

A dictator's toolkit. How cooptation affects repression in autocracies

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Summary

Frantz and Kendall-Taylor explore the interaction of two instruments of dictatorial rule: co-optation and political repression. They find that co-optation in the form of parties and legislatures leads dictators to reduce restrictions on empowerment rights. Simultaneously, it increases physical integrity violations. This replication finds evidence of model misspecification and weak predictive accuracy. An extension emphasizes the interaction of co-optation and repression.

Method and material

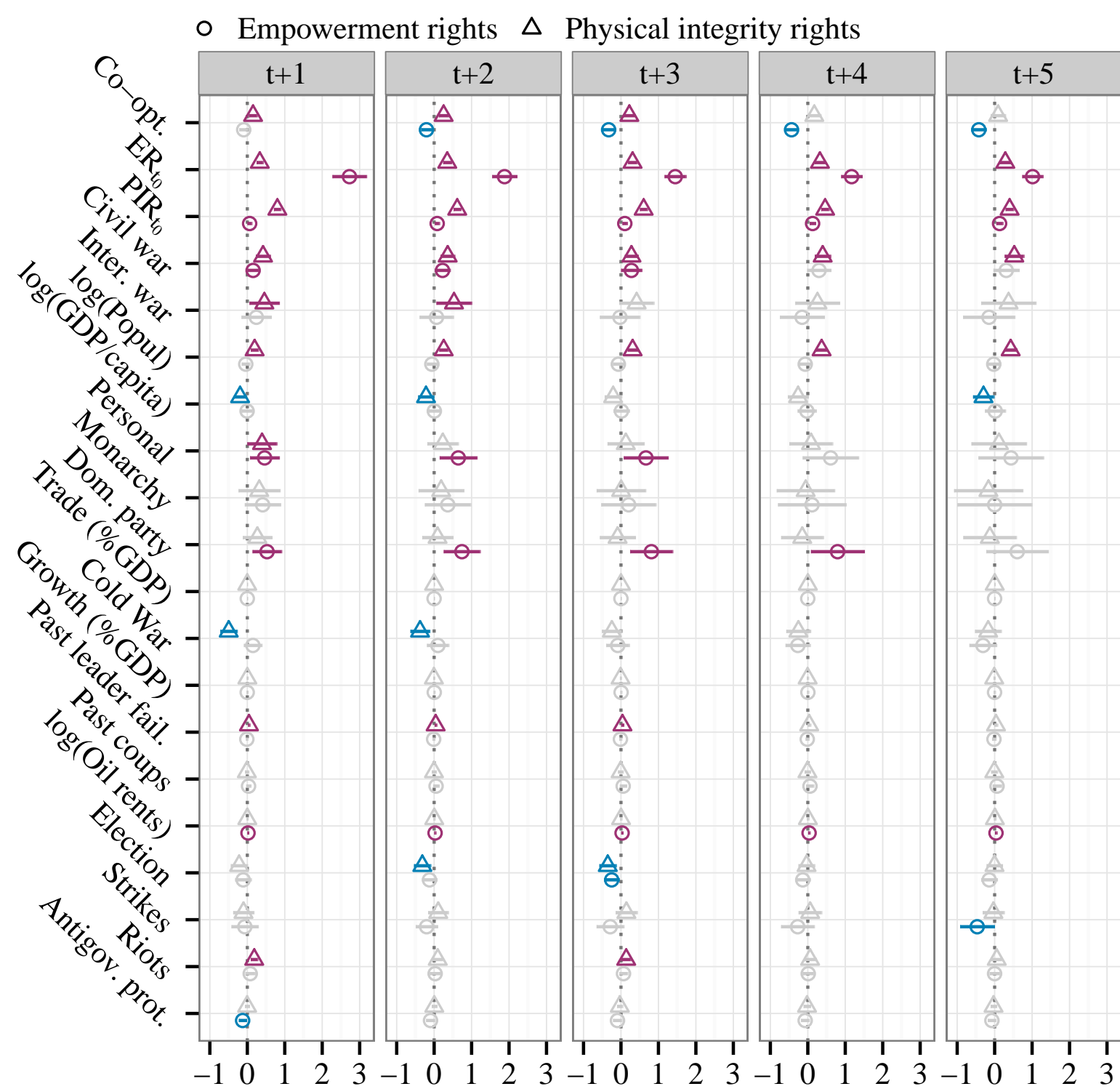
Ordered logistic regression: $\xi = \alpha + \mathbf{x}\beta + \varepsilon$

