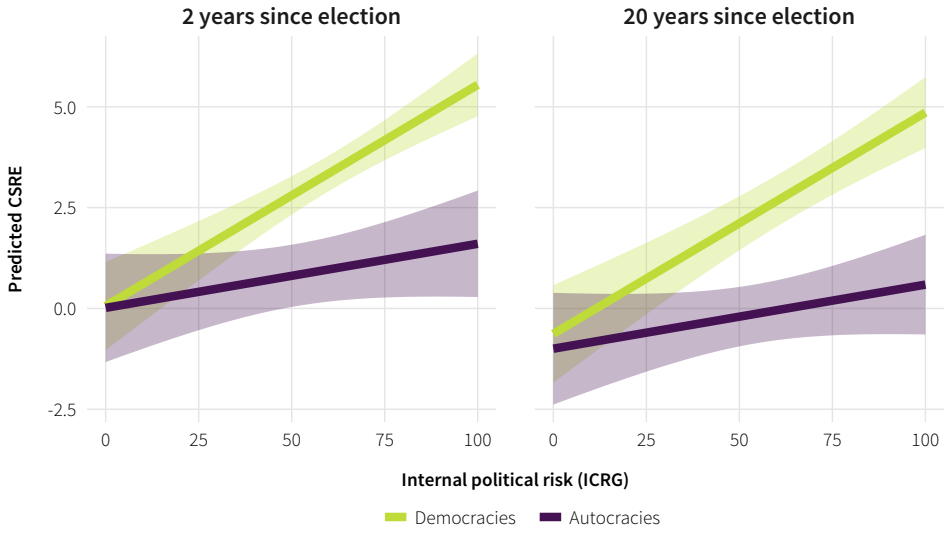


Figure 13: Predicted CSRE across range of internal political risk

Other democracy variables have varying effects on the CSRE. Executive tenure is significantly and negatively associated with the CSRE in both democracies and autocracies. For every year in office, the regulatory environment weakens by approximately 0.05—a small effect that accumulates over prolonged periods of time. The number of years since a competitive election has a similar small, yet cumulative effect, *ceteris paribus*. The right panel of Figure 13 highlights this relationship, with the CSRE substantially dampened by an absence of electoral competition, dropping nearly one unit in a hypothetical case of 20 years since an election.

Many of the control variables also have a significant, larger, and positive impact on civil society restrictions. Greater respect for physical integrity rights and larger populations improve the regulatory environment, and increased foreign aid improves restrictions in autocracies. Notably, GDP per capita is strongly negatively associated with restrictions in autocracies, meaning that as personal wealth improves in dictatorships, civil society restrictions are likely to increase.

Given these findings, hypothesis 1 appears to have mixed support—authoritarian regimes do not appear to restrict civil society in response to general internal political

risk, but restrictions *do* worsen as executives remain in power and close off electoral competition.

### External risk

Figure 14 shows the relationship between the civil society regulatory environment and several external risk factors, both in neighboring countries and in the country's broader subregion.

The minimum political risk of any neighboring country (i.e. the effect of the worst neighbor) has no significant relationship with the CSRE when using the standard battery of control variables. However, subregional instability does have a substantial negative relationship in autocracies, with a larger average effect than most of the internal factors. As regional stability *increases*, autocrats are *more likely* to restrict civil society, sometimes dramatically so (see Figure 15). This same effect does not hold in democracies.

The threat of coups in *neighboring* countries has little relationship to the civil society regulatory environment, but coups in the subregion are positively associated with improved regulations in autocracies—that is, coup activity improves the CSRE by 0.5 points in dictatorships (see the right panel of Figure 15), possibly because such an event poses a more tangible risk to the executive than simply observing subregional instability.

Thus, the evidence for hypothesis 2 is similarly mixed. Regional stability appears to allow dictators to crack down more on civil society, contrary to the hypothesis, but the more immediate threat of contagion from a coup d'etat dampens that effect and can lead to improved regulations.

### Shaming

Finally, Figure 16 shows the relationship between reputational and shame-based factors and civil society regulations.

When not controlling for any other factors, interstate shaming (as measured by the percent of all reported events that are categorized as either materially or verbally conflictual) appears to have a powerful relationship with civil society regulations. Higher proportions of conflictual interactions are negatively associated with the CSRE—at first glance, more shaming leads to more restrictions in both autocracies and democracies.

After other factors are included in the model, this interstate shaming effect disappears in autocracies, but persists for democracies, possibly revealing that interstate shaming can have counterproductive results. Conversely, INGO-based shaming has no relationship with the CSRE in democracies, but is significantly associated with improved civil society regulations in autocracies. Figure 17 clearly demonstrates this

