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Accountability in Southeast Asia & Southeast Africa

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Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem) is a new approach to the conceptualization and measurement of democracy. It is co-hosted by the University of Gothenburg and University of Notre Dame. With a V-Dem Institute at University of Gothenburg that comprises almost ten staff members, and a project team across the world with four Principal Investigators, fifteen Project Managers, 30+ Regional Managers, 170 Country Coordinators, Research Assistants, and 3,000 Country Experts, the V-Dem project is one of the largest-ever social science research-oriented data collection programs.

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Backsliding in Accountability?

Recent studies have shown that while core electoral aspects of democracy continue to improve in many countries, aspects of democratic governance that make elections truly meaningful are in decline (Luhrmann 2018). Aspects undergoing substantial decline in recent years include important non-electoral aspects such as media autonomy, freedom of expression and access to alternative sources of information, as well as civil society freedom. This negative trend affects both autocracies and democracies alike.

The aspects under attack - civil society organizations and media - fall outside of formal political participation. Following Mechkova et al. 2017 we term these aspects - diagonal accountability, capturing the extent to which citizens are able to hold a government accountable outside of elections and formal institutions such as parliaments.

This is important as accountability is ostensibly one of the cornerstones of good governance as one of the most efficient ways to combat critical threats to rule of law and development such as corruption and clientelism (WB 2005:11). Ensuring accountability between state officials and citizens is also central to democracy (Dahl 1989; Schmitter and Karl 1991) and is the mechanism that ensures that institutions and politicians act in the public interest.

This report focuses on describing the development of key aspects of accountability – namely Diagonal Accountability - across countries from Southeast Asia and Southeast Africa by comparing trends in 2007 and 2017 in order to identify patterns and understand current developments. The countries analyzed include from Sub-Saharan Africa: Malawi, Mozambique, Zambia, Tanzania, Uganda, Kenya, Burundi, and Rwanda; and from South-East Asia: Burma, Thailand, Indonesia, Laos, Cambodia, Vietnam, Philippines, and Malaysia.

Conceptualizing Accountability

The conceptual work for this report is based on two related articles, published by researchers at the V-Dem Institute, namely "The Accountability Sequence: From De-jure to De-facto Constraints on Governments" by Mechkova and co-authors,[1] and "Constraining governments: New indices of vertical, horizontal and diagonal accountability" by Luhrmann and co-authors. These two pieces draw on previously scholarship to define political accountability as constraints on the use of power (Lindberg 2013). The literature has also defined accountability entails two key ways to prevent and address abuse of power: "answerability", which involves informing and explaining decisions made, and "enforcement", the rewarding of good and punishing bad behavior (Schedler 1999:14-16). In the context of democracy, actions associated with accountability are for example voters making elected representatives answer for their policies through elections; members of parliaments scrutinizing and questioning public servants and the executive; and citizens being active in guiding and watching over from both state institutions and officials (Mulgan 2000). The various sub-types of accountability can be organized in regards to the relative positions of different groups of actors into *vertical, horizontal* and *diagonal* accountability (Lindberg et al 2017).

Vertical accountability connects politicians directly to the people through voting and formal political participation (Fox 2015, Mainwaring 2003). Elections have been long viewed as the main

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[1] An earlier version of this paper was published as background paper in the World Development Report (Mechkova 2017).

mechanism by which people exercise control over politicians through voting for competing candidates coming from various parties and programmatic platforms (Schumpeter 1950).

Horizontal accountability encapsulates checks and balances between networks of institutions, including the executive, legislative, and judicial branches, as well as various oversight agencies, (for example ombudsmen, O'Donnell 1998: 119). This type of accountability involves actively seeking information, questioning officials and possibly, punishing improper behavior, thus, providing for the legal and political consequences of decisions made by public officials to prevent the abuse of power (Rose-Ackerman 1996).

As it becomes clear, the described types of accountability mainly reflect the role of formal institutions – elections, parliaments, courts – in government oversight. However, it is also important to underline the key role of informal sources of accountability. The effectiveness of vertical and horizontal forms of accountability, or formal institutions, by themselves is limited since they may lack the capacity to continuously oversee the day-to-day activity of the whole state apparatus (Goetz and Jenkins 2010, p. 364). In addition, formal institutions might not be enough to see the priorities of citizens being implemented due to structural inefficiencies of these institutions.

Thus, Luhrmann et al (2017) and Mechkova et al (2018) focus also on *diagonal* accountability, referring to the mechanism through which citizens participate *directly* in accountability, through engaging with civil society organizations (CSOs) and the work of the media (Malena et al. 2004:3)[2]. This type of accountability is focused on citizen empowerment to enhance government transparency via "naming and shaming" for example to fight against corrupt behavior or actions that are not in the interest of people (World Bank 2006: 7). Citizens and media have an important "fire alarm" accountability function by monitoring the government activity and reporting observed irregularities through their daily lives and professional activities (Grimes 2013:382). While diagonal accountability does not have direct sanctioning power, it uses informal tools (e.g. social mobilization and media exposure) to speak to institutions and demand actions from them (e.g. legal oversight by controlling agencies) (Peruzzotti and Smulowitz 2006:4, 10). *Figure 1* illustrates our conceptual scheme.

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[2] Some authors use the term social accountability to describe the type of accountability that centers on civic action. However, throughout this report we use the term diagonal accountability, basing our work on Luhrmann et al (2017) and Mechkova et al (2018), who argue for the use of this term instead.

Figure 1. Conceptual scheme accountability
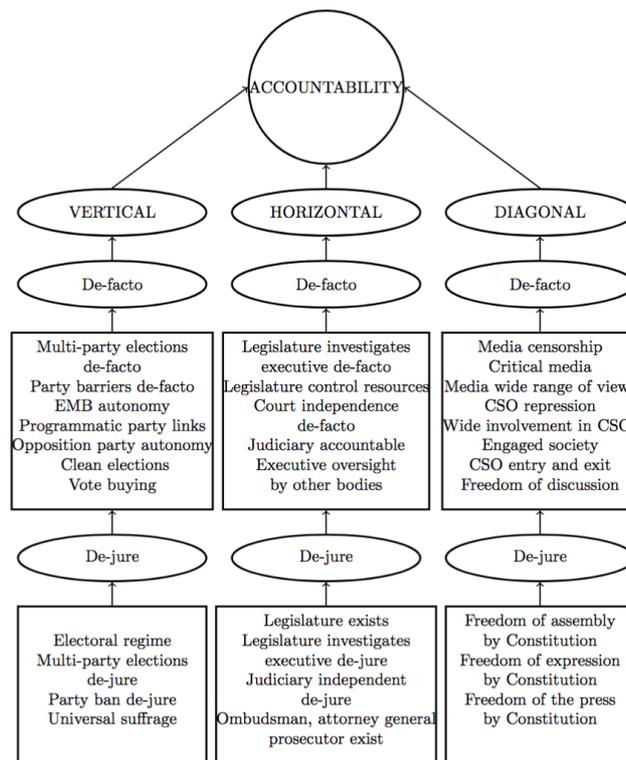
Source: Luhrmann et al. 2017

Operationalizing Diagonal Accountability

In this report we focus on diagonal accountability to get a better sense of the current trends in the world today. We depart from the sixteen priority countries in Southeast Asia and Southeast Africa identified by the European Commission, but with a particular focus on the regions' backsliders. To do so, we use V-Dem data to drill into the concept of diagonal accountability to see how the selected countries have performed over the last decade.

The V-Dem project operationalizes each type of accountability as a composite of multiple indicators from the V-Dem data set (Coppedge et al. 2017). The data are produced from ratings provided by experts (over 3,000 total) on indicators related to accountability. To aggregate ratings provided by experts, V-Dem uses a Bayesian IRT-model (for details, see Pemstein et al. 2015, Coppedge et al. 2015). To develop the indices of accountability V-Dem aggregate specific V-Dem indicators using a Bayesian structural equation model (Luhrmann et al 2017). The accountability indices used in this report are available in the V-Dem datasets and online graphing tools.

V-Dem's Diagonal Accountability Index consists of two underlying thematic components: Media freedom and Civil society. Fourteen indicators, which is the lowest level of aggregation, make up the two components.

The Civil society component is made up by the following indicators: *CSO Entry and Exit, CSO Participatory Environment, CSO Repression, Freedom of academic and cultural expression, Freedom of discussion (for women),* Freedom of discussion (for men), and Engaged Society. Details about the indicators are found here.

The Media freedom component consists of: *Media bias, Media self-censorship, Internet censorship effort, Harassment of journalists, Print/broadcast media critical,* Print/broadcast media perspectives, Government censorship effort – Media. Details about the indicators are found <u>here.</u>

For ease of presentation in this report we have selected a subset of the indicators for analysis, the indicators in italics above, which we will analyze in short country portraits. However, the indicators excluded portray more or less the same picture that we outline here. The Diagonal Accountability Index ranges from 0 to1, while the underlying indicators run from 0-4. As for all V-Dem indicator and indices, a higher score represents a better situation.

We begin by showing a broad picture of the development of diagonal accountability over time for comparative purposes. *Figure 2* shows the development of accountability in the regions of the world after the Third wave of democratization (1974 – 2017). The graph depicts a global upward trend over the last decades, especially during the late 80s and around the time of the end of the cold war. This is especially significant for Eastern Europe and Central Asia, which take the region from the lower end of the spectrum closer to the world average. At present day, MENA is the poorest performing region with a score below 0.5 while the world average today is around 0.65. Unsurprisingly, Western Europe scores consistently the highest, close to 0.9, although a negative downwards trend is visible after 2012.

*Figure 2. Diagonal Accountability Globally 1974 to 2017*
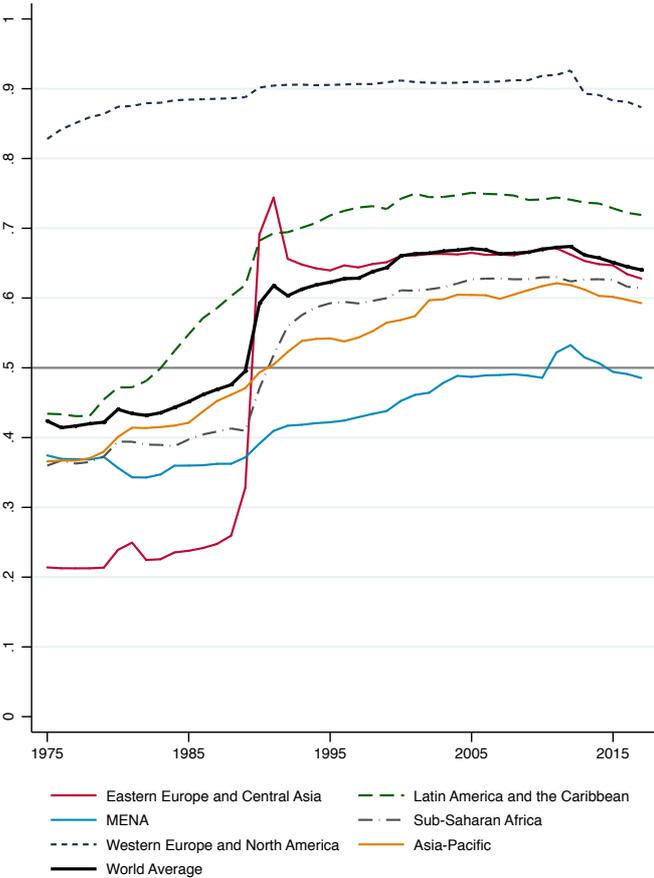
In *Figure 3* we show the change in diagonal accountability over the last five years only for the sixteen priority countries identified by the European Commission.[3] On the y-axis we show the scores for 2017, and on the x-axis for 2012. Countries on or very close to the line remain at the same levels in 2017 as they were in 2012. Countries above the line have experienced positive changes and scores for countries below the line have declined.

