

How are These Pictures Different? A Quantitative Comparison of the US State Department and Amnesty International Human Rights Reports, 1976–1995

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I. INTRODUCTION

The US State Department's annual publication, the *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices*, has been a continuing source of controversy since it was first issued in the mid-1970s.¹ These reports, which assess the degree to which human rights standards are respected in countries around the world, have been examined carefully by policymakers and academics alike.

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This research has been supported by the National Science Foundation through Grant SBR-9321741 of the Division of Social, Behavioral, And Economic Research. We thank NSF for its support but note that any opinions expressed in this article are those of the authors and not necessarily those of the National Science Foundation. We would like to thank David Cingranelli and Nils Petter Gleditsch for their constructive comments and criticism, and Mark Gibney, Michael Stohl, and Linda Camp Keith for graciously sharing their data with us.

1. UNITED STATES STATE DEPT., *COUNTRY REPORTS ON HUMAN RIGHTS PRACTICES* (1977–1993).

Particularly in the 1980s, critics frequently charged the State Department with biased reporting. The State Department has been accused of unfairly painting with the tar of repression countries ideologically opposed to the United States, while unjustly favoring countries where the US has had a compelling interest.²

Commentary on the *Country Reports* has not all been negative, however. Interviews conducted by Innes³ and the results of careful, critical examinations over the years (e.g., Lawyers Committee for Human Rights Reports for 1982, 1984, 1987, 1991, 1993, 1995, 1996), tend to agree that the annual State Department Reports are an invaluable resource that accurately reports on the conditions of most of the countries most of the time. Though critical of reports on particular countries, they also have suggested that the reports have substantially improved over the years.

In this study we present the results of our systematic, quantitative examination of the State Department Reports (1977–1996), comparing them with the reports issued by Amnesty International (1977–1996)⁴, to find if existing evidence is consistent with allegations of bias. In conducting this examination we will fill a lacuna in the fast-developing quantitative research on human rights for in spite of the great public and scholarly scrutiny of these allegations, no statistical investigation of them has ever been conducted. We will also examine the historical record to find if evidence does indeed indicate that the reports have improved over time.

II. WHY IS THIS ENDEAVOR IMPORTANT?

Since the mid-1980s researchers have increasingly turned their attention to human rights issues. Most of the quantitative research conducted under the human rights rubric thus far has investigated violations that pertain to

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2. Michael Stohl & David Carleton, *The Foreign Policy of Human Rights: Rhetoric and Reality from Jimmy Carter to Ronald Reagan*, 7 HUM. RTS. Q. 205–29 (1985); David Carleton & Michael Stohl, *The Role of Human Rights in US Foreign Assistance Policy*, 31 AM. J. POL. SCI. 1002–18 (1987); Neil J. Mitchell & James M. McCormick, *Economic and Political Explanations of Human Rights Violations*, 40 WORLD POLITICS 476–98 (1988); DAVID P. FORSYTHE, HUMAN RIGHTS AND WORLD POLITICS (1989); Steven C. Poe, *Human Rights and US Foreign Aid: A Review of Quantitative Studies and Suggestions for Future Research*, 12 HUM. RTS. Q. 499–512 (1990); Judith Eleanor Innes, *Human Rights Reporting as a Policy Tool: An Examination of the State Department Country Reports*, in HUMAN RIGHTS AND STATISTICS: GETTING THE RECORD STRAIGHT 235–57 (Thomas B. Jabine & Richard P. Claude 1992); LAWYERS' COMMITTEE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS, CRITIQUE: REVIEW OF THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE'S COUNTRY REPORTS ON HUMAN RIGHTS PRACTICES 1992 (1993); Steven C. Poe & C. Neal Tate, *Repression of Personal Integrity in the 1980s: A Global Analysis*, 88 AM. POL. SCI. REV. 853–72 (1994) for discussions of possible biases.
 3. Innes, *supra* note 2.
 4. AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL, AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL REPORTS (1977–1996).

personal (or physical) integrity: the right not to be imprisoned, tortured, disappeared, or executed, either arbitrarily or for one's political views.⁵ One vein of human rights research has attempted to isolate the impact of human rights considerations on foreign policy outputs, such as foreign aid and immigration policies of the United States government.⁶ Another fast-growing line of research seeks a theoretical understanding of why these human rights are violated. Beginning in the 1970s, numerous empirical studies addressed the problem of explaining cross-national variations in the respect for personal integrity rights.⁷ In the last two decades, many studies from both of these veins have been based on statistical analysis conducted either wholly or in part with data gathered from the U.S. State Department's *Country Reports*.⁸ Given the large and growing amount of empirical

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5. David L. Cingranelli & Thomas Pasquarello, *Human Rights Practices and the U.S. Distribution of Foreign Aid to Latin American Countries*, 29 AM. J. POL. SCI. 539–63 (1985); Poe & Tate, *supra* note 2.
 6. On foreign aid, see Michael Stohl, David Carleton & Steven E. Johnson, *Human Rights and U.S. Foreign Assistance: From Nixon to Carter*, 21 J. PEACE RES. 215–26 (1984); Cingranelli & Pasquarello, *supra* note 5; Stohl & Carleton, *supra* note 2; Steven C. Poe, *Human Rights and Economic Aid under Ronald Reagan and Jimmy Carter*, 36 AM. J. POL. SCI. 146–62 (1992); Steven C. Poe & Rangsim Sirirangsi, *Human Rights and U.S. Economic Aid During the Reagan Years*, 75 SOC. SCI. Q. 494–509 (1994); Steven C. Poe & James Meernik, *US Military Aid in the 1980s: A Global Analysis*, 32 J. PEACE RES. 399–412 (1995); Shannon Lindsey Blanton, *Impact of Human Rights on U.S. Foreign Assistance to Latin America*, 19 INT'L INTERACTIONS 339–58 (1994). On immigration policies, see Mark Gibney, Vanessa Dalton & Marc Vockell, *USA Refugee Policy: A Human Rights Analysis Update*, 5 J. REFUGEE STUD. 33–46 (1992); Mark Gibney & Michael Stohl, *Human Rights and U.S. Refugee Policy, in OPEN BORDERS? CLOSED SOCIETIES? THE ETHICAL AND POLITICAL ISSUES* (Mark Gibney ed., 1988).
 7. See, e.g., Mitchell & McCormick, *supra* note 2; Conway Henderson, *Conditions Affecting the Use of Political Repression*, 35 J. CONFLICT RES. 120–42 (1991); Conway Henderson, *Population Pressures and Political Repression*, 74 SOC. SCI. Q. 322–33 (1993); Poe & Tate, *supra* note 2; Helen Fein, *More Murder in the Middle: Life Integrity Violations and Democracy in the World*, 17 HUM. RTS. Q. 170–91 (1995); Gerald J. Blasi, & David Louis Cingranelli, *Do Constitutions and Institutions Help Protect Human Rights?*, in HUMAN RIGHTS AND DEVELOPING COUNTRIES (David L. Cingranelli ed., 1997); David Cingranelli & David Richards, *Measuring the Level, Pattern, and Sequence of Government Respect for Physical Integrity Rights*, 43 INT'L STUD. Q. 407–19 (1999); Steven C. Poe, C. Neal Tate & Linda Keith, *Repression of the Human Right to Personal Integrity Revisited: A Global Crossnational Study Covering the Years 1976–1993*, 43 INT'L STUD. Q. 291–315 (1999); David Richards, *Perilous Proxy: Human Rights and the Presence of National Elections*, 80 SOC. SCI. Q. 648–65 (1999).
 8. Examples of studies using only the State Department Reports include Cingranelli & Pasquarello, *supra* note 5; Henderson, *supra* note 7. Several studies have used data gathered from Amnesty International reports and the State Department reports in separate parallel analysis, to keep in check biases that might be evident in either of the reports (e.g., Stohl, Carleton, and Johnson, *supra* note 6; Carleton & Stohl 1987, *supra* note 2; Poe & Tate 1994, *supra* note 2; Gibney & Stohl 1988, *supra* note 6; Gibney, Dalton, Vockell 1992, *supra* note 6; Poe, Tate & Keith, *supra* note 7. Other studies, focusing on

research based on these reports and those of Amnesty International, a systematic comparison of the two is long overdue.

