

# Understanding journalist killings\*

Sabine C. Carey<sup>†</sup> and Anita R. Gohdes<sup>‡</sup>

accepted at the *Journal of Politics*  
22 December 2020

**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.

---

\*Previous versions of this paper were presented at the European Political Science Association Conference 2017, seminars at the London School of Economics, University College London, Hertie School, Oxford University, University of Essex, University of Bamberg, GIGA Hamburg, and the Varieties of Democracy project at the University of Gothenburg. We thank Daina Chiba, Catherine de Vries, Scott Gates, Christian Gläsel, Kristian Skrede Gleditsch, Ryan Jablonski, Stathis Kalyvas, Joseph Keel, Enzo Nussio, Will Moore, Mauricio Rivera, Adam Scharpf, the editor, and the three anonymous reviewers for helpful comments. We thank Alina Gäumann, Kathrin Oestringer, and Shuting Ling for providing excellent research assistance. Support for this research was provided by the European Research Council under the European Union's Seventh Framework Programme (FP7/2007-2013)/ERC Grant Agreement no 336019.

<sup>†</sup>University of Mannheim. Email: [sabine.carey@uni-mannheim.de](mailto:sabine.carey@uni-mannheim.de)

<sup>‡</sup>Hertie School, Berlin. Email: [gohdes@hertie-school.org](mailto:gohdes@hertie-school.org)

# 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.

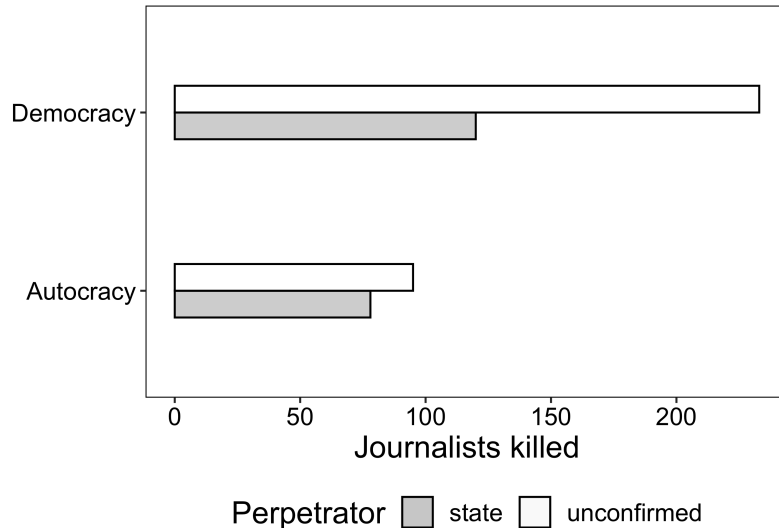


Figure 1: Journalist killings (state and unconfirmed perpetrators) across different regime types, excluding major war years and conflict settings, between 2002-2015. The distinction between democracies and autocracies is based on the dichotomous political regimes coding of Boix, Miller and Rosato (2013).

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 im-

prisonment. 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.<sup>1</sup>

## 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).

---

<sup>1</sup>Additionally, 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).

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 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.<sup>2</sup> 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

---

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

the academic literature and deserves further analysis’.

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 (Sovis, 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.<sup>3</sup> 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.<sup>4</sup> 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 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 mea-

---

<sup>3</sup>Analyzing 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.

<sup>4</sup>For 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.

asures 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).<sup>5</sup> 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,

---

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

remain regularly unpunished or take many years to achieve a prosecution despite great international attention.<sup>6</sup> 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 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.<sup>7</sup> 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 def-

---

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

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

inition 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).<sup>8</sup>

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).<sup>9</sup> 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, 2019*c*). 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

---

<sup>8</sup>For 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 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.

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

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. 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.<sup>10</sup>

## 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

---

<sup>10</sup>This 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.

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, 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).<sup>11</sup> We first provide descriptive evidence for our theoretical

---

<sup>11</sup>Table A13 in the appendix lists the specific country-years included in the analyses.



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 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.<sup>12</sup> 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,

---

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

as many journalists tend to be stationed in the capital city and work for national or international media outlets.<sup>13</sup> In short, the majority of journalists killed in democratic countries had a regional, less visible profile.

