Online Supplemental Appendix

Dictatorships and Western Public Relations Firms

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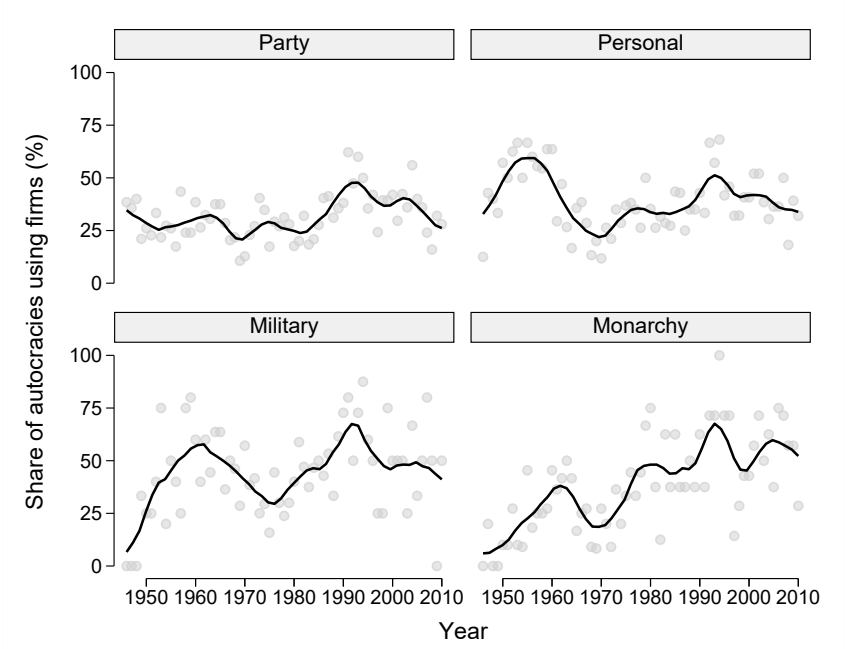
A.1 Additional descriptives

This section provides additional descriptive visualizations.

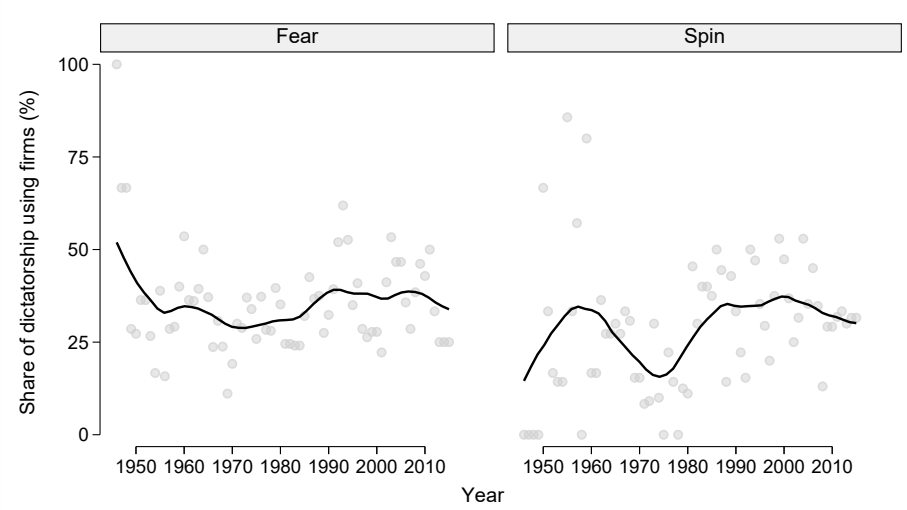
1) **Trends in Western PR firm usage across authoritarian regimes:** Figure A.1.1 shows how the use of PR firms has developed across all four authoritarian regimes identified by Geddes, Wright and Frantz (2014). As can be seen, since 1950, more than one third of all dominant-party and personalist dictatorships have employed PR firms. In contrast, 1 out of 2 military dictatorships hired PR firms in the early 1960 and again in the mid-1990s. The share of monarchies using PR firms has visibly increased over time with today almost 2 out of 3 these regimes contracting PR professionals.
2) **Trends in Western PR firm usage across fear and spin dictatorships:** Figure A.1.2 shows how the use of PR firms has developed across fear and spin dictatorships, as defined by Guriev and Treisman (2022). As can be seen, both regime types have made use of such PR experts since 1950, with use being higher in regimes that rule through fear.
3) **Lengths of contracts between Western PR firms and dictatorships:** Figure A.1.3 shows the lengths of contracts initiated between Western PR firms and authoritarian regimes. The average contract length is 3 years with a standard deviation of 5 years.