The figure makes it clear that only six of the countries are advancing and only to a very small degree. The biggest change is observed in Mozambique, which moves from .7 in 2012 to .8 in 2017 but despite that, positive changes are quite small in size. Importantly and worryingly, ten countries are backsliding in terms of diagonal accountability and the size of the negative changes are substantively much larger than the positive ones. In this report we focus on the backsliding countries to gain deeper understanding of these declines. These are: Burundi, Thailand, Cambodia, Malaysia, Uganda, Zambia, Tanzania, Kenya, Indonesia and Philippines. In the following two regional sections we visualize and analyze diagonal accountability in these countries by examining the two thematic components constituting the diagonal accountability index: civil society and media freedom.

Figure 3. Diagonal Accountability in 16 selected countries 2012 and 2017
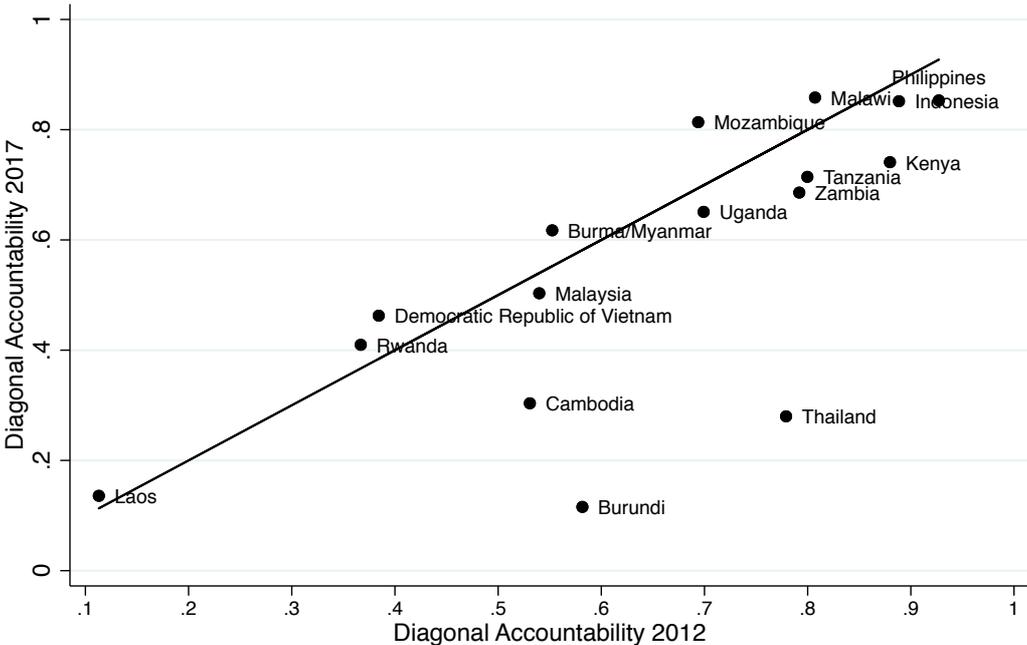
Diagonal Accountability in Southeast Africa

We first turn to the selected countries in Africa and the regional overview provided in *Figure 4* (same x and y-axis as *Figure 3*, but include the African countries only). Burundi's scores fall precipitously from a score closer to 0.6 in 2007 to below 0.2 in 2017. The other countries for which scores are declining are Uganda, Tanzania, Zambia and Kenya, but these changes are

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[3] These are: Burundi, Burma/Myanmar, Cambodia, Indonesia, Kenya, Laos, Mozambique, Malaysia, Malawi, Philippines, Rwanda, Tanzania, Thailand, Uganda, Vietnam, and Zambia.

smaller in size. The remaining three countries show steady with smaller advancements. In the following two sections we examine the backsliding countries, Burundi, Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, and Zambia, in detail.

Figure 4. Diagonal accountability in selected countries in Southeast Africa 2012 and 2017.
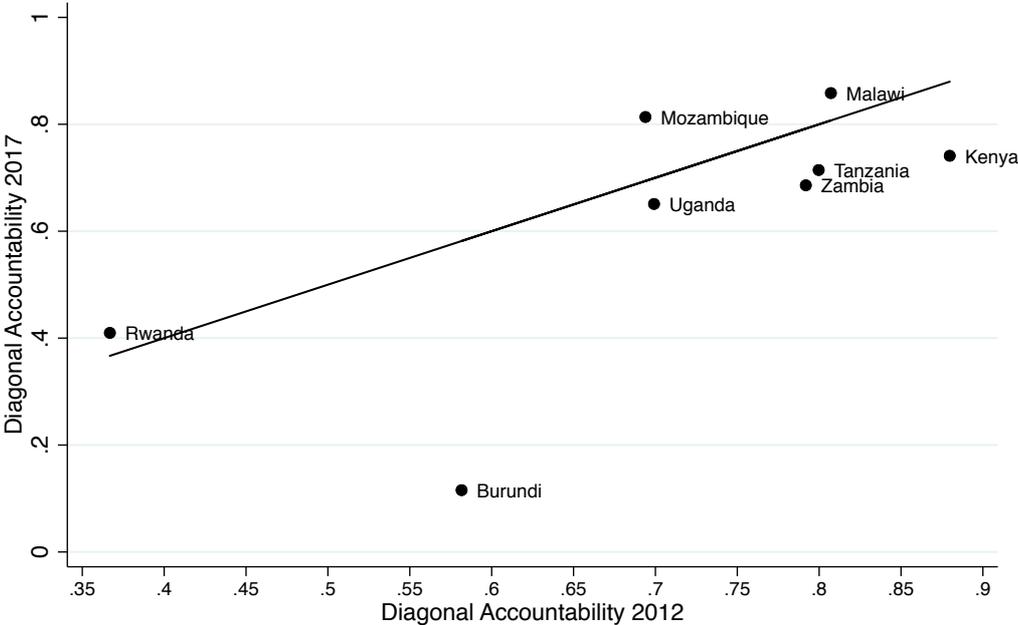
Civil Society Developments in Southeast Africa

Let's start off by analyzing the civil society component of diagonal accountability, country by country to get a better understanding of the picture painted in *Figure 4*. To better understand the backsliding, we extend the period examined to 2007-2017 for the country-specific line graphs. The indicators included in the civil society component focus on various aspects of CSOs and how freely they can operate, as well as freedom of discussion, and academic and cultural freedoms. The overall trend points towards increased state oppression. In most of the country cases, the state is imposing measures, either bans, restrictions or laws, to increase control and restrict freedom, either when it comes to individual freedoms or the civil society as a whole. On a more positive note, the freedom of discussion for women is in most of the countries one of the better performing indicators in comparison.

Burundi

The overall political situation in Burundi - the region's primary backslider - is quickly worsening, evidently also affecting the civil society. *Figure 5* reveals scores near the bottom of the scale for all measures. From 2012 and onwards, sparked by the political turbulence in 2015, a fairly steep downward trend is noticeable for the complete set of indicators. The political crisis was sparked in 2015, when President Pierre Nkurunziza announced that he would run for a third term in office, despite the constitutional limitations to only two terms. Ever since, the government has dealt violently with any attempts to oppose this decision. Security forces and the youth wing of the ruling party (Imbonerakure) have answered with arrests, torture, killings, and rape to any attempt for opposition activities (Human Rights Watch). More than 500 people have been killed, as result of which UN concluded that the ongoing rights violations in Burundi may amount to crimes against humanity (UNHCR 2016).

The indicator measuring whether the government is attempting to repress CSO's is performing worst off throughout the period. NGOs are operating under severe restrictions and control in Burundi, with legislation hindering their activities and antigovernment organizations being completely banned. With a new law imposing further restrictions in 2016, foreign civil society organizations being banned, and detention of NGOs employees, Burundi's scores are now close to the minimum. This reflects the fact that members of civil society organizations, especially human rights defenders and journalists, have been the main target of the systematic repression by authorities (UNHCR 2016). Freedom of expression as well as academic freedoms remain severely constrained (Freedom House 2018).

Figure 5. Civil society development Burundi
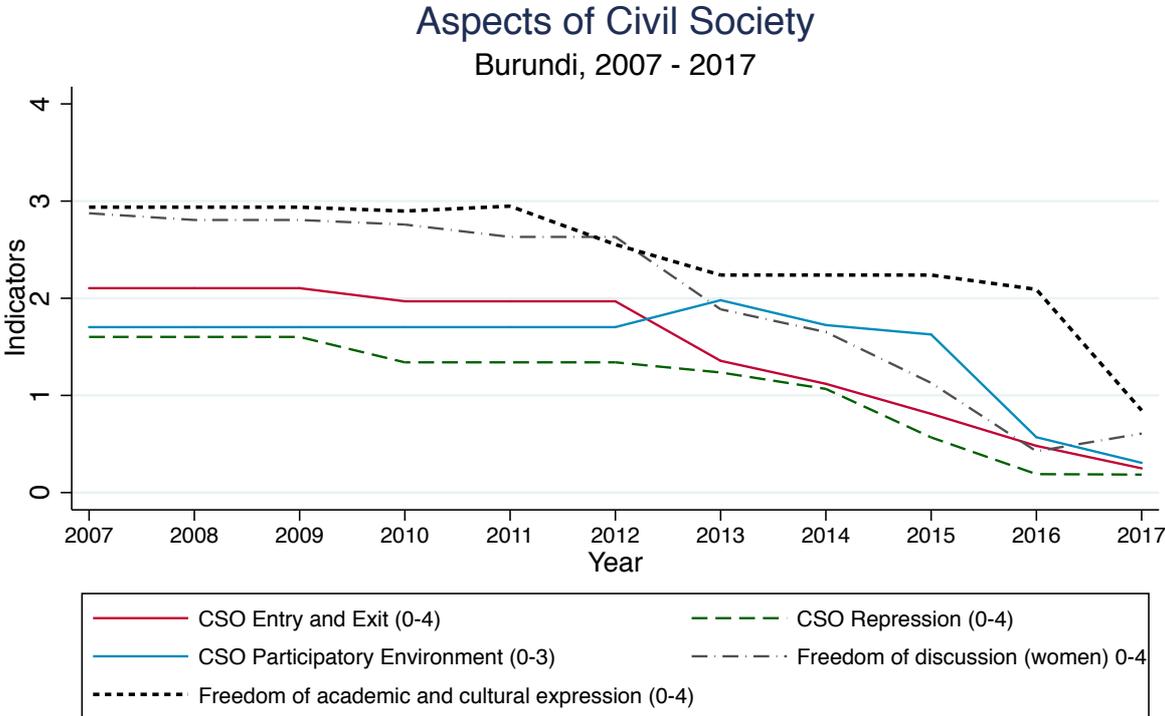
Kenya
The overall steady graphs, with scores around 2-3 on the 0 to 4 scale, suggest that few major changes have occurred in Kenya during the last decade. Civil society in Kenya has played an important role in establishing a democratic sphere during the last three decades, and grassroots movements are common all around the country (BTI). Even so, there are room for progress for the Kenyan civil society. The fact that NGOs criticizing the last election faced threats of termination, illustrates the imperfect conditions for Kenyan civil society, also visualized by the poorest performing indicator CSO Entry and Exit (Freedom House 2018). It is noteworthy that the indicator measuring Freedom of Academic and Cultural Expression depicts a decline in recent years. The indicator graph may illustrate the increasing threat from ethnic politics and political violence within academic institutions which during student protests in 2017 led to the decease of one student. A contrast to past times where academic freedoms have been fairly robust in Kenya. Freedom of expression is guaranteed by the constitution, though recent reports from the country indicate that these rights are somewhat infringed on, for instance by the government investments in mobile phones surveillance technology (Freedom House 2018).

