

Do Blasphemy Restrictions Restrict Terrorism?

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ABSTRACT

Although several countries have repealed their laws banning blasphemy in recent years, a majority of the world's countries still ban some forms of blasphemous expressions. It is often argued in political debate that such legislation is necessary to prevent conflicts and terrorism. The empirical literature on the topic nevertheless remains tiny and it is an open question if blasphemy bans 'work' in this way. In this paper, we therefore explore the association between types of blasphemy legislation and terrorist events. We do so using a large cross-country panel dataset of up to 162 countries observed between 1970 and 2016. Exploring determinants of terrorist attacks, we find that while blasphemy legislation in general is not associated with terrorism, countries with constitutionalised blasphemy bans experience a higher terrorism risk.

KEYWORDS



Blasphemy legislation;
freedom of expression;
terrorism; conflict

Introduction

In the last decade, several European countries have repealed laws banning blasphemy. Iceland and Norway repealed all legislation in 2015, Malta in 2016, Greece in 2019, and Scotland in 2021. In Ireland, the 2019 repeal required a constitutional referendum in 2018 while outside of Europe, Canada and New Zealand followed suit in 2018 and 2019. Yet, while Denmark in 2017 repealed a law that had not led to convictions since 1946, its government reintroduced a narrow blasphemy ban in December 2023, which criminalises the “improper treatment” of sacred texts.¹ Likewise, after a change of government in Greece, the new cabinet tried to reintroduce a blasphemy ban but gave up after public outcry. These governments, as well as several others that argue for maintaining legislation that at least nominally bans blasphemy, argue that such bans are important as a bulwark against religiously motivated terrorism.

Supporters of blasphemy legislation argue that it contributes to advancing human rights by safeguarding citizens' religious rights and institutions. As stressed by Gerring, Hoffman and Zarecki, “transgressing a religious law is something that one cannot escape” because religious norms are universalising.² Because universalising norms apply to everyone, including those who do not share the religion or philosophy defining or arguing for those norms, seen from the perspective of those believing in them, religious norms cannot be up for democratic debate. Opponents of blasphemy legislation conversely refer to the restrictions they logically impose on freedom of speech, contending that these laws contradict one of the most essential human rights. As Jacob Mchangama notes, blasphemous actions were important to the Lutheran Reformation as well as the eventual abolition of the Indian caste system.³

The issue of security is also raised concerning the implementation or abolition of blasphemy legislation. For instance, one of the main arguments in favour of reintroducing blasphemy legislation

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in Denmark was that the country's security would be threatened by blasphemous expressions in its media. In a statement that mirrored similar claims in Greek and Swedish political debate, the Danish minister of justice, Peter Hummelgaard, for example, emphasised on Danish Radio that the explicit purpose of a new blasphemy ban was to prevent mockery of religion and religious feelings that would have "consequences for the security of Denmark and Danes."⁴ Yet, although the debate was heated, the essential question whether blasphemy legislation in general affects the level of terrorism remains unanswered. The existing literature primarily consists of case studies, although Saiya's study of Muslim-majority states is a notable exception in both exploring cross-country comparisons and finding that banning blasphemy appears to increase the terror risk.⁵

We follow Saiya by estimating the association between types of blasphemy legislation and terrorism risk in a large panel consisting of up to 6782 observations from 162 countries between 1970 and 2016. Our findings indicate that blasphemy legislation in general is not associated with terrorism. The exception seems to be constitutionalised bans of blasphemy, which are consistently associated with *increased* levels of terrorism in democracies.

The rest of the paper is structured as follows. In "Theoretical considerations", we define our key concepts, terrorism and blasphemy, and provide a brief theoretical exposition. We then operationalise the key concepts in "Data and empirical strategy" that also outlines our methodical approach. "Results" outlines our results, and "Discussion and conclusions" concludes.

Theoretical considerations

As we note in the introduction, the previous literature mainly consists of case studies, with only one study that examines the question through a cross-country comparison. It also provides little guidance as to how blasphemy legislation would theoretically affect the risk of terrorism. We therefore mainly rely on the more well-developed theoretical arguments regarding the relationship between freedom of expression and the threat of terrorism. We next outline two positive and three negative specific mechanisms transferred from this literature.

