THE ‘GREAT POWER’ OF WORDS? THE INFLUENCE OF INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS CRITICISM ON RUSSIAN AND U.S. BEHAVIOR¹

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I. Introduction

When the U.S. delegate to the United Nations (UN) Human Rights Council was touching upon the situation in Tibet during a council debate a few years ago, his Chinese colleague first called for a point of order three times and then launched his own rhetorical counterattack: The United States should rather consider its own massive human rights violations in Iraq and the Middle East.² When it comes to preventing criticism of its human rights policies, China has employed various strategies. At the UN Human Rights Commission, the Chinese government was known for pressuring delegates in their hotel rooms in order to inhibit critical resolutions or drafts; even material pressures were used to this end. However, the country’s leadership has also consented to tangible concessions towards its critics: Repeatedly, political prisoners have been released in the run-up to UN sessions.³

That great powers such as China take all necessary measures, including political concessions, to prevent international criticism, contradicts the general impression of an international powerlessness when it comes to the norm violations of powerful states. Given their continued violation of fundamental civil and political rights, criticism simply seems to bounce off these states unheard. Such assumed resilience of powerful states is partially reflected also in the

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socialization and compliance literature. It is routinely explained with the comparatively low vulnerability of these states towards international human rights efforts, enabling them to more easily resist against external pressures than small and middle powers.\footnote{Tanja Börzel et al., “Obstinate and Inefficient: Why Member States Do Not Comply With European Law,” 
Comparative Political Studies 43 (2010) 1363–90, at 1368; Margaret E. Keck and Kathryn Sikkink, Activists beyond borders: 
Advocacy networks in international politics (Ithaca, N.Y: Cornell University Press, 1998) 117; Stephen C. Ropp and 
Thomas Risse, Introduction and overview (ed. Thomas Risse, Stephen C. Ropp and Kathryn Sikkink; The persistent 
20f.}

Against this background, it is surprising that even great powers seem to react to criticism not only by fending it off but also by changing their behavior. The paper takes this puzzle as a point of departure and investigates into the influence of international human rights criticism on two great powers, namely Russia and the United States. In particular, it is asked to what extent international human rights criticism is able to prompt great powers to change their behavior towards compliance with relevant human rights norms. Given the lack of research on a potential social vulnerability of great powers to international criticism (see part 2), a theoretical argument is presented in part 3 of the paper that even great powers can be expected to be socially vulnerable to such criticism. Starting from the English School assumption that a great power requires recognition by others in order to be granted certain privileges and status in the international system, it is argued that criticism poses a threat to its power and identity as a so-called legitimate great power, thereby inducing it to change its behavior in response to it. Having specified the methods in part 4, the argument is empirically assessed in two case studies in part 5: the Russian human rights violations during the Second Chechen War between 1999 and 2001 and the U.S. norm violations in the Bush administration’s ‘War on Terror’ between 2003 and 2004. Using the examples of the Russian military’s retreat from an ultimatum to the population of the Chechen capital Grozny in December 1999 as well as the U.S. military’s announced reduction of the number of detainees at the infamous torture prison Abu Ghraib in May 2004, it is shown that international human rights criticism, together with other factors, does influence the behavior of powerful states. However, a comparative analysis reveals that international criticism is successful only under certain conditions. In particular, in part 6 eight factors are identified which might be crucial for criticism success, including the type of the criticizing actor and the articulated degree of disapproval of the norm violations at hand. The final part 7 summarizes the research findings.

For the purpose of this paper, international human rights criticism is defined as the implicit or explicit disapproval of one or more actors’ human rights policies by other states, international organizations or transnational human rights NGOs, without being directly accompanied by concrete actions of the criticizing actors (e.g. the imposition of sanctions). The focus lies on
physical integrity rights, i.e. “the rights not to be physically mistreated by state agents”\textsuperscript{5}. Hence, a behavioral changes towards compliance with human rights encompasses those singular and long-term activities of a state which serve to comply with these rights. Finally, great powers are defined as those states that, due to their military, economic, political and/or soft power resources, are able to, and want to, exert influence in more than one region of the international system and are furthermore responded to by others on the basis of system level calculations about the present and near-future distribution of power.\textsuperscript{6}

II. International Human Rights Criticism and the Great Powers

Relevant studies such as the “spiral model” of human rights change\textsuperscript{7} have stressed the importance of a state’s material and social vulnerability in inducing compliance with human rights by external actors. Whereas material vulnerability arises from dependencies on international military and economic aid, social vulnerability is linked to a state’s quest for recognition and esteem in valued social groupings\textsuperscript{8}. Material vulnerability to international human rights pressure is unlikely in the great power context, given the significant political, economic and/or military resources they bear.\textsuperscript{9} In what respect great powers could be socially vulnerable to international criticism, remains to be specified to date.

It is true that there has been an increasing body of literature on the mechanism of “social influence”\textsuperscript{10}, which has underlined the distribution of social rewards, such as status or psychological wellbeing, as well as of social punishments, such as exclusion or criticism, as the major link for international influence. Similarly, the increasing amount of studies with a deliberate


focus on criticism or naming and shaming has contributed to a better understanding of the latter’s manifold modes of action. Criticism may, for instance, cause damage to a state’s international reputation, may signal an internal weakening or may even provoke fear of other forms of international punishment.11 However, what this concretely means for a great power’s vulnerability to criticism, has not yet been concretized. In general, a shared understanding of the causal mechanisms behind successful and failed naming and shaming has been missing to date.12

Part of this latter lack may be ascribed to the fact that existing studies dealing with questions related to a state’s commitment or compliance to human rights rarely systematically analyze international criticism as a single instrument with its own, distinct effects. Often put under the general frame of international pressure, it is instead discussed in conjunction with other direct or indirect instruments of influence, e.g. sanctions, internal pressures or capacity building. Only a mere dozen of studies, mostly applying a quantitative approach, explicitly deal with the effects of international criticism or naming and shaming on the behavior its norm addressees.13 What is more, the focus has been lying on the explanation of long-term behavioural change at the cost of an examination of more limited, so-called “tactical”14 concessions such as the release of political prisoners. These singular concessions, however, may be quite influential: Besides being capable of saving individual lives, they may also have more far-reaching consequences for a country’s human rights situation, if they, for instance, contribute to the mobilization and strengthening of

opposition groups. Nevertheless, a systematic-comparative, qualitative examination of the role of international human rights criticism in inducing great powers to make these singular concessions is lacking to date.