Figure 6. Civil society development Kenya

Aspects of Civil Society
Kenya, 2007 - 2017

Legend:
- CSO Entry and Exit (0-4)
- CSO Participatory Environment (0-3)
- Freedom of academic and cultural expression (0-4)
- CSO Repression (0-4)
- Freedom of discussion (women) 0-4
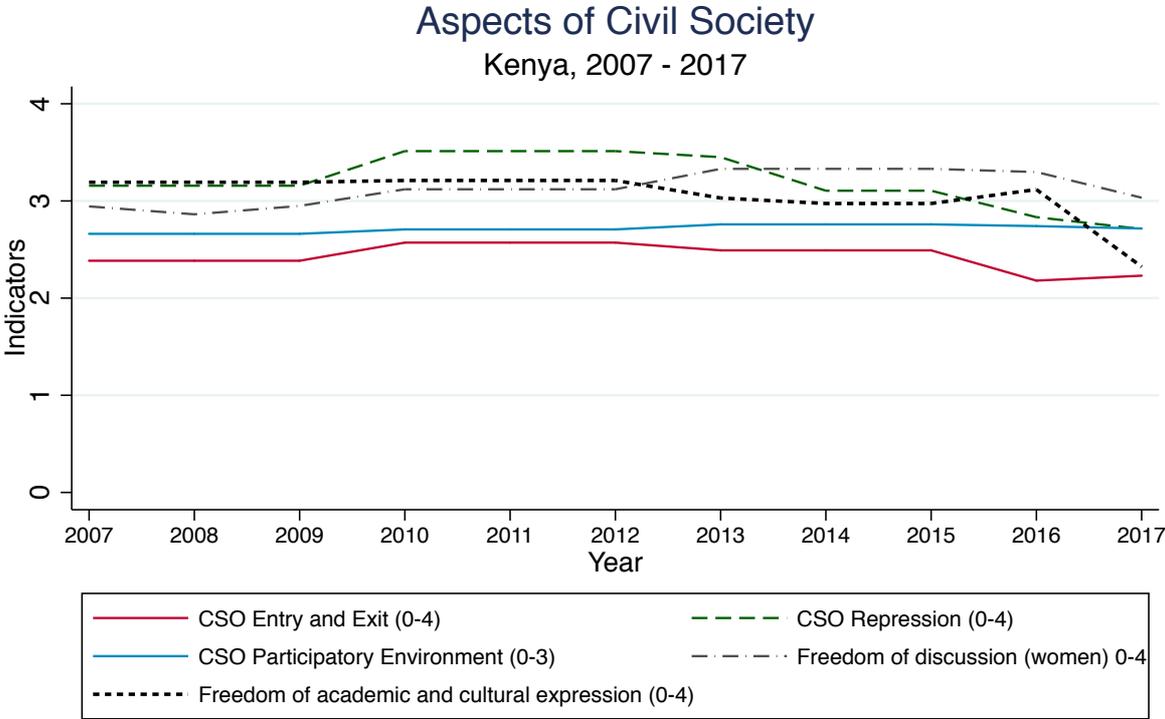
Tanzania

What is the current situation for civil society in Tanzania? *Figure 7* reveals declining trends for three aspects of Tanzanian civil society: Freedom of Discussion, the level of CSO Repressions as well as government control over CSO Entry and Exit. With an increased NGO control and the threat of deregister organizations which are contesting government views, the level of CSO repression has indeed increased (Freedom House 2018). Also, while CSOs service delivery generally is welcomed by the Tanzanian government, CSOs perceived to be a threat or contesting political interests have been exposed to various repressive treatments such as banns and interrogations (BTI). The implementation of three laws used limit expression of freedom (the Cybercrimes Act, the Statistics Act, and the Media Services Act), is possible visualized by the declining score for freedom of discussion in 2016 (BTI).

Figure 7. Civil society development Tanzania

Aspects of Civil Society
Tanzania, 2007 - 2017

Legend:
- CSO Entry and Exit (0-4)
- CSO Participatory Environment (0-3)
- Freedom of academic and cultural expression (0-4)
- CSO Repression (0-4)
- Freedom of discussion (women) 0-4
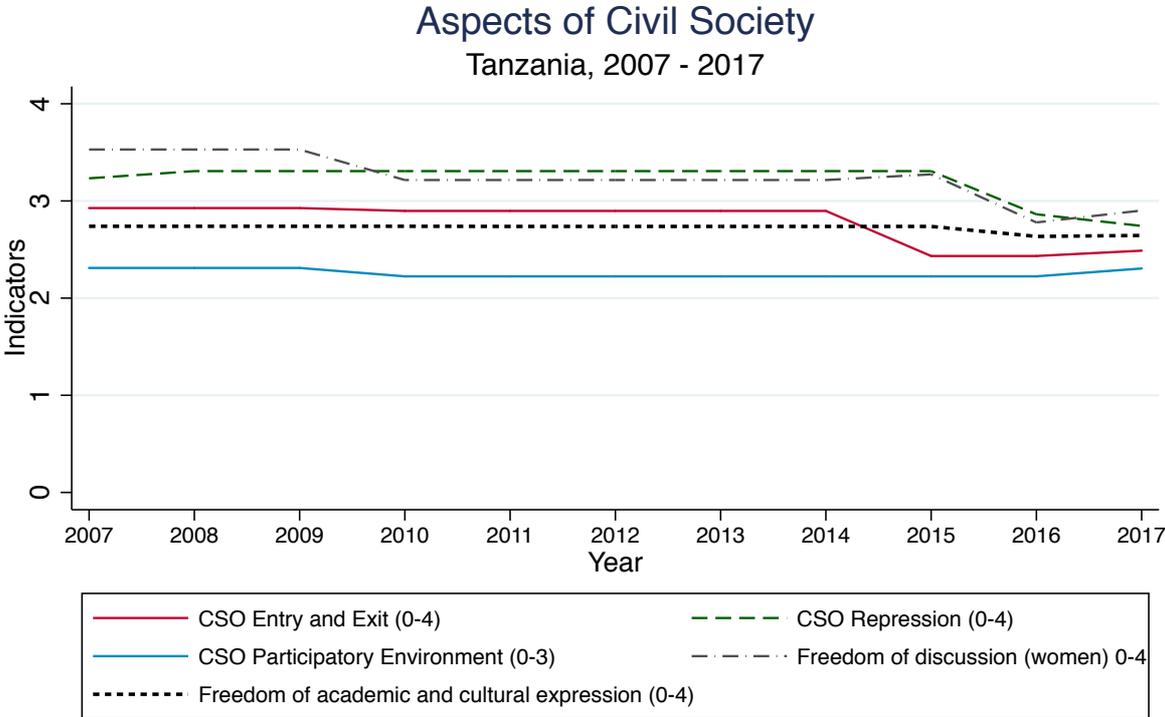
Uganda
The Ugandan civil society graph reveals an interesting pattern where Freedom of Discussion for (women) variable stands out. While online discussions and communications are constrained and monitored, private speech is relatively free in Uganda. All the same, online political discussions are still taking place openly. The increased government interreference in media, the detention of Stella Nyanzi and women's largely disadvantaged role in the Ugandan society in general, may explain the declining freedom score. The civil society in Uganda continues to enable NGOs operating rather freely. Though, their activities are monitored and the 2016 act imposing new obligations on NGOs could potentially enable more state interference going forward (BTI).

Figure 8. Civil society development Uganda

Aspects of Civil Society
Uganda, 2007 - 2017
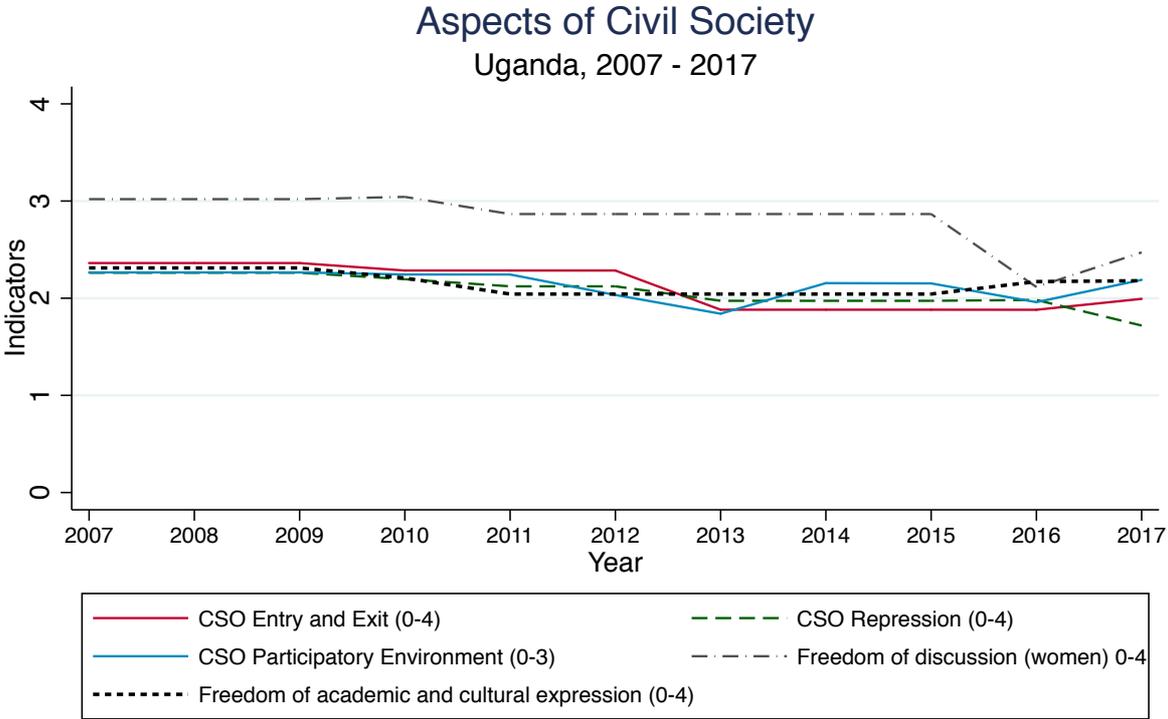
Zambia

The civil society in Zambia has remained largely stable since 2007, with a slight downward trend in recent years for two indicators: CSO Repression and CSO Entry and Exit. The measure of Freedom of Discussion remains stable around 3 throughout. There is no strong civil society tradition across Zambia, instead most of the civil society is centralized to Lusaka. The position for civil society groups continue to be weakened and there are growing tensions between civil society groups and the government (BTI). The government's attempt to in 2013 force all NGOs to register in order to not be banned did not succeed, even so NGOs still need to register (Freedom House 2017). *Figure 9* thus illustrates a society with no big changes, but with room for advancement.

