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International Differences in Support for Human Rights

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ABSTRACT

International differences in support for human rights are reviewed. The first of two sections reviews variations in the strength of ratification of UN human rights treaties, followed by an examination of the commonalities and relative strengths among the five regional human rights systems. This review indicates that internationally the strongest human rights support is found in Europe and the Americas, with weaker support in Africa, followed by still weaker support in the Arab Union and Southeast Asia. The second section reviews variations in responses to public opinion polls on a number of civil and economic rights. A strong coherence in support for different kinds of rights was found, and between a nation's public support for human rights and the number of UN human rights conventions a nation has ratified. U.S. public support for human rights is compared to international averages. Finally, two suggestions are offered for strengthening support for human rights.

Keywords: Human Rights, United Nations, International Polls, Human Rights Support, United States

Introduction

This paper, consisting of two major sections, offers a review of regional and national differences in support for human rights. In the first section, each world region's commitment to human rights is examined through the formal human rights treaty obligations it has adopted. The strength of each region's ratifications of UN human rights treaties is summarized first, followed by a summary of the strength of the five major regional human rights conventions and processes.

For the second section, international polls are examined for international variations in popular support for human rights. This section first notes several limitations of these polls, and then summarizes general conclusions that can be drawn from them. It concludes by addressing two questions: Do countries that support civil rights also support economic human rights? Does popular support for human rights correlate with governments' support, as seen in the ratification of UN human rights treaties? Finally, U.S. support for human rights is compared to international averages for both civil and economic rights.

These two sections diverge substantially in their methodology. The first focuses on support for human rights among the five major regional organizations identified below, both in their nations' support for UN human rights covenants and in their own regional human rights conventions. However, the second section examines national rather than regional differences in public support for human rights. These two sections harmonize only in addressing the topic of the paper. Because international surveys have been conducted in just a few countries within each

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region, differences in public attitudes on human rights by world region cannot be calculated. However, a comprehensive, albeit brief, coverage of the topic requires both sections.

        This review was prepared in the hope that understanding international differences in support for human rights might help human rights advocates find ways to advance human rights universally. No advocacy recommendations are offered, but this author believes that clearer knowledge of the how nations and regions vary in support for human rights can help advocates shape their advocacy to better fit the needs of each world region.

I. Regional Variations in Human Rights Treaty Commitments

        Two indicators of regional support for human rights are (a) the strength of a region's ratifications of UN human rights treaties, and (b) differences in the five regional human rights conventions and declarations from one another and from the central UN covenants, the *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights* (ICCPR), and the *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights* (ICESCR). Each of these indicators offers, at best, a limited index of a region's human rights support, as they might reflect international pressures or the concerns of political elites rather than the concerns of the public. However, if these correspond to support for human rights as reflected in international polls, they together increase our understanding of regional differences in support for human rights.

Regional Ratifications of UN Human Rights Treaties

        There are 18 UN human rights treaties available for ratification by states, including 9 core human rights conventions and 9 optional protocols (Listed in Appendix A; see also United Nations). There is also the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC), not counted among the 18.

        Five major regional organizations also address human rights. These include the 35 states of the Organization of American States (OAS), the 47 members Council of Europe (CofE), the 54 African Union (AU) states, the 22 states of the League of Arab States (Arab League), and the 10 Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) states.

        Table 1 displays the average number of the eighteen human rights treaties ratified by countries in the five regions as of May 2016 and the percentage of countries that have ratified the ICC. From these patterns, human rights commitment appears strongest in the Western Europe and the Americas, followed in descending order by Africa, the Arab states, and East Asia. As Table 1 shows, however, there are substantial variations within each region. Argentina, Bolivia, and Uruguay are the only three states on the planet that have ratified all 18, while only Spain and Portugal have ratified 17.[2]

        Still, this variation among the global regions indicates that human rights are much more salient concerns in some world regions and countries than in others. The number of ratifications offers a rough index of that salience.

        While there has been some tendency for states to ratify conventions consistent with their historical culture but not others, this pattern of selective ratification appears weak. It has been noted, for example, that the United States has ratified the ICCPR, which covers the kind of civil rights found in the United States' Bill of Rights (e.g., freedom of thought and religion, presumption of innocence) and political rights familiar to U.S. citizens (e.g., to vote and seek elective office), but not the ICESCR, which embraces the rights to health care, education, and

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social security, rights not found in U.S. constitutional law. Oppositely, China has ratified the ICESCR but not the ICCPR. States are also prone to ratify those conventions they see as in their self-interest and not those that might impinge on their interests. For example, 48 states have ratified the 1990 *International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families*, but all are states that export migrant workers; no state that receives large numbers of migrant workers has ratified this convention. Still, a nation's general support for human rights appears to be the strongest driving force, not a process of selectively choosing which treaties to ratify.