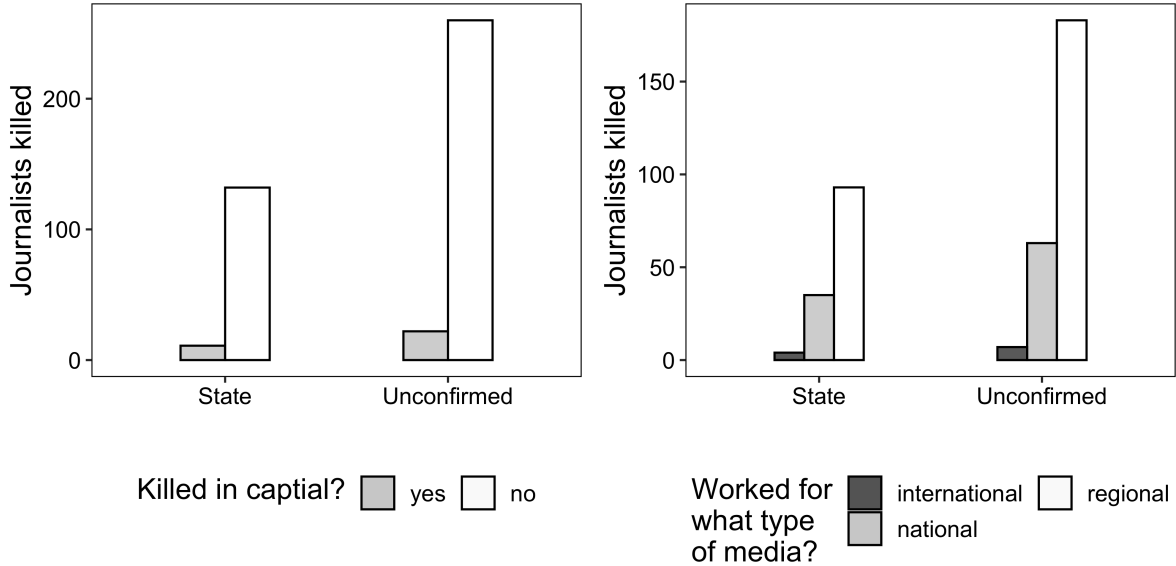


Figure 2: Journalist killings, visibility and media reach

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

<sup>13</sup>While 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 journalists worked for local, 14% for regional, 42% for national, and 36% for transnational news outlets (Thurman, Cornia and Kunert, 2016, 22).

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.

	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.

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 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.

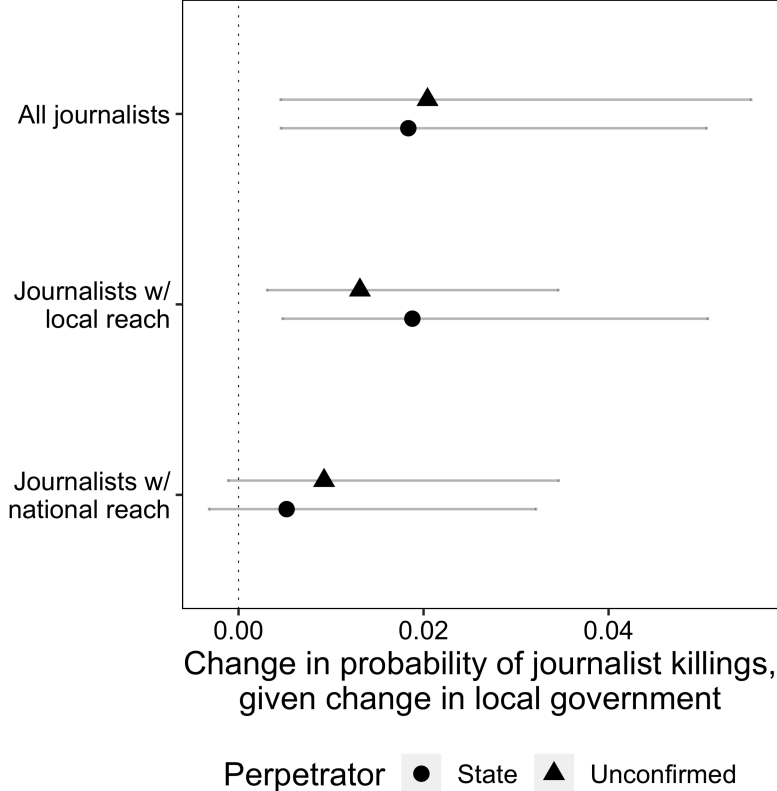


Figure 3: Change in probability of a journalist being killed, given change from not elected to elected local government

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.