Finally, a significant research gap exists with respect to the conditions under which great powers react to international criticism by changing their behavior towards compliance with human rights. Researchers have identified various factors which may affect states’ human rights conduct and the success of relevant international efforts such as a state’s political system or (the lack of) a national security threat. There have also been specific hints to potential success conditions of international human rights criticism, e.g. the type of actor raising the criticism. However, these conditions have either not been specified or examined more in detail, are case-specific, or relevant studies may even arrive at contradicting results. By discussing potential factors of criticism success, this paper sets out to contribute to filling this gap.

III. How International Human Rights Criticism Influences Great Power Behavior

A. Human Rights Criticism as a Threat to a State’s Recognition as a Legitimate Great Power

The human rights literature has remained largely silent on the question how the mechanism of social influence can be specified in such a way that it can shed light on the potential influence of international criticism on great powers. Such concretization can be provided by the English School, in particular the concept of the so-called legitimate great power. This concept has been

informed by the work of Hedley Bull\textsuperscript{20} and developed and utilized for empirical work by Shogo Suzuki\textsuperscript{21}. The concept rests on the premise that a great power derives its status and thus its actual power not only from its material resources. Rather, great power status is also a social category which requires recognition and followership by others.\textsuperscript{22} Only after both the other legitimate great powers and weaker states\textsuperscript{23} have recognized a great power’s superior status, can this power, as a member of a “club”\textsuperscript{24} of legitimate great powers, claim certain rights in the international system and unhamperedly perform its leadership role. A legitimate great power is thus a certain type of great power\textsuperscript{25}, defined by Suzuki as follows:

“a powerful elite of states whose superior status is recognised by minor powers as a political fact giving rise to the existence of certain constitutional privileges, rights and duties and whose relations which each other are defined by adherence to a rough principle of sovereign equality.”\textsuperscript{26}

As Suzuki’s definition suggests, a state that is recognized as a legitimate great power – and thereby accorded great power status – is granted certain rights and duties in the international system. In general, this concerns the right “to play a part in determining issues that affect the peace and security of the international system as a whole”, as well as the responsibility “of modifying their policies in light of the managerial responsibilities they bear” (Bull 2002: 196). Furthermore, Suzuki stresses the importance of great power relations being characterized by a rough principle of sovereign equality. Against this background, the following features of a legitimate great power can be denominated:

\textit{First}, such a state is given the privilege of participating in any institutionalized decision-making process that might change the normative and material status quo in international society. I call this the institutional dimension of legitimate great power recognition. Although the privileges mentioned in Suzuki’s definition are not necessarily synonymous with formal membership in international institutions, in today’s highly institutionalized world the ideal-type legitimate great power is expected to belong to a wide range of international institutions such as the UN Security Council.\textsuperscript{27}

\textsuperscript{23} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{24} Bull, \textit{The Anarchical Society: A Study of Order in World Politics}, 191.
\textsuperscript{25} In difference to Bull, who considers legitimacy to be a defining feature of great powerhood, the paper assumes that there may be “non-legitimate” great powers.
\textsuperscript{26} Suzuki, “Seeking "Legitimate" Great Power Status in Post-Cold War International Society,” 47.
\textsuperscript{27} Ibid., 49. Ian Clark, \textit{Legitimacy in International Society} (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005) 174
Second, recognition as a legitimate great power entails an extra-institutional dimension. This is explained by the fact that the institutional privileges of a great power must not necessarily correspond to its actual recognition as legitimate. After all, such privileges, once bestowed and especially if linked to formal membership in international organizations, can hardly be revoked, although international society may not recognize them as legitimate anymore. In order to create a more clear-cut picture of a great power's legitimacy, it is hence posited that, to be able to qualify as a legitimate great power, the legitimation of a great power's concrete international leadership claims must be uncontested by the other legitimate great powers and also weaker states. After all, this suggests a certain acceptance of a great power's institutional rights. A great power’s leadership claims can consist in the simple quest for institutional recognition or they may comprise more specific claims such as the recognition of specific spheres of influence. Equal treatment, another feature of legitimate great powerhood mentioned by Suzuki, qualifies as a suitable indicator for this criterion.

Third, in exchange for institutional and extra-institutional legitimate great power recognition, a legitimate great power is expected to maintain the core norms of international society. This obligation results from the fact that smaller states do not always willingly give their consent to the existence of legitimate great powers. Consequently, to be able to consolidate their privileges, legitimate great powers have to adhere to generally recognized norms. Since the end of the Cold War, these norms have increasingly included fundamental human rights standards. Notwithstanding the fact that these rights have been mainly promoted by Western states, there has been a nearly universal consent to a broad range of human rights, in particular the physical integrity rights analyzed in this paper. Human rights are universal in the sense that they have been recognized by almost every state as binding under international law. While this has not prevented major setbacks in terms of non-compliance and contestation of their scope and core, this paper assumes that, despite their substantial weakening, the principal status of human rights per se, and in particular the relevant physical integrity rights, as important norms of international society is still unquestioned. With respect to legitimate great power recognition, this means that such recognition is, albeit not by the majority of states and certainly not to the same extent, made dependent on compliance with fundamental human rights norms. In particular, it can be assumed that only those states are ascribed (full) institutional and extra-institutional recognition as a legitimate great power that actually live up to their human rights obligations.