The Five Regional Human Rights Systems – Similarities, Variations and Relative Strength
　　　　Each of the five regional organizations mentioned above has developed its own general human rights conventions or declarations that augment the UN human rights treaties. These began with the CofE's *European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms* (1950) on civil and political rights and the *European Social Charter* (1961, expanded in 1996) on economic and social rights. The OAS adopted the *American Convention on Human Rights* (1969) covering civil and political rights and added a protocol (1988) to embrace economic and social rights. The Organization of African Unity (now the African Union) adopted the *African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights* (1981). The Arab League adopted the *Arab Charter on Human Rights* (1994; updated in 2004). Finally, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) adopted the *ASEAN Human Rights Declaration* (2012), although there is as yet no ASEAN human rights convention.[2]

　　　　The commonality among human rights included in the regional charters and declarations is striking, due largely to their common basis in the UN's *Universal Declaration of Human Rights.* All proclaim the rights to life, personal liberty, non-discrimination, property, freedom of conscience and religion, thought and expression, and assembly. All prohibit slavery, torture, and cruel and inhuman punishment. All proclaim the equality of every individual before the law and the rights to participate in government and to choose representatives. All provide for the right to travel within one's country and abroad, and all elaborate extensively on the rights to a fair trial and protections for the accused. All proclaim a right to work and to safe conditions of work, and all call for the protection of families and other vulnerable groups, such as children, the aged or disabled. All provide for the rights to education, medical care, and social security, including the right to food.

　　　　However, each regional treaty differs in particulars from the UN human rights treaties, often by defining specific rights in greater or lesser detail, and often reflecting a region's specific historical concerns. As examples, only the *European Social Charter* specifies at least four weeks of paid vacation, with extra paid vacation for those working in dangerous or unhealthy occupations (Art. 2), and only the European and African Conventions specifically prohibit the "collective expulsion" of non-citizens. Only the *American Convention* defines the right to life as "from the moment of conception" (Art. 3), reflecting Latin-America's strong Catholic heritage. The founding *Charter of the Organization of American States* (1948) expressed Latin-America's deep concern for poverty, calling for an "equitable distribution of national income" (Art. 34). Similarly, the *American Convention* proclaims that while "Everyone has the right to the use and enjoyment of his property," . . . The law may subordinate such use and enjoyment to the interest of society" (Art. 21).

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Given Africa's recent freedom from colonial subjugation, the Preamble of the *African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights* pledges to "eradicate all forms of colonialism from Africa," and, Articles 19 through 24 describe the rights of "peoples," uniformly expressing concerns arising from colonial exploitation. For example, Article 19 states that "All peoples shall be equal; they shall enjoy the same respect and shall have the same rights. Nothing shall justify the domination of a people by another."

Given the dominance of Islam in Arab League countries, the Preamble to the 2008 *Arab Charter on Human Rights* refers to "the noble Islamic religion and other divinely revealed religions," and Article 3 notes the equality of men and women "within the framework of the positive discrimination established in favour of women by Islamic Shari'ah, other divine laws and the applicable laws and legal instruments." However, these are the only references to Islam, and the *Charter* grants freedom of "thought, conscience and religion (Art. 20), "guarantees the right to information and to freedom of opinion and expression" (Art. 32), and protects minorities to enjoy their own culture, language, and religion (Art. 25). These represents a great advance in religious freedom from the 1990 *Cairo Declaration of Human Rights in Islam,* where all rights were granted only as they conform to Islamic Shari'ah.

The 2012 *ASEAN Human Rights Declaration* strongly affirms that human rights belong to "All persons" (Art. 1) and particularly specifies that they are inalienable for "women, children, the elderly, persons with disabilities, migrant workers, and vulnerable and marginalized groups" (Art. 5). Only the *ASEAN Human Rights Declaration* explicitly protects from discrimination "people suffering from communicable diseases, including HIV/AIDS" (Art. 29) and specifically prohibits "human smuggling or trafficking in persons, including for the purpose of trafficking in human organs" (Art. 13). Only the *ASEAN Declaration* (Art. 38) and the *African Charter* (Art. 23) proclaim a right to peace.

However, the *ASEAN Declaration* contains several statements that appear to allow room for ASEAN governments to violate the rights of their citizens. While the ICCPR and other regional Conventions proclaim "freedom of peaceful assembly and association" (UDHR, Art. 20), the ASEAN Declaration omits "and association," an omission that critics have noted could permit an ASEAN government to ban organizations and civil society groups that might criticize it. Further, the Declaration states that "the realization of human rights must be considered in the regional and national context bearing in mind different political, economic, legal, social, cultural, historical and religious backgrounds" (Art. 7), injecting a note of cultural relativism that many find disquieting. These concerns have led to the *ASEAN Declaration*'s lukewarm reception by human rights NGOs (Human Rights Watch 2012), the United Nations (UN News Centre 2012), and the U.S. State Department (U.S. Department of State 2012). There is, as yet, no ASEAN human rights convention.

To summarize the variations in the five regional conventions, the *American Convention* places the greatest emphasis upon the eradication of poverty and the greatest limits on property rights. Only the *African Charter* grants rights to "peoples" as well as to individuals. The *Arab Charter* has moved from the *Cairo Declaration*'s full subjugation of rights to Islamic Shari'ah to very limited reference to Shari'ah in the *Arab Charter* of 2004. And while the *ASEAN Declaration* affirms all rights, its note of cultural relativism appears to limit its true commitment to human rights.

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The Rigor of the Five Regional Systems

The extent and rigor of the human rights systems in the five regional organizations also offer testimony to their human rights commitment. The extent of the formal human rights treaties and processes by regions strongly parallel the regions' number of ratifications of UN treaties.

