

Understanding journalist killings

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Abstract: Why do state authorities murder journalists? We show that the majority of journalists are killed in democracies and present an argument that focuses on institutional differences between democratic states. In democracies, journalists will most likely be targeted by local state authorities that have limited options to generally restrict press freedom. Where local governments are elected, negative reporting could mean that local politicians lose power and influence, especially if they are involved in corrupt practices. Analyzing new global data on journalist killings that identify the perpetrator and visibility of the journalist, we show that local-level elections carry an inherent risk, particularly for less visible journalists. Killings perpetrated by criminal groups follow a similar pattern to those by state authorities, pointing to possible connections between these groups. Our study shows that without effective monitoring and accountability, national democratic institutions alone are unable to effectively protect journalists from any perpetrator.

Keywords: Journalists, Media Freedom, Repression, Democratic Institutions

An online appendix with supplementary material is available at [add_url_here](#).
Replication files are available in the JOP Data Archive on Dataverse
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Introduction

In July 2015, Filadelfo Sánchez Sarmiento was killed by two unidentified gunmen in Oaxaca, Mexico. The journalist had been critical of local authorities and had received several threats (Committee to Protect Journalists, 2015). His murder is part of a troubling statistic that puts Mexico among the deadliest countries for journalists (Committee to Protect Journalists, 2019a). Despite its weaknesses, the Mexican political system is governed by established and entrenched democratic institutions, such as a pluralistic political system and free and fair elections resulting in peaceful political turnover. In such a setting, journalists should enjoy particular protection. But Figure 1 shows that Mexico is not an exception. Our newly collected data confirm that more journalists are murdered by *state actors* in democracies than in non-democracies. Democracies also see far more journalist killings than autocracies for which a perpetrator cannot be confirmed.

– Figure 1 here –

We tackle the puzzle of why journalists are murdered by state authorities in institutional democracies. Following Dahl (1971), we identify democracies as regimes with effective political contestation and participation, which he labels ‘polyarchies’. Our argument presents a bottom-up view of state-media relations, exploring how institutions shape local politicians’ incentives and opportunities to manipulate the flow of information. We develop and empirically test a theoretical argument that shows how elements of local-level democracy carry an inherent risk for journalists that is not always mitigated by democratic institutions at the national level. We identify three key factors that likely increase the risk of journalists being murdered in a democracy. First, local state authorities will be motivated to silence critical journalists where their political survival depends on their public image and where removal from office would result in significant loss of power and resources. Second, politicians who are involved in corrupt practices

that warrant cover-ups will be more likely to take drastic measures to silence a journalist as their own trustworthiness and integrity could be called into question. Third, potential perpetrators need to consider the risks behind murdering a journalist. In democracies, perpetrators will want to avoid excessive public scrutiny of the killings. Attacks against journalists are less likely to attract unwanted attention when they occur in politically remote areas and where impunity is high.

Our article presents a new detailed dataset of journalist killings between 2002 and 2016, drawn from multiple global sources. We distinguish between murders that were carried out by state agents, unconfirmed perpetrators, non-state political or by non-political perpetrators, and code the location and type of outlet the journalist was working for prior to being killed. Our data indicate that the majority of journalists killed by state or unconfirmed perpetrators in democracies worked in remote areas for subnational media outlets. Democratic institutions that give considerable economic and political power to locally elected authorities provide fertile ground for driving local state authorities to extreme measures. National level democratic institutions leave members of the press vulnerable as they are unable to effectively protect those attempting to shed light on local-level politics. Our findings suggest that these killings do not result from a lack of economic development, and therefore, lack of capacity to protect media workers.

To evaluate whether the hypothesized pattern is unique to journalist killings by state perpetrators in democracies, we compare our results to murders committed by other perpetrators and across all regime types - providing the most comprehensive investigation of the killings of journalists to date. Our supplementary analyses in the online appendix show that in democracies, killings by non-state political actors, such as terrorist and rebel groups, follow different patterns and are largely linked to armed conflict. Journalist killings committed by non-state actors, such as criminal gangs, show similarities to killings by state authorities, supporting suggestions of possible links between

criminal gangs and state authorities (Heyns and Srinivasan, 2013; Holland and Rios, 2017; Waisbord, 2002). Analyzing journalist killings across both democracies and non-democracies reveals that despite the greater level of media freedom in democracies (Stier, 2015), democratic institutions alone *do not* improve the safety of journalists' lives from attacks by *any* perpetrator.

Our study contributes to a number of research areas, including the literature on state repression in democracies, on press freedom and the manipulation of information, as well as the comparative study of the effects of political institutions. The results point to potential unintended consequences of making local political leaders more powerful and dependent on support from the electorate, especially in the absence of a strong and independent judiciary. They provide an important piece to the puzzle of why state agents in democratic settings use violence and violate a basic pillar of democracy by organizing the killing of a journalist.

The next section places our study in the wider context of state-media relations. Then we highlight recent work on state-sponsored violence in democracies, which our study extends and contributes to. Building on research on the targeting of journalists, we discuss how killings differ from other forms of journalist repression and explain why this extreme form of violence can be less costly for state perpetrators. We then outline the mechanisms and conditions that put journalists in danger in institutional democracies. Next, we introduce our data that code the perpetrator and visibility of the murdered journalist's work. We outline our theorized mechanism with an example from Indonesia's ambitious decentralization program and rising numbers of killed journalists, before drawing some conclusions from these new insights.

State control of the media

State-media relations are shaped at the macro-level by national institutions and regulations and at the micro-level by how players interact with each other within these settings. The macro-level represents the overall level of media freedom, which is decided at the national level because changing the overall conditions for the media requires substantial institutional power (Kellam and Stein, 2016; Whitten-Woodring and Van Belle, 2014). Institutional checks, such as legislative and judicial constraints on the president, limit the power and ability of rulers to constrain media freedom (Kellam and Stein, 2016). Due to these institutional checks it is considerably more difficult for governments in democracies to systematically curtail the press than in autocracies, leading to greater media freedom in democratic countries (Stier, 2015).

Media freedom is shaped by national governments (VonDoepp and Young, 2013), including presidents (Kellam and Stein, 2016), and by civil society (VonDoepp and Young, 2016). We contribute to work on macro-level patterns of media freedom (Kellam and Stein, 2016; Stier, 2015; VonDoepp and Young, 2016, 2013) by assessing how characteristics of lower level institutions shape local politicians' incentives and opportunities to interfere with the flow of information. We limit our argument to institutional democracies because we expect the mechanism behind the murder of journalists to fundamentally differ between democracies and autocracies. In autocracies, rulers can close down news outlets and restrict media access through intimidation, violence and imprisonment. In democracies, we assume that weaker state actors resort to killings of journalists if they expect a benefit from influencing the flow of information because they are unable to constrain the media more generally. Whereas journalist killings in autocracies frequently act as high-profile deterrents (Committee to Protect Journalists, 2020*b*), we expect the journalists who are killed in democracies to be low-profile and primarily targeted to hide

unwanted stories. Focusing on institutional democracies enables us to develop a specific argument for those regimes in which the vast majority of journalist killings take place.¹

State repression in democracies

The high number of journalists that are murdered by state or unconfirmed perpetrators in democracies is puzzling, not only because of the integral role the media play in democracies, but also because ample research shows that democratic countries are better at protecting their citizens' human rights (e.g. Davenport and Armstrong, 2004; Davenport, 2007; Poe and Tate, 1994; Zanger, 2000). This relationship has been depicted as the 'domestic democratic peace' (Davenport, 2007).

Yet state actors do not always fit the picture of the 'domestic democratic peace'. A growing body of research questions the assumption that democratic institutions necessarily improve basic human rights for everyone. Democratic institutions meant to instrumentalize the voice of the people sometimes backfire. For example, elections are associated with a greater risk of scarring torture because the victims are generally 'the weakly enfranchised; their rights are unlikely to be protected by the electoral process' (Conrad, Hill and Moore, 2018, 14). In Africa, incumbents are more likely to use violence to ensure electoral victory as the stakes in the elections increase (Fjelde and Höglund, 2016).

Increasing evidence shows that state authorities in democracies do not shy away from violence if they do not expect this violence to damage their political careers. For example, democratic leaders might harm individuals who are perceived as outsiders and

¹Additionally, data quality might be greater in democracies. Autocracies frequently impede the gathering of reliable data on journalist killings, particularly in remote areas, despite the extensive efforts of organizations aiming to collect this information (see Hollyer, Rosendorff and Vreeland, 2011).

invisible minorities (Conrad, Hill and Moore, 2018; Davenport, 2012), or they employ violence that is difficult to detect (Davenport, 2012; Daxecker and Hess, 2013).

Besides carefully choosing the target and method of violence, another strategy for getting away with state-sponsored violence in democracies is to manipulate the information about the government's involvement. Politicians can detach themselves from the perpetrators of violence (Carey, Colaresi and Mitchell, 2015) or they may shift blame to those at the lowest level of the chain (Mitchell, 2012). They 'manipulat[e] the flow of information [...] by manipulating the standards used for evaluating the action or policy' (Mitchell, 2012, 27-28). We contribute to this research that looks more closely at the repressive behavior of state agents in democratic settings and their attempts to manipulate the flow of information by investigating the killings of journalists.

Research on repression against journalists

The safety of journalists is attracting increasing attention among scholars.² The growing literature suggests that their precarious situation is linked to the topics they cover (Waisbord, 2002). Local journalists reporting on 'local politics, human rights, organized crime, and corruption' (Heyns and Srinivasan, 2013, 310) seem most at risk. Journalists often put themselves in danger by publishing stories that focus on actions taken by powerful individuals, such as politicians or business people, to cover up abuses of office, corrupt dealings and other forms of illegal activity (Bjørnskov and Freytag, 2016; Riddick et al., 2008). Criminal organizations seem to murder journalists when rival groups occupy the same territory (Holland and Rios, 2017). Yet, as Brambila (2017, 317) notes, the role of the state's security sector in the murder of journalists 'has barely been explored in the academic literature and deserves further analysis'.

²See, for example, a recent special issue on this topic (Orgeret and Tayeebwa, 2020).

Studies on Mexico (Brambila, 2017) and the Philippines (Aguilar Jr., Mendoza and Candelaria, 2014) suggest that the decentralization and dispersion of power from the center to the periphery, which is characteristic for democratic regimes, enables these killings. Brambila (2017, 298) argues that while eager to report on sensitive issues in emerging democracies, reporters are not effectively protected throughout the whole country, pointing out that in Mexico most murdered journalists worked locally. In democracies, journalists might (continue to) publish critical information due to the demand for such news (Hughes and Vorobyeva, 2019) or they may miscalculate the risk attached to distributing politically sensitive news in new democracies (Solis, 2018). Asal et al. (2016) suggest that because in democracies journalists are able to freely investigate the dealings of illegal groups, they are more likely targeted by these actors.

We build on insights from country- and region-specific research that highlights local dynamics (Aguilar Jr., Mendoza and Candelaria, 2014; Brambila, 2017), apply it to institutional democracies around the globe, and compare drivers of killings by state authorities to those committed by other perpetrators.

How killings differ from other forms of journalist repression

We focus on the murder of journalists as a comparatively low-cost strategy for local-level politicians to maintain power and influence in an institutional democracy. If local state authorities wanted to influence the flow of information, they would have limited options. Jailing journalists or torturing them in police custody would likely draw unwanted attention and legal consequences. An imprisoned journalist might become more determined to bring illegal activities of state authorities into the public domain. Instead of diverting attention from an issue, it might increase it. Additionally, imprisoning a journalist establishes responsibility of the state, making it impossible for authorities to

deny involvement.

State authorities may consider bribing journalists into withholding uncomfortable stories. But this can backfire, as it provides the reporter with more sensitive information to go public. Effectively silencing a journalist with bribes may also require more funds than are available, especially to local politicians.³ State authorities also frequently threaten journalists in the hope of silencing them. Journalists who work in democracies are likely more prone to ignore these threats than those who work in autocratic environments, as they rely on the protection of political and legal institutions.⁴ The cases of ‘failed threats’ that end in the murder of a journalist likely represent only a fraction of reporters who are intimidated. Without systematic data on threats made against journalists, we focus on the most visible and extreme form of journalist repression: killings.

Understanding journalist killings

We expect local-level institutions to shape local politicians’ incentives and opportunities to manipulate the flow of information. Following recent research on state repression in democracies, we challenge the assumption that state authorities in democracies effectively protect the lives of *all* citizens. Within democracies, the extent to which power is delegated to locally elected versus non-elected authorities varies greatly. We expect that journalist killings are more likely in institutional settings that transfer greater influence

³Analyzing bribes paid by Peru’s secret-police chief, McMillan and Zoido (2004) find that owners of television channels were paid 100 times more than judges or opposition politicians. At that time, Peru’s political institutions fulfilled all key criteria of a democracy.

