

# **The Limits of Shaming:**

## **Evaluating the Effectiveness of the Human Rights Advocate's Favorite Tool**

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The New School Graduate Program in International Affairs

GPIA Student Working Paper Series

March 30, 2009

## I. Introduction

The most frequently utilized implement in the toolbox of mainstream human rights advocates is the tactic of “naming and shaming”. When using this simple tactic, advocates seek to mobilize and direct shame at violators of human rights norms by publicly exposing the human rights abuses or failings of states (Roth, 2004: 63). However, despite the popularity and endurance of this tactic, the shaky status of human rights around the globe begs the question: is shaming an effective way for human rights advocates to push states towards accepting and respecting human rights? This research examines four specific cases of states which have received a great deal of critical public attention from human rights advocates in the past two decades: The People’s Republic of China, the Russian Federation, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela and Zimbabwe. It identified ways that governmental and non-governmental actors have sought to mobilize shame among international publics and the international community of states against these countries and considers a variety of indicators of human rights respect on the part of the four examples. If the shame directed at human rights violators (y) was having an effect, then we would expect to see tangible evidence of behavioral or at least rhetorical change (x) on the parts of the “shamed”; however, this research shows that in these four cases at least, the efforts of human rights advocates have yielded few results observable to the outside eye. This suggests that human rights advocates need to develop new tools and approaches to seeking to influence state behavior and further the cause of pushing human rights norms.

The following limitations have been applied to the research and findings of this report. First, human rights have historically been thought of as comprising two groups of rights. Western human rights advocates and governments have traditionally championed civil and political (CP) rights, which include among others the right to life, liberty, equality before the law, freedom of association, freedom of conscience and expression and the right to not be discriminated against, tortured or subject to enslavement (Uvin, 2004: 10; ICCPR: 1966). CP rights also include the right to have access to a variety of opinions in different mediums (a free press, for example) and to participate, either directly or indirectly in free elections (ICCPR, 1966: Arts. 19 & 25). Former communist states have traditionally stressed the importance of economic, social and cultural (ESC) rights, which emphasized rights to work, education, health, a decent standard of living and a right to participate in the cultural life of the community (Uvin, 2004: 10; ICESCR, 1966). While human rights advocates have increasingly reconciled what was once an ideological division between both groups of rights, this study will primarily focus on CP rights since “naming and shaming” has most frequently been applied to situations of perceived CP rights abuse (Roth, 2004: 63-64). CP rights are codified in the International Convention on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and elaborated in the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the Convention against Torture (CAT) (ICCPR, 1966; CEDAW, 1980; CAT, 1984). In order to capture contemporary human rights issues over a period sufficiently long to show changes over time, the timeframe of the study will comprise the ten years leading up to 2006, the last year for which complete data was available at the time of writing. The study will examine changes in the human rights situation in four countries that have earned significant “bad press” for their human rights records, selected with respect for their diverse geographical, ideological, governmental, cultural and historical characteristics.

The organization of this study is as follows. The first section will explore the theoretical basis of shaming and its role in the creation and incorporation of international human rights norms. Subsequently, the case study countries will be briefly profiled with reference to the relevant CP rights concerns of each and the international shaming that they have attracted. The following section will examine quantitative and qualitative evidence to look for any possible changes in the human rights “performance” of the case-study states. The final section will offer conclusions regarding the effectiveness of shaming in influencing the incorporation of human rights norms.

A brief explanation of the evidence used in this study is in order. This report draws heavily from the research and conclusions of Human Rights Watch (HRW), Freedom House and the World Bank. HRW researches human rights situations around the world with an eye towards using its mostly qualitative findings to shame governments into action (HRW, 2006a). Freedom House is more analytical, employing country experts to evaluate various aspects of the interactions between government and society to come up with its unique 7-point scale of

freedom, in which 1 represents the most freedom and 7 the least. Freedom House rates countries based on the extent to which their citizens enjoy “Political Rights”<sup>1</sup> and “Civil Liberties.”<sup>2</sup> As both categories touch on articles in the ICCPR, Freedom House scores will be integral to this study despite their being based on subjective evaluations made by country specialists and academics (Freedom House, 2007g; ICCPR, 1966).

The World Bank World Governance Indicators are the other major source of quantitative data for this study. The Indicators are composite indices of ratings drawn from sources such as the Economist Intelligence Unit, Global Insight Business Conditions and Risk Indicators, the Reporters Without Borders Press Freedom Index and from polling organizations such as Afrobarometer, Latinobarometro and Gallup. The aggregate scores are translated into a “percentile rank” which shows the percentage of countries that scored worse than the country in question for a particular indicator. These aggregated percentile rankings have a margin of error of about 10-15 points and the data as a whole have a confidence interval of only 90%. Of the indicators available, those with relevance to human rights and the ICCPR in particular are the aggregate indicators for “Voice and Accountability,” “Political Stability and Lack of Violence,” and “Rule of Law” (World Bank, 2007a; ICCPR, 1966). Given that these scores are derived from survey- or poll-based raw data that are then aggregated and ranked in comparison to all other countries with a fairly high margin of error and low level of confidence, these indicators have obvious shortcomings. However, while all these sources of evidence and data have their own drawbacks, they are among the best available and are still useful in determining general trends over time.

Finally, if state behavior regarding human rights is the dependent variable in this study, then shaming is the independent variable. Shaming can happen on many levels, from letter-writing campaigns by individual activists coordinated by groups like Amnesty International, to resolutions adopted or statements made by branches of the UN and EU, to critical speeches made by world leaders, to the very detailed chronicles of human rights violations and challenges assembled by HRW and other organizations (Amnesty International, 2007; HRW, 2006a). While a truly comprehensive study would ideally take this diversity of sources of shaming into account and concoct a method to quantify it, this study will focus primarily on the presence or absence of shaming emanating from western governments and world leaders, international organizations and major international non-governmental organizations.

## II. Theoretical Framework

This study examines the interplay between international pressure on human rights issues and state behavior on human rights. To accomplish this, a theory of how states react to pressure to accept international human rights norms will provide a necessary logical bridge to facilitate this study’s inquiry.

Finnemore & Sikkink have defined norms as behavioral standards which, through a general consensus about their rightness or appropriateness, attain what the authors call, “a quality of ‘oughtness’ and shared moral assessment,” (Finnemore & Sikkink, 1998: 892). Finnemore & Sikkink have proposed a three-stage “life cycle” of norms. Norms emerge through the work of dedicated “norm entrepreneurs” who employ persuasion to try to peddle their idea to skeptics. If the norm gains enough converts, its acceptance can “cascade” through society, especially if elites catch on to newly-proposed norms. During the “cascade phase,” elites may accept new norms if there is pressure exerted upon them to do so, especially if the good-standing of their personal reputations and/or legitimization in the eyes of the international community depend on it. Once the “cascade” has pervaded a society and its leadership, the final phase of “internalization” is reached, at which point the norm is embedded into the fabric of societal function and ceases to seem “new” (Finnemore & Sikkink, 1998: 895).