Figure A.1.1. PR firm usage over time (GWF regime types)



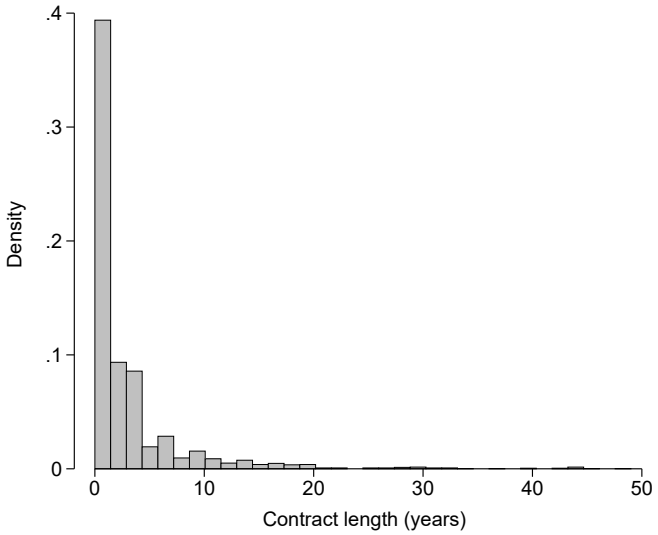
Note: Graph shows share of autocratic regimes with at least one PR firm contract. Regime data is based on Geddes, Wright and Frantz (2014). Smoothed black line is based on yearly share (grey dots).

Figure A.1.2. PR firm usage over time (GT regime types)



Note: Graph shows share of dictatorships with at least one PR firm contract. Regime data is based on Guriev and Treisman (2022). Smoothed black line is based on yearly share (grey dots).

Figure A.1.3. Contract lengths



Note: Graph shows distribution of contract lengths for PR firms hired by authoritarian regimes between 1945 and 2022.

A.2 Summary statistics

This section provides summary statistics for the variables of the statistical analyses.

1) **Firm usage:** Table A.2.1 shows descriptive statistics for the variables used in the analysis on PR firm usage and the additional tests.
2) **Firm effects:** Table A.2.2 shows descriptive statistics for the variables used in the analysis on PR firm effects.

Table A.2.1. Summary statistics (PR firm usage)

	Type	Obs.	Mean	Std. dev.	Min.	Max.
PR firm contracts initiated[a]	Continuous	8222	0.190	0.406	0.000	2.773
PR firm contracts initiated	Binary	8222	0.206	0.405	0.000	1.000
PR firm contracts ongoing[a]	Continuous	8222	0.293	0.508	0.000	3.045
Repression	Continuous	6436	5.819	1.062	2.202	8.796
Corruption	Continuous	7946	0.562	0.251	0.007	0.969
Sports tournament	Binary	8222	0.010	0.102	0.000	1.000
Civil war	Binary	7933	0.166	0.372	0.000	1.000
Successful coup	Binary	7933	0.032	0.176	0.000	1.000
New US president	Binary	8222	0.183	0.387	0.000	1.000
Cuba problem	Binary	8222	0.060	0.238	0.000	1.000
Cold War end	Binary	8222	0.038	0.192	0.000	1.000
War on Terror start	Binary	8222	0.040	0.196	0.000	1.000
Civil liberties curtailment	Continuous	8062	0.665	0.236	0.064	0.977
Regime corruption	Continuous	8006	0.572	0.270	0.006	0.979
Number of sports tournaments	Count	8222	0.011	0.109	0.000	2.000
Height of new skyscrapers[a]	Continuous	7041	0.138	0.928	0.000	10.194
Civil war over territory	Binary	7933	0.072	0.259	0.000	1.000
Civil war over government	Binary	7933	0.121	0.326	0.000	1.000
Successful regime change coup	Binary	7933	0.021	0.143	0.000	1.000
Successful reshuffling coup	Binary	7933	0.012	0.110	0.000	1.000
Single-party dictatorship	Binary	5222	0.412	0.492	0.000	1.000
Monarchic dictatorship	Binary	5222	0.114	0.318	0.000	1.000
Personalist dictatorship	Binary	5222	0.217	0.412	0.000	1.000
Military dictatorship	Binary	5222	0.110	0.313	0.000	1.000
Spin dictatorship	Binary	4111	0.181	0.385	0.000	1.000
Fear dictatorship	Binary	4195	0.486	0.500	0.000	1.000
GDP p.c.[a]	Continuous	7479	1.203	1.001	-1.252	5.054
Population[a]	Continuous	7479	6.429	1.732	1.082	11.907
Foreign policy differences	Continuous	6009	2.884	1.038	0.002	5.288
Lobbying Disclosure Act active	Binary	8222	0.271	0.444	0.000	1.000
PR firm stock[a]	Continuous	8062	0.137	0.329	0.000	2.398

Note: [a] Variable logarithmized.

Table A.2.2. Summary statistics (PR firm effects)

	Type	Obs.	Mean	Std. dev.	Min.	Max.
US Secretary of State visit	Binary	8055	0.103	0.304	0.000	1.000
US Secretary of State visits[a]	Continuous	8055	0.087	0.273	0.000	2.398
US President visit	Binary	8055	0.025	0.156	0.000	1.000
US President visits[a]	Continuous	8055	0.018	0.112	0.000	1.099
US Econoimc aid	Continuous	8079	2.582	2.399	-1.830	9.929
US Military aid	Continuous	8087	1.064	1.908	-0.777	10.070
PR firm contracts initiated	Count	8222	0.353	0.919	0.000	15.000
Foreign policy differences	Continuous	6140	2.885	1.033	0.002	5.288
Repression	Continuous	6436	5.819	1.062	2.202	8.796
Corruption	Continuous	7946	0.562	0.251	0.007	0.969
Sports tournament	Binary	8222	0.010	0.102	0.000	1.000
Civil war	Binary	7933	0.166	0.372	0.000	1.000
Successful coup	Binary	7933	0.032	0.176	0.000	1.000

Note: [a] Variable logarithmized.