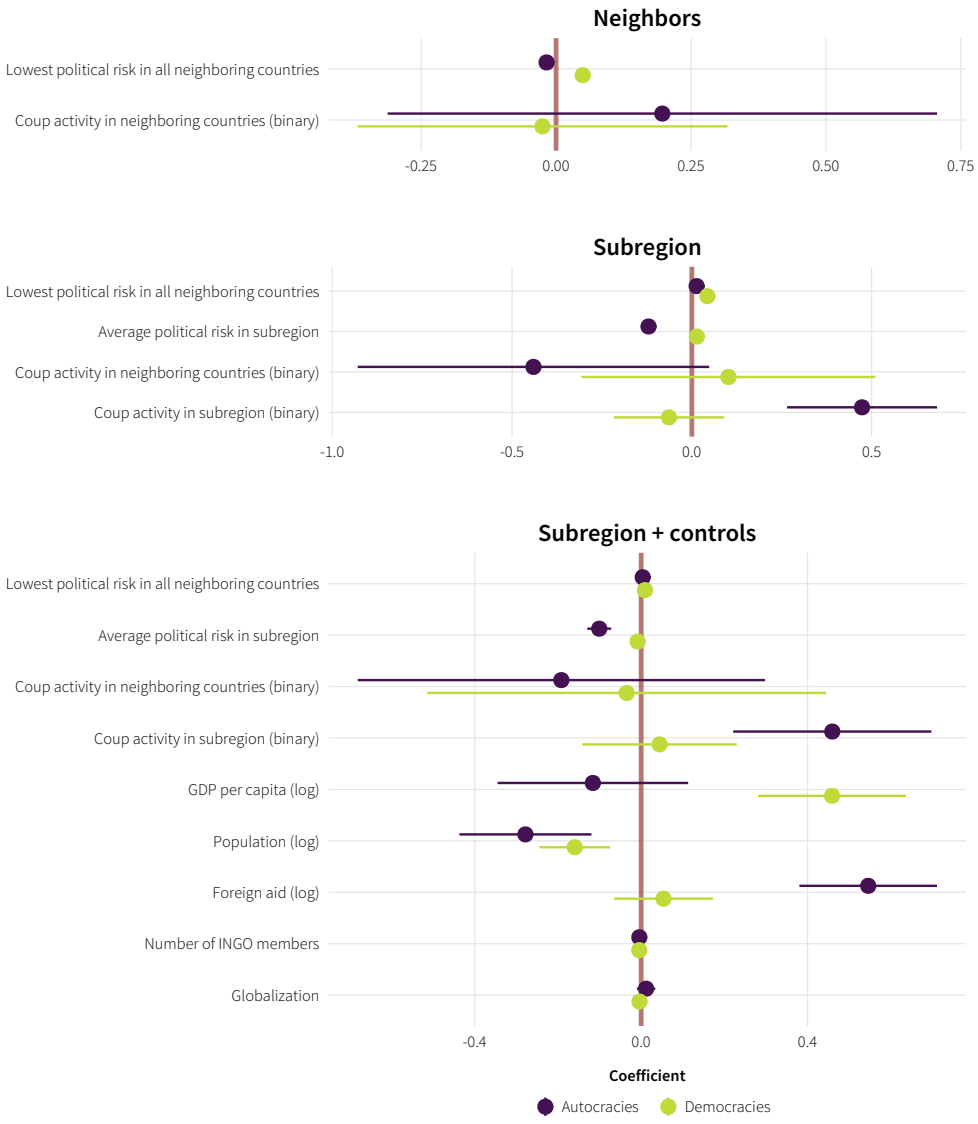


Figure 14: External determinants of the civil society regulatory environment

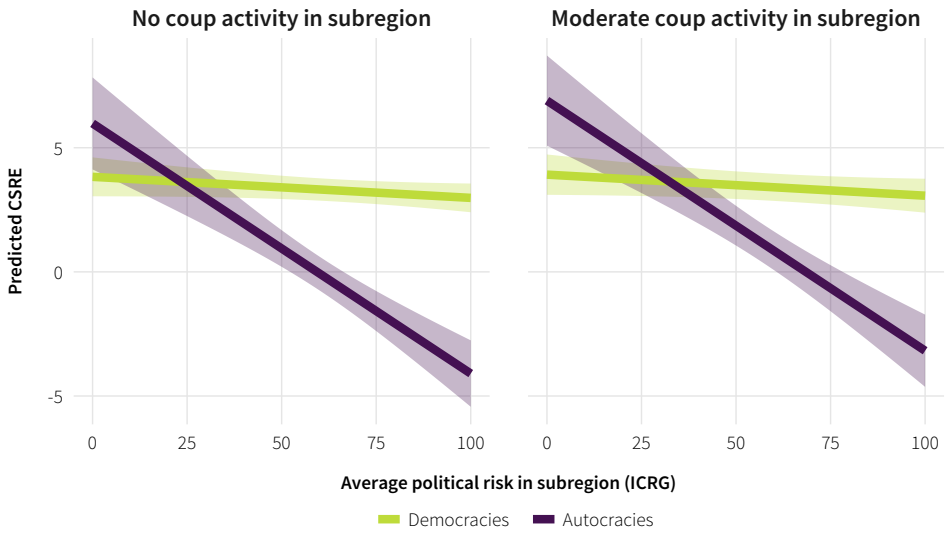


Figure 15: Predicted CSRE across range of external political risk

unique divergent relationship between civil society restrictions and interstate- and INGO-based shaming in autocracies and democracies Perhaps, in line with previous research, shaming and conflict from international NGOs does influence the domestic politics and decisions of authoritarian regimes, thus improving the legal environment for NGOs working in these countries.

The severity of interstate shaming is positively associated with the CSRE, while INGO-based shaming has a negative association, but neither relationship is statistically significant or substantive.

Given these findings, support for hypothesis 3 is once again mixed. Formal, high-level diplomatic shaming and conflict from other states does not appear to be associated with any changes in the regulatory environment for civil society in autocracies, and may have a contrary effect in democracies.[20] Shaming from human rights INGOs, however, may have a marginally positive relationship with the CSRE in autocracies.

20. Though this may, in part, be due to the extrapolative nature of predicting the CSRE in democracies, as few democratic nations are like to have such high levels of interstate shame.

