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Recommended Citation
Kahl, Chad M. and Davis-Kahl, Stephanie, "What is the Role of Annual Human Rights Reviews? Examining Biases in U.S. Department of State's Country Reports on Human Rights" (2010). *Faculty and Staff Publications – Milner Library*. 206.
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What is the Role of Annual Human Rights Reviews? Examining Biases in U.S. Department of State's *Country Reports on Human Rights*

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68th Annual Midwest Political Science Association National Conference
Chicago, IL – Palmer Hotel
April 22, 2010

Introduction

This paper examines biases in U.S. Department of State's *Country Reports on Human Rights* through comparison of country profiles for Cuba, Egypt and Iran by Amnesty International (*Amnesty International Report: The State of the World's Human Rights*) and Freedom House (*Freedom in the World*), especially post-9/11. To do so, data from the Political Terror Scale was utilized, in addition to coding by the authors.

The authors expected there to be more favorable treatment of Egypt, given its relationship with the United States, especially as a post-September 11th Arab ally, in the *Country Reports on Human Rights* versus the *AIR* and *FW* reports. Authors expected more negative treatment of Cuba and Iran in *CRHR* versus the *AIR* and *FW* reports, especially for the latter in the post-9/11 environment.

The findings proved to be mixed. In an effort to understand the results, the authors made qualitative examinations of annual human rights reports in an attempt to identify how potential differences in source information may have affected the annual Political Terror Scale values assigned to each country. This examination provided surprising results as well.

Annual Human Rights Reports

There are a variety of human rights reports created on an annual basis. Three are used prominently and provide the greatest coverage: United States' Department of State's *Country Reports on Human Rights*, Amnesty International's *Amnesty International Report: The State of the World's Human Rights* and Freedom House's *Freedom in the World: The Annual Survey of Political Rights and Civil Liberties*. We will examine how the reports are written and produced.

Country Reports on Human Rights (CRHR)

The report is released every February

> to the U.S. Congress in compliance with sections 116(d) and 502B(b) of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961 (FAA), as amended, and section 504 of the Trade Act of 1974, as amended. The law provides that the Secretary of State shall transmit to the Speaker of the House of Representatives and the Committee on Foreign Relations of the Senate, 'a full and complete report regarding the status of internationally recognized human rights, within the meaning of subsection (A) in countries that receive assistance under this part, and (B) in all other foreign countries which are members of the United Nations and which are not otherwise the subject of a human rights report under this Act.' Reports on several countries are included that do not fall into the categories established by these statutes and that thus are not covered by the congressional requirement….The reports

The authors would like to acknowledge funding received through the University Research Grant program at Illinois State University.

> cover internationally recognized individual, civil, political, and worker rights, as set forth in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (United States Department of State, n.d.).

The reports are prepared utilizing information from American embassies and consulates, foreign government officials, nongovernmental organizations and published reports. The initial drafts are written at American diplomatic missions and the final documents are completed by the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor according to a guiding principle "to ensure all information was assessed objectively, thoroughly, and fairly" (United States Department of State, 2010).

The first edition was published in 1977 and covered events that occurred in 1976. The 2009 edition contained profiles 194 countries and geographic entities.

Amnesty International Report: The State of the World's Human Rights (AIR)

AIR is also produced annually. Amnesty International produces its research from a wide variety of sources, including: "prisoners and others suffering other human rights abuses and their representatives, survivors of abuse and their families, lawyers and journalists, refugees, diplomats, religious bodies and community workers, humanitarian agencies and other human rights organizations, human rights defenders,….[and] monitor[ing] newspapers, websites and other media outlets. Amnesty International often sends fact-finding missions to assess the situation on the spot" (Amnesty International, n.d.). Fact finding missions send experts to interview victims and local officials and human rights activists, observe trials, etc.

If Amnesty International is not given access to a country, "research teams may have to rely on sources of information outside the country, including news media reports, experts, refugees, diplomatic representatives and human rights defenders" (Amnesty International, n.d.).

According to Poe, Carey and Vazquez (2001), initial reports are amended based on "knowledge of a country's law, constitution, and judicial process, and political and historical background….[and] it is standard Amnesty International practice to give its material to governments before publication for their views and additional information, and the organization will publish these in its reports" (656). However, that information was based on practices from the late-nineties and we have not been able to confirm these practices still occur, despite checking recent online and print editions of *AIR*.