$$y = \begin{cases} \text{level 1 if } -\infty < \xi \leq \alpha_1 \\ \vdots \\ \text{level } m-1 \text{ if } \alpha_{m-2} < \xi \leq \alpha_{m-1} \\ \text{level } m \text{ if } \alpha_{m-1} < \xi \leq \infty \end{cases}$$

$$Pr(y \leq j | \mathbf{x}) = Pr(\xi \leq \alpha_j | \mathbf{x})$$

Design: 138 dictatorships between 1972 and 2007 are analyzed in a pooled cross-section design with five imputed datasets. The study explores the effect of co-optation at t on repression at $t+1$ to $t+5$.

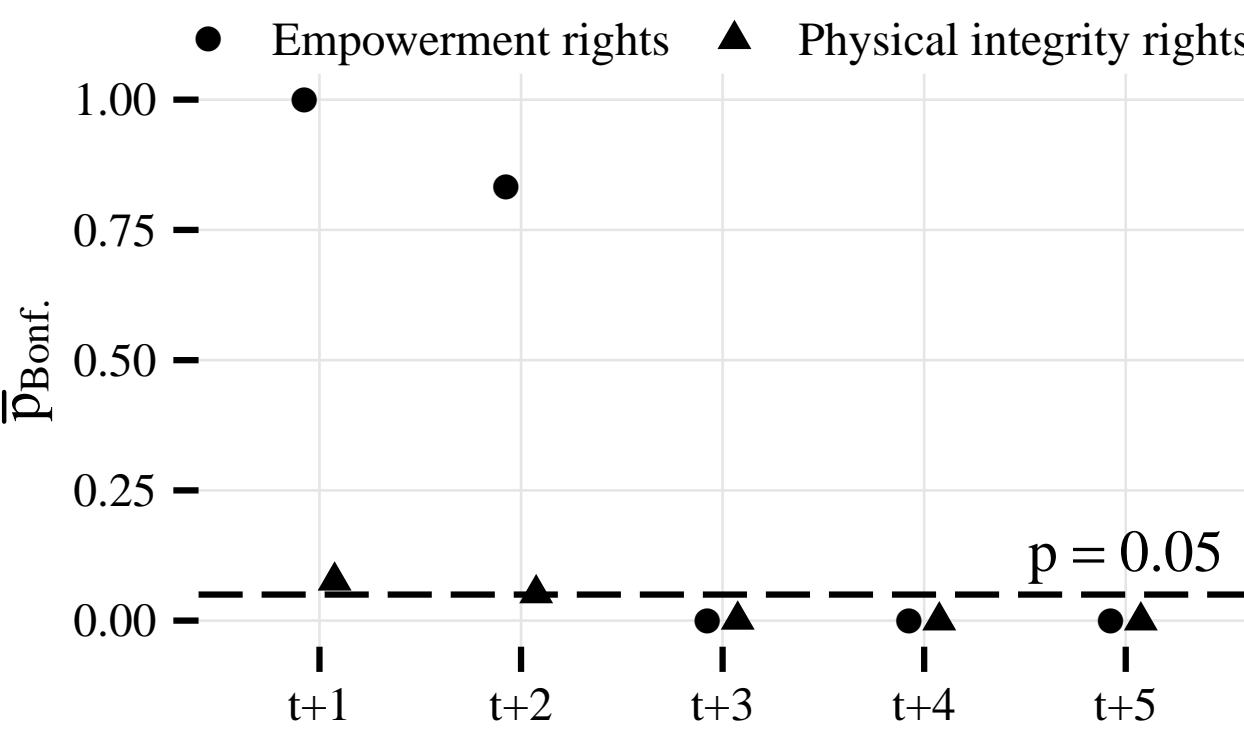
First impression



The original results can be reproduced up to two decimal places. Co-optation via legislatures and political parties **reduces** restrictions on empowerment rights. Simultaneously, it **encourages** physical integrity violations.