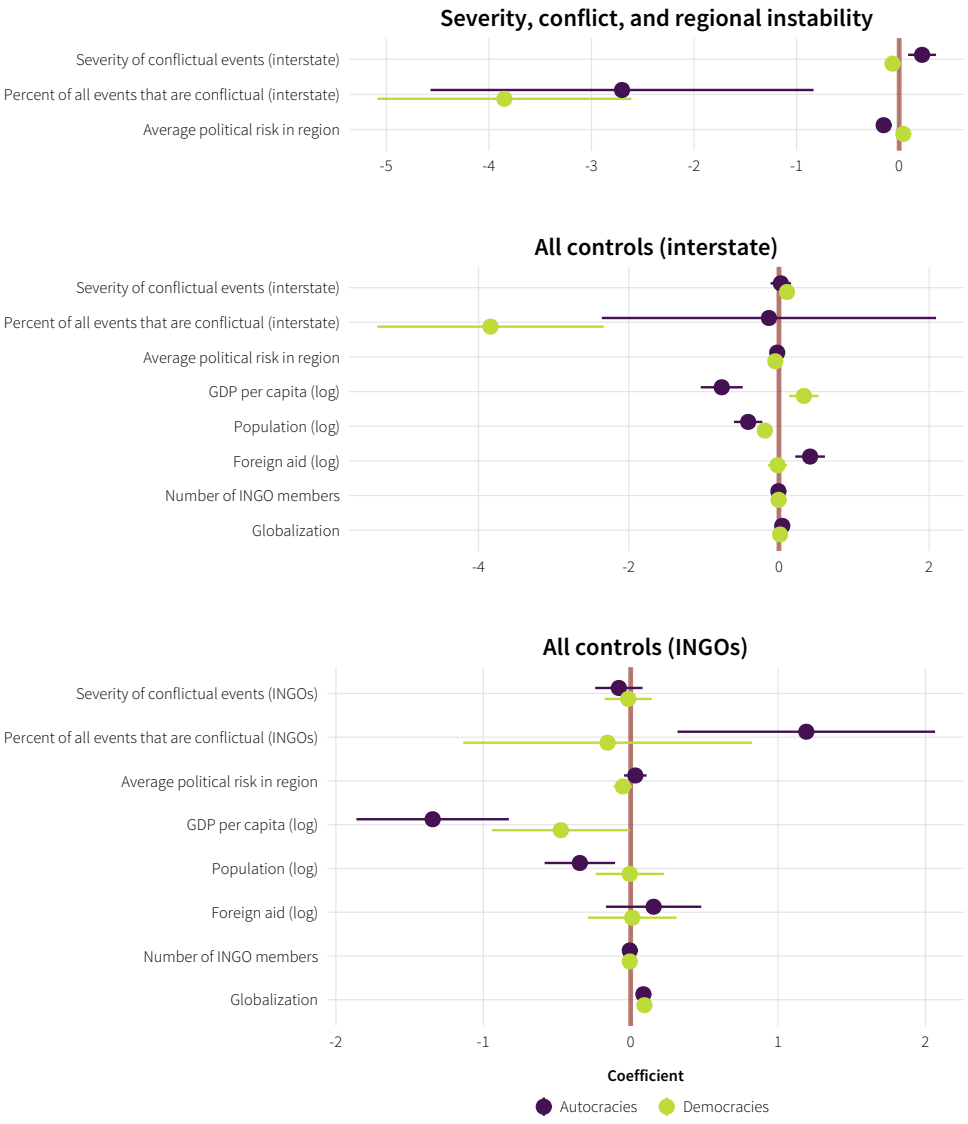


Figure 16: Reputational determinants of the civil society regulatory environment

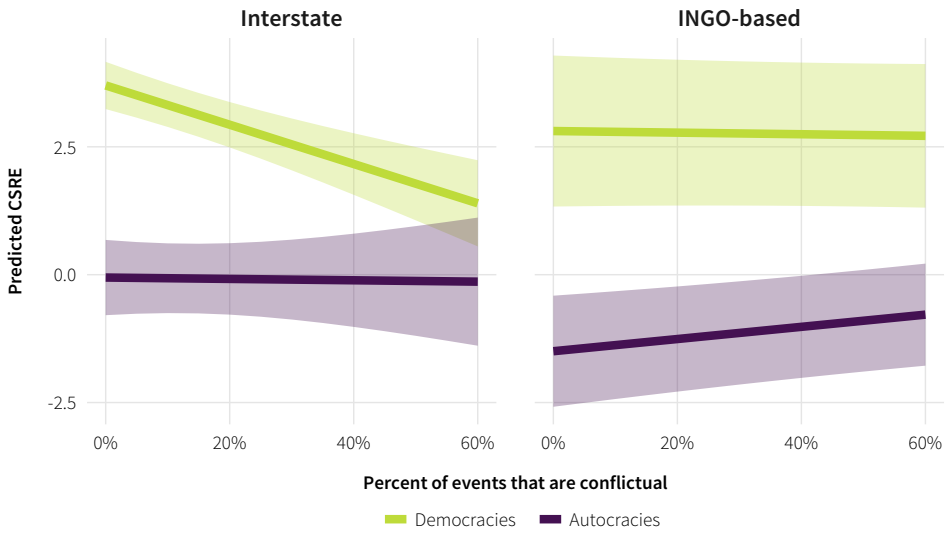


Figure 17: Reputational determinants of the civil society regulatory environment

## Disentangling restrictions on domestic and international civil society in Russia

While the preceding statistical models provide some observational evidence for the internal, external, and reputational determinants of authoritarian restrictions on global civil society, there are limits in what the statistics can reveal. Most importantly, as explained previously, there is no good way to disentangle the regulatory environment for domestic NGOS from international NGOs. Examining changes in the civil society regulatory environment in a specific case over time is instructive, as it allows us to (1) unravel the specific regulations for INGOs, and (2) determine how well the statistical findings reflect reality.

Russia is a prime case for studying authoritarian restrictions on international NGOs. Though it is not formally defined as an autocracy (as its Polity IV score ranges between 0–6 since 1991), Russia—especially under the rule of Vladimir Putin—has long been accused of harboring authoritarian tendencies by both right- and left-leaning media and scholars.[21] Post-Soviet Russia was also a proving ground for an emerging global civil society, and as thousands of Western funded NGOs began operations in the 1990s, tensions between domestic state sovereignty, foreign states, and inter-

21. http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2007/sep/20/putinism/ and http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2016/jan/26/vladimir-putin-russia-oligarch-british-left-speak-out

national non-state actors boiled up, leading directly to a series of laws strategically tailored to curb international influence in Russia's domestic affairs. In this brief case study, I trace the development of Russia's regulatory environment for international and foreign-based NGOs since 1990, connecting key legislative restrictions with the most prominent internal, external, and reputational factors from the statistical models (see Figure 18).

