Mega events and Institutional Development

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Abstract

Recent shifts in locations of the organization of mega events (Olympics, FIFA World Cup, Expo etc.) towards emerging countries (such as Russia, China, South Africa) led to the soaring objections among human right activists and investigative journalists with to the concerns over human right violations. We aim to understand the linkage between two phenomena, by empirically testing the impact of sports mega events on human rights violations in over 120 countries. By applying panel data techniques on a rich dataset going back to 1900, we find no evidence for the negative effect of sports mega events on human rights violations. On the contrary, organization of such events (the year of the nomination as well as the actual event) produces a positive effect, which remains statistically significant after several different specifications. In addition, we find a spill-over effect on improving human rights' situation onto consecutive years after the country hosted the mega-event. Moreover, even when controlling for the economic (GDP per capita), political (political participation), security (internal conflict), energy dependency (oil production) factors, mega events as well as the election years (including consecutive years – mostly 2-3 years after) are strong determinants of improving the human rights situation across the world, since 1900.

Keywords: mega events, human rights, emerging countries, institutional development

Introduction

Mega events are traditionally seen as a meeting point of different nations for celebrating diversity and peace while at the same time aiming to compete boosted a feeling of national pride for ones' country. However, the recent trend of relocation of mega events from the developed countries to the developing countries has turn the attention away from competition towards the socio-economic situation in the host country, and especially the human rights' situation. Human Rights Watch, an international organization monitoring human rights violations across the globe, specifies five primary human rights abuses in their report (Worden, 2015). They are connected to sports mega events such as (i) the forced evictions of citizens without due process or compensation; (ii) the abuse and exploitation of migrant workers; (iii) the silencing of civil society and rights activists; (iv) threats, intimidation, and arrest of journalists; and (v) discrimination (gender, anti- anti-LGBT) within bidding or hosting countries. Similar abuses were also reported in emerging countries such as Russia, China, South Africa, and Qatar which were already bidding and hosting stages of mega events (for more in the post-Soviet Eurasia context, see Makarychev & Yatsyk, 2016). Since there is often lack of reliable data regarding abuses in hosting countries before and during such events, academic attention tends to be rather theoretical or from a highly normative perspective (eg., see *Horne, 2018*). There has been virtual little or no cross-country long-term quantitative analysis of the impact of mega events on human rights and this paucity have motivated us to explore the missing link.

On one hand, human rights violations could be considered as the result of institutional dysfunctionality. Institutions are the rules of games in a society (North, 1990) and these are the restrictions which determine human interaction. In a society with effectively functioning institutions that protects the societal interest, one would observe minimized transaction costs,

oppression free society, incentives to protection of property rights and human rights (Ongo Nkoa & Song, 2022). In such a way, institutions could limit the coercive state capacity and possible tyranny of governments, thus, would sustain equal distribution of power between civil society and state. Therefore, because of weak institutions, human rights violations would not only convey information about situation of human rights and freedom of individuals, but these would also signal as an insecurity of property rights which might have crucial economic outcomes for the country. Empirical studies have shown that property rights and democracy have positive impact on economic growth (Goldsmith, 1995; Park & Ginarte, 1997, see for literature review Urbano et al., 2019).

On another hand, the level of human rights in a particular country seems to be a determinant of a handful of factors. Kinley (2009) highlights that high economic development and globalization is an important determinant of protection of the rule of law. Brecke, (2001) as well as Thoms & Ron (2007) highlight the fact that internal conflicts and instability are often associated with systematic human right abuses. Some countries flourish and take advantage of natural resources during their development, others are tied down with the resource-curse and also underperform in the matter of protection of human rights (Haber & Menaldo, 2011). Lack of political competition, via a high volatility in the party system, does not put a particular country on a path-dependent journey of a strong state and strong society with a stringent protection of human rights (Acemoglu & Robinson, 2020). Instead, most have been associated with experiencing democratic backsliding instead (Mechkova et al, 2017).

Moreover, human rights violations might also lead to degrading factor human capital. For example, by limiting people's rights to express their opinions and inhumane conditions people would feel uncomfortable living in inhumane conditions. People would abandon the country, once this happens collectively, huge brain drain takes place which eventually have a detrimental effect on development of society. Higher human capital is positively associated to better economic

institutions (Jones & Potrafke, 2014). Hence, one may claim that countries with better protection of human rights have better economic development.

While skepticism over costs of organizing mega events to the host countries is (Owen, 2005), a few empirical works have also postulated the relationship between organizing mega events and macroeconomic indicators. In perspective of international and outside attention, Rose, & Spiegel (2011) have presented evidence that organizing mega events have robust and permanent impact on international trade of the hosting country. Trade effect of hosting mega events ca also stem from the positive signal already during the bidding stage for a particular international event. These signals could be economic and political liberalizations and opening country for international visitors and foreign investors. In this way, country may acquire economic benefits from this openness strategy by boosting exports and net gains from trade (Rose & Spiegel, 2011). In addition, developing countries can see mega events as an opportunity to create nation branding, receive excessive global media attention and to use as a soft diplomacy (Knott et al., 2017). This point of view primarily focuses on the consequence of hosting mega events on foreign affairs and international trade.

Other group of studies focus on effects of hosting mega events on hosting country's domestic affairs. By using a panel of 188 countries spanning the period 1950–2009, Brückner & Pappa (2015) studied the effects of Olympic "news" on the macroeconomy of bidder and selected hosting countries. Although countries that bid and were not selected to host the mega events would not enjoy long-term positive effect of Olympic application, there are some short-term positive effects on output growth, investment, and private consumption which significantly increase about 9 to 7 years. However, hosting Olympic games has a strong and long-lasting macroeconomic effect on host country's macroeconomy by triggering the investments, consumption, and output responses even five to two years prior actually hosting the event (Brückner & Pappa, 2015).

Positive effects of hosting mega event are not limited with economic aspects. Positive impact for the society would mean that tourism sector benefits from the increased attendance during the hosting of the events. In addition, mega events could increase community cohesion, civic engagement, promote volunteering, support healthier lifestyles and assist people with a disability by building the necessary infrastructure (Smith, 2012; 2014).

The link between hosting the mega events and human rights violations remains rather theoretical or bound to event analysis and case studies and has not received much scholarly attention for exploring the quantitative empirical analysis. Considering the scarcity of research in this topic, a recent study by Olmos et al. (2020) establishes an empirical link between hosting mega events and the increased perception of corruption. Their findings suggest that corruption perception starts to increase before the very opening of mega events in host countries. In fact, it starts at the time when the host country is announced a winner, and the public perception of corruption remains strong from selection date until the opening date, with the effect dissipating with time afterwards. In their interpretation, mega events are often seen as an opportunity for rent-seeking activities and money laundering during the large infrastructural projects, which are perceived negatively.