This study should also be of interest to international relations and foreign policy scholars with a more general orientation. Statements of policymakers made in the introduction of the *Country Reports* (e.g., 1982) and statements by political appointees⁹ suggest that particular presidents' ideological orientations are reflected in the reports. Still, the career officers who are often responsible for compiling the *Country Reports* may not always be malleable to presidential preferences. Our analysis will also provide a means of assessing whether presidents have successfully reached through the layers of bureaucracy to affect the State Department's evaluations of human rights. And they will also provide us with some indication of whether the reports may have changed in reaction to the breakdown of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War, events that have been shown to have changed other aspects of American foreign policy.¹⁰

Finally, it should be noted that this inquiry is important to practical politics. The *Country Reports*, along with Amnesty International's annual reports, are the two most widely distributed and read sources of information on countries' human rights practices. Certainly credible allegations of bias have been around for a long time, but as yet there has been no systematic empirical evaluation of them. The results of such an investigation should be of interest to the human rights activists and policymakers around the world who depend on these reports.

We will first briefly present an introductory discussion of how the reports are compiled, in the words of the organizations. We will then proceed to examine the differences in these reports using both simple descriptive techniques and quantitative statistical methodologies. Our analysis will be conducted on data from 1976–1995, nearly the entire length of time for which the two reports are available. Based on bivariate, descriptive analysis, as well as more sophisticated multivariate methods, we will be able to test whether the historical record is consistent with the many allegations of State Department bias. Lastly, we will examine patterns in those biases across time and under different administrations.

the allocation of US foreign aid have used both of these sources in order to generate variables designed to approximate the information available to decisionmakers (e.g., Poe 1992, *supra* note 6; Poe & Sirirangsi *supra* note 6; Poe & Meernik 1995, *supra* note 6).

9. FORSYTHE, *supra* note 2, at 114–15.

10. James Meernik, Eric Krueger & Steven C. Poe, *Testing Models of State Behavior: United States Foreign Policy During and After the Cold War*, 60 J. OF POL., 63–85 (1998).

III. ABOUT THE HUMAN RIGHTS REPORTS

The US Department of State

The *Country Reports* of the US State Department arise out of the historical conflict between the executive and legislative branches of government.¹¹ During the Nixon administration some members of Congress yearned for a foreign policy that paid more heed to human rights, and took actions to guide presidential actions in that direction. One such act was the Harkin amendment to the Foreign Assistance Act, which prohibited US development assistance to governments that engaged in “a consistent pattern of gross violations of internationally recognized human rights.”¹² Publication of the reports began in 1976, as a means for Congress to keep tabs on recipients of US aid in an attempt to verify the wishes of Congress were being followed, but by 1980 the reports were covering a much more comprehensive set of UN member countries. Further, the range of internationally recognized rights discussed in the reports has expanded over the years. The most recent reports cover political and civil rights, the rights of workers, women, minorities, and labor as well as the right to integrity of the person.¹³

The *Preface* of the *Country Reports on Human Rights* as well as *Appendix A to the Country Reports on Human Rights* explain how the reports are prepared:

Our embassies, which prepared the initial drafts of the reports, gathered information throughout the year from a variety of sources across the political spectrum, including government officials, jurists, military sources, journalists, human rights monitors, academics, and labor activists. This information-gathering can be hazardous, and U.S. Foreign Service Officers regularly go to great lengths, under trying and sometimes dangerous conditions, to investigate reports of human rights abuse, monitor elections, and come to the aid of individuals at risk, such as political dissidents and human rights defenders whose rights are threatened by their governments.

After the embassies complete drafts of their respective countries’ reports, the texts were sent to Washington for careful review by the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, in cooperation with other State Department offices. As they worked to corroborate, analyze, and edit the reports, the Department

11. Innes, *supra* note 2.

12. *Id.* at 237. This was originally stated in the International Development and Food Assistance Act of 1974, which would later become section 116 of the Foreign Assistance Act, PL 94–116.

13. Bureau of Democracy Human Rights and Labor, U.S. Department of State, *available at* <http://www.state.gov/www/global/human_rights/99hrp_index.html>.

officers drew on their own sources of information. These included reports provided by U.S. and other human rights groups, foreign government officials, representatives from the United Nations and other international and regional organizations and institutions, and experts from academia and the media. Officers also consulted with experts on worker rights issues, refugee issues, military and police matters, women's issues, and legal matters. The guiding principle was to ensure that all relevant information was assessed as objectively, thoroughly, and fairly as possible.¹⁴

Thus these reports are the result of a sizable effort by one of the most far-reaching bureaucracies in the world: the US State Department. They are by far the most complete cataloging of human rights practices around the world, in terms of the number of countries covered, and the range of rights. However, they are not comprehensive. The reports do reflect the traditional US emphasis on so-called first generation rights, for the most part overlooking economic and social rights in the Universal Declaration, and the Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, as well as third generation rights.

Amnesty International

Amnesty International is an International Nongovernmental Organization (NGO), founded in 1961, with the purpose of furthering respect for human rights. Today, according to its own figures, Amnesty International has "more than 1,000,000 members, subscribers and regular donors in more than 100 countries and territories,"¹⁵ worldwide. Its stated purpose is to:

free all prisoners of conscience. These are people detained anywhere for their beliefs or because of their ethnic origin, sex, color, language, national or social origin, economic status, birth or other status—who have not used or advocated violence; ensure fair and prompt trials for political prisoners; abolish the death penalty, torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment of prisoners; end extrajudicial executions and "disappearances."¹⁶

As might be expected, the Annual Reports of Amnesty International have tended to focus on these purposes. As for its research methods, according to its own description, it would appear that Amnesty International gathers information on human rights violations much like the US State

14. Bureau of Democracy Human Rights and Labor, U.S. Department of State, Preface to the Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 1997, available at <http://www.state.gov/www/global/human_rights/1997_hrp_report/preface.html>.

15. Amnesty International, available at <<http://www.amnesty.org/aboutai/factfigr.htm#1>> (visited 11 Mar. 1999).

16. *Id.*

Department, but focusing on a more limited set of political and personal integrity rights. The preface and introduction to each issue of the country reports includes the organization's statement of purpose as well as a summary of the level of repression around the globe that year. Some governments are weary of human rights monitors investigating their country for human right violations, and thus, Amnesty must tread carefully in order to paint:

a picture of human rights abuses by drawing upon a wide range of sources: victims or eyewitnesses of abuses, experts like lawyers or doctors and other human rights groups. The organization then puts that information in the context of a country's past pattern of abuses to help determine whether an allegation is plausible. . . . Researchers or other experts like doctors and lawyers will talk to victims or eyewitnesses of abuses to hear their testimonies. They will visit prisons, detention centers and places where torture is said to have occurred. They attend trials to see if these conform to international fair trial standards. Or they may meet government officials and talk to a host of people and groups involved in human rights.¹⁷

If access into a country is not granted,

the organization also relies on other sources of information—testimonies from refugees or victims who have fled a country; information, such as letters, smuggled out of a country; a government itself; the more than 1,100 newspapers, journals, government bulletins and transcripts of radio broadcasts which Amnesty International receives; reports from lawyers and other humanitarian organizations and letters from prisoners and their families.¹⁸

Before the initial report is submitted the information is amended "with knowledge of a country's laws, constitution, and judicial process, and political and historical background."¹⁹ Upon submission, "all major reports are passed through several levels of approvals, often up to the Secretary General. It is standard Amnesty International practice to give its material to governments before publication for their views and additional information, and the organization will publish these in its reports."²⁰

The two reports we are investigating empirically in this paper appear, for the most part, to be gathered in a similar fashion. One difference in the discussions is that the State Department makes no mention of giving its material to governments in advance, for feedback, but in fact this is done in

17. Amnesty International, *Searching for the Truth: How Amnesty International Does its Research* (Mar. 1998), available at <<http://www.amnesty.org/aboutai/sftt.htm>>.

