

## **Coups, Regime Transition and the Dynamics of Press Freedom**

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This paper explores the dynamics of press freedom around events that threaten the incumbent regime. While democracies on average allow much larger press freedom, our theoretical starting point is that democracies and autocracies have similar incentives to protect the basic structure of the regime. As such, democracies may rationally react to coup attempts by reducing press freedom and increasing repression to the extent that such reactions are de facto consistent with constitutional provisions. Using data from the annual reports of Freedom House, we estimate the dynamics of press freedom around both failed and successful coups. We find that while press freedom is quite stable between events, successful coups lead to substantial reductions in press freedom. We nevertheless also find that democracies tend to react to failed coup attempts by significantly reducing press freedom following these events. Further results suggest that these reductions may often be permanent.