29 Ibid., 50f.
With its social perspective on great powers, the English School thus opens up an important space for the discussion of a great power’s social vulnerability to international human rights criticism. To the extent that recognition as a legitimate great power is tied to compliance with basic human rights, international criticism of a great power’s human rights policy, which comprises also the critical comments of transnational human rights NGOs increasingly involved in relevant recognition processes, expresses an attack or a damage to its reputation as a legitimate great power. After all, the bestowal and deprivation of legitimacy are inextricably linked to social communication and rhetorical action.\textsuperscript{31} In effect, this means that the recognition as a legitimate great power – and especially the extra-institutional dimension of such recognition\textsuperscript{32} – is neither absolute nor irrevocable.\textsuperscript{33} In the following, two causal mechanisms why such a reputational damage could induce a great power to change its behavior towards compliance with human rights will be introduced: a rationalist power approach and a rather constructivist identity approach.

B. Why Care? Two Causal Mechanisms Towards Compliance with Human Rights

\textit{The Power Approach}

According to the power approach, great powers care about their reputation as a legitimate great power because it is an important power resource. In general, legitimacy “empowers” its holder in three respects: \textit{First}, legitimate actors can draw on the active support of other actors that do not only comply with their decisions, but also actively invest their resources and energies in the relevant projects. \textit{Second}, commanders of legitimacy can rely on simple compliance of their power addressees. And \textit{third}, legitimate actors can benefit from low levels of opposition in the international system, which reduces the costs of coercion and bribery.\textsuperscript{34} By contrast, a non-legitimate actor must rule through a regime of credible threats, the pandering to sectional interests and “buying” of obedience or, even, on direct force.\textsuperscript{35}

Such mechanisms are, however, both instable and costly sources of power. Against this background, a reputation as a legitimate actor is relevant also for great powers, as it enables them to save significant coercion costs which could lead to their overstretch. Furthermore, they can give higher effectiveness to their activities by inducing voluntary followership by weaker states. The great power status thus serves as an instrument for powerful states to gain additional


\textsuperscript{32} International human rights criticism may, however, also influence the institutional dimension of legitimate great power recognition. This particularly applies for great powers that have not yet been granted (full) recognition as such. International criticism may in this case prevent acceptance to prestigious international institutions.


\textsuperscript{35} Reus-Smit, “International Crises of Legitimacy,” 163.
influence and more easily make up for potential deficits in certain resource dimensions (military, economic, political, soft power). A state that is known for its reputation as a legitimate great power, commands soft power, i.e. the ability to get others „to want the outcomes you want“.

Hence, according to the power approach great powers respond to human rights criticism in order to prevent a loss of power. As criticism expresses, and may thereby cause, a damage to a state’s reputation as a legitimate great power, it always signals an imminent loss of power. In order to avoid possible costs of coercion in the realization of their leadership claims and to (re-)consolidate their power, great powers may thus react to criticism by changing behavior.

The Identity Approach

However, a reputation as a legitimate great power is also important for a state’s identity formation: „(…) states not only pursue their ‘national interest’, but also – and before anything else – they seek to establish identities for themselves“.

In this context, the great power status can be seen as an end in itself with its own physiological and psychological benefits. According to Social Identity Theory (SIT), people derive part of their identity from membership in various social groups, such as a particular political party, nation or religion. As groups strive for positive distinctiveness, people compare their group’s achievements and qualities to a reference group which is equal or slightly superior. Deborah Larson and Alexander Shevchenko discern three different “strategies” of identity formation, so-called “identity management strategies”.

First, a group commanding a lower social status might pursue a strategy of social mobility, if the boundaries of the higher social status group are permeable. In this case, the lower status group imitates and conforms to the rules of the elite group to gain acceptance. If elite group boundaries are impermeable to new members, the lower social status group might, second, strive
for equal or superior status through social competition. This strategy aims for equaling or outdoing the dominant group in the area on which its claim to superior status rests.\textsuperscript{44} Third, the lower-level group might also pursue superiority in a completely different area. Such so-called social creativity is likely if the present status hierarchy is regarded as legitimate or stable. Social creativity can be achieved either by re-evaluating the meaning of a negative characteristic, or by finding a new dimension on which a group is superior.\textsuperscript{45} Although social creativity is therefore directed towards establishing a completely different ranking system, the dominant group nevertheless has to accept the status criteria as valid and desirable. In practice, there may be several strategies at play, which are pursued unconsciously rather than consciously chosen.

Applied to international relations, SIT thus suggests that states may improve their status by joining elite clubs\textsuperscript{46}, trying to outdo the dominant states, or by achieving preeminence outside the arena of geopolitical competition.\textsuperscript{47} Acceptance to the club of legitimate great powers and the recognition as such is therefore an instrument of positive identity-related self-distinction. While this may equally be true for already (fully) recognized legitimate great powers, membership in the legitimate great power club hardly exerts any identity-related appeal, if a great power engages in social competition. Whereas social creativity requires the recognition of the status criteria by the dominant states and thus equals a quest for extra-institutional recognition, in case of social competition the great power derives its positive self-image only from outdoing the others.

Consequently, according to the identity approach, a great power could be willing to make concessions in response to international human rights criticism, because it damages or threatens its identity as a great power. In fact, there is „considerable evidence that identification with a group can generate a range of cognitive and social pressures to conform“\textsuperscript{48}. According to Thomas Franck, the desire for membership in certain clubs is even the main motivation for norm-conforming behavior.\textsuperscript{49}

Both of the introduced causal mechanisms may be relevant not only for primary decision-makers, but also for a country’s broader social and political elites. Parliamentarians, national NGOs, the media, or staff members of ministries that are not competent to make decisions, might be just as


\textsuperscript{46} Whereas Shevchenko and Welch use the term elite clubs to denote prestigious international institutions such as the UN Security Council, this paper, in line with the presumptions of the English School, presumes the existence of one legitimate great power club. Membership in this club goes along with acceptance to the mentioned institutions.