18. Amnesty International, available at <http://www.amnesty.org/aboutai/factfigr.htm>.

19. Amnesty International, available at <<http://www.amnesty.org/aboutai/sftt.htm>>.

20. *Id.*

many cases. The drafted reports may then be rewritten with the comments and clarifications of the government in mind.²¹ Another difference is that rarely, if ever, do US State Department officials follow Amnesty's practice of attending trials, for that would likely be viewed as infringement in another country's affairs.

Why would we expect to find patterns in the differences between the two reports? Reasons for the expected divergences may lie in the differences between the organizations themselves. According to realist doctrine, the United States, as a nation-state, pursues power, and thus weighs security concerns more heavily than the human rights of non-Americans abroad. By contrast, Amnesty International is an international nongovernmental organization whose very motivation and goals are to forward the cause of human rights, worldwide. Further, as an arm of the US government we might expect that the State Department would have to be more concerned with issues of national sovereignty. As such it might have a tendency to tread more lightly than Amnesty International, so as not to interfere unduly in the affairs of other governments. We expect, then, that the State Department reports will be colored by issues of sovereignty, and interests related to national security and power which Amnesty International has little reason to recognize or heed.

IV. MEASURING HUMAN RIGHTS AS DEPICTED BY THESE TWO REPORTS

The problem of how to measure the concept of human rights as depicted in these two reports is bound to be controversial. However, in recent years an increasing number of scholars addressing human rights issues have chosen to employ the standards-based measurement approach,²² whereby the contents of reports like these are classified according to a predetermined set of coding standards. The reports of Amnesty International and the US State Department are frequently used for this purpose, presumably because of their widespread availability in standard form for many years and for a large percentage of the world's countries. Based on these two reports, scholars

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21. Personal interview with David Cingranelli, who has conducted personal interviews with several US government officials in conjunction with his writing on human rights and foreign aid (e.g., Cingranelli & Pasquarello, *supra* note 5) (18 Mar. 1998).
 22. Michael Stohl, David Carleton, George Lopez, & Stephen Samuels, *State Violations of Human Rights: Issues and Problems of Measurement*, 8 HUM. RTS. Q. 592–606 (1986); George Lopez & Michael Stohl, *Problems of Concept and Measurement in the Study of Human Rights*, in HUMAN RIGHTS AND STATISTICS, *supra* note 2.

have produced ordinal measures of human rights practices.²³ For this study, we chose the Political Terror Scale (PTS) originally created by Michael Stohl, Mark Gibney and their colleagues at Purdue, and added to by other researchers (including ourselves) who adopted the methods used by the Purdue group.²⁴

We chose the PTS as opposed to some alternative measures²⁵ because it is available for both the Amnesty and State Department reports, making a systematic comparison possible. The PTS has the advantage of being available for many more years and countries than the other measure which uses the accounts of both Amnesty International and the US State Department.²⁶

The content of the two sets of reports was analyzed and a value was assigned to each country for each year, according to where it fit on a five point ordinal scale. The coding rules were as follows:

Level 1) Countries . . . under a secure rule of law, people are not imprisoned for their views, and torture is rare or exceptional . . . political murders are extremely rare.

Level 2) There is a limited amount of imprisonment for nonviolent political activity. However, few persons are affected, torture and beating are exceptional . . . political murder is rare.

Level 3) There is extensive political imprisonment, or a recent history of such imprisonment. Execution or other political murders and brutality may be common. Unlimited detention, with or without trial, for political views is accepted.

Level 4) The practices of (Level 3) are expanded to larger numbers. Murders, disappearances are a common part of life. . . . In spite of its generality, on this level terror affects primarily those who interest themselves in politics or ideas.

Level 5) The terrors of (Level 4) have been expanded to the whole population. . . . The leaders of these societies place no limits on the means or thoroughness with which they pursue personal or ideological goals.²⁷

23. See, e.g., Stohl, Carleton & Johnson 1984, *supra* note 6; Stohl & Carleton 1985, *supra* note 2; Patrick M. Regan, *U.S. Economic Aid and Political Repression: An Empirical Evaluation of U.S. Foreign Policy*, 48 POL. RES. Q. 613–28 (1995); Mitchell & McCormick 1988, *supra* note 2; Cingranelli & Richards 1999, *supra* note 7; Poe, Tate & Keith 1999, *supra* note 7.

24. See, e.g., Stohl & Carleton 1985 *supra* note 2; Mark Gibney & Matthew Dalton, *The Political Terror Scale*, in HUMAN RIGHTS AND DEVELOPING COUNTRIES (David L. Cingranelli ed., 1997).

25. Mitchell & McCormick 1988, *supra* note 2; Regan, *supra* note 23.

26. Cingranelli & Richards 1999, *supra* note 7.

27. RAYMOND D. GASTIL, FREEDOM IN THE WORLD: POLITICAL RIGHTS AND CIVIL LIBERTIES, 1980 (1980), *quoted in* Stohl & Carleton 1985, *supra* note 2.

The main focus of the Political Terror Scales is on personal integrity rights. They do not provide a comprehensive measurement of all of the different categories of rights discussed in either of these reports. What they do provide, however, is coverage of what is probably the subset of human rights featured most prominently in both the Reports of the State Department and Amnesty International.

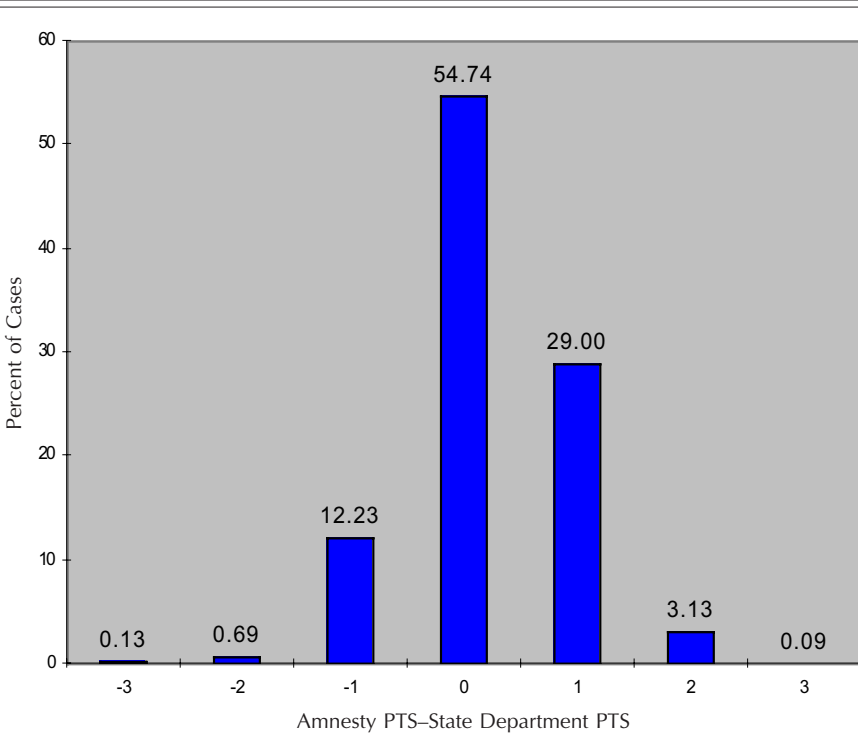
In order to examine the differences between the reports we first subtracted the values of the State Department scale from those of the Amnesty scale. This created a variable that theoretically could range from -4 to $+4$, with positive scores indicating the US State Department provided a more positive picture of the human rights situation than did Amnesty International. Negative scores represent cases where the US State Department provided a more negative assessment of human rights conditions than its counterpart.

V. SIMPLE DESCRIPTIVE ANALYSIS

First, in order to gain a better understanding for the data, we performed some descriptive analysis. In Figure 1, we present the distribution of the difference variable described above. The actual range of this variable in our sample is from -3 to $+3$. There are 2331 cases in our sample that had values for both the Amnesty and State Department variables. In most cases (54.7 percent) there is no difference between the scores. In the cases where there is a difference, the vast majority differs by an absolute value of one. The State Department had a PTS of one less than that generated for Amnesty in 29 percent of the cases; Amnesty had a PTS score of one less than the State Department in only 12.2 percent of cases. Thus, only in about 4 percent of the cases are the scores different by more than one point. In the relatively rare event in which there was a two-point difference in scales, the majority of those instances involved cases where the US State Department reports were more favorable toward countries (3.1 percent of the sample, as opposed to the .7 percent where Amnesty presented the more favorable report).