Blasphemy bans lower the terror risk

First, we need to take arguments that allowing blasphemy may cause terrorism seriously. As noted in the introduction, a common argument in favour of banning blasphemy is that it is a way to advance citizens' human rights. The focus in this type of argument is citizens' religious rights and the independence of their religious institutions, which proponents of blasphemy legislation hold would be challenged if potentially blasphemous opinions could be expressed in public.⁶ The logical conclusion of a position that includes a right not to be offended in citizens' religious rights is that blasphemy bans contribute to safeguarding citizens' religious rights. Religious rights, understood in this way, are incompatible with a right to free expression, and create two opposing sides in political discourse with rival claims to respect.⁷ However, only one side is likely to turn to terrorism. By extension, although perhaps tentatively, religiously motivated terrorism would be a consequence of *failing* to protect citizens' human rights. An admittedly extreme version of this position is exemplified by Saudi Arabia's 2014 revision of the country's blasphemy legislation that directly defined atheists as terrorists.⁸

The second type of mechanism, occasionally mentioned in political discussions, revolves around international reactions to blasphemy and calls for blasphemy bans. Blasphemy events, perhaps best illustrated by the publication of the Mohammed cartoons by the Danish newspaper *Jyllandsposten* in 2005, can set in motion a chain of international reactions. Foreign governments may have an interest in either protecting the perceived status or dignity of the dominant religion of their country, or have a political interest in being seen to do so.⁹ Either way, their interest provides them with an incentive to argue internationally against perceived acts of blasphemy in other countries, an incentive that might be stronger if religious institutions or immigrant groups in the foreign country have some form of

connection or bond to the government. In such cases, international reactions can lead to an increase in the terror risk, as was clearly the case in Denmark (and Norway) after the publication of the Mohammed cartoons.¹⁰

Blasphemy bans increase the terror risk

Conversely, a set of arguments lifted from the broader literature entail that blasphemy legislation may be counterproductive if its intention is to avoid terrorist events. First, freedom of expression can have what is termed a ‘safety valve’ effect whereby anger and outrage that might otherwise lead to terrorist inclinations and actions can be peacefully released. This for example occurs when dissatisfied citizens have peaceful opportunities to attempt to change the status quo and thus do not need to resort to violence and terrorism.¹¹ Nilay Saiya also argues that limiting freedom of expression, and thus the right to blasphemy, leads to a more polarised society.¹² While constraining civil rights in general can limit terrorist activity from “strategic” groups, it is likely to have the opposite effect on “universalist” groups with non-negotiable goals.¹³ Blasphemy bans may therefore increase the risk of political violence and terrorism because citizens lose the opportunity to express their dissatisfaction peacefully, and because citizens who were previously subjected to blasphemy now believe they have the state’s acceptance to retaliate against blasphemous statements. In the short run, dissatisfaction among citizens who have had their right to blasphemy limited may also increase and lead to conflict. In addition, several studies argue that a higher degree of freedom of the press, together with increased surveillance, can make it easier for the state to capture and prosecute potential terrorists or radicalised citizens before they commit acts of terrorism and violence.¹⁴

Second, several studies argue conversely that freedom of expression can be used as a means of radicalisation.¹⁵ It can therefore be argued that blasphemous statements can be used to radicalise citizens. Finally, some scholars argue that limiting freedom of expression can be used as a means to prevent terrorism by preventing statements that could radicalise citizens.¹⁶

As such, taking clues from the literature on freedom of expression and terrorism provides a number of mechanisms through which blasphemy legislation could affect terrorism risk. However, our short review here shows that the theoretical literature does not provide a clear expectation. Our only clear theoretical expectation is that some of these mechanisms are either only relevant or become stronger when citizens can reasonably expect that blasphemy legislation is enforced.

Throughout, we adopt Enders and Sandler’s description of terror as “the deliberate use or the threat of violence by individuals or subnational groups to achieve a political or social objective by intimidating a broad audience beyond the immediate victims.”¹⁷ Blasphemy is slightly harder to define, as it is generally understood as a complex and controversial concept involving a lack of respect for the sacred or divine, and encompasses actions or statements evoking intense emotions such as anger and hatred, which are not easily coded in legislation.¹⁸ We therefore follow Western legal tradition in defining blasphemy as an insult to God, established religion, or its fervent practitioners.¹⁹ Likewise, blasphemy legislation is a broad phenomenon that ranges from dead letter legislation threatening minor fines to five countries in the world in which blasphemy is punishable by death.

We next describe our data with which we test the relationship across countries.