A.3 Additional tests

This section provides the regression results of additional tests.

1) **Dictatorship and authoritarian regime types:** This test checks whether spin and fear dictatorships as well as different subtypes of authoritarian regimes account for variation in the hiring of US-based PR firms. We include binary regime variables in the statistical analysis using data from Guriev and Treisman (2022) and Geddes, Wright and Frantz (2014), respectively. Results in Table A.3.1 and A.3.2 show that neither the coefficient estimates for the spin and fear dictatorship variables nor the coefficient estimates for the authoritarian regimes variables are robustly correlated with the dependent variable.

2) **Alternative measures of the dependent variable:** This robustness test checks whether the results are robust to potential reporting biases in the dependent variable. First, we re-run our main analysis using a binary version of the dependent variable. We dichotomize the count of initiated PR firm contracts by re-coding all positive values to 1, and 0 otherwise. Second, we construct an extended count of the dependent variable, which takes into account the length of the contract between each PR firm and a given authoritarian regime. For example, a dictatorship may hire two firms, one for two years and one for three years. For dictatorship i, the extended count of the dependent variable would thus be y_i=2 in year t, y_i=2 in year $t+1$, and y_i=1 in $t+2$. Results in Table A.3.3 show that coefficient estimates and statistical significance levels remain unchanged for the binary version of the dependent variable. For the extended dependent variable, statistical significance drops below conventional levels for the variables capturing the stabilizing support logic (*Civil war* and *Successful coup*). This is not surprising, as regimes' strategic goals in hiring PR professionals are likely to change over the course of long-term contracts, especially if the US has pledged its support.

3) **Alternative measures of the independent variables:** This robustness test employs different variables for the proposed logics to nuance the main findings. For the logic of countering criticism, we introduce the variable *Civil liberties curtailment*, which measures the degree of respect for political liberties, such as freedom of association and freedom of expression. We reverted the variable to ease interpretation with higher values indicating more restrictions. We also include the variable *Regime corruption*, which measures the extent to which political actors use political office for private or political gains. Data for both variables stem from V-Dem (Coppedge et al. 2023). Results in Table A.3.4 show that curtailments of civil liberties—a softer form of state repression—lowers the number of PR contracts initiated by dictatorships. As we describe in the manuscript, such restrictions have a lower chance of being picked up by international media and therefore do not seem to entice dictators to hire PR specialists. In line with the results of the main analysis, regime corruption remains statistically insignificant independent of the measure used.

   For the logic of maximizing publicity, we use the variables *Number of sports tournaments* and *Height of new skyscrapers*. Results in Table A.3.5 show that both variables are positive and statistically significantly correlated with the number of initiated PR firm contracts. In addition to the rare opportunities presented by the hosting of international sports tournaments, dictatorships also seem to enlist PR firms to maximize publicity around the inauguration of prestigious skyscrapers.

   For the logic of stabilizing support, we disaggregate the original variables into *Civil war over government*, *Civil war over territory*, *Successful regime change coup*, and *Successful*

reshuffling coup. The first two variables measure the goals of insurgent groups (taking over government vs. secession), the second two variables capture the goals of successful coup plotters (changing the entire regime vs. changing the regime leadership while keeping the regime intact). Results in Table A.3.6 show that *Civil war over government* and *Successful reshuffling coup* are positively and statistically significantly correlated with the number of initiated contracts. Both, established dictators fearing for their survival in power and newly emerged autocrats engage PR firms to stabilize US support and potentially bolster their regimes.

4) **Autocratic spell fixed effects:** This robustness test examines the main results using a more fine-grained set of fixed effects. Utilizing data from V-Dem (Coppedge et al. 2023), we identify autocratic regime spells in each country, representing uninterrupted periods of authoritarian rule. Based on these spells, we generate autocratic regime-spell fixed effects. It's worth noting that this test is particularly robust as it controls for structural differences between regimes nested within each country. Table A.3.8 demonstrates that coefficient estimates and statistical significance levels remain unchanged, with the exception of the estimate for *Civil war*, which sees its statistical significance drop below the 5% level.

5) **Decade fixed effects:** This robustness test checks whether the proposed logics have been at work since 1945 and are therefore time-independent. We re-run the main statistical analysis including decade fixed effects besides the country fixed effects. While the latter take into account time-invariant country characteristics, the former account for possible temporal changes and shifts in the incentives of authoritarian regimes to engage PR firms. Results in Table A.3.9 show that coefficient estimates and statistical significance levels remain unchanged. The only exception is the variable *Civil war*, which becomes statistically indistinguishable from zero as well as the variables capturing *Cold War end* and *War on Terror start*, which is not surprising as they are measurement-wise overshadowed by the broader decade variables.

6) **Negative binomial regression:** This robustness test checks whether the main results depend on the choice of regression method. We re-run the main statistical analysis using negative binomial regression and the count version of the dependent variable. Results in Table A.3.7 show that key coefficient estimates and statistical significance levels remain unchanged.

