Research Note

ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL EXPLANATIONS OF HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS

By NEIL J. MITCHELL and JAMES M. McCORMICK*

GOVERNMENTS organize police forces and armies to protect their citizens, build schools and hospitals to educate and care for them, and provide financial assistance for the old and unemployed. But governments also kill, torture, and imprison their citizens. This dark side of government knows no geographic, economic, ideological, or political boundary. In the Middle East, for example, Iraq has morbidly placed a "welcome" doormat at the entrance to its torture chamber—a place where prisoners are burned with cigarettes and electric hot plates, where electric shocks are administered to them, and where they are hanged from the ceiling. In Central America, the government of Guatemala tolerates the torture and killing of three church workers who were assisting refugees. In Africa, the Cameroons allows eight prisoners to die of malnutrition; South Africa, through its policy of apartheid, systematically violates the rights of its nonwhite citizens. In Asia, Burmese army units operating in Karen state use local civilians as minesweepers. In Eastern Europe, the Soviet Union confines dissenters to psychiatric hospitals. In Western Europe, the residents of Northern Ireland are subjected to trials that fail to conform to international standards, and civilians are shot by the security forces.[1] The list goes on.

Unfortunately, this type of governmental behavior is—even in the late 20th century—a dismal characteristic of contemporary politics. Most of the world's countries hold some "prisoners of conscience" or detain po-

* The order of the authors' names was randomly selected to reflect equal contributions to the research effort. An earlier version of this research was presented at the 1987 Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association. We would like to thank Professors Hank Jenkins-Smith and Philip Roeder of the University of New Mexico and Professor Ken Koehler of Iowa State University for their helpful comments and suggestions on this research. Thanks are also due to the Faculty Leave Program at Iowa State for supporting a portion of this research.

[1] These illustrations are taken from *Amnesty International Report 1985*, describing human rights conditions in 1984.

litical prisoners without a fair trial. There is, however, a substantial variation between nations in the degree of these human rights violations. While some treat their citizens ruthlessly, others—though by no means innocent in their conduct—treat them better. Despite the fact that variations in the level of human rights violations across the world have been recognized, relatively little empirical research has been done to account for these differences.

Instead, most of the empirical research in this area has tended to concentrate on the influence of a country's human rights record on U.S. foreign policy, primarily on decisions concerning American aid. Undoubtedly stimulated by new congressional statutes and the Carter administration's emphasis on human rights, a number of studies emerged in the late 1970s and early 1980s on the relationship (or lack of it) between human rights and American assistance. This trend has continued into the mid-1980s, probably fueled in part by the Reagan administration's apparent reversal of this emphasis. Beyond these analyses—and a considerable dialogue on what exactly constitutes human rights—little work has proceeded to the next important step: the characteristics of countries that are most likely to violate human rights.

In our research, we intend to undertake just such an analysis. Specifically, two principal tasks guide our work. First, we seek to develop a new measure with which to compare human rights conditions on a much wider basis than has been done previously and to specify more fully the degree of human rights violations throughout the world. Second, we develop and test several alternate hypotheses that might account for this variation in global human rights conditions. By eliminating, or specifying, popular explanations of human rights violations, we can begin to understand the conditions that precipitate those violations.

Explaining Human Rights Violations

Although human rights issues are of immediate public concern and great political importance, the theoretical contribution of political science to explaining these violations has been modest at best. In view of the centrality of the state in affecting the rights of its citizens, this theoretical weakness is particularly surprising. After all, the liberal tradition has held, since Hobbes, that life under government is preferable to life without it. Thus, while government may be "evil," human beings on their own are worse. In Thomas Paine's words:

> Society is produced by our wants, and government by our wickedness. . . . Society in every state is a blessing, but government even in its best state is

> but a necessary evil. . . . Government, like dress, is the badge of lost innocence. . . .[2]

The question of what kinds of governments will be most evil would appear to be a natural priority for research; what we have instead are efforts to understand repression in the Soviet Union or in the southern cone of Latin America. Only a few efforts have been made to theorize on a global level about the kinds of governments that are likely to engage in human rights violations.

Where, then, do we look for some theoretical guidance? Our point of departure, some writing on democracy and political instability, does not always address human rights violations directly; it does, however, carry important implications for the relative propensity of states to violate the rights of their citizens. Moreover, it allows us to develop several plausible economic and political hypotheses about states and human rights violations that can be tested empirically.

Economic Conditions and Human Rights Violations

Economic modernization, it is sometimes argued, leads to political stability and, in turn, to increased respect for human rights. The poorest countries, with substantial social and political tensions created by economic scarcity, would be most unstable and thus most apt to use repression in order to maintain control. Robert McNamara has succinctly summarized this view: "There can . . . be no question but that there is an irrefutable relationship between violence and economic backwardness."[3] The implication of McNamara's analysis is that the poorer the country, the greater the probability of human rights violations as the government seeks to maintain some semblance of order. Empirically, then, a first proposition for testing would be a simple one: an inverse relationship would exist between the wealth of a society and its human rights violations.

Samuel Huntington, in his classic investigation of political stability in *Political Order in Changing Societies*, has sought to refute this "simple poverty thesis." Although human rights violations are not the focus of his work, he does suggest some likely correlates: he argues that it is not the poorest countries that will be the most unstable "because people who are really poor are too poor for politics and too poor for protest."[4]

> Evidence, nonetheless, did exist to suggest that causes of violence in such nations lay with the modernization process rather than with the backward-

[2] Thomas Paine, *Common Sense* (Harmondsworth, England: Penguin Books, 1976), 65.
[3] Quoted in Samuel Huntington, *Political Order in Changing Societies* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968), 41.
[4] *Ibid.*, 52.