The Council of Europe, the strongest regional system, initiated the European Court of Human Rights in 1950, which is authorized to issue rulings that are binding on states and to receive complaints from individuals. It initiated the European Committee of Social Rights in 1961 to oversee compliance with the *European Social Convention*. The Council of Europe has also adopted three specific conventions, on the prevention of torture, on the rights to nationality, and on preventing trafficking in persons. It has added protocols to the *European Convention* on several specific rights, including the right to education (Protocol 1), freedom of movement (Protocol 4) and abolishing the death penalty (Protocols 6 and 13).

The OAS has an active Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, created in 1959, and an Inter-American Court of Human Rights, created in 1979. The Commission is widely credited with helping to end the widespread human rights abuses in Latin-America in the 1970s and early 1980s (Weissbrodt & Bartolomei, 1991). Further, the OAS has adopted six specific human rights conventions intended to prevent and punish torture, abolish the death penalty, prevent and punish enforced disappearances, end violence against women and discrimination against persons with disabilities, and promote democracy. It has also adopted declarations on freedom of expression and on the protection of persons deprived of liberty.

An African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights was created in 1981, but the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights was created only in 2004. The AU has adopted four other human rights conventions to address the problems of refugees, the welfare of children, the welfare of internally displaced persons, and on democracy and governance. It has also added a protocol to its main convention on the rights of women.

The League of Arab States has not adopted supplementary human rights conventions or declarations. However, the League created the Arab Human Rights Committee in 2009 and the Arab Court of Human Rights in 2014. However, because the Arab Court lacks authority to receive complaints from individuals or groups and possesses no authority or capability to enforce its rulings, it is regarded by critics as the weakest regional court (Human Rights Watch 2014).

In addition to the ASEAN Human Rights Declaration, ASEAN has approved a *Declaration on the Rights of Migrant Workers* (2007) and a Commission on the Rights of Women and Children (2010). However, it has not announced any progress toward the creation of a binding convention or human rights court.

In summary, the extent and rigor of each regional body's human rights systems strongly paralleles its ratification of UN human rights treaties. The Council of Europe's is the strongest, that of the Organization of American States next in strength, with those of the African Union, Arab League, and Association of Southeast Asian Nations each weaker in turn.

II. International Variations in Response to Polls on Human Rights Attitudes

In recent years, a number of international polls have included questions regarding human rights. This section summarizes the findings of those polls, offers new analyses of the coherence of human rights attitudes and of the coherence of human rights attitudes with nations' ratification

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of human rights conventions, and notes the ways in which the attitudes of U.S. citizens diverge from international averages. To begin, however, the limitations of these polls are reviewed.

Limitations of International Human Rights Polls

There are at least seven difficulties in determining international differences in human rights attitudes through international polling. These difficulties add a useful caution in interpreting the results of these polls.

Difficulties in Acquiring Comparable Samples. It is now widely noted that polls predicting national elections are becoming less accurate, due largely to a steep decline in individuals' willingness to respond to surveys (Zukin 2015) and to the rapid replacement of land lines with cell phones (Iyar 2012). Some polling organizations have tried internet surveys, but these greatly over sample the young voters and under sample the elderly (Zukin 2015).

The difficulty of obtaining representative samples is multiplied when pollsters must use different sampling methods in different countries. In 2006, when the British Broadcasting Corporation World Service Poll asked about approval vs. disapproval of torture in 25 countries, telephone surveys were used in 14 countries and face-to-face interviews in 11. Further, sampling had to be limited to major urban areas in 7 of the countries (BBC World Service Poll, 2006). In 2014, when Global International asked about attitudes toward homosexuality in 55 countries, respondents were interviewed face-to-face in 31 countries, by telephone in 12, and online in 22 (Global International 2015).

These same sampling variations across countries are common to human rights surveys conducted by World Public Opinion.org, Pew Research Center's Global Attitudes and Trends Surveys, Gallup International polls, and World Values Survey. Costs and access to populations may make variations necessary, but they inject confounds of uncertain size for interpreting national differences in human rights attitudes.

Questions Omitted due to Cultural Sensitivity. Polling organizations often find questions too sensitive to ask in some countries. For example, in a 2014 Gallup survey across 124 countries that included a question regarding gay rights was not asked in 15 countries, primarily Islamic countries, "where the question is too sensitive to be asked" (McCarthy 2015a). For the same study, Gallup also "could not poll on gay acceptance" in China (McCarthy 2015b).

International Response-Set Differences. Several studies have found cultural differences in response sets to surveys. Individuals in "collectivist" cultures as described by Hofstede (2001; e.g., Japan, China and Korea) are more likely to display acquiescent response styles (e.g., more "strongly agree" or "agree" responses) than are those in "individualist" (e.g., United States; Western European) countries (Harzing 2006; Johnson et al. 2005). Also, individuals in "power distant" (i.e., authoritarian) countries (e.g., Malaysia, China) are more likely to give extreme responses (i.e., replying both "strongly agree" and "strongly disagree"; Johnson et al.). The degree that these response sets affect country differences on human rights surveys is not yet known.