Figure 9. Civil society development Zambia

Aspects of Civil Society
Zambia, 2007 - 2017

Legend:
- CSO Entry and Exit (0-4)
- CSO Participatory Environment (0-3)
- Freedom of academic and cultural expression (0-4)
- CSO Repression (0-4)
- Freedom of discussion (women) 0-4
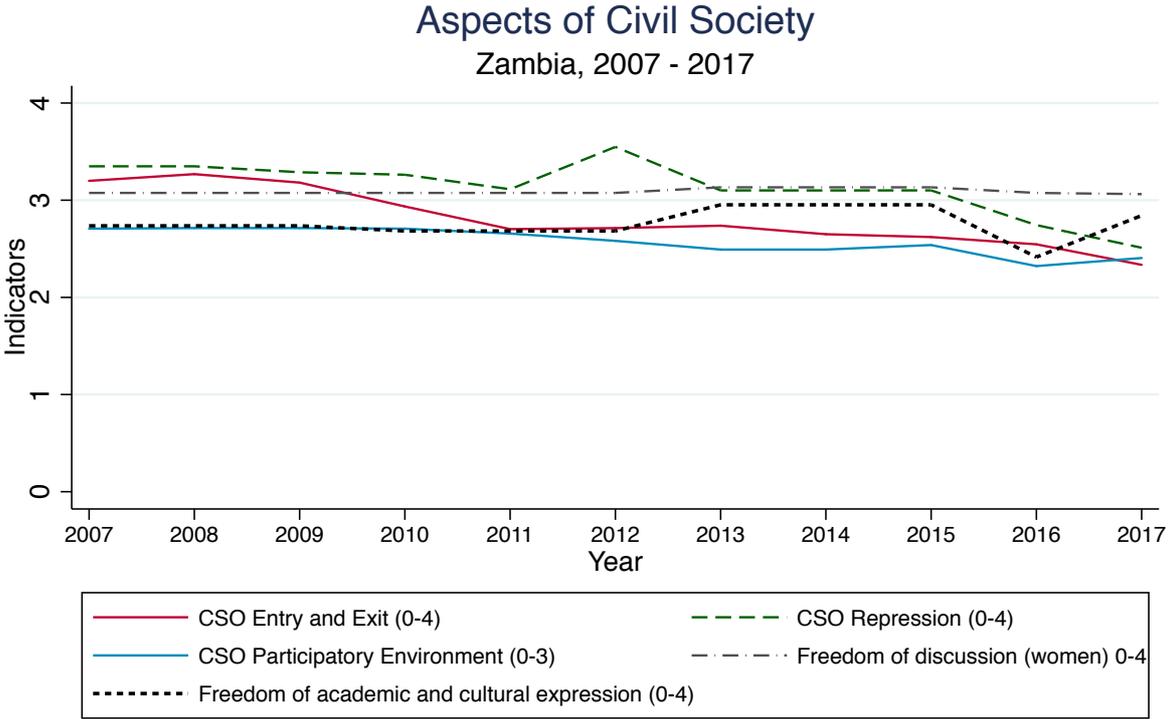
Media Freedom in Southeast Africa

Next, we take a closer look at the media landscape in the region. We will do so by graphing five of the indicators included in the media freedom component of the V-Dem diagonal accountability index. The indicators measure the degree of censorship in traditional media outlets as well as online, the likelihood and frequency of harassment of journalists, media biases and plurality as well as the ability of media to openly criticize the government. Yet again, increased state interference contributes to the declining scores and a less diverse media landscape in almost all country portraits. Interesting to note is that media bias (red line) is the best scoring indicator for all countries in this regional sample as well as the main declining indicator for at least two of them.

Burundi
Similar to the previous section, the general trend for Burundi is severely negative. Indeed, all indicators relating to media freedom are declining, several of them reaching the bottom of the scale. The steadily decline since 2015 on the indicator Media bias possibly depicts the coup attempt and the breakdown of the independent media (BTI). The 2013 media law, resulting in increased and reduced protection for journalists and sources, as well as the political violence resulting the termination of a number of media outlets have contributed to the descent. The harassment of journalists continues, forcing many to leave the country (Freedom House 2018).

Figure 10. Media Freedom Burundi

Media freedom
Burundi, 2007 - 2017
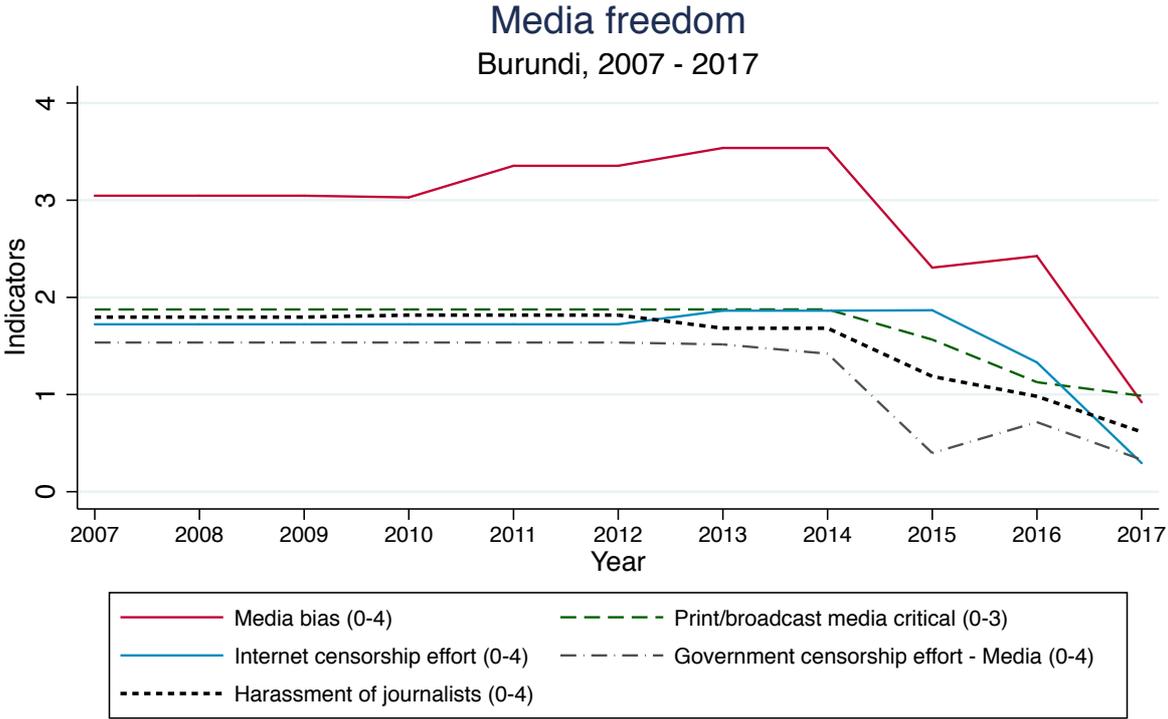
Kenya

Yet again, we pay attention to the Media Bias indicator which after a few years with stable scores is in decline after 2015, indicating increased levels of media biases towards the opposition. The media landscape in Kenya is more vibrant and diverse than in many other countries on the continent. There have been attempts to legally increase state control over media, though they have been unsuccessful (BTI). However, there are some restricting laws in place which together with the harassment of journalists increase self-censorships. For instance, mainstream media failed to report on the political violence in the aftermath of the August election (Freedom House 2018), this could be a source of the declining score in 2017.

Figure 11. Media Freedom Kenya

Figure 11. Media Freedom Kenya
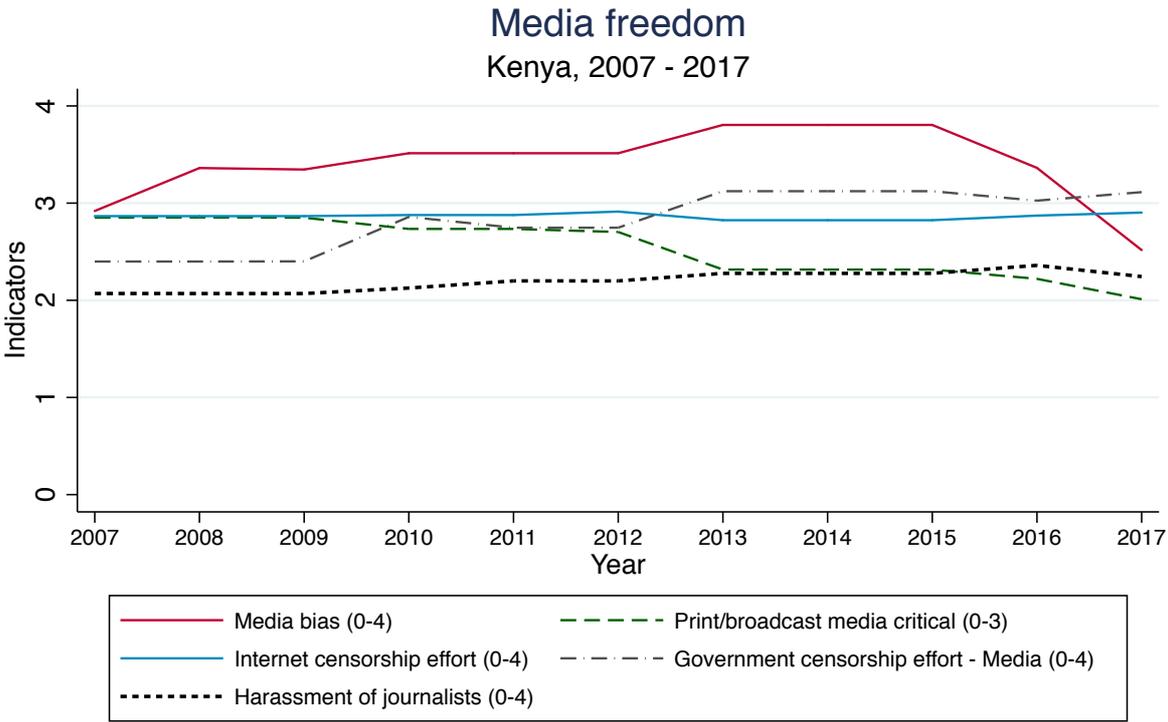
Tanzania

Just like in the previous graph for Tanzania, the media freedom scores remain fairly stable over the ten-year period. However, the 2015 draconian media laws mentioned earlier, as well as the 2016 Media Services Act have constrained the conditions for independent and critical media to operate in Tanzania and feds a climate of fear (BTI, Freedom House 2018). During 2017 two newspapers were suspended for publishing government critical contents. Taken together these developments exemplifies the declining scores in Tanzania for the measures Harassment of Journalists and Government Censorship.

Figure 12. Media Freedom Tanzania

Media freedom
Tanzania, 2007 - 2017

Legend:
- Media bias (0-4)
- Internet censorship effort (0-4)
- Harassment of journalists (0-4)
- Print/broadcast media critical (0-3)
- Government censorship effort - Media (0-4)
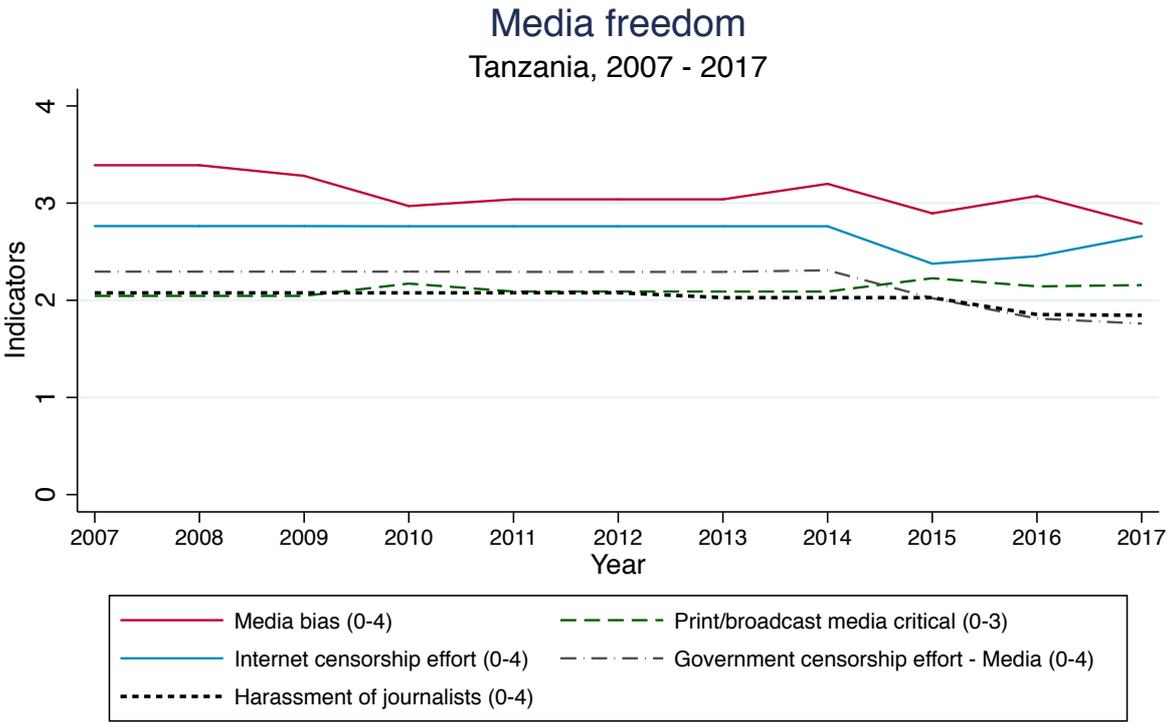
Uganda

Little has changed in the Media freedom in Uganda during the examined period with scores mostly around the middle of the scale. Even though government restrictions and interference takes place, the media scene in Uganda can be described as lively, rich and diverse (BTI). Critical opinions are tolerated to a large degree, even so, the state is a main advertiser and source of income for many outlets, which creates incentives for self-censorship. Thus, a fully free and pluralistic media sector is not achieved (BTI). The 2016 law which banns reporting about opposition acitivities further speaks to this (Freedom House 2018).