7) **Controls for economic prosperity, population size and foreign relations:** This robustness test examines whether our results are confounded by important national and international regime characteristics. We include the variables *GDP p.c.* and *Population*, both based on data by Fariss et al. (2022), as well as *Foreign policy differences*, which measures the disagreement in foreign policy positions between a given regime and the US administration in each year, based on voting patterns in the UN General Assembly. Data stem from Bailey, Strezhnev and Voeten (2017), where larger values indicate stronger disagreement. Note that these variables, specifically differences in foreign policy, might suffer from post-treatment bias, as effective PR firms might strengthen diplomatic ties between client dictatorships and the United States. Results in Table A.3.10 show that the coefficients are robust to the inclusion of the control variables. The only exception is the coefficient estimate of *Civil war*, which drops below conventional levels of statistical significance when controlling for population size.

8) **Control for Lobbying Disclosure Act:** This robustness test examines whether the main results are influenced by changes in U.S. lobbying laws, particularly the Lobbying

Disclosure Act (LDA) of 1995. The LDA, which took effect on January 1, 1996, required lobbyists to register with the Clerk of the House of Representatives and the Secretary of the Senate. According to You (2020, 305), many foreign business entities began registering under the LDA rather than the more stringent Foreign Agents Registration Act (FARA) due to its less demanding requirements. Consequently, since 1996, most entities registering under FARA have been foreign governments or political organizations. To account for this strategic sorting, we re-run the main analysis, adding a binary variable *Lobbying Disclosure Act active*, which equals 1 for all years from 1996 onward and 0 otherwise. The results in Table A.3.11 demonstrate that the main findings are robust to the inclusion of this control, with the variable consistently showing a positive and statistically significant coefficient. Therefore, competing legislation and strategic registrations by foreign entities do not appear to drive our results.

9) **Control for stock of PR firm already hired:** This robustness test aims to further isolate the effect of stimuli that motivate authoritarian regimes to hire PR firms. To this end, we re-run the statistical analysis and include the variable *PR firm stock*. This variable measures the logged number of PR firms already under contract with a given regime in a given year, using information on the start and end dates of firm contracts. The variable thus controls for both an authoritarian regime's history of PR firm engagements and the PR services already available to the regime, which might decrease the need to hire new firms. Results in Table A.3.12 show that the coefficients remain unchanged when including *PR firm stock*. The variable itself is positive and statistically significant. While past employment of PR firms incentivizes future engagements, authoritarian regimes are particularly likely to hire PR firms to maximize publicity and stabilize support.

Table A.3.1. Controlling for dictatorship types

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Spin dictatorship	0.024		0.037	
	(0.055)		(0.058)	
Fear dictatorship		−0.024		−0.037
		(0.055)		(0.058)
Repression			0.020	0.020
			(0.019)	(0.019)
Corruption			−0.044	−0.044
			(0.109)	(0.109)
Sports tournament			0.154**	0.154**
			(0.047)	(0.047)
Civil war			0.010	0.010
			(0.039)	(0.039)
Successful coup			0.124*	0.124*
			(0.049)	(0.049)
New US president			−0.008	−0.008
			(0.017)	(0.017)
Cuba problem			0.032	0.032
			(0.046)	(0.046)
Cold War end			0.049	0.049
			(0.042)	(0.042)
War on Terror start			0.074*	0.074*
			(0.036)	(0.036)
Constant	0.188***	0.212***	0.079	0.116
	(0.016)	(0.039)	(0.137)	(0.145)
AIC	2072.95	2072.95	2025.61	2025.61
Observations	2872	2872	2812	2812
Clusters	115	115	115	115
Country Fixed Effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Note: Coefficients with clustered standard errors in parentheses.

† p<0.1, * p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001

Table A.3.2. Controlling for authoritarian regime types

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Single-party dictatorship	−0.098*	−0.072†				−0.055
	(0.048)	(0.037)				(0.047)
Monarchic dictatorship	−0.038		0.119*			0.080
	(0.050)		(0.046)			(0.053)
Personalist dictatorship	−0.017			0.028		0.002
	(0.052)			(0.046)		(0.057)
Military dictatorship					0.024	
					(0.047)	
Repression		0.037*	0.043**	0.037*	0.037*	0.041*
		(0.016)	(0.016)	(0.016)	(0.017)	(0.016)
Corruption		−0.061	−0.015	−0.054	−0.030	−0.043
		(0.088)	(0.084)	(0.094)	(0.085)	(0.094)
Sports tournament		0.163**	0.162**	0.163**	0.161**	0.163**
		(0.053)	(0.053)	(0.053)	(0.053)	(0.053)
Civil war		0.032	0.041	0.031	0.032	0.038
		(0.026)	(0.026)	(0.026)	(0.026)	(0.026)
Successful coup		0.080*	0.092**	0.090**	0.086*	0.084*
		(0.033)	(0.032)	(0.032)	(0.034)	(0.034)
New US president		−0.011	−0.011	−0.012	−0.012	−0.011
		(0.012)	(0.012)	(0.012)	(0.012)	(0.012)
Cuba problem		−0.002	−0.005	−0.001	0.001	−0.005
		(0.034)	(0.035)	(0.035)	(0.035)	(0.034)
Cold War end		0.120***	0.123***	0.122***	0.120***	0.122***
		(0.035)	(0.035)	(0.035)	(0.035)	(0.035)
War on Terror start		0.073*	0.078*	0.075*	0.076*	0.076*
		(0.033)	(0.034)	(0.033)	(0.034)	(0.033)
Constant	0.278***	0.057	−0.063	0.009	−0.003	0.002
	(0.038)	(0.099)	(0.106)	(0.105)	(0.105)	(0.104)
AIC	4176.38	4072.43	4074.92	4082.05	4082.72	4073.20
Observations	4591	4557	4557	4557	4557	4557
Clusters	119	119	119	119	119	119
Country Fixed Effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Note: Coefficients with clustered standard errors in parentheses.