Amnesty International was formed in 1961. Subsequently, its first annual report covered 1961 and 1962. Individual country profiles first appeared in the 1965/66 report, but were very limited, focusing on areas where Amnesty International was particularly active at the time: British Gujana, Eastern Europe, Greece, Iran and Rhodesia. For the scope of this paper, Cuba and Iran were first covered in the 1968/69 edition with Egypt being added in the 1971/72 edition. Over time, the coverage of *AIR* grew tremendously. The 2009 edition had profiles on 157 countries and geographic entities.

Freedom in the World (FW)

Best known for its seven-point civil liberties and political rights scales and their "free," "partly free" and "not free" country ratings, Freedom House's publication, *Freedom in the World*, provides profiles annually. The reports are produced by a team of Freedom House and outside analysts. Analysts use "a broad range of sources of information--including foreign and domestic news reports, academic analyses, nongovernmental organizations, think tanks, individual professional contacts, and visits to the region--in preparing the reports" (Freedom House, n.d.).

The civil liberty and political rights ratings are proposed by an analyst and reviewed in comparison to other countries in the region. Lastly, the reports are compared across regions. Key country reports are also reviewed by academic specialists.

The seven-point scales range from one, countries that best respect the civil liberties and political rights of their citizens, to seven, countries that have virtually no political rights or civil liberties. The ratings are created through the use of a checklist that rank political rights through an examination of the three questions on electoral process, four questions on political pluralism and participation and three questions on the functioning of government; and civil liberties though a review of four questions on freedom of expression and belief, three questions on associational and organizational rights, four questions on rule of law and four questions on personal autonomy and individual rights.

Civil liberty and political rights ratings, first developed by Raymond Gastil, were first produced in 1972 as part of an annual study called *The Comparative Study of Freedom*. The short country profiles were added when the first *FW* book was published in 1978 and covered events from 1977. The ratings were done by Gastil until 1989 and solely in-house through the mid-nineties before an expansion of the scope of the geographic coverage and individual profiles necessitated hiring of outside analysts. The 2010 report covered 194 countries and related and disputed territories.

Standards-based Human Rights Measures

This paper utilizes standards-based human rights measures as opposed to other types, such as events-based, survey-based and socio-economic and administrative statistics (Landman and Carvalho, 2009). The main advantage of standards-based human rights measures is their broad scope in terms of both geographic and longitudinal coverage that lends itself to cross-national quantitative analysis. Practically, they are also useful because they are readily available online.

The disadvantages are similar to other broad-based quantitative measures with a loss of meaningful detail through over-simplification as narrative reviews are converted to numerical ordinal values. Landman and Carvalho (2009) also highlighted limitations for standards-based human rights measures. First, there is concern over the over-utilization of similar resources, especially the *CRHR* and *AI* reports. Second, there has been disapproval over the scope of human rights covered in the source materials and subsequently, the human rights measures. Both *CRHR* and *FW* have been criticized for taking a too narrow view of human rights, focusing primarily on civic and political rights and not placing enough attention on economic and social rights. Third, the country-level nature of the measures do not take into account sub-national variation. A country or geographic unit may get a poor score due to isolated problems in one province or municipality. The last is variance truncation. Given the relatively limited two-, three-, five- and seven-point scales, detailed below, it is hard to capture the vast range of human rights practices seen globally.

There are number of frequently-utilized standards-based human rights measures. As mentioned earlier, Freedom House has been producing two seven-point measures of civil liberties and political rights since the early seventies, beginning with Raymond Gastil's work. The lower the score, the better a country or other geographic unit is respecting the civil liberties and political rights of its inhabitants (Freedom House, n.d.).