Data and empirical strategy

To test the potential effects of blasphemy legislation, we rely on data from different sources, but generally take the same approach as recent research.²⁰ Our terrorism data first come from the Global Terrorism Database hosted at the University of Maryland.²¹ The database is the most widely used source of terrorism in recent studies although it is known to underrepresent simple attacks, non-lethal incidents, and attacks occurring outside urban areas.²² We calculate two measures from these data: a dummy capturing whether any attacks took place in a country in a given year between 1970 and 2016, and the log count of distinct terrorist incidents. We thereby separate the extensive and intensive

margins of events. Following recent research, we also break down terrorism and separate attacks aimed at governmental targets from those against military or police targets.²³ In a robustness test, reported in the appendix, we instead break down terrorism by capturing either only attacks in which the terrorists were armed with more than simple handguns, and attacks that involved multiple locations, which we consider “logistically challenging.”²⁴

Our second main variable is our coding of blasphemy legislation: if the country has no ban of blasphemy, if legislation against blasphemy stipulates a fine or prison (which we separate), if the blasphemy ban is part of the constitution (which always entails at least a prison sentence), and if blasphemy can be punished by death. We gathered these data ourselves from a series of sources covering different world regions or intended to cover the entire world.²⁵ The data vary over time, as the sources for most countries provide data on their adoption dates, repeal dates (if applicable), and the type of legislation and punishment. Even across otherwise comparable countries, blasphemy legislation varies from France having repealed its ban on blasphemy in 1881, the otherwise quite religious Italy in which blasphemy is at most punishable by fine, to Germany, which punishes blasphemy with prison up to five years.²⁶ Appendix [Table A1](#) provides our coding for all countries potentially in the sample in 2023.

We add a small number of control variables following previous research. First, we control for the logarithm to the purchasing-power-adjusted gross domestic product (GDP) per capita and population size from the Penn World Tables.²⁷ These controls capture direct effects of poverty as well as the specific homogeneity of relatively small countries. Second, we add a categorical measure capturing the intensity of civil war and inter-state conflicts from Nils Petter Gleditsch and his colleagues: one identifies low-intensity conflicts, defined as conflicts with over 25 battle deaths, the other high-intensity conflicts characterised by more than 1000 deaths.²⁸ We also add the discussion freedom index from Eskildsen and Bjørnskov (2022), which captures a specific aspect of freedom of expression as coded on the basis of information in the *Varieties of Democracy* database.²⁹ Finally, we separate democracies and autocracies and add dummies for single-party and multi-party (electoral) autocracies based on data in Bjørnskov and Rode’s database of regime types and regime change.³⁰ All data are summarised in [Table 1](#).

Table 1. Descriptive statistics

Variable	Average	Standard deviation	Observations
Any attacks	.475	.499	7608
Any attacks, mil./pol.	.240	.427	7492
Any attacks, gov.	.309	.462	7492
Any attacks, armed	.453	.495	7492
Any attacks, multiple	.321	.467	7492
Log no. attacks	1.066	1.548	7608
Log no. attacks, mil./pol.	.474	1.081	7492
Log no. attacks, gov.	.496	.944	7492
Log no. attacks, armed	.929	1.471	7492
Log no. attacks, multiple	.741	1.392	7492
No election	.145	.352	7957
Single-party regime	.127	.333	7957
Electoral autocracy	.267	.442	7957
Electoral democracy	.461	.498	7957
Log GDP per capita	8.842	1.239	7280
Log population	2.026	1.732	7280
Civil war, low intensity	.122	.327	8012
Civil war, high intensity	.054	.227	8012
Discussion freedom	.566	1.559	8012
<i>Blasphemy legislation</i>			
Fines	.045	.207	7571
Prison	.454	.498	7571
Constitution	.042	.199	7571
Death	.017	.127	7571
Apostasy ban	.094	.291	7571

In our main analyses in the next section, we apply a random effects logit estimator when estimating effects at the extensive margin and random effects ordinary least squares (OLS) for the intensive margin. We do so because our main independent variable changes relatively little over time, such that we mainly obtain what we think of as long-run effects. We nevertheless supplement these findings with estimates using two-way fixed effects capturing annual and country-specific factors, such that we effectively control for all approximately time-invariant factors such as geography, religious history and cultural factors. When estimating effects at the extensive margin—whether any attacks took place in a country—we employ a conditional fixed-effects logit estimator, while we use fixed-effects ordinary least squares (OLS) for the intensive margin. In both cases, we add a twice-lagged dependent variable, which accounts for country-specific trends not captured in the country fixed effects, and arguably also some of the potential endogeneity bias to the extent that reverse causality running from terrorist threats to blasphemy legislation is reflected in the lagged variable.³¹

Results

We begin by providing a sense of the data in Figures 1 and 2. Figure 1 first illustrates that while the differences in the raw data between autocracies and democracies are minor, regimes with blasphemy legislation of some kind experience substantially more terrorist attacks. Figure 2 instead illustrates terrorism from three years before to three years after either an introduction or repeal of blasphemy legislation. Across the few societies in which blasphemy legislation changed markedly since 1970, we observe little change when bans are repealed (the full line) but a visible increase in terrorism around the time when blasphemy legislation was introduced (the dotted line).