Though it was extremely rare, there were a few cases in which the State and Amnesty scores differed by 3. Among the cases treated relatively more harshly by the State Department, with scores of -3 were Argentina in 1985, Azerbaijan in 1993, and Croatia in 1994. During the years cited above, each of these countries was in, or had recently undergone a period of severe unrest. In the case of Argentina, commissions were established to investigate the "Dirty War." In 1993 Azerbaijan was contending with economic shortages and political disruption, because of the collapse of the former Soviet economic and political systems. In 1994 Croatia suffered from similar

FIGURE 1
An Examination of the Differences Between the State Department and Amnesty International Reports



political and economic collapses, which apparently resulted in greater increases in repression.

Among the cases treated most favorably by the US State Department, relative to Amnesty, were Israel in 1976, and Guinea in 1983, each of which had a difference score of +3. Israel, of course, is a long time friend of the United States.

Among the countries whose human rights practices were consistently treated more negatively by the State Department were: Nicaragua and Mozambique (with negative scores for eleven of the nineteen years in the sample), Laos (nine of sixteen years), Burkina Faso (six of eleven years), Croatia and Tajikistan (three of four years), Ukraine and Azerbaijan (four of four years). After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the difference scores of the newly created countries are mostly -1 or -2. Perhaps the US tended to give these new governments the benefit of the doubt while they were

consolidating their power. Alternatively, the degree of unrest in the former Yugoslavia and former USSR might have been such that information about specific human rights violations was more difficult for Amnesty International to obtain consistently with its smaller budget. For whatever reason these differences occur, it seems that the State Department is consistently harsher than Amnesty International in Eastern Europe in the period from 1992–1995.

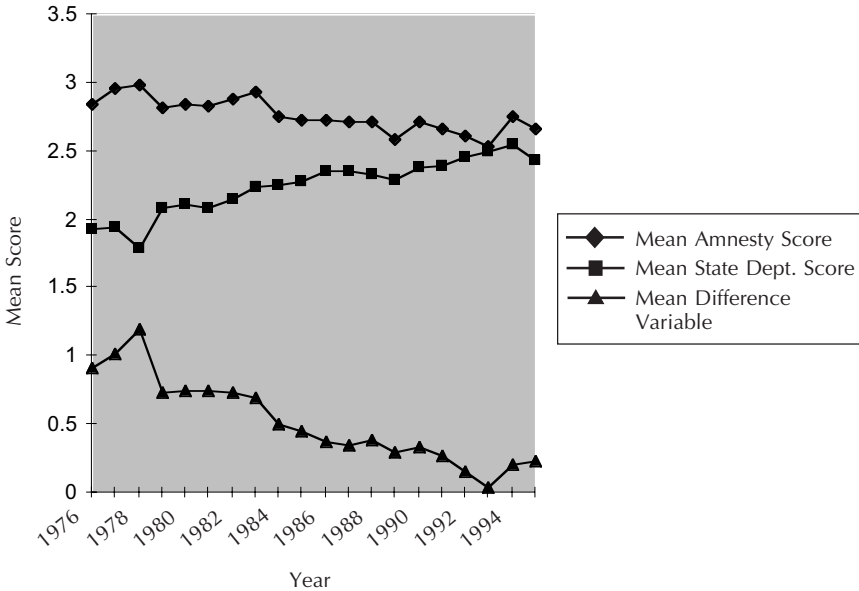
Countries that were treated more favorably by the State Department's reports 50 percent or more of the time were: Rwanda (ten of sixteen years), Turkey (fifteen of twenty years), Cape Verde (three of four years), Italy and Greece (thirteen of nineteen years), Switzerland (sixteen of nineteen years), France (fourteen of twenty years), Macedonia and Slovenia (one of two years), Egypt (ten of twenty years), Jordan (thirteen of eighteen years), Saudi Arabia (thirteen of fifteen years), Bahrain (eleven of twenty years), Israel (eleven of nineteen years), Sri Lanka (sixteen of twenty years), Philippines (ten of twenty years), Colombia (thirteen of twenty years), Uruguay (eleven of eighteen years), El Salvador (twelve of twenty years), and Brazil, Paraguay, and Venezuela (twelve of nineteen years). Many of these findings are consistent with allegations that the State Department treats with kid gloves, countries in which it has strategic interests (e.g., Israel, Egypt, the Philippines, El Salvador).

The overall distribution of the difference variable indicates that the US has tended to be somewhat less harsh than Amnesty in evaluating the human rights practices of other governments. This is perhaps a result of the greater weight it places on sovereignty issues—seeking to give other governments the benefit of the doubt. Or it may be that the State Department simply has been easier on its allies for security or power political reasons. Additionally, it may be that Amnesty, as an NGO focusing on human rights tends to be harsher in evaluating countries' performance in this regard, because its very subsistence is gained from publicizing human rights difficulties.

In Figure 2, we present the mean PTS score for both the Amnesty International and State Department reports, and for our difference variable. The results show several interesting trends. First, one notices a slight downward trend in the Amnesty scores across time. This may be attributed to Amnesty's tendency to cover the worst cases. In the early years of their reports, fewer countries were covered and attention tended to be centered mainly on countries that were the worst human rights violators.²⁸ The countries that were added tended to be nations with less repressive governments. Those changes resulted in a downward trend in the mean

28. See Poe & Tate 1994, *supra* note 2.

FIGURE 2
Mean Values of Human Rights Variables, 1976–1995



repression level in the cases that were covered by Amnesty.²⁹ In contrast, the US State Department reports have been nearly global in coverage since the early 1980s. There is an obvious trend with those reports as well, as the mean scores climb and are virtually identical to those reported by Amnesty International by 1993. However, the reports diverge again in 1994 and 1995. Consistent with these trends, the mean scores for the difference variable are largest in the earlier years, approaching zero in 1993 and increasing somewhat again, until the end of the series.

Why the increase in the values of the State Department reports? It would be more difficult to argue that the upward trend is due to case coverage. Some relatively repressive countries have been added to the sample in the 1990s, but this does not explain the trend evident throughout the 1980s. Perhaps the upward trend is due to real increases in repression. Alternatively, the convergence of these two lines might be representative of

29. See Poe, Tate & Keith 1999, *supra* note 7.

a change in the content of the State Department across time. The latter explanation is most consonant with the arguments of Innes, the Lawyers Committee, and the anecdotal information provided by Forsythe.³⁰

Though it is tempting to conclude that these trends are evidence that the assessments of the reports were becoming more similar and more consistent with one another across time, they do not provide information sufficient to draw that conclusion. It could be that while the means are converging, the two reports' assessments on particular cases were not. To ascertain whether this apparent convergence is real, we will now turn to an examination of the differences in the reports using a multivariate model.

VI. BUILDING AND TESTING A MULTIVARIATE MODEL

Random vs. Systematic Differences

Having completed several descriptive analyses, we can now conduct some analysis that explain the differences between the State Department and Amnesty International reports. Previous studies have shown that there is a high correlation between the two PTS's. In our current sample the Pearson correlation is .79 ($p < .001$).³¹ Still, as illustrated by the large but by no means perfect correlation between the two scales there are non-trivial differences in the pictures painted by these reports. Many of the divergences are almost certainly a result of random measurement error. For example, one reporting agency may have been privy to information unavailable to the other simply by happenstance. In addition, unintentional errors may have been made by the US State Department, Amnesty International, or even the researchers who coded the Political Terror Scales. In the analyses that follow we will test whether a significant proportion of the error is systematic. Drawing from the realists' argument, we will test whether these variations are consistent with the argument that US self-interest may have colored its human rights reports and that differences between the US State Department's and Amnesty International's reports will vary with the strategic, political, and economic importance of countries to US interests. We will present hypotheses, consistent with arguments of State Department bias, to see if they do in fact explain the systematic variation in the difference variable

30. Innes, *supra* note 2; LAWYERS' COMMITTEE 1993, *supra* note 2; and the anecdotal information provided by FORSYTHE, *supra* note 2.