Language Difficulties in Survey Translations. International surveys must be translated into native languages, and the same question may carry different connotations in different

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languages (Behling and Law 2000). In an topic related to human rights attitudes, the World Values Survey for Waves 5 (2005-2009) and 6 (2010-2014), 66% of U.S. citizens either agreed or strongly agreed with "I see myself as a world citizen," whereas just 50% of Germans did so (World Values Survey, nd). The finding that Germans were 16% less likely to regard themselves as world citizens seems paradoxical to a 2011 Pew international survey that found Germans 15% more likely than U.S. citizens to agree that, "Our country should help other countries deal with their problems" (54% to 39%; Pew Research Center 2011).

The problem likely resides in the different connotations of "world citizen" in English and "weltbürger" in German. German professors consulted by this author suggested that "world citizen" in English has a more proactive, participatory connotation of citizenship than does "weltbürger," which connotes more of a cosmopolitan sense of "wise in the ways of the world." If so, it is not surprising that in Wave 6, "I see myself as a world citizen" correlates .30 with a ratings of the relevance of United Nations for U.S. citizens, but just .11 for German citizens, .27 with a question on the importance of caring for the environment for U.S. citizens, but just .13 for Germans (World Values Survey, nd). If the issue of translation equivalence is evident for just English and German, one can easily imagine the difficulties in ensuring equivalence of meaning when surveys are translated into many languages!

Impact of Country-Specific Events. A fifth issue is that of disentangling the impact of dramatic events within a specific country from stable between-country differences. Surveys that repeat the same questions for the same countries across time could help disentangle these effects, but such repeated surveys are very rare.

On the topic of torture, in 2006 and 2008, respondents in 16 common countries were asked to choose between, "Clear rules against torture must be maintained…," and "Terrorists pose such an extreme threat that governments should now be allowed to use some degree of torture if it may gain information that saves innocent lives" (Kull et al. 2008a).

The results indicated that responses were influenced by both stable country differences and country-specific events. Across the 16 countries, a willingness to let governments use torture rose from 28% to 34% from 2006 to 2008, but this rise was almost entirely due to increases of 20% or more in India (from 32% to 59%), Turkey (24% to 51%), and South Korea (31% to 51%). All three had experienced major terrorist episodes between the two surveys: Kashmiri separatists and Kurdish rebels had engaged in attacks in India and Turkey, respectively, and Taliban rebels in Afghanistan kidnaped 23 South Korean missionaries, murdering two and holding the others hostage (Kull et al., 2008a). Still, the correlation of support for torture across countries for 2006 and 2008, calculated by this author, was .58. With these three countries removed, this correlation was .67, indicating stable between-country differences. Respondents in Spain (M = 13.5%) and France (M = 15.5%), were the least likely to endorse torture across the two surveys. Apart from respondents in the three countries noted above, U.S. (M = 40%) and Russian (M = 36.5%) respondents showed the strongest support for torture.[1]

In 2007, Pew Research Center asked in 22 countries "How important is it for the media to be free to publish news and ideas without government control?" (Kull et al. 2008b). This question was repeated in 2015 across 38 countries (Pew Research Center, 2015a), with 15 countries common to both surveys. The correlation for these countries for the two time periods was .53, $p < .05$, again indicating stable between-country differences. However, responses in the

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Ukraine rose from 39% to 65%, almost certainly due to the revolutionary events there in 2014. With Ukraine removed, the correlation across the remaining 14 countries for the two time periods was .68, *p* <.01. In summary, the few surveys that have repeated human rights questions in the same countries in later years indicate that responses on human rights surveys are influenced by both stable country differences and major events that affect specific countries.

Endorsing Human Rights versus Caring about Human Rights. A major concern with surveys is that agreement with human rights statements may represent a simple belief that human rights are good ideas, not a sincere concern for their protection and advancement. McFarland and Mathews (2005) found that how much individuals agree with simple human rights statements correlated modestly with measures that tapped a deeper commitment to human rights, – a willingness, for example, to invest national resources to stop genocide on other countries.

Human rights questions in international surveys appear closer to measuring simple endorsement rather than a true commitment, with one caveat. McFarland and Mathews' (2005) measure of endorsing human rights asked participants respond to statements from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree," whereas international human right surveys more commonly use response options ranging from "not important at all" to "very important." This difference creates some uncertainty whether responses express simple agreement with human rights statements or perhaps a bit more commitment.

Limited Number and Range of International Human Rights Polls. A seventh concern for assessing global differences in support for human rights is that few international polls on human rights attitudes are actually conducted. No polling organization has shown an ongoing commitment to conducting them. International polling organizations mainly sample international opinion to serve business (e.g., Gallup International), or U.S. foreign policy (e.g., Pew Research Center) concerns. Further, international polls on human rights appear guided by "hot button" issues, focusing on rights issues of interest at the moment. Following 9/11 and the revelations of U.S. torture at Abu Ghraib and elsewhere, a flurry of international polls asked questions on attitudes toward torture. More recently, several international polls have measured support for gay rights. As a result, few international polls have covered a broad range of human rights topics or attitudes toward human rights in general. International polls on a number of human rights issues appear totally missing, including, as examples, the rights of the accused to a presumption of innocence and a fair trial, the prohibition of slavery, the rights of property and privacy, or the right to work, to just wages, and to favorable conditions of work.

Should we conclude from these seven difficulties that it is not possible to know differences in human rights attitudes across countries? That conclusion seems too extreme, but these concerns should make us aware that our knowledge of human rights attitudes across world regions is imprecise and incomplete.