⁴For example, despite the extensive threats, physical violence and lawsuits Maltese journalist Daphne Caruana Galizia endured, she did not think murder was a realistic threat (Times of Malta, 2019). She was assassinated in 2017.

to elected local governments. Because local-level politicians are unable to modify the framework of press freedom, they need to pursue alternative and more targeted strategies if they want to interfere and influence their portrayal in the media. Direct attacks against individual members of the press present a more feasible solution.

Local politicians and state authorities will have an incentive to take drastic measures to disrupt the flow of information if their careers, influence, power and resources depend on a positive public image. This is the case if their political survival depends on being re-elected and if the loss of office equates to significant loss of influence and resources. Local elections place a premium on the image of politicians, on public opinion and public discourse. When local politicians are subjected to electoral pressures, being publicly linked to illegal or reprehensible behavior can damage their chances of re-election and might force them out of office prematurely. Local elections inadvertently provide the incentive to take extreme measures to hamper the kind of transparency and accountability that investigative journalists strive to achieve.

Locally elected governments usually go hand in hand with decentralized political power. They have access to resources, influence and some fiscal autonomy in their constituencies. This raises the stakes of losing office as well as the motivation to do whatever is necessary to maintain a positive public image to get re-elected. Concerns about losing such privileges may increase incentives to take measures outside the law to stay in power (Fjelde and Höglund, 2016; VonDoepp and Young, 2013).

Why do democratic institutions not effectively protect journalists at the subnational level? Davenport (2012) suggests that human rights violations in democracies are facilitated by the decentralization of power, as it is often promoted in democracies (Aguilar Jr., Mendoza and Candelaria, 2014). This failure of democratic institutions to instill accountable behavior and norms at a lower level is well documented (Gelman, 2010; Sidel, 2014), so that local politicians are confronted with two sets of norms, rules and

practices (Gibson, 2005). Such authoritarian enclaves (Garretón, 1990) are found at the subnational level (Giraudy, 2007) and in rural areas (Fox, 2007).

In democracies, state authorities are more likely to get away with non-democratic practices if they are far away from the capital to attract as little attention as possible. Journalist killings in capital cities are more likely to make the headlines, making it harder for perpetrators to evade accountability. The relative safety of journalists working in the capital compared to those working in remote areas shapes the calculations of reporters themselves. The murder of a photographer in Mexico City in 2015 attracted widespread international attention, not because of the crime itself, but because he was the first journalist in Mexico to be murdered in the capital city, having fled there after receiving threats (Bartman, 2018). Outside the capital, local politicians have much to gain and little to lose from eliminating a local radio broadcaster, blogger or photographer. State authorities who are unable or unwilling to curtail press freedom more generally, but who depend on a positive public image, may consider eliminating a low-profile reporter, who works for a small outlet away from the capital city, as a feasible option. Additionally, local journalists might be motivated to pursue investigative and watchdog reporting to attract attention to their publications and to enhance their own career prospects. This strategy might attract unwanted attention from local politicians keen to silence them.

In summary, we expect that locally elected governments increase the risk of a journalist being murdered because they incentivize local politicians to take drastic measures in pursuit of a favorable public image. Elections for local governments put a premium on how state agents are perceived by the public and they increase the stakes of losing influential positions. Additionally, we expect locally elected governments to predominantly target less visible journalists to reduce the risk of getting caught. *We expect that in democracies, journalists, in particular less visible journalists, are more likely to be killed through state authorities where local governments are elected.*

The role of corruption

Politicians will be motivated to arrange the killing of journalists to maintain a positive public image where they have something to hide from voters. Politicians who are involved in corrupt dealings will have an incentive to take drastic action to prevent media reports if such publications would jeopardize their position of power. Previous studies suggest a close link between corruption and violence against members of the press (Heyns and Srinivasan, 2013; Riddick et al., 2008; Waisbord, 2002). About two-thirds of murdered journalists for whom the Committee to Protect Journalists could clearly identify a motive, reported on corruption, politics or human rights (Committee to Protect Journalists, 2019c).

High public sector corruption in a country with democratic institutions creates an incentive for state agents to silence journalists. Politicians who are involved in corrupt dealings, but find themselves subjected to electoral accountability, will have an incentive to interfere with the flow of information as a way to circumvent said accountability. Being unable to restrict institutional media freedom, a more realistic option is to silence individual journalists. *We expect that in democracies, journalists are more likely to be killed through state authorities where public sector corruption is high.*

Impunity and the role of the judicial system

While local elections and political corruption provide incentives for state agents to arrange the killing of a journalist, those thinking to commit such a crime need to consider the risk of being held accountable. The judiciary and the rule of law shape the opportunity to order the killing without getting caught. The less effective the judiciary is, the higher is the probability that the perpetrator gets away with murder, and the greater is the risk to journalists.

Case evidence on journalist killings suggests that perpetrators rarely face any legal repercussions (Freitag, 2016; Waisbord, 2002). Ill-functioning state mechanisms keep the risk of getting caught for a murder very low. Globally, the level of impunity has been at almost 90 percent over the past two decades (Committee to Protect Journalists, 2019b).⁵ Even within Europe, attacks against journalists are not always effectively investigated (Council of Europe, 2019). High-profile cases, including the murder of Maltese journalist Daphne Caruana Galizia, or of Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi, remain regularly unpunished or take many years to achieve a prosecution despite great international attention.⁶ It suggests that impunity does not necessarily result from judicial incompetence or lack of resources, but is likely due to lack of political will. A corrupt judiciary enables those with something to hide from public view to target journalists without risking broader repercussions.

State authorities are in a unique position to manipulate judges to help cover up the murder of a reporter. When local state executives influence the judicial system, accountability weakens. A judiciary that is not working independently blocks the effective prosecution of those ordering and implementing the killing of journalists. If politicians expect to end up in court for ordering the murder of a journalist, their reputation will suffer, and they might be barred from running for office and face legal consequences. If local politicians expect the judge to look the other way in exchange for a side-payment, the payoff from this crime likely outweighs its costs. Even in a country with democratic institutions, a judiciary that fails to hold perpetrators accountable will increase the risk of a journalist being murdered by state agents. This motivates our third hypothesis: *We expect that in democracies, journalists are more likely to be killed through state authorities*

⁵In comparison, 47 percent of homicides globally did not lead to a conviction.

⁶In 2019, several individuals were arrested for the murder of Daphne Caruana Galizia, but at the time of writing the process is still ongoing.

where judicial corruption is high.

Data and research design

We present new data on the killings of journalists, covering all countries between 2002 and 2016.⁷ The data build on coding by Gohdes and Carey (2017), which hand-matched information from three sources that specialize in collecting such information: the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ), the International Press Institute (IPI) and Reporters without Borders (RWB). We follow the Committee to Protect Journalist’s definition of journalists as ‘people who cover news or comment on public affairs through any media’ (Committee to Protect Journalists, 2019*d*) including media support workers, such as photographers, bloggers, as well as translators and drivers.

We extend the database published in Gohdes and Carey (2017) in three ways. First, for each murder we identify whether the journalist was killed by *unconfirmed perpetrators* or by *state perpetrators*. State perpetrators include local authorities, such as police or mayors, government officials, the military, pro-government militias or death squads, paramilitary groups, security forces, national guards or intelligence agents. For our supplementary analyses we also identify *non-state political* perpetrators, which are anti-government militants, rebels, extremist groups, or terrorists, and *non-political* perpetrators, such as criminals, drug gangs or influential families. We extend the coding on whether the perpetrator is known or unconfirmed by including an assessment of the type of information we use for the coding (see Section A.2).⁸

⁷We collect data on journalist killings through 2016, but end our analysis in 2015 due to data availability of our independent variables.

⁸For each perpetrator category we code the quality of the information used to determine the perpetrator. This information can either be *given*, when the perpetrator is clearly identified and mentioned e.g. in news reports, or when a journalist died in

We assess journalist killings by state agents and unconfirmed perpetrators because we expect that journalists killed by unconfirmed or unknown perpetrators have similar determinants to those where agents of the state were identified as perpetrator. Local politicians are best placed to order the killing of a journalist without being linked to the crime (Aguilar Jr., Mendoza and Candelaria, 2014; Heyns and Srinivasan, 2013; Waisbord, 2002).⁹ Work by NGOs shows that killings frequently hint at involvement of a state-related actor, even if the perpetrator cannot be clearly confirmed (Committee to Protect Journalists, 2019c). As we show below, the fact that many perpetrators cannot be clearly identified is unlikely due to weak state capacity.

Case evidence supports our argument that state authorities are likely behind the killings committed by unconfirmed perpetrators, and that killed journalists cannot be merely attributed to ‘regular’ criminal activity (Bartman, 2018; Hughes and Márquez-Ramírez, 2018). The case of Brazilian radio journalist Mafaldo Bezerra Gois illustrates this: Gois reported on local corruption and was gunned down by two men on motorbikes in a remote town in Brazil. Reports on his killing suggest that in Brazil ‘in many far-away towns in the interior where the policing is weak, and impunity and local corruption is abundant, it’s just too easy to pay a couple hundred bucks to guys on motorbikes to take out a pesky local reporter asking too many questions’ (Elizondo, 2013).

Second, we provide two new measures for the visibility of the journalists’ work before they were killed. According to our argument journalists, and particularly *less visible* journalists, are more likely to be killed where local state authorities are elected.

detention or if a group admitted to killing a journalist. When information on the alleged perpetrator is available, but the evidence is not entirely clear, we code it as *inferred*. The analysis includes both given and inferred information on perpetrators.

⁹Section A.1 provides more information on the link between unconfirmed perpetrators and state authorities.

The variable *media reach* codes whether the (main) media outlet the journalist worked for was either an international/national or a regional/local media source. The variable *killed in capital* codes whether the journalist was killed in the capital city of the country, as we expect that journalists working close to the capital city as the center of political power will be more visible and therefore less likely to be targeted.

Finally, we refine the data by Gohdes and Carey (2017) by excluding killings that occurred in ‘conflict settings’, since we are only interested in cases where journalists were directly targeted. As killings in ‘conflict settings’ we identify situations that suggest the murder was not directly aimed at the journalist, for example if she was caught in cross-fire or died in a bombing not directly aimed at her.¹⁰

Independent variables

To test our hypothesis that in democracies journalists are more likely to be killed through state authorities where local governments are elected, we account for local government characteristics with VDEM’s local government index. Countries with no elected local government receive the lowest score. Countries with elected local governments that are subordinate to unelected officials at the local level receive a medium score. Countries with elected local governments that are able to operate without restrictions from unelected actors at the local level receive a high score (Coppedge, 2019, 49).

To test our hypotheses on the impact of public sector and judicial corruption, we use VDEM’s public sector corruption index and judicial corruption measure (see appendix,

¹⁰This coding does not perfectly intersect with situations of general armed conflict: some journalists are directly targeted during armed conflict, in which case we would include them in our analysis. Others might have been killed in an incident not directly aimed at them, while working in countries *not* actively involved in an armed dispute, in which case we would not include them in our analysis.

Section B.1). We include the V-Dem Electoral Democracy (Coppedge, 2019, 39) measure and its squared term to account for a possible non-linear relationship of electoral democracy within our sample. The electoral democracy index includes the Freedom of Expression and Alternative Sources of Information index by V-Dem, which allows us to also account for ‘government respect [of] press and media freedom (Coppedge, 2019, 42)’. To control for organized political violence we include a measure for armed conflict from the UCDP/PRIO Armed Conflict Dataset, which codes conflict when more than 25 battle deaths occurred in a given year (Pettersson and Eck, 2018).

We control for state-sponsored repression using the Political Terror Scale (Wood and Gibney, 2010), where higher values indicate higher levels of torture, political imprisonment, disappearances and killings. Higher levels of repression are expected to be linked to more killings of journalists. We include measures for population size and GDP per capita using World Bank Data (World Bank, 2019).

Model choice

To test our hypotheses we select our sample of democracies with the binary indicator from Boix, Miller and Rosato (2013). Our analyses cover the years 2002-2015 and include observations from 107 countries that were classified as democracies according to Boix, Miller and Rosato (2013).¹¹ We first provide descriptive evidence for our theoretical expectation that in democracies journalists are killed away from the limelight to attract only little attention.