Civil Liberties	Political Rights
Rating of 1 – Countries and territories with a rating of 1 enjoy a wide range of civil liberties, including freedom of expression, assembly, association, education, and religion. **Rating of 2** – Countries and territories with a rating of 2 have slightly weaker civil liberties than those with a rating of 1 because of such factors as some limits on media independence, restrictions on trade union activities, and discrimination against minority groups and women. **Ratings of 3, 4, 5** – Countries and territories with a rating of 3, 4, or 5 include those that moderately protect almost all civil liberties to those that more strongly protect some civil liberties while less strongly protecting others. **Rating of 6** – Countries and territories with a rating of 6 have very restricted civil liberties. They strongly limit the rights of expression and association and frequently hold political prisoners. **Rating of 7** – Countries and territories with a rating of 7 have few or no civil liberties (Freedom House, n.d.).	**Rating of 1** – Countries and territories with a rating of 1 enjoy a wide range of political rights, including free and fair elections. **Rating of 2** – Countries and territories with a rating of 2 have slightly weaker political rights than those with a rating of 1 because of such factors as some political corruption, limits on the functioning of political parties and opposition groups, and foreign or military influence on politics. **Ratings of 3, 4, 5** – Countries and territories with a rating of 3, 4, or 5 include those that moderately protect almost all political rights to those that more strongly protect some political rights while less strongly protecting others. **Rating of 6** – Countries and territories with a rating of 6 have very restricted political rights. They are ruled by one-party or military dictatorships, religious hierarchies, or autocrats. **Rating of 7** – Countries and territories with a rating of 7 have few or no political rights because of severe government oppression, sometimes in combination with civil war (Freedom House, n.d.)

David Cingranelli and David Richards have created the *Cingranelli-Richards (CIRI) Human Rights Dataset*. It "contains standards-based quantitative information on government respect for 15 internationally recognized human rights for 195 countries, annually from 1981-2007…. [with] both disaggregated measures of specific human rights practices, which can either be analyzed separately or combined into valid and reliable indices, as well as two already-aggregated indices" (Cingranelli and Richards, 2008b). Twelve of the human rights values—disappearance, extrajudicial killings, political imprisonment, torture, freedom of assembly and association, freedom of foreign movement, freedom of domestic movement, freedom of speech, electoral self-determination, freedom of religion, worker's rights, independence of the judiciary—are measured on a 0-2 scales and three—women's economic rights, women's political rights, women's social rights—are measured on a 0-3 scale (Cingranelli and Richards, 2008c).

The authors did not use *CIRI* because the five-point scale of the standards-based human rights measure, described next, worked better for testing the hypotheses and related literature had utilized it as well.

Another prominent dataset, which will be utilized in this paper, is the *Political Terror Scale* (*PTS*), developed by Raymond Gastil and updated and expanded by a number of scholars over the years. Currently, is has been made available by Mark Gibney, Linda Cornett and Reed Wood (2010a). It rates political violence, defined as "state-sanctioned killings, torture, disappearances and political imprisonment" (Gibney, Cornett, & Wood, 2010d).

Countries' level of political violence is rated on a five-point scale:

> Level 5: Terror has expanded to the whole population. The leaders of these societies place no limits on the means or thoroughness with which they pursue personal or ideological goals.
>
> Level 4: Civil and political rights violations have expanded to large numbers of the population. Murders, disappearances, and torture are a common part of life. In spite of its generality, on this level terror affects those who interest themselves in politics or ideas.
>
> Level 3: There is extensive political imprisonment, or a recent history of such imprisonment. Execution or other political murders and brutality may be common. Unlimited detention, with or without a trial, for political views is accepted.
>
> Level 2: There is a limited amount of imprisonment for nonviolent political activity. However, few persons are affected, torture and beatings are exceptional. Political murder is rare.
>
> Level 1: Countries under a secure rule of law, people are not imprisoned for their views, and torture is rare or exceptional. Political murders are extremely rare (Gibney, Cornett, & Wood, 2010b).

Ratings are given for both the *CRHR* and *AI* country reports in each year. Ratings are available for 1976 to 2008 and the latest version had values for 182 countries and geographic units.

Literature Review

On the *PTS* web site, a bibliography contains nearly 300 publication citations that have utilized the data (Gibney, Cornett, & Wood, 2010b). The *CIRI* web sites highlights over 40 additional publications utilizing its data (Cingranelli and Richards, 2008a). The two standards-based human rights measures have been utilized to study and measure the interaction of human rights and a variety of topics, such as aid, armed forces, asylum, civil conflicts and wars, civil liberties, criminal justice, democracies, economic sanctions, elections, foreign investment, foreign policy, governance, health, humanitarian crises, international law and norms, markets, trade, media and communication, migration and refugees, peace and peacekeeing, religion, small arms, state repression, terrorism, tourism, transnational justice, treaties, United Nations and women's rights. Rather than attempt to summarize the vast breadth of scholarship, this literature review will focus on research on purported biases in annual human rights reports and an examination of the qualitative vs. quantitative debate in human rights.

