

Inviting rebellion? IGOs, minority groups, and low-level violence in intrastate conflicts

Johannes Karreth¹ Joshua Strayhorn² Jaroslav Tir²

¹ Department of Political Science, Rockefeller College of Public Affairs & Policy, University at Albany-SUNY

² Department of Political Science, University of Colorado Boulder

Summary

- IGO constraints on member states help prevent full-scale civil wars (Karreth & Tir 2013).
- But do these constraints encourage demands and small-scale violent actions by potential rebel groups?
- When governments are constrained by IGOs, potential rebels can make larger demands and challenge governments without fearing severe repercussion.
- Evidence: Minority organizations in the Middle East & North Africa made more substantial demands and used low-level violence in states that faced more IGO-based constraints.

Motivation

Recent work: **IGOs constrain governments in domestic political conflicts**, especially in the absence of established or formal domestic constraints.

- Simmons & Danner (2010) portray the ICC as a self-constraint for governments in tense government-rebel interactions
- Vabulas (n.d.) shows that IGOs suspend governments that excessively roll back political liberties in domestic political conflicts
- Karreth & Tir (2013) find that highly structured IGOs (HSIGOs) constrain governments *and*, *putatively*, *rebels* in domestic political conflicts, helping prevent escalation of violence to civil wars

But non-state groups & organizations are rarely formally represented or involved with HSIGOs. So HSIGOs have little direct ability to punish and sanction such actors.

Why wouldn't non-state groups exploit HSIGO-based constraints on governments and push governments harder for concessions?

Research question

Do HSIGO constraints on member governments encourage demands and small-scale violent actions by potential rebel groups?

Theory: Setup

Two actors: a potential opposition/rebel group and a government

- Group: can mobilize and make a (continuous) demand
- Government: can accept the demand or escalate to war (costly lottery)
- HSIGOs: can punish the gov't or ignore it
- Payoff parameters
 - x : balance of power between gov't and group
 - c : cost of conflict for both sides
 - m : cost of mobilization for group
 - s : cost of HSIGO "penalty" to gov't
 - k : HSIGO intervention cost
 - d : group demand

Theory: Model

First game (Fig. 1): the group makes demands $x + c$ if $c \geq m$.

