DETERMINANTS OF CENSORSHIP: PROTEST, TENURE, AND MISERY

Abstract

Global Freedom has been in decline for 15 years in a row and Press Freedom has followed. This thesis explores the variables affecting Press Freedom (Censorship) around the world. Then, it asks how do we explain the discrepancies in Censorship in different countries? Findings show that variables such as Tenure, Regime Type, GDP per capita really matter. Tenure increases Censorship in autocracies. In terms of Regime Type and GDP per capita, a country needs to democratize and increase its GDP per capita together to reduce Censorship, otherwise Censorship increases. Finally, when Protests happen, a leader who has been in power for a long time will not respond with Censorship, while a new leader is more likely to use Censorship as a response.

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International Relations Honors Thesis

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Spring 2021
I. Introduction

Censorship is defined as “the changing or the suppression or prohibition of speech or writing that is deemed subversive of the common good.”\(^1\) It was associated more with the banning of books or movies by governments in the previous century. However, for us millennials, the first thing that comes to mind is the censoring of the Internet. The online social media platforms replaced the traditional press in many aspects and even the traditional press moved online to keep up with the times. Therefore, the censoring of social media channels or the internet in general affects the Freedom of Press Worldwide. The Freedom of Press variable used here for Censorship was modified to take into account the role of digital media and comprises three main categories: legal, political and the economic environment of the press.\(^2\)

According to the Freedom House, 2020 was the 15th consecutive year of decline in Global Freedom.\(^3\) We can see a correlation here with the rise of social media technologies and digital Censorship, democratic values have been on a decline. “The erosion of press freedom is both a symptom of and a contributor to the breakdown of other democratic institutions and principles, a fact that makes it especially alarming.”\(^4\) Falling press freedom leaves people unable to access correct information and share their opinions with the government. This in turn can increase grievances and trigger movements. “Whereas technological platforms were initially politicized in the Arab Spring campaign and used as tools for democracy, they have since taken

on a more sinister dimension in many countries.” When the governments are able to watch all actions of their citizens through their digital footprints, it is easier for them to silence critics or prevent access to information of their citizens.

Figure 1 shows the Freedom of the Press around the world and we can see that it varies a lot. There are regions like the Middle East that have on average, darker shades, meaning worse Censorship. In order to explain these differences in Freedom of the Press, I looked into the following variables: Protest, Tenure and Misery, as well as their respective interactions. I found that on average, it is not the levels of protest that drive differences seen in Figure 1, but it can be explained more substantially through Tenure, Regime Type and GDP per capita.

**Figure 1: Freedom of the Press Worldwide 2020**

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II. Literature Review

Previously different opinions have been stated on Censorship and Protests along with their respective interactions with technology. I combine the different perspectives presented in these works for the basis of my theoretical framework. The literature review that follows is organized thematically. The themes are as such: Protest and Regime Type, Social Media and Protest, Censorship and Social Media, and lastly different Models of Censorship.

a. Protest and Regime Type

The relationship between protests and different forms of regimes has been heavily researched. There are distinct opinions on whether protests are more likely to occur in democracies or autocracies. It is important to note several points here that contribute to our discussion. On the one hand, “…higher level of democratization reduces the mobilization costs for civil society actors and thus is more conducive to protests. However, others argue that democratization might lead to a decline of social protest activities because a more democratic political system provides more institutionalized channels for political participation and grievance resolution.”

Furthermore, due to these channels for feedback democracies are less likely to experience anti-government protests. Thus, here the relationship between Protest and Regime Type overall is unclear, but in terms of types of protests, one is less likely to see anti-government demonstrations in democracies since there are official channels for grievances.

b. Social Media and Protest

Citizens' access to social media has increased connectivity and the instantaneity of protests around the world. In today’s digital sphere, “Attention is oxygen for movements.

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7 Su 160.
Without it, they cannot catch fire. Powerful actors try to smother movements by denying them attention..." Censorship can be thought of as this denial of attention to movements. Due to increased globalization, movements in one part of the world are cheered on or demonized in other countries. When there is more media coverage on a movement, it is more likely to catch fire, so to say. Unlike it was with traditional media, banning information does not guarantee silencing of criticism. If anything, when a government tries to keep a movement quiet, it is more likely to gain attention on the international scene. This is dubbed the Streisand Effect in the literature.9

This in turn has “... challenged the law’s traditional reliance on territorial borders and thus questioned the government's ability to control citizens’ behaviours.”10 Technically, the internet does not have borders, but with increased government involvement in the digital sphere, we see more and more territorial control of the internet. This notion is manifested through ““the making of knowledge and information into property””11. More and more governments require social media companies to store their user information within the country’s borders in order to access it if a ‘threatening’ situation arises. Since banning the internet directly was not effective anymore, governments came up with other elaborate tools to stop the public from gathering for collective action. There were some authoritarian regimes who acted fast and early. According to Dencik, “if you were not already thinking like China and Iran in the 1990s, it is quite expensive and difficult to switch to that model now.”12 After all, there isn’t only one model of censorship that exists in the world. Some countries like Russia opted for obscure democratic looking

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11 Dencik 115.
12 Tufekci 238.
techniques to discourage journalists. In order to stop people from protesting they create mass information glutes during times of turbulence. Other examples to consider here are Turkey, Egypt, Saudi Arabia as well as some countries in Latin America and South East Asia.

In practice, one does not need an intricate censorship infrastructure in place to be able to monitor the people. “...Surveillance has now reached new frontiers and the costs of mass scrutiny have decreased substantially. “‘Connective surveillance’...the surveillance logic enabled by commercial social-networking services, allows authorities to take advantage of this ready-made ‘survillant assemblage’ of state and nonstate actors.””13 This type of surveillance can be seen in our daily lives, when subjects we talked about or researched show up in the form of ads on our social media platforms. Conditions we agree on for marketing purposes, can in certain cases be used for government surveillance.

The broadening of the use of social media had positive and negative consequences. Governments who were able to access information on social media servers began to send ordinary citizens to jail for criticizing them. This in turn created a form of self-surveillance among active citizens. According to Zeynep Tufekci on the effects of social media on protest culture, “I watched online as people I knew who were used to commenting on news retreated from the discussion, often discouraged by the constant challenging of all statements and assertions of fact.”14 Then the new online sphere became dominated by popularized opinions. Indeed, “Facebook users are more likely to share their views if they think their network of family and friends agrees with them...This permanent search for validation tends to reinforce commonsensical political opinions among users.”15 Marginal or different opinions came to be viewed less and less on social media platforms, leading to both self-censoring as well as a

13 Dencik 64.
14 Tufekci 246.
15 Dencik 195.
frustration in youth due to the inability to share ideas. People started self-censoring not just to avoid government repercussions, but also because of a new challenge of societal verification. The sheer amount of information available is making it almost impossible to decide what is real and what is fake. The traditional forms of media had gatekeepers in the shape of media companies and journalists. Today, most of our instant information comes, not from news channels, but from bystanders, citizens just like ourselves who happened to witness the event and shared what was going on.