In this study, we aim to explore the possible effects of mega event on human rights in hosting country by empirically testing the impact of sports mega events on human rights violations over 120 countries. By applying panel data techniques on a rich dataset going back to 1900, we find no evidence for the negative effect of sports mega events on human rights violations. On the contrary, organization of events (the year of the nomination as well as the actual event) produces a positive impact, which remains statistically significant after several different specifications. In addition, we find an effect also for the year when the particular country has been chosen to host the event as well as spill-over effects onto consecutive years after hosting. Findings remain statistically significant and robust after running series of robustness checks.

This positive association could be explained with the fact that governments may address, perhaps, partially human rights abuses before bidding or during the events as this size of public exposure would be important to save the country's image and rebrand itself. In addition, organization of mega events brings spillover effects on consecutive years that might bring the betterment of human rights situation due to an increased exposure and scrutiny.

Remainder of the paper is organized as follows. Next section will present data used and methodology employed for estimating the link. Findings will be presented in empirical results section, followed by the robustness checks. The last section will conclude and discuss the findings.

Data and Methodology

Data

Our sample covers more than 120 countries for 1900–2020, a period subject to the availability of data on human rights. We create the database of the events, by hand-coding only those giga- and mega-events that have an international nature: Olympic Summer Games, FIFA World Cups, Universal Expositions, and Olympic Winter Games, in line with previous works in the field (Olmos et al, 2020).

International events can be divided into giga- and mega-events, major and minor events according to a myriad of factors. For instance, media's attention to a particular event can be used to understand the importance of the event, as well as more subjective measures: the number of participants (active or merely spectators), budget and the culture significance or importance of the event itself.

However, for our purpose, we classify the mega-events of those who have large budgets as well as a strong attendance that provides potential gain for incumbent governments. Besides the year when the event takes place, we also take into account spillover effects for the years preceding the

actual organization of the event as well as the year when the nomination is announced. Previous literature (Rose and Spiegel, 2011; Brückner and Pappa, 2015; Olmos et al, 2020), emphasizes such approach, such as where the economic consequences are detected before the opening of the event. Thus, the complete hand-coded list of mega-events consists of 23 Winter and 28 Summer Olympic Games, 21 FIFA World Cups and 57 Universal Expositions.

Our main dependent variable of interest are human right violations. Since human right violations cannot be easily and objectively measured, we rely on the data provided by the V-Dem database, that is reliant on expert-assessed evaluations that are further combined with numerical administrative data and reduced to a series of indices. In addition, V-Dem contains a set of socio-economic and political indicators, such as GDP per capita, political stability, etc that are sources from national statistical offices or other databases.

Because of limitations in terms of data-objectivity, and following most of the literature already mentioned, we use the various indicators of human rights as a proxy for the situation of human rights in those countries. The summary of the main dependent and independent variables is presented in the Table 1 below:

Table 1: Description of the Variables

Dependent Variables	Description	Source/Literature
Rule of Law Index	Interval, from low to high (0-1). The index is formed by taking the point estimates from a Bayesian factor analysis model of the indicators for compliance with high court, compliance with judiciary, high court independence, lower court independence, executive respects constitution, rigorous and impartial public administration, transparent laws with predictable enforcement, access to justice for men and women, judicial accountability, judicial corruption decision, public sector corrupt exchanges, public sector theft, executive bribery and corrupt exchanges, executive embezzlement, and theft.	The index answers to the question to what extent are laws transparently, independently, predictably, impartially, and equally enforced, and to what extent do the actions of government officials comply with the law? (Pemstein et al., 2021)
Equal Protection Index	How equal is the protection of rights and freedoms across social groups by the state? The index is formed by taking the point estimates from a Bayesian factor analysis model of the indicators for social class equality in respect for civil liberties, social group equality in respect for civil liberties and percent of population with weaker civil liberties; reversed scale.	Sigman et al. (2015); Pemstein et al. (2021)
Civil Liberties Index	The index is formed by taking the average of physical violence index, political civil liberties index, and private civil liberties.	"Civil liberty is constituted by the absence of physical violence committed by government agents and the absence of constraints of private and

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		political liberties by the government".(V-Dem Codebook V.11, 2021)
Physical Violence Index	Interval, from low to high (0-1), estimated as an index by averaging two above-mentioned indicators: freedom from torture and freedom from political killings.	
Freedom from torture*	The variable is generated based on the answer to the expert survey question: Is there freedom from torture? The ordinal scale is from 0 - the presence of torture with the involvement of authorities to its absence at 4.	Pemstein et al. (2021)
Freedom from political killings*	The variable is generated based on the answer to the expert survey question: Is there freedom from political killings? Ordinal, converted to interval by the measurement model. The ordinal scale goes from 0 - the presence of political killings, that are approved by the government, to 4 – political killings are non-existent.	Pemstein et al. (2021)
Freedom of peaceful assembly*	The variable is generated based on the answer to the expert survey question: To what extent do state authorities respect and protect the right of peaceful assembly? The scale is from, from 0 – peaceful assemblies are not allowed, and lethal force is used to 4, – state (almost) always allows peaceful assemblies.	This question focuses on the ability to assemble publicly in practice. (Pemstein et al. 2021)
Freedom of Expression Index*	Interval, from low to high (0-1). The index is formed by taking the point estimates from a Bayesian factor analysis model of the indicators for print/broadcast censorship effort, harassment of journalists, media self-censorship, freedom of discussion for men/women and freedom of academic and cultural expression.	This index addresses to what extent government respect press and media freedom, the freedom of ordinary people to discuss political matters at home and in the public sphere, as well as the freedom of academic and cultural expression? (as cited in

Pemstein et al., 2021)

Independent Variables	Description	Source/Literature
GDP per capita	GDP refers to gross domestic production, understood on a per capita basis.	The Maddison Project Database (2018), Bolt et al. (2020)
Petroleum Production per capita	Real value of petroleum produced per capita.	Haber and Menaldo (2011).
Armed Conflict (Internal)	Coded 1 if the country suffered in an internal armed conflict in a given year, 0 otherwise.	Clio Infra (clio-infra.eu), drawing on Brecke (2001).
Political Competition	Is there any (institutionalized) political competition? This variable combines information presented in two component variables: the degree of institutionalization, or regulation, of political competition and the extent of government restriction on political competition. The two variables are combined and scaled from 1 (repressed competition) to 10 (institutionalized and open electoral participation)	Polity 5 (Marshall et al, 2013).
Mega-events	Dummy variable: 1 – when an event takes place, 0 otherwise. Consecutive years are also coded.	Official websites of organizers of mega-events: FIFA, Olympic committee, etc.
Election of mega-events	Dummy variable: 1 – when the result after the nomination are announced, 0 otherwise. Consecutive years are coded as well.	Official websites of organizers of mega-events: FIFA, Olympic committee, etc.