\textsuperscript{47} Ibid., 67.


vulnerable to criticism as head of states or ministers of foreign affairs. This might induce them to become active and change their behavior, impacting in turn on their government’s course of action.

IV. Methods

A. Case Selection

In order to probe the argument that great powers are socially vulnerable to international human rights criticism, a structured, focused comparison of two case studies is pursued: the Russian human rights violations in the Second Chechen War between 1999 and 2001 as well as the issue of detainee treatment in the U.S. ‘War on Terror’ with respect to the most prominent prisons Abu Ghraib, Guantánamo and Bagram in the time period 2003 and 2004. While both the U.S. and Russia qualify as great power according to the introduced definition, the two specific case studies can be considered ‘hard cases’ as they happened against the background of a (perceived) national security threat. In the norm literature, such threats are discussed as severe obstacle to the success of international human rights efforts. In the U.S. case, threat perceptions can be traced back to the terror attacks of September 11, 2001. The Russian government was confronted with a Chechen separatist movement including radical Islamic elements.

In addition, both cases have been marked by flagrant violations of fundamental physical integrity rights, as codified and recognized by the two countries in international human rights treaties and international humanitarian law. The two periods of investigation (1999-2001, 2003-2004) allow for multiple observations of these abuses. U.S. norm violations committed during the ‘War on Terror’, amongst others, at prominent prisons such as Abu Ghraib (Iraq), Guantánamo (Cuba) and Bagram (Afghanistan) concerned mainly the rights to be free from arbitrary detention and torture and other forms of cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment or punishment. On April 28, 2004 the U.S. TV channel CBS broadcasted pictures of naked Iraqi prisoners, chained like dogs, simulating sexual acts and stapled in human pyramids. Between 70 and 90% of the originally 8,000 detainees, most of which were civilians, had been “accidently” imprisoned. While the U.S. government has tried to portray the abuse at Abu Ghraib as infringements of a few, low-ranking security forces, significant parts of the NGO and expert community share the opinion that these

51 See fn. 18.
abuses have been instigated, authorized and badly managed from above.\textsuperscript{53} In fact, the abuse is believed to have migrated to Iraq from Guantánamo where more than 770 prisoners have been arbitrarily detained since 2002 and have partially been subject to abusive behavior such as short tackling or sexual harassment. At the U.S. military base in Bagram, abuse was rampant between 2002 and 2004, with at least three prisoners dying\textsuperscript{54}. Whereas abusive, so-called “enhanced interrogation techniques” were largely abandoned towards the end of the Bush administration at least in practice, arbitrary detention survived throughout the Obama administration notwithstanding its gradual decline, with Guantánamo still waiting for its closure.

In the case of Russia, the Second Chechen War, which was officially waged as “counterterrorism operation” between 1999 and 2009 and supposedly cost the lives of up to 70,000 people in the period 1999 until 2003 alone\textsuperscript{55}, provided the environment for severe abuses of basic physical integrity rights. Disproportionate and indiscriminate bombardments were as much part of the war as were extra-judicial executions, arbitrary detentions, disappearances as well as torture and other forms of cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment or punishment (including rape). Large-scale “cleansing operations” (zachistki) became more covert and targeted in the course of the “Chechenization” of the conflict. Human rights violations were increasingly committed by the “Kadyrovtsy”, pro-Russian security forces under the current Chechen president Ramzan Kadyrov. With the change in strategy, the number of human rights violations, in particular the documented cases of disappearance, decreased substantially. Nevertheless, torture, extra-judicial executions and arbitrary detentions continue to date.

B. Analysis and Data

The question as to what extent international human rights criticism was able to prompt the U.S. and Russian to make behavioral changes in these two cases, is assessed in two analytical steps. In the first step, congruence analysis\textsuperscript{56} is used to investigate into a possible causal effect of criticism on behavioral changes. To this end, paired observations on the independent variable international human rights criticism and the dependent variable behavioral change towards compliance with relevant human rights criticism are made for the two periods of investigation. Observation


\textsuperscript{54} Forsythe, \textit{The Politics of Prisoner Abuse. The United States and Enemy Prisoners after 9/11}, 98f.


periods of about two months each are identified in order to ensure multiple observations on both variables and examine their covariation. The observation periods take into account some necessary reaction time for the criticized actor.

In the second analytical step, a more detailed impact analysis is pursued for two examples of behavioral changes where a covariation of criticism and behavioral changes can be observed. To this end, I comparatively assess the effects of three widely discussed (indirect) instruments of influence, taking into account further factors that can be identified in empirical analysis: the effects of international criticism, internal pressures and carrots and sticks, i.e. incentives and sanctions. Juxtaposing the effects of these instruments, instead of analyzing them in conjunction with one another, allows for a more precise and unbiased account of the role of criticism.

Applying qualitative content analysis for a time period of about four weeks prior to the analyzed behavioral changes, indicators for each of the three instruments are identified based on a “prediction matrix” which covers four different levels of analysis: 1) the reasons for a behavioral change, indicated ideally by the relevant decision-makers themselves; 2) the public statements and reactions by government officials (including the military and police apparatus) prior to a behavioral change. In particular, the general themes and arguments in these statements as well as the reactions to international human rights criticism are examined in this respect; 3) the national debates outside the government circles (public opinion, parliament, court) prior to a behavioral change; as well as finally 4) the type of the behavioral change, or, more precisely, the question to what extent this change reflects the demands and concerns of the international criticizing/sanctioning, and/or the domestic actors.

Whereas the type of behavioral change is the weakest indicator for a possible relationship between one of the three (indirect) instruments of influence and a behavioral change, the indicated reasons such a change, especially if expressed by the relevant decision-makers themselves, is the most significant. The empirical investigation takes into account as many analytical levels as necessary to make a plausible argument and, if possible, also tries to identify existing hints to the introduced causal mechanisms.