The bribing and threatening of media companies especially in authoritarian regimes has further aggravated the situation. Thus, governments have been able to make rhetorical attacks on bona fide experts by positioning these movements as authorities to be resisted, portraying the media as a tool of elites (often distant or foreign). The discrediting of the media by authorities exposed severe weaknesses in gatekeeping of information. When citizens cannot trust the press with their news, who can they turn to? Thus the public has been left in the middle between the government and protestors, unable to choose who to believe.

Another important problem is that “…the time necessary for democratic process is slow…” The very structure of social media reinforces a type of meditation that is based on the immediacy of instantaneous communication. Yet we need to be aware of the fact that… ‘instantaneity’ leads to immediate fulfilment but also, immediate exhaustion.” Democratic governments cannot respond fast enough to changes brought about by the internet. In order to address new issues like the territoriality of the Internet or the usage of social media platforms to silence critics, our notion of democracy itself needs to shift alongside the changing technological public sphere. Moreover, “…the question of authenticity is becoming ever more important in an age that

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16 Tufekci 226.
17 Dencik 85.
hungers for anything that feels authentic, just as we lament more and more that it is a world of inauthenticity. Faced with a crisis of trust in central institutions of contemporary democracy, social and political actors are struggling to manifest societal positions on legitimate grounds.”

Without the establishment of firm privacy rights as well as checks and balances on social media companies it appears hard for the censorship to be eradicated.

c. Censorship and Social Media

The rise of social media as a form of communication worried governments of the world of not being able to stop people’s access to information. The preventative measures they have taken ranged from monitoring social media to deleting certain posts. The literature shows that these measures are not limited to authoritarian regimes. “Within the United States market for Internet expression, a small number of broadband providers have the power ultimately to control which expression is facilitated and which is not. In recent years, the regulation of the Internet has evolved so as to grant these private entities unfettered control over individuals’ expression, to the point at which the potential for private conduits to censor speech in this medium is unprecedented.” These providers have censored matters of political or societal importance that technically should not be possible within a democratic country such as the United States. More importantly, social media companies “... are making decisions with severe political and human rights implications.” This is one part of our global world order, companies making decisions like governments that impact the lives of everyone in the world.

On a more positive note, Tambini and Moore think that “If it comes to a battle between social media companies and the defining characteristic that forms the basis of government

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18 Dencik 206.
19 Nunziato 1.
20 Dencik 119.
legitimacy - elections and democracy itself - Facebook and other dominant platforms will lose. In a year filled with many shocks, we will need to monitor to see what happens to the state of democracy.

d. Models of Censorship

When looking to understand the variations among countries in censorship or protest levels, one needs to consider the different models of censorship employed around the world. In order to better understand the core theories of censorship, I read about the censorship systems of China, Russia, and different countries in Africa. China and Russia are the biggest authoritarian regimes around the world. Therefore, it is important to see how big authoritarian regimes shape their Censorship systems. Africa on the other hand, provides a different picture. It is a continent where connectivity issues are more prevalent than manipulative Censorship mechanisms. As a result, I wished to explore different types of Censorship methods.

Chinese Model of Censorship

The Great Firewall system of China works to filter information coming from outside of the country. Therefore, Chinese citizens use specific apps curated for them, without outside influence, such as WeChat which combines the function of multiple social media platforms. Within the country, different systems of influence are at place in terms of Censorship. “In a single-party authoritarian system, without alternative parties to contrast with, citizens tend to form evaluations based on a vertical division between central and local governments.” Due to the lack of outside influence, the local and central governments end up blaming one another for citizens’ problems. “Theoretically, Shadmehr and Bernhardt (2012) show that Censorship can be

dangerous for a ruler’s hold on power because “no news is bad news” in the eyes of citizens and the ruler gains if he commits to censoring slightly less than his desired level.”\textsuperscript{23} Therefore, the government in China does not censor all critical information. Instead, the Chinese government is more likely to censor news with collective action potential than complaints about the local government.

Another result of a single-party authoritarian system is that the government lacks effective channels of communication with its citizens. This fosters distrust which could result in protests. Citizens are already aware that in an authoritarian regime, representation is not an option. “Therefore, trust in authoritarian systems is more about management than the principle of representation, which underlines its significance for authoritarian durability.”\textsuperscript{24} If the government provides the people with their needs, then people are less likely to question the regime. However, when the government that is already not representing the people, also fails to provide them with governmental services, then the people are more likely to revolt.

Another way in which the government is shaping opinions is through their discourse. “...Due to strong censorship imposed by the Chinese government, the state’s official tone towards the movement has “become part of the everyday language that Chinese use to discuss and understand social and political issues.”\textsuperscript{25} This is dangerous since the government’s rhetoric becomes a part of everyday language which shapes the way Chinese citizens think about the world. What’s more, this could help the perpetuation of an authoritarian government with the power of China. When citizens shape their political opinions through the rhetoric of the


\textsuperscript{24} Chen 315.

government, they are less likely to criticize government discourse, which makes dissent less likely to form.

Further alarming is the fact that “more governments are turning to China for guidance and support at a time when the United States’ global leadership is on the decline, and the acquiescence of foreign companies to Beijing’s demands only emboldens the regime in its effort to rewrite international rules in its favor.”26 When the leading power of the world loses credibility in the face of hybrid democracies, the turning to an authoritarian regime of many countries is alarming. It is known that democracies are less likely to go to war with one another and prove more stable economically and politically. The increase of authoritarian regimes around the world can disrupt the balance of power.

**Russian Model of Censorship**

Formally, “the Russian model relies on a mix of less overt, more plausibly deniable, legalistic, and often nontechnical mechanisms to manipulate online information flows, narratives, and framings to affect and shape public opinion without resort to universal censorship.”27 We can say that Russia built its form of censorship around plausibly deniable scenarios. This alternative approach saw regimes opposing journalists or companies fined or jailed through obscure legal action that are still ‘democratic’. Furthermore, this alternative, somewhat democratic approach to censorship that both removes opposing views as well as confuses the public seems easier to institute than the Chinese model of the Great Firewall system that requires an immense amount of infrastructure. “Russia so far does not utilize the level of pervasive censorship observed in China and other settings.”28

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28 Kerr 65.
Therefore, we can sadly expect to see this model spreading in hybrid regimes that are vulnerable to new information flows. In the early 2000s and 2010s “... “hybrid regimes”—nondemocratic regimes that still based their domestic and international legitimacy in part on democratic institutions and rights protections—seemed particularly vulnerable to the sorts of critical discourse and mass protest mobilizations enabled by the new technologies.”