Source: Varieties of Democracy Database, version 11. Dependent variables marked with a *(star sign) are used for robustness checks.

Figure 1 shows the evolution of the eight human rights indices used in the analysis as dependent variables: Equal Protection, Physical Violence, Rule of Law, Civil Liberty as well as four ones that are used for the robustness checks: Freedom from Political Killings, Freedom from Torture, Freedom of Peaceful Assembly and the Freedom of Expression for Russia (Soviet Union prior to 1991) for the period from 1900 to 2020. The vertical lines in the years of 1980, 2014, 2018 shows the years when the mega events took place. While the aftermath of the Summer Olympic Games in 1980 coincides with the late Brezhnev era of stagnation, highlighted by the improvement of human rights situation, the aftermath of more recent mega-events is less evident. However, there are slight visible bumps in the improvement of human right situation in the consecutive years, although hard to see via pure visual correlation.

Figure 1. Human rights violations and mega events in Russia (Soviet Union, until 1991).
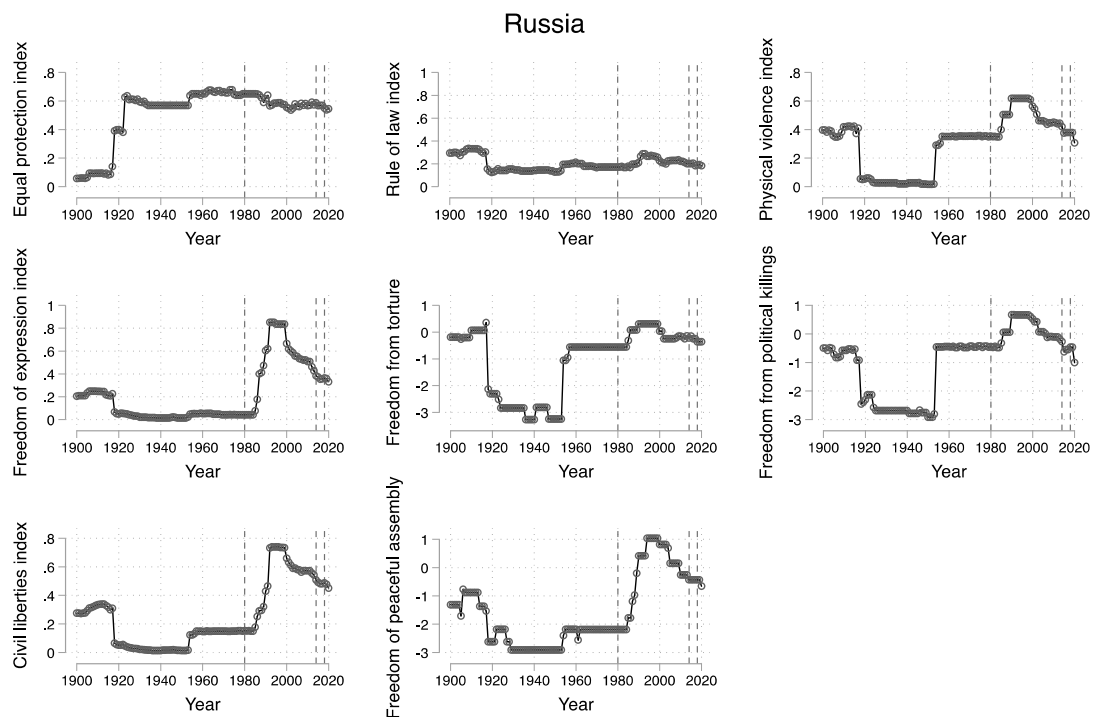
Source: compiled by authors.

Figure 1 shows the evolution of human right indicators around the world since 1900. Dotted vertical lines represent the multitude of mega-events that happened during the time period in focus (many at the same time, by different types of the event). Note a visible improvement of human right situation after the fall of the Berlin Wall in1989 and throughout the early 2000. There has also been a gap in organisation of mega events in the WWII period around the world, which coincided with a drop in all indicators. Except for the Rule of Law indicator that remained generally relatively constant throughout time, other indicators follow a pattern of decline during the first and second world wars, the period leading up to it, with a consequential recovery and the improvement of the situation in modern time

Figure 2. Human rights violations and mega events across the world.
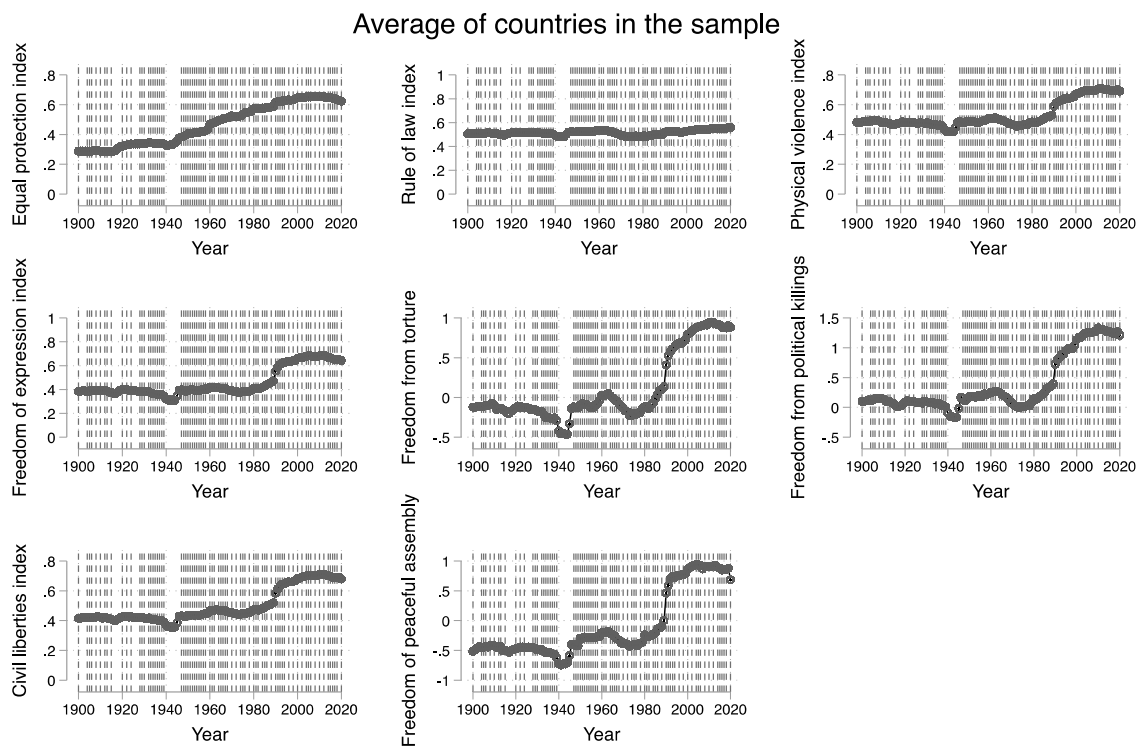
Source: compiled by authors.