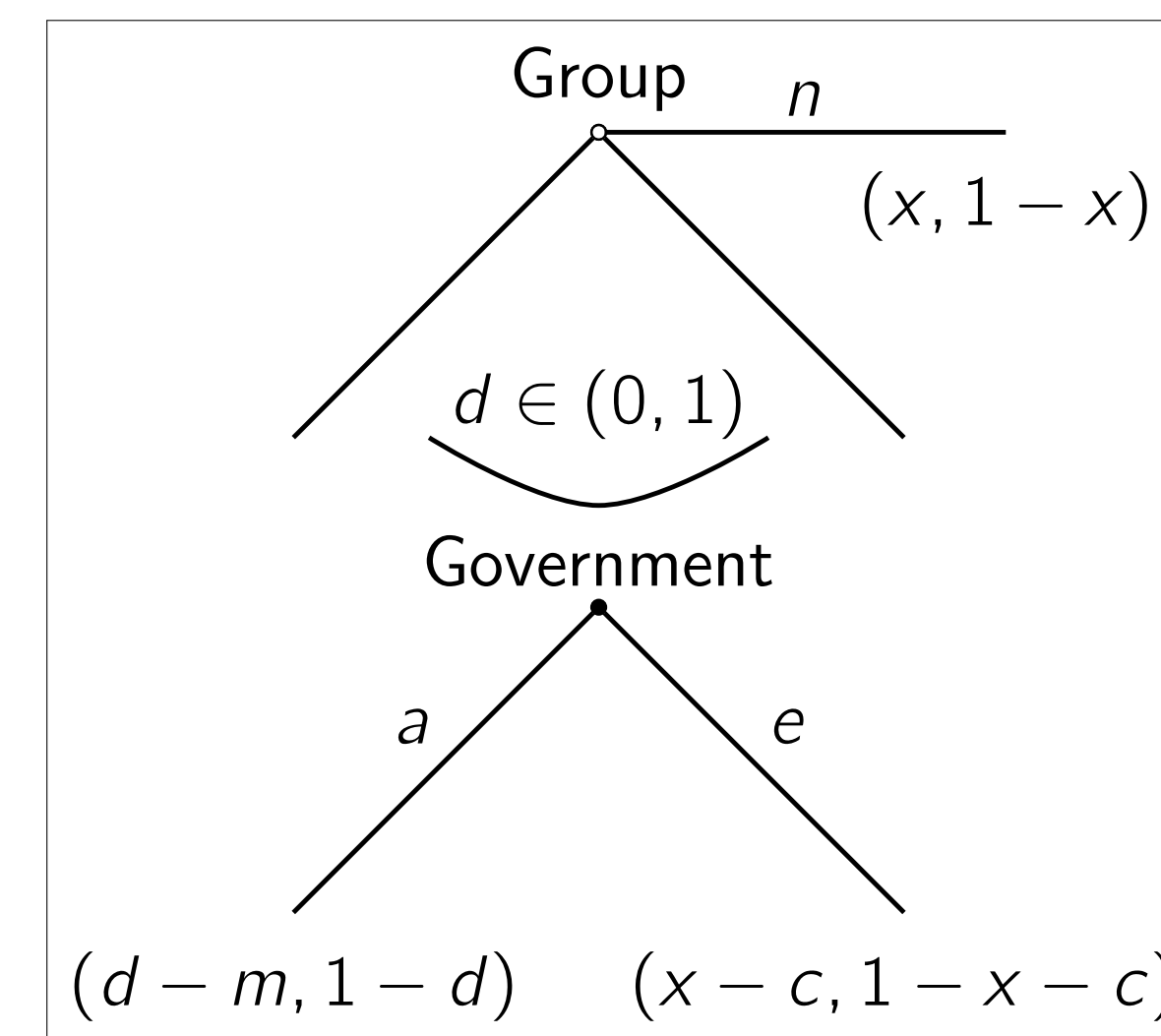


Figure 1: Game without HSIGO constraints on the gov't

Second game (Fig. 2): if the HSIGO will intervene (or threaten), the group makes demands $x + c + s$ if $c + s \geq m$.