These countries, not being able to commit 100% to strict censorship without the necessary resources to monitor the people, but also needing some type of censorship to prevent revolts within the country, were left in the middle to be affected by the rise of new information technologies.

Previous argument shows that new democracies were vulnerable to changing information flows. “This also brings into question the Cold War-era assumption that democracies, having less to fear from public discourse and free expression, are always more resilient to international flows of information than are nondemocratic regimes. Democratic countries may in fact have some important vulnerabilities that are different and greater in the face of the new information operation techniques.” Russia’s take on censorship could be applicable to even newly democratic countries that are similar to hybrid regimes in that they are vulnerable to the rise of technology. Hence, Russian Model of Censorship relies on semi-democratic methods that are easier to institute and we can expect to see it spread to other countries in the near future.

**Models of Censorship in Africa**

In the continent of Africa where access to information holds more sway than the censoring of information, different models of censorship are at play. “Although connectivity is increasing, it remains underdeveloped across the continent and in countries where vote share

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29 Kerr 63.
30 Kerr 70.
remains largely rural. Restricting access to information is therefore a far more effective tool in the arsenal of incumbent governments.”

Leaders of Africa, just like everywhere else in the world, have learned to wield the rising technologies to their advantage. Here, Gopaldas makes a distinction between hard digital dictatorships and soft digital dictatorships. While hard digital dictatorships want to control their citizens’ access to information through restrictions, soft dictatorships use available data to monitor information and manipulate the ideas of their citizens.

These different methods of censorship affect society in various ways. Countries in Africa have very high levels of ethnic diversity, so spreading fake news or restricting opposing views is more likely to bring about problems for the regime. “Indeed, the use of data in an African context is a double-edged sword – presenting both huge opportunities and substantial risks. If exploited for short-term gains by self-interested politicians and left unregulated, the risks are skewed to the latter.”

Therefore, the introduction of new technologies to the African continent has acted like a magnifying glass, exposing the good and the bad of societies for the whole world to see.

In all three different modes of censorship, it is important to emphasize the role of new technologies. A couple of decades ago, censorship was restricted to traditional media and depended more on the restriction of opinions. As the access to information became easier around the world, governments had to learn to adapt their censorship strategies. “While originally seeking to sway public opinion primarily through television content, the approach has been updated in recent years to adjust for the growing domestic political significance of Internet

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31 Gopaldas 6.
32 Gopaldas 10-11.
33 Gopaldas 16.
content consumption.” Thus, the once free space, unbound by government borders, has now become increasingly restricted through censorship.

III. Theoretical Intuitions

My intuitions stem from the research I have done into the literature of Censorship as well as my own experiences. For my first hypothesis, I wanted to explore the relationship between Censorship and Protest levels which seem evidently connected. Rational leaders who come to power, want to stay in power for as long as possible. When protests occur within or nearby a country, it is a risk to the leader’s hold on power. This risk is viewed differently in different regime types. When the country is democratic, people are usually not protesting the regime as a democratic regime gives them a voice in the government. Since they do not want to overthrow the regime it is more likely to be a problem with the leaders in power. In autocracies, on the other hand, problems within the country are often tied to the non-democratic nature of the government, so the threat to the government is more likely.

Another implication of this is that protests in autocracies are more likely to result in Censorship since the practice of censorship itself is considered to be non-democratic. Censorship is instituted in order to stop citizens from coordinating with each other through restrictions on media channels designed to stop people from accessing the news. However, in the 21st century, the type of censorship used has evolved with the advancements in technology. Regimes can no longer afford to outright ban news since this has the opposite effect of bringing more attention to the event on the international scene. On the other hand, governments can employ technological advancements to their advantage by tracking potential protestors and/or discrediting them through their use of official government media channels. This led me to make my first

\[\text{Kerr 68.}\]
hypothesis which states that ‘in democracies, high levels of protest don’t lead to censorship. In autocracies, high levels of protest lead to censorship.’

Continuing off of the leader’s hold on power, I looked into the time period in which a leader stays in power. In democracies, leaders can only stay in power for a certain amount of time such as 4 years. However, in autocracies leaders can rig elections or ban elections altogether to stay in power for longer than their allotted time. At the beginning of their term, a leader’s hold on power is weaker. They do not know the other people in the government, they do not have established relationships, among other factors. However, as their time in office increases, the leader has the opportunity to put key figures in key positions who would lend him their support. This in turn makes it easier for the leader to stay in power even if their time in office is over. Then, the leader would use Censorship to silence critics.

More specifically, leaders can use different methods in responding to threats such as repression, buying off, and suppression. Repression refers to forceful silencing of protests whereas buying off implies silencing people through monetary means. This could be a raise in salaries or additional income to certain groups of citizens. Lastly, suppression includes the censoring of information, using covert techniques to discredit or misrepresent a protest movement. These led me to my second hypothesis which is as follows ‘In autocracies, the longer the leader stays in power, the more censorship they use.’

Consequently, I explored the role of economic effects on the occurrence of Censorship. Often we observe protests stemming from a tax on basic goods such as bread that reflect the dire economic conditions a country is in. This led me to believe that when people live under poor economic conditions, they want change, so they protest. As a response, the leader uses
censorship. According to the literature, more often the lower-income part of the population will protest for these economic issues, while the middle-income part of the population will protest for social and political issues. In order to see the economy’s effect on censorship, I created a misery index and my hypothesis is ‘in autocracies, high levels of the misery index leads to more censorship.

The next hypothesis stemmed from my understanding of rentier states which are said to be ‘cursed’ with natural resources and/or strategic payments. In these countries, since the government has an external income that does not come from the leader’s success, protests are less likely to be on economic grounds and more likely to be on moral grounds. The government’s excess income does not come from citizens in the form of tax which makes the government less accountable to them. Therefore, when there are protests in rich autocracies, the leader can afford to buy off protestors. However, one can buy off citizens only up to a certain point. When moral arguments are presented by the citizens, the government needs to employ Censorship in order to prevent coordination between the people. Then I find here a relationship between Regime Type, GDP per capita, and Censorship.