For our multivariate analyses we group journalist killings according to the potential reach – or visibility – of their work. We define journalists who worked in the capital city and/or worked for international and/or national media outlets as having had *national*

¹¹Table A13 in the appendix lists the specific country-years included in the analyses.

reach. We define journalists as having had *local reach* if they worked outside the capital and/or for a regional media outlet. We investigate factors that increase the likelihood of being killed either by state or by unconfirmed perpetrators for 1) all journalists, 2) journalists with national reach and 3) journalists with a local reach. To model the risk of journalists being killed, we opt for logistic regression models to estimate the effect of our independent variables of interest on the probability of at least one journalist being killed in a given country in a given year. Using this binary measure avoids giving too much weight to outlier observations that witnessed particularly high numbers of killings.¹² It also allows us to better account for possibly uneven reporting across countries and time. All models include yearly fixed effects to account for unobserved temporal trends, as well as clustered standard errors by country.

Results

Figure 2 provides initial evidence for our expectation that in democracies journalists are killed away from the limelight to attract only little attention. The majority of journalists murdered in democracies worked for regional or local news agencies (see also Riddick et al., 2008). State actors are frequently linked to the murder of journalists in democracies, but this happens only rarely within the capital city. Even for killings where no perpetrator could be confirmed, only a very small proportion occurred in the capital. This trend is unlikely purely driven by the distribution of journalists in the country, as many journalists tend to be stationed in the capital city and work for national or international media outlets.¹³ In short, the majority of journalists killed in democratic

¹²Table A5 presents the results using the log number of journalist killings as dependent variable, confirming the substantive findings of the logistic regression.

¹³While cross-national data on the geographic distribution of journalists do not exist, a representative study on journalists working in the UK indicates that 7% of all surveyed

countries had a regional, less visible profile.

– Figure 2 here –

Table 1 presents results from logistic regressions where the dependent variable measures whether at least one journalist was killed in a given country and year. Models I-III investigate state-perpetrated killings, and Models IV-VI focus on unconfirmed perpetrators. When only focusing on democracies, regardless of type of journalist, the *level* of electoral democracy, measured with the electoral democracy index, is no significant predictor of journalist killings. Improvements in the level of electoral democracy are not correlated with an improvement in the protection of journalists' lives. In contrast, variations in the extent to which local government bodies are elected and politically influential are statistically significantly associated with a higher probability of at least one journalist being killed, supporting our first hypothesis. Countries that are overall more repressive, measured with the Political Terror Scale, were more likely to see a journalist being fatally targeted in the following year. More populous countries are statistically significantly more likely to witness the killing of a journalist. The statistically significant correlation of higher levels of economic development (per capita GDP) and killings by unconfirmed perpetrators highlights that the inability to identify the perpetrators is unlikely due to limited state capacity.

– Table 1 here –

Figure 3 shows the simulated expected change in the probability of at least one journalist being killed, given a change from no elected local government to a fully elected local government. The top two lines are based on Models I and IV in Table 1. A change

journalists worked for local, 14% for regional, 42% for national, and 36% for transnational news outlets (Thurman, Cornia and Kunert, 2016, 22).

to a fully elected local government substantially increases the probability of at least one journalist being killed either by state or by unconfirmed perpetrators by roughly 2 percentage points. The middle of this figure displays the relationship for a subset of journalist killings that we expect had only a local reach, either because they worked for local or regional media outlets or because they worked outside the capital city. The results are comparable to the models discussed above. The bottom two lines show the relationship between elected local governments and the killing of journalists who likely have a broader national (or international) audience. In line with our theoretical expectations, changes in local government are not significantly associated with changing risks for this subset of journalists.

– Figure 3 here –

These results suggest that political systems where local officials are elected and have substantial political decision-making power are associated with a statistically significant and substantially larger risk of seeing a journalist killed by either state or unconfirmed perpetrators. This seems to apply particularly to less visible journalists, who work for subnational media outlets or who work further removed from central political power.

We also expect institutional corruption to be positively associated with an increase in the risk of a journalist being killed. Figure 4, left panel, shows that all else equal, a change from no to high judicial corruption is likely to increase the probability of at least one journalist being killed by unconfirmed perpetrators by roughly 10 percentage points, and by approximately 5 percentage points for state perpetrators.

– Figure 4 here –

Increases in public sector corruption (see Table A2) are associated with an average increase of 6 percentage points (unconfirmed perpetrator) and 2 percentage points (state

perpetrator), but the expected change for state perpetrators is not statistically significantly different from zero. For both public sector and judicial corruption, the results suggest a slightly stronger association between corrupt practices and killings by unconfirmed perpetrators. This may indicate that corrupt political structures facilitate the cover up and disappearance of criminal evidence.

Additional tests

To ensure that our key findings are not dependent on a particular measure, we use three alternative operationalizations for the power of locally elected governments (Table A3). All three alternative measures for elected local government are highly statistically significant in the expected direction across all models, providing additional support for our argument. Table A5 replicates these results, but uses the log count of killed journalists as the dependent variable and finds similar results.

Next, we further investigate the relationship between media freedom and journalist killings. Since the V-Dem Electoral Democracy Index includes a measure for freedom of expression, we replace the electoral democracy measure with disaggregated measures of press freedom, capturing 1) laws and regulations that influence media content, 2) political pressures and controls on media content and 3) economic influences over media content (see Freedom House, 2020). Figure A2 reveals that economic and legal media restrictions show an inverted U-shaped relationship with the probability of a journalist being killed. Unsurprisingly, political media restrictions are highly correlated with journalist killings, as threats to journalists' physical safety are taken into account in this measure. The effects of local elections and judicial corruption remain robust.

Because our analyses might depend on the selection criteria for our sample of democracies, we replicate our results basing the sample of democracies on two other frequently used democracy measures. First, we use the V-Dem Regimes of the World

Indicator and include countries classified as ‘electoral’ or ‘liberal’ democracies in our analysis (Coppedge, 2019). Second, we replicate the results with all countries that have a Polity 2 value of 7 or higher (Jagers and Marshall, 2009), shown in Tables A9 and A10. Our key findings are robust to these alternative sampling procedures.

Finally, we compare our results to murders committed by other perpetrators in democracies and across all regime types. We first replicate the analyses from Table 1 for journalists murdered by non-state political (e.g. anti-government militants, extremist groups, terrorists) and non-political perpetrators (e.g. criminals, drug gangs) separately, shown in Table A8. Increased electoral democracy at the national level does not improve the protection of journalists from non-state perpetrators either. Local government elections, judicial and public sector corruption have a weak positive correlation with killings by non-political perpetrators, hinting at the possibility that local government officials might sometimes collaborate with criminal gangs (Holland and Rios, 2017) and out-source the killing of journalists to them (Waisbord, 2002). Journalist killings by political non-state actors follow a different pattern and are primarily driven by armed conflicts. In a second analysis, we investigate the role of national and local level democratic institutions across all regime types for both state and non-state perpetrators. Table A11 shows that when we include all regime types in our analyses, local elections no longer heighten the risk of a journalist being murdered by state or unconfirmed perpetrators.¹⁴ The results in Table A12 further suggest that our argument is unique for killings by state and unconfirmed perpetrators, as local elections are not associated with killings by other perpetrators in all regime types.

¹⁴Armed conflict seems to play a more prominent role in the extended sample.

Decentralization in Indonesia

Decentralization processes in Indonesia and subsequent attacks against journalists in the mid-to-late 2000s serve as an illustrative example. Ardiansyah Matra's, who worked as a reporter for a local TV station, was murdered on 30th July 2010 in Merauke, a small town in Papua province of Indonesia. Matra's was killed in the run-up to local elections and had been covering upcoming local business development plans that were predicted to bring new wealth to this remote region. Local experts suggested that this potential for new wealth had intensified an 'already heated competition for the position of regional chief' (Committee to Protect Journalists, 2020*a*). Prior to Matra's death, a number of journalists had received threatening text messages warning to 'never play with fire if you don't want to be burned' (International News Safety Institute, 2010).

– Figure 5 here –

As Figure 5 shows, Matra's was one of three journalists who were murdered in rural parts of Indonesia in 2010 (one in Papua and two in Maluku). Starting in 1999, Indonesia embarked on an ambitious decentralization programme, which culminated in 2005 in a move towards electing local politicians (governors, district heads and mayors) directly by the local population (Schiller, 2009). Local elections were slowly rolled out across the entire country. This is reflected in Figure 5 in the sharp, and then continuous, increase in the local government index (the solid black line) and the measure that indicates the power of local elected relative to unelected offices (the broken line). The national level measure for electoral democracy stays relatively constant throughout this period (the dotted line). The pattern portrayed in Figure 5 is compatible with our theoretical argument: as political power (and the potential for economic power) is delegated to the subnational level, local competition for political resources intensifies, and critical local journalists attempting to uncover potential wrongdoings are more likely to be threatened,

attacked and, in the worst cases, killed.

This brief example of the link between delegation of political power and resources to local elected officials and killings of journalists in Indonesia resembles findings of an in-depth study on the Philippines by Aguilar Jr., Mendoza and Candelaria (2014). They analyze the rising trend in journalist killings after the formal return to democracy in 1986. Their results suggest that the killings were not due to progressive reporting in a system with insufficient accountability, seen as characteristic for transitional democracies (Brambila, 2017; Hughes and Vorobyeva, 2019). Instead, they conclude that the journalist killings were driven by ‘local-level contestations over positions and resources sanctioned by the state framework, particularly following the decentralization since 1991’ (Aguilar Jr., Mendoza and Candelaria, 2014, 649). Their study of the Philippines supports our argument that elections for local positions that yield power over valuable economic and political resources incentivize local power-holders to use extreme measures to maintain their position in a nationally democratic setting.

Conclusion

The killing of a journalist violates the basic respect for human rights. Yet, its ramifications go far beyond individual tragedy. Democracies have a responsibility to facilitate an environment in which the media can operate freely, independently and safely, and thus to protect journalists’ physical integrity. Media freedom is often identified as the ‘fourth pillar’ of a democracy and a crucial element for a country to be labelled as such. A free press facilitates political competition and provides citizens with the necessary information to hold politicians accountable (Whitten-Woodring, 2009). ‘Watchdog media’ help citizens assess the performance of their leaders and make informed decisions at the ballot box, which should translate into better policy outcomes (Norris, 2014). The media

facilitate exposure to different views (Mutz and Martin, 2001) and shape the opinion and voting behavior of the electorate (Zaller, 1992).

Our study provides a localized view of state-media relations. Even though ample evidence confirms that democracies perform better in the area of media freedom, our results suggest that well functioning national-level democratic institutions do not prevent or even reduce the risk of journalists being murdered. Within institutional democracies, journalists are likely to be most vulnerable to state violence when working in remote areas with locally elected and powerful local authorities. For local politicians who depend on the popular vote, the risks of burying an uncomfortable story by silencing its writer are, in general, relatively low. Local journalists, especially those working for remote and possibly obscure outlets, tend to draw little attention from national or international audiences. While international media support organizations have tried to raise awareness about this issue, these murders tend to attract little attention from national executives. Corruption provides an additional incentive for a state actor to have a journalist murdered.

Our findings contribute to several important debates. In the context of rising populism and support for illiberalism in Western democracies, research on the determinants of repression in democratic settings is becoming increasingly salient (see Conrad, Hill and Moore, 2018; Davenport, 2012). We have highlighted important concerns about the decentralization of political power and the limits of democratic accountability at the subnational level, contributing to pertinent research on the abuse of power in democratic countries (Gelman, 2010; Fox, 2007; Gibson, 2005). Our study also indicates how the focus on broader conceptualizations of state-media relationship may mask contentious and individualized dynamics that call into question core protections of the media. Our study suggests that democratic principles can incentivize state actors to take drastic measures to circumvent monitoring mechanisms, particularly if low-cost strategies are available to them. When members of the press have to pay with their lives for working

in this profession, it raises fundamental questions about the workings of democracy.

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Tables

	I-State	II-State-national	III-State-local	IV-Unconfirmed	V-Unconf-national	VI-Unconf-local
Intercept	-16.04*** (3.84)	-11.51** (4.03)	-20.37*** (3.39)	-22.46*** (2.79)	-19.20*** (3.75)	-25.05*** (2.88)
Elected local gov	6.03** (1.86)	2.64 (1.61)	5.48** (1.85)	3.40** (1.22)	1.81+ (0.97)	3.39* (1.33)
Judicial Corr	0.48* (0.19)	0.12 (0.20)	0.40* (0.19)	0.70*** (0.17)	0.61** (0.21)	0.54** (0.16)
log Pop (lag)	0.32** (0.10)	0.23 (0.15)	0.38*** (0.10)	0.66*** (0.10)	0.58*** (0.12)	0.73*** (0.10)
log rGDP (lag)	0.12 (0.17)	0.10 (0.23)	0.20 (0.16)	0.34* (0.14)	0.25 (0.16)	0.32* (0.14)
Armed conflict	1.28** (0.41)	-0.15 (0.49)	1.07** (0.41)	0.05 (0.35)	-0.79+ (0.47)	-0.20 (0.35)
PTS (lag)	1.17*** (0.22)	1.20*** (0.29)	1.21*** (0.22)	1.25*** (0.19)	1.14*** (0.27)	1.32*** (0.20)
Electoral dem. index	-6.03 (9.99)	-7.25 (12.19)	4.38 (8.89)	0.75 (6.50)	1.18 (8.21)	5.52 (6.97)
Electoral dem. index (squ)	2.97 (8.01)	3.11 (10.08)	-5.26 (7.10)	-3.30 (5.21)	-3.84 (6.96)	-7.53 (5.47)
AIC	394.21	268.85	381.68	468.40	328.20	440.86
BIC	508.58	383.23	496.06	582.78	442.58	555.24
Log Likelihood	-175.10	-112.42	-168.84	-212.20	-142.10	-198.43
Deviance	350.21	224.85	337.68	424.40	284.20	396.86
Num. obs.	1338	1338	1338	1338	1338	1338

*** $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$, + $p < 0.1$. Country-clustered standard errors. Year fixed effects not shown

Table 1: Logistic regression of journalist killings (binary), democracies only, 2002-2015. State: state perpetrator. Unconfirmed: unconfirmed perpetrator. National: journalists with national reach. Local: journalists will local reach.