The basis of this paper is an examination of bias in United States Department of State *CRHR* reports. Other researchers have tackled this issue. Poe, Carey and Vasquez noted that:

> Particularly in the 1980s, critics frequently charged the State Department with biased reporting. The State Department has been accused of unfairly painting with the tar of repression countries ideologically opposed to the United States, while unjustly favoring countries where the US has had a compelling interest….Commentary on the *Country Reports* has not been all negative, however. Interviews conducted by Innes and the results of careful, critical examinations over the years (e.g. Lawyers Committee for Human Rights Reports for 1982, 1984, 1987, 1991, 1993, 1995, 1996), tend to agree that the annual State Department Reports are an invaluable resource that accurately reports on the

> conditions of most countries most of the time. Though critical of reports on particular countries, they also have suggested that the reports have substantially improved over the years (651).

The article proceeded to compare *CRHR* and *AI* reports for the years 1977 to 1996. They found that "the results indicate that the State Department's reports, in comparison to those of Amnesty International, have at times favored US friends and trading partners while discriminating against (perceived) leftist foes" (677). However, they also stated that "these analyses gave us no reason to believe that State Department biases affected their assessment of the vast majority of cases during the twenty-year period our data covered" and "our research supports the conclusion that the bias that appeared in the initial State Department Reports in the 1970s and early 1980s tended to disappear over time" (677). They suggested further research to see if an emerging bias favoring US trade partners was developing.

Another article, by Nancy Qian and David Yanagizawa (2009), examined whether *CRHR* reports were biased towards developing countries that had strategic value to the United States. It concluded that "this study presents evidence indicating that the U.S. shows significant favoritism towards countries that it values strategically" (456) but that that favoritism ended with the Cold War.

Given this paper's use of both the quantitative values, from the PTS, as well as reliance on examination of the text of the three annual human rights reports, we also wanted examine the tension between qualitative and quantitative human rights research. Emilie M. Hafner-Burton and James Ron (2009) did a masterful job of reviewing the qualitative vs. quantitative debate in human rights research:

> Indeed, the gap between qualitative and quantitative researchers is so wide that many liken it to a religious or cultural divide. Each tradition has its own rhetorical style, logic, notions of causality, and techniques for case selection, and each views the other with skepticism. We thus write in a spirit of explanation and reconciliation, seeking to help interested scholars think carefully about the Other's techniques and conclusions (363).

The article proceeds to examine how qualitative researchers, based on their initial findings signifying positive growth of the human rights regime, have tended to have a more optimistic view of the human rights process. Quantitative researchers have found less evidence of a systemically improved human rights regime and have tended to see policy-based human rights improvement limited to specific countries. The article concludes: "This process will most successfully advance when scholars from both sides of the methodological divide engage more rigorously in debate, drawing on the theoretical and empirical tools their disciplines have to offer. At the same time, they should fine-tune those tools so that they can engage each other in more productive conversations" (393).

Methodology

This paper examines biases in U.S. Department of State's *CRHR* through comparison of country profiles for Cuba, Egypt and Iran by Amnesty International and Freedom House, especially post-9/11.

Cuba, Egypt and Iran were chosen, due to their changing relationship with the United States. Cuba and the United States have had a confrontational relationship since Fidel Castro took power in 1959. This country interested the authors because its relationship with the United States

preceded the publication of the human rights reports by approximately two decades. Iran was selected because its relationship with the United States changed dramatically soon after the human rights reports began to be published. The revolution under Ayatollah Khomeini and capture of the American embassy in 1979 marked a dramatic change in relationships between the two countries when Iran was governed by the Shah. The last country, Egypt, was picked because it also experienced a substantial change in its relationship with the United States after the 1978 Camp David Accords and subsequent peace treaty was signed by Egypt and Israel in March 1979. It also has a history of questionable human rights behavior despite being allied to the United States.