While these differences can only be indicative, we present our empirical results at the extensive margin in Table 2. Across both democracies and autocracies, we first find considerable persistence, as reflected in the twice-lagged dependent variable. Consistent with previous research, we also find much less terrorism in single-party states, in smaller countries, in relatively poor countries, and in democracies with more discussion freedom. Not surprisingly, the results also show more terrorism when there are other conflicts.

Regarding blasphemy legislation, we find that constitutionalised blasphemy bans are associated with more years with terrorism regardless of the regime type. However, the additional results in the appendix suggest that the effects in autocracies, reported in Table 2, may not be robust to separating attacks against the military and police and government while those in democracies

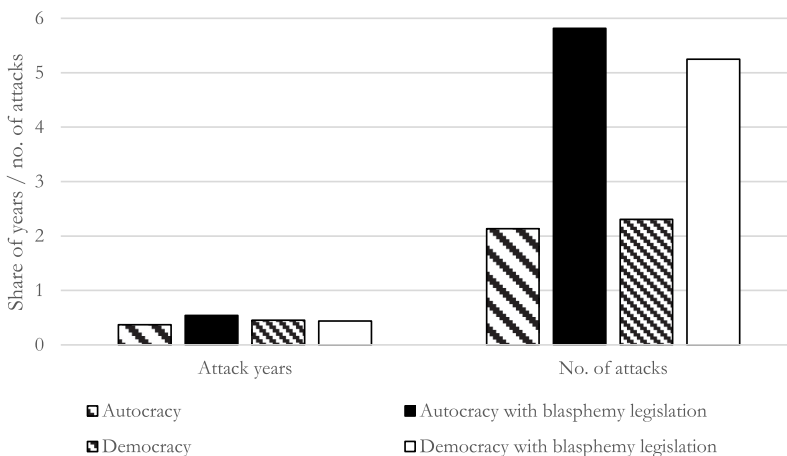


Figure 1. Terrorism intensity in countries with and without blasphemy legislation.

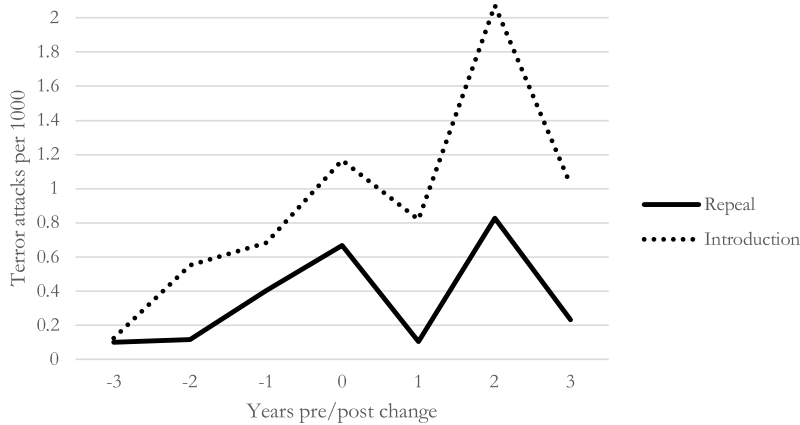


Figure 2. Terrorism around repeals and introductions of blasphemy legislation.

pertain exclusively to attacks against government. Conversely, it is worth noting that when applying a conditional fixed effects estimator in the lower panel—and thus identifying effects exclusively from the small number of cases in which blasphemy legislation changed—we still find effects of constitutionalised bans in democracies.

In [Table 3](#), we instead explore the intensive margin: does blasphemy legislation affect how many attacks occurred in years with any attacks? We again find clear evidence of persistence, as well as more attacks in larger countries and in countries with other conflicts. At the intensive margin, discussion freedom turns out mainly to be an important deterrent of attacks against the military and police. Regarding blasphemy legislation, we only consistently find that constitutionalised bans lead to fewer attacks against government in democracies. Although we do see significant estimates in the lower panel, which includes country fixed effects, we must warn that for the specific types of blasphemy legislation that appear significant, we have only a single observation with change in the dataset.