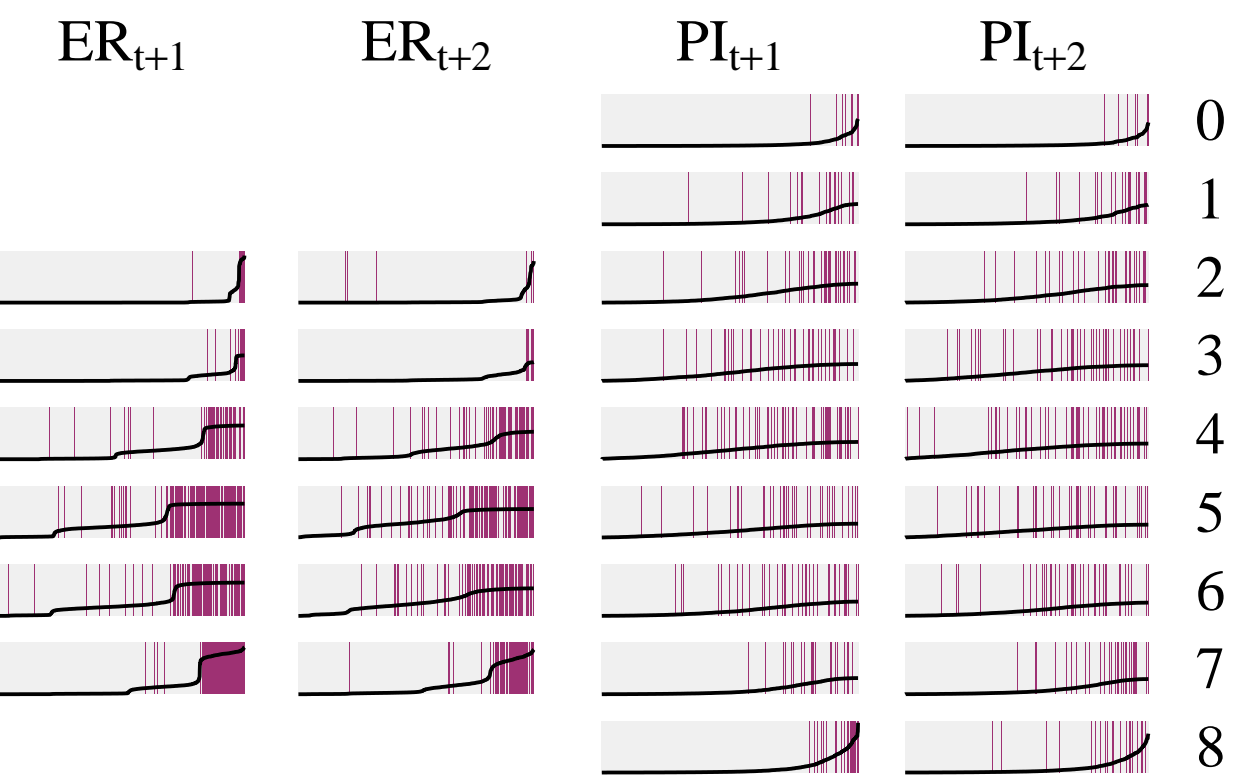
Replication results

Parallel regressions assumption



Using a χ^2 -test the coefficients from each imputation round can be compared to their multinomial alternatives. Only four models reject the multinomial alternative hypothesis of non-constant coefficients.