Thus far, my intuitions were focused on the specific determinants of censorship. However, it is also noteworthy to look at the interactions between determinants of censorship. The determinants used so far include Tenure, Misery Index, and Protests. In literature, we see that “...election cycles are associated with the highest peaks of protest.” Furthermore, in the face of threats to their power we observe that leaders can also respond by introducing power-sharing agreements. These agreements usually come to be when the government is not sure about their hold on power and the citizens are not sure about their ability to overthrow the

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35 Ballot and the Street, 333
government. One form of power-sharing includes limited electoral competition. Thus the introduction of semi-democratic measures can be seen as an unsureness on the autocrat’s part in measuring the determination of citizens. This implies that when a leader is encountered with Protests during elections, they are more likely to respond by Censorship if they are new to power, but if they have been in office for long they can use power-sharing agreements to measure the morale of the population.

When we look at the relationship between the Misery Index and Protests, we see that Misery increases the likelihood of protests. “According to one study of European countries after the Global Financial Crisis, every percentage point increase in unemployment rates could increase the likelihood of protests by as much as two percent.” Unemployment rates form half of the Misery Index in my module and prove to be a critical variable in determining the occurrence of protests. An important thing to note here is that measured unemployment levels can be different from their respective effect on society. “...it is not just that economic circumstances trigger unrest, but that perceptions of unfair treatment and a lack of opportunity and social immobility exacerbate societal tensions.” There can be unmeasured local factors that stem from economic stagnation which in turn also contribute to the rise in levels of protests. Having explored the interconnectedness of Tenure, Misery and Protests, we can expect to see joint impacts of these variables on levels of Censorship.

IV. Hypotheses

After careful consideration of my theoretical arguments, I formulated the following five hypotheses.

36 Ballot and the Street, 335
37 Root Causes of Unrest, 16
38 Root Causes of Unrest, 17
**H₀: In democracies, high levels of protest don’t lead to censorship. In autocracies, high levels of protest lead to censorship.**

I expect democracies to not institute high levels of censorship in the face of protests since democratic leaders’ hold on power depends on the will of the people. If people were to find out that they are being censored, then the leader in power faces the risk of not being reelected in the next election. Meanwhile, in autocracies, the leader is not chosen by the people, so they can institute higher levels of censorship in the face of protests. They do not need to fear being overthrown by the people unless the situation turns into a revolt.

**H₀: In autocracies, the longer the leader stays in power, the more censorship they use.**

When leaders first come to power, they are usually more moderate since they do not have control over the system or the trust of the people yet. As they stay in power for longer, they have time to put their supporters in key positions and get a hold of the ruling system. This is of course mostly the case in autocracies since most democracies have limits on the length that the leader can stay in power, as well as the way in which others are selected into the government.

**H₀: In autocracies, high levels of the misery index lead to more censorship.**

In democracies, citizens have official channels through which they can express their grievances. However, in authoritarian regimes, the government lacks these vital channels. Therefore, when the economic conditions are bad, the country’s misery index is high, people are likely to protest to get their voices heard. In an authoritarian regime, I expect
the leader to increase censorship in response to protests the year before in order to prevent increased collective action which could turn into a revolution.

\( \rightarrow H_0: \text{Rich autocracies exhibit high levels of censorship.} \)

In rich autocracies, the government has the power to offer to buy off citizens. If the citizens are bought off, they are less likely to protest. As an additional measure, the leader would still censor more compared to democracies since buying off can only satisfy people up to a certain point, beyond which people could still be troubled by the actions of their government on moral grounds and protests can be expected.

\( \rightarrow H_0: \text{Protest as an input variable affects Censorship more when there are other inputs present.} \)

Different determinants of censorship tested separately in the previous hypotheses can also be coupled together. I believe that the effects of protests will be more pronounced when there is another input present such as a leader who has been in office for a long time or when economic conditions are bad. In order to see their respective interactions, I will be putting my previous variables together.

\( \bullet H_0: \text{In autocracies, the longer a leader stays in power, the less likely they are to increase censorship in the face of protests.} \)

According to my theoretical intuitions, we can conclude that elections in authoritarian regimes reflect an unsureness on a leader’s part of the extent of their power over society. We can also conclude that protests are more likely to happen during elections than normal
times. Thus, we can see that during elections when a new leader is ‘elected’ in an autocracy, they are more likely to face protests which would explain their increased response to protests through censorship. On the other hand, a leader who has been in power for a long time is less likely to use censorship as a response to protests.
### V. Data

Table 1: Summary of Datasets

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th># Observations</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Dev.</th>
<th>Min</th>
<th>Max</th>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Year</td>
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<td>2004.86</td>
<td>8.828</td>
<td>1990</td>
<td>2020</td>
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<td>0.32</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Censorship</td>
<td>Freedom of Press score</td>
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<td>45.63</td>
<td>24.087</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>100</td>
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<tr>
<td>Protest</td>
<td>CNTS Protest Index of Three variables</td>
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<td>0.53</td>
<td>0.87</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5.41</td>
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<tr>
<td>Misery</td>
<td>Inflation Rate + Unemployment</td>
<td>7400</td>
<td>22.87</td>
<td>311.65</td>
<td>-15.62</td>
<td>23775.99</td>
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<td>Natural log of GDP per capita (World Bank)</td>
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<td>1.47</td>
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<td>Population</td>
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I will be using multiple datasets put together in order to analyze my hypotheses. My dependent variable, Censorship, will be coming from the Freedom House. Freedom House has a Freedom of the Press data collection that measures media independence around the world including the degree of print, broadcast, and digital media freedom in 199 countries and territories from 1979 to 2017. The data assigns a numerical value to each country per year ranging from 0 to 100, Freedom of the Press decreasing as the value increases. I chose the years 1993-2017 to analyze given countries due to the structure of the data. Pre-1993 data is only available in character format, numerical analyses start in 1993. Therefore, I decided to look at the around three-decade period between 1993 and 2017.

For my main independent variable, levels of Protest, I considered different approaches. One approach was to use a more focused dataset including a few regions of the world that had more specific data in it. The other one was to include as many countries as possible without more in-depth information. I chose to go the second route since, in my analysis, I am looking at general trends across countries and time. My protest data comes from the Cross-National Time-Series (CNTS) Data Archive. The dataset has 200+ countries and includes the years 1815 and onward. The National Domestic Conflict Data includes many variables such as government crises, purges, riots, etc. I created my protest variable as an index of three variables within this dataset: strikes, riots, and anti-government demonstrations. They are all dummy variables taking 0 or 1 depending on their occurrence within a country in a given year. Furthermore, I took the logarithm of the index in order to account for the differences of magnitude. I also used protest from 1990 onwards since my censorship data started in 1993 and I will be needing the lagged variable of protest in order to account for protests in the year before.
In order to identify the different regimes and their respective relationship with Censorship, I use the Polity V Score of Democracy. The dataset contains accounts for years 1800-2018 but I chose to use data post-1990 due to my Censorship variable only being available after 1993. I will be using the Polity 2 variable which is revised for time-series research. The dataset contains 167 countries. In terms of the data, the regime scores of the countries range from -10 to 10 which is harder to numerically analyze with negative variables. Therefore, I converted the -10,10 scale to a 0,1 scale. The lower the number is the more autocratic the regime is and the opposite is true for democracies.

