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## Do Democracies Discourage NGO Cooperation?

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Following the violent crackdown on demonstrators in Tiananmen Square in 1989, Chinese authorities arrested writer, activist, and now-Nobel laureate Liu Xiaobo, accusing him of instigating the protests and operating as a “black hand” against the regime.<sup>1</sup> His two-year detention led to international outcry as human rights and advocacy international nongovernmental organizations (INGOs) rallied to his support. In spite of the strictness of Chinese regulations and restrictions on the operations of foreign NGOs,<sup>2</sup> PEN International’s Writers in Prison Committee worked with Amnesty International to provide Liu with legal assistance and moral support, advocating for him before both the Chinese government and the UN.<sup>3</sup> Global civil society has been especially collaborative in China despite these restrictions—between 1990 and 2009 Reuters reported INGO cooperation in 13 years.

In contrast, INGOs have been comparatively inactive in more democratic regimes like Turkey. In 2003, as part of its initial bid for EU membership, Turkey enacted Labor Act 4857, which mandated dozens of pro-labor regulations such as a 45-hour workweek, discrimination protections, and improved minimum wage requirements.<sup>4</sup> The International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU) and other international

<sup>1</sup>Jonathan Mirsky, “Jailed for Words: Nobel Laureate Liu Xiaobo,” *The New York Review of Books Blog*, October 11, 2010, <http://www.nybooks.com/blogs/nyrblog/2010/oct/11/jailed-for-words-nobel-laureate-liu-xiaobo/>

<sup>2</sup>Barrett L. McCormick, Su Shaozhi, and Xiao Xiaoming, “The 1989 Democracy Movement: A Review of the Prospects for Civil Society in China,” *Pacific Affairs* 65, no. 2 (Summer 1992): 182–202.

<sup>3</sup>PEN International, “Liu Xiaobo, China,” <http://www.pen.org/defending-writers/liu-xiaobo>

<sup>4</sup>See <http://www.ilo.org/public/english/region/eurpro/ankara/download/labouracturkey.pdf> for an English translation of the law. See also Toker Dereli, *Labour Law in Turkey* (Alphen aan den Rijn, Netherlands: Kluwer Law International, 2012).

labor unions backed these new labor reforms (the first since 1936), and worked together to show their support to the Turkish government.<sup>5</sup> Beyond events like this show of global solidarity, INGO cooperation in Turkey was relatively rare, reported in only two years between 1990–2009.

Scholars have recently attempted to explain this variation in international NGO cooperation. Murdie convincingly argues that the level of trust in a country, as measured by its quality and stability of governance is one of the key determinants of cooperation<sup>6</sup>—it is far easier for INGOs to collaborate when they work in a cultural and regulatory environment that allows for collaboration. She finds that INGOs are more than eight times as likely to cooperate in nations with high quality government than those with poor governance (as measured by Political Risk Services' quality of governance measure).

Country	Region	Regime type	Governance (ICRG)	Years of cooperation
China	East Asia	Dictatorship	0.565	13
Japan	East Asia	Democracy	0.848	6
Korea South	East Asia	Democracy	0.684	3
Israel	North Africa & the Middle East	Democracy	0.78	6
Turkey	North Africa & the Middle East	Democracy	0.552	2
Saudi Arabia	North Africa & the Middle East	Dictatorship	0.556	1

Table 1: Quality of governance (0–1 scale) and years of NGO cooperation in select countries

Murdie also finds that *ceteris paribus*, INGOs are nearly 50% less likely to cooperate in democratic nations. The experiences of China and Turkey support this finding (see Table 1): both nations have roughly the same level of governance quality, but non-democratic China has seen an inordinately large amount of inter-NGO cooperation. However, this trend does not bear out in all regions. In East Asia, democracies like Japan and South Korea are less likely to see INGO cooperation, as expected, but in the Middle East dictatorships such as Syria and Saudi Arabia see almost no international collaboration.<sup>7</sup> In East Asia, dictatorships see more collaboration than democracies

<sup>5</sup>See article in Murdie's original dataset.

<sup>6</sup>Amanda Murdie, "Scrambling for Contact: The Determinants of Inter-NGO Cooperation in Non-Western Countries," *Review of International Organizations* (October 2013): 1–23.

<sup>7</sup>With the exception of Iraq, which underwent severe economic sanctions in the 1990s and an American invasion in 2003–2009, which precipitated extraordinary wartime INGO collaboration.

(as predicted), but in the Middle East, democracies see more cooperation than their dictatorial counterparts.

This counterintuitive finding of a negative democracy effect on INGO cooperation poses a fascinating puzzle. Why do democracies see fewer instances of inter-NGO collaboration? Additionally, why do some regions seem more amenable to INGO cooperation in democracies than others? In this paper I hope to pry deeper into this puzzle and contribute to the burgeoning literature on the determinants of INGO behavior. After briefly reviewing new contributions to this literature, I propose three hypotheses for this finding: that (1) younger democracies and (2) lower levels of democracy are less likely to see INGO cooperation, and that (3) regional differences have valid explanatory power in explaining variation in INGO cooperation. I then replicate Murdie's original findings and extend her models to test these hypotheses and find that neither democratic age nor quality explain this variation. However, I find that regional effects do play an important role and indicate a greater need for region- and country-specific qualitative case studies to better understand the effect of domestic institutions on trends in NGO cooperation.

### **Opening the black box of NGO behavior**

After the fall of the Soviet Union in the late 1980s and early 1990s, the prevailing international system faced radical changes. Groups of dissident intellectuals who had helped topple communist regimes were touted as a form of global civil society that could act as a “bright shining hope for a better life for all”—that is, a new international civil society sector would allow for a new kind of global citizenship where ordinary citizens could contend against state oppression.<sup>8</sup> Thousands of transnational civil society organizations have emerged since, often touted as a silver bullet to solve crises in development, human rights, and advocacy.

Though the initial optimism surrounding global civil society has since waned, in much of the existing academic work on international institutions, INGOs have long been ignored and treated as a “black box.” INGOs have often been assumed to act as altruistic bulwarks against the state, filling policy and issue gaps in the international system, and run by managers with only the best intentions.<sup>9</sup> In the past decade, however, scholars have worked to open this black box and uncover the determinants

<sup>8</sup>Ronaldo Munck, “Global Civil Society,” in *Third Sector Research*, ed. Rupert Taylor (New York: Springer, 2010), 317–26.