Finally, Human Rights Attitudes Across the Globe

In summarizing the international human rights polls, results for attitudes toward civil rights will be presented first, followed by results on attitudes toward economic and social rights. For civil rights, the results will include those for freedom of speech and press, freedom of religion, the right to engage in protests or demonstrations, the prohibition of torture, and the rights of equality – for races, women, and homosexual persons. The poll results on attitudes on economic and social rights will review those on the rights to health care, food, and education.

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It is often suggested that civil and political rights differ in kind from economic and social rights, but in the United States, at least, individuals' support for the two kinds of rights are positively related. Hertel, Scruggs and Heidkamp (2009) found that 80% of those who believed that civil rights (e.g., "freedom of thought and expression,") should be "guaranteed to every human being and never violated," also believed that "a minimum standard of living" also should be guaranteed. McFarland and Mathews (2005) found that commitment to civil rights (e.g., "preventing mass killings and genocide around the world") consistently correlated about .75 with commitment to economic and social rights (e.g., "working toward livable wages for workers in every country"). In short, those who care about civil and political rights generally care about economic and social rights, as well.

International Attitudes on Civil Rights

On the surface, there appears to be strong public support for civil rights across the globe. Yet in each case, there is wide variation among countries in that support.

Freedom of Expression. In 2007, Pew asked participants in 35 countries how important it is to live in a country "Where you can openly say what you think and can criticize the (state or government)" An average of 57% felt it "very important," and another 30% said it was "somewhat important" (Pew Research Center 2007). Virtually identical percentages were found in 2015 (Pew Research Center 2015b). In a 2008 poll conducted by WorldPublicOpinion.org (WPO) across 23 nations, 88% regarded the right "to express any opinion, including criticisms of the government or religious leaders," as either "very important" (66%) or "important" (22%; WorldPublicOpinion.org 2008). In a WPO 2009 study across 22 countries, 57% agreed that "people should have the right to publically criticize a religion" (WorldPublicOpinion.org 2008). In 2015, however, Pew found that just 35% across 38 nations agreed that "People should be able to say things publically that are offensive to your religious beliefs" (Pew Research Center, 2015b). In the U.S., 77% would allow people to do so.

Similar results are found for freedom of the press. In 2008, when WPO polled 21 nations on how important it is "for the media to be free to publish news and ideas without government control," 81% rated press freedom as either "very important" (53%) or "important" (28%; WorldPublicOpinion.org 2008). In 2015, asking a virtually identical question across 38 countries, Pew found that 68% responded as either "very important (44%) or "important" (24%). In summary, global support for freedom of expression appears strong.

Still, the variation among nations is huge. The "very important" ratings of freedom to criticize one's government ranges from just 33% (Malaysia) to 86% (Lebanon). For freedom to criticize "government or religious leaders,' from 34% (Russia) to 87% (Mexico), for press freedom from lows of 23% (Russia) and 29% (Iran) to 79% (Mexico), and for freedom to criticize a religion from 26% (Iraq) to 89% (United States). The strongest limitation on free speech in these surveys is on the right to defame a religion. Across 20 nations polled, 57% chose that "people should have the right to publically criticize a religion," including strong majorities in all Western nations. However, majorities in six countries chose the option, that "the government should have a right to fine or imprison people who publicly criticize a religion" led by Egypt (71%), Pakistan (62%), India (59%) and Iraq (57%; WorldPublicOpinion.org 2009). The desire to prohibit defamation of religion, which Muslim states have proposed several times at the UN's Human Rights Council, appears supported by the populations of Muslim states.

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Freedom of Religion. In 2008, WPO asked in 24 nations, "How important do you think it is for people of different religions to be treated equally?" Overall, 64% chose "very important." Yet this percentage ranged from just 29% in Egypt and 34% in Russia to 90% in Argentina. Egyptian respondents were also most likely to agree that "There are some religions that should not be allowed to practice," at 67%. Globally, just 41% agreed with, "In [country name], people of any religion should be free to try to convert members of other religions to join theirs," with Indonesia (17%), Palestine (18%) Russia (23%) and Egypt (30%) again in the bottom tier in their willingness to allow efforts to convert (WorldPublicOpinion.org 2008). These countries correspond closely to a 2012 Pew report that found the greatest restrictions on religious freedom precisely in the countries where the populations most favored such restrictions (Pew Research Center 2012). In short, those governments that severely restrict freedom of religion appear to have popular support for doing so.

Prohibition of Torture. International surveys on the use of torture proliferated following 9/11 and have continued to more recent polls conducted for Amnesty International in 2013, Pew Research Center in 2014, and International Committee of the Red Cross in 2016. These polls sometimes simply asked whether governments should be allowed to use torture, sometimes whether torture should completely banned versus whether a complete ban is too restrictive, and sometimes whether exceptions should be made for suspected terrorists or for enemy soldiers to obtain important military information.

Averaging across these polls, 57% of those surveyed across countries reject the use of torture, but almost 40% approve of torture in some circumstances, such as to gain information to protect the public. The strongest and most consistent condemnation appears in countries that earlier had experienced dictatorships that had engaged in torture, such as Greece, Argentina, and Chile. Condemnation was also strong in the European countries of Spain, France, and Germany. A greater willingness to allow torture, particularly of terrorist suspects, is found in India, Iran, Kenya, Nigeria and Egypt, and China (e.g., Amnesty International 2014; WorldPublicOpinion.org 2008).