Finally, in a third step examples of successful criticism are compared with time periods where criticism was not able to bring about relevant changes in behavior in order to discuss possible conditions that might enable or facilitate criticism success. For the analysis, in addition to the secondary literature, 4,820 pages (U.S. case) and 1,593 pages (Russia case) of news articles

57 The time period is extended in case of further information shedding light on the behavioral change at hand.
59 For more detailed information on the prediction matrix as well as relevant issues of operationalization, amongst others concerning the independent and dependent variable, please contact the author.
including records of press conferences and parliamentary debates – largely drawn from the news databases lexis nexis and Integrum World Wide – are examined. Furthermore, 20 interviews (U.S. case) and 29 interviews (Russia case) with (former) government officials, politicians and members of the NGO and expert community provided the basis for empirical analysis.

V. The Influence of International Human Rights Criticism on Russian and U.S. Behavior

A. International Human Rights Criticism and Russian and U.S. Behavior

In line with the theoretical expectations of this paper, international human rights criticism was time and again followed by behavioral changes towards compliance with human rights both in the Russia and the U.S. case. More precisely, criticism came along with changes in behavior in 57% (Russia case) and 65% (U.S. case) of the analyzed observation periods, despite the fact that criticism especially by other states and international organizations dropped sharply throughout both periods of investigation regardless of continued human rights violations. Most of the changes were of a singular, short-term nature, limited in their capacity to end the human rights violations at hand. For instance, on July 25, 2001 the Russian prosecutor-general introduced rules for the execution of cleansing operations, which, amongst others, required the presence of a prosecutor during those operations. Whereas the decree No. 46 is perceived as a step into the right direction by human rights activists, it is criticized that it was rather of a formal nature.

Even more long-term changes in terms of politico-institutional durability, which can be observed in both cases, contributed to tackling relevant human rights issues only in very limited ways. For instance, the creation of an U.S. Office of Detainee Affairs in July 2004 has been praised by (former) U.S. officials and human rights professionals for its facilitating role in providing a single, institutional platform for detainee issues and less for its substantial contribution to mitigating the human rights situation on the ground.

While there were few short-term measures that played a more significant role in ensuring compliance with human rights (see the announced reduction of detainees at Abu Ghraib), neither of the two investigation periods witnessed changes that can be considered sustainable both on a politico-institutional and substantial level.

Furthermore, the analysis reveals that criticism was not always followed by behavioral changes, raising doubts as to whether criticism played a role in bringing all or at least some of the

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60 Interview with a high-ranking member of the Russian human rights organization "Memorial", Moscow (June 04, 2013); Telephone interview with a Russia expert (December 16, 2012).
61 Interview with a former legal adviser to the National Security Council (NSC) at the White House", Washington D.C. (September 27, 2012); Interview with a former military assistant to Secretary of Defense Donald H. Rumsfeld, Washington, D. C. (October 09, 2012); Interview with a high-ranking member of "Human Rights Watch", Washington, D. C. (October 01, 2012).
identified changes at all. To gain more clarity about a potential causal relation between criticism and Russian and U.S. behavior, two examples of behavioral changes will be more intensively discussed in the next part: the U.S. military’s announced reduction of the number of detainees at Abu Ghraib in May 2004 as well as the Russian military’s retreat from an ultimatum to the population of the Chechen capital Grozny in December 1999. Both examples qualify as most-likely cases\textsuperscript{62}, since they can be observed at the peak of the international outcry and hence strongly suggest criticism success. While the announced prisoner release took place in the mid of the Abu Ghraib scandal, the Russian retreat from the Grozny ultimatum can be observed in the initial phase of the “counterterrorist operation” in Chechnya.

B. The Announced Reduction of the Number of Detainees at Abu Ghraib

On May 4, 2004 Maj. Gen. Geoffrey Miller, the deputy commander for detainee operations in Iraq, informed the public about his plans to cut the number of 3,800 detainees at the Iraqi prison Abu Ghraib by more than half, leaving 1,500 to 2,000 detainees as the top end\textsuperscript{63}. Still on the same day, 200 prisoners were set free, followed by further releases in the upcoming weeks and months.\textsuperscript{64} While there had been efforts at speeding up the releases of detainees even prior to May 4, they were pressed ahead with vigor only then.\textsuperscript{65} As of June 7, 2004 the number of detainees at Abu Ghraib had reportedly already been reduced to 2,500.\textsuperscript{66} Whereas Miller’s announcement did not put an end to the U.S. policies of arbitrary, indefinite detention in the ‘War on Terror’, it can nevertheless be viewed as a significant contribution to counter the rampant climate of torture and abuse at the prison, publicly disclosed on April 28 by a CBS news broadcast. In particular, the chronical overcrowding of Abu Ghraib has been widely acknowledged as conducive to the multiple abuses in the prison.\textsuperscript{67} As the subsequent analysis of the events prior to Miller’s announcement shows, international criticism, together with internal pressures and learning processes within the U.S. military, substantially contributed to bringing about this change.


\textsuperscript{64} E.g. The Frontrunner, “Abuse Scandal Seen As Forcing Rumsfeld To Lower Public Profile,”; Carol Costello et al., “Release of Hundreds of Prisoners from Abu Ghraib; U.S. Offensive Against Muqtada Al-Sadr’s Mahdi Army” \textit{CNN (CNN Daybreak)}, May 14, 2004; Talek Harris, “Abu Ghraib relatives rail against US as prisoner release continues” \textit{Agence France Presse}, June 14, 2004.


The role of learning processes within the U.S. military and internal pressures

Geoffrey Miller mentioned his plans about a substantial reduction of the numbers of detainees from Abu Ghraib only shortly during a press conference in Baghdad on May 4, without further elaborating on the rationale behind the stepped-up releases. Only upon explicit request of journalists did U.S. government and military officials provide information on this step. The disclosure of the torture pictures had been followed by an international outcry: Mainly representatives of other states, but also of international organizations and human rights NGOs outspokenly expressed their disapproval and “disgust” of the Abu Ghraib incidents, demanding an investigation, a punishment of the perpetrators or, simply, “swift and stern measures” to tackle the issue.