<sup>9</sup>See Olaf Corry, “Defining and Theorizing the Third Sector,” in *Third Sector Research*, ed. Rupert Taylor (New York: Springer, 2010), 11–20; Kjell Skjelsbaek, “The Growth of International Nongovernmental Organization in the Twentieth Century,” *International Organization* 25, no. 3 (Summer 1971): 420–42; Joseph S. Nye Jr. and Robert O. Keohane, “Transnational Relations and World Politics: An Introduction,” *International Organization* 25, no. 3 (Summer 1971): 329–49; and Jens Bartelson, “Making

of NGO behavior. A typology of behavioral influences has emerged as a result of this work, including (1) the marketplace for INGO action, (2) the internal managerial structure of INGOs, (3) the cultural and legal environment of INGO home countries, (4) INGO access to international governmental organizations (IGOs), and (5) access to and position in broader networks of INGOs and other international actors.

While it may feel intuitive that more INGOs working on a similar issue would lead to gains in economic and managerial efficiency, Cooley and Ron have argued that competition among INGOs actually leads to perverse outcomes and sectoral insecurity.<sup>10</sup> As similar INGOs compete for the same sources of funding, organizations will often undermine their competitors, withhold information, act unilaterally, and seek government rents. Though INGOs may initially be motivated by normative altruistic agendas, competition in the fundraising market can result in dysfunctional behavior. Clifford Bob has expounded on this argument, showing that INGOs do not operate in a meritocracy of agenda issues, where the worthiest human rights and humanitarian problems are taken up by the global community. Instead, INGOs compete in a “harsh, Darwinian marketplace where legions of desperate groups vie for scarce attention, sympathy, and money.”<sup>11</sup> Organizations that are experts at emotive marketing, employ native English speakers, use charismatic spokespeople, and craft their messages to fit Western sensibilities are far more effective in the global community than their competitors.

Beyond the external influences of the competitive market for INGO action and funding, Wendy Wong has shown that the internal organizational structure of NGOs plays a critical role in explaining NGO success.<sup>12</sup> She argues that NGOs can centralize or decentralize different forms of managerial power: the power to propose new goals and missions, the power to enforce those goals, and the power to actually implement those proposals. Organizations that successfully centralize proposal power while decentralizing implementation power are better able to pursue a central agenda without stifling local creativity, thus leading to better success. These centrally proposed agendas and strategies do not simply emerge from the preferences of INGO leaders, however. Sarah Stroup has shown that the organizational structures and missions of INGOs are deeply tied to the cultural and legal environments of their home countries.<sup>13</sup> For example, CARE USA’s mission reflects American norms of efficiency

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Sense of Global Civil Society,” *European Journal of International Relations* 12, no. 3 (September 2006): 371–95.

<sup>10</sup>Alexander Cooley and James Ron, “The NGO Scramble: Organizational Insecurity and the Political Economy of Transnational Action,” *International Security* 27, no. 1 (Summer 2002): 5–39.

<sup>11</sup>Clifford Bob, “Merchants of Morality,” *Foreign Policy* no. 129 (3–4 2002): 36–45.

<sup>12</sup>Wendy H. Wong, *Internal Affairs: How the Structure of NGOs Transforms Human Rights* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2012).

<sup>13</sup>Sarah S. Stroup, *Borders Among Activists* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 2012).

and results-oriented pragmatism by using a professional staff, securing large amounts of government funding, and avoiding anti-American advocacy. In contrast, Amnesty International, based in the United Kingdom, eschews many of the stricter norms of business-like efficiency and professionalization to focus more on advocacy work. Additionally, because Amnesty International refuses government funding (in part because of the historical absence of government funding for charities), it focuses much of its advocacy work on British and American human rights abuses.

Another strand of this literature explains INGO effectiveness using network theory, arguing that INGO access to IGOs and other international actors has considerable impact on the ability of INGOs to make their preferences global issues. Jonas Tallberg, et al. show that INGOs and other transnational actors can gain access to the international policymaking stage by engaging in missions that are technically complex or require local implementation, since IGOs are generally unwilling to spend the resources necessary to undertake these missions on their own.<sup>14</sup> IGOs are also more willing to rely on INGOs when they want to appear more democratic or shield themselves from political contention or attacks on IGO authority, essentially using INGOs as safety valves in public opinion. While the bulk of their work looks at the IGO-INGO relationship from an IGO perspective, INGOs can strategically position themselves and their missions to be more palatable to cooperation with IGOs, and thus gain greater access to international bureaucrats and governments.

Charli Carpenter extends this argument by showing that a key determinant of INGO power is not only access to IGOs, but to all members of an issue-area network.<sup>15</sup> That is, INGOs are most able to push new normative ideas onto the global agenda if they are connected to key nodes—or gatekeepers—in a network, who then vet the proposals and give (or deny) them credibility and legitimacy. In general, the more connected or centralized an INGO is in relation to other organizations, the more influential it will be. This network centrality theory has been also been proven by Murdie, who shows that among advocacy organizations, the amount of effective advocacy output increases as the organization's network centrality increases.<sup>16</sup>

### **Host-country institutions and INGO effectiveness**

One theoretical field that has largely been ignored, however, is the influence of host country institutions on NGO behavior. From Stroup it is clear that cultural sensibili-

<sup>14</sup>Jonas Tallberg et al., *The Opening up of International Organizations: Transnational Access in Global Governance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

<sup>15</sup>R. Charli Carpenter, *Lost Causes: Agenda-Setting and Agenda-Vetting in Global Issue Networks* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2014).

<sup>16</sup>Amanda Murdie, "The Ties That Bind: A Network Analysis of Human Rights International Non-governmental Organizations," *British Journal of Political Science* (September 2013): 1–27.

ties can shape the missions and agendas of INGOs, but little work has been done to show how the institutions of the countries where these INGOs work affect their efficiency or goals. Murdie's original article on INGO cooperation represents an early attempt at approaching this field, finding that the quality of governance in a nation influences the probability of collaboration.