My third hypothesis looks into the length of a leader’s time in office. In order to see how long leaders stayed in power across countries and years, I use the Archigos dataset with 200+ countries. Data identifies the primary ruler of a given country at a given year and has their entry and exit dates to and from office. The dataset also includes the leader's manner of leaving office, as well as their post-tenure fate. Archigos ranges from 1875 to 2015, but I use the data from 1990 onwards per the availability of my Censorship data. I used the entry and exit dates of rulers to constitute a measure of the tenure of the leader in any year.

Furthermore, I created a misery index that includes the Unemployment and Inflation Rates of countries provided by the World Bank. The Inflation Data is an annual percentage of consumer prices whereas the Unemployment Data is a percentage of the total labor force that is unemployed. The Inflation data includes the years 1960-2019 and 200+ countries. The Unemployment data includes the years 1991-2020 and 200+ countries as well.

Lastly, my controls all come from the World Bank and are as follows: GDP per capita (constant 2010 US$), GDP Growth Rate (Annual %), and Population (Total). All include the
years 1960 to 2019 and 200+ countries. I took the logarithm of population and GDP per capita to account for the problem of magnitude.

VI. Empirical Design

I will be running multivariate OLS regression analysis with my variables for each of my hypotheses. My unit of measurement is Nation/Year since I will be looking across countries and through time. I will be using the World Bank codes of countries in order to avoid complications. Year will be ranging from 1990 onwards depending on the variable. I have five models in total, where I explore the relationship between Censorship and different variables. In my first four models I look into the way in which Censorship is affected by certain variables whereas, in my last model, I look into the interactive effects of these variables on Censorship. All my models include control variables to account for variation across countries in terms of wealth, population, and income growth.

I plan to use the following models to test my hypotheses.

Model 1
Censorship = $\beta_0 + \beta_1$\text{(Protest Lagged)} + $\beta_2$\text{(Regime Type)} + $\beta_3$\text{(Protest Lagged*Regime Type)} + $\beta_4$\text{(Controls)} + $\varepsilon$

→ I expect $\beta_1 > 0$ when Regime Type = 0 (Autocracy), and $\beta_1 + \beta_3 = 0$ when Regime Type = 1 (Democracy).

Model 2
Censorship = $\beta_0 + \beta_1$\text{(Tenure)} + $\beta_2$\text{(Regime Type)} + $\beta_3$\text{(Regime Type*Tenure)} + $\beta_4$\text{(Controls)} + $\varepsilon$
I expect that $\beta_1 > 0$ when Regime Type = 0 (Autocracy), and $\beta_1 + \beta_3 = 0$ when Regime Type = 1 (Democracy).

**Model 3**

Censorship = $\beta_0 + \beta_1(\text{Misery}) + \beta_2(\text{Regime Type}) + \beta_3(\text{Misery*Regime Type}) + \beta_4(\text{Controls}) + \epsilon$

I expect that $\beta_1 > 0$ when Regime Type = 0 (Autocracy), and $\beta_1 + \beta_3 = 0$ when Regime Type = 1 (Democracy).

In the first three models, I expect the variables Protest, Tenure and Misery to have positive relationships with Censorship.

**Model 4**

Censorship = $\beta_0 + \beta_1(\text{Regime Type}) + \beta_2(\text{GDP per capita}) + \beta_3(\text{Regime Type* GDP per capita}) + \beta_4(\text{Controls}) + \epsilon$

I expect that $\beta_2 > 0$ and $(\beta_1 + \beta_3) = 0$. When a country is autocratic, Regime Type = 0, higher levels of GDP per capita increase Censorship. When a country is democratic, Regime Type = 1, the joint effect of Regime Type and the interaction with GDP per capita is close to zero.

**Model 5**

1. Censorship = $\beta_0 + \beta_1(\text{Protest Lagged}) + \beta_2(\text{Tenure}) + \beta_3(\text{Misery}) + \beta_4(\text{Regime Type}) + \beta_5(\text{GDP per capita}) + \beta_6(\text{Regime Type*GDP per capita}) + \beta_7(\text{Tenure*Protest Lagged}) + \beta_8(\text{Tenure*Misery}) + \beta_9(\text{Protest Lagged*Misery}) + \beta_{10}(\text{Controls}) + \epsilon$

   • Expectations of main variables:
When Regime Type = 0, I expect

- $\beta_1 > 0$, $\beta_2 > 0$ and $\beta_3 > 0$
- Here, I am trying to observe the joint effect of Tenure, Protest and Misery on Censorship. I expect them to be all positively correlated and statistically significant.

When Regime Type = 1, I expect

- $\beta_1$, $\beta_2$, $\beta_3$ to have no effect
- When a country is democratic, I expect these variables to not change levels of Censorship.

Expectations of interactions:

When Regime Type = 0, I expect

- $\beta_7 > 0$, $\beta_8 > 0$ and $\beta_9 > 0$
- Here we are looking specifically at how the interactions between Tenure, Protest and Misery affect Censorship.
  - I expect a leader who has been in power for longer to use more Censorship in the face of protests.
  - I expect a leader to use more Censorship when economic conditions are bad.
  - Finally, when economic conditions are bad, I expect the presence of protests to increase the likelihood of Censorship.

When Regime Type = 1, I expect

- $\beta_3 + \beta_8 = 0$
\[ \beta_2 + \beta_7 = 0 \]
\[ \beta_1 + \beta_9 = 0 \]

**Controls**
- For all my models I use three control variables
  - \( \log(\text{Population}) \)
  - \( \log(\text{GDP per capita}) \)
  - GDP Growth

**VII. Results and Analysis**

My results are surprising in the sense that my main assumptions do not hold, but I reach important conclusions from my other hypotheses. The driving intuition of this thesis stemmed from the relationship between Censorship and Protests. I expected protests to be the main force behind a leader’s institution of Censorship, since my model looks at Censorship as a response in the face of a threat to a leader’s hold on power. However, according to my analysis, protests are not the main driver behind a leader’s decision to use Censorship. Instead, a variable I intuitively thought to not be of great importance, Tenure, really matters in a leader’s decision to institute censorship. Furthermore, as expected, Regime Type and GDP per capita matter in affecting Censorship. Misery which I thought would drive Censorship also does not significantly matter. I will be explaining my findings in three steps. First, we will be looking at the main regressions involving my four main models. Then, we will be looking at the Fixed Effects Model of these main regressions. Lastly, I will be discussing the interactive effects model which is my fifth hypothesis.
A. Main Regression Results