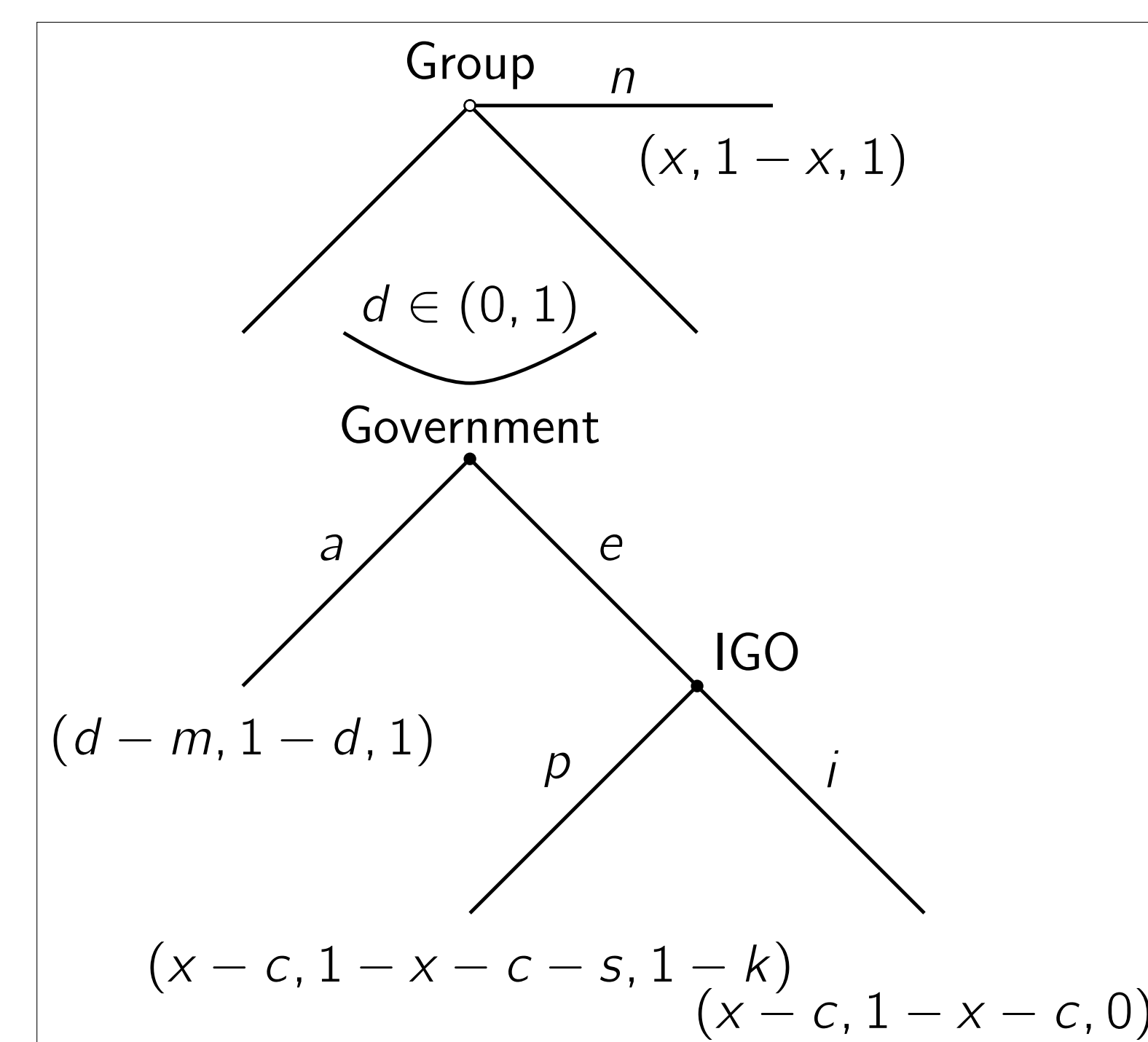


Figure 2: Game with HSIGO constraints on the gov't

- Larger sanctioning costs on the member gov't make initial demands more likely, all else equal.
- The group, if they make demands, also make larger demands in the second game.

Similarly, for the group, **mobilizing and using low-level violence** goes hand in hand with making larger demands. **Larger sanctioning costs for the government make the mobilization toward rebellion and low-level violence more likely.** Yet, full-scale escalation by the potential rebels to mass violence and civil war do not occur in equilibrium (consistent with Karreth & Tir 2013).

Theory: Implications

Groups should be more likely to make larger demands and use violence when the gov't is subject to more HSIGO constraints.

Hypothesis 1: Non-state groups in countries with more HSIGO constraints are more likely to make substantial demands.

Hypothesis 2: Non-state groups in countries with more HSIGO constraints are more likely to use low-level violence against governments.

Data & Analysis

Group behavior: from the Minorities at Risk–Organizational Behavior (MAROB) data; Organizations explicitly representing ethnic groups and...

- Politically active at the regional/national level
- Not created by governments
- Active for 3+ years between 1980-2006

Sample: 103 ethno-political organizations from 12 countries in the Middle East and North Africa, operating between 1980-2004.

Unit of analysis: The first organization-year in which the outcome was recorded or changed.

Outcomes: (A) Demands & (B) severity of violence to pursue demands

HSIGO constraints: Count of country's memberships in highly institutionalized IGOs (Boehmer et al. 2004, Karreth & Tir 2013). Examples of HSIGOs in this sample:

- Economic Cooperation Organization
- Islamic Development Bank

Methods: Regressions of demands on HSIGO constraints & controls; varying intercepts for countries (groups nested in countries)

Controls (where applicable): Rebel-government interactions (State repression, State violence, Previous rebel success) and country-level conditions (Economic development, Population size, Past armed conflict, Democracy).