Murdie does not look at the effect of governance per se—rather, she uses quality of governance as a proxy for inter-organizational trust. INGOs that work in well governed countries will trust that those governments stop corruption, permit communication, and allow for increased predictability. Her empirical work also uncovers an empirical puzzle worth exploring. While the probability of inter-NGO cooperation increases with better governance and higher trust, cooperation is less likely in democratic regimes. Murdie posits that because her sample is limited to non-Western regimes, democracies outside North America and Western Europe have newer NGO sectors with less trust between organization, perhaps because these organizations struggle for legitimacy and autonomy from their nascent democratic states.

Testing this hypothesis, however, is rather difficult given the state of data on global civil society. Two general-purpose civil society indexes appear promising initially, but do not contain adequate data for cross-sectional time series analysis. The Civil Society Index (CSI), developed and maintained by Civicus, ranks national civil society sectors along four dimensions: (1) structure, (2) values, (3) impact, and (4) environment.<sup>17</sup> The CSI would provide excellent insight into environmental factors that contribute to the strength and embedded trust of a country's civil society sector, but Civicus has only collected data for a handful of years for a few dozen nations. A rival index, the Johns Hopkins Global Civil Society Index (GCSI) measures similar aspects related to the domestic context of civil society: (1) capacity, (2) sustainability, and (3) impact.<sup>18</sup> The GCSI would be equally useful for measuring sector-wide trust at a national level, but like the CSI it only covers a handful of nations for a short period of time.

Other institutional aspects of national civil society that could explain the negative democratic effect are equally difficult to measure. No index or data source measures the age of the civil society sector in each nation. New and forthcoming research has worked to measure state restrictions and regulation on civil society—important insti-

<sup>17</sup>Carmen Malena and Volkhart Finn Heinrich, "Can We Measure Civil Society? A Proposed Methodology for International Comparative Research," *Development in Practice* 17, no. 3 (June 2007): 338–52.

<sup>18</sup>Lester M. Salamon and S. Wojciech Sokolowski, "Measuring Civil Society: The Johns Hopkins Global Civil Society Index," in *Global Civil Society: Dimensions of the Nonprofit Sector*, ed. Lester M. Salamon and S. Wojciech Sokolowski, vol. 2 (Bloomfield, CT: Kumarian Press, 2004), 61–92; Mark Lyons, "Measuring and Comparing Civil Society," *Cosmopolitan Civil Societies Journal* 1, no. 1 (2009): 71–84.

tutional structures that have a direct impact on civil society effectiveness—is either limited to a small subset of countries<sup>19</sup> or not yet available.<sup>20</sup>

Rather than directly measure the attributes of national civil society sectors, we can instead connect civil society to democratic governance as a whole, following the Tocquevillian theory that associational life in a polity generates social capital that is ostensibly critical for democratic governance.<sup>21</sup> By measuring democratic institutions in general, we can hopefully capture some of the effect those institutions have on civil society, and by extension, trust. Making such a leap is theoretically justifiable and is not without precedent—examples include work looking at the effect of political regimes on foreign investment inflows<sup>22</sup> and the effect of regime age and type on international trade negotiations.<sup>23</sup>

Murdie posits that young, weaker civil societies might see less inter-INGO cooperation. As it is currently impossible to reliably measure either of these civil society attributes, I instead measure the age and strength of the ruling political regimes of each country. Democratic political systems can be differentiated by the age of the ruling regime or institutional framework. Because they face a different set of policy choices, young democracies tend to perform more poorly than older, more established regimes—new democracies tend to see higher levels of corruption, reduced rule of law, and less social trust and capital.<sup>24</sup> Moreover, younger democracies struggle to maintain property and contract rights<sup>25</sup> and tend to achieve lower levels of economic growth.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>19</sup>Darin Christensen and Jeremy M. Weinstein, “Defunding Dissent: Restrictions on Aid to NGOs,” *Journal of Democracy* 24, no. 2 (April 2013): 77–91.

<sup>20</sup>Kendra Dupuy, James Ron, and Aseem Prakash, “The Global Backlash Against Civil Society: Restrictions on Foreign NGOs and Foreign Funding Flows, 1995–2012” (Annual meeting of the International Studies Association, Toronto, March 27, 2014).

<sup>21</sup>Michael W. Foley and Bob Edwards, “The Paradox of Civil Society,” *Journal of Democracy* 7, no. 3 (1996): 38–52; Robert D. Putnam, Robert Leonardi, and Raffaella Y. Nanetti, *Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994).

<sup>22</sup>Nathan M. Jensen, “Democratic Governance and Multinational Corporations: Political Regimes and Inflows of Foreign Direct Investment,” *International Organization* 57, no. 3 (Summer 2003): 587–616.

<sup>23</sup>Leonardo Baccini and Johannes Urpelainen, “International Institutions and Domestic Politics: Can Preferential Trading Agreements Help Leaders Promote Economic Reform?” *Journal of Politics* 76, no. 1 (January 2014): 195–214.

<sup>24</sup>Philip Keefer, “Clientelism, Credibility and the Policy Choices of Young Democracies,” *American Journal of Political Science* 51, no. 4 (October 2007): 804–21.

<sup>25</sup>Christopher Clague et al., “Property and Contract Rights in Autocracies and Democracies,” *Journal of Economic Growth* 1 (June 1996): 243–76.

<sup>26</sup>Kevin G. Grier and Michael C. Munger, *On Democracy, Regime Duration, and Economic Growth*, Working Paper, May 28, 2006.

Many democracies suffer from these same inefficiencies, regardless of age—for example, many Latin American nations are considered democracies on the Polity IV scale but continue to struggle with the maintenance of property rights, consistent economic growth, or trust. I therefore argue that the level or quality of democracy plays a similar role as age. Given the relationship between age and quality of democracy, I propose the following hypotheses:

*Hypothesis 1:* Younger democratic regimes are will see less inter-INGO cooperation.

*Hypothesis 2:* Lower levels of democracy will see less inter-INGO cooperation.