> ness itself. Wealthier nations tend to be more stable than those less wealthy, but the poorest nations, those at the bottom of the international economic ladder, tend to be less prone to violence and instability than those countries just above them.[5]

As social and economic change broadens, political participation increases, and the demands on government are greater. According to Huntington, traditional sources of political authority are thus challenged, and new political institutions (particularly political parties) are necessary to moderate and channel the demands of the newly mobilized citizenry. If such institutions are not developed, instability and disorder will result. Such a situation is ripe for political repression. The inference from Huntington's analysis, unlike that from McNamara's, is that the "modernizing" states would be most susceptible to a high level of human rights violations. Put differently, a curvilinear relationship should exist between the relative wealth of a nation and human rights violations: the very poor and the very rich countries would be less likely to have substantial levels of human rights violations, while those who are in the process of modernization would be more likely to exhibit such a pattern.

A third economic explanation is largely Marxist in orientation and has less to do with poverty *per se* and more with the external economic relationships of a country. Noam Chomsky and Edward S. Herman, for example, argue that "the balance of terror [in human rights violations] appears to have shifted to the West and its clients, with the United States setting the pace as sponsor and supplier."[6] This shift is systematically linked to the economic interests of the United States and other advanced capitalist countries, and to their efforts to maintain favorable conditions for investment in the third world. Such efforts include the containment of reform (e.g., the formation of trade unions) and the prevention of revolution. Consequently, there is an increase in human rights violations by countries that are more involved with external capitalist interests. In other words, the greater the economic association with the United States or other advanced capitalist countries, the greater the degree of human rights violations.

Political Conditions and Human Rights Violations

While poverty, levels of development, and dependence represent the principal economic conditions that may be associated with human rights violations, political culture and regime type seem to be the principal political conditions. The dominant attitudes and beliefs of a society are con-

[5] *Ibid.*, 41.

[6] Chomsky and Herman, *The Political Economy of Human Rights: The Washington Connection and Third World Fascism* (Boston: South End Press, 1979), 8.

sidered to be of great importance in the choice of methods of political control and the relative propensity of governments to violate human rights. A key question, for example, is: To what extent does the political culture tolerate political repression as a means of maintaining order?

One important factor that is thought to have shaped political culture for most states in the world is the colonial experience. Since most are relatively new (over 90 newly independent states have been created since 1945), the political culture derived from the colonial experience may be a useful starting point for understanding variations in respect for human rights. British colonial rule, for instance, is commonly thought to be strongly associated with the postcolonial development of democracy. The British legacy may be a relatively greater respect for human rights. By contrast, other colonial experiences (Spanish, for instance) are generally assumed to have introduced a greater degree of hierarchy and authoritarianism. The legacy here may well involve higher levels of human rights violations.[7]

The thesis based upon political culture may be affected by the length of colonial rule and, alternatively, by the "newness" of the state. For example, 18th-century British colonies such as India are thought to have a better record in terms of democracy than 19th-century British colonies such as those in Africa.[8] Presumably, "democratic" culture—insofar as any colonizing culture can be democratic—is more or less influential depending on the time it has had to permeate the colonized society. It is also possible that politics in countries that achieved independence relatively recently, regardless of colonial rule, may be more unsettled than in those that have had a considerable time to unify their states. Because ethnic and religious divisions may be more important than the sense of belonging to one nation, human rights violations may be particularly pronounced in the newest states as they attempt to "build" a new nation.

Other political explanations of differences in human rights focus on the kind of political regime in power. One variant is offered by former U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations, Jeane Kirkpatrick, who employs

[7] See Samuel Huntington, "Will More Countries Become Democratic?" *Political Science Quarterly* 99 (Summer 1984), 193-218. Wiarda and Kline contrast the British and Iberian influences as follows:

> The Spanish and Portuguese colonies were founded on a set of institutions that were absolutist, authoritarian, hierarchical, Catholic, feudal or semifeudal, two-class, corporatist, patrimonialist, orthodox, and scholastic to their core. By contrast, the British colonies . . . derived from a set of institutions and practices that were fundamentally different. . . ."

Howard J. Wiarda and Harvey F. Kline, eds., *Latin American Politics and Development* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1979), 21-22.

[8] Huntington (fn. 7), 206.

the distinction between totalitarian and authoritarian regimes as her organizing theme.[9] Rhoda Howard and Jack Donnelly focus on another variant, the differences between liberal and "communitarian" regimes.[10] With each variant, predictions are made about the magnitude of human rights violations in the kinds of societies examined.

Kirkpatrick maintains that, of all forms of government engaged in repression, left-wing, totalitarian regimes are the greatest offenders against human rights. These regimes render the individual virtually defenseless in relation to the state and offer little prospect of evolutionary or revolutionary change. Authoritarian regimes, though hardly innocent of human rights violations, are based upon traditional social patterns with less complete control; in time, they are thus subject to evolutionary change. Because governmental control in authoritarian regimes is less complete and more subject to change than in totalitarian regimes, human rights violations in the former are likely to be less extensive than in the latter. Kirkpatrick summarizes her position and its implication for American foreign policy as follows:

> Only intellectual fashion and the tyranny of Right/Left thinking prevent intelligent men of good will from perceiving the facts that traditional authoritarian governments are less repressive than revolutionary autocracies, that they are more susceptible of liberalization, and that they are more compatible with U.S. interests.[11]

Since the "susceptibility of liberalization" argument requires data over time, it will not be investigated here. We shall focus, instead, on the assertion that totalitarian regimes are most repressive. To our knowledge, this regime explanation for human rights violations has not been systematically tested.

Howard and Donnelly cast a wider net than Kirkpatrick by grouping regimes into two general categories: liberal or communitarian. They maintain that only governments that operate within the liberal tradition are likely to observe their citizens' human rights: "We contend that internationally recognized human rights require a liberal regime."[12] Their contention is based on the premise that only "liberal" regimes have the

[9] Kirkpatrick, "Dictatorships and Double Standards," *Commentary* 68 (November 1979), 34-45.