Denying a major connection to the recent scandal, officials portrayed the step as the result of an ongoing learning process within the U.S. military. According to the Deputy Director for Coalition Operations in Iraq Brig. Gen. Mark Kimmitt, the increasing number of operations had created a situation where the number of detainees exceeded the capabilities of the current detainee review process, thus necessitating a speeding up of the existing review boards. Lt. Gen. Ricardo Sanchez, the most high-ranking U.S. commander in Iraq, did admit that the Abu Ghraib incidents had created increased problem awareness as a result of an internal investigation by Maj. Gen. Antonio Taguba. Nevertheless, he insisted that the military had taken all necessary steps by itself. While the public statements of U.S. officials thus suggest that learning processes of the U.S. military were the main driver for the increased releases, a more in-depth analysis reveals that a relevant problem awareness was created substantially by internal pressures. International criticism helped to transform this awareness into a concrete necessity to actually introduce the changes.

In particular, Miller’s announcement had been preceded by diverse efforts, amongst others from within the U.S. Department of Defense, for stepping up the number of releases. These had yet been largely ignored by the military leadership in Iraq at the beginning. According to a former staff member of U.S. Minister of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, who had been working in Iraq

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between 2003 and 2004, Lt. Gen. Sanchez pursued a policy of mass arrests in Iraq which rendered an effective review of the reasons for detainment impossible:

“(…), sometimes they would just queue people up, if they were looking for two guys in a particular neighborhood (…), it was foolish because we ended up with all these guys in the prisons and very little way to effectively screen them (…). Initially the process was that you were in there for six months, so if you had done nothing but happened to be living in the same neighborhood as the targets (…) you were stuck in the system for six months (…) then you got reviewed. The problem was in many cases they didn’t have enough information on this guy’s status (…) So instead of defaulting ‘ok (…) we don’t have any proof that he’s a bad guy, we should let him go’, their default was ‘we don’t have enough information to make a good call, so we’ll just keep him’. So you had these people doing repetitive six months periods of confinement getting reviewed and then put back in and the population was swelling more than that facility could handle.”

Opposition against Sanchez’ policy began to emerge, amongst others during the daily intelligence meetings of the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA), in which the cited staff member routinely participated:

“(…) several of us pointed out to them that doing that you’re potentially creating as many dissatisfied people that could go to the other side, and there were some folks in the military that didn’t think that this was relevant (…)”

For instance, Paul Bremer, the U.S. civil administrator in Iraq, is said to have asked for the planned releases almost on a daily basis since the taking office of Lt. Gen. Ricardo Sanchez as commander of the Combined Joint Task Force 7 (CJTF 7) in Iraq in June 2003, and again since November 2003. Due to his lack of authority over the military, Bremer’s inquiries remained largely without consequence. Likewise, Bremer’s repeated talks, amongst others with Rumsfeld, on the question of living conditions at Abu Ghraib went virtually unheard. U.S. officials described Bremer “as ‘kicking and screaming’ about the need to release thousands of uncharged prisoners and improve conditions for those who remained”. The Department of Defense also ignored similar interventions by the Department of State, amongst others by Secretary of State

75 Interview with a former military assistant to Secretary of Defense Donald H. Rumsfeld (as in note 61).
76 Ibid.
78 Graham and Drehle, “Bush Apologizes for Abuse of Prisoners; Criticism of Rumsfeld Intensifies, But President Says His Job Is Safe.”
Colin Powell, creating “extreme frustration” in the department that months of pressure did not produce real results.79

The Role of International Human Rights Criticism: Criticism as Catalyzer

In fact, it was not until the Abu Ghraib scandal “when they really started to relieve that pressure and start(ed; author’s remark) to let people go”80. While the disclosure of the torture images came as a shock also to wide parts of the U.S. military itself81, it was the criticism of the international community that served as a catalyzer for stepping up the releases from Abu Ghraib:

„International pressure clearly played a role. It’s a lot easier to get a change, if you’re not only having people inside the system, but people outside the system shining a light on it. It’s a lot easier to get that momentum to make a change like that.”82

In particular, the criticism by other states, international organizations and transnational human rights NGOs revealed and transported the negative implications of the torture incidents for the U.S. military mission in Iraq and created an increased urgency to act:

„In Abu Ghraib, the Bush Administration was extremely fast to make adjustments to their policy (…) I think the largest reason was that they had a clear recognition of the negative implications for the US military mission in Iraq for detainee treatment. (…) you know, one of the factors why it was a security problem for the United States, because they received such strong human rights criticism and because it was obvious that they were deviating from human rights norms, and I think it clearly had an impact there.”83

Such a role of international human rights criticism lends support to the power approach of this paper, which assumes that a great power reacts to criticism to ensure the (continued) acceptance of its foreign policy goals and leadership claims.84 However, there is also evidence for a possible role of the identity approach. According to experts and former U.S. officials, a major driver behind the reaction to international criticism was the fact that the U.S. did not want to be stigmatized as a norm violator and torturer, which would affect its reputation and standing in the

80 Interview with a former military assistant to Secretary of Defense Donald H. Rumsfeld (as in note 61).
81 Interview with a former high-ranking member of the U.S. Navy, Washington D.C. (October 18, 2012).
82 Interview with a former military assistant to Secretary of Defense Donald H. Rumsfeld (as in note 61).
83 Interview with a former member of the Policy Planning Staff of Secretary of State Colin Powell, Washington D.C. (October 10, 2012).
84 Hence, less the Abu Ghraib images themselves but rather fear of the damaging consequences of the Abu Ghraib incidents, symbolized and transported by the international outcry, provided the basis for a problem awareness of the U.S. military.
world. Consequently, U.S. officials repeatedly stressed that the torture incidents were not representative of the U.S. military and even that they were “un-American”: “Americans do not do this to other people.” It can thus be assumed that the torture scandal undermined the U.S.’s positive self-image as a legitimate great power, being the main protector of human rights.