31. We also ran the correlations between the two scales across time. The correlations do show a slight upward trend over time, from .75 for 1976, to a high of .88 in 1989 and 1990, and then trailing off to .83 in both 1994 and 1995.

developed above. If a large percentage of the variance in the difference variable can be explained with the model we develop below, then this would be an indication that the differences between the two reports are serious and systematic, consistent with allegations of bias. Conversely, if little or no variance is accounted for by the model, this would suggest that the common criticisms of the State Department's reports are weak and, at most, unfounded. We do *not* argue, nor do we believe that the Amnesty Reports offer the correct depiction of human rights realities, and that in all cases where they differ from the State Department we should accept the picture painted by Amnesty as correct. That argument would ignore the inevitable errors present in the Amnesty International reports, as well as the biases of that organization. However, if there is truth behind criticisms of the US State Department reports, we should find that a subset of the differences are patterned in ways consistent with critics' claims.³²

Regime Type Hypotheses

For most of the post–World War II years, consistent with the argument made anonymously by Kennan in the so-called X-paper, the major guide-post for US foreign policy was the containment of Soviet Influence (X 1947).³³ Jeane Kirkpatrick, Ambassador to the UN under the Reagan administration, argued that totalitarian (by which she meant leftist) governments were more serious violators of human rights than authoritarian regimes and were not apt to evolve into democracies.³⁴ Consistent with the Cold War thinking of the time, she argued that they should be treated more harshly by US foreign policy than authoritarian leaders.

We believe that, consistent with Kirkpatrick's thesis, countries with leftist ideologies will be treated more harshly by the US State Department reports than others, *ceteris paribus*. We also hypothesize that military regimes, most of which are authoritarian, will be given more positive

32. Though another way to proceed would be able to "triangulate" using reports from other countries or organizations, the Political Terror Scales are available for only the two sources, making this impracticable. Further, alternative reports, such as those of HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH, HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH WORLD REPORT 1992 (1991) and the government of Norway (Kathleen Pritchard, *Human Rights Reporting in Two Nations: A Comparison of the United States and Norway*, in HUMAN RIGHTS AND STATISTICS, *supra* note 2, at 235–57 that could be coded do not provide data on nearly as many countries or years as the two reports we chose to use. Finally, the expense of coding the PTS for these data currently is prohibitive.

33. *The Sources of Soviet Conduct*, 25 FOREIGN AFFAIRS 566–82 (1947).

34. Jeane Kirkpatrick, *Dictatorship and Double Standards*, 68 Commentary 34–45 (1979).

assessments by those reports. In many cases, regimes thought to be friends of the US have been perpetrators of horrendous human rights abuses.³⁵

To identify leftist governments, we borrow the operationalization of Poe and Tate, and Poe, Tate and Keith,³⁶ by defining a leftist regime as a political system that does not allow effective electoral competition or any non-socialist opposition. Also following those studies, military regimes are defined as those which “as a consequence of a successful coup d’état, led by the army, navy, or air force, that remained in power with a military person as the chief executive for at least six months in a given year.”³⁷ Both variables are coded “1” if the particular regime type is present and “0” if it is not, in a particular country year.³⁸ Consistent with our reasoning above, a finding that the coefficient of the leftist dummy variable is negative and statistically significant would be consistent with claims that the State Department has been biased against leftist countries. A finding that the coefficient of the military control variable is positive, would be consistent with the argument that the State Department was less stern than Amnesty International, regarding human rights conditions in those countries. To be fair, we should note that it is plausible that the differences between the US State Department and Amnesty International could arise due to leftist leanings of the Amnesty reports, rather than a systematic conservative bias on the part of the US State Department.³⁹ So we should be cautious in our interpretation of the results regarding this variable. If statistically significant results arise in our analysis of the entire sample, they cannot, in and of themselves, be taken as definitive proof that such biases exist in the State Department’s reports. Such results would, however, provide empirical evidence consistent with the claims of State Department, as well as anyone who would claim Amnesty has leftist leanings. If no such evidence is found, however, the claims of the State Department’s critics would clearly be discredited.

35. We find anecdotal evidence for these lines of arguments in critiques of the *Country Reports*. For example, in the case of Cuba, the Lawyers Committee, *supra* note 2, concludes that prior to 1989, at least, those reports suffered from “exaggeration and . . . undocumented conclusions,” *id.* at 78. Similarly, in the case of El Salvador, a military regime, that critique argues that the reports of the State Department were “extremely politicized” in the 1980s, Lawyers Committee 1993, *id.* at 102.

36. Poe & Tate, *supra* note 2; Poe, Tate & Keith, *supra* note 7.

37. Hamed Madani, Socioeconomic Development and Military Policy Consequences of Third World Military and Civilian Regimes, 1965–1985. Ph.D. dissertation, University of North Texas 61 (1992) (on file with author); R.D. McKinlay & A.S. Cohan, *A Comparative Analysis of the Political and Economic Performance of Military and Civilian Regimes*, 7 *COMPARATIVE POLITICS* 1–30 (1975); Poe & Tate 1994, *supra* note 2, at 858.

38. Some data used to test this were taken from Poe & Tate 1994, *supra* note 2. Sources used to update these data were ARTHUR S. BANKS, ALAN J. DAY, & THOMAS C. MULLER, *POLITICAL HANDBOOK OF THE WORLD* (1997); EUROPA PUBLICATIONS, *THE EUROPA WORLD YEAR BOOK* (1997).

39. See, e.g., Poe & Tate 1994, *supra* note 2.

Friendly Political Ties with the US

Just as we expect the State Department to be more critical of its natural Cold War enemies in leftist countries, we believe it is apt to treat its friends more favorably than other countries. During the post World War II era, the US definition of its friends was frequently tied to its efforts to contain communism. One factor to consider is whether countries are members of a strategic alliance with the United States. Any country that was a party to a mutual security agreement with the US (e.g., NATO, ANZUS, Rio Pact) is coded "1", others are coded "0". We were not satisfied with having this as our only indication of friendliness to US interests, though, because a number of friendly US client states have not signed such agreements. Therefore, we also include as an indicator of friendly ties, the amount of economic and military aid that a country was allocated by the United States in a particular year [collected from *US Overseas Loans and Grants and Aid from International Organizations* (1977 through 1997)].⁴⁰ If allegations of State Department bias have been correct we would expect that US client states, as indicated by the amount of foreign aid allocated, and countries that are US allies, would be treated more favorably by the State Department reports than by the Amnesty International reports. Statistically significant, positive, results would be consistent with these allegations.

Economic Interests

We also might expect that US economic interests would be considered in the development of the State Department's Human Rights Reports. Analysts drawing their inspiration from Marxist and neorealist arguments agree that economic interests are important, differing in how much weight they believe governments ascribe them.⁴¹ Accordingly, we test the hypothesis that countries that trade with the United States are treated more favorably by the State Department than others, once other factors are held equal.

In order to measure trade, we calculated the natural log of the sum of US imports from and exports to each country for each year of the sample. We expect that this trade variable will be positively related to the dependent variable that taps differences between the two reports. Statistically significant positive results can be interpreted as providing evidence consistent with allegations of bias in the State Department's *Country Reports*.

40. Agency for International Development, *US Overseas Grants and Loans and Aid from International Organizations 1977–1997*.

41. See, e.g., David A. Baldwin, *Neoliberalism, Neorealism and World Politics*, in *NEOREALISM AND NEOLIBERALISM: THE CONTEMPORARY DEBATE 7* (David A. Baldwin ed., 1993).

Temporal Effects

As evidenced by the trends in Figure 2, the reports tended to converge across time. Examinations of the State Department's reports by Innes, the Lawyers Committee, and others have suggested that these reports have improved in consistency across time, perhaps in reaction to critics or as a result of the end of the Cold War.⁴² To account for this trend, in some of the models we entered a series of dummy variables, where a separate dummy variable is coded "1" for all cases that occur in a year, and all other cases are coded "0". This is done for every year except for 1976, which is used as the base period, necessary to test the model. If the two reports converge, and that convergence cannot be explained by other factors in the model, the coefficients of the dummy variables identifying particular years should have increasingly negative values through time. Further, by examining the coefficients of these variables, we should be able to ascertain when the trends toward convergence occurred which will then allow US to draw conclusions about the likely effects of various administrations and events, such as the end of the Cold War.

