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The International Issues Division of the recently constituted Office of Regional and Political Analysis is the successor organization to the International Functional Staff of the Office of Political Research and the International Organizations unit of the Office of Current Intelligence. The division seeks to support the policy-making community via multidisciplinary analyses on the international political implications of global problems such as Energy, Nuclear Proliferation, Food and Population, Human Rights, Arms and Technology Transfers, and Terrorism. It also will be following developments in key international organizations and analyzing such international trends as modernization, authoritarianism, the emergence of regional powers, and LDC demands for a "New International Economic Order." Our recent study *Political Perspectives on Key Global Issues* explores the individual and collective impact of several of these problems and trends on international relations generally and on specific US interests.*

Comments from readers on the priority of topics for analysis, on the substance of articles in this periodic publication, and on other matters of mutual interest are most welcome. Readers should feel free to contact me or any of the individuals listed in the roster of division personnel on page 39.

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International Issues Division
Office of Regional and Political Analysis

* Other recent publications of the division and its predecessor offices that may be of interest are listed on page 40.

State Dept. review completed

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Impact of the US Stand on Human Rights

Initial international skepticism about the seriousness of the new US administration's commitment to the fostering of human rights has been dispelled by presidential statements and US initiatives in bilateral relations and international forums. Considerable confusion and suspicion over US motives persist, however, and there is apprehension over the lengths to which the US may be prepared to go in pursuit of human rights objectives. This article first assesses regional reaction to the US stand and then explores implications and prospects.

Introduction

The administration's stand on human rights has spearheaded efforts to reexert US moral leadership in world affairs. It has focused international attention on the issue, stimulated thought and debate, and increased popular awareness. The US stand has been heartening to many of those who feel oppressed by tyrannies of either the right or left. Expansion of the horizon of the UN Human Rights Commission beyond its limited list of usual concerns in response to US initiatives could serve as a first step toward more meaningful work by that organization.

US initiatives, moreover, have prompted several governments to move toward bettering their human rights performance. This has occurred principally where the regime has been anxious to preserve cooperative relations with the US, has not felt publicly challenged or specifically pressured by Washington, and is relatively confident about its internal security situation.

* *Analysts in OPRA's regional divisions aided in the preparation of this article.*

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Even in these cases, however, there has been a notable reluctance to accept the US stand at face value. Public expressions of understanding about US concerns have been matched by private assessments of Washington's emphasis on human rights as a ploy designed to prod other countries into comporting themselves in accordance with US policies generally. ✓

Attribution of such ulterior motivation, the connection of human rights to other issues, and a marked propensity to interpret US pronouncements and actions in egocentric terms have been characteristic reactions of countries with the most cause for unease over the US stand. Repressive practices have intensified in some cases, and bilateral relations have suffered in a number of instances.

There is enthusiastic support for the US stand in some countries, but in many cases it is coupled with considerable worry over the potential for adverse international political consequences. Applause for Washington's espousal of human rights principles, therefore, is not always accompanied by approval of specific US initiatives.

A broad range of political relationships important to the US thus has been complicated by the addition of what many foreign observers view as a new element of uncertainty in international affairs. The ensuing discussion explores the impact that the US stand has had on human rights practices and international politics in more detail, and examines some implications for the future.

The Communist World

The Soviets, perplexed and concerned over Washington's human rights initiatives, tend to view the US stand as aimed primarily at them. Even sophisticated Soviet observers reportedly suspect US actions are part of a campaign to undermine their political system. The Soviets may choose to cite lack of US criticism of China's human rights record in support of this interpretation. ✓

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Moscow already seems reconciled to the fact that--contrary to its previous expectations--this is unlikely to be a banner year in Soviet-US relations. The Soviets have protested vehemently that certain actions related to human rights constitute unacceptable interference in their internal affairs, and there have been numerous warnings that bilateral relations could suffer serious--though unspecified--damage as a result of the US stand. Thus far, however, the Soviets have limited themselves to reactions deemed sufficient to make their points without severely damaging ties with the US.