To compare the human rights reports, the authors utilized the Political Terror Scale. The PTS scale was chosen due to the existing availability of values for both the *CRHR* and *AIR*. Furthermore, given the description of the scale on the PTS web site allowed the two authors to code 31 annual *FW* reports, that began in 1997, for the three countries.

Each author coded each annual report for the three countries separately and then the two sets of values were compared and any differences were discussed. At the start of the process, the authors considered creating an equation that would automatically take the civil liberties and political right seven-point scale values and convert them into a point value on PTS's scale. This did not prove possible because much of the value of the reports was in the narrative description.

There are a couple of caveats to note in the coding. Due to a change in the publication schedule by Freedom House, there is no value for any country in 1983. Furthermore, the publication changed dramatically in coverage from the report covering 1988 and the one cover 1989. This occurred when Freedom House took over the production of the reports from Raymond Gastil. From 1977 to 1988, the reports were typically a half-page in length and changed very little from year to year, especially in the narrative description of each country. Starting with the coverage for 1989, the reports became multi-paged and much more descriptive, including event details that were not found in the previous versions under Gastil. As a result, the findings of the comparisons will focus on the reports covering 1989 and later.

The change in the depth of coverage by the FW reports essentially negated the selection criteria that focused on Egypt and Iran as countries that had suddenly had a change in their relationships with the United States soon after the human rights reports were initiated for coverage of 1976, by *AIR*, and 1977, by *FW* and *CRHR*. Nonetheless, the end of the Cold War and September 11th do offer some temporal points to consider when reviewing the findings.

Findings

The authors expected there to be more favorable treatment of Egypt, given its relationship with the United States, especially as a post-September 11th Arab ally, in the *CRHR* versus the *AIR* and *FW* reports. Authors expected more negative treatment of Cuba and Iran in *CRHR* versus the *AIR* and *FW* reports, especially for the latter in the post-9/11 environment.

The authors utilized a descriptive analysis technique used by Poe, Carey and Vazquez (2001). They compared the values, on the five-point PTS scale, between *CRHR* and *AI*. The differences in values could range from –4 to +4. This paper compared *CRHR* to the two non-governmental organizational reports, *AI* and *FW*, from 1989 to 2008. Comparisons were made between *CRHR* and *AIR*, *CRHR* and *FW* and *AIR* and *FW* respectively. The first two comparisons were made to see if bias could be seen between the *CRHR* reports and the two NGO reports. The last comparison wanted to see if there was any difference between the two NGO reports.

Overall, there were a total of 180 comparisons of values. Overall, 53.3% of the values (96 of 180) were identical. Only two of the 180 had a difference of greater than plus or minus one. Those occurred when *FW* gave PTS values that were two greater than *AIR* in 1989 and 1991. The rest (82 or 45.6%) were reports that had values that were one higher or lower on the PTS scale than the other report.

We will now examine the three individual country sets of reports to see if the hypotheses proved to be true.

Cuba

To reiterate, the PTS values were expected to be lower in the *AIR* and *FW* reports than the *CRHR* reports, especially in the values for 2001 and later.

In the case of the comparison between the Amnesty International and State Department reports:

Difference b/t *AI* & *CRHR PTS* value	**-1**	**0**	**+1**
number of reports (n=20)	4	15	1

AIR values were only lower in 20% of the cases, although they all did occur after September 11th in the reports for 2002, 2003, 2004 and 2005.

The comparison between the Freedom House and State Department reports:

Difference b/t *FW* & *CRHR PTS* value	**-1**	**0**	**+1**
number of reports (n=20)	0	12	8

This was completely opposite of what was expected. The *FW* values were higher than the *CRHR* reports 40 % of the time. None of the *FW* values were lower than the *CRHR*. Interestingly, the *FW* and *CRHR* scores were identical for every annual report after September 11th (2001-2008).

Lastly, in terms of the two NGO reports, Amnesty International in comparison to Freedom House:

Difference b/t *AI* & *FW PTS* value	**-1**	**0**	**+1**
number of reports (n=20)	12	7	1

We expected these scores to be similar, but the two NGO *PTS* scores were identical only 35 % of the time.

Egypt

To reiterate, the PTS values were expected to be lower in the *CRHR* reports than the *AIR* and *FW* reports, especially in the values for 2001 and later.