Table 2 displays some descriptive statistics for the main determinants of the human rights described earlier. The mean of the dummy variable on mega events is 0.006, which points to only

0.6 percent of our sample having hosted a mega-event in the past. The slightly different value is for the year of the election of the mega-event, which is at 0.005 or 0.5 percent, which is due to some mega-event hosts being decided due to cancellations or withdrawal of the original ones. Indexes (equal protection, civil liberties, physical violence, rule of law and freedom of expression) have the mean of around 0.5 on the 0 to 1 scale and are normally distributed. This is often represented by a mix of countries with highly protected rule of law in Denmark, Finland, and New Zealand for most of the time periods and lower such as in Mexico, Turkey, and Russia during the sample period. For the variables on freedom (torture, political killings, peaceful assembly) the mean value on the four-point scale is around 2, in the middle of the four-point scale.

The mean for the per capita GDP is in accordance with the nature of the sample, with a variety of countries from rich to poor, including Haiti, Mexico and other countries which have hosted mega-events in the past. Eight percent of our sample had had some form of internal political conflict in the past, while the mean of political competition variable is at the midpoint on the scale, that is being five. Variables of GDP per capita as well as total revenue from oil represent a variety of values across time and space, with countries that have achieved economic growth with a considerable revenue flow from oil as well as those who have not managed to do so.

Table 2. Descriptive statistics. 1900-2020

Variable	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
Mega event	0.006	0.080	0	1
Election of mega events	0.005	0.073	0	1
Rule of Law Index	0.516	0.296	0.004	0.999
Civil Liberties Index	0.505	0.288	0.009	0.975
Physical Violence Index	0.535	0.306	0.013	0.989
Equal Protection Index	0.476	0.296	0.006	0.986
Freedom from Torture (ordinal form)	1.884	1.294	0	4

Freedom from Political Killings (ordinal form)	2.304	1.354	0	4
Freedom of Peaceful Assembly (ordinal form)	2.002	1.330	0	4
Freedom of Expression Index	0.466	0.313	0.01	0.993
GDP per capita (in thousand dollars)	8.777	11.812	0.373	156.299
Armed conflict, internal	0.085	0.278	0	1
Total Revenue from oil (in thousand dollars)	0.466	3.088	0	78.5888
Political Competition	5.452	3.516	1	10

Source: compiled by authors.

Methodology

We propose the following specification, where the dynamic effect of the shock (the celebration of the mega event or the election) is modelled below:

$$human\ rights\ violations_{i,t} = \sum_{k \geq 1} \delta_k event'_{i,t,k} + \gamma X'_{i,t} + country_i + year_t + \mu_{i,t}$$

In which $human\ rights\ violations_{i,t}$ is one of the indicators of human rights (composite index or expert interview response) described in the previous section. $event'_{i,t,k}$ is a set of dummy variables that take value 1 in period t when k years have passed since country i has hosted the event and 0 otherwise. We also code and include the spillover effects in terms of coding the following years as well (years 2-3 and 4-5 grouped together). With this set of dummy variables, we capture the entire dynamic response of human rights violations to the celebration of the event. If parameters that are included in δ_k are negative (positive), they indicate that the level of human right violations has decreased (increased) after k periods following the celebration of the event in country i. As explained in the introduction, these parameters are expected to show a negative sign,

that by bringing light to the human rights' violations due to the increase in the public scrutiny, increased journalistic attention as well as the consequences of the celebration of the event.

$\mu_{i,t}$ is the error term, where $X'_{i,t}$ is a vector of explanatory variables that may have an impact on the level of human right situation for reasons independent of the hosting of events, and with δ_k being the corresponding vector of coefficients.

We estimate the equation using fixed effects model using panel data described in the previous section[1]. We incorporate time and country fixed effects, to capture the aggregate trend generated by unmodeled time-specific and group-invariant effects. To deal with potential autocorrelation and heteroskedasticity problems, we estimate our panel models using White-Huber robust standard errors.

We also note that that the effect of hosting mega-events on human right violations could appear not only from the event opening, but also from the date when the winner of the election of selection of the country is announced. Such events trigger media coverage, increase attention by international press as well as local activists. In addition, such a confirmation might trigger reforms or public policy aimed at bettering the human rights situation at the time when the actual event takes place. In addition, holding of the event requires the host to build necessary infrastructure, dedicate facilities, announce public procurement and deal with issues that require sound juridical prudence. Similarly, to the empirical strategy by Olmos et al. (2020), we will consider both the hosting and the election of the host in coding of the dummy variables.

We include other explanations in the vector $X'_{i,t}$ to test whether the organization of mega events stays robust to alternative determinants for human right situation in a country at a particular point of time. In order to address the omitted variable bias, we include variables of GDP per capita

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[1] As highlighted by Olmos et.al. (2020) the application of the difference-in-differences (DID) methodology is not suitable in this framework, since the treatment is applied to each unit at different moments.

(thousand), Armed conflict (internal), Petroleum Production per capita (thousand) as well as Political Competition. We note that conducted tests do not show signs of multicollinearity concerns among these variables. These factors are in-line with economic (Kinley (2009)), societal (Brecke, (2001) as well as Thoms & Ron (2007)), resource-curse (Haber & Menaldo, 2011) as well as political explanations (Mechkova et al, 2017; Acemoglu & Robinson, 2020) of human rights' situation presented in the introduction.