Figures

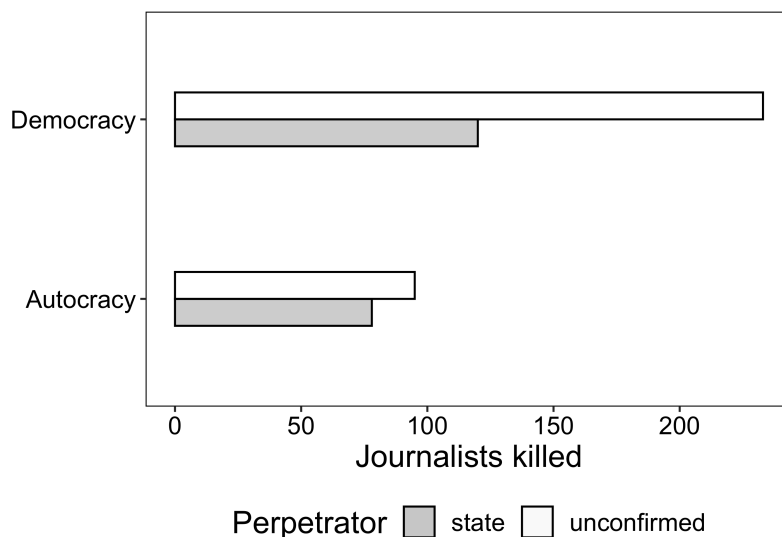


Figure 1: Journalist killings (state and unconfirmed perpetrators) across different regime types, excluding major war years and conflict settings, between 2002-2015. The distinction between democracies and autocracies is based on the dichotomous political regimes coding of Boix, Miller and Rosato (2013).

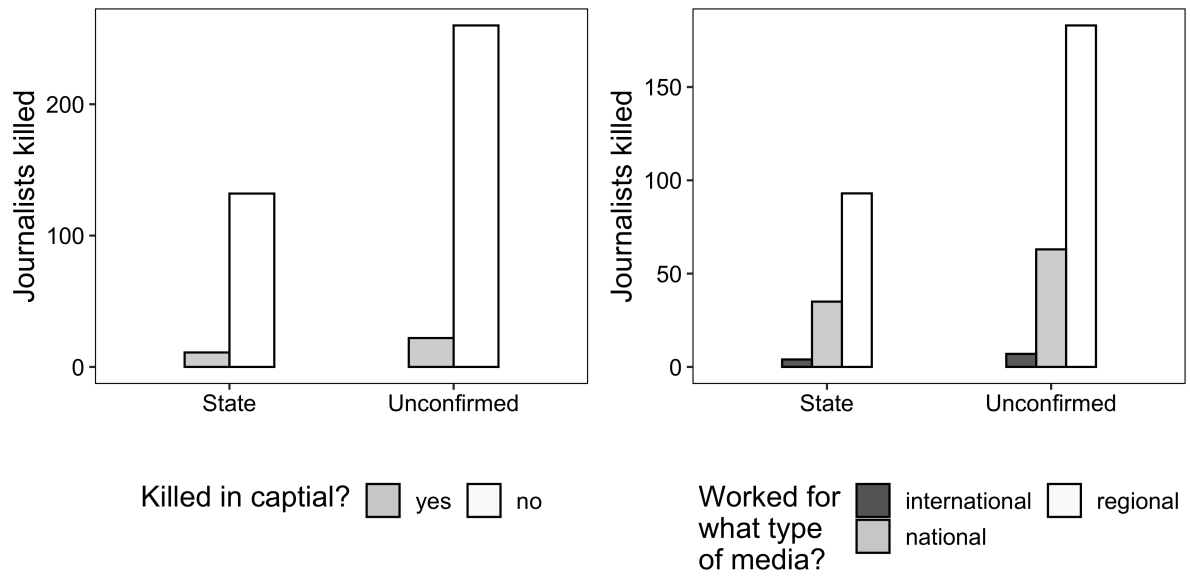


Figure 2: Journalist killings, visibility and media reach

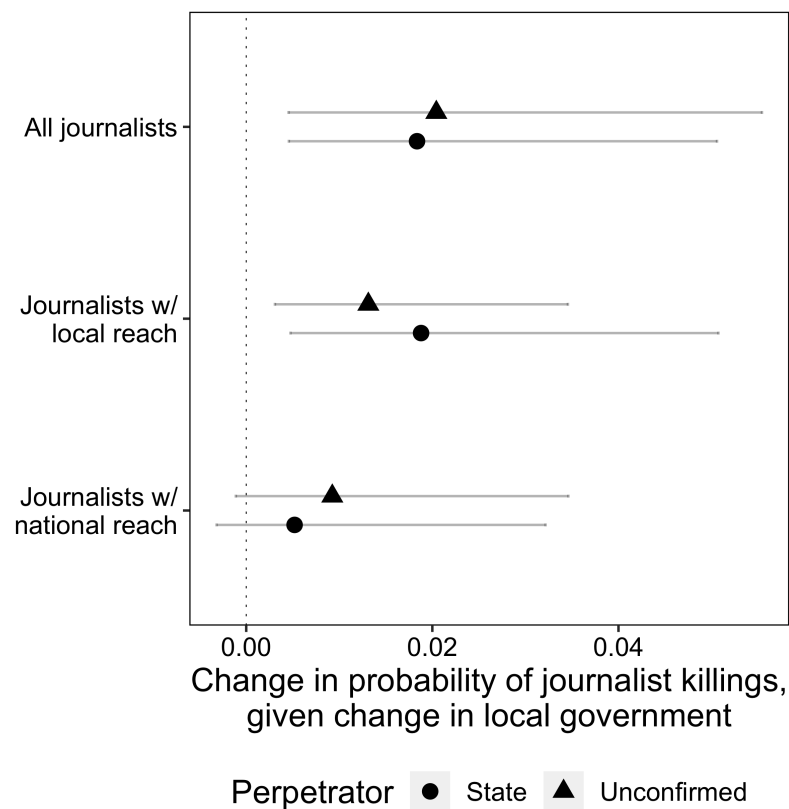


Figure 3: Change in probability of a journalist being killed, given change from not elected to elected local government

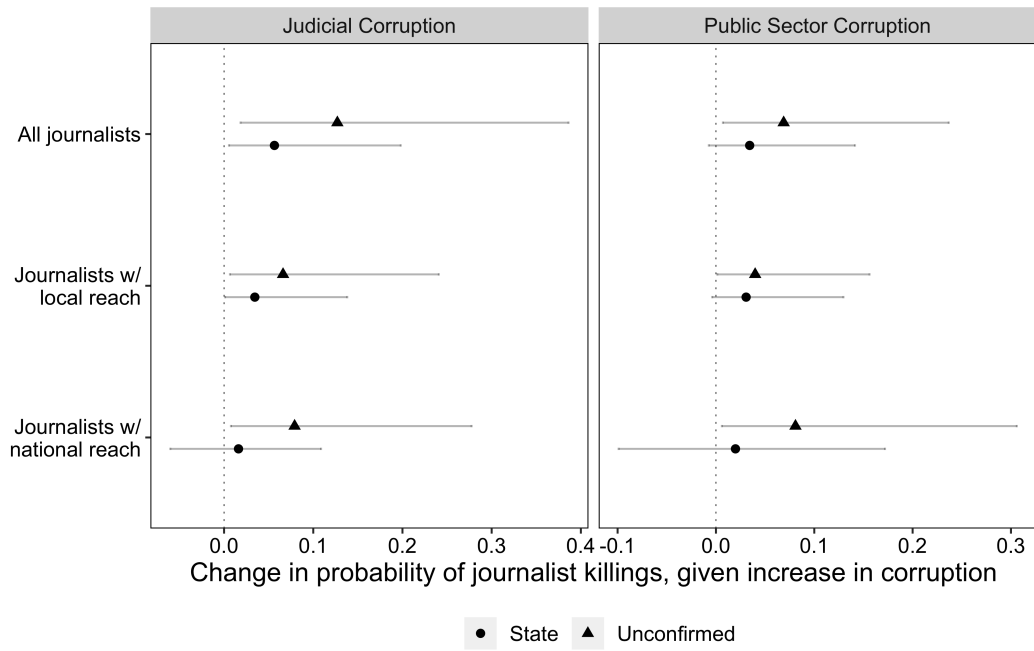


Figure 4: Change in probability of a journalist being killed, given a change from low to high judicial corruption and a change from no to high public sector corruption.

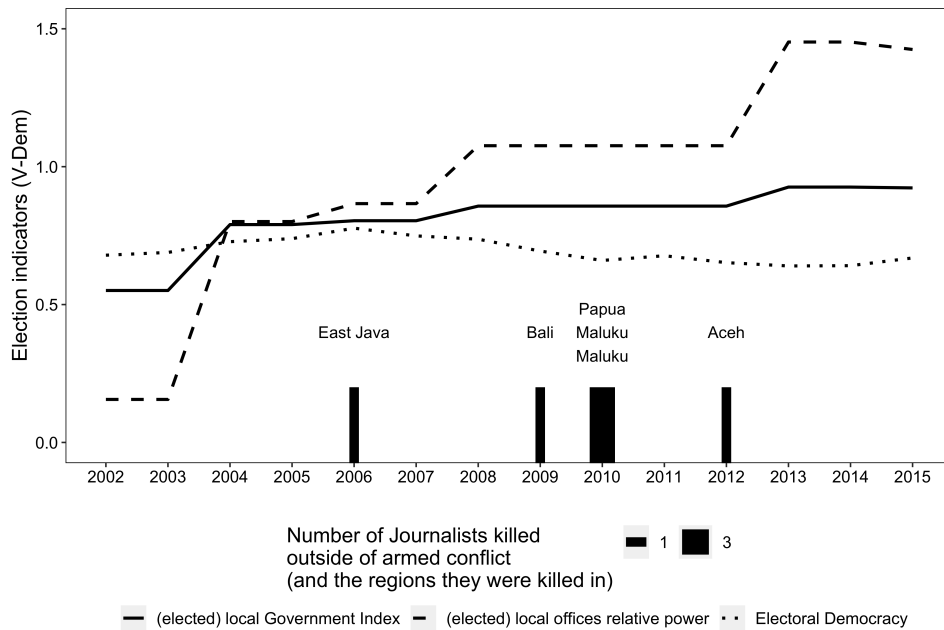


Figure 5: Electoral reforms in Indonesia, and journalists killed by state or unconfirmed actors (outside of major war).

Online Appendix for: 'Understanding journalist killings'

Sabine C. Carey and Anita R. Gohdes

Contents

A	Coding Journalist killings	2
A.1	The link between unconfirmed perpetrators and state authorities	2
A.2	Codebook	3
A.2.1	Definition of journalist	3
A.2.2	Variables to be coded	3
B	Descriptive Statistics	8
B.1	Details on VDEM's public sector corruption index and judicial corruption measure	8
C	Analysis of democracies	9
C.1	Replication of Table 1, including public sector corruption	9
C.2	Alternative measures for subnational politics	10
C.3	Alternative measures for state capacity	11
C.4	Dependent variable: Number of journalist killings	12
C.5	Types of media restrictions	13
C.6	Journalist killings by non-state perpetrators	15
D	Replication of results using alternative democracy measures	16
D.1	Democracy cut-off: Regimes of the World (V-Dem)	16
D.2	Democracy cut-off: Polity 2 values 7-10	17
E	Full sample analysis, including all regime types	18
E.1	Journalist killings by state and unconfirmed perpetrators	18
E.2	Journalist killings by non-state perpetrators	19
F	Sensitivity to specific cases	20
G	List of country-year observations included	21

A Coding Journalist killings

A.1 The link between unconfirmed perpetrators and state authorities

For many murders of journalists, NGOs on the ground that collect such information cannot unequivocally confirm who was responsible for the killings. In these cases no specific group can unambiguously be held accountable. But even for these cases details about the circumstances of the killing are frequently known. For example, data collected by CPJ show that most victims reported on political issues, including corruption of local politicians (See: [Committee to Protect Journalists](#)). Members of government are best placed to organize murders without being linked to them and to avoid prosecution, while having a particularly high incentive to avoid being identified. CPJ reports on the killings oftentimes hint at possible involvement of a state-related actor even if the perpetrator cannot be clearly confirmed.