Given the primacy of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in the history and diplomacy of the United Nations, the widespread ratification of the major human rights treaties, and the increasing use of human rights language in world politics, human rights have arguably taken on the status of norms in today’s world. While

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<sup>1</sup> The Freedom House definition of Political Rights includes rights of citizens to choose their government through legitimate elections, join and associate with political parties and organizations, and otherwise participate in the political sphere.

<sup>2</sup> These include the freedoms of religion and speech, and rights to life, to organize and to live in a state which respects the rule of law.

states' respect of international human rights norms and their treaty obligations often leave much to be desired, human rights remain the ideal rules of the game and the standards against which human rights advocates measure state behavior. In this sense, norm "entrepreneurs" sold the idea of human rights well during the construction of the United Nations and the norms of human rights have "cascaded" significantly through the international community of states. However, we have definitely not yet reached the point where human rights norms can be considered "internalized" the world-over (Finnemore & Sikkink, 1998: 895; Donnelly, 2003: 14; Glendon, 2002: xvi; UNHCHR, 2007).

Human rights advocates use shaming to try to close this gaping hole between theory and practice. Shaming can be aimed at the citizens of a country, its government, or both. International shaming can provide a measure of comfort through solidarity to a repressed population, bolster domestic political opposition, or even aid in starting a popular mobilization or uprising against a rights-violating regime. Applied to governments, shaming at the very least reminds rights-violating elites that they are operating outside of the rules that the rest of the world (ideally at least) operates by. It can also tip the balance between maintenance of the status quo and reform in situations where a regime may be under other forms of economic or diplomatic pressure to change (Wachman, 2001: 264-265).

Risse & Sikkink (1999) have constructed a theory of how states can be socialized into incorporating international norms which Wachman has modified for human rights norms. This "spiral model" starts in its first stage with domestic groups making demands on the state for the respect of human rights. Met with resistance or repression, domestic groups look outside the borders of their own state for international advocates, invoking what Risse & Sikkink call the "boomerang" approach to lobbying their government from without via outside advocates (Risse & Sikkink, 1999: 22 – 34; Wachman, 2001: 262). In its second stage, external advocates, contacted and informed by domestic groups via transnational informational networks, seek to lobby the state in question on behalf of the repressed domestic group through the use of shame and by encouraging other states and international organizations to do the same. In the third stage, the targeted state may respond to international shaming with incremental changes in behavior which Risse & Sikkink have termed "tactical concessions" or "cosmetic gestures" (Risse & Sikkink, 1999: 25; Wachman, 2001: 263). These changes are generally insubstantial and motivated primarily by economic or diplomatic self-interest; however they can set important precedents and raise domestic expectations for further changes or reforms. In the fourth stage, if enough incremental changes are made as a response to international shaming, the target state may start using the language of human rights to describe its policies and behaviors and may even link its legitimacy with human rights norms, thereby risking hypocrisy if it reneges on these pronouncements. The fifth and final stage of the "spiral" sees the target state fully accepting human rights norms and both internalizing them into the national legal framework and enforcing them with the rule of law (Wachman, 2001: 263-264).

However, as Wachman has noted in his study of shaming and the PRC, a state's progression from human rights violator to protector is rarely so linear (2001: 257). In particular, given the various governmental systems, internal power struggles between political elites and the interplay of internal and external pressures, it can be extremely difficult to determine whether or not international shaming is affecting state behavior at all. Additionally, when and if positive changes do occur, giving international shaming the credit for having *caused* that change is also tricky due to the panoply of factors that influence state behavior (Wachman, 2001: 259). With that in mind, this study aims to achieve rather modest goals. Through an exploration of the human rights issues in the case study countries, any high-profile shaming that has been directed at them as a result and any changes in behavior that have occurred over the past decade, this study will seek to determine if any rough correlation between shaming and positive human rights change can be observed in the countries studied. In the final section, the theory elaborated above will be applied to the cases in question to see what sorts of informed guesses can be made regarding causality.

### III. Case Studies: Human Rights Issues and International Shaming

#### *People's Republic of China (PRC)*

**Issues** – Despite being a State Party to the ICESCR, CEDAW and CAT and a signatory of the ICCPR, as shown below in Figure 1, systematic human rights abuses have long been prevalent in the PRC (UNHCHR, 2007; HRW, 2007b: 258). Unrest in rural areas, where the booming economic growth of China's coastal regions has yet to penetrate, has been met with violent state repression and increasingly tight controls on media reportage, internet access and NGO activity. The regular use of quelling internal dissent through the imprisonment of activists has made China the subject of international outcry for years. HRW notes that the PRC has adapted by developing “layers of control,” tactics which include informal house arrest, police intimidation, tapping of phones and reading of electronic correspondence and other covert methods, as an alternative to arrest for attempting to contain critics and protesters (HRW, 2007b: 258). The legal system is highly opaque and offers little chance of redress for victims of state violence or land seizures (HRW, 2007b: 259-260). Citizens of the PRC with internet access find that their access to information is highly restricted by government censors, acting in concert with corporations such as Google, Yahoo! and Microsoft. Writers and contributors to web and print-media content deemed critical of the government have been subject to harassment and even imprisonment (HRW, 2007b: 261-262). Religious organizations are strictly controlled by the state and some, such as Falon Gong, have been labeled “cults” and their adherents subject to harassment and abuse at the hands of the state security services (HRW, 2007b: 264). Repression of Uighur and Tibetan minorities in the PRC's west and southwest based on charges of “separatism” have also prompted international protest (HRW, 2007b: 265-266).

The 2008 Olympic Games in Beijing further opened China to criticisms of its human rights record. Most keenly in focus were the PRC's economic and diplomatic relations with regimes implicated in systematic human rights abuses such as those of Sudan, Burma (Myanmar) and North Korea and the PRC's weak judiciary system, use of torture and the heavy employment of the death penalty to punish a wide range of crimes. Additionally, the forced evictions of Beijing residents, often without provisions for re-settlement, to make room for Olympic-related construction, and the use of migrant laborers on Olympic projects who worked under dangerous conditions for less than government-guaranteed wages, were also publicized in the run-up to the games (HRW, 2007a).