Using an alternative way of categorising types of attacks and focusing on either attacks with heavier weapons or attacks at multiple locations, we find slightly weaker but consistent results; these results are reported in appendix [Tables A2](#) and [A3](#). Overall, we therefore at best find that blasphemy legislation is irrelevant for terrorism risks. However, the evidence we unearth consistently points to constitutionalised bans as counterproductive if their purpose is to avoid terrorist events. As we discuss in the final section, blasphemy legislation may also have indirect effects.

Discussion and conclusions

Several Western countries have, in recent years, repealed old bans on blasphemy. However, in December 2023 Denmark reintroduced the criminalisation of (most types of) blasphemy, and several other countries are discussing bans as a way to avoid terrorism. As the Danish minister of justice emphasised in public debate around the time, the explicit aim of the recriminalisation of blasphemy was to reduce the terror risk. These discussions raise the question if blasphemy laws are actually effective in combating terrorism, not least because they come with the obvious risk of restricting freedom of expression and discriminating between religious and secular belief systems.

Exploring the association between blasphemy legislation and terrorism across 162 societies observed annually since 1970, our only significant empirical results pertain to constitutionalised bans of blasphemy. While we find that countries with such bans have approximately 53 percent fewer attacks against government in years with any terrorist attacks, our findings also show that

Table 2. Main results, extensive margin

	Autocracy	Democracy	Autocracy	Democracy	Autocracy	Democracy
	All attacks		Against military /police		Against government	
Twice-lagged dependent	1.141*** (.105)	.844*** (.127)	1.198*** (.144)	1.265*** (.151)	1.230*** (.125)	.732*** (.129)
Single-party regime	-.593*** (.175)	-	-.448* (.238)	-	-.604*** (.199)	-
Electoral autocracy	-.062 (.156)	-	-.241 (.191)	-	-.054 (.168)	-
Log GDP per capita	.263*** (.095)	.270** (.134)	.221 (.138)	.224 (.153)	.239** (.105)	.252** (.131)
Log population	.493*** (.075)	.861*** (.094)	.634*** (.119)	.786*** (.104)	.509*** (.084)	.748*** (.088)
Civil war, low intensity	1.035*** (.159)	.620* (.343)	1.338*** (.182)	.789*** (.262)	.866*** (.165)	.868*** (.263)
Civil war, high intensity	1.428*** (.239)	2.488*** (.867)	1.717*** (.249)	1.503*** (.454)	1.363*** (.229)	1.123** (.443)
Discussion freedom	-.050 (.072)	-.216* (.121)	-.134 (.098)	-.495*** (.127)	-.031 (.078)	-.183* (.110)
<i>Blasphemy legislation</i>						
Fines	.039 (.772)	.161 (.559)	-.018 (1.146)	.089 (.608)	-.257 (.898)	-.487 (.561)
Prison	.378 (.250)	-.109 (.260)	.103 (.364)	-.063 (.286)	.098 (.271)	-.161 (.246)
Constitution	1.287** (.569)	2.968** (1.395)	.887 (.799)	.541 (1.062)	.336 (.574)	2.348** (1.051)
Death	.665 (.734)	1.505 (1.816)	-1.649** (.839)	1.256 (1.636)	-.012 (.694)	2.798 (1.753)
Apostasy ban	-.971** (.390)	.019 (.970)	.001 (.574)	-.656 (1.007)	-.482 (.412)	.290 (.934)
Observations	3633	3150	3504	3006	3504	3008
Countries	121	113	121	113	121	113
Log likelihood	-1638.849	-1244.232	-1125.529	-975.774	-1346.640	-1213.593
Wald Chi ²	568.97	477.47	412.12	399.30	430.85	441.58
<i>CFE estimate</i>						
Fines	1.389 (1.548)	14.132 (799.498)	17.141 (4185.172)	1.084 (1.068)	-13.457 (1920.396)	.159 (1.225)
Prison	-.262 (.696)	-.166 (.481)	-1.452* (.823)	-.023 (.541)	-1.211 (.795)	.425 (.493)
Constitution	1.211 (1.261)	3.891** (1.532)	14.379 (1686.812)	14.223 (1356.301)	-1.012 (1.125)	2.849** (1.368)
Death	-.989 (1.232)	-	-20.826 (899.433)	-	-2.267* (1.171)	-

*** (**) [*] denote significance at $p < .01$ ($p < .05$) [$p < .10$]. All regressions also include decadal fixed effects. Numbers in parentheses are standard errors.

they are about nine times more likely to have such years than countries without blasphemy legislation. On balance, this type of blasphemy legislation—but not others—is systematically associated with more terrorism.