Hints at the possible spillover of Soviet displeasure into SALT, for example, continue to be accompanied by explicit signals that SALT is a separate issue where progress can be achieved. The human rights controversy complicated the recent SALT negotiating session, but by no means did it foredoom Secretary Vance's mission. Had the substance of US proposals been more to the Soviets' liking, they undoubtedly would have reacted accordingly--despite their annoyance with the US over the human rights issue. Nevertheless, at least for tactical reasons, they are likely to continue to point to the US human rights stand as a major impediment to progress on the whole range of bilateral issues.

Moscow is anxious to disabuse the US of the notion that public urgings on human rights will help Soviet dissidents and to convince the dissidents that pleading their cause to the West will be counterproductive. Some of the dissidents have reportedly been encouraged by US initiatives despite the fact that they anticipate intensification of repressive measures in the immediate future. Approval of the US stand among Soviets interested in bringing about changes in their society tends to vary directly with the degree to which they feel alienated from the system.

Moscow is eager to make the revolution's 60th anniversary in November and the events leading up to it bright landmarks in Soviet history and is concerned that the celebrations could be tarnished if the West vigorously presses the issue of "Basket III" (human rights) implementation at the Belgrade CSCE meeting that begins in June. Efforts to stifle dissident activity before and

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during the CSCE sessions are likely to coincide with the dissidents' own realization that it is a propitious time internationally to publicize their various causes. The dissidents also realize, of course, that the risk to individuals of regime reprisals has increased as well.

Soviet authorities already have significantly increased pressure on the dissidents, and attempts to intimidate them through arrests and threats will continue. There are indications that where dissidents actually are brought to trial, Moscow may try to blunt accusations of human rights violations by forgoing political charges (e.g., anti-Soviet agitation and propaganda) and concentrating on criminal counts, such as currency offenses.

Another serious worry for Moscow is that agitation over human rights could exacerbate existing or anticipated control problems in Eastern Europe, especially in Poland, and to a lesser extent in East Germany. Like the Soviets, the East European regimes seem puzzled by the US stand and somewhat off balance. ✓

There is disagreement within and among the East European regimes on their most immediate problem: how to handle the most serious wave of dissident activity in the last several years--activity that promises to become bolder as the CSCE meeting approaches. Regimes with the least serious dissident problem (i.e., Hungary) or who believe a hard line would be counterproductive in their particular circumstances (i.e., Poland) have been resisting pressure from the Soviets for a crackdown. They have been arguing that party leaders in individual countries are in the best position to determine a proper course of action in light of local conditions. Thus far, the Soviets appear to have listened to these arguments and tolerated some measure of diversity in handling dissent. There is no evidence so far that the US human rights stand has had a significant impact on the tactics of the East European regimes for dealing with their dissidents.* ✓

25X1 * For a more comprehensive discussion see "Dissident Activity in East Europe: An Overview," by [redacted] ORPA. (RP 77-10060, March 1977) 25X1

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✓ The East Europeans do seem genuinely worried, however, over the possibility of US human rights initiatives provoking Soviet movement away from detente and over the adverse implications such a development would have for them both economically and politically. The East European press has been highly critical of the US stand and has counterattacked with condemnations of alleged injustices in the US and US disregard for "economic and social" rights. This type of criticism has become more pointed since a meeting of Warsaw Pact party secretaries in early March, undoubtedly reflecting a decision to harden the propaganda line.

✓ China is the only Communist country that seems to have derived some satisfaction from the US stand. Peking clearly has taken heart from recent difficulties in US-Soviet relations, and the Chinese see Washington's attitude on human rights as possibly signaling a toughening US stance toward Moscow generally. The Chinese thus far appear unconcerned about their own vulnerability on the human rights issue, but Peking probably has some private misgivings on this score. This may explain the failure of Chinese media to highlight the human rights controversy despite Peking's usual penchant for emphasizing US-Soviet differences.

Indeed, initial Chinese enthusiasm may have been tempered by realization that the status of human rights in China could become a controversial issue in the US and complicate the process of normalizing Sino-US relations. The "freedom of emigration" provision of the 1974 Trade Act could, for example, adversely affect US extension of Most Favored Nation status to Peking. The Chinese may also be concerned over the Soviets' increasing their influence at Washington's expense among third world countries offended by US human rights initiatives.