Empirical Results

Figure 3 presents the estimation results of the models in Table A1 (in the Appendix). We consider the year that countries were chosen to host a mega event as the cutoff point at which human rights can be affected. Columns (1.A, 2.A, 3.A, 4.A) present base models with dummy variables that are coded according to the number of years passed since the year when the particular mega-event took place – with two consecutive years grouped together. This allows to grasp the effect of those events that have been organized at the end or the beginning of a year and that are not defined by that particular year. Base models present the positive impact of the years as well as consecutive years for all the models, which use various indices of human rights as dependent variables – Equal Protection, Physical Violence, Rule of Law and Civil Liberty. The effect does seem to fade in the subsequent years, but pick up again four to five years after the event takes place. Columns (1.B, 2.B, 3.B and 4.B) present specifications that add key control variables, which still confirm the outcome (except for the Rule of Law index), although the magnitude of the effect is lower. The subsequent years after the celebration of the event lose in magnitude by an average of 2%, but generally remain significant. However, the effect of the year of the organization of the event (as well as the following one) stays significant, positive and strong throughout different model specifications while alternating the outcome variables. The dynamic response shows a positive impact on the human rights situation and varies from around 3.8% in Equal Protection Index to 2.6% in case of Civil Liberty Index. This effect seems to be twice smaller in the consequent years,

while the sign and the significance generally persists, although decreasing to 2 percent in the Equal Protection Index and 1.2% in Civil Liberty. Control variables on political competition and the economy (GDP per capita), remain significant throughout all the models, while conflict (armed conflict (internal)) is important for all dependent variables, except for the Equal Protection Index. Resource-dependence (petroleum production) remains significant for Equal Protection Index and marginally significant for the Rule of Law.

Figure 3. Mega Events (Organization) and Human Rights.

Mega Events and Human Rights around the World (1900-2020)
Years of Organization of the events
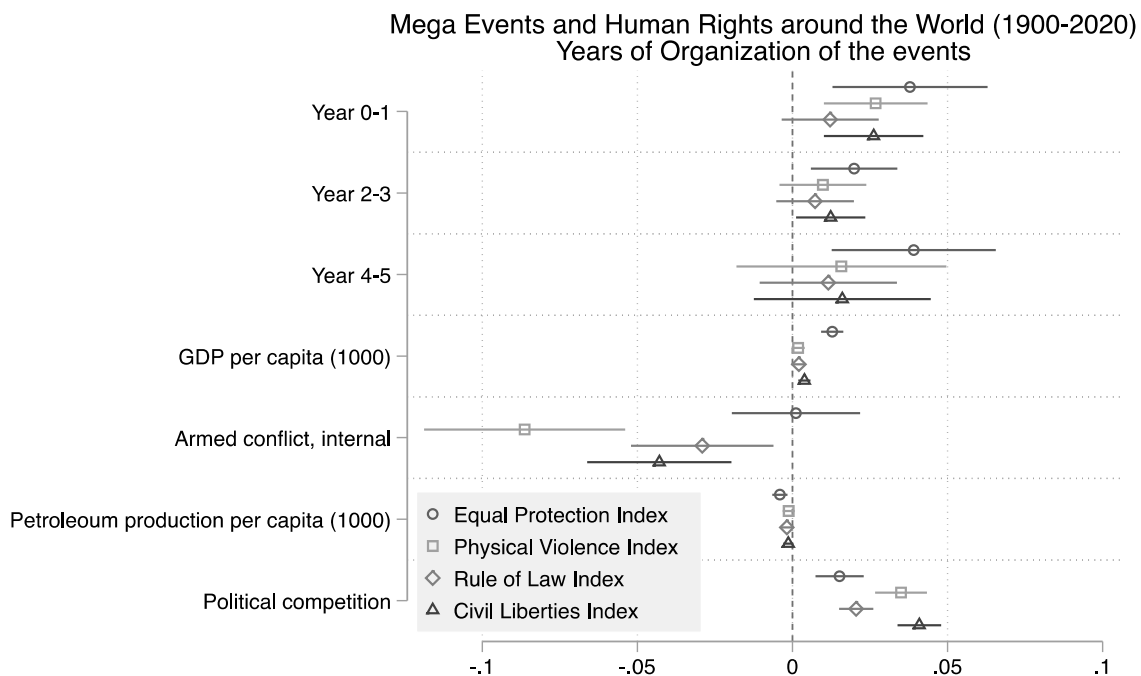
Source: compiled by authors.

In Figure 3, we considered the year in which the country hosted the event as the key moment to have an impact on the level of human rights. There are usually 6-7 years as the preparation for the event, and the year of selection gives us an important window of information in the human right situation. Figure 4 shows years of the announcement of the nomination of the host country as well the consecutive years. Unlike when the event actually takes place, consecutive years matter seem not to matter for Equal Protection Index as well as for the Civil Liberty Index. The year when the

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nomination of the event takes place, seem to matter as much as the organization of the event itself: sign, significance, and magnitude are comparable with Figure 3 (as well as Table A1 in the Appendix) and are similar for all models. Consecutive years lose in significance, and years 4-5, which are one to two years before the start of the event do not seem to matter. The dynamic estimates show a positive association with human rights situation, that remains significant, even when controlling for the traditional factors that determine the association with human rights on the other side of the equation. The dynamic response shows a positive impact on the human rights situation and varies from around 1.5% in Rule of Law Index to 4.7% in the case of Equal Protection Index. This effect seems to be twice smaller in the consequent years, while the significance disappears for Rule of Law, Physical Violence Index, when controlling for other factors. Control variables on the economy (GDP per capita), conflict (armed conflict (internal)), resource-dependence (petroleum production) and political competition resemble the same pattern of significance with the models of the years of the organization of the events with the expected signs.

Figure 4. Mega Events (Selection) and Human Rights.

Mega Events and Human Rights around the World (1900-2020)
Years of Selection of the events
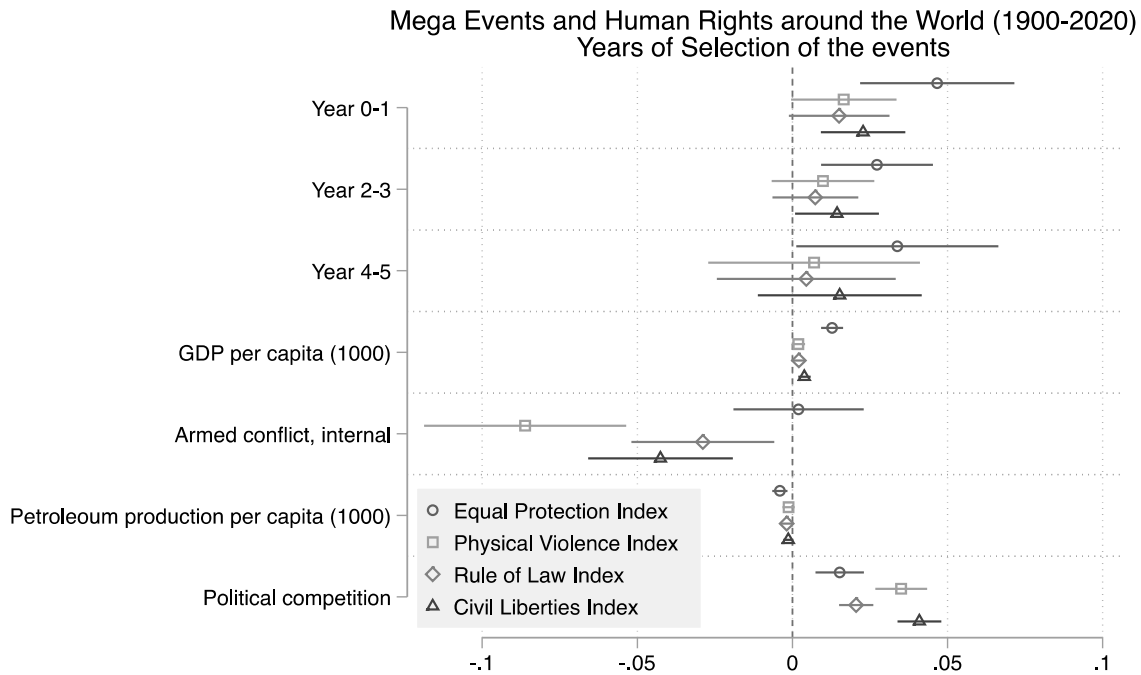
Source: compiled by authors.