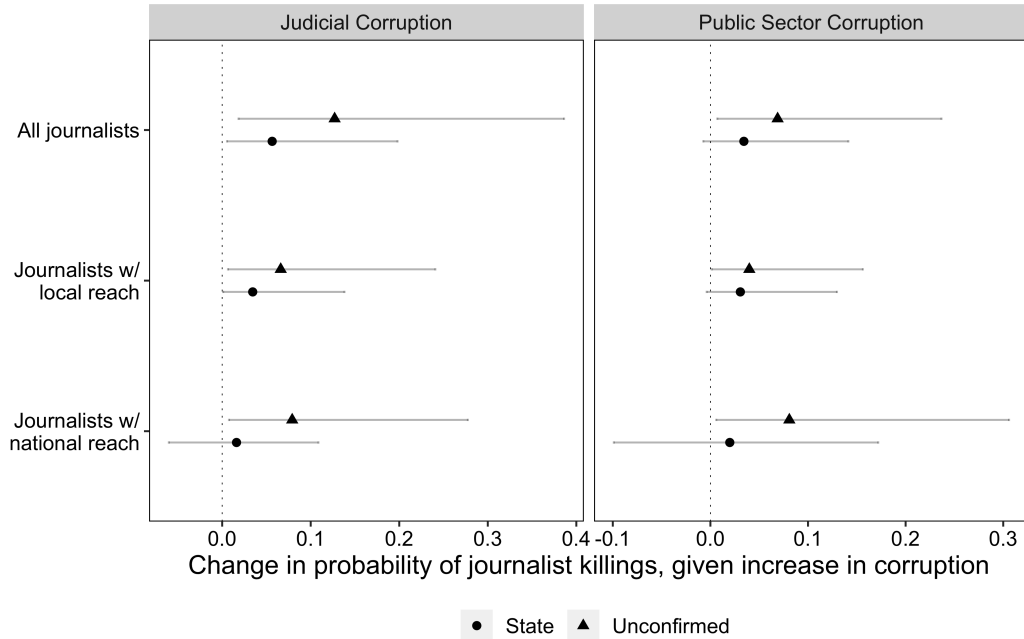


Figure 4: Change in probability of a journalist being killed, given a change from low to high judicial corruption and a change from no to high public sector corruption.

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 outsource 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.<sup>14</sup> 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.

### **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'is, 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'is 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'is 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).

---

<sup>14</sup>Armed conflict seems to play a more prominent role in the extended sample.