Figure 13. Media Freedom Uganda

Media freedom
Uganda, 2007 - 2017

Legend:
- Media bias (0-4)
- Internet censorship effort (0-4)
- Harassment of journalists (0-4)
- Print/broadcast media critical (0-3)
- Government censorship effort - Media (0-4)
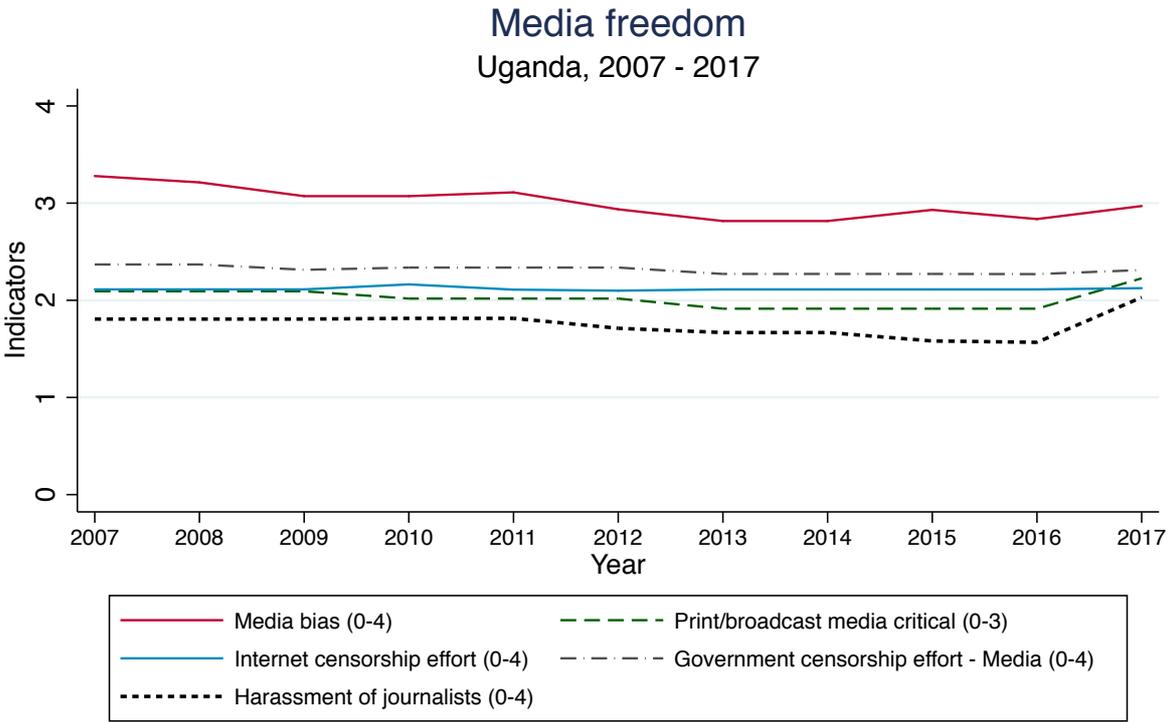
Zambia

The Zambian media scene reveals significant changes in terms of Government Censorship efforts – Media. With the only independent newspaper being shut down one month before the election in 2016, high levels of media biases are evident. Media freedom and freedom of discussions usually prevails in Zambia, thought around the time of the 2016 election, this was heavily infringed on and sources suggests that the current administration is less tolerant (BTI).

Figure 14. Media Freedom Zambia

Media freedom
Zambia, 2007 - 2017

—— Media bias (0-4)	– – – Print/broadcast media critical (0-3)
—— Internet censorship effort (0-4)	–·–·– Government censorship effort - Media (0-4)
······ Harassment of journalists (0-4)	
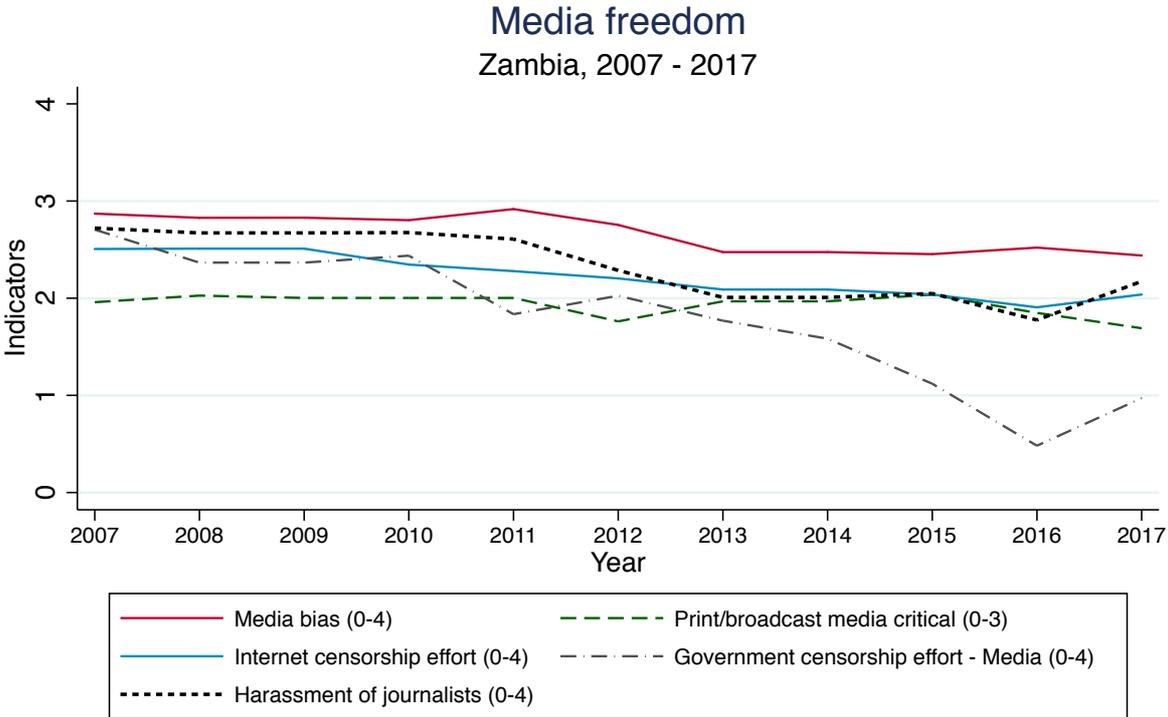
Diagonal Accountability in Southeast Asia

With *Figure 15,* we are now turning to the eight priority countries identified in Southeast Asia with a particular focus on the backsliding countries: Thailand, Cambodia, Malaysia, Indonesia, and Philippines. Three countries have improved to a very small degree over the time period 2012-2017: Burma/Myanmar, Laos and Vietnam. It is worth pointing out that Laos, though a minor improvement, is scoring close to the bottom of the scale both in 2012 and 2017. On opposite end of the graph we find Philippines and Indonesia which, even though backsliding, remain closer to the top of the scale with substantively higher levels of diagonal accountability in comparison.

Figure 15. Diagonal Accountability in Southeast Asia 2012 and 2017.
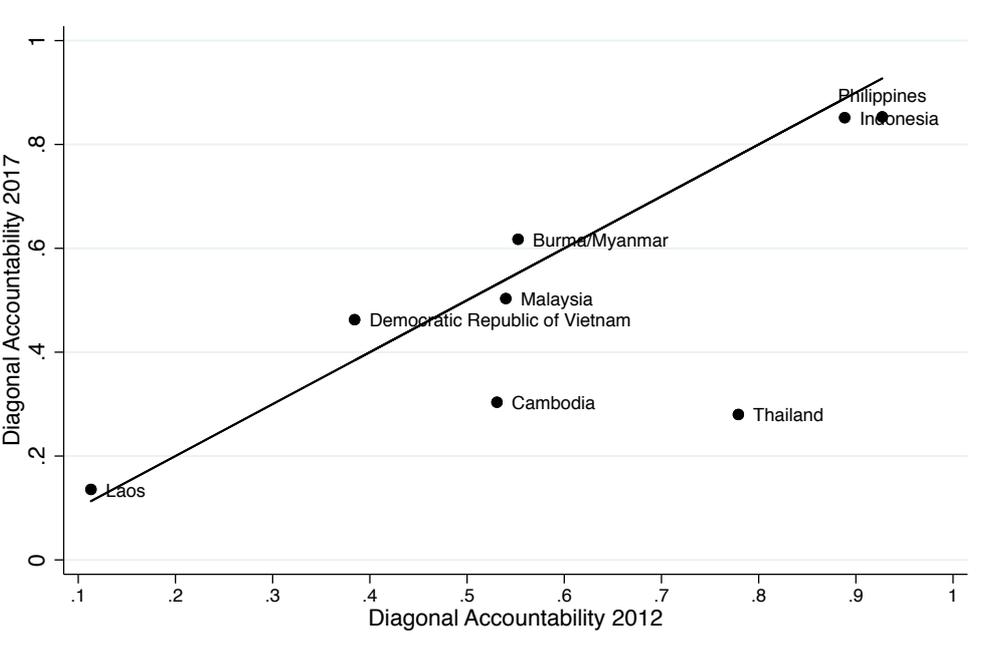
Civil Society Developments in Southeast Asia

In this section the recent trends in the five backsliding countries 2007-2017 for civil society and media freedom are analyzed. Remember, the measures look at the situation for CSOs from three different angles, as well as three different types of freedoms: academic, cultural and speech. The overall picture painted in this regional sample, is one where many of the country line graphs are fairly steady with minor declines. In comparison to the African country portraits, there are fewer examples of state interference. Thailand's drastic developments stand out in this regional sample.

Cambodia
Along with Thailand, Cambodia is the worst performing country with scores close to the bottom of the scale on several key indicators connected to civil society freedom. All indicators but one are backsliding and the only aspect improving, though a very minor increase, is CSO Participatory Environment which describes the extent and under what conditions citizens involve in CSOs. The slight increase could perhaps be explained by the broad numbers of CSOs delivering services, particularly within the health sector (BTI). Cambodia's formerly so active civil society is with the 2015 constraining law at risk, visible from the downward trend for CSO Entry and Exist. Increased fear of speaking one's mind and NGOs being obliged to operate under political neutrality, is threatening the freedom of speech and discussion (BTI). The murder of Kem Ley in 2015 as well as NGOs under threat or banned contributed to that end (Freedom House 2018). Another worrying trend is visible for the indicator focusing in particular on freedom of discussion for women.