**Figure 1: Treaty Status of Case Study States**

	ICCPR	CAT	CEDAW	CRC
<b>PRC</b>	<i>Signature Only</i> October 5, 1998	Ratified December 12, 1986	Ratified July 17, 1980	Ratified August 29, 1990
<b>Russian Federation</b>	Ratified March 18, 1968	Ratified December 10, 1985	Ratified May 8, 2001	Ratified January 26, 1990
<b>Venezuela</b>	Ratified June 24, 1969	Ratified February 15, 1985	Ratified July 17, 1980	Ratified January 26, 1990
<b>Zimbabwe</b>	Acceded August 13, 1991	<i>No Action</i>	Acceded June 12, 1991	Ratified March 8, 1990

*Source: (UNHCHR,2007)*

**Shaming** - International outcry over human rights violations in the PRC reached a high-water mark after the violent crackdown on peaceful demonstrators in Tiananmen Square in 1989 (Freedom House, 1996: 182-183). Nothing quite so high-profile as that incident or the reaction it produced has occurred since but the world has kept its attention on the PRC.

In 1996, despite eventually renewing the PRC's most-favored nation trade status (MFN), the US House of Representatives passed a non-binding resolution citing China's pervasive human rights violations (HRW, 1997: 154). In 1999, the PRC was cited by the Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women for failing to live up to its treaty obligations to take action against domestic violence, workplace gender discrimination and curtailing the more draconian aspects of its population control program. That same year, the US State Department publicly protested China's mass arrest of dissidents on the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Tiananmen Square crackdown (HRW, 2000: 184-185). In 2000, then UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Mary Robinson took the opportunity of a trip to Beijing to publicly disparage the PRC's human rights violations while the US State Department protested the widespread repression of members of Falun Gong throughout China (HRW, 2001: 188-189). In 2001, the UN Commission on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination protested against repression of ethnic and religious minorities in Tibet and Xinjiang (HRW, 2002: 214). In 2006, the Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women again cited the PRC for its failure to establish a legal definition of gender discrimination (HRW, 2007b: 268).

### ***Russian Federation***

**Issues** - Russia, under the leadership of President Vladimir Putin, has been widely criticized as moving away from the political and social openings which the demise of the Soviet Union helped make possible (Freedom House, 2007d). The human rights situation in the Russian Federation during the past decade has been dominated by the case of Chechnya and the North Caucas region although other problems have persisted throughout the country. Russian military and allied militias have used forced disappearance, torture and even sexual violence in an effort to defeat secessionists in Chechnya, resulting in massive human rights violations against civilians. While Russia claims to have pacified Chechnya, conflict has resurfaced in other areas of the North Caucasus (HRW, 2007: 405; Jefferson, 2004: 325). Civil society actors, opposition political activists and journalists critical of the government have all come under increased scrutiny and even assault. Evidence of this includes the passage of recent laws regulating NGO activity in Russia, the violent crackdowns on peaceful opposition demonstrations and the murder, widely suspected to be politically motivated, of journalist and Kremlin-critic Anna Politkovskaia in 2006 (HRW, 2007: 406; BBC, 2007b). Various forms of discrimination have also been on the rise in Russia, especially against Russian Muslims and ethnic Georgians (HRW, 2007: 407; Freedom House, 2007d). The trafficking of women into prostitution has also been a prevalent human rights concern in Russia over the past decade (HRW, 2003: 359).

**Shaming** - In 1996, the UN Commission on Human Rights requested a special report on the situation in Chechnya. That same year, high-level officials in the Clinton administration made critiques of Russia's conduct in Chechnya and the US Congress cut significant amounts of bilateral aid to the Russian Federation. The EU Parliament also adopted a resolution warning Russia that its conduct in Chechnya could significantly damage relations with the EU (HRW, 1997: 236-37). In 1997, the UN Committee Against Torture expressed concern that Russia was failing to live up to its CAT obligations due to reports that Russian troops had employed torture in Chechnya. EU Commissioner Hans van den Broek and President Clinton both wrote personal letters of support to jailed dissident and environmental activist Alexander Nikitin. That same year, Clinton criticized the newly-passed "Freedom of Conscience and Religious Association" law which limited the rights of adherents to religions considered "new" to Russia (HRW, 1998: 276-277). In 1999, the EU Parliament passed a resolution condemning racist and anti-Semitic attacks and poor prison conditions in Russia and President Clinton criticized Russia for its excessive and "indiscriminate" use of military power in Chechnya (HRW, 2000: 292). In 2000 and 2001, the UN Commission on Human Rights set a precedent by passing a resolution criticizing the conduct of a permanent member of the UN Security Council, citing human rights abuses in Chechnya both years. In 2001, the Bush administration publicly voiced its concern over the deterioration of freedom of the press in Russia (HRW, 2001: 319; HRW, 2002: 346-347).

In 2002, the European Court of Human Rights cited Russia for degrading treatment of suspects awaiting trial in detention and found that the Russian judicial system routinely failed to pay compensation to victims when

ordered to do so in domestic court cases (HRW, 2003: 358). That same year, President Bush cautioned Russia on the growing prevalence of ethnic discrimination and the erosion of press freedoms and also criticized Russia's lack of action on drafting and passing laws banning the trafficking of women (HRW, 2003: 359). In 2003, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees protested Russia's decision to forcibly repatriate Chechen refugees from neighboring Ingushetia, despite ongoing violence there (Denber, 2004: 129). In 2004, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe adopted a resolution calling for accountability for Russia's human rights abuses in Chechnya (HRW, 2005: 411). In 2005, the Parliamentary Assembly again criticized Russia for its conduct in Chechnya and for the political nature of the tax fraud trials that led to the imprisonment of two prominent businessmen, Mikhail Khodorkovsky and Platon Lebedev (HRW, 2005: 386). Russia was also found guilty by the European Court of Human Rights of violating the right to life of its citizens and violating its obligations under the CAT through the conduct of members of the Russian military in Chechnya (HRW, 2007: 406). Finally, in 2006, world leaders including President Bush voiced their concerns for Russian journalists following the murder of Anna Politkovskaia and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe again criticized Russia for its human rights violations in Chechnya (HRW, 2007: 409).

### ***Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela***

**Issues** - While President Hugo Chávez has stolen the international spotlight with his noisy denunciations of US foreign policy and grand proclamations of the aims of his "Bolivarian Revolution" and plans for "21<sup>st</sup> Century Socialism," the domestic human rights picture in Venezuela has in many ways deteriorated in the past decade (Freedom House, 2006: 785-787). The independence of the judiciary has been compromised by the packing of the Supreme Court with Chávez supporters in 2004 (HRW, 2007: 228). Press freedoms have been severely restricted by a series of laws enacted since 2004. Such restrictions were perhaps best symbolized by the closure in 2007 of RCTV, a leading opposition television station (BBC, 2007c). Journalists critical of Chávez have been subject to legal action under Venezuela's recently revised *desacato* ("disrespect") laws which impose stiff punishments for defamation and libel (HRW, 2007: 230).