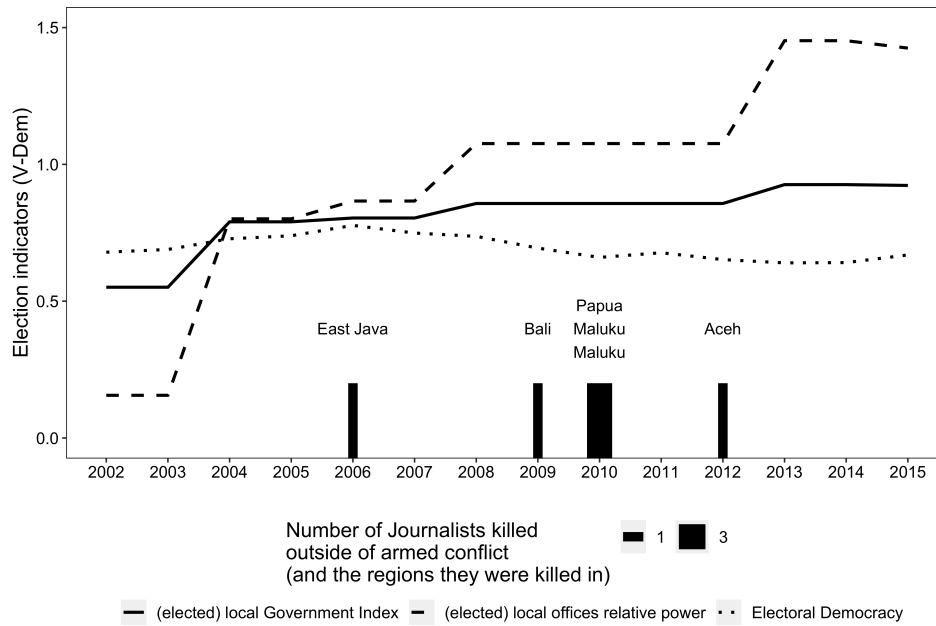


Figure 5: Electoral reforms in Indonesia, and journalists killed by state or unconfirmed actors (outside of major wars).

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 am-

ple 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 sub-national 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.

## References

- Aguilar Jr., Filomeno V., Meynardo P. Mendoza and Anne Lan K. Candelaria. 2014. “Keeping the State at Bay: The Killing of Journalists in the Philippines, 1998-2012.” *Critical Asian Studies* 46(4):649–677.
- Asal, Victor, Matthew Krain, Amanda Murdie and Brandon Kennedy. 2016. “Killing the Messenger: Regime Type as a Determinant of Journalist Killing, 1992–2008.” *Foreign Policy Analysis* 14(1):24–43.
- Bartman, Jos Midas. 2018. “Murder in Mexico: are journalists victims of general violence or targeted political violence?” *Democratization* 25(7):1093–1113.
- Bjørnskov, Christian and Andreas Freytag. 2016. “An offer you can’t refuse: murdering journalists as an enforcement mechanism of corrupt deals.” *Public Choice* 167(3-4):221–243.
- Boix, Carles, Michael Miller and Sebastian Rosato. 2013. “A Complete Data Set of Political Regimes, 1800–2007.” *Comparative Political Studies* 46(12):1523–1554.
- Brambila, Julieta A. 2017. “Forced Silence: Determinants of Journalist Killings in Mexico’s States, 2010–2015.” *Journal of Information Policy* 7:297–326.
- Carey, Sabine C., Michael P. Colaresi and Neil J. Mitchell. 2015. “Governments, informal links to militias, and accountability.” *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 59(5):850–876.
- Committee to Protect Journalists. 2015. “Filadelfo Sánchez Sarmiento.” (accessed October 10, 2018).  
**URL:** <https://cpj.org/data/people/filadelfo-sanchez-sarmiento/>
- Committee to Protect Journalists. 2019a. “Getting away with murder.” (accessed February 2, 2020).  
**URL:** <https://cpj.org/reports/2019/10/getting-away-with-murder-killed-justice.php>

Committee to Protect Journalists. 2019b. “Global campaign against impunity.” (accessed October 28, 2019).

**URL:** <https://cpj.org/campaigns/impunity>

Committee to Protect Journalists. 2019c. “Killed since 1992.” (accessed April 29, 2019).

**URL:** <https://cpj.org/data/killed/>

Committee to Protect Journalists. 2019d. “Methodology.” (accessed April 28, 2019).

**URL:** <https://cpj.org/data/methodology/>

Committee to Protect Journalists. 2020a. “Ardiansyah Matra’is.” (accessed April 15, 2020).

**URL:** <https://cpj.org/data/people/ardiansyah-matrais/>

Committee to Protect Journalists. 2020b. “Nikolai Andrushchenko.” (accessed April 15, 2020).

**URL:** <https://cpj.org/data/people/nikolai-andrushchenko/>

Conrad, Courtenay R., Daniel W. Hill and Will H. Moore. 2018. “Torture and the limits of democratic institutions.” *Journal of Peace Research* 55(1):3–17.

Coppedge, Michael et al. 2019. “V-Dem Country-Year Dataset v9.” *Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem) Project* .

**URL:** <https://www.v-dem.net/en/data/data-version-9/>

Council of Europe. 2019. “End impunity for crimes against journalists.” (accessed June 16, 2019).