Table 2: Regression Results of Hypotheses 1-4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Main Regression Results</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(1)</td>
<td>(2)</td>
<td>(3)</td>
<td>(4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dependent variable:</td>
<td>Censorship</td>
<td>Censorship</td>
<td>Censorship</td>
<td>Censorship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protest_Lagged</td>
<td>0.905</td>
<td>(0.824)</td>
<td>0.905</td>
<td>(0.824)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regime_Type</td>
<td>-52.840***</td>
<td>-46.053***</td>
<td>-52.124***</td>
<td>13.036***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.826)</td>
<td>(1.752)</td>
<td>(0.764)</td>
<td>(4.041)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tenure</td>
<td>2.225***</td>
<td>(0.567)</td>
<td>2.225***</td>
<td>(0.567)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Misery</td>
<td>0.006</td>
<td>(0.008)</td>
<td>0.006</td>
<td>(0.008)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population</td>
<td>1.175***</td>
<td>1.614***</td>
<td>1.544***</td>
<td>1.855***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.158)</td>
<td>(0.144)</td>
<td>(0.143)</td>
<td>(0.138)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GDP_Growth</td>
<td>0.044</td>
<td>0.030</td>
<td>0.045</td>
<td>-0.002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.035)</td>
<td>(0.035)</td>
<td>(0.035)</td>
<td>(0.034)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regime_Type:GDP_per_capita</td>
<td>-7.632***</td>
<td>-7.632***</td>
<td>-7.632***</td>
<td>-7.632***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.465)</td>
<td>(0.465)</td>
<td>(0.465)</td>
<td>(0.465)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GDP_per_capita</td>
<td>-4.584***</td>
<td>-4.469***</td>
<td>-4.384***</td>
<td>1.088***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.154)</td>
<td>(0.156)</td>
<td>(0.151)</td>
<td>(0.364)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protest_Lagged:Regime_Type</td>
<td>1.467***</td>
<td>1.467***</td>
<td>1.467***</td>
<td>1.467***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(1.020)</td>
<td>(1.020)</td>
<td>(1.020)</td>
<td>(1.020)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regime_Type:Tenure</td>
<td>-2.919***</td>
<td>(0.808)</td>
<td>-2.919***</td>
<td>(0.808)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regime_Type:Misery</td>
<td>-0.005</td>
<td>(0.010)</td>
<td>-0.005</td>
<td>(0.010)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>102.204***</td>
<td>89.788***</td>
<td>95.035***</td>
<td>44.851***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(2.925)</td>
<td>(2.933)</td>
<td>(2.688)</td>
<td>(4.007)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observations</td>
<td>3,081</td>
<td>3,127</td>
<td>3,175</td>
<td>3,175</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R²</td>
<td>0.734</td>
<td>0.729</td>
<td>0.729</td>
<td>0.750</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjusted R²</td>
<td>0.734</td>
<td>0.728</td>
<td>0.729</td>
<td>0.750</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residual Std. Error</td>
<td>12.080 (df = 3074)</td>
<td>12.143 (df = 3120)</td>
<td>12.128 (df = 3168)</td>
<td>11.646 (df = 3169)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F Statistic</td>
<td>1,417.103***</td>
<td>1,397.097***</td>
<td>1,420.825***</td>
<td>1,902.276***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(df = 6; 3074)</td>
<td>(df = 6; 3120)</td>
<td>(df = 6; 3168)</td>
<td>(df = 5; 3169)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: * p<0.1; ** p<0.05; *** p<0.01

→ $H_1$: In democracies, high levels of protest don’t lead to censorship. In autocracies, high levels of protest lead to censorship.
For my first hypothesis, I expected to find a significant relationship between Protests and Censorship. I used the Protest Lagged variable as my Protest variable, since I wanted to explore the effect of protests in the year before on the level of censorship a year later. My intuition in doing so is due to the slowness of response on part of the government in instituting censorship. This excludes internet or social media shutdowns which are immediate responses to protests on part of governments. I expected Protests to affect the levels of censorship in autocracies, but not in democracies. Democratic regimes have protests, but their response to protests is not in the form of censorship which in and of itself is an undemocratic practice. I found that levels of protest do not have a significant effect on the levels of censorship.

Furthermore, as a country gets bigger in size, as the population increases, the level of censorship increases. The relative effects of censorship in a small vs. a big country are different. In a small country, censoring is not going to be an effective response in part of the leader. Citizens can learn news from each other or neighboring countries whereas in a large country, the existence of censorship affects people’s access to information. Especially if a person lives in a rural area, they are reliant on the government to distribute truthful information. That is why as a country becomes bigger in size more censorship is instituted because it works in the government’s favor as an effective response. Another reason to think of is that a small country is reliant on news sources around the world for global news so shutting them down is not gonna be helpful for the country as a whole. The R-squared of the model is around 73.4% which means that this model explains around 73% of the variation in data.

➔ \( H_2: \text{In Autocracies, the longer the leader stays in power, the more censorship they use.} \)
My second hypothesis predicted that Tenure would be an important factor in determining Censorship in Autocracies. Specifically, I expected the coefficient of my Tenure variable to be positive when a country is autocratic. When a country is democratic, I expected the coefficients of Tenure and Regime Type*Tenure to approximately cancel each other out.

I found Tenure to have a significant relationship with the levels of Censorship. As a regime gets more democratic their levels of censorship decrease. In democratic countries Tenure’s impact on censorship is cancelled out by the Regime Type*Tenure interactive term. Specifically, one is 2.225 and the other is -2.919 and they are both statistically significant. In autocracies, when Regime Type = 0 in the extreme case, Tenure positively impacts censorship. Namely, the longer a leader stays in power, the more likely they are to use censorship.

⇒ **H₃**: In autocracies, high levels of the misery index lead to more censorship.

In my third model, I expected to see the Misery Index affecting the levels of Censorship significantly. However, that was not the case. The barely positive coefficient (0.006) on the Misery Index is not statistically significant in regards to Censorship. I expected the economy to affect Censorship since it is such a big force in the everyday lives of people. It may be the case that here the economic conditions do not drive censorship, but they affect people’s likeliness to protest, revolt or start revolutions which in turn change the levels of censorship in a country.

⇒ **H₄**: Rich autocracies exhibit high levels of censorship.
My fourth model stems from my observations regarding rich autocracies. Here my intuition specifically comes from the rentier states which are resource rich authoritarian states such as the oil producing nations of the Middle East. I expect these countries specifically to have more Censorship in comparison to a poor autocratic state.