[10] Howard and Donnelly, "Human Dignity, Human Rights, and Political Regimes," *American Political Science Review* 80 (September 1986), 801-18.

[11] Kirkpatrick (fn. 9), 44. We should note that the use of regime type in an analysis of human rights violations risks tautology because concern for human rights is an element of regime definition. In our research, however, classifications of regime types are independent of our data on human rights.

[12] Howard and Donnelly (fn. 10), 802.

requisite "substantive conception of human dignity" to make the observance of internationally recognized human rights possible. "Communitarian" societies, by contrast, in which the community or the state has priority over the individual, will not be receptive to the observance of human rights. Howard and Donnelly do not extend their argument to the identification of regimes that are to be considered liberal; our database, however, permits a rough comparison, suggested by their work, of presumed liberal states—that is, first-world nations—with the rest of the world.

The various theoretical positions can be summarized in a number of questions for research:

—Are the worst violators the poorest nations?
—Are the worst violators economically associated with capitalist countries?
—Are the worst violators tied to a particular colonial background?
—Are the worst violators the newest nations?
—Are the worst violators regimes of a certain political type?

Before pursuing these questions, we need to address the difficulties involved both in collecting adequate data on human rights violations and in the problem of developing comparative measures.

Defining and Measuring Human Rights Violations

In evaluating human rights violations in any society, we immediately encounter several questions: What are human rights? How do you monitor nonadherence to human rights across a great number of countries? How do you measure these violations in a way suitable for comparative purposes?

The initial problem, of course, involves the definition of human rights (and hence, their violation). We do not wish to get involved in the philosophical debate on the nature, origins, or existence of human rights.[13] Our concern here is with governments' propensities for torture, killing, and arbitrarily imprisoning their citizens. We simply follow contemporary convention by identifying these activities as violations of human rights. In addition to philosophical traditions that have given rise to this convention, there is now a legal basis—the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948). This United Nations resolution, in addition to condemning torture, killing, and imprisonment, enumerates various eco-

[13] See the discussion in David Carleton and Michael Stohl, "The Foreign Policy of Human Rights: Rhetoric and Reality from Jimmy Carter to Ronald Reagan," *Human Rights Quarterly* 7 (May 1985), 205-29. Our discussion of the methodology draws upon their imaginative research and follows their lead.

nomic and social rights. Although these latter rights are clearly very important, they represent a distinct category and are beyond the scope of the present research.

Acts of the U.S. Congress have added to the legal basis of this convention with their focus on aspects of human rights that have to do with "the integrity of the person." For example, section 116 of the International Development and Food Assistance Act of 1975 and section 502B of the International Security Assistance and Arms Export Control Act of 1976 both emphasize "the integrity of the person." Section 116 states that

> no assistance may be provided under this part to the government of any country which engages in a consistent pattern of gross violations of internationally recognized human rights, including torture or cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment, prolonged detention without charges, or other flagrant denial of the right of life, liberty, and the security of the person. . . .[14]

Section 502B repeats only a portion of this passage: "No security assistance may be provided to any country the government of which engages in a consistent pattern of gross violations of internationally recognized human rights."[15] In essence, then, while we acknowledge that we are examining only part of human rights across national societies, we are evaluating a crucial segment of them.

How, then, do we measure whether states respect "the integrity of the person" within their societies? The primary problem, as in all human rights analyses, is simply the inadequacy of information on such violations, since governments are understandably reluctant to publicize their use of arbitrary imprisonment, torture, or killing. Second, even in the case of sources that monitor human rights conditions on a regular basis, questions about comprehensiveness and political fairness inevitably arise. Of three standard sources of such human rights monitoring—Amnesty International, Freedom House, and the U.S. State Department—only *Amnesty International Report* can make a reasonable claim to being politically uncommitted. Freedom House does not focus solely on "the integrity of the person" and has been described as a "partisan group within the domestic context of American politics." The U.S. State Department can hardly claim to be a disinterested investigator.[16] Further, *Amnesty Inter-*

[14] See the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961 as amended, in *Legislation on Foreign Relations Through 1985*, Committee on Foreign Relations (Washington, DC: G.P.O., 1986), 86, for a more recent statement of this section, in which the phrase "causing the disappearance of persons by the abduction and clandestine detention of those persons" has been added after the passage on "prolonged detention without charges."

[15] *Ibid.*, 125.

[16] See Harry M. Scoble and Laurie S. Wiseberg, "Problems of Comparative Research on

national Report concentrates specifically on human rights conceptualized as concerned with "the integrity of the person"; it does not introduce what is sometimes called respect for civil and political liberties.

Our analysis is based on the latest available human rights survey (at the time) by Amnesty International (*Amnesty International Report 1985*); we developed a two-dimensional scale of human rights violations for each of the countries included in the 1985 *Report*. A detailed description of how the scale was constructed will show how it differs from earlier efforts and how it will be used in our subsequent analyses.

First, one of the authors surveyed the *Report* to identify the categories of human rights violations recorded in order to develop a coding format that is comparable across all nations. The coding categories ranged from the holding of "prisoners of conscience" (those imprisoned for their beliefs, color, religion, and so forth, and who are nonviolent) and other political prisoners detained without a trial conforming to internationally recognized standards, to disappearances, executions, and the torture of prisoners. The format thus developed allowed the coders to evaluate the presence or absence of these dimensions in 1984, the intensity of the different activities (that is, the number of violations), and the presence or absence of these activities in earlier years. Coding space was also available for any investigation or conviction of officials who were accused or suspected of human rights violations in that year. (*Amnesty International Report* sometimes includes information on efforts to handle human rights violations.) Each of the authors then read and coded all 123 countries listed in the *Report*.