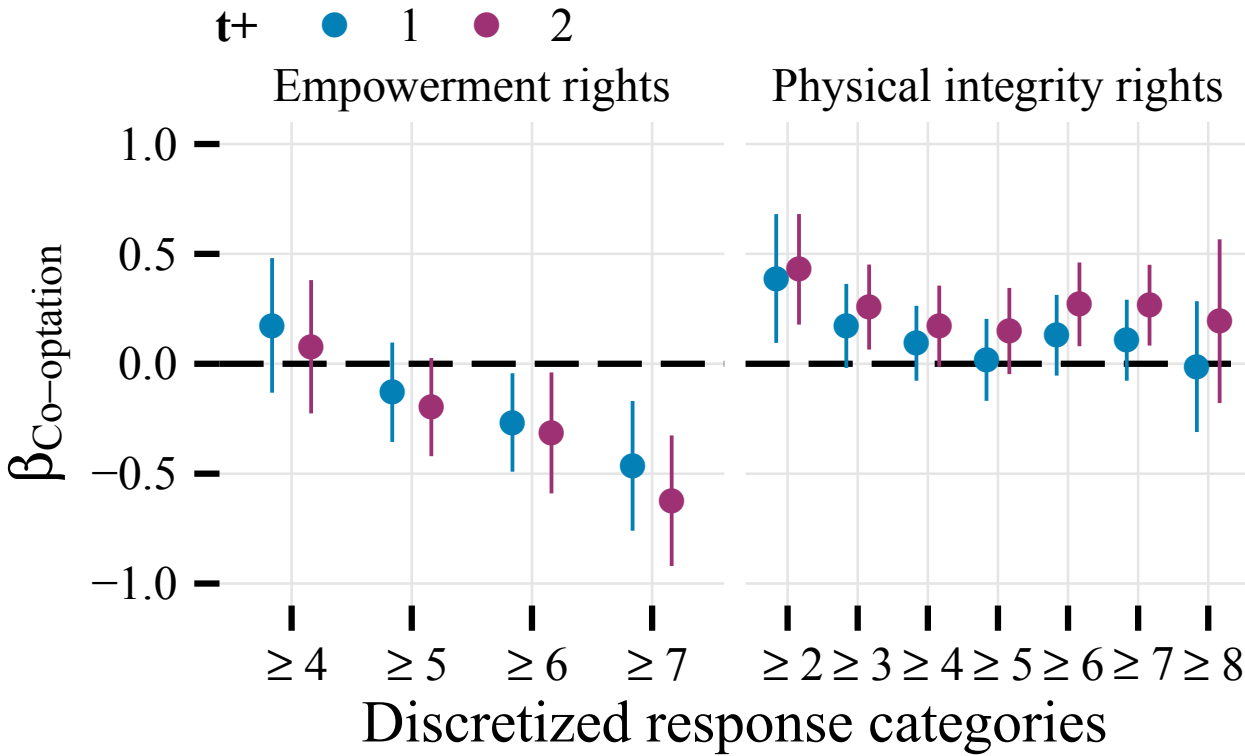
Predictive accuracy



As can be seen from the separation plots empowerment rights restrictions at $t+1$ are somewhat reliably predicted. Already at $t+2$ predictive accuracy declines visibly. Moreover, co-optation offers no leverage on physical integrity violations.