Economic (GDP per capita), political (political participation), security (internal conflict), energy dependency (oil production) are strong determinants of the level of human rights around the world. However, years of organization mega events including following years as well as years when a host is nominated are strong determinants of improving the human rights situation across the world, since 1900.

Robustness Checks

We apply robustness checks to our benchmark estimates in order to reinforce the consistency of the previous results. We use a different set of dependent variables that focus on freedom and are based on expert interview questions: freedom variables (Freedom from Political Killings/ Torture / Peaceful Assembly and the) or a composite index, such as Freedom of Expression. Figure 5 presents the estimation results of the models in Table A3 (in the Appendix). Columns (1.A, 2.A,

3.A, 4.A) present base models that show positive impact of the years as well as consecutive years of organization of mega events for all models. Columns (1.B, 2.B, 3.B and 4.B) shows that our results generally hold for the year of the event (Freedom from Political Killings, Freedom from Torture) as well as consecutive years (Freedom of Expression, Freedom of Peaceful Assembly) with a positive sign. Adding key control variables, models still confirm the outcome, while the magnitude of the effect is decreasing. The subsequent years after the celebration of the event lose twice the magnitude and remain significant for three out of four indicators of freedom. Four to five years after the celebration of the event do not seem to be significant when it comes to the level of association with the set of dependent variables. All control variables are and with expected signs: political competition and the economy (GDP per capita), conflict (armed conflict (internal)) and resource-dependence (petroleum production) remain statistically significant (except for Petroleum Production for the Freedom from Political Killings).

Figure 3A. Robustness Checks. Mega Events (Organization) and Human Rights.
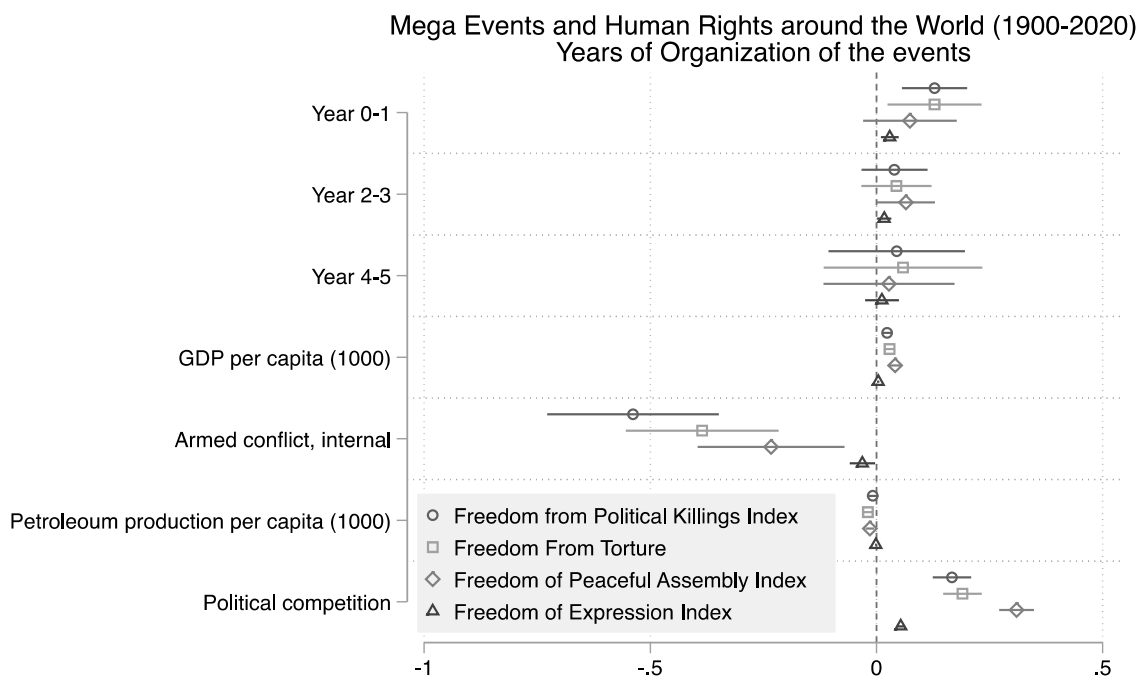
Source: compiled by authors.

Figure 6 shows the results of the robustness checks that focus on the year of the announcement of the host country as well as on the consecutive years. The results show that similarly to the analysis in the previous section, as one to two consecutive years, seem to matter as much as the years when the nomination is announced. These results hold in all, except for the models that use Freedom from Torture and Freedom of Peaceful Assembly as dependent variables, in line with Figure 5 as well. The year when the nomination of the event takes place, seem to matter as the organization of the event itself: sign, significance, and magnitude are comparable with Figure 5 (as well as Table A3 in the Annex) and are similar for all models. Consecutive years lose in significance, and years 4-5, which are one to two years before the start of the event do not seem to matter. The dynamic estimates show a positive association with human rights situation, however, when controlling for economy, conflict, oil-dependence and political competition, results do not hold for Freedom from Torture and Freedom of Peaceful Assembly indicators. The control variables resemble the same pattern of significance and sign with the models of the years of the organization of the events.

Figure 6. Robustness Checks. Mega Events (Selection) and Human Rights.