The next task was to construct a summary measure for comparing countries. A two-dimensional measure of human rights violations was developed—one dimension based upon the degree of arbitrary imprisonment, the other based upon the systematic use of killings and torture of prisoners. The conceptual justification for this dichotomy was based upon the view that, although arbitrary imprisonment was certainly reprehensible, resort to torture and killing was a distinct, and qualitatively worse, activity. Previous measures had tended to incorporate different levels of imprisonment and killings into a single dimension; we believe, however, that that approach inadequately captures the substantive difference. Furthermore, we noted that, empirically, states were quite distinct on these measures. While the preponderance of states had political prisoners, there is a considerable gulf between states with political prisoners

Human Rights," in Ved R. Nanda, James R. Scarritt, and George W. Sheppard, Jr., *Global Human Rights: Public Policies, Comparative Measures, and NGO Strategies* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1981), 162-64, for a discussion of the Freedom House and State Department reports.

and those that use torture and killing. These differences should be noted in any evaluation. Finally, in order to provide greater sensitivity to these dimensions, a five-point ordinal scale was developed for each. A country could be scored as (0) never having such violations, (1) rarely, (2) sometimes, (3) often, or (4) very often.

With the coding information collected and the scale dimensions with their subcategories developed, each author separately proceeded to classify each country on the imprisonment and torture dimensions. We then compared our rank orderings, discussed differences that arose, and came to a joint resolution.[17] The result was a summary measure along each dimension for all of the countries included in the *Amnesty International Report*. In a few cases—for example, North Korea and Albania—Amnesty International reported particular difficulties in obtaining information. Our strategy was to assume the worst and score those cases in the "very often" categories on both dimensions.

In a further effort to verify our rankings, we compared them with an earlier attempt at crossnational human rights measurement. We put our 1984 combined political prisoner and torture rankings beside those in Carleton and Stohl's analysis for 1983,[18] and found that they differed only slightly. Fifty-four percent (25 of 46 comparisons) had similar rank or-

[17] The rank-ordering of a country into one of the five categories for the two scales was difficult. While identifying the most and least serious offenders on either dimension was a relatively straightforward procedure, the task was considerably more challenging for the majority of countries in our study. In order to produce meaningful measures for analysis, the scaling of each country involved an iterative process of categorization. First, using the information on each country from our coding sheet, both of us separately rank-ordered all countries on both scales. Next, we compared our rankings, did an initial intercoder reliability check, and tried to make explicit the calculations that we went through to arrive at a particular rank order for a country. To resolve our differences, we agreed upon the following quantitative distinctions: "rarely" referred to countries in which one to ten cases of political prisoners or incidents of torture or killing were reported by Amnesty International; "sometimes" referred to countries with 20 to 90 cases; "often" to 100 or above, and "very often" to 1000 or more. Because our coding sheet has more than one entry to capture information on political prisoners and their treatment, we also agreed that if a given country had a number of entries on these dimensions, the numerical threshold required for an assigned scale would be lower. Finally, we made adjustments in our rank-ordering for several countries to reflect these decisions. Namibia, while given its own country entry in the *Report*, was not included in our analysis because of the general lack of other data.

Although these procedural efforts cannot ultimately remove the necessarily qualitative judgment for the two scales, we are generally quite confident that our effort helped us to construct a meaningful and empirically useful measure.

Finally, in a decision that may well be controversial, we departed from Amnesty International's definition by not counting judicial executions or capital punishment on our torture-and-killing scale. For the sake of consistency, we also excluded judicial amputations—as found, for example, in some Moslem countries—from our analysis.

[18] The comparison between our aggregate human-rights scale score (the sum of the ranks on the political prisoner and torture scales) for 1984 and Carleton and Stohl's rank-ordering of countries for 1983 is based upon their assessment from Amnesty International for that year (fn. 13, 227-28). The range of our scale scores was 0 to 8; it was 1 to 5 for Carleton and Stohl. In all, comparable information between the two datasets was available for 46 countries.

derings even though different scale categories were used. In comparing 1983 and 1984, some of the differences were to be expected. For instance, the 1984 human rights score for Argentina improved after it changed from a military to a civilian regime in late 1983. By contrast, Nigeria's record worsened, perhaps as a result of the military coup of December 31, 1983. We also scored India and Chile higher in terms of violations; the rankings correspond in India to Indira Gandhi's assassination and the events surrounding it, and in Chile to Pinochet's crackdown on growing antigovernment unrest. Even where the comparisons did not match, the differences in most cases were not greater than one category in rank. In short, our political prisoner/torture scale is comparable to another measure of human rights violations.

Findings

Table 1 shows that, although virtually all countries of the world held some political prisoners in 1984, countries vary widely. Part A of the table shows the aggregate level of human rights violations (the political prisoner scale and the torture scale combined). There is a relatively even distribution of countries across the nine categories. Fourteen countries score 0 or 1 on this summary measure, 28 countries score 7 or 8, and the rest are fairly evenly distributed across the other values. The aggregate measure, of course, assumes equality between the two dimensions. Without minimizing the significance of either, it can reasonably be asserted that the torture-and-killing dimension is generally the harsher method of political control; this is the argument that encourages the separate analysis of each dimension. When we separate the aggregate scale into the two components, we begin to see considerable variations in human rights violations.

Part B of Table 1 shows the number of countries for each of the five points on our political-prisoner scale. While only 8 states did not hold any political prisoners in 1984, over half (65) of the states in our analysis held citizens as political prisoners "often" or "very often" in that year. Between these two extremes, 49 states "rarely" or "sometimes" used detention of political prisoners as an instrument of policy.

Some of the states with the greatest number of political prisoners are readily recognizable from recent popular accounts: Ethiopia, South Africa, Kampuchea, Iran, and Sri Lanka, for example. The countries with the best records are not wholly unexpected either: the United States, Switzerland, Ireland, Japan, and Finland, for instance. These results demonstrate, however, that the bulk of the states of the world still practice this kind of human rights violation.