Figure 16. Civil society developments Cambodia

Aspects of Civil Society
Cambodia, 2007 - 2017

CSO Entry and Exit (0-4)	CSO Repression (0-4)
CSO Participatory Environment (0-3)	Freedom of discussion (women) 0-4
Freedom of academic and cultural expression (0-4)	
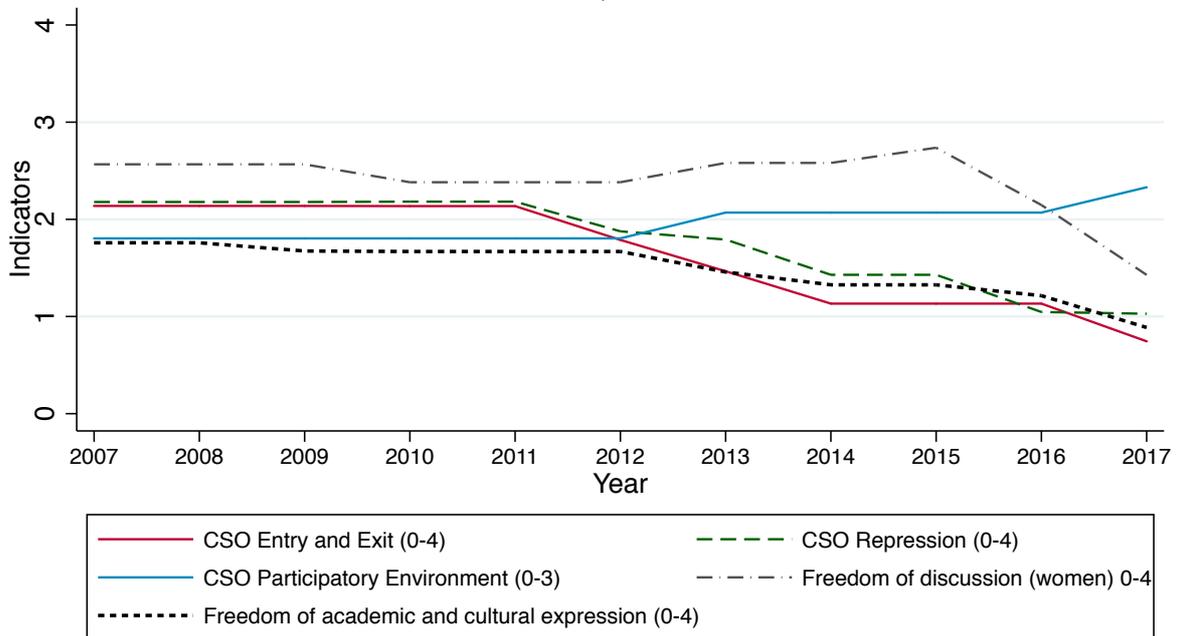
Indonesia

Indonesia, one of the region's top performers, is showing negative trends on several indicators after 2016. While the measures CSO Repression and Freedom of Discussion are stable since 2013, the remaining indicators are declining. The academic freedom is generally well respected in Indonesia, illustrated by the relatively high score and insignificant change (Freedom House 2017). A law restricting civil society activism was adopted in 2013. However, organizations remain resilient in their attempts to criticize government activities and continue to participate in public political debates openly (BTI). Nevertheless, the declining scores in CSO participatory environment reveal that the government is attempting to shrink the space for opposition.

Figure 17. Civil society Indonesia

Aspects of Civil Society
Indonesia, 2007 - 2017

Legend:
- CSO Entry and Exit (0-4)
- CSO Participatory Environment (0-3)
- Freedom of academic and cultural expression (0-4)
- CSO Repression (0-4)
- Freedom of discussion (women) 0-4
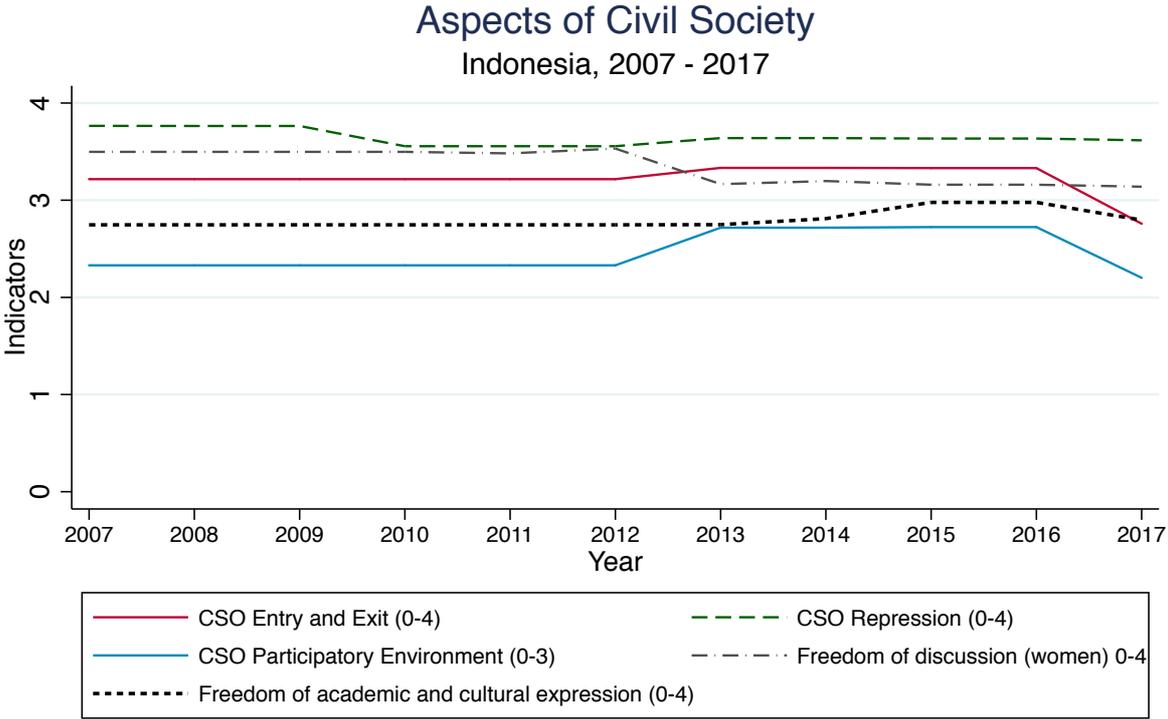
Malaysia

In the case of Malaysia, all civil society measures are below 3 but fairly stable throughout the time span. Significant changes are visible only for CSO Participatory Environment and by a small increase in the Freedom of Academic and Cultural Expression. The latter remains below 2 throughout and may depict the University Colleges Act enabling disciplinary actions towards those critical of the government or politically active (Freedom House 2018). The general perception is that NGOs can operate freely in Malaysia, under the condition that they do not interfere with government policies (BTI). According to BTI, a large share of the population, about 20%, is engaging in a CSOs (BTI).

Figure 18. Civil society Malaysia

Aspects of Civil Society
Malaysia, 2007 - 2017

Legend:
- CSO Entry and Exit (0-4)
- CSO Repression (0-4)
- CSO Participatory Environment (0-3)
- Freedom of discussion (women) 0-4
- Freedom of academic and cultural expression (0-4)
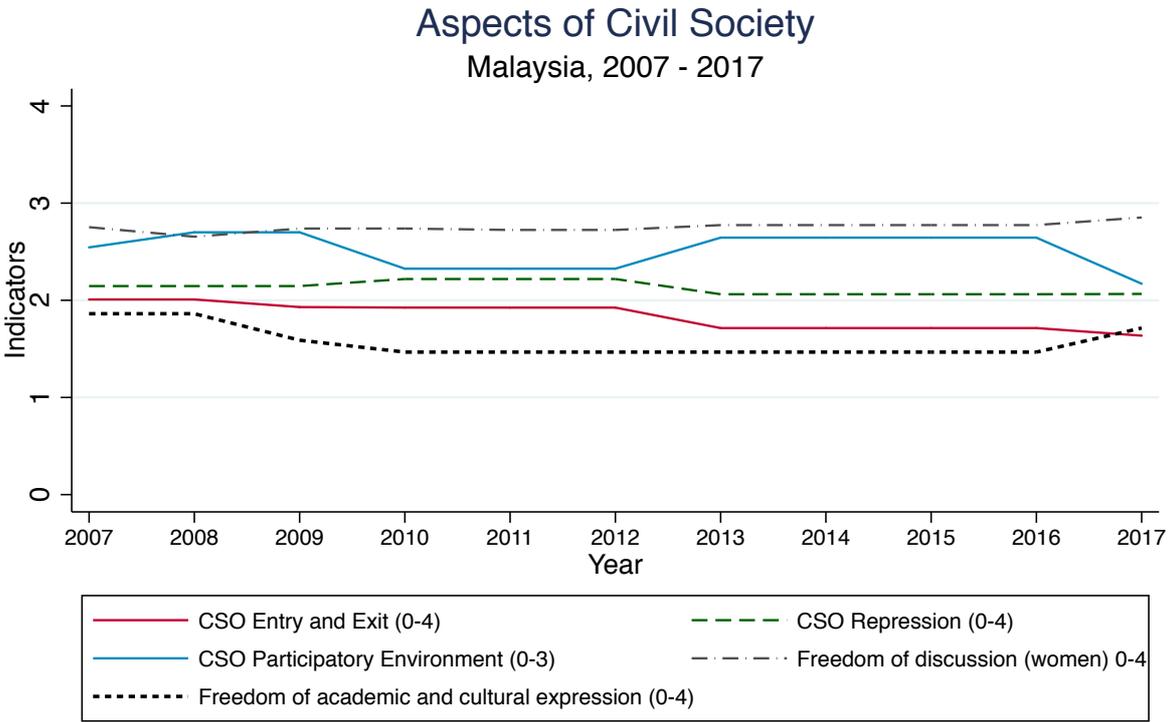
Philippines

One of the top performers, Philippines, still reaches high scores with limited declines only. As visible from the figure below, all indicators are close to the top of the scale with relatively minor declines from 2016 and onwards. A declining trend is noticeable for the CSO Repression measure which looks into whether government attempts to repress CSOs, a rising concern in the Philippines where NGOs critical to government policies openly receive threats (BTI, Freedom House 2018). Duerte's policies and actions are threatening one of the strongest CSO sectors in Asia with highest number of NGOs per capita (BTI). The measure Freedom of Discussion decline in conjunction with the Duerte's entry to power.

Figure 19. Civil society Philippines

Aspects of Civil Society
Philippines, 2007 - 2017

Legend:
- CSO Entry and Exit (0-4)
- CSO Participatory Environment (0-3)
- Freedom of academic and cultural expression (0-4)
- CSO Repression (0-4)
- Freedom of discussion (women) 0-4
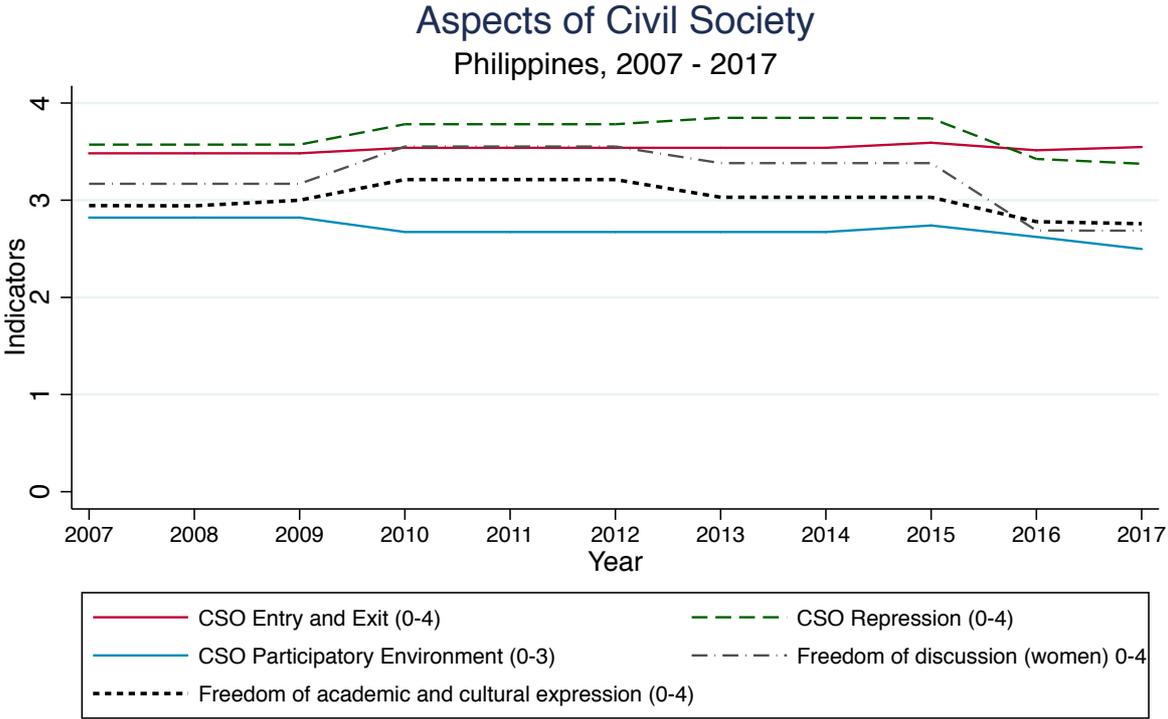
Thailand

Thailand is the principal backslider in the Southeast Asia region with diagonal accountability score declining from 8 to below 4 according to *Figure 15*. As visible in *Figure 20* below, the country has experienced dramatic developments over the last ten years. By the installment of the junta in 2014, all indicators but CSO Participatory Environment declined significantly and remain, with some variation, on close to the bottom values up until today. Academic freedoms are severely constrained by the military leadership, ensuring that politically sensitive topics are avoided all together, by measures such as surveillance and detention (Freedom House 2018). Even though the country generally has a vibrant civil society, CSOs focusing on human rights and freedom of expression are restricted (Freedom House 2018). The number of lèse-majesté cases have increased a lot since the 2014 regime change (194 in 2016), severely restraining civilians' possibilities to speak their mind (Freedom House 2018, BTI).