## Domestic and global civil society in post-Soviet Russia

As the international balance of power shifted away from Cold War two-superpower alignments in the early 1990s, non-state actors—guided in part by moralistic and capitalistic norms—gained significant prominence in global affairs (Lipschutz 1992), and particularly so in newly democratizing Eastern Europe and Latin America (Munck 2010). Foreign foundations and private donors interested in democratization flooded Russia's nascent grassroots society organizations with aid in the early and mid-1990s, which provided hundreds of civil society organizations with valuable equipment and training and substantially increased their organizational capacity. This influx of foreign funds, however, changed the nature of domestic Russian NGOs and forged patron-client ties between international donors and Russian recipients, strengthening vertical ties between NGOs and foreign nations, rather than creating horizontal networks necessary for a more robust and socially responsive civil society sector. Instead of a strong grassroots civil society, foreign democratization aid in post-Soviet Russia helped created a "professionalized realm of NGOs, inaccessible to most local groups and compromised by its links to a neoliberal vision of development" (Hemment 2004, 215).

In the first years of Boris Yeltsin's presidency, the Russian legal system was unable to handle this rush of foreign-backed grassroots civil society. The 1977 Soviet constitution contained provisions for creating social organizations to encourage education, sport, and culture, and the Communist party controlled and oversaw all state-approved organizations (Albertie 2004). With the collapse of the party and ancien régime, however, the new post-Soviet NGO sector was governed by outmoded laws that both stifled activists and prevented the government from controlling the sector.

Internally, political risk in Russia in Yeltsin's early years was volatile and tumultuous. In the final months of 1994, internal political instability dropped to one of its lowest points, following months of high inflation rates, IMF-backed economic shock therapy, intra-regime conflict, and persistent constitutional crises. Most threatening to the regime's stability, however, was the direct threat of the Chechnya separatist movement, which had fomented since 1992. Yeltsin ordered an invasion of Chechnya in December 1994, launching a two-year civil war that would eventually end in stalemate.

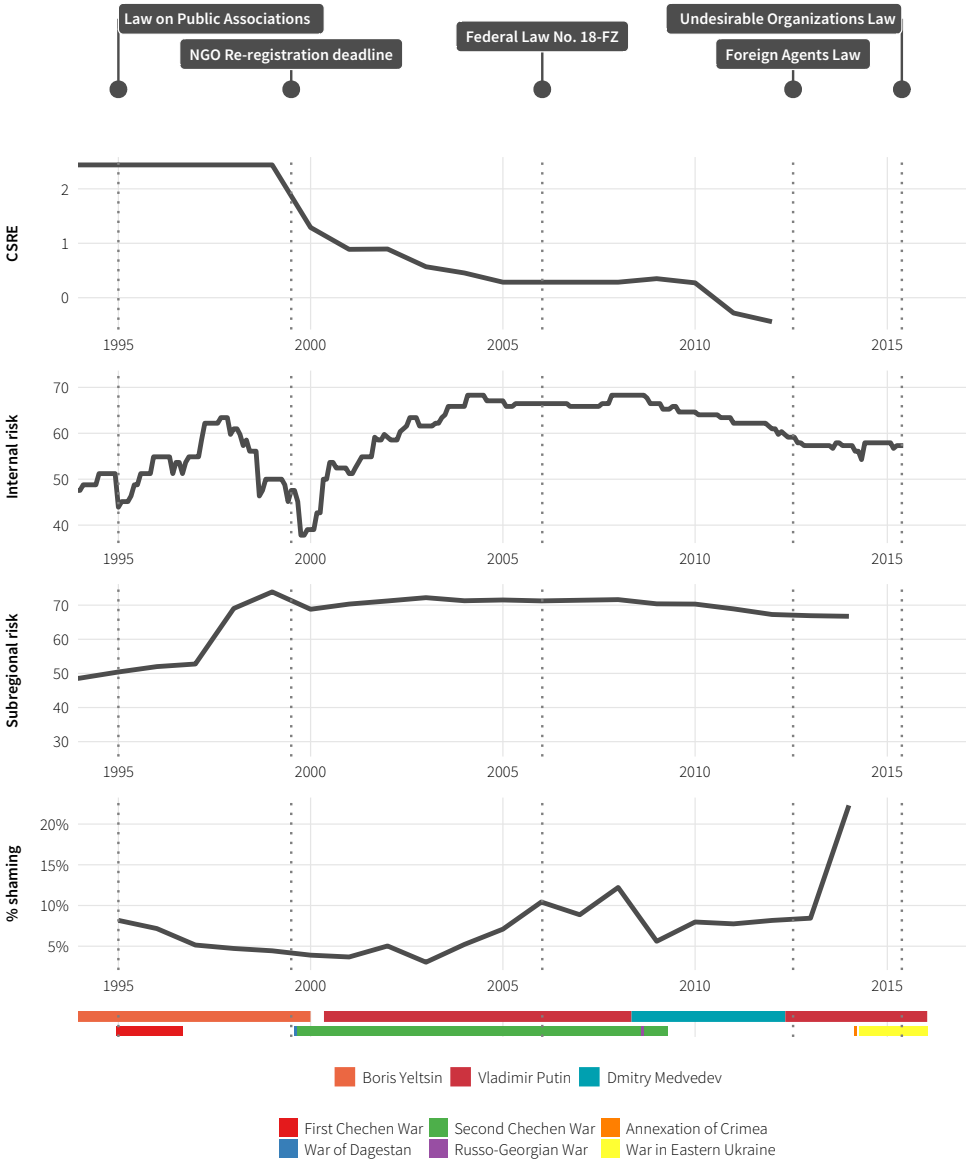


Figure 18: Timeline of international NGO restrictions in Russia

External threats to the regime also loomed large. Political risk throughout the Eastern European subregion mirrored Russia's own internal crisis, as the ICRG categorized the region with "very high" risk. The threat of uprisings, coups, and revolutions in the Balkans, Czechoslovakia, and other former Soviet republics, added to the already intensely risky political climate.

In the midst of this tumultuous political milieu, the Russian Duma passed the 1995 Law on Public Associations, providing a legal foundation for regulating civil society in modern Russia. The law regulated the relationship between the government and NGOs and outlined bureaucratic procedures for establishing and maintaining NGOs (Albertie 2004). Importantly, though the 1995 law was not specifically targeted at international NGOs, the new regulations allowed the government to regain control over Russian domestic civil society and limit foreign influence. The law forced the registration or re-registration of all NGOs by 1999, and failing to register led to liquidation and closure. On its face, reregistration was intended to update administrative information and improve government efficiency, but "in effect, the re-registration provision operated to eliminate troublesome and undesirable organizations" (20), and in particular organizations funded by foreign sponsors that dealt with human rights issues.