TABLE 1
HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS RANKED ALONG THREE DIMENSIONS
(1984)

Scale Values		*Number of Countries*	*%*
		A. AGGREGATE SCALE	
No Violations	0	6	4.9
	1	8	6.6
	2	13	10.7
	3	13	10.7
	4	19	15.6
	5	19	15.6
	6	16	13.1
	7	18	14.8
Most Violations	8	10	8.2
Total		122	100.2*
		B. POLITICAL PRISONERS TAKEN	
Never		8	6.6
Rarely		9	7.4
Sometimes		40	32.8
Often		39	32.0
Very Often		26	21.3
Total		122	100.1*
		C. USE OF TORTURE	
Never		29	23.8
Rarely		15	12.3
Sometimes		32	26.2
Often		27	22.1
Very Often		19	15.6
Total		122	100.0

* Percentage does not total to 100 due to rounding.

Part C of Table 1 shows that, although still substantial, governmental use of torture and killing is somewhat less pervasive than is the holding of political prisoners. To be sure, 44 states never or rarely employed such harsh treatment, but 46 states (or 38 percent of our dataset) frequently tortured their citizens. Once again, many countries in this category are no surprise: El Salvador, Guatemala, Indonesia, Iran, Iraq, Kenya, Uganda, for example.

We should emphasize again that the two dimensions are related. The Spearman rank-order correlation is significant and relatively large (.62), but it is not perfect—indicating, as do the frequencies, that holding prisoners, and torturing and killing them, are distinct activities in a substantial number of countries.

Economic Conditions as Explanations

Economic conditions can help us understand and begin to account for variations in human rights violations, but their impact is less potent than might be expected. Table 2 contains cross-tabular breakdowns of countries on three levels of per capita income (under $500 per year, $501 to $3000, and over $3000).[19] For the political prisoner analysis, McNamara's "simple poverty thesis" seems to have more support than Huntington's curvilinear explanation. That is, the wealthier the country, the less likely it is to hold a large number of political prisoners.

Yet even this assertion should not be pushed too far, for at least two reasons. First, the relationship is modest at best. Although the cross-tabulation implies support, and the tau_c coefficient for this relationship is significant and in the right direction, it is relatively small (−.19). Second, close examination of the tabular results suggests that only in countries that never or rarely hold political prisoners do we approach a linear relationship with the level of economic development (and direct support for the McNamara thesis). When we look at countries that hold political prisoners sometimes or often, the pattern changes. The differences on the political prisoner dimension between the countries in the two lowest income categories are small, but the difference between these two categories and the highest income category is substantial. In effect, there is a threshold effect in the relationship between relative wealth and the holding of political prisoners.

On the torture dimension, the simple poverty thesis receives some support as well. Once again, those countries that have a relatively low per capita income are more likely to have higher levels of torture. But caution is in order to an even greater degree than in the case of the political prisoner scale. While the tau_c coefficient for this relationship is somewhat stronger (−.21) than for the political prisoner analysis, the tabular results plainly show the threshold effect. Only 3 of the high-income countries

[19] For the purposes of the statistical analyses, we collapsed categories one and two on both the political prisoner and torture scales. The income data are from *World Development Report, 1986* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986). Where there were reporting gaps, which was most often the case with second-world countries, we used *The World Almanac and Book of Facts, 1986* (New York: Newspaper Enterprise Association, Inc., 1985). In the case of Brunei, we used *The CIA Factbook* (Washington, DC: C.I.A., 1986).

TABLE 2
HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS BY LEVEL OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT (1984)

	Per Capita Income		
	$0-$500	*$501-$3000*	*>$3000*
A. POLITICAL PRISONERS TAKEN			
Rarely or Never	2.4%	11.3%	35.7%
Sometimes	41.5	26.4	32.1
Often	34.1	35.8	21.4
Very Often	22.0	26.4	10.7
Total	100.0	99.9*	99.9*
	(N=41)	(N=53)	(N=28)
Chi Square = 18.70, $p<.005$			
B. USE OF TORTURE			
Rarely or Never	29.3%	28.3%	60.7%
Sometimes	29.3	22.6	28.6
Often	22.0	30.2	7.1
Very Often	19.5	18.9	3.6
Total	100.1*	100.0	100.0
	(N=41)	(N=53)	(N=28)
Chi Square = 14.36, $p<.03$			

* Percentage does not total to 100 due to rounding.

(those above $3000 per capita per year) have torture records in the "often" or "very often" categories, while 25 have torture records that place them in the "rarely" or "sometimes" rankings. The low- and middle-income countries in our dataset do not have that great a gap between those with relatively good records ("rarely" or "sometimes") and those with bad records ("often" and "very often"). Thus, in this case too, only countries with very high incomes do well on this dimension of human rights.[20]

[20] Although our human rights measures are not per capita measures, there is a small positive association between the size of population and the frequency of violations on both human rights measures: the larger the population, the larger the potential pool of victims, and the larger the reports of violations. Nevertheless, when we controlled for size of population (small, medium, or large) using an analysis of variance technique and a hierarchical log linear technique (controls that we use throughout these analyses) the association between income and human rights violations remained. See Marija J. Norusis, *SPSS^x Advanced Statistics Guide* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1985), 195-254, 297-325. The population estimates for 1984 are from *The World Almanac* (fn. 19). For Albania, Gambia, U.S.S.R., and Zaire, population estimates were available only for 1983.