All in all, an analysis of the indicated reasons for the stepped up releases from Abu Ghraib reveals the crucial role of international human rights criticism in prompting the U.S. to make this change. While learning processes within the U.S. military and, most strikingly, internal pressures created a certain awareness of the overcrowding problem at Abu Ghraib prison, international human rights criticism functioned as crucial catalyst by transforming such awareness into a concrete necessity to act. What is more, there are even indications that international criticism may have served as a major catalyst or direct impulse for the analyzed internal pressures themselves. More precisely, shortly before U.S. administrator Bremer got alarmed about the situation of detainees at Abu Ghraib and started to pressure for changes in summer 2003, he had been presented a 53-page memorandum by Amnesty International: The report drew attention to torture and abuse by security official in the U.S.-run prison. Also a report by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) in February 2004 on the treatment of prisoners of war in Iraq reportedly induced Bremer to step up his efforts at improving the situation at Abu Ghraib. Whereas international human rights criticism thus ostensibly also contributed to the fact that internal pressures occurred at all, there is no evidence that international incentives and sanctions evidently had any role.

C. The Russian Retreat from the Grozny Ultimatum

On December 10/11, 1999 the Russian leadership let an ultimatum pass which the Russian military announced on December 05 by dropping leaflets over the Chechen capital Grozny. The ultimatum threatened all those remaining in Grozny to be treated like “terrorists and bandits” and be destroyed by the Russian artillery and air force. If carried out, the ultimatum would have marked a major violation of the right to life as well as the principle of distinction between civilians and combatants under international humanitarian law. However, on December 10 Russian Interior Minister Vladimir Rushailo declared that there would be no bombing of the city.

85 Interview with a high-ranking member of the ”Center for American Progress”, Washington, D. C. (September 28, 2012).
Instead, a day later new flight corridors were opened and a two-day ceasefire was introduced.\textsuperscript{90} Whereas the retreat from the ultimatum could not prevent the brutal invasion of the city later on, it could at least temporarily put a halt to the indiscriminate bombing of the city.

The message about the ultimatum provoked an international wave of protest: Representatives of different states, international organizations and transnational human rights NGOs expressed their revulsion of the Russian threat as well as their deep concern over the fate of the civilian population of Grozny. For instance, German Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer denounced the Russian behavior as an “act of barbarism”\textsuperscript{91}, U.S. president Bill Clinton even threatened that Russia would pay a “heavy price” for its “threat to the old, infirm, injured and other peaceful civilians”.\textsuperscript{92} Also more concrete material sanctions were threatened or imposed: Most strikingly, on December 07 the International Monetary Fund (IMF) delayed the disbursement of a credit to Russia. Only three days later this was followed by a threat of European leaders during the EU summit in Helsinki. If Russia did not refrain from the ultimatum, the EU would suspend some provisions of the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement with Russia and limit next year’s EU aid under the TACIS program to key areas such as the protection of human rights.\textsuperscript{93}

\textit{The Russian Retreat from the Grozny Ultimatum as a Result of External Pressures}

As in the U.S. case, Russian officials did not specify the reasons for their retreat from the ultimatum, partially even denying the very existence of it. For instance, on December 11, 1999, Rushailo in a live broadcast on Russian television explained: “As you can see, today is December 11, but there is no ultimatum for the peaceful civilians, fighting has stopped, the corridor is free”\textsuperscript{94}. By contrast, on the same time Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin admitted an ultimatum against the “bandits” but stressed that the military had created the conditions for civilians to leave.\textsuperscript{95} Only unofficially, Putin reportedly had acknowledged that the “story with the ultimatum” had been a “mistake”\textsuperscript{96}, thereby reiterating that the threat had in fact existed.

\textsuperscript{92}NTV, “Segodnya,” December 06, 1999.
\textsuperscript{95}Itar-Tass, “Vladimir Putin: Esli boeviki ne sdamy oruzhia, nashi dejstviya budut reshitelnymi.”
More explicit information on the reasons for the Russian military’s retreat from the ultimatum can be found in the statements of experts and practitioners outside the Russian government. Most of them suggest a role of external pressure, which, however, is again not concretized. For instance, on January 25, 2000, Alexander Cherkasov from the Russian human rights organization Memorial stated in an interview that “these plans were not realized under the influence of the international community”\textsuperscript{97}. Likewise, German Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer and NATO Secretary General George Robertson only very generally attributed the Russian renouncement to the EU summit in Helsinki\textsuperscript{98} and, in the case of Robertson, to the “almost global anger”\textsuperscript{99}.

The overall role of international and transnational actors in the Grozny case is furthermore supported by the fact that Russian officials gradually distanced themselves from the ultimatum partially in direct reaction to the international outcry. In doing so, they did not get tired of stressing their humanitarian intentions. For instance, Viktor Kazantsev, Commander of the Allied Group of Federal Forces in the North Caucasus, responded to Clinton’s above mentioned statement by underlining that there had been no ultimatum but a “demand to the bandits”\textsuperscript{100}. The operations of the armed forces were aimed at minimizing the number of victims among both the civilian population and the military.\textsuperscript{101} Putin, while insisting that some foreign heads of states should rather use their influence to exert pressure on the “bandits”, personally acknowledged that he could understand “the concern of the international community, amongst others the U.S. administration”\textsuperscript{102}.