While we cannot provide more details on the killings than the NGOs dedicated to recording such atrocities, we can make informed guesses on who the most likely perpetrators are, based on the information we have. It seems unlikely that criminal gangs are responsible for the majority of these murders for which the perpetrator cannot be clearly confirmed. Particularly in democracies politicians are keen to identify and punish those responsible for crimes to maintain legitimacy. Uncovering murders committed by drug gangs or other non-political groups is probably high on the agenda of politicians as they can increase their legitimacy by doing so. Therefore, it seems unlikely that most unconfirmed perpetrators in democratic countries are criminal groups. It seems also unlikely that political groups that oppose the government are behind the majority of killings for which the perpetrator cannot be confirmed. If political opponents are responsible for the killing of journalists, the government is likely to put even greater efforts into bringing those to justice. Additionally, such actors often claim responsibility for murdering journalists and use this as propaganda for their purpose and strength.

Politicians are keen not to be linked to the killing of a journalist, and, when compared to non-political actors, are more likely to have the appropriate networks to hide or obfuscate such links and to evade accountability. The 2006 killing of Russian journalist Anna Politkovskaya, who was famous for criticizing Kremlin policies, shows how difficult it is to establish who orchestrates the murders. Former exiled Russian interior ministry officer Alexander Litvinenko suspected President Putin to be behind the murder of Politkovskaya; Litvinenko himself died later that year from being poisoned.¹⁵

Some scholars suggest that not only the killings without confirmed perpetrator are linked to political authorities, but even many of those pinned to criminal groups. Studying violence against journalists in Latin America, Waisbord (2002, 104) draws a wide circle of perpetrators that have connections to the state:

Some cases show that governments have been directly responsible for the attacks. Others, instead, attest to the privatization of violence, that is, the existence of hit men and death squads in the service of powerful bosses and

¹⁵See Mary Dejevsky, '[Who really did kill Russian journalist Anna Politkovskaya](#)', The Independent, June 13, 2014.

drug lords. State-Sponsored violence and privatized violence are not separate but related phenomena. Not only can the state not put an end to the autonomization of violence, it was originally responsible for granting 'licenses to kill' to police and military officers as part of the repression of guerrilla movements and political dissidents.

Waisbord (2002) argues that the state had itself initiated this 'autonomization of violence' and is not trying to reign in those agents of violence. Looking beyond Latin America, Heyns and Srinivasan (2013, 311) conclude that 'often the suspects are drawn from the very institutions and authorities responsible for upholding and enforcing a protective regime.' This further supports our assumption that members of the state are behind most killings for which the perpetrators remain unconfirmed.

A.2 Codebook

A.2.1 Definition of journalist

We follow the Committee to Protect Journalist's definition (Committee to Protect Journalists, 2019*d*): 'Journalists [are] people who cover news or comment on public affairs through any media – including in print, in photographs, on radio, on television, and online. [This includes] staff journalists, freelancers, stringers, bloggers, and citizen journalists.' We also include media support workers in our database. The definition for media support worker follows CPJ's definition and includes translators, drivers, fixers, and administrative workers. Information for this variable is coded using the circumstantial information provided

A.2.2 Variables to be coded

1. **gwno**: Gleditsch Ward Country identifier
2. **Country**: Country name
3. **Year**: Year of killing/death
4. **in_rog**: Found in database of Reporters without Borders (0/1)
5. **in_cpj**: Found in database of Committee to Protect Journalists (0/1)
6. **in_ipi**: Found in database of International Press Institute (0/1)
7. **date**: Full date of killing/death (if available) (day/month/year)
8. **name**: Name of killed/dead journalist. If the journalist is reported in more than one source, this field lists all names (as found in each data source), separated by a semicolon
9. **dataset**: Lists all sources for each journalist, separated by a semicolon (RoG;CPJ;IPI)
10. **circumstances**: Open text field with information on the circumstances of each killing/death. The information is gleaned from CPJ, IPI, and RoG, as well as Wikipedia, news reports, and other online sources (e.g. IFEX, Article 19, Global Voices Online).

11. **media name:** Name of the (main) media outlet the journalist worked for.
12. **media type:** Information on the type of media outlet the journalist worked for. If the journalist worked for two different types of media, separate by semicolon. This includes:
 - Radio
 - Magazine
 - Newspaper
 - Television
 - News/media agency
 - Online
 - Other: (add details)
13. **media reach:** (international/national/regional). Is the (main) media outlet the journalist worked for an international, national or regional (i.e. subnational) media source? If the journalist worked for more than one outlet, and e.g. one was regional and one was international, separate by semicolon (regional; international).
 - **regional:** If the media outlet has a sub-national reach (e.g. a local newspaper, or a radio station focusing on a certain province...), then the media reach is regional. This includes local media (e.g. if you find mention that the media outlet is a local paper, or magazine, or radio station). This also includes regional media outlets, such as regional weekly paper (oftentimes it mentions the region). If no information on the media outlet can be found on the internet, then we assume the media reach is regional. Note that in large and/or decentralized countries (e.g. India, Russia, Philippines) most radio stations are likely to be regional. Likewise, if online media outlets are published in the local language (and not e.g. English), and no further information is available, they are likely to be regional. We also code local affiliates of larger national media companies as regional, for example if it is a regional newspaper or radio station that is owned by a large national outlet. This is not to be confused with local correspondents working for national outlets.
 - **national:** If the media outlet has national reach (i.e. national coverage) that it should be coded as national. This includes media outlet that include 'national' in their names, but also includes newspapers based in the capital. This also includes local correspondents working for national outlets. Capital radio stations are also coded as national, unless there is explicit mentioning that the radio station only has regional coverage. When newspapers (e.g. in Pakistan or India or Ethiopia or Kenya) are in English, then we usually code them as national.
 - **international:** If the media outlet has reach beyond national borders (e.g. it is broadcast in more than one country) then it is international. This also includes large news outlets such as the New York Times, or Al Jazeera, but also more specific outlets that e.g. to cater to certain Latin American countries, or South East Asia, or German-speaking European countries. We also code diaspora media as international.

- **unclear:** If media reach is unclear, leave it blank. This is most likely the case for online media sources.

14. **killed in capital:** (yes/no). Was the journalist killed in the capital city of the country?

15. **killed in conflict setting:** (yes/no). Was the journalist killed in a situation that indicates the death was part of a larger violent event not directly aimed at the journalist? Information on whether the journalist was killed during an assignment amidst an armed military conflict (for example: killed in crossfire while covering a conflict, stepped on a landmine, killed in bombardment while covering a warzone). Conflict settings also include journalists who were killed in cross-fire, suicide bombings or e.g attacks on public buildings. Note that suicide attacks directly aimed at journalists (e.g. Charlie Hebdo) are not coded as a conflict setting. It is also possible to be killed outside of conflict settings in conflict countries, for example when a journalist dies in prison, or is explicitly targeted outside of a crossfire situation. If the journalist is targeted individually (e.g. there is a bomb planted under his/her car), then it is not a conflict setting.

- Notable event: on November 23 2009, at least 58 people were kidnapped in Maguindanao, Philippines. The victims were later killed, and the event has become known as the Maguindanao massacre. Of the 58 victims, 34 were journalists. This event is particularly notable as CPJ called it the ‘single deadliest event for the press since 1992, when CPJ began keeping detailed records on journalist deaths.’¹⁶ In this database, the journalists killed in this massacre are coded as having died in a conflict setting, as the victims of this event included more than a dozen individuals who were not working as journalists.

16. **perpetrator known:** (yes/no/accident). Information on whether the perpetrator is known or not. By perpetrator we do not mean the actual identity of the person (or persons) who killed the journalist. We instead mean whether the individual, group, organization or institution who is responsible for the killing of a journalist (for example by ordering it) is known. Note that in many cases, the perpetrator is unclear, or multiple sides accuse each other. The variable perpetrator information type is intended to capture uncertainty surrounding the perpetrator. Perpetrator known should only be recorded yes/no/accident. A note on robberies: In situations where the circumstances are unclear (e.g. if a journalist was robbed in their home but there are no signs of forced entry), we code the perpetrator not known. If no information on prior threats against the journalist is available and if there were no eyewitnesses, or when reports say the perpetrator could either be government or anti-government, or ‘killed by drug cartel or local politicians’ we also code the perpetrator as unknown.

- no: If no indication of who the perpetrator might be is available, then the perpetrator is not known. This also includes cases where the only information available is that e.g. unidentified gunmen killed the journalist (and possibly robbed him/her), but no indication of a possible larger motive is available.

¹⁶<https://cpj.org/2009/11/maguindanao-death-toll-worst-for-press-in-recent-h/>

- yes:: If a perpetrator can clearly be identified (e.g. police, hired gunmen for local politician, rebel group, gunmen hired by drug cartel) then the perpetrator is known. If a probable motive is mentioned (e.g. the family reports that the journalist previously received threats from local politicians, or from a drug cartel), then the perpetrator is also coded as known.
 - accident: If the journalist was killed in an accident (e.g. helicopter crash, Malaria, drowned, killed in airplane crash, etc) then the perpetrator is coded as accident. If the journalist was killed in an accident, then perpetrator category, perpetrator and perpetrator information type do not have to be coded (leave empty)
17. **perpetrator category:** (if perpetrator known = yes): Details on who the perpetrator is. A note on foreign governments: We code foreign governments contingent on their relationship with the domestic government. For example, the Russian government would be coded as government in the Syrian conflict, but the US government would be coded as anti-government. In both cases, foreign government should then be coded in the perpetrator category below. *Note that when the government has convicted someone and there is doubt about who the perpetrator is, we need to look at the cases individually.* This category distinguishes between:
- government: government (or pro-government) actors, include military and security forces
 - anti-government: groups or actors (e.g. rebel groups, terrorist groups or opposition parties/groups).
 - non-political: groups or actors (e.g. influential families or drug cartels)
18. **perpetrator (if perpetrator known = yes):** Details on who the perpetrator is. If information on specific group names, government branches, family, or gang names is available it is included here. Examples include:
- Government officials
 - Military officials
 - Security forces
 - Paramilitary groups
 - Police
 - Local politician (possibly including name)
 - Local authorities
 - Foreign government
 - Rebel groups (possibly including group name)
 - Organized criminal groups (possibly including group name)
 - Political Group (possibly including group name)
 - General crime (possibly including group name)
 - Radical nationalists (e.g. nationalist Turks, nationalists Russians)
 - Religious (non-political) groups (possibly including group name)

19. **perpetrator information type (if perpetrator known = yes):** Codes the quality of the information used to determine the perpetrator. The information can be:
- given: the perpetrator is generally known. Note that this does not mean the perpetrator was held accountable. For example, there is eyewitness evidence, or other evidence. Note that we code the information as given when journalists died e.g. in police custody or in prison.
 - inferred: it is not entirely clear who the perpetrator is, but there is information on the most probable motive. Information on the alleged perpetrator is available and given the circumstantial information and the topics covered by the journalist, the perpetrator can be inferred. Probable motive needs to be mentioned. Inferred is also if other parties 'blame' a specific party.
20. **comments:** open text field for comments.