These results also vary by how the question is worded and by the context in which it is couched. In 2009, WPO found that 59% of U.S. citizens agreed with the international conventions that state that "governments should never be allowed to use physical torture." However, when Pew Research Center asked internationally "In the period following the September 11th, 2001 terrorist attacks in the U.S., the U.S. government used interrogation methods that may consider to be torture on people suspected of terrorism. Were these methods justified or not justified?" 58% of U.S. respondents chose "justified" and just 37% said "not justified." Across the other 39 countries in the survey, a median 51% of respondents said that U.S. interrogation methods were "not justified" and just 35% said "justified." Majorities in eight countries supported U.S. interrogation methods, including Israel, India, the Philippines, and five African countries, while the strongest condemnation came from Latin-American countries Venezuela, Argentina, Chile and Mexico, the Palestinian territory, and from Germany, Spain, Great Britain and France in Europe (Pew Research Center 2015a).

Non-Discrimination. Attitudes on discrimination have been assessed for race and ethnic group, gender, and homosexuality.

Race and Ethnic Group. Large majorities in all countries now agree that people of different races and ethnicities should be treated equally. In 2008, WPO asked how important it is

for "people of different races and ethnicities to be treated equally." Across 22 countries, 91% rated it as "very important" (69%) or "important" (22%). Still, the percentages of "very important" ranged from just 34% (Russia) to 94% (Mexico), with the U.S. percentage at 79%. In the same survey, 80% across the countries agreed that governments "should make an effort" to "prevent discrimination based on a person's race or ethnicity," ranging from a low of 46% in India to a high of 94% in Mexico (WorldPublicOpinion.org 2009).

Gender. Support for "women to have full equality of rights compared to men" appears just slightly lower than support for racial and ethnic group equality. In 2008 WPO found that 86% globally rated women's equality as "very important" (59%) or "important" (27%; (WorldPublicOpinion.org 2008), while in 2015, Pew found, across 38 countries, that 87% regarded "women have the same rights as men" as either "very important" (65%) or "important" (22%; Pew Research Center, 2015b). However, in the WPO survey, "very important" ratings ranged from 31% in Egypt and 35% in Russia to 89% in Mexico and Great Britain. In the 2015 Pew survey, "very important" responses ranged from 31% in Burkina Faso to 94% in Canada. In the U.S., "very important" responses were 77% in the former survey and 91% in the Pew survey.

Homosexual persons. International polls on gay rights are comparatively recent. However, in 2007, and again 2013, Pew Research Center asked in 39 countries, "Should society accept homosexuality?" with simple "yes" or "no" responses. In 2007, just 32% responded "yes," but 40% did so six years later. Still, acceptance of homosexuality was still a minority view across the globe in 2013.

No human rights question reveals a greater cultural divide. In 2013, the willingness to accept homosexuality ranged from lows of 1% in Nigeria, 2% in Pakistan and Tunisia, and 3% in Ghana, Senegal, Indonesia, Egypt and Jordan, to above 80% in Canada, Spain, Germany, and the Czech Republic, and above 70% in six other countries. In the U.S., 60% said yes in 2013, up from 49% in 2007. Gay marriage is illegal in all of the low-approval countries, but as of 2015 is legal in half of the countries with 70% or greater acceptance of homosexuality. The correlation in acceptance of homosexuality for these countries from 2007 to 2013, calculated for this paper, was .98, indicating almost perfect consistency across time in countries' willingness to accept or not accept homosexuality.

Consistency Among Civil Rights Attitudes. In 2008, WorldPublicOpinion.org asked about a number of human rights across 24 countries, making it possible to look at the consistencies in the degree that national populations that endorse one human right also endorse others. Further, from later surveys it is possible to add other rights such as gay rights and prohibition of torture to further determine the consistency in levels of nations' support for civil rights across various rights. These correlations were computed for this paper.

The correlations among support for the various civil rights – freedom of expression, a free media, freedom of religion, prohibition of torture, equality for racial groups, women, and gays are all strikingly positive at the national level. For example, although acceptance of homosexuality was in a separate survey, its acceptance correlates with support for all other civil rights, from a low of .31 with treating all religions equally to a high of .84 with allowing criticism of religion. Acceptance of homosexuality correlated .63 with belief that women should be equal to men, and .43 with the belief that ethnic and racial groups should be treated equally. Other civil rights correlations are similar: Opposition to torture correlated .71 with approval of homosexuality, .71 with support for racial equality, .48 with support for gender equality, and .40

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with support for the right free press rights. In summary, nations whose populations support one civil right are very prone to support others. Overall, this pattern is robust.

International Attitudes on Economic and Social Rights

Very few international polls have addressed economic and social rights. For that reason, conclusions are necessarily more tentative.

Right to Education. In 2008, WPO asked, again in 24 countries, "What about the basic need for education? Do you think the government should or should not be responsible for ensuring that people can meet this need?" Support for a right to education appears overwhelming, as 91% replied that governments should be responsible. Argentina and China, each at 98%, were in strongest agreement with this right, while the lowest percentages were in India (64%), Egypt (77%), and the U. S. (83%).