In the results table we can see that the coefficient of the Regime Type and GDP per capita variables are positive and the interaction of Regime Type and GDP per capita is negative. Regime Type yields a positive coefficient here because of its interaction with GDP per capita. We can conclude that when a country only becomes more democratic or more rich, then the levels of Censorship increase. When a country becomes rich and democratic from poor and autocratic, the net effect on censorship is around 0.
Table 5: Effects of Regime Type and GDP per capita on increasing Censorship (100 point scale)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Poor</th>
<th>Rich</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Democrat</td>
<td>-31.5</td>
<td>-70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Autocrat</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Additionally, Table 5 shows the relative impact of nations being poor/rich and democratic/autocratic on the levels of Censorship. We can see that being autocratic increases censorship while being democratic reduces it. Specifically, being rich and democratic greatly reduces censorship. In the authoritarian regimes category, being rich and autocratic increases censorship more than being poor and autocratic, but the effect is not as significant as in democracies. This result suggests that it is not enough to democratize nations, but a balanced growth of both the economy and the political institutions is necessary for freedom of speech. On the flip side, rich autocracies are more likely to use censorship than their poor counterparts. Therefore, it will be more effective to deprive rich autocracies of their income for them to liberalize.

This effect is overstated in the fixed effects model which controls for cross country differences and allows us to look into the changes given a specific country. In a specific country then, the variance of Regime Type and GDP per capita will be much smaller than across countries.
### B. Fixed Effects Models

#### Table 3: Fixed Effects Models of Hypotheses 1-4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fixed Effects Models</th>
<th>Dependent variable:</th>
<th>(1)</th>
<th>(2)</th>
<th>(3)</th>
<th>(4)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Censorship</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protest_Lagged</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.276</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(0.473)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regime_Type</td>
<td>-28.454***</td>
<td>-26.001***</td>
<td>-27.305***</td>
<td>20.005***</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(1.091)</td>
<td>(1.293)</td>
<td>(1.019)</td>
<td>(6.058)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tenure</td>
<td>0.797**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.346)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Misery</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.001</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(0.004)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population</td>
<td>4.088***</td>
<td>4.291***</td>
<td>4.998***</td>
<td>2.152*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(1.240)</td>
<td>(1.224)</td>
<td>(1.202)</td>
<td>(1.227)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GDP_Growth</td>
<td>-0.033*</td>
<td>-0.037*</td>
<td>-0.036*</td>
<td>-0.039**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.019)</td>
<td>(0.019)</td>
<td>(0.019)</td>
<td>(0.019)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regime_Type:GDP_per_capita</td>
<td>-6.400***</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(0.804)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GDP_per_capita</td>
<td>-0.599</td>
<td>-1.076</td>
<td>-0.885</td>
<td>1.511**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.665)</td>
<td>(0.657)</td>
<td>(0.650)</td>
<td>(0.708)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protest_Lagged:Regime_Type</td>
<td>-0.099</td>
<td>-0.642</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.583)</td>
<td>(0.472)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regime_Type:Tenure</td>
<td></td>
<td>-0.004</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(0.005)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Observations         | 3,081                | 3,127 | 3,175 | 3,175 |
|                      | (0.005)              |     |     |     |
| R²                   | 0.211                | 0.202 | 0.202 | 0.217 |
|                      | (0.005)              |     |     |     |
| Adjusted R²          | 0.166                | 0.158 | 0.158 | 0.174 |
|                      | (0.005)              |     |     |     |
| F Statistic          | 129.662*** (df = 6; 2916) | 125.070*** (df = 6; 2962) | 127.297*** (df = 6; 3008) | 167.079*** (df = 5; 3009) |

Note: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

In order to control for cross country variation, I created the fixed effects models of the afore-mentioned regressions. These models help us to zoom in on country-specific effects in our regressions. When we take a look at Table 3, in the first regression, I tested the relationship between Protests and Censorship. Here we can observe that the Protest variable is still not significant. This model helps us account for heterogeneities between countries such as cultural...
norms. Moreover, the effect of GDP per capita on the level of Censorship disappears within a country. GDP Growth becomes relatively significant here. As the economy grows, the level of censorship decreases. Although the effect is small, we peak into a key area that could be helpful in policy decisions in the future.

In the second regression, I looked into the relationship between Tenure and Censorship. Accounting for country specific effects, Tenure is still a significant variable in determining Censorship. The longer a leader is in power, the more likely they are to use censorship.

In the third regression, accounting for fixed effects does not change the fact that the Misery index here is not statistically significant.

For the last regression, the effect is similar to that of the main model. When a country becomes more democratic or richer within itself, levels of Censorship increase. However, if a country becomes both rich and democratic, then Censorship decreases. GDP Growth reduces Censorship here as well. I will be discussing the fifth model in detail below.
C. Interactive Effects Model

Table 4: Interactive Effects Model of Hypothesis 5

<p>| | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>OLS</td>
<td>panel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(1)</td>
<td>linear (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protest_Lagged</td>
<td>3.042***</td>
<td>-0.020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.540)</td>
<td>(0.307)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tenure</td>
<td>0.982***</td>
<td>0.192</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.303)</td>
<td>(0.183)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regime_Type</td>
<td>7.959*</td>
<td>16.836***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(4.192)</td>
<td>(6.249)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GDP_per_capita</td>
<td>0.533</td>
<td>1.531**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.382)</td>
<td>(0.734)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regime_Type:GDP_per_capita</td>
<td>-6.936***</td>
<td>-6.036***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.482)</td>
<td>(0.831)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protest_Lagged:Tenure</td>
<td>-0.960***</td>
<td>0.164</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.320)</td>
<td>(0.174)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tenure:Misery</td>
<td>0.002</td>
<td>-0.0003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.004)</td>
<td>(0.002)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protest_Lagged:Misery</td>
<td>-0.007*</td>
<td>-0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.004)</td>
<td>(0.002)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observations</td>
<td>3,057</td>
<td>3,057</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R²</td>
<td>0.750</td>
<td>0.228</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjusted R²</td>
<td>0.750</td>
<td>0.183</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residual Std. Error</td>
<td>11.687 (df = 3045)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F Statistic</td>
<td>832.497*** (df = 11; 3045) 77.477*** (df = 11; 2888)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

In Table 4, I am putting together my previous variables to observe their joint effect on Censorship. Firstly, I expect Tenure, Protest and Misery to positively affect Censorship levels in an autocracy, but for them to have no effect in democracies. I find that, when coupled with other variables, Protest becomes significant in this regression. As levels of protest increase, so does Censorship. Tenure is again significant here. Misery is not significant as in the previous models.
In the fixed effects model, protest becomes insignificant again. Misery on the other hand seems to be relatively significant here. However, it is negatively correlated with Censorship. As Misery increases, as economic conditions worsen, censorship decreases. Instead of implementing more censorship in the face of the collapse of the economy, the leader here decides to censor less. One explanation could be that this is a policy response to the current economic situation. The country could be receiving foreign aid or loans on the condition that they liberalize, decrease censorship.