Figure 20. Civil society Thailand

Aspects of Civil Society
Thailand, 2007 - 2017

Legend:
- —— CSO Entry and Exit (0-4)
- – – – CSO Repression (0-4)
- —— CSO Participatory Environment (0-3)
- –·–·– Freedom of discussion (women) 0-4
- ······· Freedom of academic and cultural expression (0-4)
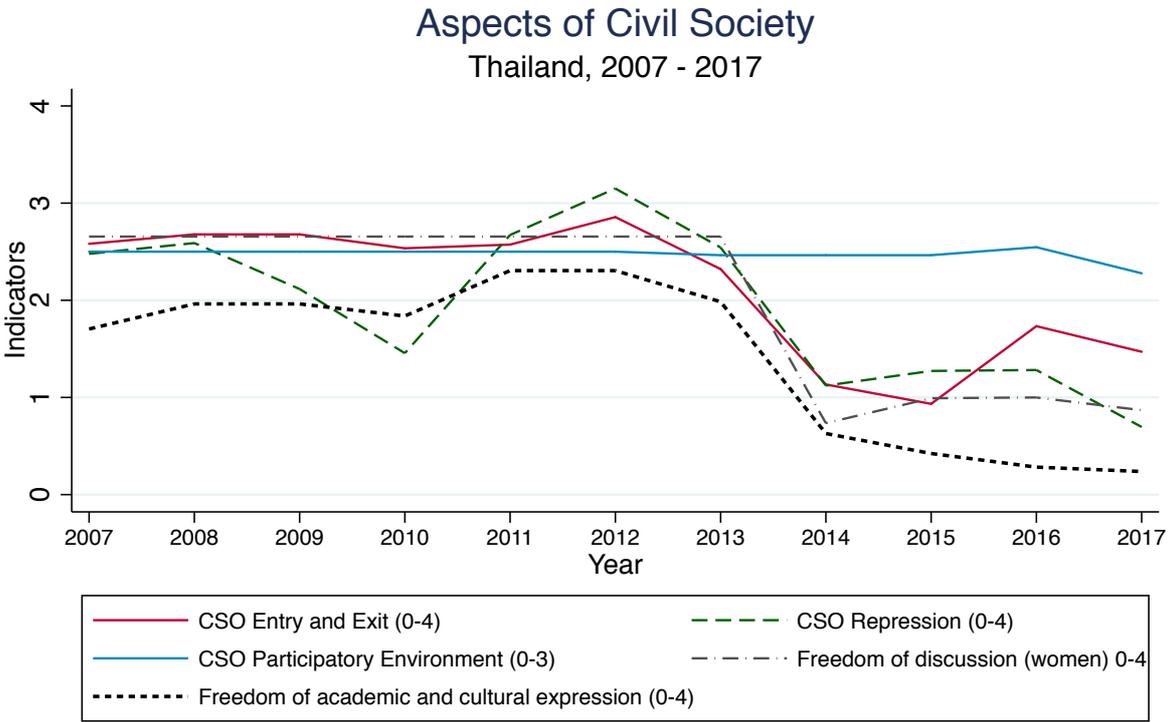
Media Freedom in Southeast Asia

We now turn to the last thematic and regional segment by analyzing media freedom in Southeast Asia. Again, this dimension of diagonal accountability aims to capture the state of the media landscape in a given country by measuring degree of censorships, media pluralism and the ability of journalist to criticize the government. Just like in the African sample, the media bias measure scores high for all countries in the sample. Thailand and Cambodia stand out with dramatic changes and steep declines.

Cambodia

The Cambodian graph shows a swift development, with a clear downward trend around 2016 which was when the Law on Cybercrime and Telecommunication was implemented, which is increasing government control and surveillance powers (Freedom House 2016). The implementation has for instance led to criminal charges for posting critical Facebook posts (FH 2016, 2017). The steady but low Cambodian scores are best understood in the light of the government control and monopoly of most media outlets. The government view is only challenged (to a limited degree) by social media platforms. Indeed, the room for critical thoughts remain thin (BTI).

Figure 21. Media Freedom Cambodia

Media freedom
Cambodia, 2007 - 2017

Legend:
- Media bias (0-4)
- Print/broadcast media critical (0-3)
- Internet censorship effort (0-4)
- Government censorship effort - Media (0-4)
- Harassment of journalists (0-4)
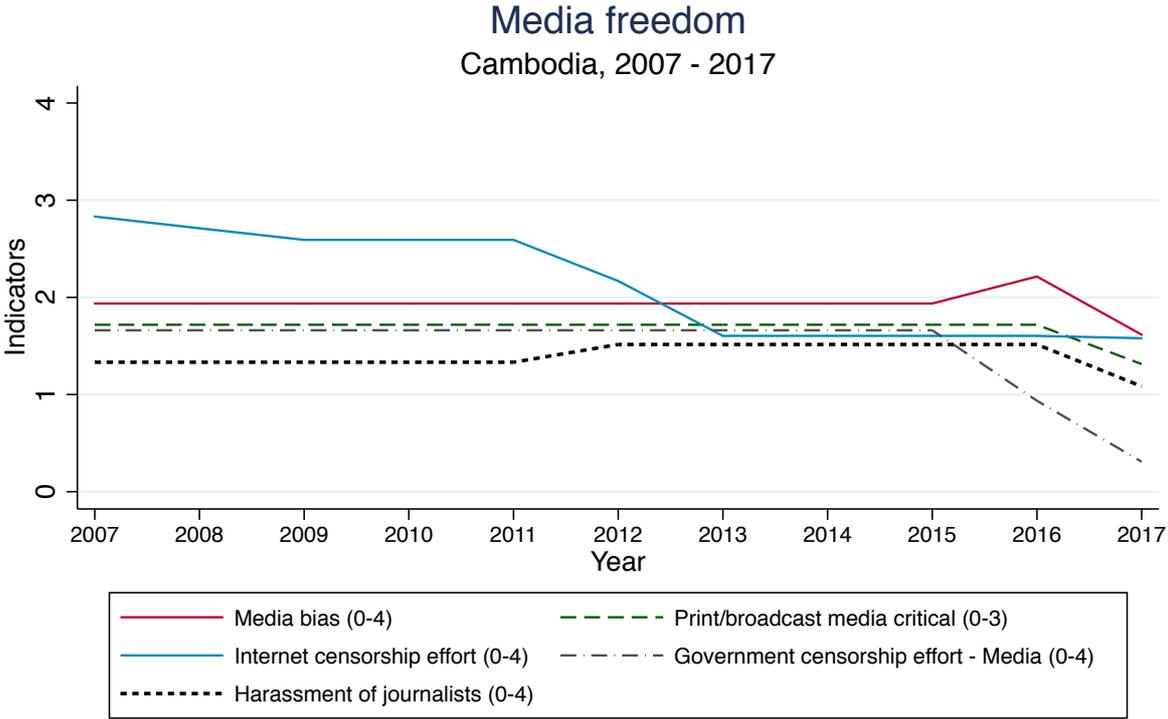
Indonesia

Yet again we observe relatively constant scores for Indonesia. The Indonesian press is comparatively diverse and rich. Though is far from perfect; there are restrictions and controls that prevent a fully free and well-functioning media sector. According to BTI the sector "*has become politically biased in a way not seen since the end of authoritarianism*" (BTI). Also, Freedom house reports that a large number of harassments of journalists in 2017 (Freedom House 2017).

Figure 22. Media freedom Indonesia

Media freedom
Indonesia, 2007 - 2017

Legend:
- Media bias (0-4)
- Internet censorship effort (0-4)
- Harassment of journalists (0-4)
- Print/broadcast media critical (0-3)
- Government censorship effort - Media (0-4)
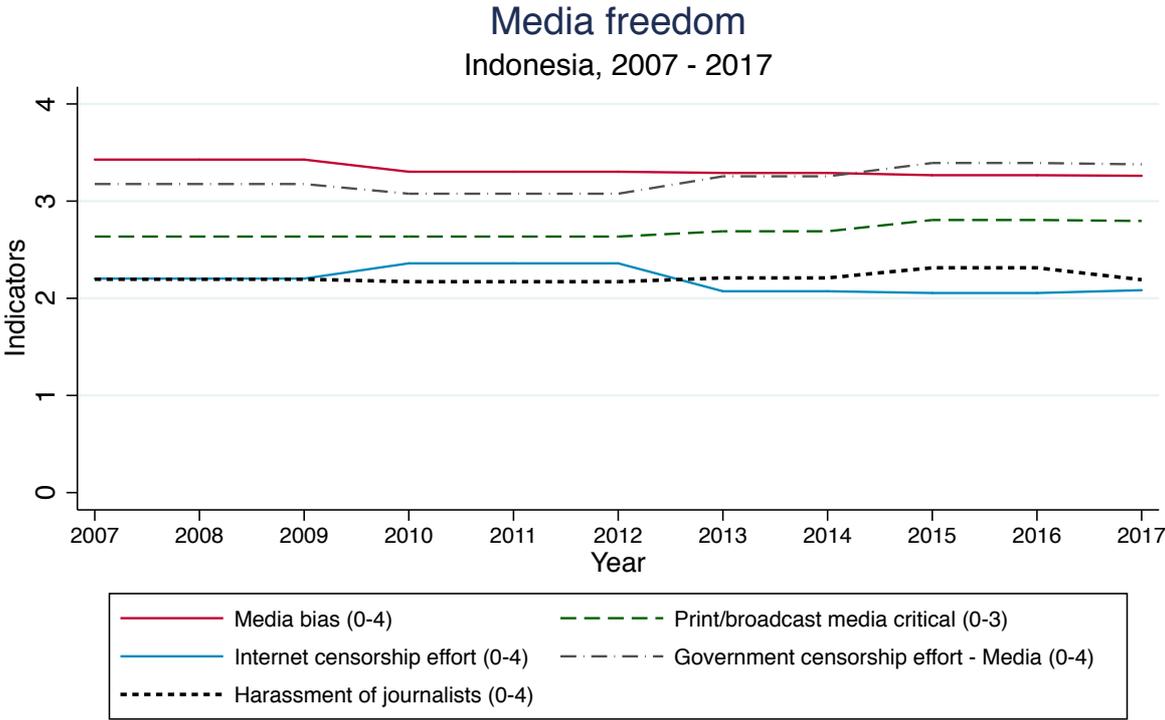
Malaysia

The scores for media freedom in Malaysia remain stable and clustered into two groups where censorship in media and ability to criticize stands out as the indicators performing the least well scoring around 1. With all mainstream media being controlled (direct or indirect) by government as well as with law enabling control over media outlets, the two indicators visualize a difficult situation for media outlets in Malaysia. After the 2015 Sarawak scandal, the climate has indeed hardened substantially (BTI). Exemplified by the closing of Malaysian Insider in 2016 (Freedom House 2018).