Violence is a pervasive human rights problem in Venezuela on many levels. Police officers have been charged with "disappearing" suspected criminals and participating in the extrajudicial executions of those suspected of criminal activity. Of the over 6,000 officers implicated in killings between 2000 and 2005, only 760 have been formally charged and a mere 113 convicted. Venezuelan jails are chronically overcrowded, contributing to frequent riots and violence between prisoners (HRW, 2007: 230-231).

**Shaming** - In 2001, Venezuela was the subject of a Human Rights Committee statement of concern over the prevalence of disappearances and executions of suspected criminals carried out by police and the military. The Human Rights Committee also cautioned the Chávez government that reforms of the judiciary were undermining the independence of the courts (HRW, 2002: 173). That same year, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights appealed to the government on behalf of several journalists being tried in criminal courts on defamation charges, voicing fears of a political motivation behind their charges (HRW, 2002: 174). In the tumultuous year of 2002, a coup led by rebellious elements of the military, leaders of the business community and a coalition of labor unions removed Chávez from power for three days. The coup-plotters garnered widespread condemnation up to and after the return of Chávez to power on April 14 (HRW, 2003: 161-164, 170). In 2005, the Inter-American Center for Human Rights cited Venezuela for the swelling power of the executive branch of government under Chávez, the weakening separation of powers and the influence of the military in government (HRW, 2005: 217).

### ***Zimbabwe***

**Issues** - While staggering inflation and an otherwise deteriorating economy have blemished the international public perception of Zimbabwe in the past decade, abuses of human rights have also been rampant under the government of President Robert Mugabe, president since independence in 1980 (Freedom House, 2006: 785). Human Rights

Watch reports that Zimbabwe under Mugabe, despite being party to the ICCPR and ICESCR (although notably not the CAT) has come under repeated criticism for its brutal treatment of peaceful protesters, members of the political opposition, human rights activists and members of civil society. Prisoners of the regime have accused the government of torture and mistreatment while in custody. While the economic meltdown has destroyed the livelihoods of many Zimbabweans, government-sponsored demolition of informal settlements through a program known as Operation Murambatsvina has led to further destitution (HRW, 2007: 171; UNHCHR, 2007). Cases of widespread harassment and police brutality towards civil society activists and opposition supporters have even earned the President's praise, as evidenced by President Mugabe's quote that a group of trade unionists severely injured by police deserved to be, "thoroughly beaten" for airing their grievances with the government publicly (HRW, 2007: 174). Human rights activists have routinely been accused of siding with the domestic political opposition or acting as agents in the pay of foreign governments with aims at undermining the government's stability (HRW, 2007: 176).

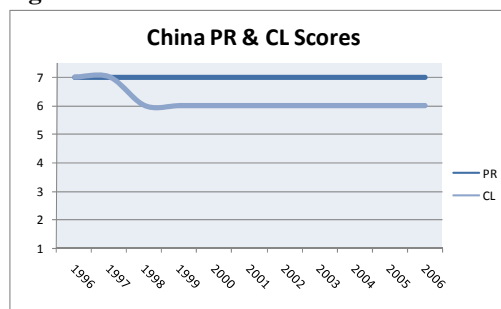
**Shaming** - In 2002, the European Union imposed diplomatic sanctions on officials in President Mugabe's ZANU-PF government, including the president himself, citing human rights violations as one of their concerns. These sanctions were extended in 2004. That same year, the African Union adopted a report sharply critical of the human rights situation in Zimbabwe (Freedom House, 2006: 803-805; HRW, 2005: 182). In 2005, the Operation Murambatsvina clearances were publicly condemned by representatives of the US, EU and by a special envoy to UN Secretary General Kofi Annan (HRW, 2006: 158).

#### IV. Trends in CP Rights

##### *People's Republic of China*

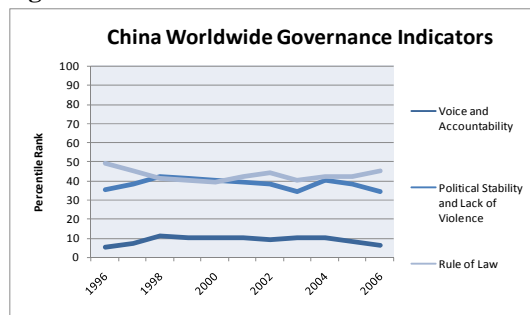
**Quantitative Data** - The example of the PRC offers a relatively static case in terms of changes in its behavior regarding human rights. Looking at the data presented in Figure 2, Freedom House puts the PRC's PR score at a consistent "7" (representing the least political rights on the seven-point scale) though its CL score changed from "7" to "6" between 1997 and 1998 (Freedom House, 2007e). However, Freedom House notes in its 1999 *Freedom In the World* report that this change in the CL ranking resulted from a methodological change that created new criteria for capturing subtle changes in the intrusions of the Chinese state into the lives of its citizens. Additionally, the report further notes that this incremental opening, reflecting new freedoms for citizens to choose their places of work, more openness in the housing market and greater freedoms to travel domestically and internationally, was disproportionately enjoyed by members of China's urban middle class (Freedom House, 1999: 133-136). The Worldwide Governance Indicators, shown in Figure 3, further reflect this consistently negative state of affairs.

**Figure 2**



Source: (Freedom House, 2007e)

**Figure 3**



Source: (World Bank, 2007a)

Notably, the PRC's strikingly low "Voice and Accountability" scores are perhaps indicative of the continuously autocratic nature of its nominally "communist" government (World Bank, 2007a; Freedom House, 2007a).

**Qualitative Observations** - Human rights observers have noted a similar lack of change in the PRC over the past decade. While incremental reforms to the judicial system were seen as making modest but tangible improvements to the rule of law in China over the entire past decade, repression of political and religious dissidents and journalists, police torture and brutality and repression of ethnic Tibetans and Uighurs in Tibet and Xinjiang have continued unabated (Freedom House, 2007a).