The Industrial Democracies

There is broad approval in principle of the US human rights stand in Western Europe, Canada, and Japan. A joint declaration of the European Parliament, the EC Council, and the EC Commission signed early this month strongly reaffirmed the signatories' commitment to the enhancement of fundamental rights and individual freedom.

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Among the industrial democracies, however, there is also a strong inclination to temper actions based on such declarations with practical considerations.

Leaders of these countries tend to define international issues on which the US takes a comprehensive global approach in more parochial terms. Thus, the Europeans see the human rights issue mainly in terms of East-West relations while the Japanese are primarily concerned with how the US stand will affect US policy and Japanese interests in Asia.

The Europeans are concerned that US human rights initiatives risk causing--perhaps in ways now unforeseen--a deterioration in East-West relations that would have a more damaging impact on Western Europe than on the US. As a result, government leaders have displayed a decided preference for pursuing human rights objectives with quiet diplomacy and behind-the-scenes approaches.

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[redacted] the strong speech on human rights delivered by Foreign Secretary Owen in early March did not herald a major change in UK policy. French officials

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[redacted] are anxious to maintain a propitious atmosphere for Brezhnev's coming visit to Paris. Traditional reluctance to appear to be following any US lead may also figure in France's reticence. In Germany, Chancellor Schmidt has declared that Bonn will seek to advance the cause of human rights in its own--i.e., low-key--way.* Among the smaller West European nations, willingness to be outspoken on the human rights issue seems to vary inversely with physical proximity to the Soviet Union.

Latin America

US human rights initiatives have aroused considerable resentment in several Central and South American

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countries ruled by military regimes that have felt directly challenged. They have denounced US statements and actions as unwarranted and unacceptable interference in strictly internal affairs.

Argentina and Uruguay rejected all US military assistance after Washington linked aid cuts to human rights violations in those countries. Brazil, already angered by US pressure to modify its nuclear deal with West Germany, condemned the State Department's preparation of a report on its human rights practices* as an affront to its sovereignty and renounced the 1952 military assistance agreement. Guatemala and El Salvador have also rejected military assistance conditioned on US judgment of their human rights situations.

The Latins are angered by what they regard as US failure to understand and make allowances for their political and internal security problems. The Southern Cone military regimes, especially, are convinced that their countries' experiences with political disintegration, insurgency, and terrorism fully warrant tough internal security measures. The Argentines, for example, insist that they will not deviate from the practices they deem indispensable in their continuing war with leftist terrorists no matter what outside criticism they incur.

The Latins also believe the US has failed to give them credit for incremental improvements in their human rights practices. Brazilian President Geisel reportedly is particularly upset on this score, and Chile's military leaders now seem convinced that no ameliorative action they take will be sufficient to satisfy their critics. The human rights controversy may have complicated Geisel's personal efforts to prevent excesses by Brazil's security forces, and the Chilean junta has recently taken a still harder line against political activity and expression.

The military regimes now appear determined not to take any action that could be construed as caving in to

* One of 82 such reports submitted to Congress in accordance with Section 301 of the International Security Assistance and Arms Export Control Act of 1976.

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US pressure. Significant improvement in their human rights practices is likely to come only when they believe such action is compatible with their internal security situations and when there is no danger of appearing to be responding meekly to Washington's wishes.

The Latins remain resentful over the fact that they were not considered important enough to US interests to be treated specially (e.g., like South Korea). They have questioned US qualifications for making international moral judgments and have voiced suspicion that the US has ulterior motives for its human rights stand. The latter view is particularly strong in Brazil, where the human rights issue is viewed as an adjunct to US pressure on nuclear matters.

The Southern Cone regimes have been commiserating with each other, and they reportedly are considering joint moves to convince the US that it has seriously underestimated the costs of alienating them. There are also indications, however, that the Latins would prefer to forgo polemics and halt any deterioration in their relations with Washington. This appears to be the case even in Brazil, where President Geisel reportedly has reacted positively to a recent letter from President Carter.

Latin reaction to the US stand has not, of course, been entirely negative. Venezuela and Costa Rica, two of Latin America's few remaining democracies, have strongly endorsed US initiatives.