Our third economic hypothesis—capitalist involvement—is more difficult to test; it requires some discussion of how best to measure economic involvement with the United States and capitalist countries generally. As the hypothesis is essentially directed at third-world nations, first- and second-world countries were excluded from our analysis. We decided to operationalize capitalist involvement in two ways: first, by measuring the amount of trade between capitalist and third-world countries; and second, by measuring the total investment tie between capitalist and other countries. The first measure involves the 1984 volume of trade flows (exports plus imports) between an individual country and capitalist countries (defined as "industrial countries" by the International Monetary Fund [I.M.F.]).[21] The second measure involves the private-sector net flows plus public-sector export credits and investments to the individual country from capitalist countries for 1984.[22] Although it is now conventional to operationalize the trade measure as a function of trade's relative weight in a domestic economy, and thus as a ratio of GNP, we have used the absolute amounts of trade and investment. Our hypothesis is that the greater the economic involvement with the capitalist countries, the greater the human rights violations, rather than the greater the relative weight of capitalist economic involvement in the domestic economy, the greater the human rights violations. Irrespective of the size of a country's GNP, it is assumed that two plants or factories will be twice as likely to prompt efforts to unionize as would one plant, and twice as likely to prompt government countermeasures as well. We are therefore not theoretically interested in the ratio measure itself.[23]

[21] The I.M.F. lists the following as "industrial countries": United States, Canada, Australia, Japan, New Zealand, Austria, Belgium, Luxembourg, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Iceland, Italy, Netherlands, Norway, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom. I.M.F., *Direction of Trade Statistics Yearbook 1986* (Washington, DC: International Monetary Fund, 1986). The classification of nations into first-, and second-, and third-world nations was based upon Gary K. Bertsch, Robert P. Clark, and David M. Wood, *Comparing Political Systems: Power and Policy in Three Worlds* (New York: Wiley, 1986), xiii-xv, and their categorization of 170 nations for 1983. The first-world nations excluded from our dataset for this analysis were: Canada, Greece, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Spain, Switzerland, United Kingdom, and the United States. The second-world nations excluded were: Albania, Bulgaria, People's Republic of China, Cuba, Czechoslovakia, East Germany, Hungary, Kampuchea, North Korea, Laos, Poland, Romania, Soviet Union, Vietnam, and Yugoslavia. The rest of the nations in our dataset were classified as third-world countries for this analysis, including five nations (Barbados, Cyprus, Djibouti, Grenada, and the Seychelles) that were classified as "mixed systems, status uncertain, or otherwise unclassified" by Bertsch et al. Because of missing data for some nations, the total number of nations in the trade and investment analyses was 90 and 85, respectively.

[22] The investment measure is the sum of "Total Other Official Flows plus Private Sector Net" from the member countries of the OECD's Development Assistance Committee (which corresponds to the I.M.F.'s list of industrial countries except Luxembourg, Iceland, and Spain). OECD, *Geographical Distribution of Financial Flows to Developing Countries* (Paris: OECD, 1986).

[23] See Glenn Firebaugh and Jack P. Gibbs, "User's Guide to Ratio Variables," *American*

TABLE 3
HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS
BY TRADE WITH AND INVESTMENT BY CAPITALIST COUNTRIES (1984)

	Trade			*Investment*			
	Low	*Medium*	*High*	*Negative*	*Low*	*Medium*	*High*
A. POLITICAL PRISONERS TAKEN							
Rarely or Never	17.2%	6.3%	3.4%	11.5%	13.6%	10.0%	5.9%
Sometimes	44.8	40.6	31.0	50.0	45.5	20.0	29.4
Often	31.0	28.1	37.9	26.9	27.3	30.0	52.9
Very Often	6.9	25.0	27.6	11.5	13.6	40.0	11.8
Total	99.9*	100.0	99.9*	99.9*	100.0	100.0	100.0
	(N=29)	(N=32)	(N=29)	(N=26)	(N=22)	(N=20)	(N=17)
Chi Square = 8.44 (not significant)				Chi Square = 12.83 (not significant)			
B. USE OF TORTURE							
Rarely or Never	48.3%	18.8%	27.6%	30.8%	40.9%	15.0%	29.4%
Sometimes	24.1	31.3	17.2	34.6	22.7	25.0	23.5
Often	20.7	25.0	31.0	7.7	27.3	40.0	29.4
Very Often	6.9	25.0	24.1	26.9	9.1	20.0	17.6
Total	100.0	100.1*	99.9*	100.0	100.0	100.0	99.9*
	(N=29)	(N=32)	(N=29)	(N=26)	(N=22)	(N=20)	(N=17)
Chi Square = 9.53 (not significant)				Chi Square = 10.42 (not significant)			

* Percentage does not total to 100 due to rounding.

Countries in the high trade category are, as expected, more likely to be in the "often" and "very often" imprisonment categories. Table 3 shows a total of 65 percent in these categories, as compared to 38 percent in low trade countries. The chi square is not significant, but the tau_c coefficient (.24) is; it indicates an association between imprisonment and trade in the direction expected. Using the direct measure of investment, the high investment category again has the largest share of countries that imprison citizens often or very often; the low is 38 percent in the negative investment category, in which the investment flow is reversed and away from the country. Investment is significantly associated with imprisonment (the tau_b coefficient is .18). When we control for size of population, however, any significant associations between trade and imprisonment and investment and imprisonment disappear.

Sociological Review 50 (October 1985), 713-22, and Eric Uslaner, "The Pitfalls of Per Capita," *American Journal of Political Science* 20 (February 1976), 125-33, for a methodological discussion of the use of ratio variables.

Those countries that use torture often or very often tend to fall in the medium and high trade categories; the low trade category has the largest share of countries that make infrequent or no use of torture. These observations are supported by a significant tau_c coefficient (.22). The medium and high investment categories also contain most of the countries that use torture often or very often. But the tau_b coefficient for the relationship between investment and torture is not significant, and the trade/torture association disappears when population is held constant. So, while a substantial number of countries that have very bad human rights records are economically heavily involved with advanced capitalist countries, a third factor—population—appears to account for some of the observed association.

Political Conditions as Explanations

The political culture hypothesis seems to provide some useful insight into human rights violations. The classic assertion that British colonial experience is associated with the development of democracy and, by extension, with greater respect for human rights, finds some support in our data.[24] As Table 4 shows, countries that were British colonies are less likely to imprison political dissidents than countries that had other colonial experiences. (The tau_c of .25 is statistically significant.) About 58 percent of the countries that were British colonies are classified as "rarely" or "sometimes" holding political prisoners. By contrast, 55 percent of the countries with other colonial experiences fall into the "often" or "very often" categories.