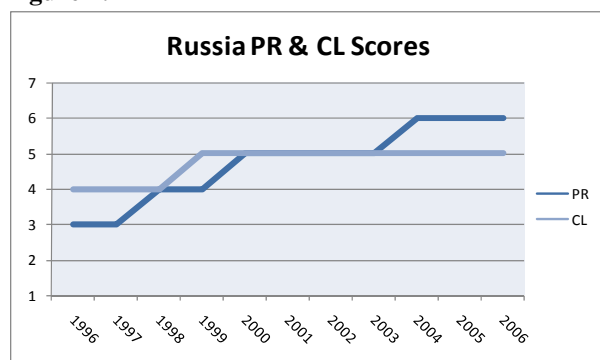
The few concessions that the PRC has made to human rights demands and standards would seem to be typical of the "cosmetic gestures" of stage three of the "Spiral Model." In 1997, for example, the PRC released prominent labor activist Wei Jingsheng at a strategic point in deliberations within the US Congress on the renewal of China's MFN status, which subsequently passed. In 1998, the PRC signed but did not ratify the ICCPR (Human Rights Watch, 1998: 171; UNHCHR, 2007). In 2004, China amended its constitution to commit itself to upholding the basic human rights of its citizens. However, these amendments have no direct enforcement mechanisms, making the importance of these amendments beyond their symbolic value dubious (HRW, 2005: 264).

### **Russian Federation**

**Quantitative Data** – Russia's scores for PR and CL, shown in Figure 4, demonstrate a clear upward (toward fewer rights and freedoms) trend in both indicators over the past decade. The slow climb of Russia's PR score from a "3" in 1996 to a "6" in 2006 was a particularly ominous change (Freedom House, 2007b). The Worldwide Governance Indicators, shown in Figure 5, paint a rather conflicted picture in which indicators for "Voice and Accountability" and "Political Stability and Absence of Violence" both peaked in 2002, a year that Human Rights Watch reported that the Chechen conflict continued to smolder, racist attacks on Muslims and ethnic minorities in Russia surged and libel suits and tax evasion charges landed many leading journalists in jail (Freedom House, 2007b; HRW, 2003: 350-355). However, the clustering of all three indicators close to the 20% mark in 2006 would seem to be broadly indicative of the erosion of rights and freedoms in Russia in the past decade, especially since the election of Vladimir Putin in 2000 (Freedom House, 2007d; Freedom House, 2007b).

**Qualitative Observations** – Descriptions of the human rights situation in the Russian Federation would seem to roughly map onto the general picture painted by the Freedom House numbers, describing a markedly negative trend in respect for human rights over the time period in question (Freedom House, 2007d). In terms of political rights and freedom of the press, the changes are particularly striking. In the mid-1990's, Russia boasted over 150 independent television, radio and newspaper outlets. There were nine major political parties and numerous independents held seats in the Duma. By

**Figure 4:**



Source: (Freedom House, 2007e)

**Figure 5:**



Source: (World Bank, 2007b)

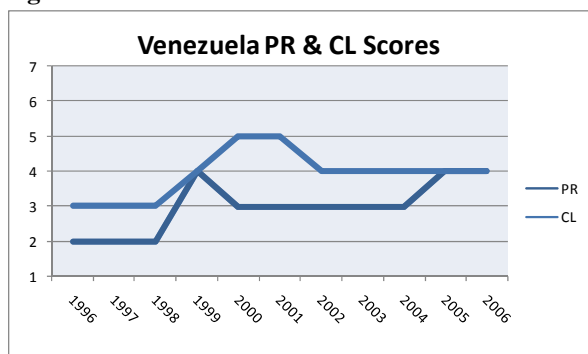
2006, in contrast, the pro-Putin United Russia party had a parliamentary super-majority and most television and radio outlets had been effectively consolidated under government control (Freedom House, 2007b; HRW, 2005: 407).

Other changes were less dramatic but equally troubling. During the presidency of Boris Yeltsin, the “Freedom of Conscience and Religious Association” law restricted the rights of adherents of religions that were deemed to have existed in Russia for less than 15 years and anti-government critics and human rights advocates were already being charged and imprisoned on politicized charges of contempt of court, libel or for sexual misconduct with minors (HRW, 1998: 272). In 1998, a system of resident registration was imposed, restricting the internal movements of civilians and giving police a legal tool with which to harass ethnic minorities in urban areas (HRW, 1999: 281-282). In 1999, with the breakdown of the fragile peace in Chechnya, Russian military aircraft began a 3-month carpet bombing of the Chechen capital, Grozny. Following the terrorist bomb attacks on residential buildings in Moscow, widely believed to have been the work of Chechen terrorists, ethnic profiling and harassment of Chechens and others from the North Caucasus jumped and security services installed observation hardware on telecommunications infrastructure across the country (HRW, 2000: 286-287; HRW, 2001: 314-319). Following the Beslan Massacre of 2004, President Putin linked the disaster to the collapse of the Soviet Union and Russia’s transition to democracy in the 1990’s and announced new plans to expand the power of the executive over the legislative branch and over the leadership of Russia’s regions. Opposition parties and remaining independent media outlets continued to be attacked through politicized court actions (HRW, 2005: 406-407). In 2006, the year of the murder of journalist Anna Politkovskaia, Ramzan Kadyrov, leader of a pro-Moscow Chechan militia thought to be responsible for the forced disappearances of civilians during the worst of the conflict, was installed as Prime Minister of Chechnya. Also, new regulations for civil society groups were announced which required registration with the government and permitted the government access to files and the broad rights to search the offices and facilities of these groups (HRW, 2007: 405-406).

## Venezuela

**Quantitative Data** – Venezuela represents the most variable of all the case studies in terms of both its positive and negative changes in the past decade. As the Freedom House scores, shown in Figure 6, demonstrate, while the overall trend in Venezuela’s PR and CL scores are towards fewer rights and less freedom over the ten years in question, this progression is not a linear one (Freedom House, 2007e). The Worldwide Governance Indicators, shown in Figure 7 below, paint a more straightforward picture of steady decline in all three categories. Interestingly though, while violence on the part of criminal gangs and police and security forces has been a continuous human rights problem in Venezuela over the past ten years, the data for “Political Stability and Absence of Violence” does not seem to reflect the short-lived coup of 2002 or the violence that preceded it (Freedom House, 2007g). However, this could simply be a function of the methodology of determining the percentile rankings (World Bank, 2007c).