Reregistration proved to be a difficult hurdle. Government bureaucrats wielded discretionary power in deciding which NGOs would be allowed to register, and NGOs were denied official recognition because of arbitrary issues, such as submitting applications with too many pages or an incorrect font size (22). Ultimately, the 1995 law had a dramatic effect on the size and nature of Russian civil society, as seen in Figure 19 (Grishina 2000). Thousands of public associations throughout the country, many flush with foreign funds, shuttered their doors and ceased their work.

As seen in Figure 18, the 1999 registration deadline marked the start of the decline in Russia's civil society regulatory environment. By 1999, external threats had largely ceased—the subregion has had a "low" risk rating from ICRG from the late 1990s until today. Internally, political instability had improved during the mid 1990s, but dropped to its lowest point in post-Soviet history, receiving a "very high" risk rating beginning in late 1998.

The events surrounding the 1995 Law on Associations generally support my theory. Internal political instability, driven in particular by an unregulated foreign-backed NGO sector, civil war, and domestic constitutional drama, appears to have helped set the stage for restrictive regulations that could be used discretionarily against foreign NGOs. More instability thus led to a worse legal environment. External regional threats and fears of contagion also likely influenced the legislation, contrary to the statistical findings. Finally, there is little evidence that shaming influenced INGO regulations during the 1990s.

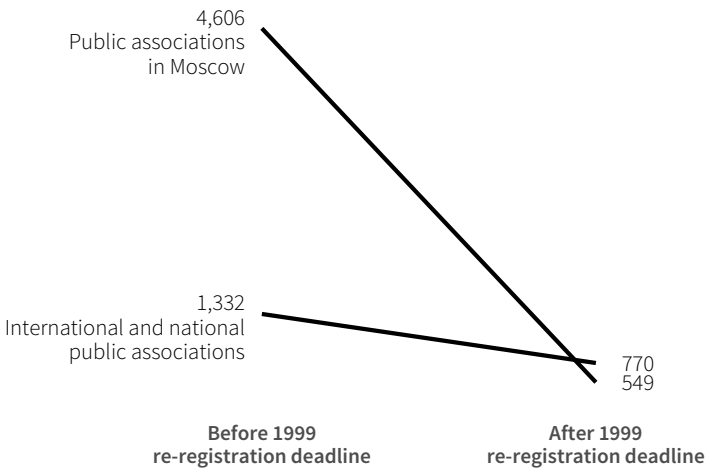


Figure 19: Effect of 1999 registration requirement

## Vladimir Putin, part one: power consolidation and fears of contagion

Following the inauguration of Vladimir Putin in 2000, the general civil society regulatory environment steadily worsened as the new president worked to consolidate his power. Putin sought more direct control over the country's political institutions. In 2002, he ended elections for regional governors and gave himself the power to directly appoint regional officials, and thereby indirectly appoint their local legislative and judicial subordinates. Putin also took control of the country's last independent television network, threatened journalists (and allegedly assassinated the most vocal), and cajoled the country's rich oligarchs into cooperating with the regime (Blitt 2008).

For Putin, it appears that domestic and international NGOs were yet another institution that needed to be controlled. From 2000–2005, Russia's CSRE steadily worsened inversely as internal stability increased, contrary to both hypothesis 1 and the statistical findings. NGO-based power consolidation culminated in Federal Law No. 18-FZ, enacted in January 2006. This new law imposed dozens of additional registration requirements for NGOs and granted government bureaucrats additional discretionary powers to permit or deny legal status to NGOs. Most importantly, however, the law contained a bevy of restrictions targeted specifically at both international and foreign-backed domestic NGOs.

Bureaucrats were empowered to deny registration to any foreign NGO if its "goals and objectives … create a threat to the sovereignty, political independence, territorial integrity, national unity, unique character, cultural heritage, and national interests of the Russian Federation" (*Analysis of Law # 18-FZ: On Introducing Amendments to Certain Legislative Acts of the Russian Federation* 2006, 2). Additionally, the government

gained new supervisory powers and required that NGOs provide details of all foreign funds, allow bureaucrats to observe or participate in any public or private event or meeting held by the organization, and ultimately determine whether an NGOs programming is appropriate and nonthreatening. The law also restricted foreign nationals, preventing anyone not legally residing in Russia from being a founder, member, or participant in any NGO (Maxwell 2006). As with the 1995 law, miscellaneous minutia placed burdens on foreign NGOs and often led to the revocation of their legal status—for example, the new law required that all registration materials had to be translated into Russian and certified by the government, but officials would often reject these certified translations, claiming they were "repulsive" and done poorly, forcing INGOs to pay for multiple translations (Blitt 2008, 36).

According to the statistical model, the 2006 restrictions imposed on INGOs should not have happened. Putin passed the law at the height of his political consolidation, and the country was the most internally stable it had been since before the fall of the Soviet Union. Internal political risk improved steadily during Putin's first presidential tenure, though apparently at the expense of civil society, as the CSRE declined in concert with Russia's growing stability. External political risk was also extremely low, as Eastern Europe continued to be considered quite stable in spite of the ongoing second civil war in Chechnya. Inter-state condemnation and shaming of Putin began to rise in 2005 and 2006, but still remained relatively low. What, then, led to the additional restrictions?

Measurement error likely hides the overriding explanatory factor for these new restrictions. Three prominent Eastern European political revolutions—the 2003 Rose Revolution in Georgia, the 2004–2005 Orange Revolution in Ukraine, and the 2005 Tulip Revolution in Kyrgyzstan—are not reflected in the regional or subregional risk score. In each of these revolutions, thousands of protestors took to the streets in mass demonstrations that eventually led the overthrow of each ruling regime. Both international NGOs and Western-supported domestic NGOs played a critical role in each color revolution. As in Russia, backed by millions of dollars in democracy assistance aid, global civil society had established itself as a powerful institution in Georgia, Ukraine, and Kyrgyzstan, but unlike Russia, none of these states had curbed the influence of the sector to the same extent. Subsequently, Western NGOs and civil society groups provided material support to aggrieved protestors and helped shape post-revolutionary governments (Tudoroiu 2007).