Larger demands under more HSIGOs

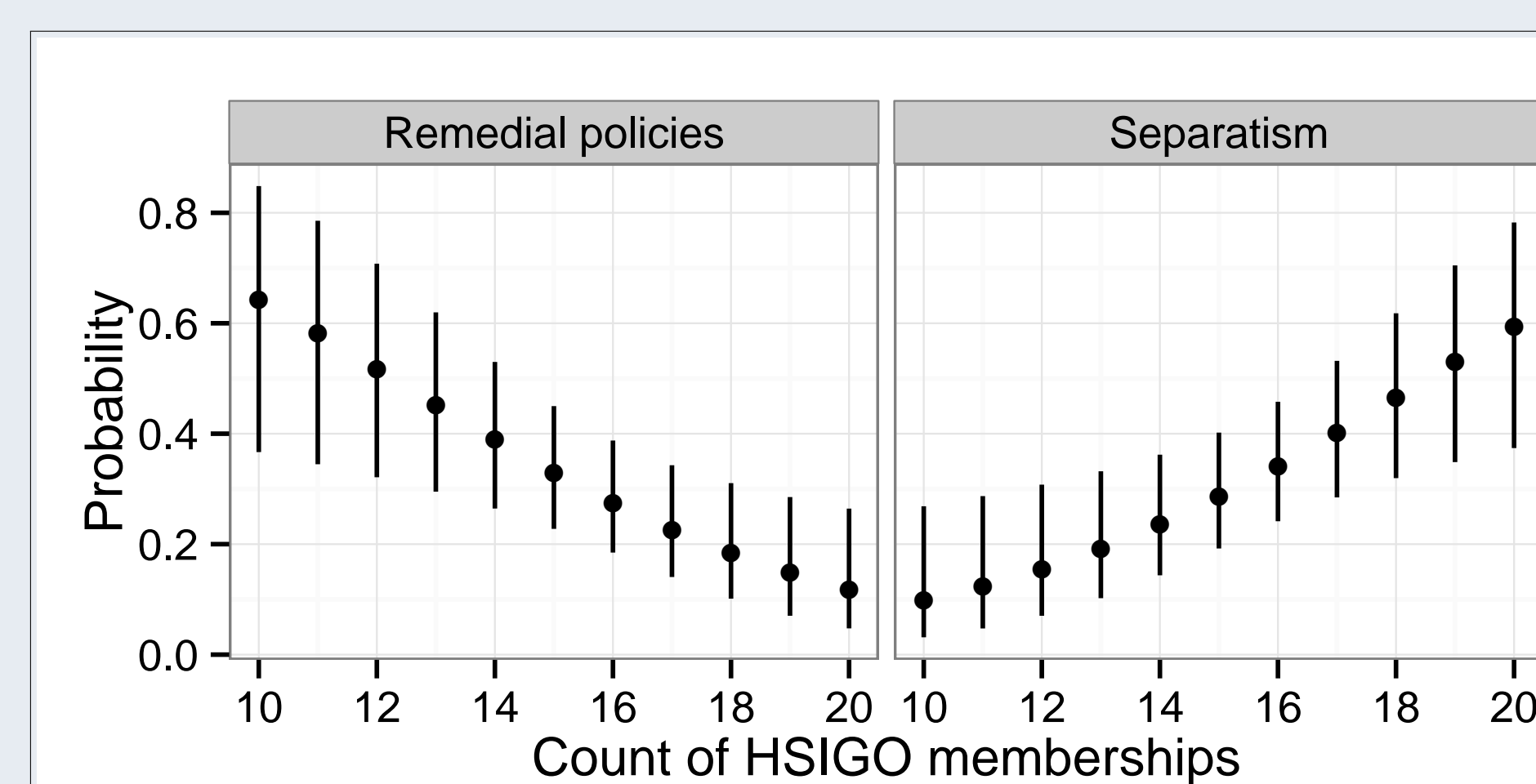


Figure 3: Groups' demand types (avg. probabilities from ordered logit)