Mega Events and Human Rights around the World (1900-2020)
Years of Selection of the events
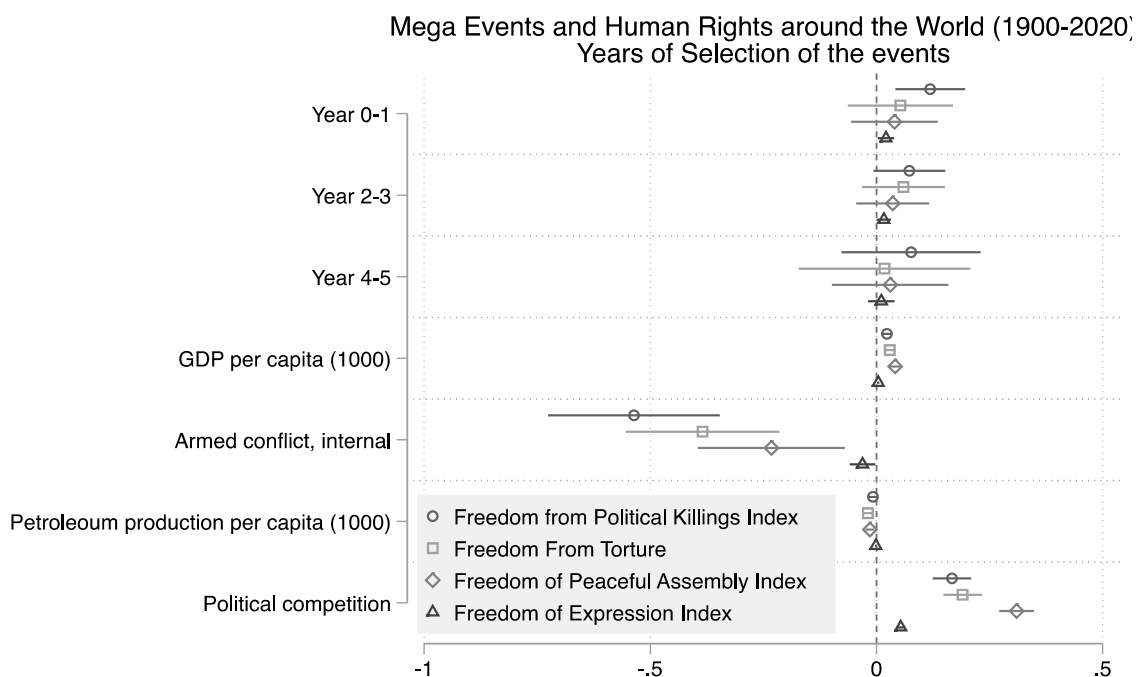
Source: compiled by authors.

Conclusions

The results are surprising. Both the organization and the selection for the mega-event seem to matter when it comes to human right protection in a particular country. Even when controlling for the economic (GDP per capita), political (political participation), security (internal conflict), energy dependency (oil production), which are associated with a strong effect over the human rights violations around the world, mega events as well as the election years (including consecutive years – mostly 2-3 years after) are strong determinants of improving the human rights situation across the world, since 1900.

We offer two potential explanations for this. First, governments try to improve their human rights situation when the host country is nominated. When the event takes place, attention brings upon visitors, diversity and economic resources that gives way to improvement of institutions of governance and human rights come into the spotlight. Also, events themselves, need a strong institutional effort from the organizing country, events bring diversity, plurality of opinions, etc., something that would be of a value especially at the beginning of the 20th century.

Second, the actual human right situation highlighted by journalists in a host country during the preparation and the organization of a mega-event might be better than they are on an average day. We might see only the tip of the iceberg of the actual human rights' situation hidden from the human eye on an average day.

Our results give two main conclusions with the current literature. First, it contributes to the traditional understanding of the determinants of human rights in a particular country that is in line with the factors that include the economy (Kinley, 2009), lack of conflicts (Brecke, 2001; Thoms

& Ron, 2007), healthy political competition (Mechkova et al, 2017; Acemoglu & Robinson, 2020) as well as dependency on oil (Haber & Menaldo, 2011). We show that organization as well as the process of nomination for hosting the mega-events proves to have a consistent and positive impact on the human rights' situation in a particular country. Second, we add to the literature on the consequences of organization of mega-events (Rose & Spiegel, 2011; Knott et al., 2017). Besides the conventional positives of increased economic activity, tourism, mobility, etc. it seems to bring about an improvement in human right situation in a country, with spillover effects for consecutive years. Whether, the 1980 Summer Olympics in Moscow, 2022 Winter Olympics in Beijing or 2022 FIFA World Cup in Qatar, it is worth considering looking at mega-events as a proxy tool for opening up a country and improving human-right situation, particularly in a country, that is struggling with the rule of law.

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Appendix

Table A1. Baseline regressions, during the years the event takes place

When the Event Takes Place	Equal Protection Index		Physical Violence Index		Rule of Law Index		Civil Liberty Index	
	(Base Model)		(Base Model)		(Base Model)		(Base Model)	
	(1.A)	(1.B)	(2.A)	(2.B)	(3.A)	(3.B)	(4.A)	(4.B)
Year 0-1	0.147***	0.038***	0.107***	0.027***	0.074***	0.012	0.122***	0.026***
	(0.019)	(0.013)	(0.021)	(0.008)	(0.018)	(0.008)	(0.021)	(0.008)
Year 2-3	0.092***	0.020***	0.060***	0.010	0.043***	0.007	0.073***	0.012**
	(0.013)	(0.007)	(0.016)	(0.007)	(0.013)	(0.006)	(0.016)	(0.006)
Year 4-5	0.162***	0.039***	0.102***	0.016	0.079***	0.012	0.123***	0.016
	(0.022)	(0.013)	(0.026)	(0.017)	(0.018)	(0.011)	(0.026)	(0.014)
GDP per capita (thousand)		0.013***		0.002*		0.002**		0.004***
		(0.002)		(0.001)		(0.001)		(0.001)
Armed conflict (internal)		0.001		-0.086***		-0.029**		-0.043***
		(0.010)		(0.016)		(0.012)		(0.012)
Petroleum Production per capita (thousand)		-0.004***		-0.001		-0.002*		-0.001
		(0.001)		(0.001)		(0.001)		(0.001)
Political Competition		0.015***		0.035***		0.021***		0.041***
		(0.004)		(0.004)		(0.003)		(0.004)

Constant	0.409***	0.357***	0.522***	0.392***	0.500***	0.449***	0.469***	0.329***
	(0.001)	(0.022)	(0.001)	(0.024)	(0.001)	(0.016)	(0.001)	(0.021)
Observations	26,103	9,073	26,096	9,073	25,909	9,073	25,767	9,072
R-squared	0.023	0.366	0.012	0.323	0.011	0.226	0.017	0.493
Number of countries	199	151	199	151	199	151	199	151

Note: the sample covers the period 1900-2020. Country and time fixed effects are included in all models. Robust standard errors in parentheses, * p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001.