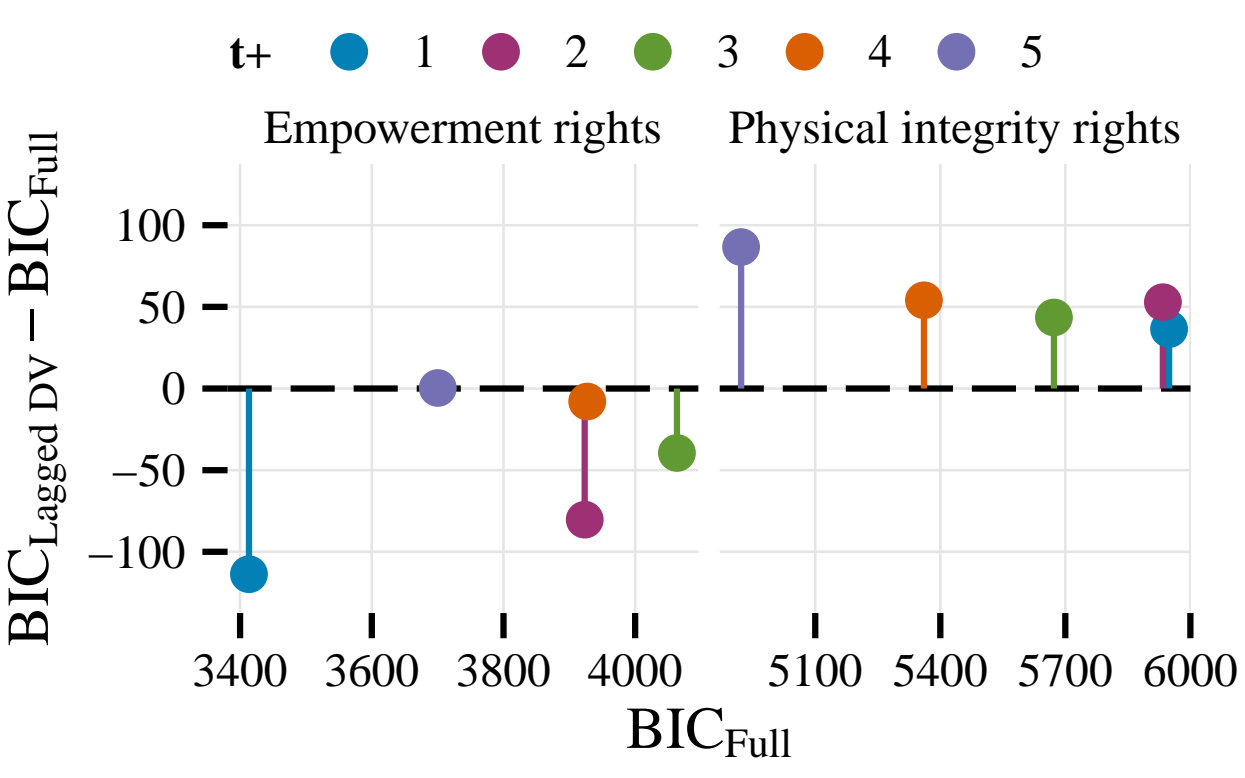
Attempted extension

- **Focus.** ER_{t+1} performs relatively best.
- **Improve consistency.** Use Civil Liberties dataset.
- **Jettison ballast.** $\tilde{X} \subset X : \mathbf{x} \perp \varepsilon \forall \mathbf{x} \in \tilde{X}$
- **Simplify.** $ER_{t+1} = \tilde{X}\beta + \varepsilon$
- **Be sceptical.** Is co-optation linear?
- **Be precise.** $ER_{t+1} \sim \text{Co-opt.} | \text{Physical integr. viol.}$



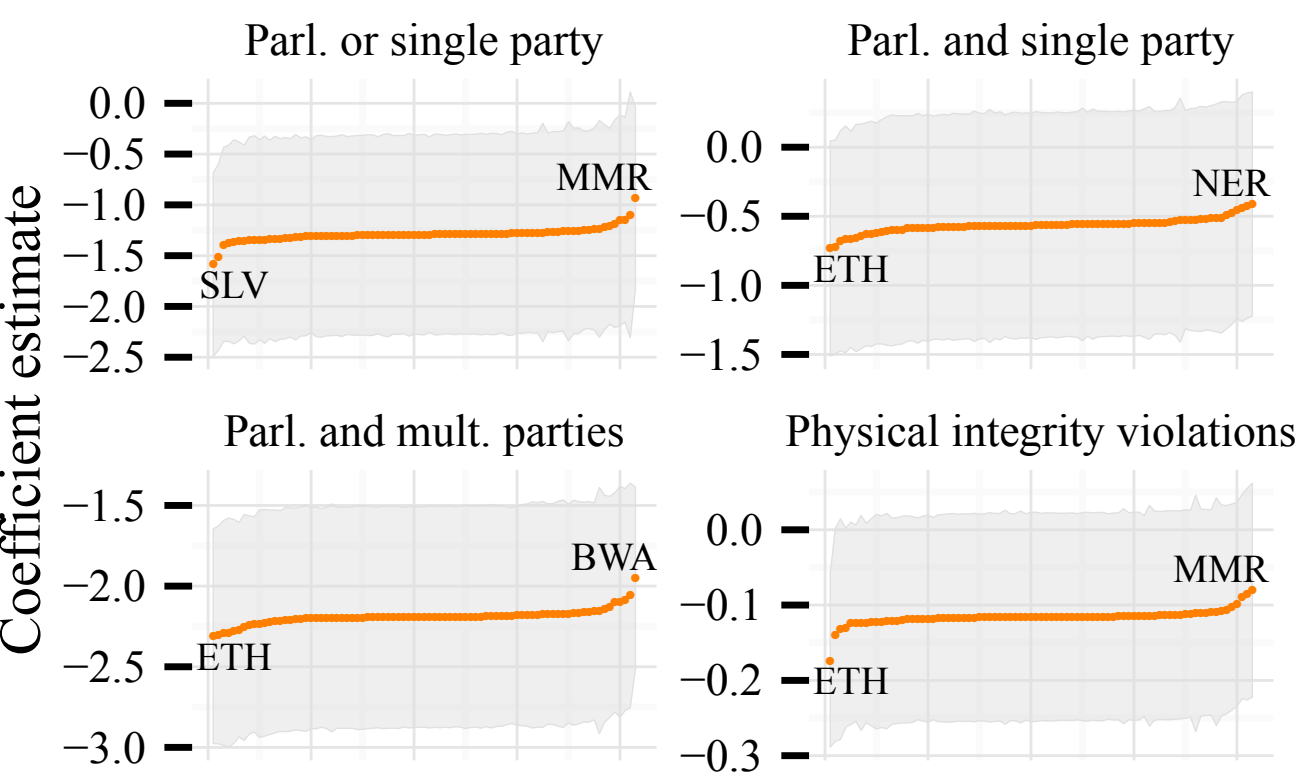
An alternative test draws on $j-1$ logistic regressions with response $\mathbb{1}_y(y_i \geq j)$. Coefficients should differ little as j increases. Perfect separation occurred for some response levels. The test raises strong concerns about co-optation.