East Asia

The US stand has been met with a noticeable lack of enthusiasm in most of East Asia, where with the exception of Japan all states are ruled by authoritarian regimes that impose significant restrictions on human rights. The nations with the closest political, economic, and security ties to the US--those that feel most vulnerable to US pressure--seem to have the most negative attitudes. ✓

South Korea's sensitivity on the issue is reflected in a trend begun last November selectively to ease pressures on dissidents and reduce overt police surveillance. The press is enjoying greater latitude in its handling of foreign news, prison conditions for key political

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figures have improved, and the government has forgone punishment for a number of protesters. A spate of arrests in mid-April probably was meant as a warning to those inclined to increase anti-government activity during the April 19 independence day period. Seoul shows little interest in modifying its authoritarian style of rule which, it argues, is needed to ensure stability in the face of the North Korean threat.

The Marcos government in the Philippines is quite concerned over the potential implications of the US emphasis on human rights. Manila's vulnerability on the issue is one reason Marcos would like to receive rent payments for US bases rather than payment in the form of military assistance subject to annual congressional scrutiny.

Indonesia is anxious to preserve good relations with the US, especially the continuance of military aid. Government officials have publicly expressed understanding of US initiatives, and Jakarta has announced an accelerated timetable for the release of political prisoners.

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✓ [redacted] Indonesians interpret US emphasis on human rights as one ploy in a series designed to force their country to cooperate with the US, particularly on petroleum issues. There is resentment of US interference in what the Indonesians maintain is essentially an internal matter.

The government on Taiwan is trying to avoid giving the US cause to focus on human rights practices there, but the mainland Chinese political establishment remains determined to suppress ethnic Taiwanese opposition. Taiwan will undoubtedly be tempted to try to turn the issue to its own advantage by calling attention to the human rights situation in the People's Republic of China.

Africa

Almost every African government is vulnerable to criticism on the human rights issue, but reactions to the US stand have been varied. The white minority regimes in Southern Africa have for the most part maintained a discreet and cautious silence. This reflects Rhodesian and South African apprehensions about the prospects they see for US and international pressures for changes in their discriminatory racial policies.

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Ethiopia feels it has been unjustly singled out as a human rights violator, and there is displeasure over the US aid cutback. But poor bilateral relations are mainly reflective of the revolutionary socialist regime's generally unfavorable attitude toward the US.

The US emphasis on human rights has been strongly endorsed by Nigeria, Cameroon, and Gambia. Most black African states are, in fact, likely to applaud US concern for human rights so long as they believe its primary effect will be to foster US support for majority rule in Southern Africa. The focusing of US attention on the internal situations of black African states other than Uganda, however, would with very few exceptions be much less appreciated.

Middle East

There is an analogous reaction in the Middle East, where the Arab states tend to define human rights strictly in terms of concern over Israel's settlement policy in occupied territories, the fate of Arab prisoners in Israeli jails, and recognition of the "legitimate rights of the Palestinian people."

The Arabs will react positively to the US stand so long as its principal effect in the Middle East is the focusing of US attention on such issues, rather than on human rights practices (especially the treatment of minorities) in Arab countries.

The Israelis, of course, are concerned over the possible implications of increased US interest in their treatment of Arabs in the occupied territories. On the other hand, the Israelis apparently believe the US will be inclined to support initiatives they may take to focus international attention on Soviet harassment of Jews who have asked to leave the USSR.

Prospects

The impact that US human rights initiatives will have on international politics over the next several months will depend in large part on how forcefully the US chooses to press the issue. Repeated protestations as to the universality of US concerns are in any case

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unlikely to dissuade most of the vulnerable governments from continuing to interpret even general US actions or pronouncements as attacks directed particularly against them.

The Soviets will continue to seek wide-ranging support for their contention that comments by one state about the human rights situation in another constitute impermissible interference in internal affairs. They may not be content with continued reliance primarily on this essentially defensive line, however, and they could try to turn the issue against the US with allegations of past domestic and international misdeeds, present injustices, and socio-economic inequities in US society. But the Soviets would probably prefer to avoid direct polemical battles that would further dramatize the human rights issue, and they would be likely to couple any such campaign with private signals that bilateral relations would be better served by mutual restraint.