When we control for both population and income, however, using an analysis of variance and a log linear technique, the association between former British colonies and lower levels of imprisonment is no longer statistically significant. A closer examination of the data suggests that the original relationship between these two variables was largely attributable to some small former British colonies with medium (and, to some extent, high) per capita incomes and good human rights records, as compared to similar states with other colonial experiences and poor human rights records. Put differently, and generally consistent with our earlier results, low- and high-income countries—with or without British colonial experience—do not have significantly different human rights records. Some caution is still warranted in intepreting these results, however, because of the limited cases in our data cells when these controls are built in.

[24] The information on colonial powers is from Waldemar A. Nielsen, *The Great Powers and Africa* (New York: Praeger, 1969), inside front cover; *The World Almanac* (fn. 19); and Arthur S. Banks, ed., *Political Handbook of the World, 1986* (Binghamton, NY: CSA Publications, 1986).

Colonial background is even less important in differentiating nations on the torture scale, although the results are in the predicted direction. While most countries with any colonial experience are classified as torturing "rarely" or "sometimes," those with a British colonial background are less likely to be in the "often" or "very often" category than those with a non-British colonial background. The statistical analysis indicates that the propensity to torture or kill is not significantly associated with a British colonial experience. When we control for population and income through log linear techniques, we find that both factors significantly specified any possible relationship between torture and British or other colonial background. Close inspection revealed that, again, any relationship that does exist is based on medium-income former British colonies that have considerably better records on the torture dimensions than do medium-income countries with other colonial experiences.

Taking our colonial analysis one step further, we found few differences in human rights performance, both on our political prisoner scale and on our torture scale, between the 21 countries in our dataset that had been British colonies for less than a hundred years and the 19 countries that had been British colonies for more than a hundred years. Thus, the sheer fact of British colonization seems to have somewhat more impact on human rights performance than length of colonization.[25]

A second way to examine political conditions and human rights violations is to look at the relationship between the length of a state's independence and the treatment of its citizens. Are older nations more respectful of human rights than newer ones? To answer this question, we divided the states in our dataset into two categories: those that had gained independence before 1944, and those that had gained independence after that year. On our two dimensions of human rights violations, we found virtually no difference between these two classifications. The newness of the state appears to be unrelated to the observance of human rights.

Yet another way to inquire into the relationship between human rights violations and the political environment is to test the hypothesis advanced by Jeane Kirkpatrick. According to her thesis (and using her vocabulary), totalitarian regimes—operationalized here as second-world, Marxist nations—are more repressive in the treatment of their citizens than are authoritarian regimes—operationalized here as military regimes and traditional monarchies; the former are also less susceptible to change.[26] In

[25] Data for years of independence are from Appendix B in Bruce Russett and Harvey Starr, *World Politics: The Menu for Choice* (San Francisco: W. H. Freeman, 1981 and 1985), original and 2d eds., 577-83 and 589-96.

[26] To identify authoritarian regimes, we used the regime typology presented in W. Phillips Shively, *Power and Choice* (New York: Random House, 1986), 248-49. From this typology, the

TABLE 4
HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS BY COLONIAL EXPERIENCE
(1984)

	Colonial Experience	
	Former British Colony	*Other Colonial Background**
A. POLITICAL PRISONERS TAKEN		
Rarely or Never	25.0%	3.9%
Sometimes	32.5	41.2
Often	30.0	29.4
Very Often	12.5	25.5
Total	100.0	100.0
	(N = 40)	(N = 51)
Chi Square = 9.92, $p<.02$		
B. USE OF TORTURE		
Rarely or Never	42.5%	31.4%
Sometimes	25.0	23.5
Often	12.5	29.4
Very Often	20.0	15.7
Total	100.0	100.0
	(N = 40)	(N = 51)
Chi Square = 3.94 (not significant)		

* Spanish, Portuguese, French, Dutch, Belgian, or Italian.

one sense, Kirkpatrick's argument is confirmed by our data. All second-world nations fall into the "often" or "very often" political prisoner categories (see Table 5). The strong and statistically significant relationship ($tau_c = -.47$) between imprisonment and the second world survives our controlling for population differences and levels of income. On the torture dimension, however, we found no significant difference between the two types of regimes. Contrary to Kirkpatrick's argument, more author-

classification of "Military Government" and "Monarchy" formed the bulk of our authoritarian category. Like most such efforts, the regime typology from Shively has some questionable classifications. For example, Uruguay, South Korea, and Honduras were listed under "Democracy," with the qualification "heavy military involvement." We placed those countries in the authoritarian category. Finally, to identify totalitarian regimes, we used the classification of Marxist nations by Bertsch et al. (fn. 21).

TABLE 5
HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS
BY TOTALITARIAN AND AUTHORITARIAN STATES (1984)

	Type of State	
	Totalitarian	*Authoritarian*
A. POLITICAL PRISONERS TAKEN		
Rarely or Never	0.0%	0.0%
Sometimes	0.0	41.9
Often	53.3	41.9
Very Often	46.7	16.1
Total	100.0	99.9*
	(N = 15)	(N = 31)
Chi Square = 10.19, $p<.01$		
B. USE OF TORTURE		
Rarely or Never	33.3%	19.4%
Sometimes	26.7	29.0
Often	26.7	32.3
Very Often	13.3	19.4
Total	100.0	100.1*
	(N = 15)	(N = 31)
Chi Square = 1.16 (not significant)		

* Percentage does not add to 100 due to rounding.

itarian regimes (52 percent) than totalitarian regimes (40 percent) are in the "often" or "very often" category on the torture dimension.