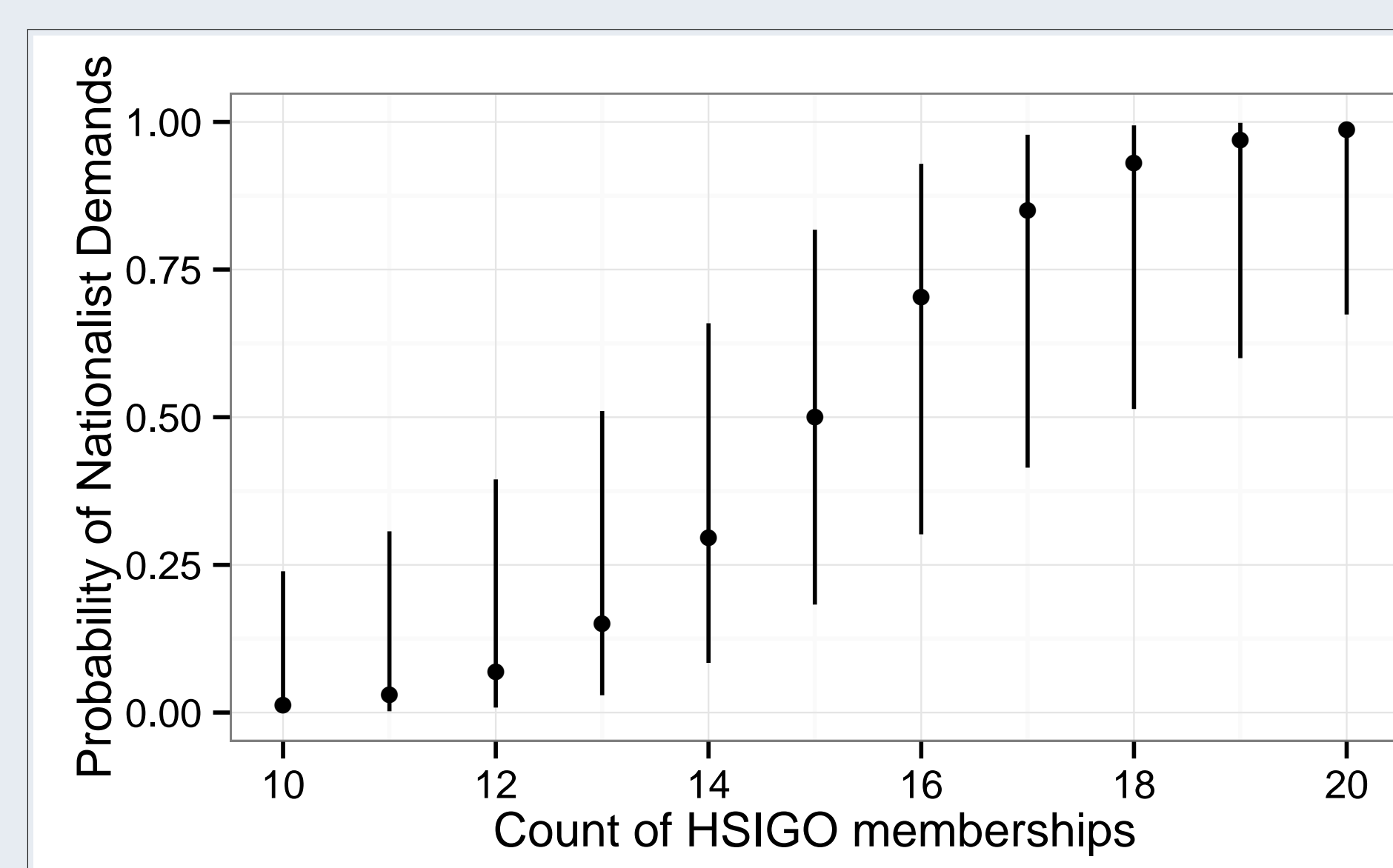


Figure 4: Groups' probability of making "Nationalist claims to autonomy or independence" (avg. probabilities from binary logit)