Table A2. Baseline regressions, during the years when the selection takes place

Election Year	Equal Protection Index		Physical Violence Index		Rule of Law Index		Civil Liberty Index	
	(Base Model)		(Base Model)		(Base Model)		(Base Model)	
	(1.A)	(1.B)	(2.A)	(2.B)	(3.A)	(3.B)	(4.A)	(4.B)
Year 0-1	0.173***	0.047***	0.117***	0.017*	0.094***	0.015*	0.140***	0.023***
	(0.018)	(0.013)	(0.023)	(0.009)	(0.020)	(0.008)	(0.022)	(0.007)
Year 2-3	0.113***	0.027***	0.080***	0.010	0.060***	0.007	0.094***	0.014**
	(0.014)	(0.009)	(0.017)	(0.008)	(0.014)	(0.007)	(0.016)	(0.007)
Year 4-5	0.160***	0.034**	0.102***	0.007	0.081***	0.004	0.123***	0.015
	(0.023)	(0.016)	(0.031)	(0.017)	(0.025)	(0.015)	(0.029)	(0.013)
GDP, capita (thousand)		0.013***		0.002*		0.002**		0.004***

		(0.002)		(0.001)		(0.001)		(0.001)
Armed conflict (internal)		0.002		-0.086***		-0.029**		-0.043***
		(0.011)		(0.016)		(0.012)		(0.012)
Petroleum Production per capita (thousand)		-0.004***		-0.001		-0.002*		-0.001
		(0.001)		(0.001)		(0.001)		(0.001)
Political Competition		0.015***		0.035***		0.021***		0.041***
		(0.004)		(0.004)		(0.003)		(0.004)
Constant	0.409***	0.357***	0.522***	0.392***	0.500***	0.449***	0.469***	0.329***
	(0.001)	(0.022)	(0.001)	(0.024)	(0.001)	(0.016)	(0.001)	(0.021)
Observations	26,103	9,073	26,096	9,073	25,909	9,073	25,767	9,072
R-squared	0.024	0.365	0.013	0.323	0.013	0.226	0.018	0.493
Nr of countries	199	151	199	151	199	151	199	151

Note: the sample covers the period 1900-2020. Country and time fixed effects are included in all models. Robust standard errors in parentheses, * p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001

Table A3. Robustness check, during the years the event takes place

When the Event Takes Place	Freedom from Political Killings Index		Freedom From Torture		Freedom of Peaceful Assembly Index		Freedom of Expression Index	
	(Base Model)		(Base Model)		(Base Model)		(Base Model)	
	(1.A)	(1.B)	(2.A)	(2.B)	(3.A)	(3.B)	(4.A)	(4.B)

Year 0-1	0.562***	0.128***	0.614***	0.128**	0.217*	0.074	0.130***	0.029***
	(0.105)	(0.037)	(0.137)	(0.053)	(0.111)	(0.052)	(0.023)	(0.010)
Year 2-3	0.322***	0.040	0.348***	0.044	0.143*	0.065**	0.078***	0.017**
	(0.083)	(0.037)	(0.089)	(0.039)	(0.076)	(0.033)	(0.018)	(0.008)
Year 4-5	0.550***	0.045	0.622***	0.059	0.209	0.028	0.131***	0.012
	(0.130)	(0.076)	(0.159)	(0.089)	(0.132)	(0.073)	(0.031)	(0.019)
GDP per capita (thousand)		0.023***		0.029***		0.041***		0.004***
		(0.005)		(0.006)		(0.008)		(0.001)
Armed conflict (internal)		-0.538***		-0.385***		-0.233***		-0.031**
		(0.096)		(0.086)		(0.082)		(0.014)
Petroleum Production per capita (thousand)		-0.008		-0.019***		-0.015***		-0.001*
		(0.006)		(0.006)		(0.005)		(0.001)
Political Competition		0.167***		0.190***		0.310***		0.054***
		(0.021)		(0.022)		(0.019)		(0.005)
Constant	0.322***	-0.380***	0.050***	-0.761***	-0.028***	-1.736***	0.427***	0.224***
	(0.004)	(0.119)	(0.004)	(0.117)	(0.005)	(0.110)	(0.001)	(0.026)
Observations	26,098	9,073	26,104	9,073	17,432	7,360	25,633	9,049
R-squared	0.013	0.330	0.015	0.376	0.002	0.548	0.015	0.495
Number of country_id	199	151	199	151	178	150	199	151

Note: the sample covers the period 1900-2020. Country and time fixed effects are included in all models. Robust standard errors in parentheses, * $p<0.05$, ** $p<0.01$, *** $p<0.001$.

Table A4. Robustness check, during the years the selection of the event takes place

Election Year	Freedom from Political Killings Index		Freedom From Torture		Freedom of Peaceful Assembly Index		Freedom of Expression Index	
	(Base Model)		(Base Model)		(Base Model)		(Base Model)	
	(1.A)	(1.B)	(2.A)	(2.B)	(3.A)	(3.B)	(4.A)	(4.B)
Year 0-1	0.666***	0.119***	0.643***	0.053	0.310***	0.040	0.145***	0.021**
	(0.119)	(0.039)	(0.135)	(0.059)	(0.082)	(0.048)	(0.023)	(0.009)
Year 2-3	0.448***	0.073*	0.455***	0.060	0.214***	0.036	0.099***	0.016**
	(0.086)	(0.040)	(0.101)	(0.046)	(0.062)	(0.041)	(0.016)	(0.008)
Year 4-5	0.602***	0.076	0.590***	0.018	0.323***	0.030	0.121***	0.011
	(0.160)	(0.078)	(0.171)	(0.096)	(0.117)	(0.065)	(0.029)	(0.015)
GDP, capita (thousand)		0.023***		0.029***		0.041***		0.004***
		(0.005)		(0.006)		(0.008)		(0.001)
Armed conflict (internal)		-0.536***		-0.385***		-0.232***		-0.031**
		(0.096)		(0.086)		(0.082)		(0.014)
Petroleum Production per capita (thousand)		-0.008		-0.019***		-0.015***		-0.001
		(0.006)		(0.006)		(0.005)		(0.001)
Political Competition		0.167***		0.190***		0.310***		0.054***

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
		(0.021)		(0.022)		(0.020)		(0.005)
Constant	0.321***	-0.379***	0.052***	-0.761***	-0.030***	-1.734***	0.427***	0.224***
	(0.004)	(0.119)	(0.004)	(0.118)	(0.004)	(0.109)	(0.001)	(0.026)
Observations	26,098	9,073	26,104	9,073	17,432	7,360	25,633	9,049
R-squared	0.015	0.330	0.015	0.376	0.004	0.548	0.014	0.495
Number of country_id	199	151	199	151	178	150	199	151

Note: the sample covers the period 1900-2020. Country and time fixed effects are included in all models. Robust standard errors in parentheses, * $p<0.05$, ** $p<0.01$, *** $p<0.001$.