Beyond general institutional effects on cooperation, it is possible that aspects of individual countries or regions explain some of the variation in collaboration. For example, advocacy INGOs such as Amnesty International and PEN International have collaborated regularly in China because of that country's persistent human rights abuses against writers and intellectuals. At the same time, other nations with similar histories of anti-intellectual abuse, such as Egypt, have seen little cooperation (there are only three years of reported cooperation in Egypt). China's position as central pillar of the global economy may explain its salience as a target of advocacy. In a similar vein, development INGOs are far more active in Africa than in Asia due to a historical legacy of development activities in the region. These country- and regional-level anomalies and historical trends lead to my final hypothesis:

*Hypothesis 3:* Historic and cultural regional differences explain much of the variation in inter-INGO cooperation.

## **Modeling institutional effects on NGO cooperation**

### Dependent variable

In order to generate results that are comparable to Murdie's findings, I have maintained many of the original variables from her models. All three of my hypotheses rely on a measure of inter-NGO cooperation. As discussed previously, measuring civil society *strength* is difficult due to a disappointing dearth of data. Measuring civil society *activity* is equally challenging, as there is no standard metric for NGO actions undertaken.

To remedy this, Murdie used event data methods—long popular in the conflict forecasting literature—to compile a new measure of inter-INGO cooperation. Event data uses natural language text processing to determine the main actors and actions

in a reported news story, essentially determining “who did what to whom.” To calculate the “who,” Murdie compiled a list of the 33,524 INGOs listed in the 2001/2002 *Yearbook of International Organizations* and worked with Virtual Research Associates (VRA) to find all events where a listed INGO was mentioned in the Reuters Global News Service archives from 1990–2009, previously prepared and coded for event data analysis by the Integrated Data for Event Analysis Project (IDEA). The sample was then limited to events where NGOs were both the source (“who”) and the target (“to whom”). Finally, events were filtered further by limiting the action (“did what”) to cooperative terms (i.e. events where an NGO “criticized” another NGO were ignored, while events where an NGO “collaborated” or “advised” another NGO were preserved), and collapsed to a count of inter-NGO cooperation events for each country and year.

Because this measure of cooperation is wholly reliant on a single source of event data, it is subject to some degree of selection bias. For a cooperative event to count, Reuters wire reporters must have taken some interest in the event and reported on it using the names of both organizations. As such, countries with reduced Reuters coverage (such as North Korea, which did permit country offices for foreign media organization during the time period under study) and countries that are naturally underreported (such as Central Asia) will underrepresent NGO activities, while countries or regions that are more salient (such as the Middle East during the sanctions in Iraq in the 1990s and the American war in Iraq in 2003) may overrepresent NGO action. In reality, the asymmetry in reporting may reflect an actual asymmetry in inter-NGO cooperation, since countries facing more salient conditions may indeed attract more concerted NGO responses. Murdie controls for this bias in part by including the overall number of NGO events (including single-NGO events and noncooperative inter-NGO events) as an independent variable in her models. Alternatively, it may be more accurate to control for the total number of reported events per country-year, which would normalize and rescale many of the countries that are under- or over-reported.<sup>27</sup> However, due to contract restrictions, the original raw event data is unavailable, so controlling for NGO events must suffice.

Given these biases and the fact that there is only one archival news source for events, there are no NGO-related events in 91% of the included country-years. While it is possible that NGOs do not cooperate in many nations, it is likely that reliance on Reuters data has led to gross underreporting of actual inter-INGO cooperation. Recent and forthcoming developments in event data methods and sources can potentially increase this model’s robustness. For example, the GDELT project uses “tens of thousands of broadcast, print and online news sources from nearly every corner

<sup>27</sup>This is the standard approach when using GDELT (see <http://gdeltproject.org/data.html>).

of the globe”<sup>28</sup> and thus clearly has better (and potentially less biased coverage). In spite of the vastness of its sources and coverage, however, GDELT was not designed to work with events surrounding NGOs (there are a host of actor codes for protest and conflict actors, but few for non-state or non-governmental actors), and ongoing legal issues have led to turnovers in ownership and have left the project’s reliability in question.<sup>29</sup> Fortunately international relations scholars are currently developing a new open source (and legally reliable) framework for massive event data collection. In the future these newer sources can be used to replicate this and other event data-based research by Murdie and others and yield even more accurate results. However, as this more comprehensive event data is either suspect or not ready yet, the existing Reuters data must again suffice.

### Independent variables

While measures of civil society are severely lacking, there is fortunately a relatively established body of literature and data on measuring democratic institutions. My first two hypotheses deal directly with a country’s overall institutionalization of democracy. For the first hypothesis, I measure democracy age by counting the number of consecutive years since each country scored a 6 or higher on the Polity IV scale.<sup>30</sup> As seen in Figure 1, most of the countries included in the dataset have had democratic regimes for fewer than 20 years. A handful of country-years exceeding 100 years of democracy were excluded from the figure, but included in the model.

Murdie’s original article included a binary control variable to indicate whether a country’s political regime was a democracy or an autocracy. However, it has been shown that while dichotomization is convenient, much of the nuance and complexity in assigning a label of regime type is lost when boiling a country’s institutionalization into one of two categories.<sup>31</sup> Additionally, while categories of institutionalization are useful at large magnitudes (i.e. there is a clear difference between a country that scores a -8 on the Polity IV scale and one that scores a 6), marginal changes in democratization scores are often meaningless (i.e. a change from a level 5 anocracy to a level 6 democracy is rather imperceptible and more susceptible to rater subjectivity). Though Polity IV and the numerous other competing democracy scales tend to result in simi-

<sup>28</sup>GDELT Project, “About GDELT: The Global Database of Events, Language, and Tone—Data Sources,” <http://gdeltproject.org/about.html#datasources>

<sup>29</sup>Philip Schrod, “The Legal Status of Event Data,” *asecondmouse*, February 14, 2014, <http://asecondmouse.wordpress.com/2014/02/14/the-legal-status-of-event-data/>

<sup>30</sup>Rather than provide a dichotomous measure of democracy, the Polity IV project assigns democracy scores ranging from -10 to 10. Regime types labels are then assigned based on this score: autocracies (-10 to -6), anocracies (-5 to 5), and democracies (6 to 10).

<sup>31</sup>David L. Epstein et al., “Democratic Transitions,” *American Journal of Political Science* 50, no. 3 (July 2006): 551–69.