In the case of the comparison between the Amnesty International and State Department reports:

Difference b/t *AI* & *CRHR PTS* value	**-1**	**0**	**+1**
number of reports (n=20)	1	10	9

The expected results occurred less than half the time. However, six of the eight post-9/11 *AIR* values were greater than the *CRHR* values for the same year, as expected.

The comparison between the Freedom House and State Department reports:

Difference b/t *FW* & *CRHR PTS* value	**-1**	**0**	**+1**
number of reports (n=20)	9	5	6

Similar to the values for Cuba, the values were unexpected. The *FW* score was less than the *CRHR* score nearly half the time. Interestingly, four of the six expected values (+1) occurred post-9/11 (2001, 2002, 2003, 2007).

Lastly, in terms of the two NGO reports, Amnesty International in comparison to Freedom House:

Difference b/t *AI* & *CRHR PTS* value	**-1**	**0**	**+1**	**+2**
number of reports (n=20)	1	9	8	2

This was very surprising. The only two instances were the difference in the values was greater than one occurred in the values for Egypt in 1989 and 1991. In each case, the *FW* value was 2 and the *AIR* value was 4. Once again, less than half of the values were identical.

One other interesting result was the comparison of the reports for 2005. This year was given a lower PTS score in both *AIR* and *FW* than the *CRHR* report. In the case of the *AIR* report, it was the only one of the twenty that was lower than the *CRHR* values.

Iran

To reiterate, the PTS values were expected to be lower in the *CRHR* reports than the *AIR* and *FW* reports, especially in the values for 2001 and later.

In the case of the comparison between the Amnesty International and *CRHR* reports:

Difference b/t *AI* & *CRHR PTS* value	**-1**	**0**	**+1**
number of reports (n=20)	5	11	4

Only 20 % of the *AIR* values proved to be lower than the *CRHR* values. Moreover, all the post-September 11th values were either identical (2001, 2003, 2006, 2007, 2008) or actually lower in *AIR* (2002, 2005).

The comparison between the Freedom House and State Department reports:

Difference b/t *FW* & *CRHR PTS* value	**-1**	**0**	**+1**
number of reports (n=20)	2	13	5

Only 10 % of the *FW* scores proved to be lower and neither of them were post-9/11. Unexpectedly, one-quarter were actually higher in *FW* than the *CRHR* reports.

Lastly, in terms of the two NGO reports, Amnesty International in comparison to Freedom House:

Difference b/t *AI* & *FW PTS* value	**-1**	**0**	**+1**
number of reports (n=20)	5	14	1

Nearly three-quarters of the values were identical, as expected.

To summarize, the PTS values for Cuba were expected to be higher in the *CRHR* reports than the *AIR* or *FW*. However, there were more instances (9) where the NGO values were higher (+1) than the *CRHR* value, than instances (7) where the NGO values were lower (-1) than the *CRHR* value. More than half of the instances (24) had identical scores between the *CRHR* report and either the *AIR* or *FW* report.

Egypt had the most surprising results. *FW* values were lower than the *CRHR* values in nearly half the cases, while the *AIR* and *FW* values proved to be quite different. The two NGO scores were similar in fewer than half the cases (9) and had the only two instances of a difference greater than one (+2).

Lastly, for Iran, there were more instances where the NGO values (9) were higher than the *CRHR* scores (7) than vice-versa.

In an effort to identify why the results were not as expected, we decided to examine the narrative annual reports to ascertain the similarity of the underlying narrative information.

To review a manageable number, we identified when the *FW* score differed from identical *AIR* and *CRHR* scores. There were seventeen instances where the *FW* score differed from *AIR* and *CRHR*. This allowed us to focus on a specific year to compare across all reports to identify inconsistencies with the other two reports. Significant events, people or changes in political, economic or social contexts were noted.

Given the greater number of differences between *CRHR* and *FW*, we expected that they contain different information, while *CRHR* and *AIR* would be more similar.