B Descriptive Statistics

Statistic	Min	Pctl(25)	Mean	Pctl(75)	Max	Median	St. Dev.
state journ. killings	0	0	0.07	0	1	0	0.25
unconfirmed journ. killings	0	0	0.09	0	1	0	0.29
BMR Democ (0/1)	0.00	0.00	0.56	1.00	1.00	1.00	0.50
Elected local gov	0.00	0.23	0.61	0.94	1.00	0.78	0.37
Judicial corruption	-3.29	-1.28	0.03	1.22	3.13	0.51	1.54
Public sector corruption	0.005	0.20	0.51	0.77	0.98	0.58	0.30
log Pop (lag)	11.30	15.02	15.99	17.11	21.04	16.06	1.69
log rGDP (lag)	5.27	7.04	8.36	9.53	11.62	8.30	1.55
Armed Conflict (0/1)	0	0	0.15	0	1	0	0.36
PTS (lag)	1.00	2.00	2.57	3.00	5.00	3.00	1.11
Electoral dem. index	0.01	0.31	0.54	0.78	0.95	0.54	0.26

Table A1: Summary Statistics

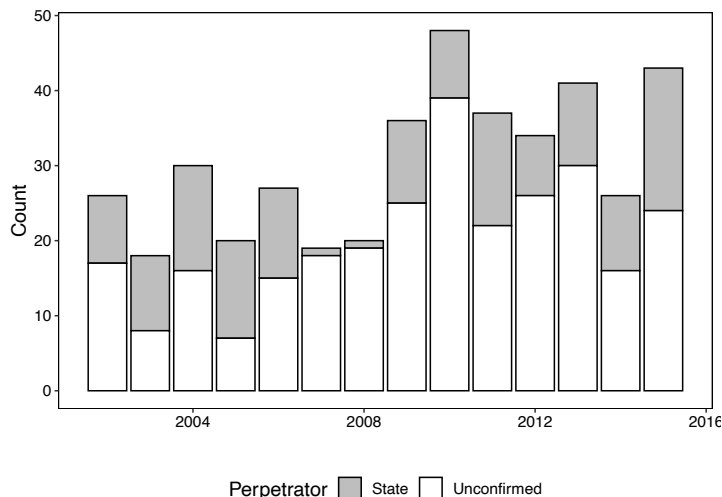


Figure A1: Journalists killed in democracies, outside of conflict settings, 2002-2016. Note that the analysis only includes observations through 2015

B.1 Details on VDEM’s public sector corruption index and judicial corruption measure

The public sector corruption index codes answers to the question: ‘To what extent do public sector employees grant favors in exchange for bribes, kickbacks, or other material inducements, and how often do they steal, embezzle, or misappropriate public funds or other state resources for personal or family use?’ (Coppedge, 2019, 267). The judicial corruption variable codes answers to the question ‘How often do individuals or businesses make undocumented extra payments or bribes in order to speed up or delay the process or to obtain a favorable judicial decision?’ (Coppedge, 2019, 154). These ordinal response scales are aggregated across coders using a Bayesian item response theory measurement model, which provides an interval scaled measure (Coppedge et al., 2019a).

C Analysis of democracies

C.1 Replication of Table 1, including public sector corruption

	I-State	II-State-national	III-State-local	IV-Unconfirmed	V-Unconf-national	VI-Unconf-local
Intercept	-19.28*** (4.23)	-12.39** (4.03)	-23.96*** (4.07)	-27.13*** (3.14)	-23.83*** (3.79)	-29.09*** (3.32)
Elected local gov	6.13*** (1.85)	2.61 (1.59)	5.59** (1.87)	3.59** (1.32)	1.67 (1.05)	3.56* (1.41)
Public Sector Corr	2.04 (1.34)	0.78 (1.89)	2.24+ (1.36)	2.87** (1.02)	3.51* (1.38)	2.31* (1.05)
log Pop (lag)	0.37*** (0.11)	0.23 (0.15)	0.41*** (0.11)	0.72*** (0.10)	0.60*** (0.12)	0.78*** (0.10)
log rGDP (lag)	0.16 (0.18)	0.13 (0.25)	0.28+ (0.17)	0.41** (0.14)	0.39* (0.17)	0.39** (0.15)
Armed conflict	1.27** (0.46)	-0.10 (0.56)	1.16* (0.45)	0.06 (0.38)	-0.55 (0.52)	-0.18 (0.38)
PTS (lag)	1.14*** (0.20)	1.19*** (0.28)	1.17*** (0.21)	1.18*** (0.18)	1.07*** (0.25)	1.27*** (0.19)
Electoral dem. index	-1.21 (9.89)	-6.50 (11.83)	8.91 (8.74)	8.02 (6.78)	6.35 (8.51)	11.49 (7.41)
Electoral dem. index (squ)	-1.08 (7.98)	2.65 (10.01)	-8.65 (6.95)	-9.36+ (5.45)	-7.44 (7.31)	-12.53* (5.85)
AIC	397.88	268.84	382.31	477.95	328.80	445.91
BIC	512.26	383.21	496.68	592.33	443.17	560.28
Log Likelihood	-176.94	-112.42	-169.15	-216.98	-142.40	-200.95
Deviance	353.88	224.84	338.31	433.95	284.80	401.91
Num. obs.	1338	1338	1338	1338	1338	1338

*** $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$, + $p < 0.1$. Logistic regression. Country-clustered standard errors. Year fixed effects not shown

Table A2: Journalist killings, state and unconfirmed killings, democracies only. State: state perpetrator. Unconfirmed: unconfirmed perpetrator. National: journalists with national reach. Local: journalists with local reach

C.2 Alternative measures for subnational politics

	I-State I	II-State	III-State	IV-Unconfirmed	V-Unconfirmed	VI-Unconfirmed
Intercept	-12.84*** (3.65)	-14.40*** (3.76)	-15.26*** (4.14)	-20.39*** (2.64)	-22.44*** (2.79)	-22.36*** (2.90)
Regional gov index	1.65*** (0.46)			1.37** (0.43)		
Subnat. election unevenness		-1.18*** (0.24)			-0.62** (0.19)	
Local offices rel. power			1.73*** (0.32)			1.20*** (0.30)
Judicial Corr	0.48** (0.18)	0.36* (0.16)	0.41* (0.19)	0.75*** (0.16)	0.62*** (0.16)	0.64*** (0.18)
log Pop (lag)	0.13 (0.11)	0.34** (0.11)	0.40*** (0.11)	0.54*** (0.10)	0.67*** (0.10)	0.72*** (0.10)
log rGDP (lag)	0.40* (0.16)	0.37* (0.16)	0.09 (0.16)	0.53*** (0.14)	0.55*** (0.13)	0.30* (0.13)
Armed conflict	1.01** (0.38)	0.63+ (0.35)	1.38*** (0.41)	-0.06 (0.34)	-0.31 (0.34)	0.12 (0.35)
PTS (lag)	1.27*** (0.24)	0.91*** (0.19)	1.11*** (0.20)	1.29*** (0.20)	1.09*** (0.18)	1.21*** (0.19)
Electoral dem. index	-0.31 (9.56)	-5.88 (9.61)	0.49 (10.33)	2.77 (5.94)	2.88 (6.16)	5.16 (6.55)
Electoral dem. index (squ)	-1.48 (7.49)	5.19 (7.80)	-3.65 (8.19)	-5.26 (4.74)	-3.98 (5.10)	-7.96 (5.41)
AIC	405.05	393.09	384.33	470.78	473.53	459.06
BIC	519.18	507.42	498.19	584.91	587.86	572.92
Log Likelihood	-180.53	-174.54	-170.16	-213.39	-214.77	-207.53
Deviance	361.05	349.09	340.33	426.78	429.53	415.06
Num. obs.	1323	1335	1307	1323	1335	1307

*** $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$, + $p < 0.1$. Logistic regression. Country-clustered standard errors. Year fixed effects not shown

Table A3: Journalist killings, state and unconfirmed killings, democracies only. State: state perpetrator. Unconfirmed: unconfirmed perpetrator.

We use three alternative measures for subnational politics. First, we capture the power of elected versus non-elected offices at the *regional* level (Coppedge, 2019, 50) with the *regional government index*: Are there elected regional governments, and — if so — to what extent can they operate without interference from unelected bodies at the regional level (Coppedge, 2019, 50)? The results suggest that there is a positive and statistically significant correlation between regional elected governments that can operate without interferences from unelected bodies at the regional level, and the probability of a journalist being killed by either a state or unconfirmed perpetrator.

Second, we account for *subnational election unevenness*: (Coppedge, 2019, 67): Does the freeness and fairness of subnational elections vary across different areas of the country (Coppedge, 2019, 67)? The lowest value indicates that subnational elections in some areas of the country are significantly less free and fair than subnational elections in other areas of the country. Higher values indicate that subnational elections are generally equally free and fair (or equally not free and fair). The results suggest that countries with more uneven subnational elections - meaning that the quality of the electoral process in terms of being free and fair - is statistically significantly correlated with an increased probability of journalists being killed by either a state or unconfirmed perpetrator.

Third, we measure *local offices relative power*: How would you characterize the relative power, in practice, of elected and non-elected offices at the local level (Coppedge, 2019, 66)? Lower values indicate that non-elected offices at the local level hold all or most of the power, whereas highest values indicate that elected offices hold the majority

of power, which suggests that non-elected offices are subordinate. The results suggest that countries where the majority of the political power at the local level is held by elected officials are significantly correlated with an increased probability of journalists being killed by either a state or unconfirmed perpetrator.

C.3 Alternative measures for state capacity

To assess the impact of different types of state capacity, we replace per capita GDP as a measure for ability and resources to protect journalists with two measures for the rule of law as an indicator for the state’s willingness to ensure journalists’ safety.

The *Freedom House Rule of Law* measures (Coppedge, 2019, 315): ‘the independence of the judiciary; the extent to which rule of law prevails in civil and criminal matters; the existence of direct civil control over the police; the protection from political terror, unjustified imprisonment, exile and torture; absence of war and insurgencies; and the extent to which laws, policies and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population.’

The *World Bank* measures (Kaufmann, Kraay and Mastruzzi, 2009, 7): ‘perceptions of the extent to which agents have confidence in and abide by the rules of society, and in particular the quality of contract enforcement, property rights, the police, and the courts, as well as the likelihood of crime and violence.’

Both measures are likely to be endogenous to the killing of journalists, either through the presence of violence (Freedom House) or perceptions related to the likelihood of crime and violence (World Bank). Table A4 shows that both measures are statistically significant. Importantly, the measure for locally elected governments remains statistically significant.

	I-State I	II-Unconfirmed	III-State	IV-Unconfirmed
Intercept	-11.05*** (3.16)	-16.21*** (2.67)	-15.44*** (3.50)	-21.12*** (2.78)
Local gov index	5.72** (2.03)	3.71* (1.47)	6.21*** (1.80)	3.75** (1.28)
Rule of Law (Freedom House)	-0.40*** (0.08)	-0.45*** (0.08)		
Rule of Law (World Bank)			-1.19*** (0.34)	-1.42*** (0.32)
log Pop (lag)	0.38** (0.12)	0.66*** (0.11)	0.34** (0.11)	0.71*** (0.10)
Armed conflict	1.29** (0.40)	0.00 (0.35)	1.75*** (0.42)	0.56 (0.36)
PTS (lag)	0.71** (0.26)	0.86*** (0.21)	1.03*** (0.22)	1.02*** (0.18)
Electoral dem. index	-5.32 (8.71)	2.55 (7.18)	-7.44 (9.09)	0.86 (6.68)
Electoral dem. index (squ)	4.16 (6.77)	-2.37 (5.61)	5.29 (7.15)	-1.78 (5.29)
AIC	310.18	379.56	386.71	466.29
BIC	399.34	468.73	495.89	575.47
Log Likelihood	-137.09	-171.78	-172.36	-212.14
Deviance	274.18	343.56	344.71	424.29
Num. obs.	1047	1047	1338	1338

*** $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$, † $p < 0.1$. Logistic regression. Country-clustered standard errors. Year fixed effects not shown

Table A4: Number of journalist killings (log), state and unconfirmed killings, democracies only. State: state perpetrator. Unconfirmed: unconfirmed perpetrator.

C.4 Dependent variable: Number of journalist killings

	I-State I	II-State	III-State	IV-State	V-Unconfirmed	VI-Unconfirmed	VII-Unconfirmed	VII-Unconfirmed
Intercept	-0.28 (0.17)	-0.18 (0.18)	-0.26 (0.17)	-0.28 (0.17)	-0.50*** (0.15)	-0.46** (0.15)	-0.56*** (0.15)	-0.51*** (0.15)
Elected local gov	0.09*** (0.02)				0.03+ (0.02)			
Regional gov index		0.08*** (0.01)				0.04*** (0.01)		
Subnat. election unevenness			-0.02** (0.01)				0.00 (0.01)	
Local offices rel. power				0.05*** (0.01)				0.03*** (0.01)
Judicial Corr	0.01** (0.01)	0.01** (0.01)	0.01* (0.01)	0.02*** (0.01)	0.02*** (0.00)	0.02*** (0.00)	0.02*** (0.00)	0.02*** (0.01)
log Pop (lag)	0.00 (0.00)	-0.00 (0.00)	0.00 (0.00)	0.00 (0.00)	0.02*** (0.00)	0.01*** (0.00)	0.02*** (0.00)	0.02*** (0.00)
log rGDP (lag)	0.01+ (0.01)	0.02* (0.01)	0.02** (0.01)	0.01 (0.01)	0.02*** (0.01)	0.02*** (0.01)	0.02*** (0.01)	0.02** (0.01)
Armed conflict	0.23*** (0.05)	0.22*** (0.05)	0.22*** (0.05)	0.24*** (0.05)	0.10** (0.03)	0.09** (0.03)	0.09** (0.03)	0.10** (0.03)
PTS (lag)	0.05*** (0.01)	0.06*** (0.01)	0.05*** (0.01)	0.06*** (0.01)	0.05*** (0.01)	0.06*** (0.01)	0.05*** (0.01)	0.05*** (0.01)
Electoral dem. index	-0.12 (0.41)	-0.12 (0.42)	-0.16 (0.42)	-0.05 (0.42)	-0.05 (0.36)	-0.04 (0.36)	0.04 (0.36)	-0.04 (0.36)
Electoral dem. index (squ)	0.07 (0.31)	0.09 (0.32)	0.17 (0.32)	0.00 (0.32)	-0.05 (0.27)	-0.05 (0.26)	-0.12 (0.27)	-0.06 (0.27)
R ²	0.24	0.24	0.23	0.25	0.28	0.28	0.28	0.29
Adj. R ²	0.23	0.23	0.22	0.24	0.27	0.27	0.27	0.28
Num. obs.	1338	1323	1335	1307	1338	1323	1335	1307
RMSE	0.21	0.21	0.21	0.21	0.17	0.17	0.17	0.17

*** $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$, + $p < 0.1$. Linear regression. DV: Log number of journalist killings. Country-clustered standard errors. Year fixed effects not shown

Table A5: Number of journalist killings (log), state and unconfirmed killings, democracies only. State: state perpetrator. Unconfirmed: unconfirmed perpetrator.