Given their role in the color revolutions, Putin and his administration were concerned with the potential destabilizing influence of international NGOs, and the 2006 law appears to have been drafted explicitly to prevent and stave off revolutionary contagion from the region (Machleder 2006). Developments after the 2006 law provide some evidence for Russian fears of contagion. In an effort to realign domestic NGOs with Russia, rather than Western foundations and INGOs, Putin attempted to make

the state the "primary financier" of the NGO sector (Crotty, Hall, and Ljubownikow 2014), thus heading off potential external influence. The government established the Public Chamber of the Russian Federation, a bureaucratic body responsible for doling out all federal funding to NGOs through competitive grants (Richter 2009). In theory, the Chamber would have allowed the state to sever the financial ties between NGOs and Western organizations, but ultimately, the Chamber has been wildly inefficient—in 2010, the Chamber awarded one billion rubles to 604 of Russia's 300,000 NGOs (Ljubownikow and Crotty 2014, 766), and it has been widely criticized for its corruption (Richter 2009).

Thus, the 2006 NGO law provides mixed evidence to support my hypotheses. As internal regime stability increased and Putin consolidated his power, the civil society regulatory environment worsened, contrary to the first hypothesis. External and reputational factors, as measured in the statistical model, have no apparent effect on the decision to pass the law, but unmeasured external factors—the threat of color revolution contagion—*did* have a demonstrably powerful effect on the legal environment and were likely the crucial factor for limiting INGOs in Russia.

### Dimitry Medvedev: temporary thaw in state-INGO relations

In 2008, Dmitry Medvedev succeeded Putin as president, inheriting the former ruler's formidable consolidated political scene (and benefitting from Putin's support behind the scenes as prime minister). Instead of continuing Putin's more authoritarian consolidation, Medvedev engaged in some forms of liberalization and openness, and in November 2008, he offered NGOs an olive branch in his inauguration speech, calling for closer and more amiable cooperation between the government and civil society sector (Flikke 2015, 5). Medvedev meet with NGO leaders in 2009 and promised to review the 2006 NGO law, ultimately passing several amendments to ease some of the strictest regulations, in particular not allowing bureaucrats to deny registration to organizations that threatened Russia's cultural heritage or national interests (Jenkins 2012, 506–7).

However, this newfound openness did not last long. The Medvedev regime's internal political risk began to drop immediately upon taking office, and by 2010, discretionary and targeted restrictions on Western-related NGOs increased, leading to a new decrease in the overall regulatory environment for civil society. Contrary to the years of Putin's political consolidation, the CSRE and internal stability move in lock step, as hypothesized—as stability worsens, so too do the restrictions on NGOs.

### Vladimir Putin, part two: regional ambitions and new fears of contagion

Though data for the CSRE is only available through 2012, two important and highly restrictive pieces of legislation passed in 2012 and 2015 which have undoubtedly fur-

ther diminished the index. All three hypothesized mechanisms appear to play a role in this most recent push to regulate and restrict international NGOs working in Russia.

Reprising his fear of NGOs from his first term, in just a few months following his second inauguration, Vladimir Putin signed the 2012 Foreign Agents Law, which contained a set of strict regulations aimed specifically at stigmatizing international NGOs and any domestic NGOs that receive funds from abroad. Similar to the original 1995 Law on Associations, the 2012 law required that any NGO that either (1) received funding from or was based in a foreign country, or (2) engaged in any form of "political activity" (broadly defined) had to reregister with the government as a иностранный агент, or "foreign agent", a legal term of art laden with powerful symbolic meaning—traitorous spies working against the Soviet regime during the Cold War received the same appellation.[22] Beyond the registration requirement, the law also required that foreign-connected NGOs prominently advertise the fact that they were foreign agents on all publications, pamphlets, and marketing. Failing to disclose this status carried a fine of up to 500,000 rubles—roughly US $7,000 (Flikke 2015, 9).

Since the law was implemented in 2012, Russian authorities have enforced it far more vigorously than previous NGO regulations, increasing spontaneous inspections and shuttering and harassing organizations that did not voluntarily register (10). By 2015, a third of foreign-connected NGOs in Russia had shut down and left the country.[23] Subsequent regulations passed in 2014 sought to co-opt international NGOs, as Putin restored and transformed the Public Chamber as the primary domestic source for NGO funding, thereby attempting to dissuade domestic organizations from linking with foreign powers.

Most recently, the Duma (under Putin's influence) passed a set of amendments to the 2012 law—the 2015 Undesirable Organizations Law, which allowed the government to blacklist any foreign-connected NGO that it considered exceptionally undesirable. Prominent Western INGOs such as the Open Society Foundations, the MacArthur Foundation, Freedom House, Amnesty International, and the National Endowment for Democracy have all been deemed undesirable and subsequently kicked out of the country.[24]

Given the internal political context, as well as persistent external threats to stability, Russia's rapid crackdown on the environment for foreign civil society organizations is not unexpected. By the time Putin resumed the presidency in 2012, Russia's internal political risk had fallen to its worst level since the first few years of Putin's first term. A confluence of economic and political factors stoked this internal instability, including

22. See http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/apr/26/harassed-and-shunned-the-russians-labelled-foreign-agents-by-kremlin
23. http://bellona.org/news/russian-human-rights-issues/russian-ngo-law/2015-10-foreign-agent-law-has-put-33-percent-of-russias-ngos-out-of-business
24. https://meduza.io/en/news/2015/07/08/soros-and-macarthur-foundations-among-12-ngos-in-patriotic-stop-list

a flagging economy, Putin's ambitions to expand Russian influence into the Middle East and China, and a latent interest in irredentism (which would come to full fruition with Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014).