† p<0.1, * p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001

Table A.3.3. Alternative measures of the dependent variable

	Binary: PR firm contracts initiated					Ln(Count): PR firm contracts ongoing				
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)
Repression	0.040**				0.030*	0.070***				0.057**
	(0.012)				(0.013)	(0.019)				(0.020)
Corruption	0.096				0.064	0.161†				0.126
	(0.061)				(0.062)	(0.092)				(0.093)
Sports tournament		0.194***			0.198***		0.226†			0.189*
		(0.054)			(0.046)		(0.118)			(0.093)
Civil war			0.095***		0.046*			0.144***		0.060†
			(0.022)		(0.023)			(0.032)		(0.032)
Successful coup			0.068*		0.066*			0.064†		0.056
			(0.030)		(0.031)			(0.035)		(0.036)
New US president				0.000	−0.001				−0.007	−0.005
				(0.010)	(0.013)				(0.011)	(0.013)
Cuba problem				−0.001	0.023				−0.015	0.030
				(0.020)	(0.033)				(0.026)	(0.043)
Cold War end				0.093**	0.087**				0.120***	0.103**
				(0.028)	(0.030)				(0.035)	(0.036)
War on Terror start				0.107***	0.072*				0.118**	0.071†
				(0.028)	(0.028)				(0.036)	(0.036)
Constant	−0.044	0.204***	0.193***	0.199***	0.013	−0.148	0.291***	0.274***	0.286***	−0.076
	(0.081)	(0.001)	(0.004)	(0.003)	(0.082)	(0.129)	(0.001)	(0.005)	(0.003)	(0.133)
AIC	6191.82	6802.25	6626.64	6785.65	6152.46	8238.77	9686.86	9355.09	9669.16	8209.34
Observations	6396	8222	7933	8222	6396	6396	8222	7933	8222	6396
Clusters	148	165	155	165	148	148	165	155	165	148
Country Fixed Effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Note: Coefficients with clustered standard errors in parentheses.

† p<0.1, * p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001

Table A.3.4. Alternative measures for countering criticism logic

	Repression		Corruption	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Civil liberties curtailment	-0.196^{***}	-0.164^{***}		
	(0.044)	(0.047)		
Repression				0.035^{*}
				(0.014)
Regime corruption			0.125^{*}	0.044
			(0.055)	(0.064)
Corruption		0.077		
		(0.058)		
Sports tournament		0.228^{*}		0.217^{**}
		(0.092)		(0.078)
Civil war		0.080^{***}		0.051^{*}
		(0.021)		(0.023)
Successful coup		0.075^{*}		0.072^{*}
		(0.030)		(0.031)
New US president		0.016		0.005
		(0.011)		(0.013)
Cuba problem		0.005		0.006
		(0.021)		(0.032)
Cold War end		0.097^{**}		0.082^{*}
		(0.032)		(0.032)
War on Terror start		$0.054^{\dagger}$		0.064^{*}
		(0.029)		(0.029)
Constant	0.323^{***}	0.234^{***}	0.122^{***}	-0.025
	(0.029)	(0.051)	(0.032)	(0.090)
AIC	6610.50	6416.07	6667.54	6110.94
Observations	8062	7819	8006	6430
Clusters	157	154	156	148
Country Fixed Effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Note: Coefficients with clustered standard errors in parentheses.

† p<0.1, * p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001

Table A.3.5. Alternative measures for maximizing publicity logic

	Tournments		Skyscrapers	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Repression		0.036*		0.044**
		(0.014)		(0.014)
Corruption		0.056		0.031
		(0.069)		(0.069)
Number of sports tournaments	0.185*	0.190*		
	(0.092)	(0.077)		
Height of new skyscrapers			0.030*	0.030*
			(0.012)	(0.012)
Civil war		0.049*		0.027
		(0.023)		(0.023)
Successful coup		0.072*		0.083*
		(0.030)		(0.032)
New US president		0.005		0.010
		(0.013)		(0.012)
Cuba problem		0.007		0.018
		(0.032)		(0.032)
Cold War end		0.085**		0.091**
		(0.032)		(0.031)
War on Terror start		0.063*		0.070*
		(0.029)		(0.031)
Constant	0.188***	−0.041	0.180***	−0.082
	(0.001)	(0.092)	(0.002)	(0.092)
AIC	6721.03	6076.11	5270.94	5110.54
Observations	8222	6396	7041	5700
Clusters	165	148	149	141
Country Fixed Effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Note: Coefficients with clustered standard errors in parentheses.