Parsimony

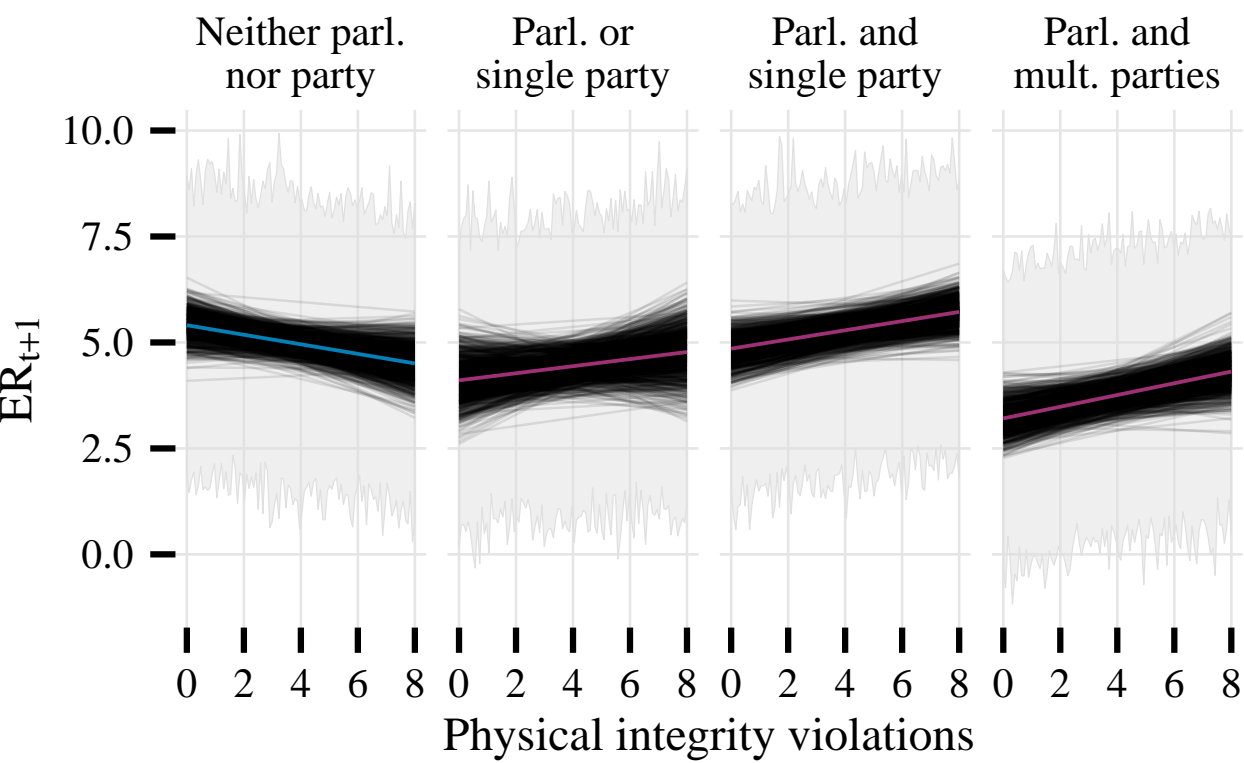


All models include lagged responses to account for serial autocorrelation. However, in many cases the lagged response offers the most parsimonious fit to the data. Again co-optation offers no leverage on political repression.