→ $H_0$: In autocracies, the longer a leader stays in power, the less likely they are to increase censorship in the face of protests.

From here on, I want to zoom in on the interactions between these variables. Firstly, I will look into the interaction between Tenure and Protest and then the relationship between Tenure and Misery. Lastly, I take a look at three interactions between each one of them.

For the first part, the coefficients of Tenure and Protest are both positive. This means that the leader being in office for a long time or having lots of Protest the year before increases the likelihood of censorship. However, the joint effect of these two variables, specifically, if the leader has been in office for a long period of time and a lot of protests occur the year before, they are less likely to use censorship. Another implication of this relationship can be seen through the coefficients of Tenure and Protest Lagged*Tenure. They cancel each other out, meaning that when the leader has been in office for a long time, protest is not a threat on their hold on to power that would result in them using Censorship as a response. This also implies that if a leader just came into office, they are more likely to institute censorship in the face of protests.
Likewise, I look at the interaction between Tenure and Misery. Throughout most of my analysis the Misery Index does not seem to matter as much as the other variables. Here too, Misery is not a statistically significant variable. I can conclude that Misery is not the driving force behind Censorship in my analysis. Similarly, the interaction of Protest and Misery is only significant at the 10% level and is not the driving force behind Censorship either.

VIII. Conclusion

Throughout the thesis, I have explored different determinants of Censorship and how they interact with each other. I had five hypotheses initially selected. I failed to reject my second, fourth and fifth hypotheses. My second hypothesis delved into the relationship between Tenure and Censorship. I found that Tenure is statistically significant in regards to Censorship and as a leader stays in power longer, they are more likely to use censorship. My fourth hypothesis looked into the relationship between GDP per capita and Regime Type on Censorship. I found that when a country becomes just more democratic or richer, then the levels of Censorship increase. This means that just becoming democratic or rich is not sufficient to reduce levels of Censorship. A country needs to become both rich and democratic for Censorship to not increase. My fifth hypothesis looked into the joint effects of Protest, Tenure and Misery. I hypothesized that Protest would become more significant when entering the equation with Tenure and Misery. As a result, Protest did become statistically significant here. This outcome suggests that Protest levels by themselves may not be sufficient enough for the leader to increase Censorship, but given other factors the effect is stronger. Another implication of my fifth hypothesis, looked into the interactions between Tenure, Protest and Misery. I find that if a leader has been in power for a long time, they are less likely to respond to protests, a threat to their hold on power, with Censorship. However, if a leader came to power recently, then they are more likely to respond to
protests with Censorship. Another finding that was significant only at the 10% level, but might have important implications is in regards to economic growth variable. I found that growth of GDP is negatively correlated with Censorship.

All of these findings have significant implications for policy recommendations in hybrid or autocratic regimes. Knowing that rich autocracies increase Censorship more compared to poor autocracies, we can use more economic factors to democratize rich autocratic regimes. Furthermore, Tenure has really significant effects on Censorship that is not widely considered to be a driving force. I want to emphasize the importance of having a leader in power for a long period of time in an authoritarian regime. We see emerging populist leaders today in the world. Some countries that started out democratic have seen their leaders not wanting to relinquish their hold on power. Thus, there are a lot of countries where the leader manages to stay in power through democratic-looking actions or rigged elections. To reemphasize my intuition, these leaders have the chance to put key actors in key positions within the government if the legislative system is not strong enough. If the checks and balances of a democracy do not work properly then these leaders will use this loophole to their advantage so that they can stay in power for a longer amount of time. Knowing the effect these long-time leaders can have on freedom of speech we should be more vigilant about proper democracy building. Per my fourth hypothesis, it is not just enough to democratize the country, but the economy needs to grow together for the change to be effective. Combining these two outcomes, when a country is transitioning into a democracy, the economy and political institutions play a very important role.

It is also vital to recognize that my research model is not perfect. There are some missing data from my observations that may have affected the results. Moreover, I am only observing the
effects on Censorship of three variables when we can look into many other social and economic factors. My data spans from 1990-2020, but looking into the past might also prove helpful for further research. I chose my Censorship data to start from 1993 because prior to that the data is not numerical. Countries are categorized not on a 0-100 scale but on a Free, Partly Free and Not Free scale. Therefore, it is harder to analyze numerically press freedom prior to 1993. There is also the matter of measurement. Censorship is not an easy to measure variable. Government’s Censorship can take many forms that may not be seen in action. It could be that the population starts to self-censor after seeing their friends or relatives being interrogated for their posts on social media. One needs to recognize the importance of getting your voice heard in a society. Censorship prevents that so that the leader can stay in power longer, but it also shuts off channels of feedback from the public and increases chances of frustration on part of the population which could then lead to a revolution when coupled with other grievances like hunger, economic conditions etc.

Nonetheless this paper has important implications for research into the area of Censorship. With the advances in technology, we have started to see completely new forms of Censorship used by governments. As discussed in the literature review, some governments have invested in infrastructure that can literally control the internet within their borders while the others rely on overtly legal methods to silence dissidents. In this new age, “the roles and responsibilities of governments, civil society, Internet providers and regulators will need to be re-assessed and redesigned to ensure that they are adept at managing the complex, ambiguous and evolving realities that sit at the intersection of technology, politics, and governance.”\(^{39}\) The digital tools of Censorship allow leaders to stay in power for longer and control their citizens

\(^{39}\) Gopaldas 17.
more effectively. As a result of this, we see higher levels of Censorship in Autocracies, more likely in richer ones and consequently leaders who have been in power for longer are more likely to use Censorship.

To conclude, “although initially conceived by both courts and commentators—as a speech utopia, the Internet is now in danger of becoming a dystopia for expression because of this concentration of power and private regulation and control. This can be seen even in the most democratic or advanced countries today. Europe and the US were championed as models of non-censorship and democracy for a long time. As years passed, both their democracy and people’s trust in the media eroded. The rest of the developing world initially thought that there was something different about the US and Europe that made them so successful with their democracies. However, as the Western democracies started to suffer from the same problems as the developing world, a feeling of hopelessness spread over the rest of the world, eroding people’s trust in the West and their democracies. It is important to re-establish these connections and assess what went wrong in the West as well as in the developing world. This paper helps us gaze into the variables that affect Censorship as well as their combined impact on the practice of Censorship which can hopefully help promote change in places that need it.

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Bibliography