† p<0.1, * p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001

Table A.3.6. Alternative measures for stabilizing support

	Civil wars		Coups	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Repression		0.035*		0.036*
		(0.014)		(0.014)
Corruption		0.050		0.056
		(0.068)		(0.069)
Sports tournament		0.217**		0.218**
		(0.078)		(0.078)
Civil war over territory	0.054	0.028		
	(0.043)	(0.042)		
Civil war over government	0.110***	0.059*		
	(0.026)	(0.027)		
Civil war				0.049*
				(0.023)
Successful regime change coup			0.084*	0.072†
			(0.037)	(0.038)
Successful reshuffling coup			0.098*	0.091*
			(0.040)	(0.042)
Successful coup		0.072*		
		(0.030)		
New US president		0.005		0.005
		(0.012)		(0.013)
Cuba problem		0.007		0.008
		(0.032)		(0.032)
Cold War end		0.085**		0.086**
		(0.032)		(0.032)
War on Terror start		0.063*		0.063*
		(0.029)		(0.029)
Constant	0.177***	−0.030	0.191***	−0.041
	(0.004)	(0.092)	(0.001)	(0.092)
AIC	6554.43	6071.05	6604.90	6072.54
Observations	7933	6396	7933	6396
Clusters	155	148	155	148
Country Fixed Effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Note: Coefficients with clustered standard errors in parentheses.

† p<0.1, * p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001

Table A.3.7. Negative binomial fixed effects regressions

	Countering criticism	Maximizing publicity	Stabilizing support	Signaling allegiance	Combined logics
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Repression	0.249***				0.189**
	(0.070)				(0.073)
Corruption	0.537				0.391
	(0.402)				(0.412)
Sports tournament		0.664*			0.646*
		(0.303)			(0.280)
Civil war			0.507***		0.242*
			(0.109)		(0.105)
Successful coup			0.381**		0.356**
			(0.134)		(0.136)
New US president				0.064	0.056
				(0.067)	(0.070)
Cuba problem				−0.103	0.056
				(0.139)	(0.159)
Cold War end				0.480***	0.400**
				(0.142)	(0.137)
War on Terror start				0.516***	0.318*
				(0.147)	(0.132)
Constant	−3.118***	−1.266***	−1.393***	−1.303***	−2.758***
	(0.489)	(0.000)	(0.022)	(0.023)	(0.515)
Ln(Alpha)	0.071	0.275**	0.219†	0.277*	0.035
	(0.109)	(0.103)	(0.112)	(0.111)	(0.102)
AIC	9557.17	10948.90	10591.35	10876.05	9533.57
Observations	6396	8222	7933	8222	6396
Clusters	148	165	155	165	148
Country Fixed Effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Note: Coefficients with clustered standard errors in parentheses.

† p<0.1, * p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001

Table A.3.8. Linear regressions with autocratic spell fixed effects

	Countering criticism	Maximizing publicity	Stabilizing support	Signaling allegiance	Combined logics
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Repression	0.044**				0.034*
	(0.014)				(0.015)
Corruption	0.110†				0.083
	(0.065)				(0.066)
Sports tournament		0.212*			0.202*
		(0.093)			(0.079)
Civil war			0.095***		0.042†
			(0.022)		(0.023)
Successful coup			0.075*		0.073*
			(0.031)		(0.032)
New US president				0.001	0.004
				(0.010)	(0.012)
Cuba problem				−0.002	0.017
				(0.019)	(0.031)
Cold War end				0.104***	0.094**
				(0.031)	(0.032)
War on Terror start				0.098***	0.068*
				(0.028)	(0.029)
Constant	−0.094	0.188***	0.176***	0.182***	−0.041
	(0.089)	(0.001)	(0.004)	(0.003)	(0.091)
AIC	5927.83	6410.36	6257.37	6397.28	5884.87
Observations	6396	8222	7933	8222	6396
Clusters	205	244	233	244	205
Autocratic Spell Fixed Effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Note: Coefficients with clustered standard errors in parentheses.

† p<0.1, * p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001

Table A.3.9. Linear regressions with decade and country fixed effects

	Countering criticism	Maximizing publicity	Stabilizing support	Signaling allegiance	Combined logics
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Repression	0.044***				0.039**
	(0.013)				(0.013)
Corruption	−0.185*				−0.182*
	(0.085)				(0.085)
Sports tournament		0.196*			0.205**
		(0.088)			(0.076)
Civil war			0.046*		0.019
			(0.023)		(0.024)
Successful coup			0.079**		0.080**
			(0.030)		(0.030)
New US president				0.013	0.021
				(0.010)	(0.013)
Cuba problem				0.038*	0.048
				(0.018)	(0.029)
Cold War end				0.021	0.036
				(0.029)	(0.030)
War on Terror start				0.031	0.029
				(0.034)	(0.034)
Constant	−0.047	0.070***	0.077***	0.067***	−0.031
	(0.089)	(0.016)	(0.018)	(0.017)	(0.088)
AIC	5982.82	6418.53	6330.58	6438.51	5956.56
Observations	6396	8222	7933	8222	6396
Clusters	148	165	155	165	148
Decade Fixed Effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Country Fixed Effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Note: Coefficients with clustered standard errors in parentheses.