More activity and low-level violence under more HSIGOs

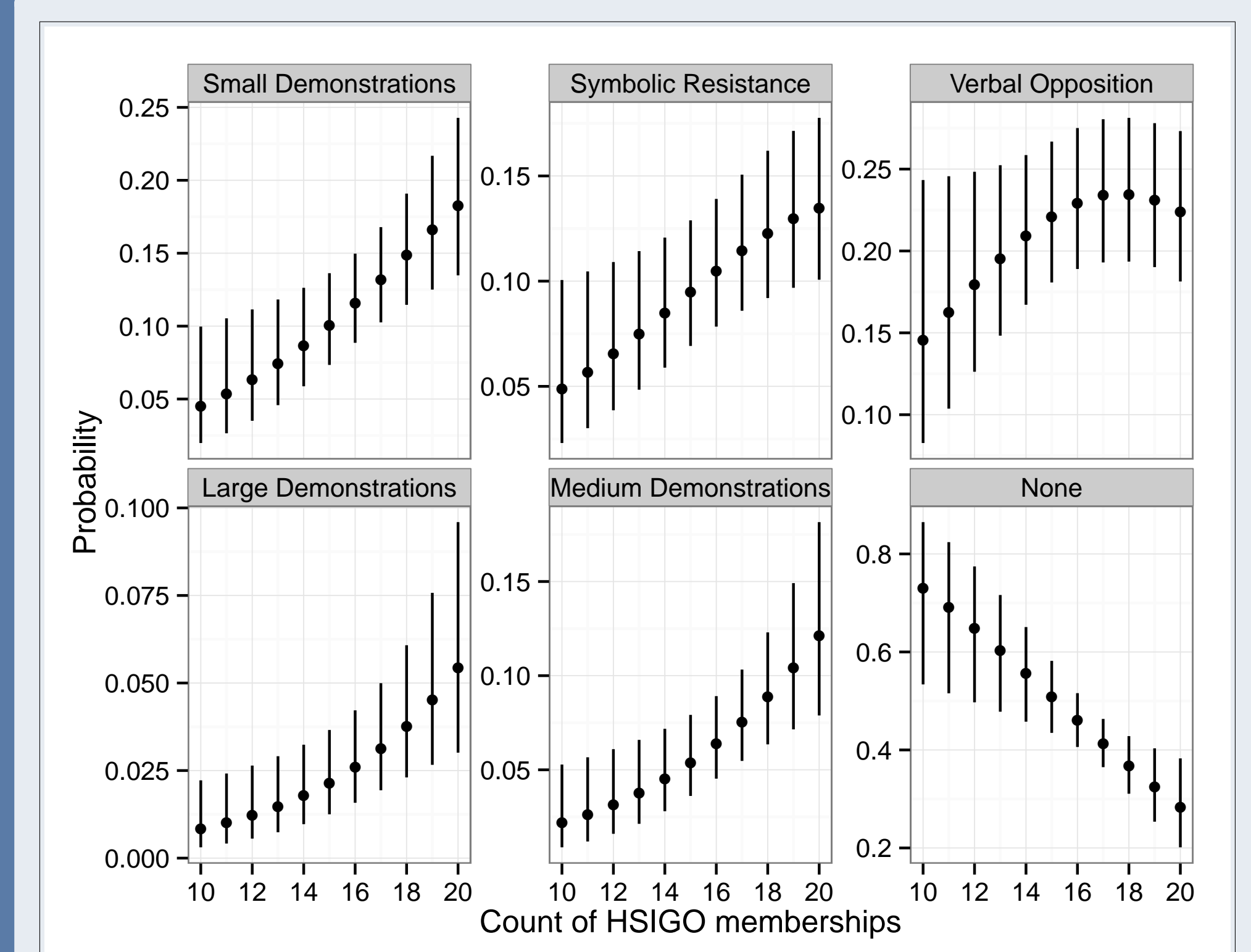


Figure 5: Groups' protest activity (avg. probabilities from ordered logit)