Right to Health Care. The 2008 WPO poll cited above also asked, "What about the basic need for healthcare? Do you think the government should or should not be responsible for ensuring that people can meet this need?" Across the countries, 92% agreed that the government should be responsible, with Argentina (97%) and China (96%), along with Indonesia (97%) topping support. Just 5% thought that it should not be.

Right to Food. In this same survey, WPO also asked, "Do you think the government should be responsible for ensuring that its citizens can meet their basic need for food OR do you think that is NOT the government's responsibility?" Again, the populations surveyed agreed overwhelmingly that access to food is a human right, as 87% agreed, led by Indonesia (97%), Kenya (96%), and China (96%). Across all countries surveyed, just 8% disagreed that insuring the right to food is a government responsibility.

Consistency in National Support for Economic Rights. As was true for civil rights, the between-countries correlations in the endorsement of economic rights were strong. The correlations among the belief in the responsibility of government to guarantee the right to food, health care, and education ranged from .76 (for food and education) to .91 (for food and health care). Populations in countries that support one economic right (the right to food, health care, or education) also support the others.

Coherence of Civil Rights with Economic Rights.

Do countries that endorse civil rights also endorse economic rights? To address this question, a sum of support for non-discrimination on the basis of race or sex, acceptance of homosexuality, freedom for religion, prohibition against torture, support for free speech and an uncensored media was calculated as an index of national support for civil rights. Similarly, a sum of support for the rights to food, health care, and education was calculated to assess support for economic rights. The between-country correlations between support for civil and economic rights was .53, $p < .03$. In short, there is substantial coherence between supporting civil and economic rights; populations of states that support one kind of rights are prone to support the other, as well. This result is consistent with the same tendency for individuals in the U.S. reported earlier.

Coherence of National Attitudes with National Ratifications of Human Rights Treaties

How do survey responses to the two kinds of rights correspond to the number of

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ratifications of UN treaties? While data needed for these computations were available for only 19 countries, the sum of support for civil rights correlated .53, $p < .03$, with the number of treaty ratifications, and support for economic rights correlated, .41, $p < .08$, with treaty ratifications. When support for civil and economic rights are combined as an overall index of how much the population supports human rights, this support correlated .54, $p < .03$ with the number of UN human rights conventions states have ratified. It appears clear that those countries whose populations support human rights generally have ratified more UN human rights conventions.

Because this data is correlational, the causal direction is unclear. Does public support for human rights lead governments to ratify more human rights covenants, does government ratification of human rights covenants enhance public support, or are the causal paths bi-directional? The coherence in public support for civil and economic rights suggests that government ratification follows public support, but such a conclusion cannot clearly be drawn from the available data.

United States Divergence in Support for Civil vs. Economic Rights

Despite the general evidence of strong consistency in support for civil and economic rights, the data for the United States shows substantial diversions from international averages. U.S. citizens across the polls support civil rights more strongly and economic rights more weakly than the global averages. For civil rights, 76% of U.S. citizens agreed that it is "very important" to "have a right to express any opinion, including criticisms of government and religious leaders," compared to 66% globally. Americans were similarly more supportive than global averages of "the right to publish news and ideas without government control, even if potentially destabilizing" (75% to 57%), the "right to demonstrate peacefully" (95% to 75%), and believing it "very important" that "all religions be treated equally" (77% to 64%). More respondents in the U.S. (77%) than in any of 38 countries surveyed thought that "others should be allowed to say things publically that are offensive to your religious beliefs;" the global median was 35% (Pew Research Center 2015b).

The major U.S. divergence from greater than global averages in support for civil rights regards torture. As noted above, U.S. citizens, along with Russians, was consistently more willing to allow torture than were respondents in other 14 countries (Kull et al, 2008a). Similarly, a 2016 survey of 16 countries found that 46% of U.S. citizens would allow torture of enemy combatants to obtain military information, contrasted with 27% across the other 15 countries. Only Israel (50%) and Nigeria (70%) were more willing to allow the torture of enemy soldiers (International Committee of the Red Cross, 2016).

In contrast with greater-than-average support for most civil rights, U.S. citizens support for economic rights is at or near the bottom of all nations surveyed. While 91% across 47 nations thought that governments should insure basic education for all, just 83% of U.S. respondents did so. Although 77% of U.S. respondents agreed that the government should be responsible for insuring health care, the global average was 92%. While 74% in the U.S. agreed that the government should insure access to food, 87% did so globally. More U.S. citizens rejected the view that the government should be responsible for insuring citizens' access to health care (21%) and food (25%) than in any other nation polled, and these percentages were about four times the global average (WorldPublicOpinion.org, 2008). U.S. Citizens were the least likely among the 47 nations to "completely agree" (28%) that it is "the responsibility of the (state or government)

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to take care of very poor people who can't take care of themselves," just half the global average of 56%., and more U.S. respondents replied "completely disagree" (11%) than in any other country (Pew Research Center 2007).

One key to understanding the U.S. disparity on economic rights may be found in the fact that U.S. citizens are more prone than those in other countries to ascribe both success and failure to the individual rather than to circumstances. For example, Pew Research Center (2014) asked in 44 countries, "Which is the most important reason for the gap between the rich and poor in our country today?" Respondents in the U.S. were more than twice as likely as the global median of to choose, "Some work harder than others" (24% vs. 10%), and less likely blame "our government's economic policies" (24% vs. 29% globally). This belief that hard work leads to success, that if you are poor it is your own fault, appears stronger in the U.S. than in any country surveyed, and seems most likely the reason U.S. citizens are more reluctant than citizens of other countries to support government guarantees of food, health care, and education.