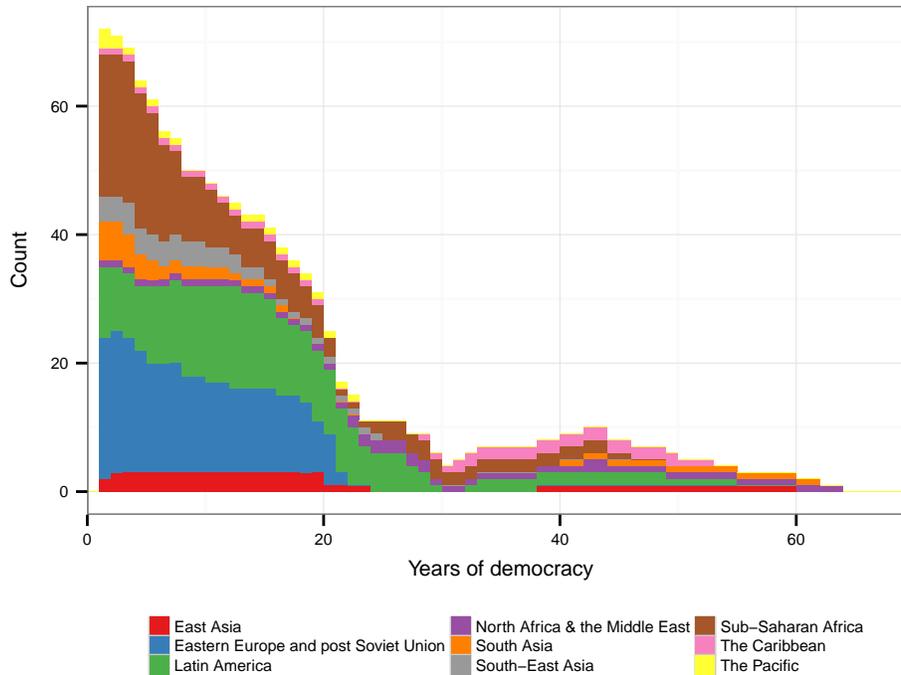


Figure 1: Years of consecutive democratic rule

lar findings in spite of their reliance on differing methods and multiple raters, there is little consensus about which scale is the more reliable or “best.” Additionally, each of these scales fails to account for uncertainty in their estimates of levels of democratic governance. The Unified Democracy Score (UDS) scale was created in 2010 to combat these deficiencies of democratic measurement.<sup>32</sup> This innovative scale uses Bayesian estimation and simulation to generate aggregate democracy scores based on 10 other standard measurement scales (such as Polity IV). Instead of assigning each country a single score, the UDS provides every country-year with a posterior score distribution, including a mean and a median score, a standard deviation, and 95% confidence intervals. UDS scores range from -2 to 2, with more democratic nations receiving higher scores (see Figure 2 for the distribution of mean, non-simulated UDS scores).

<sup>32</sup>Daniel Pemstein, Stephen A. Meserve, and James Melton, “Democratic Compromise: A Latent Variable Analysis of Ten Measures of Regime Type,” *Political Analysis* 18, no. 4 (Autumn 2010): 426–49.

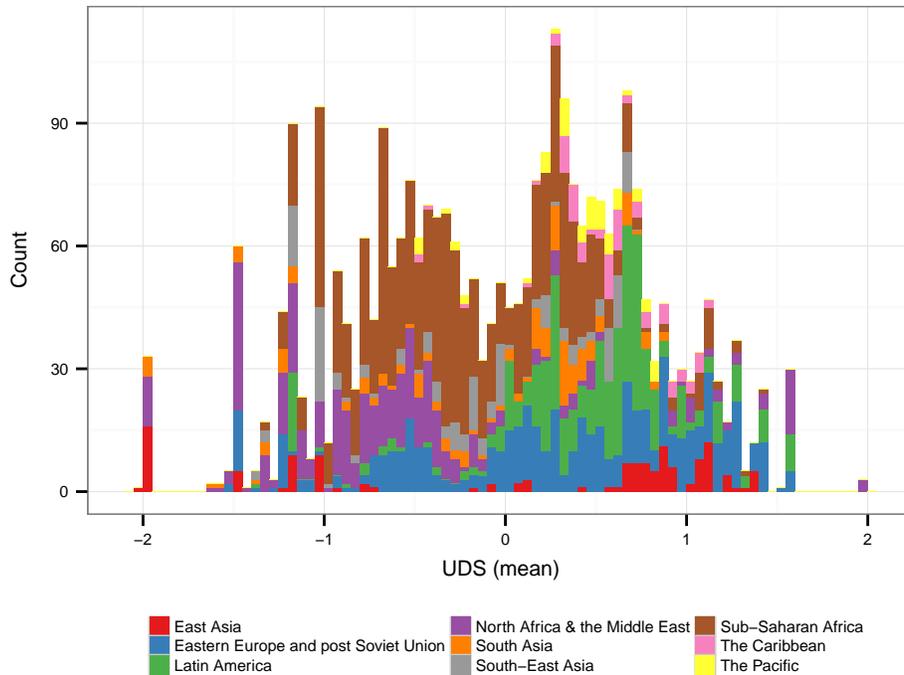


Figure 2: Mean UDS scores

To test my third hypothesis I include regional-level fixed effects,<sup>33</sup> which Murdie omitted from her original models. Fixed effects are generally simply controlled for and ignored (and often not reported in regression tables). However, to determine whether regional differences in institutional settings and problems facing NGOs play a determining role on NGO behavior, I treat these regional fixed effects as actual reported coefficients.

For the sake of comparability I also include many of Murdie's independent and control variables, each of which are described and cited in more detail in the original paper: (1) the Political Risk Services' quality of governance measure, which ranges from 0 (minimum governance) to 1 (high quality governance), (2) foreign aid per capita, (3) country population, (4) GDP per capita, and (5) the number of INGOs with members or volunteers in the country. Additionally, I include indicator variables for whether the country (6) underwent a humanitarian military intervention that year,

<sup>33</sup>Western Europe, North America, Australia, and New Zealand excluded.

or suffered a (7) natural disaster or (8) civil war in the past five years. As with Murdie's original models, all independent variables are lagged by one year.