Yet, we must emphasise that we also find evidence consistent with previous research that discussion freedom—a specific aspect of freedom of expression—is statistically associated with terrorism risks and other social conflict in democracies, such that freer societies experience less terrorism and fewer social conflicts.³² To the extent that blasphemy legislation constrains citizens' freedom of expression, such bans can thereby indirectly lead to more terrorism in the longer run. Overall, we therefore find no evidence in favour of banning blasphemous expression and a number of indications that such bans can be directly counterproductive. Given that a ban is a serious intrusion into a fundamental human right, we agree with Peter Jones's assessment of blasphemy legislation that "concern with breaches of the peace is out of place in a law designed to prevent offence."³³

Table 3. Main results, intensive margin

	Autocracy	Democracy	Autocracy	Democracy	Autocracy	Democracy
	All attacks		Against military /police		Against government	
Twice-lagged dependent	.626*** (.041)	.614*** (.027)	.609*** (.049)	.512*** (.038)	.546*** (.052)	.518*** (.033)
Single-party regime	-.052 (.088)	-	-.051 (.152)	-	-.125 (.093)	-
Electoral autocracy	-.069 (.084)	-	-.088 (.081)	-	-.101 (.080)	-
Log GDP per capita	.052 (.033)	.032 (.031)	.047 (.036)	.017 (.042)	.036 (.029)	-.064** (.032)
Log population	.058** (.024)	.123*** (.019)	.040 (.023)	.099*** (.026)	.025 (.020)	.081*** (.023)
Civil war, low intensity	.255*** (.095)	.557*** (.106)	.155 (.109)	.538*** (.082)	.121 (.076)	.224*** (.084)
Civil war, high intensity	.388*** (.130)	.538*** (.207)	.256** (.127)	.739*** (.176)	.301*** (.104)	.495*** (.158)
Discussion freedom	-.006 (.036)	-.089** (.038)	.029 (.044)	-.100*** (.025)	.012 (.031)	-.029 (.035)
<i>Blasphemy legislation</i>						
Fines	.186 (.144)	.033 (.103)	.097 (.109)	-.048 (.103)	.146 (.104)	.016 (.109)
Prison	.029 (.088)	.004 (.075)	.111 (.112)	.039 (.083)	.031 (.072)	-.004 (.085)
Constitution	.062 (.223)	-.234 (.165)	.027 (.245)	-.029 (.163)	-.088 (.197)	-.536** (.151)
Death	-.136 (.252)	.031 (.222)	-.197 (.138)	.226 (.273)	-.199 (.159)	-.081 (.239)
Apostasy law	.053 (.169)	.233 (.196)	.211 (.178)	-.219 (.266)	.055 (.131)	.077 (.222)
Observations	1576	1806	748	907	923	1176
Countries	115	106	93	91	108	101
Within R ²	.442	.443	.472	.451	.388	.334
Wald Chi ²	-	-	-	-	-	-
<i>FE estimate</i>						
Fines	-.921*** (.272)	.325 (.223)	-	-.513** (.208)	-	.225 (.214)
Prison	-.023 (.326)	-.256 (.174)	.351 (.559)	-.141 (.168)	-.146 (.215)	-.089 (.122)
Constitution	-.175 (.381)	-.189 (.389)	-	-	-.218 (.320)	-.296 (.383)
Death	-1.138*** (.367)	-	-.298 (.625)	-	-1.127*** (.261)	-

*** (**) [*] denote significance at $p < .01$ ($p < .05$) [$p < .10$]. All regressions also include decadal fixed effects. Numbers in parentheses are standard errors.

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Data availability statement

All data are based on publicly available sources. All data are available upon request from the authors. <https://www.christianbojnskov.com/>.