For second-world governments, imprisonment is the preferred method of political control. Thus, only if "repression" is restricted to imprisonment is there evidence that confirms Kirkpatrick's thesis. If repression is defined as torture and killing, then the results, though not statistically significant, are contrary to her expectation: authoritarian regimes show a greater inclination toward torturing and killing the opposition. And if repression is defined as both imprisonment *and* torturing and killing, our aggregate human rights measure, there is no statistically significant difference between the two types of regimes.[27]

[27] South Africa was also classified as a democracy in the Shively listing, and the following were termed countries "difficult to classify": Philippines, El Salvador, Haiti, Nepal, Chad, and Iran. When these seven countries are added to the authoritarian category, the number of

A reformulated and weaker version of Howard and Donnelly's argument—that liberal regimes are more attentive to human rights than are communitarian regimes—is borne out by our analysis. Although Howard and Donnelly do not provide a usable operational definition of a liberal regime, we operationalized their thesis by comparing the degree of violations in first-world nations (advanced capitalist democracies) with that of the rest of the world. Whereas the first-world nations would do well on respecting "the integrity of the person," we assume that these other nations would all do equally poorly on this dimension of human rights.

In the course of our analysis, we found, not unexpectedly, that the "liberal" regimes have a superior human rights record on both the political prisoner and the torture dimensions. Almost all of the liberal states fall into either the "rarely" or "sometimes" categories on both dimensions; the lowest-scale category ("rarely") is the most prominent one. By contrast, the rest of the nations are spread across the scale, with over half in the "often" and "very often" ranks on the political prisoner dimension, and just under half in the same categories for the torture dimension.

Howard and Donnelly advance a precise and interesting proposition: that human rights observance *requires* liberalism while "communitarian regimes necessarily violate the full range of human rights."[28] It is supported by our analysis only if Barbados, Botswana, Mauritius, and Jamaica—which, along with Japan and the United States, are the only countries to score 0 on both of our measures of human rights violations—are considered to have liberal regimes. Several additional second- and third-world countries score 0 on the torture scale and thus cannot be said to violate "the full range of human rights."

Conclusion

Our analysis demonstrates, first, that human rights violations are indeed a common feature of contemporary governments. At the same time, however, substantial differences exist between governments in terms of the types and numbers of violations that occur. Moreover, these differences are sufficiently marked so that the division of the violations into two categories—imprisonment and torture—is an appropriate conceptualization, especially in terms of violations of "the integrity of the person." Further, these two categories may serve as important guideposts in

authoritarian regimes in the two high-torture dimensions increases from 52% to 61%, but this does not significantly change the results.

[28] Howard and Donnelly (fn. 10), 814.

seeking to reduce such violations on a global scale. Arbitrary imprisonment seriously diminishes the integrity of any individual, but systematic torture deserves even more immediate normative attention and action.

Although we tested several plausible explanations that might account for variations in human rights violations throughout the world, our results indicate that none of them is complete. Support for various hypotheses was generally weak-to-modest and not always consistent, especially when various controls for the size of a nation's population and its level of income were introduced into the analysis. In that sense, this study has begun to specify, and possibly to eliminate, several explanations for differences in human rights compliance around the world, but it has not found a wholly satisfactory one. Further work will need to be undertaken to complete the picture that we have begun to outline.

Nonetheless, the major themes of our results are worth emphasizing. We generally found that the economic hypotheses were better supported than the political ones. For instance, countries that enjoyed higher levels of economic well-being had somewhat consistently—albeit modestly so—better human rights records than those that did not. Extensive ties with capitalist states did not in themselves detract from or contribute to the level of human rights violations in the nations of our dataset; the actual level of development—as measured by domestic income levels—seems to be a more important factor.

For the political explanations, the results are more mixed. While former British colonies are somewhat less likely to imprison their citizens than are countries with other colonial backgrounds, both were about equally likely to torture their citizens. The relative "newness" of a state turned out to be unrelated to both dimensions of human rights violations, and support was mixed for Kirkpatrick's thesis on authoritarian and totalitarian regimes. A weak version of Howard and Donnelly's thesis on liberal and communitarian regimes was generally borne out by our data, but their stronger version was not.

Where do we go from here? First, we need to introduce other political and social conditions within these nations that may help us sort out the relationships. Two factors immediately come to mind: the amount of warfare (both internal and foreign), and the magnitude of ethnic divisions within a state. Both of these factors can be expected to influence human rights violations; they should be incorporated into future analyses. Second, where possible, we need to move to greater precision in our data, and to more multivariate analyses of various alternate explanations. Our examination thus far has relied primarily on, at best, ordinal-level data with only a few limited controls. More sophisticated analyses are neces-

sary, even though we are constrained by the limitations of our data (and of human rights data in general). Third, we should search for and examine additional explanations for human rights violations. By moving in all these directions, we may come closer to a position in which we can understand and work for change in human rights conditions.

Some of our "explanations" of human rights violations do not seem to have immediate policy implications. The level of development or a colonial heritage, for example, are conditions within which policy makers must operate rather than something they can do much about.[29] Our analysis does indicate variations in violations *within* as well as *between* different types of conditions, however: poor countries do not necessarily violate their citizens' human rights; among those that do, the extent varies. Thus, while some global redistribution of material well-being may be the obvious overall recommendation, government policy makers in poor countries do have alternatives when coping with the problem of political control. It may be possible for the international community, or even for individual nations, to raise the costs—perhaps through aid decisions—of violations of human rights.

We began this article with some examples of violations of human rights in particular countries. In the course of our analysis, and with the unavoidable abstractions that accompany statistical discussion and the necessary attention given to methodological issues, we lose some sensitivity toward the phenomenon that we are trying to understand. It is important to end by reminding ourselves of the real terror and suffering contained in our concepts and percentages.

[29] See Charles W. Anderson, "System and Strategy in Comparative Policy Analysis," in William B. Gwyn and George C. Edwards, eds., *Perspectives on Public Policy Making* (New Orleans: Tulane University Press, 1975), for a theoretical discussion of policy conditions.