C.5 Types of media restrictions

	I-state	II-state	III-state	IV-unconf	V-unconf	VI-unconf
Intercept	-20.64*** (3.53)	-23.74*** (3.66)	-19.63*** (3.23)	-23.97*** (2.77)	-26.78*** (3.23)	-23.70*** (2.48)
Elected loc. gov	5.56** (1.76)	5.77** (1.75)	5.59** (1.97)	2.96** (0.99)	3.59** (1.35)	2.74* (1.18)
Judicial corruption	0.35+ (0.21)	-0.12 (0.22)	0.30 (0.21)	0.80*** (0.21)	0.24 (0.21)	0.67*** (0.19)
Econ Media Restrictions	0.49+ (0.25)			0.68** (0.26)		
Econ Media Restrictions squ	-0.02+ (0.01)			-0.03** (0.01)		
Pol Media Restrictions		0.62** (0.20)			0.24 (0.15)	
Pol Media Restrictions squ		-0.01* (0.00)			-0.00 (0.00)	
Legal Media Restrictions			0.49* (0.23)			0.56** (0.19)
Legal Media Restrictions squ			-0.01+ (0.01)			-0.02** (0.01)
log Pop (lag)	0.29** (0.11)	0.27* (0.11)	0.20* (0.10)	0.54*** (0.09)	0.69*** (0.10)	0.49*** (0.09)
log rGDP (lag)	0.07 (0.15)	0.07 (0.16)	0.12 (0.17)	0.18 (0.13)	0.25+ (0.14)	0.30* (0.13)
Armed conflict	1.53*** (0.37)	1.28*** (0.38)	1.65*** (0.37)	0.40 (0.35)	-0.03 (0.36)	0.55 (0.35)
PTS (lag)	1.13*** (0.20)	0.90*** (0.22)	1.19*** (0.20)	1.29*** (0.20)	0.87*** (0.20)	1.33*** (0.20)
AIC	391.97	374.01	387.68	462.32	423.63	462.04
BIC	506.12	488.16	501.82	576.47	537.77	576.19
Log Likelihood	-173.99	-165.01	-171.84	-209.16	-189.81	-209.02
Deviance	347.97	330.01	343.68	418.32	379.63	418.04
Num. obs.	1324	1324	1324	1324	1324	1324

*** $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$, + $p < 0.1$. Logistic regression. Country-clustered standard errors. Year fixed effects not shown

Table A6: Determinants of journalist killings, state and unconfirmed killings, democracies only. Excluding the V-Dem Electoral Democracy Indicator, and instead including the Freedom House Measures on media restrictions. State: state perpetrator. Unconf.: unconfirmed perpetrator.

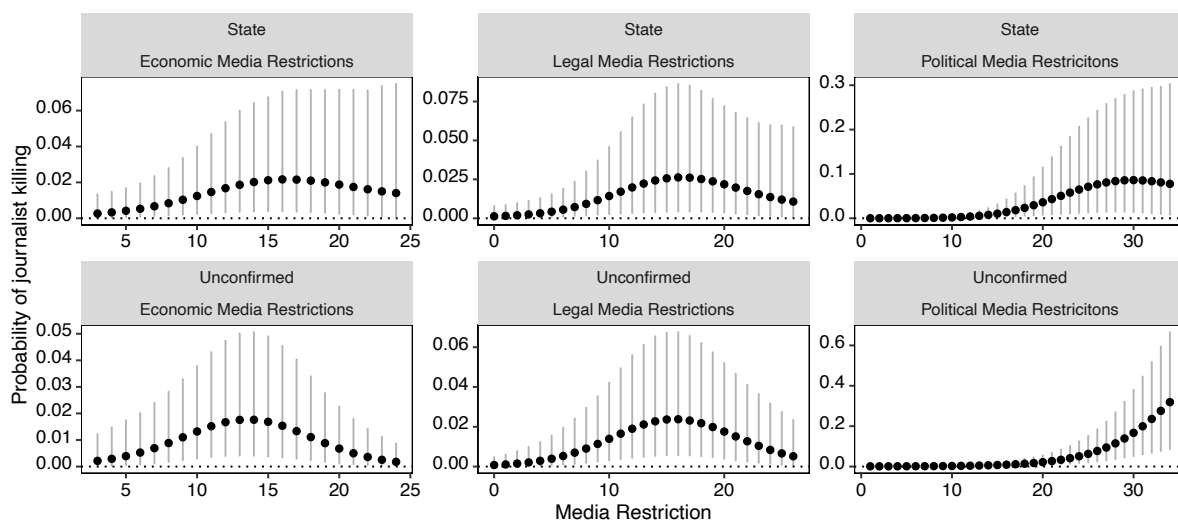


Figure A2: The relationship between economic, political and legal media restrictions and the probability of at least one journalist being killed.

	I-State	II-State-national	III-State-local	IV-Unconfirmed	V-Unconf-national	VI-Unconf-local
Intercept	-18.30*** (3.38)	-11.84** (4.22)	-19.51*** (3.56)	-19.72*** (2.30)	-14.01*** (2.57)	-20.60*** (2.27)
Elected local gov	6.40** (1.99)	3.40* (1.63)	6.06** (2.01)	3.59** (1.20)	2.36** (0.84)	3.66** (1.35)
Judicial Corr	0.40* (0.20)	0.02 (0.25)	0.38* (0.19)	0.91*** (0.19)	0.98*** (0.25)	0.80*** (0.20)
log Pop (lag)	0.27* (0.11)	0.05 (0.18)	0.32** (0.11)	0.52*** (0.09)	0.37*** (0.11)	0.56*** (0.10)
log rGDP (lag)	0.03 (0.15)	-0.12 (0.20)	0.10 (0.15)	0.13 (0.13)	-0.09 (0.16)	0.08 (0.14)
Armed conflict	1.47*** (0.38)	0.12 (0.47)	1.35*** (0.38)	0.25 (0.35)	-0.71+ (0.40)	0.11 (0.35)
PTS (lag)	1.18*** (0.20)	1.29*** (0.28)	1.21*** (0.20)	1.37*** (0.19)	1.34*** (0.29)	1.43*** (0.20)
FH Media Freedom - Econ	0.01 (0.06)	-0.09 (0.10)	0.03 (0.06)	-0.09+ (0.05)	-0.20** (0.07)	-0.08+ (0.05)
FH Media Freedom - Legal	0.06 (0.04)	0.16** (0.06)	0.05 (0.04)	0.07+ (0.04)	0.11** (0.04)	0.07+ (0.04)
AIC	393.68	264.42	381.63	468.86	322.74	443.38
BIC	507.83	378.56	495.77	583.00	436.89	557.53
Log Likelihood	-174.84	-110.21	-168.81	-212.43	-139.37	-199.69
Deviance	349.68	220.42	337.63	424.86	278.74	399.38
Num. obs.	1324	1324	1324	1324	1324	1324

*** $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$, + $p < 0.1$. Logistic regression. Country-clustered standard errors. Year fixed effects not shown

Table A7: Determinants of journalist killings, state and unconfirmed killings, democracies only. Replicating the results from Table 1, but excluding the V-Dem Electoral Democracy Indicator, and instead including the Freedom House Measures of Legal and Economic Media restrictions. State: state perpetrator. Unconf.: unconfirmed perpetrator.

C.6 Journalist killings by non-state perpetrators

	Non-state pol.	Non-state pol.	Non-pol.	Non-pol.
Intercept	-14.55*** (4.34)	-14.68** (4.53)	-22.81*** (3.50)	-27.14*** (3.72)
Elected local gov	-1.00 (0.96)	-1.06 (0.96)	2.69* (1.22)	2.79* (1.31)
Judicial Corr	-0.12 (0.28)		0.45*** (0.13)	
Public Sector Corr		0.26 (1.49)		2.62* (1.06)
log Pop (lag)	0.48** (0.18)	0.46** (0.18)	0.70*** (0.10)	0.73*** (0.11)
log rGDP (lag)	-0.03 (0.19)	0.00 (0.21)	0.13 (0.17)	0.24 (0.17)
Armed conflict	0.62 (0.50)	0.70 (0.52)	-0.18 (0.37)	-0.04 (0.42)
PTS (lag)	1.12** (0.37)	1.12** (0.38)	0.76*** (0.20)	0.74*** (0.20)
Electoral dem. index	5.70 (14.51)	4.77 (14.45)	5.31 (8.08)	11.07 (8.61)
Electoral dem. index (squ)	-8.15 (12.53)	-6.79 (12.40)	-4.56 (6.34)	-8.75 (6.86)
AIC	205.57	205.72	429.05	429.54
BIC	319.94	320.10	543.42	543.92
Log Likelihood	-80.78	-80.86	-192.52	-192.77
Deviance	161.57	161.72	385.05	385.54
Num. obs.	1338	1338	1338	1338

*** $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$, + $p < 0.1$. Logistic regression. Country-clustered standard errors. Year fixed effects not shown

Table A8: Determinants of journalist killings by non-state perpetrators.
Non-state pol.: Non-state political perpetrators. Non-pol.: Non-political perpetrator.

D Replication of results using alternative democracy measures

D.1 Democracy cut-off: Regimes of the World (V-Dem)

	I-State	II-State-national	III-State-local	IV-Unconfirmed	V-Unconf-national	VI-Unconf-local
Intercept	-14.40*	-6.80	-15.20**	-19.88***	-22.05**	-22.32***
	(5.65)	(7.71)	(5.65)	(4.73)	(6.91)	(4.87)
Elected local gov	3.78*	1.63	3.45*	2.81**	0.64	2.51*
	(1.56)	(1.36)	(1.53)	(1.08)	(0.97)	(1.16)
Judicial Corr	0.49*	0.02	0.47*	0.95***	0.72**	0.79***
	(0.21)	(0.24)	(0.21)	(0.19)	(0.24)	(0.18)
log Pop (lag)	0.33**	0.25	0.36***	0.65***	0.51***	0.74***
	(0.11)	(0.16)	(0.11)	(0.11)	(0.13)	(0.11)
log rGDP (lag)	0.26	0.20	0.34 ⁺	0.41**	0.33	0.46**
	(0.18)	(0.26)	(0.18)	(0.15)	(0.20)	(0.16)
Armed conflict	0.69 ⁺	-0.48	0.69	0.36	-0.42	0.16
	(0.42)	(0.49)	(0.42)	(0.37)	(0.49)	(0.37)
PTS (lag)	1.47***	1.48***	1.47***	1.17***	1.15***	1.22***
	(0.24)	(0.34)	(0.24)	(0.20)	(0.29)	(0.21)
Electoral dem. index	-10.80	-23.34	-11.13	-8.62	11.51	-5.67
	(13.72)	(20.33)	(13.78)	(12.87)	(18.47)	(13.16)
Electoral dem. index (squ)	6.27	13.06	6.22	5.05	-9.54	1.78
	(9.99)	(15.05)	(10.03)	(9.32)	(13.91)	(9.49)
AIC	366.47	228.24	356.34	432.59	288.62	408.14
BIC	487.07	348.84	476.94	553.19	409.22	528.74
Log Likelihood	-160.24	-91.12	-155.17	-193.29	-121.31	-181.07
Deviance	320.47	182.24	310.34	386.59	242.62	362.14
Num. obs.	1399	1399	1399	1399	1399	1399

Logistic regression. Country-clustered standard errors. Year fixed effects not shown