† p<0.1, * p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001

Table A.3.10. Additional control variables

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Repression	0.054^{***}	0.030^{*}	0.036^{*}	0.051^{***}
	(0.015)	(0.012)	(0.014)	(0.014)
Corruption	-0.002	$-0.145^{\dagger}$	0.031	-0.176^{*}
	(0.071)	(0.079)	(0.080)	(0.082)
Sports tournament	0.196^{*}	0.196^{**}	0.241^{**}	0.219^{**}
	(0.080)	(0.070)	(0.086)	(0.076)
Civil war	0.034	0.025	$0.041^{\dagger}$	0.010
	(0.023)	(0.022)	(0.024)	(0.023)
Successful coup	0.072^{*}	0.085^{**}	0.072^{*}	0.076^{*}
	(0.030)	(0.030)	(0.031)	(0.031)
New US president	0.004	0.011	0.010	0.017
	(0.012)	(0.012)	(0.013)	(0.014)
Cuba problem	0.043	$0.054^{\dagger}$	0.042	$0.053^{\dagger}$
	(0.030)	(0.031)	(0.033)	(0.031)
Cold War end	0.081^{*}	0.070^{*}	0.072^{*}	0.101^{**}
	(0.032)	(0.032)	(0.033)	(0.031)
War on Terror start	0.062^{*}	0.030	$0.054^{\dagger}$	0.046
	(0.028)	(0.029)	(0.030)	(0.030)
GDP p.c.	0.113^{***}			$0.048^{\dagger}$
	(0.024)			(0.027)
Population		0.160^{***}		0.190^{***}
		(0.030)		(0.041)
Foreign policy differences			0.027	-0.044^{*}
			(0.017)	(0.019)
Constant	-0.247^{*}	-0.954^{***}	-0.103	-1.197^{***}
	(0.104)	(0.181)	(0.098)	(0.221)
AIC	5981.31	5917.95	5531.49	5373.64
Observations	6393	6393	5802	5802
Clusters	148	148	142	142
Country Fixed Effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Note: Coefficients with clustered standard errors in parentheses.

† p<0.1, * p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001

Table A.3.11. Controlling for Lobbying Disclosure Act of 1995

	Countering criticism	Maximizing publicity	Stabilizing support	Signaling allegiance	Combined logics
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Repression	0.053***				0.043**
	(0.013)				(0.014)
Corruption	−0.039				−0.061
	(0.074)				(0.075)
Sports tournament		0.203*			0.209**
		(0.089)			(0.076)
Civil war			0.079***		0.035
			(0.022)		(0.023)
Successful coup			0.080**		0.076*
			(0.030)		(0.030)
New US president				0.009	0.012
				(0.010)	(0.013)
Cuba problem				0.014	0.016
				(0.019)	(0.031)
Cold War end				0.123***	0.113***
				(0.030)	(0.032)
War on Terror start				0.019	0.021
				(0.030)	(0.029)
Lobbying Disclosure Act active	0.085**	0.107***	0.095***	0.116***	0.090***
	(0.025)	(0.022)	(0.023)	(0.024)	(0.026)
Constant	−0.082	0.159***	0.152***	0.151***	−0.038
	(0.086)	(0.006)	(0.007)	(0.007)	(0.088)
AIC	6077.31	6601.92	6470.39	6595.20	6034.17
Observations	6396	8222	7933	8222	6396
Clusters	148	165	155	165	148
Country Fixed Effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Note: Coefficients with clustered standard errors in parentheses.

† p<0.1, * p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001

Table A.3.12. Controlling for stock of PR firms already hired

	Countering criticism	Maximizing publicity	Stabilizing support	Signaling allegiance	Combined logics
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Repression	0.043***				0.031*
	(0.012)				(0.013)
Corruption	0.071				0.040
	(0.063)				(0.064)
Sports tournament		0.222*			0.221**
		(0.086)			(0.075)
Civil war			0.091***		0.048*
			(0.020)		(0.021)
Successful coup			0.073*		0.072*
			(0.030)		(0.030)
New US president				0.012	0.002
				(0.011)	(0.013)
Cuba problem				−0.009	0.007
				(0.018)	(0.030)
Cold War end				0.091**	0.085**
				(0.031)	(0.032)
War on Terror start				0.079**	0.059*
				(0.027)	(0.028)
PR firm stock	0.140***	0.176***	0.169***	0.173***	0.139***
	(0.025)	(0.026)	(0.026)	(0.027)	(0.025)
Constant	−0.086	0.166***	0.153***	0.161***	−0.025
	(0.082)	(0.004)	(0.005)	(0.004)	(0.083)
AIC	6030.97	6481.74	6398.14	6481.33	5987.37
Observations	6396	8062	7933	8062	6396
Clusters	148	157	155	157	148
Country Fixed Effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Note: Coefficients with clustered standard errors in parentheses.