**Figure 6:**



Source: (Freedom House, 2007e)

**Qualitative Observations** – Prison overcrowding, violent crime and heavy-handed police responses, sometimes involving the torture and extrajudicial execution of suspected criminals and often done with impunity for the officers involved, have plagued Venezuela throughout the past decade (Freedom House, 2007c). Major changes came following the election of President Hugo Chávez in 1998. In 1999, constitutional changes that strengthened the power of the executive branch and gave Chávez the power to dissolve Congress and control judicial appointments

triggered domestic protest over the perceived authoritarian streak of the new president. These tensions and the populist mass-movement nature of the *chávista* support-base were cited by Freedom House as reasons for the jump in Venezuela's PR and CL scores from 1998 to 1999 (Freedom House, 2000: 522-523; HRW, 2000: 150). Freedom House lowered its PR rating in 2000 following a mostly free and fair election but raised its CL score following the passage of new laws which permitted Chávez to impose state controls on the selection of the leaders of the largest labor unions. Additionally, Chávez stepped up his verbal intimidation of critical journalists and the government brought defamation charges against several prominent members of the press (Freedom House, 2001: 579-582; HRW, 2001: 145). In 2001, Venezuela's Supreme Court reinterpreted an article of the new constitution to make it illegal for journalists to report "half truths" or "false news," a move seen as creating a new mechanism for the persecution of journalists critical of the government. The forcible return of refugees fleeing ongoing violence in neighboring Colombia was also reported (HRW, 2002: 171-172).

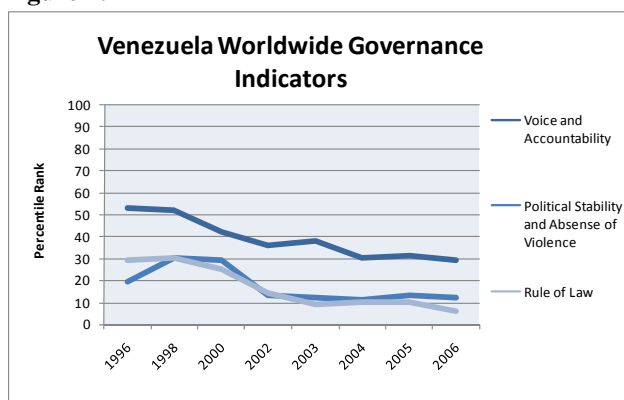
In 2002, a presidential decree on land reform and the expansion of government control over the oil sector prompted prolonged anti-government protests by a coalition of business, labor and some military leaders which culminated in violent clashes between pro- and anti-government groups and a short-lived coup in April. Chávez was returned to power only days later, but the coup attempt deepened the already heavily polarized population (HRW, 2003: 161-164). However, as civil society groups mobilized for and won a concession from Chávez to hold a referendum on the continuation of his presidency, Freedom House dropped its CL rating from 5 to 4 (Freedom House, 2003: 602-603).

By 2004, though Chávez won the largely free and fair recall referendum, he moved to undermine the independence of the judiciary by expanding the Supreme Court and stacking it with judges loyal to his government (HRW, 2005: 232). In 2005, Freedom House upped its PR score from 3 to 4 based on reports of government-sponsored intimidation of opposition political parties and the denial of government jobs and services to critics of the government (Freedom House, 2006: 785).

### Zimbabwe

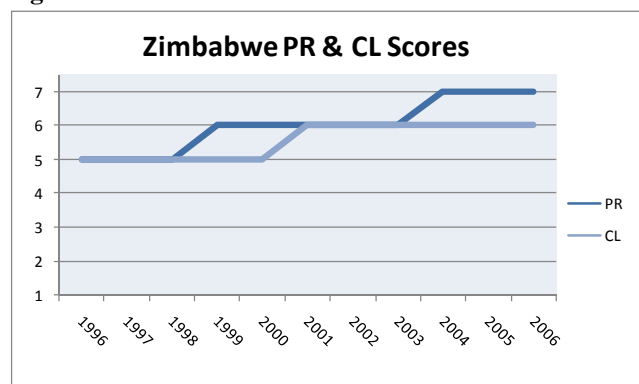
**Quantitative Data** – Data shown in Figures 8 and 9 point to a generally negative trend in the human rights situation in Zimbabwe over the past decade (Freedom House, 2007e; World Bank, 2007d). The slight increase in Zimbabwe's "Political Stability and Absence of Violence" score from 2005 to 2006 is a puzzling change given qualitative observations which will be elaborated on below. However, given the margin of error of the data set and the basing of the percentile ranks on Zimbabwe's performance relative to other countries, this score change does not necessarily reflect significant changes in behavior on the part of the regime (World Bank, 2007d; Freedom House, 2007d).

**Figure 7:**



Source: (World Bank, 2007c)

**Figure 8:**



Source: (Freedom House, 2007e)

**Qualitative Observations** - By 1996, President Robert Mugabe and his ZANU-PF leadership had already been in power since the end of white-minority rule in 1980. Elections in 1996 were dubbed seriously flawed by observers and constitutional changes in 1999 curbed existing democratic rights and freedoms of citizens (Freedom House, 1996: 504-505; Freedom House, 1997: 539; Freedom House, 2000: 536). Elections in 2000 were marked by political violence sponsored by the government and electoral fraud (Freedom House, 2001: 595). In 2004, the “Public Order and Security Act” and the “Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act”

were adopted, both of which were aimed at clamping down on criticism of the government from the press, civil society and opposition political groups. In the run-up to elections in 2005, fears of political manipulation in the distribution of food aid were raised and NGOs operating in Zimbabwe were required to register with the government (HRW, 2005: 178-181). In 2005, a constitutional amendment gave the government powers to seize privately-owned lands without restriction. Under Operation Murambatsvina, urban evictions left an estimated 700,000 residents of informal urban settlements homeless while the state also expropriated rural properties from white farmers and redistributed the land to ZANU-PF supporters (HRW, 2006: 154-157; Freedom House, 2007d). In 2006, evictions continued without provisions for the resettlement of former landowners and tenants and further restrictions were placed on the media, the political opposition and civil society. Detained activists reported torture and brutal treatment at the hands of the police (HRW, 2007b: 171).

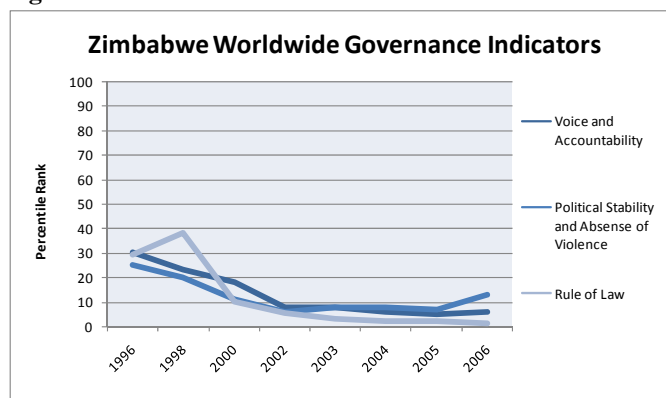
## V. Discussion and Conclusions

### *The Limits of Shaming*

In none of the four country case studies has a decade of international shaming on human rights issues coincided with tangible improvements in the practice of respecting human rights norms. China’s status as a repressive human rights violator has stayed roughly static, the human rights situations in Russia and Zimbabwe have deteriorated and Venezuela has bounced between positive and negative trends in the respect of human rights (Freedom House, 2007a; Freedom House, 2007b; Freedom House, 2007c; Freedom House, 2007d; Freedom House, 2007e; World Bank, 2007a; World Bank, 2007b; World Bank, 2007c; World Bank, 2007d).