To summarize, then, our baseline multivariate model is:

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Difference AI / State Dep. Human Rights Reports}_{it} = & a + b_1 \\ & \text{Leftist Regime}_{it} + b_2 \text{Military Control}_{it} + b_3 \text{Ally}_{it} + b_4 \text{Aid}_{it} + \\ & b_5 \text{Logged Trade}_{it} + e_{it} \end{aligned}$$

In addition, in some of our models we will add a series of dummy variables to identify the years in which the cases in our data set occur. The model will be tested on a nearly global sample of cases for which Amnesty International and the State Department each published reports. These data cover the twenty-year period from 1976 to 1995.

VII. TESTS OF HYPOTHESES CONCERNING STATE DEPARTMENT BIASES

Statistical Methodologies

An advantage of using a pooled cross-sectional time series data set is that it allows us to analyze effects across time and space simultaneously. However, there are two statistical difficulties that are commonly posed by this sort of design—heteroskedasticity and autocorrelation. These problems potentially

42. Innes, *supra* note 2; LAWYERS' COMMITTEE 1993, *supra* note 30.

affect the validity of tests of statistical significance.⁴³ We employed advanced statistical techniques to ascertain whether or not these were problems. Because we found that they had little substantive effect on the results,⁴⁴ we present the results yielded with more widely understood multivariate Ordinary Least Squares regression. This method allows us to control for the effects of potentially confounding factors statistically. Using this method we can ascertain the effect of a one-unit change of each independent (explanatory) variable on the dependent variable (our difference variable) while controlling for the effects each of the other independent variables included in our model.

Tests of the Model on the 1976 to 1995 Sample

First, we will present the most general tests that we conducted of the baseline model, on all the countries for which we could find data, for the 1976–1995 period. In Model 1, which tests only the hypotheses that may be posed from allegations of State Department bias, all variables are statistically significant in the direction we would expect to see if those allegations are true. Statistical significance, indicated by the asterisks, is achieved when we

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43. CHARLES W. OSTROM, *TIME SERIES ANALYSIS: REGRESSION TECHNIQUES*: SAGE UNIVERSITY PAPERS ON QUANTITATIVE APPLICATIONS IN THE SOCIAL SCIENCES (2d ed. 1990); James A. Stimson, *Regression in Space and Time: A Statistical Essay*, 29 AM. J. POL. SCI. 914–47 (1985).
44. To test whether heteroskedasticity is a hindrance, we conducted tests both with standard OLS regression and with OLS regression with Panel Robust Standard Errors, Nathaniel Beck & Jonathan N. Katz, *What to Do (and Not to Do) with Time-Series—Cross-Section Data in Comparative Politics*, 89 AM. POL. SCI. REV. 634–47 (1995). From our results we concluded that this difficulty does not affect our conclusions, because the results we gained from the more sophisticated panel corrected techniques are nearly identical to those obtained with standard OLS regression. Consistent with the argument of Halbert White, *Heteroskedasticity Consistent Covariance Matrix Estimator and a Direct Test for Heteroskedasticity*, 48 ECONOMETRICA 817–38 (1980), who originated the robust standard errors techniques, we can conclude that heteroskedasticity is not a problem since the results of this technique do not differ much from those obtained with OLS regression. Further, Durbin-Watson statistics and results yielded by the Prais-Winsten technique indicated that autocorrelation was not a serious difficulty once the series of yearly dummy variables was entered. The original, untransformed Durbin-Watson statistic was 1.78 for the model without the dummies, putting it in a questionable range, but it was 2.006 once the dummies were added, indicating no evidence of first order autocorrelation at the .05 level ($t = 1.56$, $p < .06$). We also ran a Generalized Least Squares (GLS) model, assuming an AR(1) process, and found the results to be similar, the only difference, again, being that the military control variable did not achieve statistical significance in Model 1. The AR(1) coefficient without the yearly dummies was not that great, at .28, but with them included that coefficient was quite tolerable, at .15.

know with a high degree of confidence (in this case either 95 or 99 percent confidence) that the effect is different from zero in the expected direction. The main numbers in the tables are coefficients which are measures of the magnitude of the effect of the independent variable, representing the effect of a one-unit change in each particular independent variable on the dependent variable. Thus, the negative coefficient of the leftist variable indicates that the State Department has been harder on leftist countries in its annual human rights reports than has Amnesty International. In contrast, it would appear that the State Department has been less stern than Amnesty toward governments friendly to the United States, as indicated by their being allies or foreign aid recipients. The results also show that Amnesty is less favorable to military regimes than the State Department, but this result is evidently the single finding depicted in the table that is partly affected by autocorrelation (see note 18), since the yearly dummy variables that seemed to alleviate autocorrelation difficulties were not included. Thus we cannot place much confidence in this finding. Finally, trading ties evidently have affected the difference between these reports as well, since the positive coefficient of that variable indicates that trade with the US was related to more friendly treatment in the US State Department Reports than in those of Amnesty International, once other factors are controlled.

In Model 2, in order to capture any trends in the data we add nineteen dummy variables, each representing a different year between 1977 and 1995. (One year, 1976, must be left untapped by a variable so that we have a baseline.) The results of the regression analysis in Model 2 are very similar to the results from Model 1, with a few exceptions. The military control dichotomy no longer is statistically significant, as its coefficient is weak and negative in this equation. However, the other variables are statistically significant at the .05 level (one-tail test) or less. The coefficient of the left variable is somewhat stronger, while the coefficients of the ally and aid variables are slightly weaker.⁴⁵

Though several variables were statistically significant, the alleged biases of the US State Department Reports do not have that much explanatory

45. One of the assumptions of O.L.S. regression is that the independent variables are not related to one another. Results of a Klein test, whereby the researcher checks whether there are linear relationships between the independent variables, indicate that multicollinearity should not pose much of a problem to our interpretation of these results. The tolerance statistics yielded by SPSSX are analogous to the results of the Klein test, with the R-squares resulting from regressing a particular independent variable on all others being subtracted from one, so that high tolerance statistics represent that multicollinearity is not a problem. The smallest tolerance statistic of any variable in the model was .54, for the dummy variable indicating 1990. The variables that we included to test hypotheses concerning State Department biases each had tolerance statistics of above .67. Since none of these tolerance statistics approached zero, we can conclude that multicollinearity is not a substantial hindrance here.

TABLE 1
Determinants of the Differences in the Human Rights Assessments of the
U.S. State Department and Amnesty International: an OLS Regression Analysis

	<i>Model 1</i> <i>Excluding Yearly Dummies</i>	<i>Model 2</i> <i>Including Yearly Dummies</i>
Constant	.10** (2.43)	.51** (5.50)
Leftist Regime Dichotomy	-.23** (-5.56)	-.32** (-7.89)
Military Control Dichotomy	.06* (1.78)	-.009 (-.29)
Ally	.13** (3.14)	.07* (1.94)
Aid	.0002** (3.34)	.0001** (3.03)
Logged Trade	.02** (2.98)	.02** (3.31)
N	2198	2198
R ²	.05	.16
Adj. R ²	.05	.15
F	22.8	16.92
Significance of F	.0000	.0000

Dependent Variable: Amnesty International Political Terror Scale—State Department Political Scale
 Unstandardized regression coefficients are presented, along with t-scores in parentheses.
 *Statistically significant < .05 level (one-tailed test)
 **Statistically significant < .01 level (one-tailed test)

power. The first model, which uses only state characteristics related to hypothesized State Department biases, is not very great. The adjusted and unadjusted R-squares, which measure the proportion of the variance in the dependent variable that is explained by the independent variables in the model, are about .05. So, we conclude that though the models provide evidence consistent with the proposition that the State Department has been biased toward US interests, and against its perceived ideological foes, we have absolutely no reason to believe that the vast majority of the differences between the reports are systematic. Any news of State Department reporting bias is disturbing. However, the rather low proportion of the variance explained by those biases is very good news for those who (like the authors of the present paper) have used the State Department reports to measure countries' respect for human rights.