## Results

In her original paper, Murdie used two forms of her inter-NGO cooperation variable: (1) a binary measure indicating whether cooperation occurred, and (2) a count measure indicating the number of cooperative events in a given country-year. Each of these forms were then used in models with different functional forms: (1) regular logistic and rare-event logistic for the binary measure, and (2) negative binomial and zero-inflated negative binomial for the count data. For the sake of simplicity, and because no country-year experienced more than four NGO events, I only use logistic regression models.

Table 2 provides the results for Murdie's replicated logistic and rare-event models, followed by extensions of the model that test the hypotheses laid out previously. Columns 1 and 2 highlight the negative effect democracy has on NGO cooperation—all else equal, NGOs are about 50% less likely to collaborate when working in democratic countries. Figure 3 demonstrates this effect graphically, showing the predicted probabilities of NGO cooperation along the full range of possible quality of governance scores (with all other model variables held at their means). While democracies do indeed have lower predicted probabilities, the prediction line falls within the 95% confidence interval for dictatorships, indicating that the variable's significance is likely mathematic and not substantive.

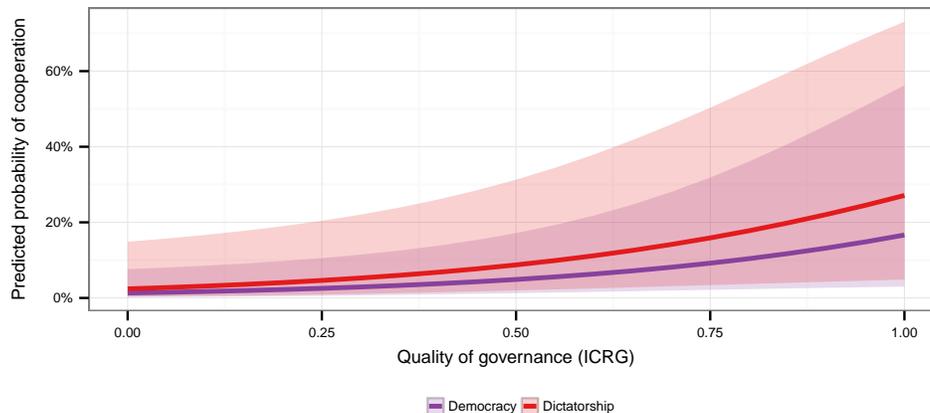


Figure 3: Predicted probabilities of inter-NGO cooperation by regime type

	Original logit	Original logit (RE)	Extended logit	Extended logit (RE)	Extended logit	Extended logit (RE)
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Quality of government	2.71* (1.23)	2.61* (1.08)	3.28** (1.18)	3.14** (1.11)	3.64** (1.11)	3.39** (1.18)
Humanitarian intervention	1.22 (0.63)	1.24* (0.58)	1.30* (0.64)	1.32* (0.59)	1.14 (0.66)	1.14 (0.60)
Aid per capita (ln)	-0.15 (0.17)	-0.15 (0.14)	-0.18 (0.19)	-0.17 (0.14)	-0.17 (0.19)	-0.17 (0.15)
INGO members/volunteers (ln)	1.12** (0.40)	1.08** (0.38)	1.66*** (0.43)	1.59*** (0.47)	1.59** (0.58)	1.52** (0.58)
Media coverage of NGO events	0.01*** (0.003)	0.01*** (0.003)	0.01*** (0.003)	0.01*** (0.003)	0.02*** (0.004)	0.02*** (0.004)
Democracy	0.62* (0.29)	0.60* (0.29)				
Unified democracy score (mean)			-0.54 (0.28)	-0.54 (0.31)	-0.38 (0.31)	-0.36 (0.33)
Years of democratic rule			-0.02 (0.01)	-0.02 (0.01)	-0.02* (0.01)	-0.02 (0.01)
Population (ln)	0.26 (0.20)	0.24 (0.14)	0.16 (0.21)	0.15 (0.15)	0.17 (0.22)	0.13 (0.20)
GDP per capita (ln)	-0.01 (0.31)	-0.01 (0.17)	0.04 (0.32)	0.04 (0.17)	-0.07 (0.43)	-0.06 (0.23)
Disaster in past 5 years	0.27 (0.56)	0.16 (0.56)	0.41 (0.60)	0.30 (0.60)	0.17 (0.63)	0.09 (0.61)
Civil conflict in past 5 years	0.43 (0.27)	0.43 (0.27)	0.51* (0.25)	0.49 (0.27)	0.83** (0.27)	0.78** (0.30)
Year fixed effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Regional fixed effects	No	No	No	No	Yes	Yes
Observations	1,093	1,093	1,079	1,079	1,079	1,079

Notes:

\*p<0.05; \*\*p<0.01; \*\*\*p<0.001

Reported coefficients are log odds. Constants have been suppressed.

Logistic regression models use robust standard errors clustered by region. Due to technical differences between the implementation of rare event logistic regression in Stata and R, coefficients differ slightly from the original paper. Additionally, rare event models reported here do not use clustered standard errors.

Table 2: Determinants of NGO-NGO cooperation

The findings from my expanded model are included in columns 3 and 4. To test the hypotheses of whether the age and level or quality of a democracy explain some variation of inter-NGO cooperation, I have replaced the binary “dictatorship/democracy” measure with the mean UDS score and the number of years of consecutive democracy. Despite the theoretical supposition that younger democracies face barriers to high quality governance such as increased corruption, weakened rule of law, and a weaker (and less trusting) civil society sector, the duration of democratic rule does not have a significant impact on the probability of cooperation ( $z = -1.81, p = 0.071$ ). If we use a 90% confidence threshold, democratic age is significant, but not substantively so—each year of consecutive democratic rule decreases the probability of cooperation by 2%. Even if we use this lower threshold, the changes in probability are not substantive—Figure 4 shows the predicted probabilities of cooperation for varying durations of democracy (with all other values held at the mean), and as in Figure 3, there are no significant differences in prediction. There is therefore insubstantial evidence that younger democracies are more likely to see INGO cooperation.

