Panel 3 – New Metrics for Assessing Human Rights and How These Metrics Relate to Development and Governance

David Cingranelli, Professor of Political Science, SUNY – Binghamton

CIRI Human Rights Data Project
- Focuses especially on rights in the civil and political covenant
- Provides annually updated information about government respect for 14 (soon to be 20+ internationally recognized human rights from 1981 to 1009 in 195 countries
- Unit of analysis is by country

Measuring Human Rights is the assignment of numeric ratings to national governments assessing the level of conformity by those governments with international standards for the protection of various human rights.

Policies
Practices
Conditions

The practices are never stronger than the policies – the first step is to pass laws requiring governments to respect human rights.
- Very few instances where practices are any better than the laws.

Metrics Are Important for
- Monitoring state human rights practices
  - Kaufman looks at the relationship between civil and political rights and economic growth; he thinks that there is a causal relationship whereby human rights beget economic growth
- Building theories about the causes and consequences of human rights practices
- Assessing the human rights impact of public policies

Some Research Questions
- What human rights are most and least respected?
- How have degrees of respect for various human rights changed, on average, over time?
- Is there a relationship between violation of (or respect for) human rights and rebellion?
  - Torturing your citizens makes rebellion high
  - However, respect for freedom of association makes rebellion go down
- Has the spread of democracy and rapid economic globalization since the end of the Cold War affected human rights?
- Have specific policies such as free trade agreements, bilateral foreign………?

CIRI Measures Currently Available Online

- More coming soon!
- Most political scientists focus on the first four: disappearance, extrajudicial killing, political imprisonment

To content-code qualitative materials to produce quantitative human rights indicators, cross-nationality, every year, requires *systematic* sources of information to mitigate bias
- *Systematic = information about the same rights, every country, every year
- State Department reports as a source → most systematic and comprehensive report available… uses Amnesty's Annual Report to cross-check for completeness; if there is a discrepancy, such as regarding torture, they use Amnesty's… basically just because academics are more to the left; however, there are usually very few differences
- News sources used to clarify events

Strengths
- Global in scope
- Annually updated
- Available from 1981-2009
- Free and public data
  - Open to criticism – if you can prove they are wrong, write to them and they will consider the change
- Public Coding Guidelines (e.g. full respect for human right X requires…)
- Easily replicated (checked)

Limitations
- The interpretation of every human right is contested
  - We may agree that there is a right to not be tortured, but we may disagree on what constitutes torture
- CIRI measures human rights practices – not policies or conditions
- CIRI measures are based on the annual reports issued by the USSD and AI
- Human rights practices of each country are measured against an absolute standard
  - Don't try to be culturally sensitive… wealth = more rights?
- Continued availability depends on funding

Examples of Interpretation of Human Rights
- What type/length of arrest/incarceration counts as political imprisonment?
  - Iran – political imprisonment for protests… how many people arrested?
- Are deaths from inappropriate use of tasers extrajudicial killings?
  - Amnesty says yes; have to use them since USSD doesn't code.
- If fathers/husbands must give permissions…………?

Graph

- Political imprisonment significantly decreased since fall of the Soviet Union

Where do we go from here?
- Add measures of more internationally recognized rights including:
    - Economic, social and cultural rights
    - Human trafficking
    - Right to a fair trial
    - Specific workers' rights
- Laws and practices

Sabine Donner, Senior Project Manager, Bertlsmann Foundation

Transformation Index

Normative index in its approach…

Advocating goals of democracy based on rule of law and market economy flanked by social-political safeguards (?)

Broad picture on transformation…
- Ranking countries into two indices
    - Status Index
        - Examines state of development towards democracy based on rule of law & market economy
    - Management Index
        - Evaluates quality of government

Independent and Expert-Based Study

Holisitc Approach – Democracy
- Political Participation
- Rule of Law
- Stability of Democratic Institutions
- Political and Social Integration
    - Focusing also on strength of civil society and general consent to democracy and democratic norms and practices

Status of Democracy
- Erosion of certain standards globally
    - Do not at least at first suggest a global shift towards democracy… relatively stable democracies…