**URL:** <https://www.coe.int/en/web/human-rights-channel/end-impunity-for-crimes-against-journalists>

Dahl, Robert A. 1971. *Polyarchy; participation and opposition*. New Haven,: Yale University Press.

- Davenport, Christian. 2007. "State Repression and Political Order." *Annual Review of Political Science* 10(1):1–23.
- Davenport, Christian. 2012. "When democracies kill: Reflections from the US, India, and Northern Ireland." *International Area Studies Review* 15(1):3–20.
- Davenport, Christian and David A. Armstrong. 2004. "Democracy and the Violation of Human Rights: A Statistical Analysis from 1976 to 1996." *American Journal of Political Science* 48(3):538–554.
- Daxecker, Ursula E. and Michael L. Hess. 2013. "Repression Hurts: Coercive Government Responses and the Demise of Terrorist Campaigns." *British Journal of Political Science* 43(03):559–577.
- Elizondo, Gabriel. 2013. "The local journalists under threat in Brazil." *Al-Jazeera* . (accessed October 13, 2018).  
**URL:** <https://www.aljazeera.com/blogs/americas/2013/02/62001.html>
- Fjelde, Hanne and Kristine Höglund. 2016. "Electoral Institutions and Electoral Violence in Sub-Saharan Africa." *British Journal of Political Science* 46(02):297–320.
- Fox, Jonathan. 2007. *Accountability politics: Power and voice in rural Mexico*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Freedom House. 2020. "Freedom of the Press Research Methodology." (accessed May 10, 2020).  
**URL:** <https://freedomhouse.org/freedom-press-research-methodology>
- Freitag, Vera. 2016. "Takeaways: How Latin American journalists can protect themselves." (accessed October 2, 2019).  
**URL:** <http://www.dw.com/en/takeaways-how-latin-american-journalists-can-protect-themselves/a-36680338>

- Garretón, Manuel A. 1990. "The feasibility of democracy in Chile: Conditions and Challenges." *Canadian Journal of Latin American and Caribbean Studies* 15(30):67–84.
- Gelman, Vladimir. 2010. "The Dynamics of Subnational Authoritarianism." *Russian Politics & Law* 48(2):7–26.
- Gibson, Edward L. 2005. "Boundary Control: Subnational Authoritarianism in Democratic Countries." *World Politics* 58(1):101–132.
- Giraudy, Agustina. 2007. *Democrats and autocrats: Pathways of subnational undemocratic regime continuity within democratic countries*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Gohdes, Anita R. and Sabine C. Carey. 2017. "Canaries in a Coal-mine? What the killings of journalists tell us about future repression." *Journal of Peace Research* 54(2):157–174.
- Heyns, Christof and Sharath Srinivasan. 2013. "Protecting the Right to Life of Journalists: The Need for a Higher Level of Engagement." *Human Rights Quarterly* 35(2):304–332.
- Holland, Bradley E. and Viridiana Rios. 2017. "Informally Governing Information: How Criminal Rivalry Leads to Violence against the Press in Mexico." *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 61(5):1095–1119.
- Hollyer, James R., B. Peter Rosendorff and James R. Vreeland. 2011. "Democracy and transparency." *The Journal of Politics* 73(4):1191–1205.
- Hughes, Sallie and Mireya Márquez-Ramírez. 2018. "Local-Level Authoritarianism, Democratic Normative Aspirations, and Antipress Harassment: Predictors of Threats to Journalists in Mexico." *The International Journal of Press/Politics* 23(4):539–560.

Hughes, Sallie and Yulia Vorobyeva. 2019. “Explaining the killing of journalists in the contemporary era: The importance of hybrid regimes and subnational variations.” *Journalism* 0(0):xx–xx.

**URL:** <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/1464884919885588>

International News Safety Institute. 2010. “Ardiansyah Matra’is.” (accessed April 21, 2020).

**URL:** <https://newssafety.org/news/insi-news/press-releases/detail/ardiansyah-matrais-567/>

Jagers, Keith and Monty G Marshall. 2009. “Polity IV Project: Dataset Users’ Manual.” *Severn, MD: Center for Systematic Peace* .

Kellam, Marisa and Elizabeth A. Stein. 2016. “Silencing Critics: Why and How Presidents Restrict Media Freedom in Democracies.” *Comparative Political Studies* 49(1):36–77.