After the series of yearly dummy variables are entered into the model,

the explanatory power of the model, as indicated by the adjusted R-square, increases to .15. The coefficients of the yearly dummy variables are presented in Figure 3 along with the confidence intervals, so that we may ascertain when the convergence between the reports occurred. Recall that Amnesty started the period with higher PTS, so that the negative difference score (Amnesty PTS minus State PTS) would indicate that, consistent with the observations of traditional scholars, the reports converged as time went on. We would thus expect that this trend would be exhibited in increasingly negative coefficients for the time indicator variables as time passed. The coefficients (or parameter estimates) achieved by these variables are represented by the squares, while the upper and lower bounds of the 95 percent confidence interval are indicated by the diamond and the circle, respectively.⁴⁶ An obvious first conclusion from the figure is that there was indeed a statistically significant tendency for the two reports to converge over time. The lower bound of the 95 percent confidence interval for the late 1970s is well above the upper bound for the early to mid-1990s.

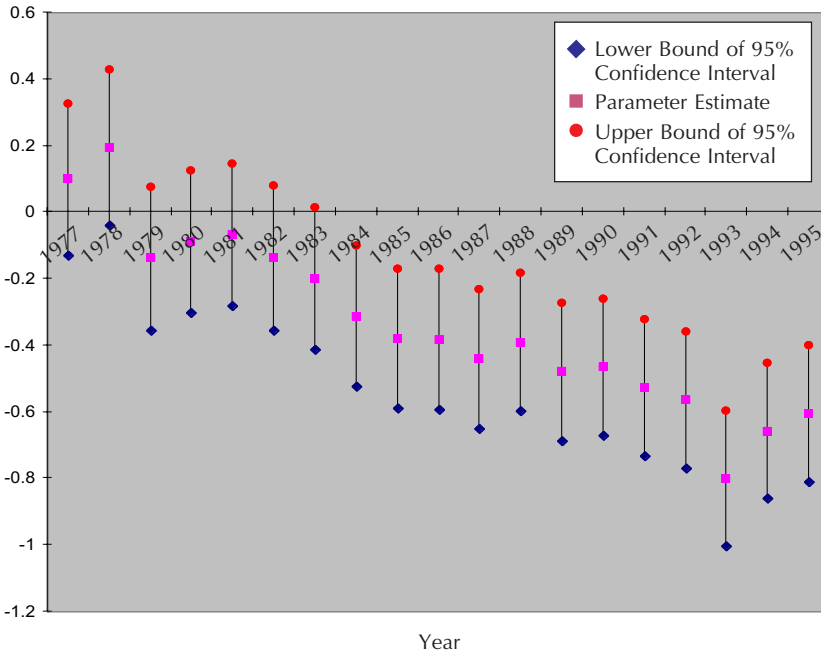
An inspection of the coefficients indicates the expected trend toward convergence is rather steady, with a couple of possible exceptions. One case of backsliding toward more biased reports occurred in 1980 and 1981, when the absolute value of the negative coefficient decreases. This is interesting, because though historical reporting might lead us to expect a move toward more biased reports by the State Department under Reagan (because of his stated desire to deemphasize human rights in comparison with security concerns) he did not take power until 1981. Perhaps the slightly higher coefficient for 1980 reflects an adjustment in that direction on the part of Carter after the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, but as the 95 percent confidence interval points out, it could quite possibly be the case that the trend could be flat, or downward during these years.

This figure also illustrates that the convergence between the two reports pre-dated the end of the Cold War. The series appears to progress rather steadily toward increasingly negative coefficients from 1981, the first year of the Reagan administration until 1993, when the Clinton administration takes power. In that year the coefficients are largest in absolute value, at $-.80$. However, from there they decrease in absolute value, back to $-.61$ for 1995. The coefficients of every yearly dummy variable from 1983 forward are negative and statistically significant.

This series is largely consistent with the findings of more descriptive, traditional accounts of the biases of the reports by the Lawyers Committee

46. We also ran a model where only the yearly dummy variables were included, and the substantive variables (e.g., leftist regime, allies) were excluded. The findings and conclusions that we would reach from these findings are the same as those reached in our multivariate analyses, discussed in the text.

FIGURE 3
The Effect of Year Variables on the Difference Between the
Amnesty and State Department Reports



that have documented improvements of the State Department's Reports.⁴⁷ Indeed, relatively recent editions of the Lawyers Committee's Critiques have lamented that the reports appeared to have "hit a ceiling, dogged by persistent shortcomings that prevent them from realizing their full potential as a policy source."⁴⁸ The finding that the coefficients of the 1994 and 1995 variables move upward (though admittedly not statistically significant) suggests that the tendency toward convergence in the two reports have leveled off, as might be expected if a "ceiling" had indeed been hit.

47. See, e.g., LAWYERS' COMMITTEE 1984, 1987, 1991, 1993, 1995, 1996; Innes, *supra* note 2.

48. LAWYERS' COMMITTEE 1995, *quoted in* LAWYERS' COMMITTEE 1996, at v.

Have Patterns Changed During Different Administrations?

Yet to be seen is whether different variables have influenced patterns in divergences between the State Department's human rights reports and Amnesty International reports under different presidents. Each presidency may be conceived of as a different temporally-defined system, in which different patterns of causation or "Nice Laws" specific to those systems would be found.⁴⁹ For example, Carter and Reagan clearly had diverging views on human rights. In his campaign for the presidency and during his first term in office, Reagan criticized the policies of his predecessor and, according to the conventional wisdom, tended to view human rights only through lenses tinted by anticommunism. If presidents can be successful in influencing the information reported by the State Department bureaucracy, then we might expect leftist countries to be treated relatively more harshly by the State Department, in comparison to the Amnesty Reports during Reagan's first term than under Carter.⁵⁰ These tendencies would have been hidden in our previous, general, analyses.

In Models 3 through 7, presented in Table 2, we used the same equation as in Model 1, performing the analyses separately for each term in office during the period of our period of study, with the exception of President Ford, for whom only one year of data was available. The separation of the Reagan years into two terms is consistent with the view that the election was a breakpoint during the Reagan years, and that after that date he (or other persons prominent in the administration) may have been concerned about his place in history, and thus acted to soften hawkish foreign policy stances.⁵¹

Model 3 analyzes the original equation for the time period of Carter's presidency from 1977 to 1980, Model 4 focuses on the Reagan administration from 1981 to 1984, Model 5 covers Reagan's second administration,

49. BENJAMIN A. MOST & HARVEY STARR, *INQUIRY, LOGIC AND INTERNATIONAL POLITICS* (1989).

50. We investigated the possibility that the ideology of Amnesty International may have varied over time. We could find no evidence of such variation in our examination of the reports. An e-mail correspondence with an Amnesty International representative at the US headquarters further allayed our concerns, stating that "while the organization has grown larger and the reports have increased in length over the past 20 years, Amnesty's mandate has remained consistent for 35 years." (Betsy Ross, of Amnesty International USA, e-mail correspondence to Tanya C. Vazquez, Tues., 17 Feb. 1998 22:53:28 and Wed., 18 Feb. 1998 15:19:00). By way of contrast, a reading of presidential speeches, and the introductions of various State Department Reports clearly show us that ideological orientations of US administrations have varied. Thus we believe that Amnesty International can probably be used as a baseline from which to judge differences in the State Department Reports, by presidential administration.

51. For another study that follows this practice, see Clair Apodaca & Michael Stohl, *United States Human Rights Policy and Foreign Assistance*, 43 *INT'L STUD. Q.* 185-98 (1999).