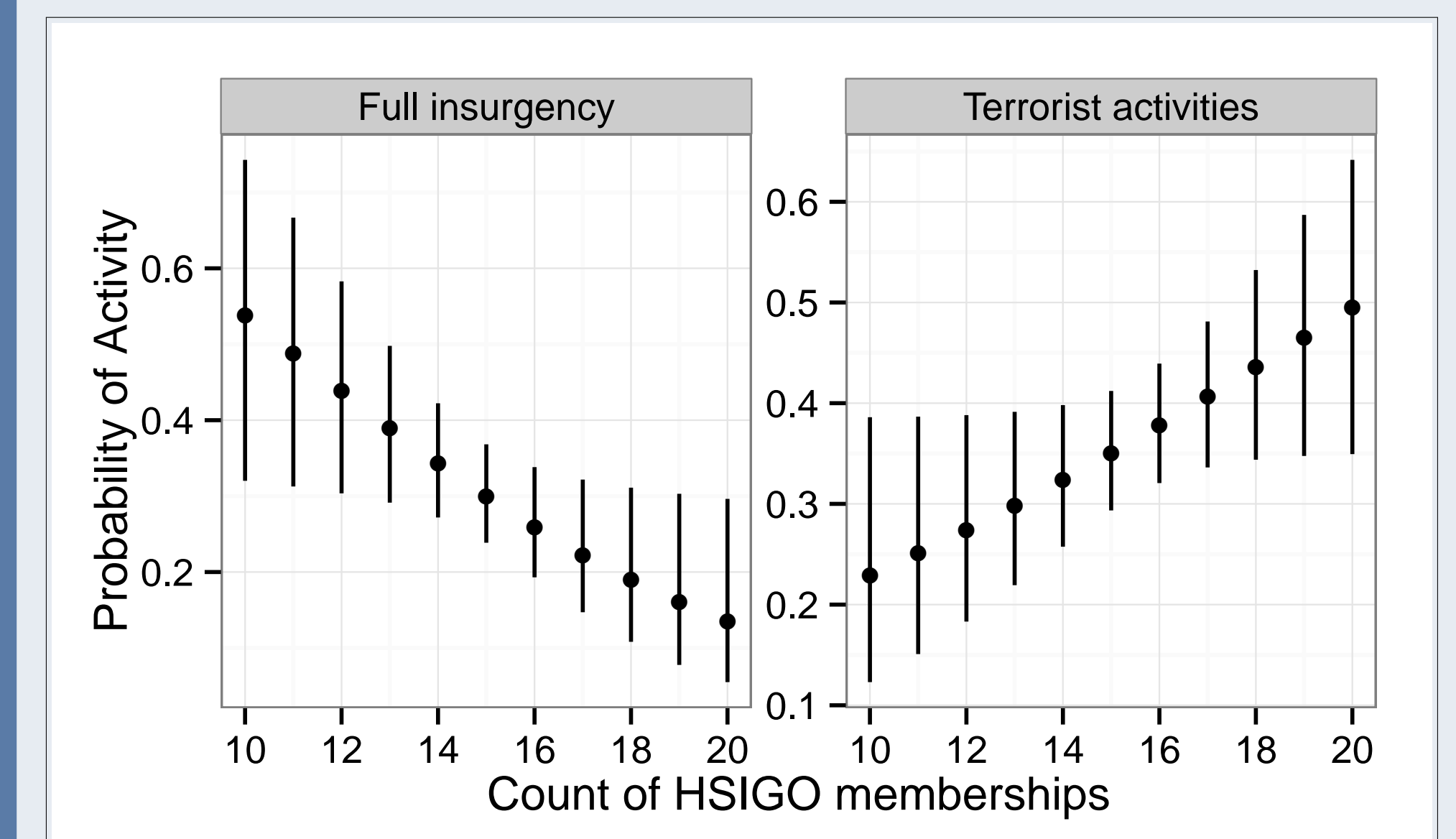


Figure 6: Groups' activities (avg. probabilities from binary logit)

Implications

Constraints on member governments from HSIGOs can encourage larger demands from non-state groups (opposition movements, minority groups).

- But potential adverse effects of unilateral HSIGO constraints do not automatically result in conflict escalation and civil war
- Future work might investigate whether direct engagement of IGOs with non-state actors can have the effect of constraints (or equivalents) as well; examples:
 - World Bank civil society "focal points"
 - Project-specific interaction with local communities & informal governance

Contact

Karreth: jkarreth@albany.edu | jkarreth.net
Strayhorn: joshua.strayhorn@colorado.edu
Tir: jtir@colorado.edu | spot.colorado.edu/~jati3108