Another likely Soviet tack will involve continued efforts to convince US and West European leaders that the controversy over human rights threatens to complicate the tasks of Soviet leaders committed to the furtherance of detente. The obviously self-serving nature of this argument does not mean that it has no basis in fact. Nonetheless, Brezhnev is adept at turning seemingly adverse developments to his own advantage, and it could be that he has been able to use the human rights issue to deflect attention from serious domestic economic difficulties.

In preparation for the coming CSCE sessions, the Soviets will also be trying to convince the West Europeans that degeneration of the meeting into an acrimonious exchange of charges on implementation of the Helsinki final act would be a severe setback for detente. There are indications that many West European leaders are already worried on this score and do not want the Soviets to be "put in the dock" at Belgrade. The Soviets may, in fact, believe that the asymmetry of US and West European perspectives on human rights can be exploited to create controversy and tension within the Atlantic Alliance.

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Other countries that have reacted most negatively to US human rights initiatives seem to be hoping for a "cooling off" period that would permit a resumption of less antagonistic bilateral relations and allow them to develop strategies for coping with the new situation. This is especially the case in Latin America, where recent congressional testimony by Assistant Secretary of State Todman and Human Rights Coordinator Derian has been interpreted as signaling that significant changes in US tactics for pursuing human rights objectives are in the offing. Disappointment of such expectations would give added impetus to the Southern Cone countries' discussions about convincing the US that they are vitally important to its interests. They too reportedly have been considering ways in which the human rights issue could be turned against Washington.

Countries that might be vulnerable on the human rights issue but have not felt particularly pressured by US initiatives probably would also appreciate a more restrained US approach. Iran, for example, vigorously rejects accusations that it systematically violates human rights, but Tehran still is concerned that relations with the US could be damaged by controversy over its practices. The Iranians contend that the US is itself subject to criticism on a number of points.

Actions or pronouncements interpreted by other nations as heralding the focusing of US attention on their human rights practices are likely to increase complaints of US interference in strictly internal affairs. Attacks on US practices and motives, on such matters as US failure to ratify international human rights covenants like the Genocide Convention, and on Washington's maintenance of a double standard on human rights where US strategic interests are involved, would probably also increase in number and intensity. Criticism of alleged US disinterest in the world wide advancement of social and economic justice is especially likely to increase if the less developed countries (LDC) conclude that the US plans to link human rights to international economic issues.

The US already has been accused of defining human rights too narrowly in terms of civil and political

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liberties and of being unwilling to do more than pay lip service to LDC demands that the economic and social rights of mankind be advanced by restructuring international economic relations so as to reduce the gap between the world's rich and poor nations. A key component of the LDCs' concept of this "new international economic order" calls for substantially increased LDC influence over the decision-making processes of international financial institutions. Indications that the US might seek to further its human rights objectives in these institutions even where their charters call for loan decisions to be made strictly on the basis of economic considerations will undoubtedly intensify LDC pressure for changes in voting procedures. The "North-South" dialogue, moreover, could become considerably more contentious generally if controversy over human rights were to severely damage US relations with nations (like Brazil) that have played significant moderating roles in the articulation of LDC demands.

The composition and strength of US human rights initiatives will also have an important bearing on whether and how the US stand affects the actual practices of other nations in the months ahead. US initiatives are likely to continue to prove effective in some situations--especially where governments eager to establish or maintain harmonious bilateral relations are confident enough about their internal security situations to risk ameliorative action--and counterproductive in others--where US pressure compounds existent insecurity and precipitates a fiercely nationalistic reaction that even local human rights advocates may be constrained to join.

Either way, the impact of the US stand is likely to be felt mainly at the margins, at least over the short term. Human rights practices around the world reflect underlying socio-cultural and political dynamics, including the peculiar imperatives of authoritarian rule.* Basic progress in alleviating human rights abuses will probably continue to depend mainly on whether totalitarian and authoritarian regimes increase their sense of security enough to moderate their practices or, perhaps, give way to effective democratic governments.

* See, *Authoritarianism and Militarism: "The Roots of the Human Rights Problem," International Issues, March 1977.*

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