† p<0.1, * p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001

A.4 Tests on PR firm effects

This section provides regression results on the effects of dictatorships' hiring of US-based PR firms.

1) **US state visits:** To analyze how the hiring of PR firms influence subsequent state visits by the US Secretary of State and the US President, we construct four different dependent variables using hand-coded data from the Office of the Historian (2023). Two binary variables indicate whether a country was visited by the US Secretary of State or the US President in a given year, and two count variables consist of the number of visits by the Secretary of State or the President in a given year. We logarithmize the count variables to reduce skewness and the influence of outliers.

   The key independent variable is *Contracts initiated*, which measures the annual number of contracts started with PR firms (the dependent variable in the main analysis). We utilize different lags of this variable to examine delayed effects (i.e., t, t-1, and t-2). We employ linear regression models with two-way fixed effects (country and year fixed effects) to mitigate potential problems with unobserved, potentially confounding country characteristics and global shocks. Each regression model includes all independent variables identified in the main analysis, along with a variable controlling for the disagreement in foreign policy positions between a given regime and the US in a given year, based on voting patterns in the UN General Assembly. Data are taken from Bailey, Strezhnev and Voeten (2017). Additionally, all included control variables are lagged by one year more than the version of *Contracts initiated* included in the analysis.

   Table A.4.1 presents the results for the binary version of the US state visits, while Table A.4.2 displays the results for the count version of the dependent variable. The coefficient estimates of *Contracts initiated*$_{t-1}$ and *Contracts initiated*$_{t-2}$ are positively and statistically significantly correlated with visits by the US Secretary of State. Conversely, in the case of visits by the US President, it is the coefficient estimate of *Contracts initiated*$_{t-2}$. Overall, the results suggest that the engagement of PR firms by dictatorships could lead to more state visits by high-ranking representatives of the US government.

2) **US aid:** To analyze the influence of hiring PR firms on subsequent US military aid, we adopt the modeling strategy of the preceding test, but employ two different dependent variables. Regression models again include country and year fixed effects, as well as an additional control for differences in foreign policy positions. One dependent variable captures the amount of economic aid, while the other measures the amount of military aid, based on data from U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) (2023). Both variables are measured in million US dollars. We logarithmize the dependent variables to reduce skewness and the influence of outliers. Table A.4.3 presents the results. Across all models, the coefficient estimates of *Contracts initiated* are statistically indistinguishable from zero. The null findings suggest that for dictatorships the hiring of PR firms may not translate into tangible financial gains, at least in terms of foreign aid.

Table A.4.1. Two-way linear fixed effects regression for US state visits (binary measure)

	US Secretary of State			US President		
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Contracts initiated$_{t}$	0.008			0.001		
	(0.005)			(0.003)		
Contracts initiated$_{t-1}$		0.018**			0.002	
		(0.006)			(0.003)	
Contracts initiated$_{t-2}$			0.016**			0.006†
			(0.006)			(0.003)
Constant	0.116	0.115	0.044	0.082*	0.042†	0.027
	(0.077)	(0.074)	(0.066)	(0.038)	(0.025)	(0.026)
AIC	2222.28	2195.53	2216.91	−4488.48	−4337.42	−4222.70
Observations	5836	5712	5586	5836	5712	5586
Clusters	142	142	141	142	142	141
Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Country Fixed Effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year Fixed Effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Note: Coefficients with clustered standard errors in parentheses.

† p<0.1, * p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001

Table A.4.2. Two-way linear fixed effects regression for US state visits (count measure)

	US Secretary of State			US President		
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Contracts initiated$_{t}$	0.015*			0.000		
	(0.006)			(0.002)		
Contracts initiated$_{t-1}$		0.019***			0.002	
		(0.006)			(0.002)	
Contracts initiated$_{t-2}$			0.018**			0.005*
			(0.006)			(0.002)
Constant	0.083	0.070	0.012	0.055*	0.028	0.017
	(0.074)	(0.071)	(0.067)	(0.027)	(0.018)	(0.018)
AIC	793.50	821.56	826.33	−8332.58	−8096.77	−7927.22
Observations	5836	5712	5586	5836	5712	5586
Clusters	142	142	141	142	142	141
Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Country Fixed Effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year Fixed Effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Note: Coefficients with clustered standard errors in parentheses.

† p<0.1, * p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001

Table A.4.3. Two-way linear fixed effects regressions for US foreign aid

	Econoimc aid			Military aid		
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Contracts initiated$_{t}$	−0.013			−0.026		
	(0.035)			(0.044)		
Contracts initiated$_{t-1}$		0.004			−0.014	
		(0.035)			(0.045)	
Contracts initiated$_{t-2}$			0.009			−0.030
			(0.034)			(0.043)
Constant	2.432***	1.546*	1.527*	−0.331	0.279	0.462
	(0.722)	(0.662)	(0.686)	(0.601)	(0.620)	(0.635)
AIC	19786.97	19371.92	19203.51	19960.67	19753.72	19644.62
Observations	5828	5787	5745	5836	5794	5751
Clusters	142	142	141	142	142	141
Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Country Fixed Effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year Fixed Effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Note: Coefficients with clustered standard errors in parentheses.

† p<0.1, * p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001

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