Examples of these differences in a sample year for each country:

	CRHR	***AIR***	***FW***
Cuba (1990)	• Retaliation against Cuban activists who testified to UNHRC mentioned; • ICRC access to prisoners curtailed; • Cuban Human Rights Committee members arrested, detained or had houses searched; • Cuban Human Rights Party member, Samuel Martinez Lara, released after 9-month jail term, then re-arrested on charges carrying three additional years imprisonment.	• No mention of retaliation against Cuban activists; • No mention to ICRC access to prisoners; • References violent attacks on Cuban Human Rights Committee members' homes (does not use the word attacks in *CRHR*); • Samuel Martinez Lara re-arrest also referenced.	• Retaliation against Cuban activists who testified to United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC); • International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) access to prisoners curtailed.
Egypt (1999)	• References conviction of three journalists from Al-Shaab; • New law regarding NGOs and private foundations mentioned; • Mention of the arrests of suspected members of the Muslim Brothers.	• No mention of either journalists' conviction; • Law regarding NGOs and private foundations noted on first page of report; • Mention of the arrest of suspected members of the Muslim Brothers.	• Three journalists from newspaper Al-Shaab convicted by criminal court of libeling Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Agriculture. (Sentences later suspended, new trial ordered); • New law passed regarding the "formation, function and funding" of nongovernmental organizations and private foundations. Critics charge the law places undue burdens on NGOs, other say effects of law are too early to gauge. • Arrests of suspected members of the Muslim Brothers
Iran (2001)	• Mention of satellite dishes confiscation post-soccer riots; • Akbar Ganji conviction referenced; • No mention of Tehran University attack.	• Mention of satellite dishes confiscation post-soccer riots; • Akbar Ganji conviction referenced • References attack on Tehran University, but not the bill passed. Mentions parliamentary call for "speedier investigation" and request for clemency for students.	• Following riots that broke out after a soccer game in October 2001, hundreds of satellite dishes were confiscated; • Akbar Ganji, journalist, convicted for attending the Berlin conference on Iranian reform. Nine others also convicted; • Bill passed to ban police from universities and dormitories following attack at Tehran University in 1999 that left one student dead.

We found overlap occurred between the *CRHR* and the *FW* reports most often, while there was little overlap between these reports and the *AIR*. Further, we found that the *CRHR* went far more

in depth than either of the other reports, provided more contextual information for significant events and provided more detail for specific people. *AIR* was the most narrow in scope. *FW* reports were notable for the information that was carried over from year to year as well as what new information was included.

In comparing the three annual reports, there are similarities with their source material and reference to *The Universal Declaration of Human Rights*. All three use information from governmental and non-governmental officials and published reports. Not surprisingly, given the issue of sovereignty, *CRHR* does not rely on visits, unlike *AIR* and *FW*.

As for *The Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, all three mention the United Nations treaty. *CRHR* states its "reports cover internationally recognized individual, civil, political, and worker rights, as set forth in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights" (United States Department of State, n.d.). *AIR* notes that "The heart of the book is a country-by-country survey of human rights, from Afghanistan to Zimbabwe. Overwhelmingly, the entries show how improvements in the lives of millions of people are fragile – at best – when states ignore or repress any of the rights laid out in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights" (*Amnesty International Report 2009*, back cover). Lastly, Freedom House notes in its methodology that it "does not maintain a culture-bound view of freedom. The methodology of the survey is grounded in basic standards of political rights and civil liberties, derived in large measure from relevant portions of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights" (Freedom House, n.d.).

Conclusion

The three hypotheses were not confirmed by descriptive analysis. Expected lower or higher scores between *CRHR* and the NGO reports, *AIR* and *FW*, did not materialize. In fact, more than half (36 of 60) of the *CRHR* and *AI* values were identical when results of all three countries are combined. Exactly half (30 of 60) *CRHR* and *FW* values were identical. Similarly, only half (30 of 60) *AI* and *FW* values were identical. Qualitative analysis of the annual reports narratives explained why there were such differences in the values. This is due to the great difference in the two types of reports; *FW* and *CRHR* share more similarities in their annual human rights reports than *AI* and *FW*.

To further this research, the use of the *FW* scores could be expanded to a greater number of countries and larger numbers of coders could improve the reliability of the PTS values. A third annual NGO human rights report, Human Rights Watch's *World Report*, was originally going to be part of this research, but was dropped due to time and workload demands. An effort could be made to code and include its annual reports, published since 1989, as yet another set of values. More data would allow for greater use of more sophisticated statistical analyses. In terms of qualitative research, perhaps content analysis could be done of the human rights reports' narrative descriptions.

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