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Appendix A

Table A1. Blasphemy legislation by 2023

Country		Country		Country	
Afghanistan	Death	Greece	None	Oman	Prison
Albania	None	Guatemala	Prison	Pakistan	Death
Algeria	Const.	Guinea	None	Panama	None
Angola	None	Guinea-Bissau	None	Papua New Guinea	Prison
Argentina	None	Guyana	Prison	Paraguay	None
Armenia	None	Haiti	None	Peru	None
Australia	None	Honduras	None	Philippines	Prison
Austria	Prison	Hong Kong	Prison	Poland	Prison
Azerbaijan	None	Hungary	None	Portugal	Prison
Bahrain	Prison	Iceland	None	Qatar	Const.
Bangladesh	Prison	India	Prison	Rep. of the Congo	None
Barbados	Fine	Indonesia	Prison	Romania	None
Belarus	None	Iran	Death	Russia	Prison
Belgium	Prison	Iraq	Prison	Rwanda	Prison
Benin	None	Ireland	Fine	Sao Tomé and Príncipe	Prison
Bhutan	None	Israel	Prison	Saudi Arabia	Const.
Bolivia	None	Italy	Fine	Senegal	Prison
Bosnia and Herzegovina	None	Ivory Coast	None	Serbia	None
Botswana	Prison	Jamaica	Prison	Seychelles	Prison
Brazil	Prison	Japan	None	Sierra Leone	None
Bulgaria	None	Jordan	Prison	Singapore	Prison
Burkina Faso	None	Kazakhstan	Prison	Slovakia	Prison
Burma/Myanmar	Prison	Kenya	Prison	Slovenia	None
Burundi	None	Kuwait	Prison	South Africa	Fine
Cambodia	None	Kyrgyzstan	Prison	South Korea	None
Cameroon	Fine	Laos	None	Spain	Prison
Canada	None	Latvia	None	Sri Lanka	Const.
Cape Verde	Prison	Lebanon	Prison	Sudan	Const.
Central African Rep.	None	Lesotho	None	Suriname	Prison
Chad	None	Liberia	None	Swaziland	None
Chile	None	Libya	Prison	Sweden	None
China	None	Lithuania	None	Switzerland	Fine
Colombia	None	Luxembourg	Prison	Syria	Prison
Comoros	Prison	Macedonia	Prison	Taiwan	Prison
Costa Rica	None	Madagascar	None	Tajikistan	Prison
Croatia	None	Malawi	Prison	Tanzania	Prison
Cuba	None	Malaysia	Prison	Thailand	Prison
Cyprus	Prison	Maldives	Prison	The Gambia	Prison
Czech Republic	None	Mali	None	Togo	None
DR of the Congo	None	Malta	None	Trinidad and Tobago	Prison
Denmark	Fine	Mauritania	Death	Tunisia	Prison
Djibouti	Const.	Mauritius	Prison	Turkey	Prison
Dominican Republic	None	Mexico	None	Turkmenistan	Fine
Ecuador	None	Moldova	Fine	Uganda	Prison
Egypt	Const.	Mongolia	None	Ukraine	None
El Salvador	Prison	Montenegro	Prison	United Arab Emirates	Prison
Equatorial Guinea	None	Morocco	Prison	United Kingdom	None
Estonia	None	Mozambique	None	United States of America	None
Ethiopia	Prison	Namibia	None	Uruguay	None
Fiji	Fine	Nepal	Prison	Uzbekistan	Prison
Finland	Prison	Netherlands	None	Venezuela	None
France	None	New Zealand	None	Vietnam	None
Gabon	None	Nicaragua	None	Yemen	Prison
Georgia	None	Niger	None	Zambia	Prison
Germany	Prison	Nigeria	Prison	Zimbabwe	Prison
Ghana	None	Norway	None		

Table A2. Main results, extensive margin, alternative categorisation

	Autocracy	Democracy	Autocracy	Democracy	Autocracy	Democracy
	All attacks		Armed attacks		Multiple attacks	
Twice-lagged dependent	1.141*** (.105)	.844*** (.127)	1.254*** (.110)	1.029 (.127)	1.615*** (.133)	1.300*** (.136)
Single-party regime	-.593*** (.175)	-	-.553*** (.184)	-	-.453** (.215)	-
Electoral autocracy	-.062 (.156)	-	-.075 (.163)	-	-.161 (.183)	-
Log GDP per capita	.263*** (.095)	.270** (.134)	.293*** (.099)	.272** (.133)	.212* (.122)	.333** (.150)
Log population	.493*** (.075)	.861*** (.094)	.508*** (.080)	.815*** (.093)	.657*** (.102)	.863*** (.106)
Civil war, low intensity	1.035*** (.159)	.620* (.343)	1.033*** (.163)	.332 (.312)	1.196*** (.177)	1.019*** (.297)
Civil war, high intensity	1.428*** (.239)	2.488*** (.867)	1.465*** (.239)	1.539** (.640)	1.462*** (.246)	1.495*** (.494)
Discussion freedom	-.050 (.072)	-.216* (.121)	-.029 (.076)	-.340*** (.119)	-.142 (.088)	-.252* (.119)
<i>Blasphemy legislation</i>						
Fines	.039 (.772)	.161 (.559)	-.229 (.828)	.243 (.559)	-.079 (1.054)	.413 (.607)
Prison	.378 (.250)	-.109 (.260)	.226 (.263)	-.019 (.255)	.430 (.318)	-.147 (.278)
Constitution	1.287** (.569)	2.968** (1.395)	1.018* (.582)	1.557 (1.099)	.319 (.668)	1.778 (1.106)
Death	.665 (.734)	1.505 (1.816)	.1794 (.739)	2.797 (1.776)	-1.021 (.899)	1.156 (1.618)
Apostasy ban	-.971** (.390)	.019 (.970)	-.917** (.407)	-.735 (.919)	-.450 (.492)	-.232 (.989)
Observations	3633	3150	3535	3006	3558	3077
Countries	121	113	121	113	121	113
Log likelihood	-1638.849	-1244.232	-1530348	-1225.401	-1240.978	-1123.846
Wald Chi ²	568.97	477.47	538.50	439.43	541.03	467.57
<i>CFE estimate</i>						
Fines	1.389 (1.548)	14.132 (799.498)	1.388 (1.562)	14.977 (1273.900)	-	17.351 (2960.160)
Prison	-.262 (.696)	-.166 (.481)	-.789 (.736)	.009 (.455)	-.621 (.818)	-.341 (.463)
Constitution	1.211 (1.261)	3.891** (1.532)	.295 (1.158)	3.204** (1.473)	-1.004 (1.212)	18.243 (3393.726)
Death	-.989 (1.232)	-	-2.366* (1.243)	-	-18.855 (1838.417)	-