Interstate shaming of Russia increased substantially following Putin's inauguration and subsequent crackdown on civil society, though much of the international condemnation was not directly related to the regime's treatment of INGOs—rather, Western countries tended to rail against Putin's recalcitrance and newfound position as an authoritarian bogeyman.

As with the color revolutions preceding Russia's 2006 INGO law, the statistical model again fails to account for external instability and fears of contagion. In 2012, uprisings and revolutions in Tunisia, Egypt, Bahrain, Syria, and others threatened authoritarian regimes worldwide, especially as the revolutionary spark appeared to spread throughout the region. Syria, in particular, posed a threat to Putin's international ambitions, as Syrian president Bashar al-Assad acted as Russia's regional client and openly received Russian support to fend off the revolutionary movement (ultimately launching the country into a still ongoing civil war).

In parallel with 2006, fears of foreign meddling appear to be the overriding factor for the 2012 and 2015 laws. The architects of the 2015 Undesirable Organizations law revealed as much. Konstantin Kosachev, the chair of the committee responsible for labeling INGOs as "undesirable," argued in 2015 that

> The scale of the foreign NGOs' activities in Russia is of a destructive nature and their aim is to overthrow the authorities in Russia. … Their main task is to try and make a direct impact on Russia's internal political processes, intervene in them and in the long run ensure that a regime that is more loyal to these states (that finance the NGOs in Russia) come[s] to power (Hamlett 2015, 7).

One of the law's cosponsors, Aleksandr Tarnavsky, linked the harshness of the new INGO restrictions with the external threats of foreign meddling in Ukraine, stating that

> Events in Ukraine have offended me, like many other Russians. Western countries audaciously spoke to us of friendship, while their secret services staged a coup hoping to tear Ukraine away from us. You act like that to us, then we'll treat you the same. It's pure pragmatism—nothing personal.[25]

25. https://meduza.io/en/feature/2015/05/21/pure-pragmatism-nothing-personal

Tarnavsky argued that the strict regulations would loom large for INGOs, like a "weapon hanging on the wall and that never fires,"[26] forcing them to toe the government line. The law was thus conceived of as a sort of defensive weapon against undue foreign influence, necessitated by ongoing fears of external instability.

Events leading to the 2012 Foreign Agents and 2015 Undesirable Organizations laws provide moderate evidence for my hypotheses. As internal political stability decreased (especially in response to Putin's irredentist annexation of Crimea and subsequent war with Ukraine) and threats of revolutionary contagion and external political stability increased, civil society restrictions intensified correspondingly, as anticipated. However, the regime was apparently not responsive to international shaming and condemnation.

## Conclusion

Civil society, both domestic and international, acts as an institution within authoritarian regimes, and accordingly, is one of the many institutional challengers that dictators must control and balance to remain in power. In an effort to curb the potential destabilizing risks associated with foreign organizations, autocrats limit civil society through legislation and regulations, and the severity and restrictiveness of this regulatory environment is a function of a regime's internal stability and political risk, the level of risk and conflict in neighboring countries, and international condemnation and shaming of a regime's actions.

The statistical models presented in this paper provide mixed support for each of these factors, indicating that internal, external, and reputational concerns can drive a dictator's decision to repress and limit civil society activity in general. Unfortunately, due to the nature of the data, this analysis does not distinguish between the regulatory environment for domestic and international NGOs. Tracing the development of INGO regulations in Russia, however, bolsters the theory, adds nuance that was not captured by the statistical models, and provides additional evidence for the theory.

## Appendix

26. https://meduza.io/en/feature/2015/05/21/pure-pragmatism-nothing-personal

| | Civil society regulatory environment (CSRE) in following year | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Autocracy | Democracy | Autocracy | Democracy | Autocracy | Democracy |
| | (1) | (2) | (3) | (4) | (5) | (6) |
| Internal political risk (ICRG) | −0.020*** | 0.072*** | −0.009 | 0.079*** | 0.016 | 0.055*** |
| | (0.006) | (0.003) | (0.007) | (0.003) | (0.011) | (0.008) |
| Years executive in office | | | −0.060*** | −0.036*** | −0.056*** | −0.038*** |
| | | | (0.011) | (0.011) | (0.011) | (0.015) |
| Years since competitive election | | | −0.038*** | 0.019 | −0.013 | 0.021 |
| | | | (0.008) | (0.017) | (0.009) | (0.036) |
| Opposition vote share | | | 0.038*** | 0.007** | 0.015* | 0.006 |
| | | | (0.009) | (0.003) | (0.009) | (0.004) |
| Physical integrity rights | | | | | 0.165** | 0.286*** |
| | | | | | (0.069) | (0.042) |
| GDP per capita (log) | | | | | −0.942*** | 0.215** |
| | | | | | (0.162) | (0.096) |
| Population (log) | | | | | 0.301** | 0.145*** |
| | | | | | (0.129) | (0.055) |
| Foreign aid (log) | | | | | 0.419*** | −0.066 |
| | | | | | (0.126) | (0.058) |
| Number of INGO members | | | | | −0.008* | 0.004* |
| | | | | | (0.004) | (0.002) |
| Globalization | | | | | −0.008 | −0.022** |
| | | | | | (0.015) | (0.009) |
| Constant | 0.848** | −1.007*** | 1.363*** | −0.876*** | −6.931*** | −2.472 |
| | (0.332) | (0.168) | (0.480) | (0.275) | (2.307) | (1.574) |
| Year fixed effects | No | No | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Observations | 784 | 1,776 | 409 | 1,377 | 299 | 770 |
| $R^2$ | 0.014 | 0.318 | 0.302 | 0.370 | 0.604 | 0.285 |
| Adjusted $R^2$ | 0.013 | 0.318 | 0.258 | 0.359 | 0.562 | 0.258 |
| Residual Std. Error | 2.270 (df = 782) | 1.382 (df = 1774) | 1.940 (df = 384) | 1.348 (df = 1352) | 1.472 (df = 270) | 1.473 (df = 741) |
| F Statistic | 10.987*** (df = 1; 782) | 828.026*** (df = 1; 1774) | 6.922*** (df = 24; 384) | 33.094*** (df = 24; 1352) | 14.680*** (df = 28; 270) | 10.567*** (df = 28; 741) |