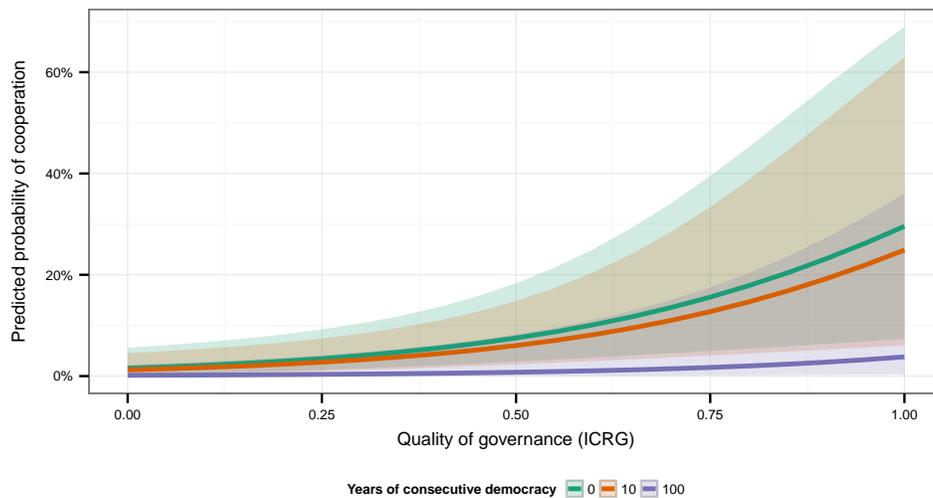


Figure 4: Predicted probabilities of inter-NGO cooperation for varying years of consecutive democracy

The models provide a similar conclusion for the hypothesis that higher levels of democracy see less NGO cooperation. The estimated coefficient for mean UDS scores is marginally smaller than the original binary indicator (countries are 41% less likely to see inter-NGO cooperation for each one-point increase in UDS scores), but this finding is no longer significant ( $z = -1.94, p = 0.053$ ). One advantage to using the UDS

scores, though, is that the scores are actually posterior probability distributions, which permits simulation and resampling. Figure 5 shows the estimated coefficients for the UDS and quality of governance where the logistic regression model was run 100 times using simulated UDS scores, generated using the mean and standard deviation of the UDS's posterior distribution. The violin plots (density plots mirrored horizontally)<sup>34</sup> demonstrate the distribution of key model coefficients, while the dark grey lines show the simulated 95% confidence intervals. As seen in the plot, simulated UDS scores can result in marginally different coefficient estimates that consistently remain negative, ranging from -0.16 to -0.82 (log odds), which shows that countries are 15%–56% less likely to experience inter-NGO cooperation as they increase in UDS scores. However, the UDS coefficient in most simulations remains insignificant at a 95% confidence level.

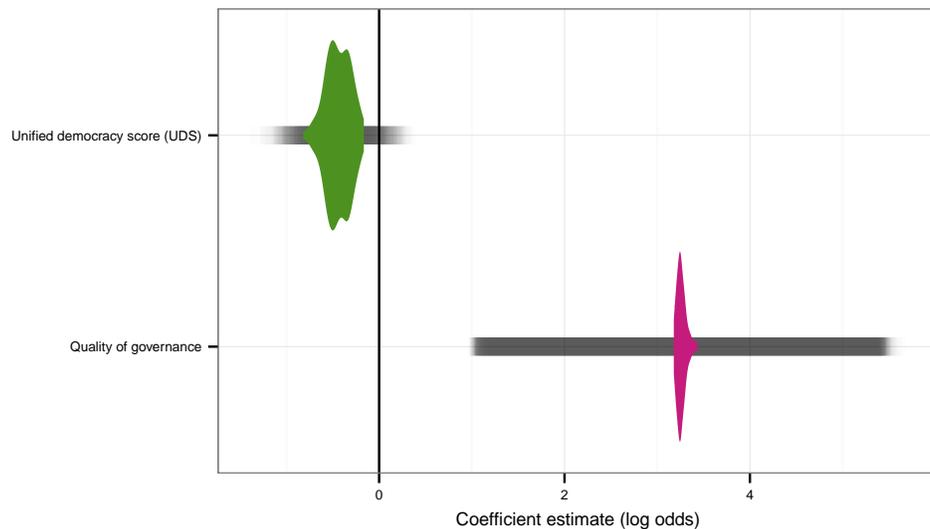


Figure 5: Simulated model coefficients after 100 random draws of UDS scores

The figure does show that quality of governance—Murdie’s primary variable of interest—maintains its substantive significance regardless of simulated UDS. In fact, the governance coefficient increases significantly when controlling for UDS and democratic duration, further bolstering Murdie’s claim that high quality governance provides a more amenable environment for inter-NGO cooperation. However, given the lack of evidence otherwise, I find little evidence for Hypotheses 1 and 2—that younger

<sup>34</sup>Jerry L. Hintze and Ray D. Nelson, “Violin Plots: A Box Plot-Density Trace Synergism,” *The American Statistician* 52, no. 2 (May 1998): 181–84.

and weaker democracies will see less cooperation. Democratic institutions in general do not appear have a substantively significant<sup>35</sup> impact on the probability of NGO cooperation, despite Murdie's finding of significance in her original models.

Although actual democratic institutions may not explain variation in collaboration, unmeasured region- or country-specific conditions are more successful in predicting inter-NGO cooperation. In her original models, Murdie only included fixed effects variables to control for time, capturing effects that may be specific to certain years—perhaps some years were inherently more amenable to cooperation than others. To test my third hypothesis—that regional differences affect the probability of cooperation—I included regional fixed effects in columns 5 and 6 of Table 2. Filtering out region-specific characteristics increased the quality of governance effect more, but had no significant influence on the potential impact of UDS scores or consecutive years of democracy. Rather than keep these fixed effects hidden, however, a richer story of regional effects can be told by looking at the effects of the model in each region.

To see these individual regional effects, I estimated separate regression models for a subset of data for each region. Running multiple models rather than simply including the interaction terms for each region in the original model essentially allows for every possible interaction between region and other variables included in the model—instead of simply shifting the intercept or slope for each region, individual regional models ostensibly reflect the full impact of the region on the aggregate model as a whole. However, running separate models presents a mathematical challenge, as subsetting the data into smaller groups decreases the number of observations available to model and increases the number of observations dropped due to missing data. To maintain the separate models' statistical power, I was forced to both ignore some regions and remove some control variables in the model. I dropped regions where there were fewer than 80 observations; removed indicators for humanitarian interventions, natural disasters, and civil conflicts; and dropped variables measuring foreign aid per capita and the number of INGO members in the country. Some regions in the sample did not suffer from disaster or conflict, and others received little (or unreported) foreign aid, thus weakening their region-specific models too much to return useful results.