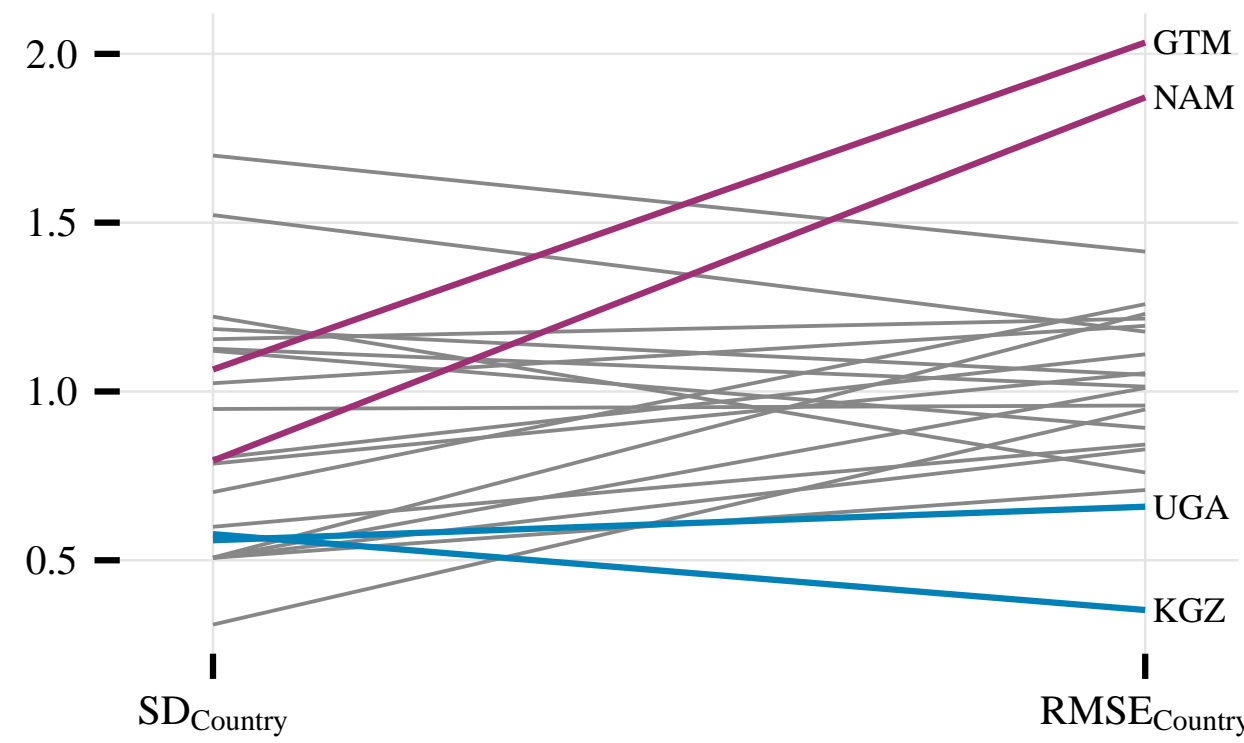
Cross-validation by country



Simulation and out-of-sample prediction



Statistical simulations point to the assumed conditionality: The expected value of ER_{t+1} decreases as co-optation increases and physical integrity violations counterbalance this effect. Yet, already accounting for systematic uncertainty proves the extended model unreliable.



Twenty percent of the 138 countries were withheld for out-of-sample validation. Given an in-sample RMSE of 1.05 and a test-sample score of 1.10 the extended model seems to perform well. Alas, within-country variance in ER_{t+1} is overestimated – sometimes dramatically.

Conclusion

Dictators maintain power by a combination of co-optation and political repression. Investigating their interaction is a venue for future research. Nevertheless, statistical models and data should be chosen and evaluated more carefully.

Reference

Frantz, Erica & Andrea Kendall-Taylor (2014) A dictator's toolkit: Understanding how co-optation affects repression in autocracies. *Journal of Peace Research*, 51(3): 332-346.

Partner up!



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