Quality of Democracy – BTI 2010 Findings

- Detailed Quality Assessment of Political Transformation
    - Rule of Law has always been one of the weakest criteria
- Comparison between WTI 2006-2010, largest decrease in scores has been assembly rights/freedom of expression → high correlation of the rule of law results with political rights dimension… it seems to be also as if the rule of law in democracy in an otherwise stable democracy sometimes the political rights seem to be more in danger than in other cases

Holistic Approach – Economy
- Broad approach to market economy
- All criteria normally found in economic indices… micro and macro indicators
- Sustainable market economy must be built not only from free market and property rights but also from principles of social justice → economic growth goes hand in hand with eradicating poverty
- Seven criteria of economic transformation

Holistic Approach – Governance

Nathaniel Heller, Managing Director, Global Integrity Index

(no slides)

Global Integrity is an NGO that generates data and reports on issues of governance, transparency and corruption.

Seeing real-life impact; data is shaping the debate at a policy level.
- Millennium Challenge Corporation

Less concerned with serving the research community; trying to influence reforms on the ground by governments and civil society; giving them tools for evaluation.

Confidence when publishing that they have interesting, bottom-up, exclusive information because they use local experts' reporting; it's not done at home, by white Americans sitting in an office!

Trade-off is now that they have capped the coverage to only 30-40 countries because it is very expensive and difficult. This frustrates some users who want more comprehensive data.

Emerging Trends

- 1. Era of national rankings and scores is coming to a close
  - Never-ending stream of data by country on topic of interest
  - In terms of policy changes on the ground… the turn on investment for doing it for 190+ countries is minimal
  - Interesting change in debates happen not because of comparative results but for really good data on local results in one country…
  - Aggressive experimentation with sub-national metrics and sector-specific metrics
    - Micro-level on each thing, but the results are incredibly useful and specific
    - Transparency and accountability moving quickly
  - Human rights metrics to start obsessing less with global rankings and focusing on particulars
- 2. Data that gives explicit information; getting beyond simplistic facts
  - Getting into the drivers of change → *why* is Zimbabwe performing poorly?
  - Takes a while and costs a lot to do this with on-the-ground expertise
  - Time and again getting requests for actionable policy advice to accompany the data, answering the question of why
- 3. Increasing use of local expertise on the ground in countries
  - Very rapid shift towards understanding the limits of using third-party data
  - Not just in capital cities; but getting into the hinterlands
    - Not easy, but it's not as scary or difficult as you would think it would be… establishing partnerships with major NGOs, etc. usually in capital city and then going from there beyond that
    - Still a lot of money and time, but it's not rocket science
  - Leverage local expertise to tell the bottom-up story
- 4. The labeling problem
  - Huge challenges communicating the results and meaning of data because of the labels chosen for description
  - National-level tool used to have a subcategory called the "rule of law" – explicit, defined by 26 specific questions about what it meant… but you show it to someone else and their seeing the label and making assumptions makes the conversation with them almost impossible
    - Also, though, stuff is so dense that if you give them a 300 page Excel sheet with explicit details, it is too much
- 5. Problem of walled gardens of data
  - A lot of effort, time and money spent trying to think through not only collecting data but plugging it into a place where people can access and discuss it easily…
  - Do two sets of data correlate on a particular issue? ← this becomes hours of work to answer; no one has time to do it!
  - Making human rights community to at least be aware of this; not to lock up data on the web where it's not accessible; make it open and try to

make it easily readable and also use field operators to make it more real-time

Q&A

Mike Kozlowski – Nathaniel, have folks at Global Integrity Index considered at micro-level (in the field) things such as Ushahidi Platform (?)… urges local capacity-building and transferable skills?

Nathaniel Heller: The reason we work with 1200 people in the field is that they know 1000 times more than I ever will about their country… That platform is useful for a lot of applications… for our own fieldwork, still too limited. Still, the more you can get folks online is exactly where a lot of this needs to go.