With these important caveats, results from the individual regional models are presented in Table 3. Region-specific differences appear to play a crucial role in the reliability of the previously specified models. For example, quality of governance plays an extremely important role in predicting inter-INGO cooperation in Latin America, but not as strongly (if at all) in other regions. Similarly, democracy (as measured by UDS

<sup>35</sup>Justin Esarey and Nathan Danneman, "A Quantitative Method for Substantive Robustness Assessment," *Political Science Research and Methods* (2014).

scores) has a significant negative impact in Latin America alone—all other regions balance out the aggregate coefficients reported in Table 2. However, even with these changes in significant coefficients, the substantive significance of the regional models remains suspect. The differences in regions are perhaps best understood using predicted probabilities. As seen in Figure 6, the individual models for Eastern Europe and Latin America fail to make reliable predictions. Cooperation is actually more likely in the Middle East and North Africa as democracy increases, yet less likely in Southeast Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa—averaging the disparate regional effects eventually yields the original negative democratic effect.

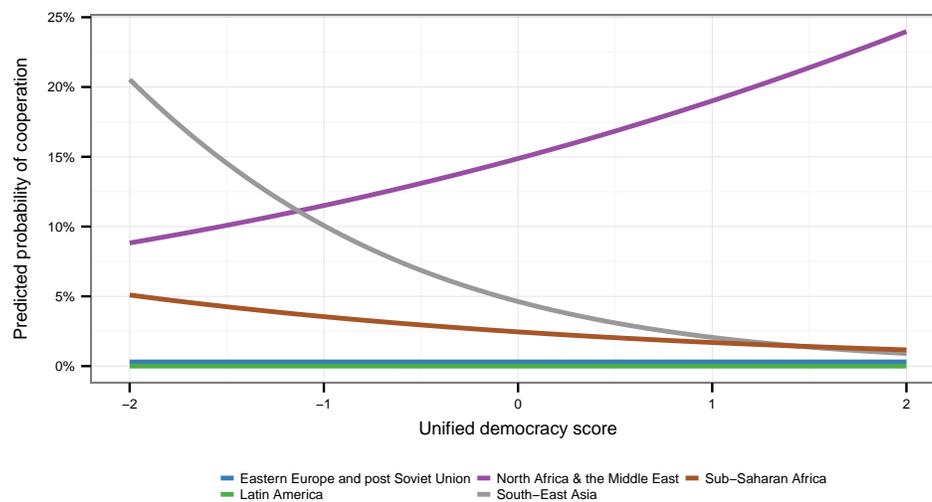


Figure 6: Predicted probabilities of inter-NGO cooperation for varying levels of democracy (UDS) by region

	Eastern Europe & Post USSR	Latin America	North Africa & Middle East	Sub-Saharan Africa	Southeast Asia
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Quality of governance	-6.33 (5.70)	8.13* (3.29)	-2.02 (3.65)	2.23 (1.87)	0.39 (3.22)
Media coverage of NGO events	0.03 (0.02)	-0.01 (0.02)	0.02* (0.01)	0.04*** (0.01)	0.02 (0.01)
Unified democracy score (mean)	-1.82 (1.48)	-2.09* (0.98)	0.30 (0.57)	-0.38 (0.68)	-0.84 (0.88)
Years of democratic rule	0.08 (0.16)	-0.01 (0.02)	0.02 (0.04)	-0.02 (0.08)	0.11 (0.10)
Population (ln)	-0.13 (0.44)	1.36*** (0.35)	0.41 (0.26)	0.33 (0.26)	0.79 (1.06)
GDP per capita (ln)	3.70* (1.66)	-0.60 (0.75)	0.56 (0.49)	-0.43 (0.33)	0.91 (1.73)
Year fixed effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	256	360	297	548	95

Notes:

\* $p < 0.05$ ; \*\* $p < 0.01$ ; \*\*\* $p < 0.001$

Reported coefficients are log odds. Constants have been suppressed.

All models use logistic regression with non-robust, unclustered standard errors.

Table 3: Determinants of NGO-NGO cooperation (by region)

## Conclusion

I find that democratic regimes do not inherently discourage cooperation. Neither the age nor the quality of the regime have any substantial influence on the probability of inter-INGO collaboration. The counterintuitive democracy effect originally found by Murdie may instead be attributable to regional and country-level differences. As shown previously, Turkey and Israel—both in the Middle East—are democracies with relatively high UDS scores, and both saw more cooperative events than democracies in other regions. This may, however, be more reflective of country-specific peculiarities. Most of the NGO cooperation in Israel, for instance, is directly related to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and is not necessarily linked to levels of democracy, governance, or any other variable included in the model. Likewise China—far from a democratic nation—has been a hotbed for INGO collaboration over human rights, possibly because of its central and salient position in the global economy

The findings presented here indicate two avenues for future research: First, there is a need for richer and more detailed event data. As discussed above, the Reuters database used here is limited to events reported by a single news agency and is likely underreporting inter-NGO activities. Recent developments in event data look promising and the large scale, multiply-sourced datasets currently in production should provide an excellent resource for retesting the hypotheses laid out here. Second, Murdie's work does an excellent job of providing macro-level explanations for the variation in inter-INGO cooperation, but it does so at the expense of more granular country- and regional-level details and trends. There is a need for more detailed case studies focused on specific regions, using qualitative methods to explain the cultural and historical determinants of INGO behavior. Combining rigorous and creative quantitative work with detailed case studies will allow us to better understand the nuances of these findings and make more applicable policy recommendations for improving the effectiveness of global civil society.

## Software

All the graphs, tables, and model results can be replicated using code available at <https://github.com/andrewheiss/democracy-ngo-cooperation> and the following open source software:

Hlavac, Marek. *stargazer: LaTeX code and ASCII text for well-formatted regression and summary statistics tables*. 2014. Version 5.0.

Imai, Kosuke, Gary King, and Olivia Lau. *relogit: Rare Events Logistic Regression for Dichotomous Dependent Variables*. Version 4.2-1

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