*** (**) [*] denote significance at $p < .01$ ($p < .05$) [$p < .10$]. All regressions also include decadal fixed effects. Numbers in parentheses are standard errors.

Table A3. Main results, intensive margin, alternative categorisation

	Autocracy	Democracy	Autocracy	Democracy	Autocracy	Democracy
	All attacks		Armed attacks		Multiple attacks	
Twice-lagged dependent	.626*** (.041)	.614*** (.027)	.628*** (.044)	.624*** (.027)	.631*** (.046)	.556*** (.027)
Single-party regime	-.052 (.088)	-	-.066 (.093)	-	-.098 (.123)	-
Electoral autocracy	-.069 (.084)	-	-.086 (.086)	-	-.064 (.103)	-
Log GDP per capita	.052 (.033)	.032 (.031)	-.086 (.086)	.002 (.035)	.035 (.041)	.015 (.041)
Log population	.058** (.024)	.123*** (.019)	.039 (.025)	.103*** (.019)	.018 (.024)	.142*** (.023)
Civil war, low intensity	.255*** (.095)	.557*** (.106)	.253" (.102)	.560*** (.097)	.177* (.096)	.578*** (.107)
Civil war, high intensity	.388*** (.130)	.538*** (.207)	.438*** (.134)	.614*** (.204)	.358*** (.125)	.689*** (.209)
Discussion freedom	-.006 (.036)	-.089** (.038)	-.009 (.037)	-.074** (.037)	.012 (.043)	-.094** (.041)
<i>Blasphemy legislation</i>						
Fines	.186 (.144)	.033 (.103)	.233** (.108)	.066 (.110)	.184* (.102)	-.075 (.116)
Prison	.029 (.088)	.004 (.075)	.068 (.089)	-.008 (.080)	.057 (.098)	-.024 (.095)
Constitution	.062 (.223)	-.234 (.165)	.043 (.234)	-.248** (.124)	.046 (.261)	-.296* (.161)
Death	-.136 (.252)	.031 (.222)	-.103 (.238)	-.102 (.267)	-.217 (.274)	.305 (.228)
Apostasy law	.053 (.169)	.233 (.196)	.117 (.161)	.239 (.254)	.158 (.198)	.132 (.193)
Observations	1576	1806	1355	1560	1038	1295
Countries	115	106	114	106	102	99
Within R ²	.442	.443	.472	.454	.445	.421
Wald Chi ²	-	-	-	-	-	-
<i>FE estimate</i>						
Fines	-.921*** (.272)	.325 (.223)	-.958*** (.257)	.573** (.259)	-	-.110 (.246)
Prison	-.023 (.326)	-.256 (.174)	.060 (.385)	-.182 (.209)	.268 (.424)	-.346** (.168)
Constitution	-.175 (.381)	-.189 (.389)	-.147 (.439)	-.115 (.431)	.520 (.505)	-
Death	-1.138*** (.367)	-	-.975** (.421)	-	-.859* (.471)	-

*** (**) [*] denote significance at $p < .01$ ($p < .05$) [$p < .10$]. All regressions also include decadal fixed effects. Numbers in parentheses are standard errors.