The PRC has taken to using some human rights language, has released prominent dissidents at opportune times, signed human rights treaties and even incorporated human rights language into its constitution. However, these gestures have not resulted in any real change in the human rights situation in China, making them indicative of the “cosmetic gestures” typical of the third stage of the “spiral model.” Human rights rhetoric may raise expectations of greater freedoms, but no mechanisms exist for citizens to hold the government accountable for them (Freedom House, 2007a; HRW, 2005: 264; Wachman, 2001: 263). Wachman has noted in an earlier study of shaming and the PRC that part of the reason for this static state of affairs is that shaming is aimed in part at emboldening domestic opposition to human rights abuse. However, dissent in the PRC is extremely dangerous and the political space for such an organized opposition is almost nonexistent (Freedom House, 2007a; Wachman, 2001: 264). Additionally, the Chinese leadership bases its legitimacy in large part on its historical legacy of delivering

**Figure 9:**



Source: (WB, 2007d)

China from Japanese and western colonial influence and has invoked its sovereignty and cultural relativism in rejecting “imperialistic” western criticism of its human rights record (Wachman, 2001: 268-269).

While Russia’s human rights situation has deteriorated, President Putin has continued to invoke themes of human rights and democracy in his rhetoric (HRW, 2001: 314). However, Putin’s administration has sought to paint dissent as a threat to state security, charging critical reporters with “revealing state secrets” and justifying restrictions on civil society groups by claiming that NGOs operating in the country receive funding from foreign states and organizations that pursue an “anti-Russia” agenda (HRW, 2002: 344; HRW, 2005: 408). Putin has also squeezed the independent media and opposition political groups into relative insignificance. By politicizing foreign pressure and restricting the arena for public dissent, Putin has created new buffers against the impacts of shaming on his government (Freedom House, 2007b; Wachman, 2001: 275).

Venezuela under Chávez has also sought to politicize foreign criticism and influence of any kind, disqualifying NGOs receiving foreign support from government recognition in 2000 and charging critical civil society activists with “conspiring against the nation” in 2005 (HRW, 2001: 145; HRW, 2006: 213). While the ups and downs in Venezuela’s human rights record are hard to pin on international pressure, space for domestic political opposition to the Chávez government, though compromised, still undoubtedly exists in Venezuela. Therefore, despite state suspicion and politicization of foreign influence, international shaming may have helped sustain the domestic opposition movements that have helped prevent Chávez from further expanding his personal powers despite his poll-proven popularity and authoritarian tendencies (Wachman, 2001: 275; Freedom House, 2007c).

Finally, world outcry has not seemed to have had any effect on halting the disintegration of the human rights situation in Zimbabwe (Freedom House, 2007d; Freedom House, 2007e). A former rebel leader who fought against white-minority rule, President Mugabe has cast himself and his ZANU-PF government as bulwarks against western imperialism (BBC, 2002). Mugabe has based his legitimacy on his anti-colonial past and has linked his domestic opponents with foreign interests bent on destabilizing the country (HRW, 2007: 176). By violently restricting freedoms of expression and assembly and removing democratic checks on his power, Mugabe has insulated himself from pressure while also stifling the opposition and has denouncing human rights criticisms from the west as imperialist and hypocritical (Freedom House, 2007d; HRW, 2007: 171-176; Parsons, 2007).

### *Legacies of Hypocrisy*

In addition to endogenous issues relating to the ineffectiveness of shaming, western hypocrisy and double-standards on human rights issues have also eviscerated shaming applied from the west. Among many relevant topics of human rights concern, the Bush administration’s gross violations of human rights norms inherent in the suspension of *habeas corpus* for terror suspects detained in the “War on Terror” at Guantanamo Bay, the use of torture against them and infringements of the civil liberties of citizens under the “USA Patriot Act” make American pronouncements about respect for human rights and freedom prone to justifiable claims of hypocrisy (HRW, 2007: 532-536; ACLU, 2003). Indeed Mugabe himself has criticized President Bush for his hypocritical invocation of human rights standards, citing the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq and the denials of basic rights and dignities of prisoners at Abu Ghraib and Guantanamo to distract from his own dismal record of human rights violations in response to criticisms from President Bush about his “tyrannical” rule in Zimbabwe (Parsons, 2007). Similarly, the government of the PRC has reacted to human rights criticisms of China published in annual human rights reports of the US State Department with rebuttal annual reports of its own which condemn the human rights record of the US. In its response to the 2006 State Department report, the PRC highlighted issues such as illegal wiretapping, police brutality, extreme income inequality, and racial, ethnic and gender-based discrimination in the US. The report concluded, rather unsurprisingly, that the US should address its own domestic human rights violations before criticizing the records of other countries (Embassy of the PRC in the United States, 2006).

While such criticisms from the likes of Zimbabwe or the PRC are clearly motivated by the desire to deflect western criticism, both bring up some valid points. The problem with the west, and western governments in particular, “championing” human rights issues is that we are not yet in the fifth stage of Risse and Sikkink’s “Spiral Model” where human rights norms are fully and intractably incorporated into the operations of the state. We are,

more accurately, in some sort of protracted limbo between the fourth and fifth stages, where human rights norms are still “cascading” through society and western states increasingly use the language of rights to describe themselves but have yet to fully “slide into compliance with norms” (HRW, 2007: 532-536; Finnemore & Sikkink, 1998: 895; Wachman, 2001: 263).

Additionally, political and economic collusion with human rights violators demonstrates to the world that western states will overlook their supposed human rights “priorities” when doing so is in their diplomatic or economic self-interest. Although the EU continues to uphold an arms embargo on the PRC as continuing punishment for the massacre of pro-democracy protestors in Tiananmen Square in 1989, the Chinese leadership enjoys access to western heads of government and state and increasingly benefits from its inclusion into the world economy, especially since joining the World Trade Organization in 2001 (HRW, 2007: 268-269; BBC, 2001). In 1996, lack of support from the EU stalled the progress of a proposed Human Rights Commission resolution condemning human rights abuses in China while Airbus, a subsidiary of the massive pan-European aerospace corporation EADS, negotiated a US\$2.1 billion deal with the Chinese government. No official pronouncement linked the two events but the coincidence is nevertheless striking (HRW, 1997: 153-154).