Figure 23. Media freedom Malaysia

Media freedom
Malaysia, 2007 - 2017

Legend:
- Media bias (0-4)
- Internet censorship effort (0-4)
- Harassment of journalists (0-4)
- Print/broadcast media critical (0-3)
- Government censorship effort - Media (0-4)
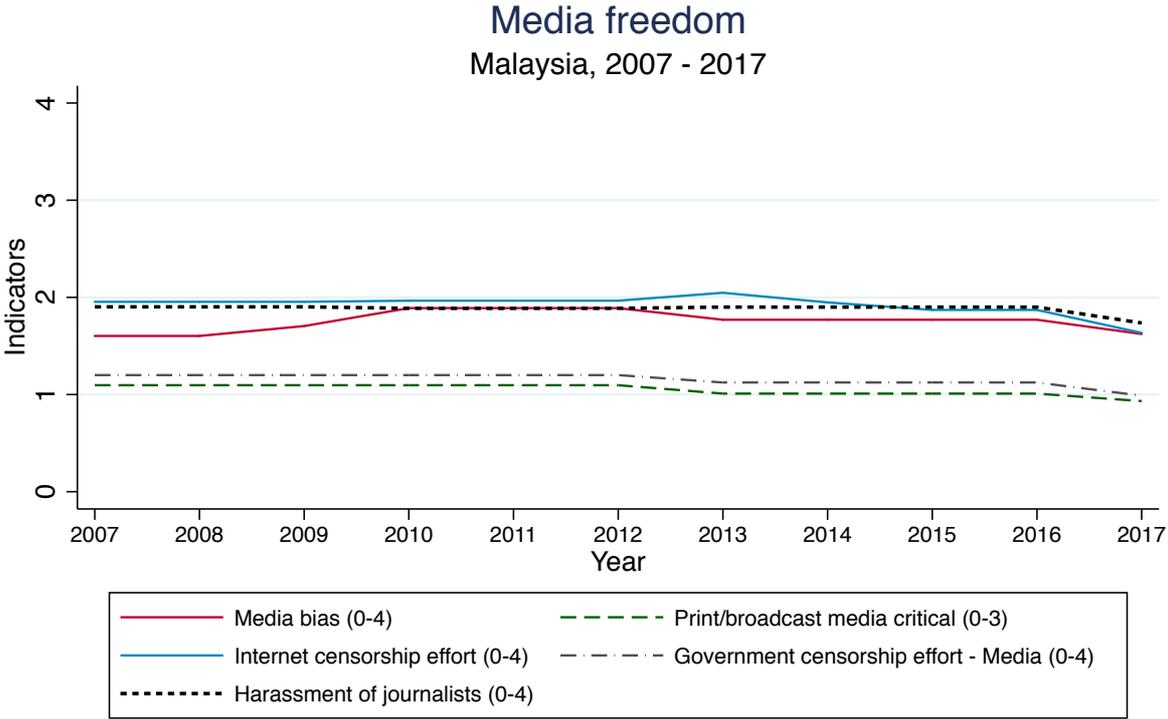
Philippines

As for the civil society development, most indicators are backsliding since 2016 and the commencement of Duerte's presidency. Indeed, the media landscape has been affected by Duerte's way of dealing with media outlets (Freedom House 2017). According to Freedom House and Journalists without borders, Philippines is one of the most dangerous countries in the world for a journalist, illustrated by the declining score for Harassment of journalists, a hostile trend that furthered sparked by the murderer of two journalists in 2017. Indeed, the situation for journalists in Philippines is though, the law enabling wiretapping of journalists in case of suspicion of involvement in terrorism, is just another example of the restrictive and dangerous situation for journalists (BTI, Freedom House 2018). In addition, the censorship board has extensive powers to edit or ban contents (Freedom House 2018). In terms of silver lining; many media outlets are privately owned and pluralism in terms of views remain (BTI), visualized by the rather high scores for Media bias and Government censorship.

Figure 24. Media Freedom Philippines

Media freedom
Philippines, 2007 - 2017

Legend:
- Media bias (0-4)
- Internet censorship effort (0-4)
- Harassment of journalists (0-4)
- Print/broadcast media critical (0-3)
- Government censorship effort - Media (0-4)
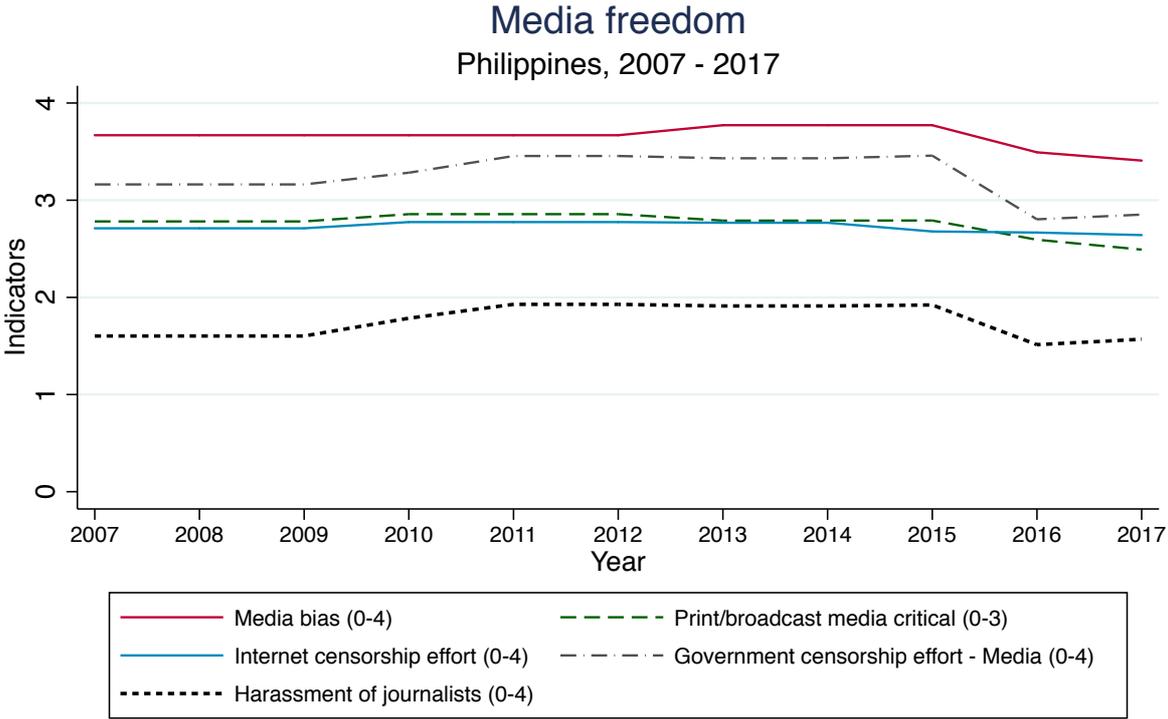
Thailand

As for civil society, the media landscape in Thailand has been heavily affected by the 2014-coup. The harsh media censorship implemented by the NCPO junta, pushes the censorship score to bottom levels. Over the last years the junta has closed a number of radio stations (15), tv networks (10), opposition views are to increasing degree being censored, books as well as movies that are considered illegitimate are being banned and a strengthened cyber law has been implemented (BTI). Indeed, the developments for the Thai media landscape is not looking to well. Even so, the fact that the Media bias indicator remains on, comparatively, higher levels.

Figure 25. Media Freedom Thailand
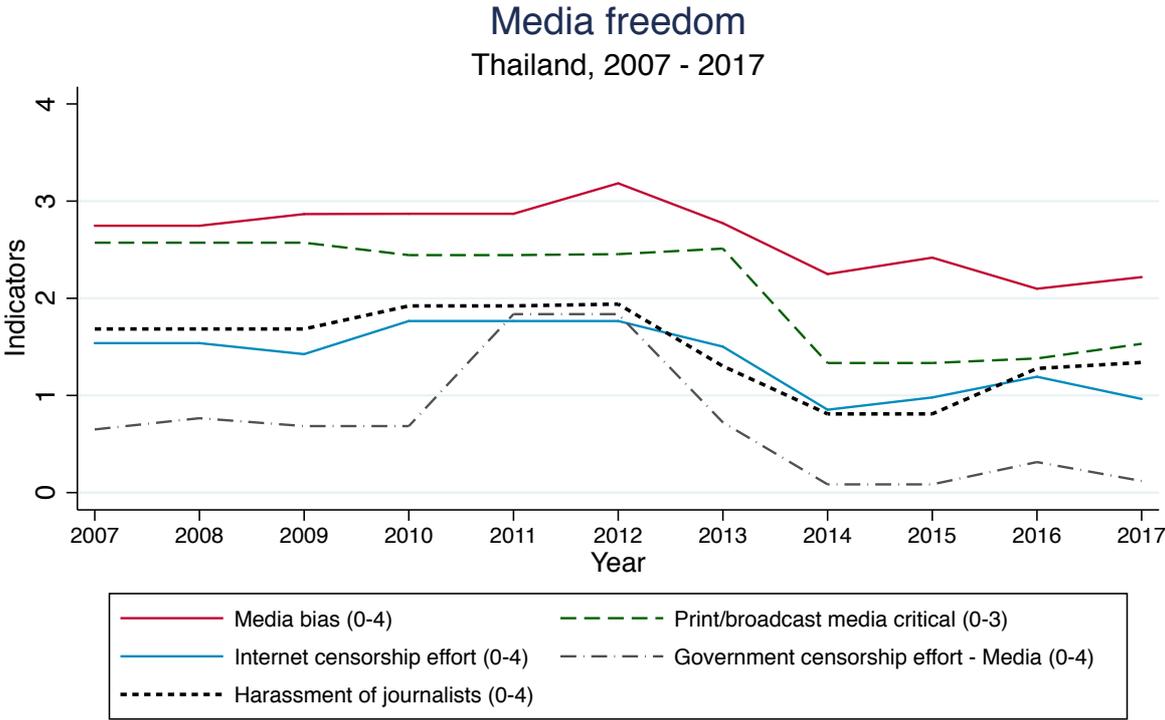
Conclusion

The global average for diagonal accountability is - though still close to all time high - in decline. In this report we focus precisely on the democratic decline we observe. Declining scores for several aspects of the media landscape, such as media bias, plurality and censorships, are visible for a number of countries in the world today. The same goes for several of the individual freedoms, which are declining globally. The countries analyzed in this report exemplify current trends in the world and the larger phenomenon of declining democratic scores. While upward or stable trends in many cases are noticeable, cornerstone democratic institutions such that fall outside of formal institutions (for instance individual freedoms and media) are declining.

It is important to pay attention to in what context declines emerge. In our country portraits we find both institutionalized state interference, such as implementation of laws and bans, as well as informal and non-institutional events, self-censorship, which most likely affect the declining scores. Furthermore, the countries' developments vary across indicators and time, and often change following regime changes or legislation. Countries showing biggest declines and most worrying trends are Burundi, Cambodia and Thailand, standing out from the sample with dramatic changes and societies turning less free and democratic. Countries making advancement are Malawi and Mozambique. However, it is important to underline that these positive changes are quite small in size, and the negative trends are by far trumping the positive developments among the countries chosen in this report.

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Appendix 1: Diagonal Accountability Index

Table 1. Civil Society indicators

Indicator name	Indicator tag
CSO Entry and Exit	v2cseeorg
CSO Participatory Environment	v2csprtcp
CSO Repression	v2csreprs
Freedom of academic and cultural expression	v2clacfre
Freedom of discussion (for men)	v2cldiscm
Freedom of discussion (for women)	v2cldiscw
Engaged Society	v2dlengage

Table 2. Media Freedom indicators

Indicator name	Indicator tag
Harassment of journalists	v2meharjrn
Internet censorship effort	v2mecenefi
Media self-censorship	v2meslfcen
Media bias	v2mebias
Government censorship effort – Media	v2mecenefm
Print/broadcast media perspectives	v2merange
Print/broadcast media critical	v2mecrit