McMillan, John and Pablo Zoido. 2004. “How to Subvert Democracy: Montesinos in Peru.” *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 18(4):69–92.

Mitchell, Neil J. 2012. *Democracy’s blameless leaders: from Dresden to Abu Ghraib, how leaders evade accountability for abuse, atrocity, and killing*. New York: New York University.

Mutz, Diana C. and Paul S. Martin. 2001. “Facilitating communication across lines of political difference: The role of mass media.” *American Political Science Review* 95(1):97–114.

Norris, Pippa. 2014. Watchdog Journalism. In *The Oxford Handbook of Political Accountability*, ed. Mark Bovens, Robert E Goodin and Thomas Schillemans. Oxford: Oxford University Press pp. 525–541.

- Orgeret, Kristin Skare and William Tayeebwa. 2020. "Introduction: Rethinking Safety of Journalists." *Media and Communication* 8(1):1–4.
- Pettersson, Therése and Kristine Eck. 2018. "Organized violence, 1989 - 2017." *Journal of Peace Research* 55(4):535–547.
- Poe, Steven C. and C. Neil Tate. 1994. "Repression of Human Rights and Personal Integrity in the 1980s: A Global Analysis." *American Political Science Review* 88(4):853–872.
- Riddick, L, G Thomson, N Wilson and G Purdie. 2008. "Killing the canary: the international epidemiology of the homicide of media workers." *Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health* 62(8):682–688.
- Schiller, Jim. 2009. Electing District Heads in Indonesia. In *Deepening democracy in Indonesia?: Direct elections for local leaders (Pilkada)*. Institute of Southeast Asian Studies.
- Sidel, John T. 2014. "Economic foundations of subnational authoritarianism: Insights and evidence from qualitative and quantitative research." *Democratization* 21(1):161–184.
- Sovis, Jonathan A. 2018. *Media Attacks and Political Institutions*. Indiana University Bloomington.
- Stier, Sebastian. 2015. "Democracy, autocracy and the news: The impact of regime type on media freedom." *Democratization* 22(7):1273–1295.
- Thurman, Neil, Alessio Cornia and Jessica Kunert. 2016. *Journalists in the UK*. Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism. (accessed Octobr 15, 2019).
- URL:** <https://ora.ox.ac.uk/objects/uuid:5986a227-839c-4315-9ccc-732b055a0461>



Times of Malta. 2019. "People would spit at Daphne' - Peter Caruana Galizia.". (accessed August 17, 2020).

**URL:** <https://timesofmalta.com/articles/view/without-the-corruption-daphne-would-still-be-alive-peter-caruana.755230>

VonDoepp, Peter and Daniel J. Young. 2013. "Assaults on the Fourth Estate: Explaining Media Harassment in Africa." *Journal of Politics* 75(01):36–51.

VonDoepp, Peter and Daniel J. Young. 2016. "Holding the state at bay: understanding media freedoms in Africa." *Democratization* 23(7):1101–1121.

Waisbord, Silvio. 2002. "Antipress Violence and the Crisis of the State." *The Harvard International Journal of Press/Politics* 7(3):90–109.

Whitten-Woodring, Jenifer. 2009. "Watchdog or Lapdog? Media Freedom, Regime Type, and Government Respect for Human Rights." *International Studies Quarterly* 53(3):595–625.

Whitten-Woodring, Jenifer and Douglas A Van Belle. 2014. *Historical guide to world media freedom: A country-by-country analysis*. CQ Press.

Wood, Reed M. and Mark Gibney. 2010. "The Political Terror Scale (PTS): A Reintroduction and a Comparison to CIRI." *Human Rights Quarterly* 32(2):367–400.

World Bank. 2019. "World Development Indicators Data.". (accessed July 10, 2017).

**URL:** <http://data.worldbank.org/data-catalog/world-development-indicators>

Zaller, John. 1992. *The nature and origins of mass opinion*. Cambridge England ; New York, NY, USA: Cambridge University Press.

Zanger, Sabine C. 2000. "The Global Analysis of the Effect of Political Regime Changes on Life Integrity Violations, 1977-93." *Journal of Peace Research* 37(2):213–233.