Likewise in Russia, given the dependence of the EU on Russian oil and gas in meeting its energy needs and the coziness of many European leaders to Putin and his government despite ongoing human rights abuses, the EU is prioritizing its strategic energy concerns over its concerns about the promotion of human rights (HRW, 2006: 386; HRW, 2007: 409; European Commission, 2007: 10-11). Of course, from a perspective of *realpolitik*, Western dialogue and cooperation with emerging economic and military powers like the PRC and resurgent energy-rich Russia make sense. Regrettably though, western governments do not seem to be able to balance taking serious action on human rights while also conducting “business as usual.” As President Clinton admitted back in 1997, the policy of “constructive engagement” with the PRC on diplomatic and economic issues as a way of influencing human rights seemed then, and still seems now, to be a failure (HRW, 1998: 179).

### *Contemplating Alternatives*

Drawing from the writings of Wachman and supported by this study’s observations of Venezuela in relation to the other case studies, one conclusion is that shaming is less likely to have an effect on states in which the domestic space for political opposition is highly restricted and in which the state bases its legitimacy on claims of protecting the nation against a perceived threat of imperialist intervention (Wachman, 2001: 275). How then can the rest of the world seek to create human rights change in these more repressive, paranoid states?

Donnelly has outlined a range of possible ways that human rights advocacy can be incorporated into foreign policy, spanning from forms of quiet diplomacy to making aid or trade contingent on rights standards to the outright use of force (Donnelly, 2003: 241-243). While tying aid to government performance and the threat of force both have obvious drawbacks in terms of potential risks for civilians (who may have nothing to do with government policy at all), Donnelly’s suggestion of “disaggregating [foreign policy] objectives” by separating out national security goals, economic motivations and the desire to promote human rights in formulating policy is certainly useful (Donnelly, 2003: 248). As HRW’s 2007 report on Russia noted, EU-Russia relations in 2006, when energy policy seemed to dominate the agenda, were conducted as though EU negotiators assumed that confronting Russia directly on its human rights violations would risk punitive cuts in oil and gas exports to EU countries (HRW, 2007: 409). True prioritization of human rights as a foreign policy objective could conceivably have been realized by pursuing parallel discussions on Russia’s human rights violations and oil policy at the same time. Making trade conditional on better respect for human rights could be a more appropriate approach. Roth has also described some possible post-shaming tactics that international human rights organizations could use for the promotion of human rights. Roth has proposed tactics such as using courts to litigate the enforcement of human rights standards, providing technical support to governments seeking to improve their capabilities for upholding human rights, and working in concert with domestic groups to raise local awareness of human rights. While these are all useful general considerations, their applicability in situations where freedoms of expression and assembly are restricted and outside interference highly politicized is doubtful (Roth, 2004: 65-67; Bob, 2005: 17).

Another tactic could be a more inward-looking approach on the part of western states. For all their rhetorical bluster, the counter-arguments of the PRC leadership and Mugabe against the US do highlight some important areas in which the US could improve in solidifying its commitments to human rights (Embassy of the PRC in the US, 2006; Parsons, 2007). Making the US and other western states into better examples of states in which human rights really are respected, protected and fulfilled would serve as a form of quiet diplomacy on its own by showing the world a model of what a state fully internalizing and applying human rights norms would look like. Unlike most of the states in this study, those of us in more functional democracies have the opportunity to more openly confront our own governments and to shame our own political elites into accepting rights norms and internalizing respect for human rights, thus aiding in the push towards completing the “cascade” of human rights acceptance within our societies (Finnemore & Sikkink, 1998: 895). Shaming from a state that actually could defend its own human rights record would carry far more weight and would also be far less prone to rebuttals based on perceptions of hypocrisy.

### *Conclusions*

This study has sought to show that shaming has only the most limited effect on prompting human rights change in the countries studied. Because shaming is partly aimed at strengthening domestic opposition, it is particularly ineffective in states where repressive, undemocratic regimes severely restrict domestic criticism and protest (Wachman, 2001: 275). Even when superficial concessions are made, the lack of tolerance for criticism and the difficulty or impossibility of holding leaders accountable make it extremely difficult to force these regimes to get past the third stage of the “spiral” (Wachman, 2001: 263-264). Furthermore, shaming has been ineffective against states like Russia and the PRC that position themselves as counters against the “west” and “western values” or against Mugabe’s ZANU-PF dominated government in Zimbabwe which bases its legitimacy on its anti-colonial history as a liberation movement (HRW, 2005: 408; Freedom House, 2007a; BBC, 2002; Parsons, 2007). In these cases, the protests of human rights advocates, especially those in western governments, can either be spun into what Wachman calls “knee-jerk nationalism” or dismissed as an attempt on the part of the west to impose its own value system on other countries, even though the “shamers” may not adhere to their own advice when it comes to their own actions (Wachman, 2001: 268-269, 275-276). The example of Venezuela among the case study countries confirms these generalizations. Despite the government’s anti-imperial rhetoric and its squeeze of civil society and the press, both remain active and able to mount a visible and powerful challenge to the government and its policies, as the 2007 constitutional referendum defeat for Chávez poignantly demonstrated (Freedom House, 2006: 785-786; The Economist, 2007: 30). Though the government does not appear to be receptive of human rights related criticisms of its actions, international shaming pressure can be seen as having further emboldened the domestic opposition by demonstrating that a significant part of the world agrees with their resistance to the creeping authoritarianism of the Chávez government (The Economist, 2007: 30)

Given the precarious state of human rights around the world though, human rights activists need to develop new implements with which to stock their “toolboxes” for advocating for human rights worldwide. Part of this project must be an inward look on the part of democratic western states at our own human rights practices to work towards better meeting our own human rights obligations and, if we are truly serious, making respect for human rights an integral part of our domestic and foreign policy. Only then can our governments speak with any kind of moral authority about respecting human rights (Robinson, 2005: 1; Donnelly, 2003: 241-243). Ultimately though, human rights change in repressive regimes must somehow come from within. With western technical, logistical and financial support for human rights so intensely politicized and suspect in so many corners of the world, the difficult task at hand is to find subtler ways of encouraging emerging civil society actors the world over to develop and promote their own kinds of human rights advocacy with which to challenge repressive human rights violators from within (Bob, 2005: 17; Roth, 2004: 66-67; Wachman, 2001: 277).

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