- Q: Used CIRI dataset quite extensively in his work and used it for training sessions; especially liked about it the codebook because it gives transparency of the assessment methodology; but the difficulty is the underlying source material. Amnesty & State Dept. are not transparent sources, however: difficult to find how they came to their assessments. Isn't it time to leave the expert-based data sources where you always lack transparency and then go more into the survey-based methodology? Also, the question of ranking: your conclusion and learning on this is similar in that it doesn't necessarily produce a very good dialogue.
    - o David Cingranelli: There is a place for these things, but in terms of actually changing things on the ground, I agree that there is a need for more accurate surveys, but you can only have one or the other: scope or depth.
    - o Sabine Donner: Rankings are useless. Comparison on the national level and ideally regional level… are important. More stories, less experts: I would agree with Nathaniel that we would need more local expert-based assessments. Not sure whether either survey or experts' studies are better… but to integrate local experts is important.
    - o Nathaniel Heller: The rankings are important for those doing the rankings, they get a lot of publicity for the generators. But on the ground it's a five-minute conversation then get into the real stuff. A big problem/challenge for people generating rankings for a long time. Number of groups doing those rankings and getting coverage in major press is really hard, especially for NGOs who need funding, to walk away from.
    - o David Cingranelli: For those interested in assessing the affects of public policies, for example Abouharb and I wrote the book on structure adjustment programs and that this led to a decline in human rights… a lot of qualitative work had been done; work not taken seriously because if you look at different cases you get different results without controlling for selection processes… that's what statistical analysis can do for us, and only if we have a broad array of cases will we have measures.
- Q: When you measure human rights, how does one solve issues of indivisibility of human rights? A lot of things fall under human rights, how do

you measure how a country has actually fared? Prioritize one or another? How are those decisions made when measuring human rights given restrictions on data collection?

- o David Cingranelli: We look not just at the full index of physical integrity rights, for example, but to see if they all behave the same way… No one has come up with an overall measure for the state of ALL human rights… 43-ish rights in the International Bill of Human Rights and we just don't have measures for all of them, so I don't have a good answer.

- Q: Concerning comparing and contrasting different indices and metrics, there are ownership issues in the private and public sectors not so much academia, and there are labeling differences… how much did you compare in developing your data set to existing metrics? What kind of strategy would you recommend?

    - o Sabine Donner: I would not do it. Basically this is not possible. So no. Of course we are comparing other indices, still if you want to be convinced that there is a key point… the labeling system again is a challenge, the codebook helps a lot but I agree with Nathaniel that this is not the label you see in all your publications. On the other hand, I think there has to be some sort of labeling. Even two sentences is some form of labeling. We learn a lot from other indices in the way they are communicating their results and the way they are improving their methodologies.
    - o Nathaniel Heller: A lot of quiet and not well-document dialogue between groups to slightly improve how we're all doing this.

- Allison Johnson (Q) – Interested in on-the-ground results. Does the panel have any feedback where you've seen your indices directly impact public policy or directly influence the leadership in developing/middle-income countries as it relates to their policy regarding human rights?

- Q: Meaning of rights is contested. Some form of literature to which we can turn for most rights. What would you recommend to a team of experts who are trying to measure government compliance to a set of rights when there hasn't been an attempt to define it?

- Q: When there are disagreements (i.e. human rights such as women's rights) – how do you resolve those conflicts… philosophical, cultural, etc.?

    - o Nathaniel Heller: On the question of bias, which is really important, it's something we do… We actually don't trust and rely on a single person; usually small teams and several people on whom we rely; 3-10 of those people we hire specifically… minimizes chance of really skewed bias. Double-blind process is really important so that when you get published you're not going to get burned

        - ▪ On the real-life use of data, I'll change country and name b/c it's not public… we did fieldwork in a Gulf State country in the Middle East, first time we had done work there, rare, not much data for the country… now coming up with reform laws based specifically on the data… may not be implemented/enforced,

that's a separate question… it doesn't happen every day in every country, but it's that kind of impact for which we are looking.

- o Sabine Donner: We have a lot of people approaching us asking how do we improve our scores on the CPI… does not really mean that there is going to be a policy change…
- o David Cingranelli: What kinds of discussion took place when a standard was created, we look at that… that gives us some broad contours… then we look at how the international community and how they have handled disputes… nothing come before council then regional human rights… those are the main ways that we do it, we hate to impose a standard ourselves… but we kept reading in our reports on the issue of women traveling… no one had reported on this.