TABLE 2
Determinants of the Differences in the Human Rights Assessments of the U.S. State Department and Amnesty International, under Different Presidents, 1977–1995

	<i>Model 3</i> <i>Carter</i> <i>(1977–80)</i>	<i>Model 4</i> <i>Reagan I</i> <i>(81–84)</i>	<i>Model 5</i> <i>Reagan II</i> <i>(85–88)</i>	<i>Model 6</i> <i>Bush</i> <i>(89–92)</i>	<i>Model 7</i> <i>Clinton</i> <i>(92–95)</i>
Constant	.63** (6.64)	.37** (4.28)	.07 (.81)	.02 (.20)	-.22** (-2.56)
Leftist Regime Dichotomy	-.34** (-3.76)	-.56** (-6.80)	-.23** (-2.96)	-.22** (-2.68)	-.10 (-.77)
Military Control Dichotomy	-.07 (-.92)	.14* (1.98)	-.07 (-.97)	-.11 (-1.73)	-.003 (-.04)
Ally	.26** (2.90)	.09 (1.00)	.12 (1.48)	.01 (.20)	-.06 (-.64)
Aid	.0001 (1.39)	-.00008 (-.72)	.0002** (2.35)	.0001 (1.29)	.0002 (1.29)
Logged Trade	-.006 (-.44)	.02 (1.37)	.02* (1.86)	.02* (2.19)	.04** (2.54)
N	341	413	466	506	540
R ²	.10	.16	.08	.06	.02
Adj. R ²	.09	.15	.07	.05	.01
F	7.69	15.07	8.49	6.19	2.51
Significance of F	.0000	.0000	.0000	.0000	.0290

Dependent Variable: Amnesty International Political Terror Scale—State Department Political Scale
 Unstandardized OLS regression coefficients are presented, along with T-scores which are in parentheses.
 *Statistically significant < .05 level (one-tailed test, except for Constant where two tailed test was employed.)
 **Statistically significant < .01 level (one-tailed test, except for Constant where two tailed test was employed.)

1985–1988, Model 6 covers the Bush presidency, 1989 to 1992, and Model 7 covers the period under Clinton from 1992 to 1995.

Looking at each explanatory variable across the five models, 3 to 7, we see some intriguing differences and trends. First, the coefficient of the leftist regime variable is by far the largest in the first Reagan administration, but not that much larger than during some of the first years that the reports were published under Carter. However, in his second term in office the effect of the leftist variable decreases substantially, lower than it had been under Carter. This variable's coefficient holds steady under Bush, and then decreases further under Clinton, when it is no longer statistically significant.

The trends in these results provide more evidence that biases in the US State Department reports existed in the first place. As noted before, some would argue that the Amnesty reports have a pro-leftist bias. But if that is the case, why would evidence of differences between these reports, where leftist countries are concerned, disappear across time? We could think of no reason to assign responsibility for these differences in patterns to changes in Amnesty International's Reports. And it would be very difficult to attribute the increased differences in these two reports under the first Reagan administration to greater leftist leanings on the part of Amnesty International, occurring roughly in accordance with the ascension of this US president. A much better explanation is that two factors are at work. Consistent with the work of the Lawyers Committee (i.e., 1993), the State Department's Reports appear to have been biased against some leftist countries, but they probably have become less biased over time. Another part of the puzzle may be that there are many fewer leftist countries in the international system in the 1990s than in the 1980s, the number included in the sample was in the low thirties, depending on the year, which began a precipitous decline in 1990, until the 1994–1996 period, where this number decreased to nine. A model, tested on the entire data set, incorporating an interactive term between the passage of time in the form of a year counter variable time and the left variable, did indeed indicate that with the passage of time the effect of the left variable weakened. Other analyses with interactive terms were attempted, but most were plagued by multicollinearity and thus are not presented here.⁵²

Another interesting difference in these findings is that the tendency of the State Department to be more favorable to its allies, in comparison to the Amnesty International Reports, disappears relatively early in the series. This variable had a strong coefficient and a statistically significant effect under Carter, which dissipated under Reagan and thereafter. These findings are

52. To gauge changes in the effect of the leftist variable throughout time, the baseline model with yearly dummy variables was used, and an interaction term of the left variable times a year counter variable was entered. The coefficient of the interaction between left and the year counter was .018, with a t-score of 2.22 ($p < .05$), while the coefficient of the left variable was $-.51$ (t-score = -5.49). Thus the effect of the leftist variable dissipated as the years went on. As suggested in the text, we also experimented with other interactive terms to check the results that were presented. We found that if an interactive term of left with the first Reagan administration is added, the coefficient of the interaction was $-.30$, with a t-score of -3.39 ($p < .01$). However if both the left x year counter interaction, and the Reagan I x left interaction were entered, the year counter interaction, though positive, was no longer statistically significant. We attribute this to the high multicollinearity between the interaction terms and the left variable. Unfortunately many of our efforts to examine interactive effects (i.e., trade with time and the post-Cold War period, ally with time) were plagued by multicollinearity and therefore we judged them not sufficiently interesting to warrant presentation here.

consistent with the proposition that Reagan administration I tended to favor military regimes consistent with the ideological biases induced (or perhaps more likely, rationalized) by the Kirkpatrick Doctrine. However, that tendency disappeared during Reagan II, which instead appears to have been less apt to report the human rights abuses of US foreign aid recipients than Amnesty International.

A third very interesting pattern is evident when looking at the progression of results with the trade variable across the administrations. Trade with the US is the one independent variable in the model whose effect tends to grow larger across time. Evidently the State Department's reports have changed in ways consistent with the widely perceived growth in the importance of economic ties, as well as the concomitant perception that strategic ties are less salient. This variable first reached statistical significance under the second Reagan administration, held steady under President Bush, and increased again under Clinton.

These analyses also provide us with yet a final test of the nature of the convergence between the two reports. If the State Department is becoming less biased in its reporting, as the Lawyers Committee and others have pointed out, we would expect the explanatory power of the bias variables to decrease in later administrations. Thus the R-squares (which, again, measure the percentage of the variance explained) of the models would be expected to decrease with time. An examination of the R-squares obtained by the models provides such evidence. The adjusted R-square is .09 under Carter, rising to its highest value, .15, during the first term of Reagan. From then on explanatory power decreases substantially, to .05 under Bush, and finally, to .01 under Clinton. As in the analyses above, autocorrelation was found not to pose any difficulties in interpretation.⁵³

VIII. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

In this paper we have compared, using quantitative analyses, the depiction of human rights in the US State Department's *Country Reports* and the annual reports of Amnesty International. We did this by conducting a variety

53. Although some of the Durbin-Watson *d* statistics fell between the lower and upper limit, the significance of the results yielded by applying the Prais-Winsten technique, which controls the effects of autocorrelation, are nearly identical to the results presented in the Table 2 for each administration. We also conducted parallel analyses with the applicable annual dummy variables included and found no substantial differences in results. We do not present those results here because of our interest in assessing the degree to which the alleged State Department biases have dissipated across time. The addition of dummy variables confuses our efforts to assess the explanatory power of alleged State Department biases by comparing R-squares.

of quantitative analyses comparing parallel human rights measures variables generated from those reports. We conducted both simple descriptive and multivariate explanatory analyses on data from the period 1976 to 1995.

Drawing on earlier, qualitative research and existing theories, we tested hypotheses consistent with arguments that the US State Department's human rights are biased. While such arguments and allegations abound, to our knowledge there had never been any kind of systematic quantitative tests conducted to find if the historical record is consistent with those arguments. For the most part, hypotheses concerning these biases found limited support in our general analyses. The results indicate that the State Department's reports, in comparison to those of Amnesty International, have at times favored US friends and trading partners while discriminating against its (perceived) leftist foes.

That being said, these analyses gave us no reason to believe that State Department biases affected their assessments of the vast majority of cases during the twenty-year period our data covered. This is because hypotheses consistent with critics' allegations of State Department bias explained only a very small percentage of the variance in the differences between the two reports. Further "good news" to those who have had to sort out ambiguities between the two reports in the past, is that the two reports have clearly converged in their assessments of human rights violations over time. It seems likely this is because the US State Department has instituted improvements in the reports in response to its critics. Evidence consistent with the disappearance of most biases over time is also found in results pertaining to particular administrations. The finding that the leftist government variable had its greatest impact during the Reagan years suggests that the ideological orientations of presidents might, at times, have colored the information coming from the bureaucracies that lie well beneath them.

Our research supports the conclusion that the bias that appeared in the initial State Department Reports in the 1970s and early 1980s tended to disappear over time. Some serious causes for concern remain, though, since the results also suggest that just as the biases related to strategic and political interests faded, a new bias relating to US trading partners might have emerged. Changes in the international system may have been partly behind the convergence, but our findings suggest that such a change may also have been the catalyst for the appearance of new biases.