Table A9: Democracies only. Sample defined as countries defined as either ‘electoral democracies’, or ‘liberal democracies’ in the Regimes of the World Indicator by V-Dem. Determinants of journalist killings, state and unconfirmed killings, democracies only. State: state perpetrator. Unconfirmed: unconfirmed perpetrator. National: journalists with national reach. Local: journalists with local reach

D.2 Democracy cut-off: Polity 2 values 7-10

	I-State	II-State-national	III-State-local	IV-Unconfirmed	V-Unconf-national	VI-Unconf-local
Intercept	-20.55*** (5.07)	-36.63*** (6.77)	-20.55*** (5.07)	-18.07*** (3.63)	-12.41** (4.54)	-21.07*** (3.56)
Elected local gov	9.84** (3.09)	8.71* (3.45)	9.84** (3.09)	5.25** (1.73)	3.68** (1.33)	5.73** (1.99)
Judicial Corr	0.72** (0.27)	0.08 (0.27)	0.72** (0.27)	0.77*** (0.21)	0.57* (0.27)	0.61** (0.19)
log Pop (lag)	0.58*** (0.16)	0.62** (0.21)	0.58*** (0.16)	0.68*** (0.13)	0.59*** (0.14)	0.75*** (0.14)
log rGDP (lag)	-0.06 (0.26)	-0.30 (0.31)	-0.06 (0.26)	0.26 (0.18)	-0.03 (0.20)	0.32+ (0.18)
Armed conflict	0.68 (0.53)	-1.54* (0.73)	0.68 (0.53)	0.03 (0.41)	-0.73 (0.49)	-0.08 (0.41)
PTS (lag)	1.46*** (0.27)	1.60*** (0.32)	1.46*** (0.27)	1.21*** (0.22)	0.97*** (0.28)	1.24*** (0.22)
Electoral dem. index	-17.30 (12.90)	-11.25 (15.87)	-17.30 (12.90)	-14.35+ (8.59)	-13.70 (10.61)	-11.63 (8.78)
Electoral dem. index (squ)	11.25 (9.84)	5.34 (12.35)	11.25 (9.84)	7.56 (6.58)	6.52 (8.77)	4.27 (6.52)
AIC	277.06	150.93	277.06	411.78	290.99	383.80
BIC	393.33	267.21	393.33	528.05	407.26	500.07
Log Likelihood	-115.53	-52.47	-115.53	-182.89	-122.49	-168.90
Deviance	231.06	104.93	231.06	365.78	244.99	337.80
Num. obs.	1159	1159	1159	1159	1159	1159

Logistic regression. Country-clustered standard errors. Year fixed effects not shown

Table A10: Democracies only. Sample defined as countries with a Polity 2 value of 7, 8, 9, or 10.

Determinants of journalist killings, state and unconfirmed killings, democracies only. State: state perpetrator. Unconfirmed: unconfirmed perpetrator. National: journalists with national reach. Local: journalists with local reach

E Full sample analysis, including all regime types

E.1 Journalist killings by state and unconfirmed perpetrators

To assess the impact of democracy on the killings of journalists, we use two alternative indicators for democracy. First, we rely on the minimalist dichotomous coding of political regimes by Boix, Miller and Rosato (2013). This measure allows us to clearly distinguish between countries that fulfil the basic features of democracies identified by Dahl (1971) and those that do not. As an alternative, we use a more fine grained measure for national levels of democracy with the electoral democracy index collected by V-Dem (Coppedge, 2019, 40). To account for possible non-linear relationships we include a square term of this electoral democracy measure. Models I and II use the binary regime measure from Boix, Miller and Rosato (2013) to capture the correlation between democracy and murders of journalists, Model III uses the V-Dem Electoral Democracy measure well as its squared term to account for a possible non-linear relationship, while Model IV includes various control variables. In all models we use country- and year fixed-effects to account for unobserved heterogeneity.

	I	II	III	IV
BMR Democ (0/1)	0.10*	0.11**		
	(0.04)	(0.04)		
Electoral dem. index			1.09***	1.06***
			(0.30)	(0.31)
Electoral dem. index squ			-1.20***	-1.18***
			(0.33)	(0.33)
Elected local gov		-0.02		-0.01
		(0.07)		(0.06)
Judicial Corr		-0.01		-0.02
		(0.02)		(0.02)
Armed Conflict (0/1)		0.18***		0.15***
		(0.03)		(0.03)
PTS (lag)		0.04**		0.03**
		(0.01)		(0.01)
log Pop (lag)		0.13 ⁺		0.07
		(0.07)		(0.06)
log rGDP (lag)		-0.03		-0.06
		(0.04)		(0.04)
Num. obs.	2390	2303	2576	2466

*** $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$, + $p < 0.1$. Twoways fixed effects, DV: log(journalist killings)

Table A11: Determinants of journalist killings, state and unconfirmed killings (all regime types)

E.2 Journalist killings by non-state perpetrators

	Non-state pol	Non-state pol	Non-pol	Non-pol
BMR Democ (0/1)	-0.01 (0.02)		0.04 ⁺ (0.02)	
Electoral dem. index		-0.13 (0.19)		0.10 (0.17)
Electoral dem. index squ		-0.02 (0.21)		-0.03 (0.19)
Elected local gov	-0.02 (0.04)	0.03 (0.04)	0.01 (0.04)	0.02 (0.04)
Judicial Corr	0.00 (0.01)	0.00 (0.01)	-0.01 (0.01)	-0.01 (0.01)
Armed Conflict (0/1)	0.05** (0.02)	0.04* (0.02)	0.00 (0.02)	0.02 (0.02)
PTS (lag)	0.02** (0.01)	0.02* (0.01)	0.00 (0.01)	0.00 (0.01)
log Pop (lag)	0.04 (0.04)	0.05 (0.04)	0.05 (0.04)	0.04 (0.03)
log rGDP (lag)	-0.03 (0.02)	-0.04 (0.02)	0.03 (0.02)	0.02 (0.02)
Num. obs.	2303	2466	2303	2466

*** $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$, + $p < 0.1$. Twoways fixed effects, DV: log(journalist killings)

Table A12: Determinants of journalist killings by non-state actors (all regime types). Non-state pol: Non-state political perpetrators. Non-pol: Non-state non-political perpetrators.

F Sensitivity to specific cases

To more systematically investigate the sensitivity of our results to specific cases we replicate the results of the six models presented in Table 1, excluding one country at a time. Figure A3 plots the coefficients (and 95% confidence intervals) of the elected local government' variable for each replication. The Figure indicates that the estimated coefficients remain stable, therefore suggesting that the results are not substantially influenced by dynamics in individual countries.

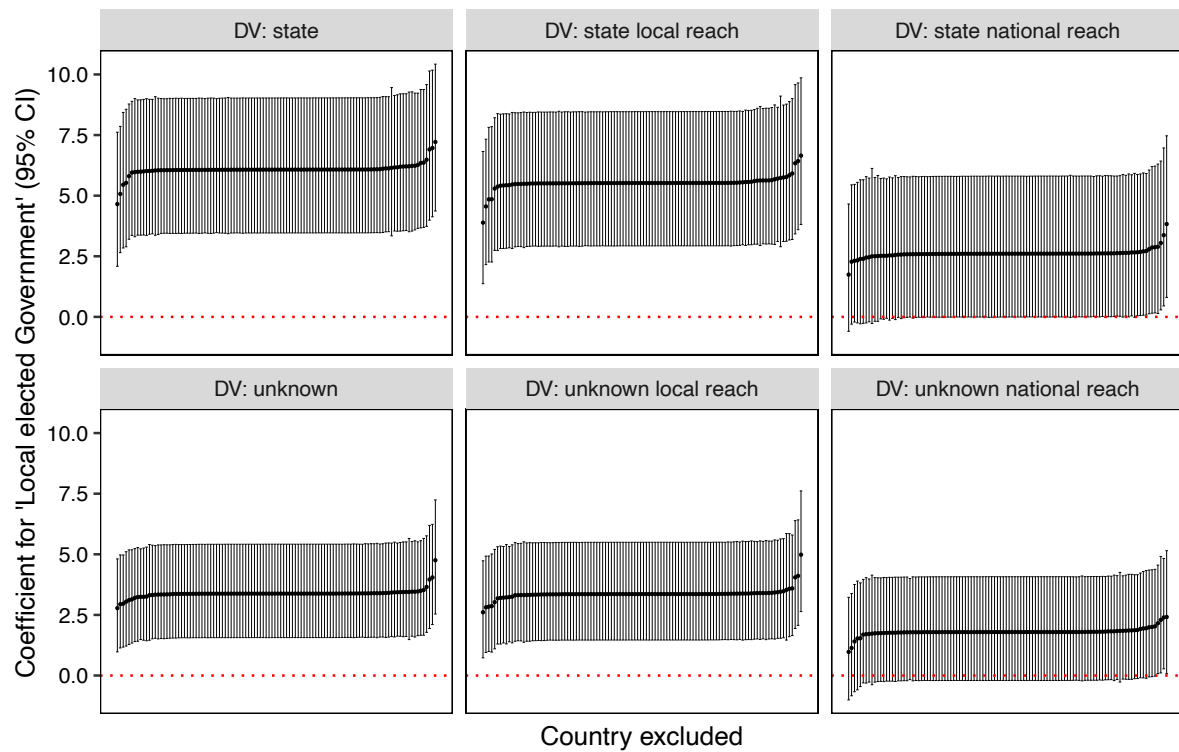


Figure A3: Coefficients of elected local government, including 95% confidence interval. Replication of models in Table 1, excluding one country at a time.

G List of country-year observations included

Country	Years included	Country cont'd	Years cont'd
Albania	2002-2015		
Argentina	2002-2015	Macedonia	2002-2015
Australia	2002-2015	Madagascar	2002-2008
Austria	2002-2015	Malawi	2002-2015
Bangladesh	2002-2006;2009-2013	Maldives	2009-2011
Barbados	2002-2015	Mali	2002-2011
Belgium	2002-2015	Malta	2002-2015
Benin	2002-2015	Mauritius	2002-2015
Bolivia	2002-2015	Mexico	2002-2015
Bosnia & Herzegovina	2002-2015	Moldova	2002-2015
Botswana	2002-2015	Mongolia	2002-2015
Brazil	2002-2015	Montenegro	2007-2015
Bulgaria	2002-2015	Mozambique	2002;2003
Burundi	2005-2015	Nepal	2008-2015
Canada	2002-2015	Netherlands	2002-2015
Cape Verde	2002-2015	New Zealand	2002-2015
Chile	2002-2015	Nicaragua	2002-2015
Colombia	2002-2015	Niger	2002-2008;2011-2015
Comoros	2006-2015	Nigeria	2015
Costa Rica	2002-2015	Norway	2002-2015
Croatia	2002-2015	Pakistan	2008-2015
Cyprus	2002-2015	Panama	2002-2015
Czechia	2002-2015	Papua New Guinea	2002-2015
Denmark	2002-2015	Paraguay	2003-2015
Dominican Republic	2002-2015	Peru	2002-2015
Ecuador	2003-2015	Philippines	2002-2015
El Salvador	2002-2015	Poland	2002-2015
Estonia	2002-2015	Portugal	2002-2015
Fiji	2014;2015	Romania	2002-2015
Finland	2002-2015	Senegal	2002-2015
France	2002-2015	Sierra Leone	2002-2015
Georgia	2004-2015	Slovakia	2002-2015
Germany	2002-2015	Slovenia	2002-2015
Ghana	2002-2015	Solomon Islands	2006-2015
Greece	2002-2015	South Africa	2002-2015
Guatemala	2002-2015	South Korea	2002-2015
Guyana	2002-2015	Spain	2002-2015
Honduras	2002-2008;2010-2015	Sri Lanka	2002-2009
Hungary	2002-2015	Suriname	2002-2015
Iceland	2002-2015	Sweden	2002-2015
India	2002-2015	Switzerland	2002-2015
Indonesia	2002-2015	Sao Tome and Principe	2002-2015
Ireland	2002-2015	Thailand	2002-2005;2011-2013
Israel	2002-2015	Timor-Leste	2003-2015
Italy	2002-2015	Trinidad & Tobago	2002-2015
Jamaica	2002-2015	Tunisia	2015
Japan	2002-2015	Turkey	2002-2015
Kenya	2002-2015	Ukraine	2002-2015
Kosovo	2012-2015	United Kingdom	2002-2015
Latvia	2002-2015	United States	2002-2015
Lesotho	2002-2015	Uruguay	2002-2015
Liberia	2006-2015	Vanuatu	2002-2015
Lithuania	2002-2015	Venezuela	2002-2004
Luxembourg	2002-2015	Zambia	2008-2015

Table A13: Observations included in the analysis

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