Conclusions

This paper started with the assumption that international differences in support for human rights are revealed in national rates and patterns of ratification of UN human rights treaties, in the strength of regional human rights conventions and of their active human rights systems, and in differences in responses to international human rights polls. This paper includes a summary of each of these, together with evidence that each lead to similar conclusions.

The cumulative evidence suggests that the strongest support for human rights is found in Europe and the Americas, followed in turn by Africa, Arab League States, and Southeast Asian States. This order is found in the descending order of ratifications of UN human rights conventions and of the ICC, and in the relative strength of the regional human rights systems.

Second, there is strong between-country consistency in support for a wide variety of human rights, including both civil and economic rights, and a nation's popular support for human rights relates significantly to that nation's number of ratifications of UN human rights conventions. The discussion of the separation of civil and political rights on the one hand from economic, social and cultural rights on the other is decades old. Following the adoption of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* in 1948, it was assumed that a single binding human rights covenant could be prepared. However, by 1952, the breech between the West favoring civil and political rights with the Soviet Union and its allies favoring the latter rights, made it evident that separate covenants should be created for each set of rights, leading to the adoption of the ICCPR and ICESCR in 1966.

However, the current study, together with the earlier studies in the U.S., indicates that at both individual and national levels, support for human rights form a consistent bundle. The largest division is not between those nations or individuals who support one kind of human rights over the other. Rather, the largest division is simply between those who support human rights, both civil and economic, and those who do not.

Assuming that readers share the concern to increase support for human rights, how might that be done? One key ingredient is that of enlarging the sense that, as in Gandhi's statement, "All humanity is one undivided and indivisible family." McFarland, Webb and Brown (2012) found identification with "all humans everywhere" as measured by their Identification with All Humanity Scale, to be the strongest positive correlate with a genuine commitment to human

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rights.

But can identification with all humanity be taught? Today in the United States there appear to be few public efforts at teaching it to our youth. In the 1970s, a U.S. children's television series tried to do so. *Big Blue Marble*, named for its opening photo of the Earth surrounded by black space, featured stories of children from many cultures, encouraged inter-cultural pen pals, and the like. Its theme song contained the refrain,

> "Folks are folks and kids are kids, we share a common name,
> We speak a different way but work and play the same."

If there are similar public efforts today, they appear drowned out by the patriotism that now dominates the public values taught to our children.

Knowledge of human rights appears very limited among students in the U.S. A survey on the campus of this author found that just 10% could correctly identify the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* in a four-choice item. This result may not be representative of U.S. students in general, but likely is. In 1980, Barrows asked a representative sample of U.S. students, "Which of the following organizations promulgated the Universal Declaration of Human Rights?" Slightly under 50% knew (or guessed) the United Nations, with the three incorrect choices the League of Nations, the World Council of Churches, and Amnesty International (Barrows, 1980). No newer studies of U.S. students' knowledge of human rights were located. Because we cannot care about what we don't know about, this author wrote *Human Rights 101: A Brief College Level Overview*. Posted on the website of the American Association for the Advancement of Science Human Rights Coalition and easily located by searching its title. *Human Rights 101* is intended as a free download that can be used by any interested professor for a one- or two-day overview and discussion of human rights. Links are provided to detailed information on every human rights topic.

In summary, to increase concern for human rights, it is important both to teach Gandhi's belief that "All humanity is one undivided and indivisible family" and to teach the basic tenants of modern human rights far more than they are commonly taught today.

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Endnotes

1 Each nation's ratifications of U.N. treaties is available on the website of the UN's High Commissioner for Human Rights at http://indicators.ohchr.org/.

2 Because all regional human rights instruments are easily located by internet searches, they are not referenced here.

3 Due to the number and variety of surveys, it is not feasible to present full tables of the results for each study cited, and only of each study are provided. However, full tables are available on the websites cited in reference list.

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Table 1

Rates of Ratification of the 18 UN human rights treaties and of the International Criminal Court (ICC) by the Regional Organizations

	Average Number Ratified	ICC
Council of Europe	13	89%
Range: Iceland, Liechtenstein (11 each) to Spain, Portugal (17)		
Organization of American States	12	83%
Saint Kitts, Nevis (4), U.S. (5) to Argentina, Bolivia, Uruguay (18)		
African Union	11	63%
South Sudan, Somalia (5) to Gabon (16)		
League of Arab States	8	23%
Comoros (4) to Tunisia (14)		
ASEAN	8	20%
Brunei, Myanmar, Singapore (4) to Philippines (14)		

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Appendix A
The Nine Core UN Human Rights Conventions and the Nine Optional Protocols
The Nine Conventions:

International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966)
International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (1966)
International Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination (1965);
Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (1979);
Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (1984);
Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989);
International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families (1990);
Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006).
International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance (2006).

The Nine Optional Protocols:

Optional Protocol to the International covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966)
Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, aiming at the abolition of the death penalty (1989)
Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (1999)
Optional protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict (2000)
Optional protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography (2000)
Optional Protocol to the Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (2008)
Optional protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography (2014)
Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (2002)
Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006)

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