

Effect of human security law & International Criminal Court (ICC) or regional equivalents on political security

International human rights conventions fail to protect, and may worsen, human rights

Geographic Focus: Global

Effect: Harmful effect ($g=-0.308$)

Confidence in study findings: Low (2 studies with 8 effect sizes)

Short summary

The studies in this cell examine the influence of human rights treaties, focusing on direct effects on ratifying countries and diffuse effects globally. Political terror increased on ratification, worsening as the period since ratification grows, which highlights widespread noncompliance. Democracies respect civil rights more than non-democracies, but there are violations rise during civil wars and in populous countries. Judicial independence's effect on rights violations remains unclear, requiring further research.

Long summary

The intervention

The interventions assessed by studies in this cell are human rights treaties, and their domestic enforcement.

How the intervention is expected to work

International human rights treaties, such as the Convention Against Torture (CAT) and the Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (CCPR), are intended to reduce political terror and human rights violations by providing codes of conduct to be adhered to by signatory governments.

The evidence base

The cell contains 2 studies: 2 impact evaluations designed as quasi-experimental studies and randomized controlled trials. There is consistency in findings across studies.

The studies present the global context of the intervention and outcome (2).

Evidence findings

Ratification of international treaties actually worsens political rights, which deteriorate the longer the period since ratification. This effect does vary by how the treaty is used: applying the treaty directly, ignoring domestic law, worsens rights, whereas interpreting domestic law in the light of the treaty improves them,

Included Studies

There are two quasi-experimental impact evaluations in the cell. Summaries of the two studies are thus provided here:

Cole (2012) assessed the influence of human rights treaties, assessing two kinds of treaty effects: direct—the effect of treaties on the countries that ratified them; and diffuse—the effect of treaties on countries regardless of ratification. The study has a quasi-experimental design. The study used the political terror scale and civil liberties from 1970 to 2007 as dependent variables. Average levels of political terror increased on ratification and grew the longer a country was party to the Convention Against Torture (CAT), as evidenced by the significantly positive coefficient on the years-since-ratification variable ($p < 0.001$). CAT membership did not directly affect civil liberties outcomes, as indicated by the statistically insignificant coefficients on the linear and quadratic years-since-ratification terms. CCPR also had little effect on civil liberties. The study is rated as low confidence as it is designed as a non-experimental study, and has a partial description of the intervention.

Lupu (2019) argues that national courts must be careful to safeguard their independence in the face of potential backlash, but they face constraints in terms of the legal mechanisms available to them when enforcing international law. The study assesses two legal mechanisms: *direct effect*, under which courts apply treaties directly, setting aside inconsistent domestic laws; and *canons of interpretation*, under which courts strive to interpret domestic laws in conformity with treaties. The study has a quasi-experimental design. The data includes the years 1982–2007, used to test the authors' hypotheses using a series of ordinary least squares models. The direct effect in fact leads to a deterioration in political rights on all three measures - political and civil rights, freedom of discussion and women's empowerment; whereas the canons leads to an improvement. The latter is smaller than the former, so the average effect across all measures is negative.

Confidence assessment

Overall low confidence as there are only 2 studies in the cell. There is consistency in findings across all 2 studies.