*Note:* *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Table 1: Internal determinants of restrictions on the civil society regulatory environment

| | Civil society regulatory environment (CSRE) in following year | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Autocracy | Democracy | Autocracy | Democracy | Autocracy | Democracy |
| | (1) | (2) | (3) | (4) | (5) | (6) |
| Lowest political risk in all neighboring countries | −0.018*** | 0.049*** | −0.002 | 0.048*** | 0.013** | 0.043*** |
| | (0.006) | (0.003) | (0.007) | (0.003) | (0.006) | (0.003) |
| Average political risk in subregion | | | −0.044** | 0.001 | | |
| | | | (0.021) | (0.006) | | |
| Average political risk in region | | | | | −0.120*** | 0.014*** |
| | | | | | (0.011) | (0.003) |
| Coup activity in neighboring countries (binary) | 0.197 | −0.025 | −0.040 | 0.048 | −0.440* | 0.102 |
| | (0.260) | (0.175) | (0.263) | (0.190) | (0.249) | (0.209) |
| Coup activity in subregion (binary) | | | 0.184** | −0.055 | | |
| | | | (0.076) | (0.043) | | |
| Coup activity in region (binary) | | | | | 0.473*** | −0.064 |
| | | | | | (0.106) | (0.078) |
| GDP per capita (log) | | | | | | |
| Population (log) | | | | | | |
| Foreign aid (log) | | | | | | |
| Number of INGO members | | | | | | |
| Globalization | | | | | | |
| Constant | 0.639** | 0.968*** | 2.153* | 1.008*** | 6.015*** | 0.411* |
| | (0.270) | (0.161) | (1.275) | (0.386) | (0.596) | (0.224) |
| Year fixed effects | No | No | No | No | No | No |
| Observations | 788 | 1,647 | 760 | 1,589 | 747 | 1,589 |
| $R^2$ | 0.015 | 0.165 | 0.058 | 0.171 | 0.233 | 0.179 |
| Adjusted $R^2$ | 0.012 | 0.164 | 0.053 | 0.169 | 0.229 | 0.177 |
| Residual Std. Error | 2.231 (df = 785) | 1.550 (df = 1644) | 2.200 (df = 755) | 1.555 (df = 1584) | 1.995 (df = 742) | 1.548 (df = 1584) |
| F Statistic | 5.776*** (df = 2; 785) | 161.882*** (df = 2; 1644) | 11.591*** (df = 4; 755) | 81.607*** (df = 4; 1584) | 56.390*** (df = 4; 742) | 86.305*** (df = 4; 1584) |

*Note:*

Table 2: External determinants of restrictions on the civil society regulatory environment

| | Civil society regulatory environment (CSRE) in following year | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Autocracy | Democracy | Autocracy | Democracy | Autocracy | Democracy |
| | (1) | (2) | (3) | (4) | (5) | (6) |
| Severity of conflictual events (interstate) | 0.273*** | −0.079* | 0.223*** | −0.065 | 0.025 | 0.107** |
| | (0.072) | (0.042) | (0.070) | (0.042) | (0.070) | (0.050) |
| Percent of all events that are conflictual (interstate) | −2.878*** | −4.637*** | −2.702*** | −3.849*** | −0.134 | −3.841*** |
| | (1.004) | (0.624) | (0.952) | (0.632) | (1.135) | (0.769) |
| Severity of conflictual events (INGOs) | | | | | | |
| Percent of all events that are conflictual (INGOs) | | | | | | |
| Average political risk in region | | | −0.152*** | 0.040*** | −0.023 | −0.049*** |
| | | | (0.018) | (0.006) | (0.019) | (0.010) |
| GDP per capita (log) | | | | | −0.762*** | 0.332*** |
| | | | | | (0.142) | (0.100) |
| Population (log) | | | | | −0.410*** | −0.188*** |
| | | | | | (0.096) | (0.048) |
| Foreign aid (log) | | | | | 0.415*** | −0.019 |
| | | | | | (0.101) | (0.064) |
| Number of INGO members | | | | | −0.008** | −0.005** |
| | | | | | (0.004) | (0.002) |
| Globalization | | | | | 0.044*** | 0.015 |
| | | | | | (0.014) | (0.010) |
| Constant | −1.946*** | 4.760*** | 6.829*** | 2.121*** | 2.985 | 6.318*** |
| | (0.544) | (0.294) | (1.231) | (0.472) | (2.545) | (1.597) |
| Year fixed effects | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Observations | 578 | 1,411 | 561 | 1,387 | 404 | 771 |
| $R^2$ | 0.040 | 0.049 | 0.157 | 0.082 | 0.314 | 0.173 |
| Adjusted $R^2$ | 0.009 | 0.036 | 0.128 | 0.069 | 0.274 | 0.148 |
| Residual Std. Error | 2.226 (df = 559) | 1.645 (df = 1392) | 2.099 (df = 541) | 1.622 (df = 1367) | 1.772 (df = 381) | 1.558 (df = 748) |
| F Statistic | 1.302 (df = 18; 559) | 3.953*** (df = 18; 1392) | 5.313*** (df = 19; 541) | 6.427*** (df = 19; 1367) | 7.913*** (df = 22; 381) | 7.089*** (df = 22; 748) |

*Note:*

Table 3: Reputational determinants of restrictions on the civil society regulatory environment

## Software

All the figures, tables, and other results can be replicated using code available at https://github.com/andrewheiss/Dissertation/tree/master/Analysis/ngo_regs_regime_stability and the following open source software:

Hlavac, Marek. 2014. *stargazer: LaTeX code and ASCII text for Well-formatted Regression and Summary Statistics Tables*. Version 5.2.

R Core Team. 2016. *R: A language and environment for statistical computing*. Vienna, Austria: R Foundation for Statistical Computing. http://www.r-project.org. Version 3.2.3.

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