Reputation or Ruble? The question for the role of international sanctions

While such statements, amongst others by Russian officials, strongly suggest a role of the international community in bringing about the analyzed change later on, it is not yet clear whether it can be attributed to international human rights criticism or (the threat of) international sanctions, e.g. by the IMF or the European Union. An influence of the IMF sanctions can be largely dismissed. Apart from the fact that the IMF credit had been already withheld since September, the Russian government was openly signalled that the credit would be disbursed already in the upcoming weeks.\textsuperscript{103} In addition, Russia had started to repay the IMF credits as early

\textsuperscript{101} Idem, “Novosti (Moderator: Igor Gmyza),” December 06, 1999.
as 1999. However, also an influence of relevant EU threats is rather unlikely. The possibility of material sanctions, which had been brought up by representatives of some European governments, had been revoked or at least substantially downplayed even before the summit in Helsinki. A representative of the EU headquarters in Brussels told the Russian newspaper Vremya that no state had suggested examining the possibility of economic sanctions against Russia because of the war in Chechnya. Accordingly, the Russian foreign minister denied that the question of possible economic sanctions had played a role in the latest contacts with foreign officials. In light of such contradicting messages sent out by international actors the Russian government is reported to have been confident that it would not face serious material consequences for its conduct in Chechnya. In general, according to experts and politicians Russian leaders were at no point worried about the possibility of sanctions.

Instead, there are clear indications that international human rights criticism played a major role in bringing about the analyzed change. Stressing the importance of critical statements by international actors such as Amnesty International, a high-ranking member of Memorial explains:

"(...)

I don’t think that Putin was afraid of serious sanctions but he was certainly concerned about losing international reputation (...) such a brutish blockade, the destruction of Grozny including its peaceful inhabitants could strongly undermine its reputation. And I think – as fresh, new politician who, all in all, wanted to establish good contacts with the heads of Western countries – at that time understood that such behaviour went too far and could cause damage. I think that is why they ended that."\(^{107}\)

An interesting aspect in this context is the Russian perception as a great power. Asked for the relation between international human rights criticism and great power thinking, a renowned Russia expert stresses that in Russia there was a strong feeling of colonization by the West. According to him, it was the great narcissistic humiliation of the 20th century that Russia was no longer one of the two great powers or perceived as such. Hence, the expert considers it likely that the Russian leadership took international human rights criticism as an attack to its great power status. This is in line with the identity approach to international criticism which suggests a reaction to international criticism in order to restore a state’s identity as a great power. All in all,

\(^{105}\) Ibid.
\(^{106}\) Interview with a Russia expert and former member of staff of the "Moscow Center of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace", Moscow (June 05, 2013); Interview with a member of the Council of the Russian President for the Development of Civil Society and Human Rights, Moscow (May 30, 2013); Interview with a former deputy of the Russian Duma, Moscow (May 21, 2013).
\(^{107}\) Interview with a high-ranking member of the Russian human rights organization "Memorial" (as in note 60).
\(^{108}\) Interview with the former director of a German political foundation, Moscow (May 28, 2013).
the analysis reveals that international human rights criticism, and not international material sanctions, was driving the Russian military’s retreat from the Grozny ultimatum as major impulse.

The role of internal pressures

In addition, internal pressures by domestic human rights organizations and politicians played a role in bringing about the Russian change of behavior in the Grozny case according to experts and insiders.109 Whereas the Russian “counterterrorist operation” in Chechnya was strongly supported by the Russian political elite and public, there were isolated critical voices in the country. Amongst others, politicians such as the Ingush President Ruslan Aushev, Jury Luzhkov, the Mayor of Moscow, or Grigory Yavlinsky from Yabloko, which was the only party openly opposing the war in Chechnya in the run-up for the duma elections of December 19, 1999, expressed their disapproval of the ultimatum. Also the Russian human rights NGO Memorial had repeatedly pressured for a retreat from the threat. Yet at the same time a high-ranking representative of the organization admits the limits of such influence, at the same time reiterating the central role of international efforts: “(...) we would have hardly managed to end this without international [efforts; note of the author] (...)”.110 Given the fact that there was hardly any national debate on the appropriateness of the Russian conduct in Chechnya, it can thus be assumed that, compared to international human rights criticism, internal pressures played a rather subordinate role in inducing the Russian concession in the Grozny case.

All in all, the analysis reveals that international human rights criticism, although not the only relevant factor, significantly contributed to bringing about the Russian retreat from the Grozny ultimatum and the U.S. military’s reduction of the number of detainees from Abu Ghraib, both as an impulse and a catalyst. The theoretical argument of the paper is furthermore strengthened by the fact that indicators for both of the introduced causal mechanisms could be identified. However, the analysis has also shown that criticism is not always followed by concessions, raising questions about the existence of certain conditions which enable its success. Consequently, based on a comparison of the two examples with four time periods in which criticism did not result in behavioral changes111, in the next part potential success conditions will be discussed. Three clusters of conditions will be considered: the characteristics of the addresses of international

109 Telephone interview with a Russia expert (as in note 60); Interview with a high-ranking member of the Russian human rights organization "Memorial" (as in note 60).
110 Interview with a high-ranking member of the Russian human rights organization "Memorial" (as in note 60).
111 For further explanations on the selected time periods please contact the author.
criticism, the characteristics of its senders as well as the characteristics of international criticism. Furthermore the interplay of criticism with other instruments of influence is examined.

VI. Discussion of Possible Success Conditions

In difference to time periods where criticism did not result in behavioral changes, both the case of the Grozny ultimatum and the releases from Abu Ghraib share a number of interesting traits. With respect to the characteristics of the senders of international criticism, it stands out that both cases were characterized by a large amount of criticism by a broad variety of different actors – states, international organizations and transnational human rights NGOs alike. In particular, critical comments by crucial state cooperation partners or (former) central antagonists of a great power – such as Germany and the U.S. in the case of Russia – could be observed. Hence, criticism by important members of a great power’s so-called social constituency, defined as that social grouping “in which legitimacy is sought, ordained, or both”\textsuperscript{112}, seems to be particularly successful in inducing such a state to react by changing its behavior. With regard to the characteristics of the criticism, both of the analyzed concessions were preceded by very fierce critical comments signalling a high degree of disapproval of the human rights violations at hand. Representatives of states, international organizations and human rights NGOs condemned the norm violations in strongest terms and even pointed out possible damaging consequences, amongst others, for the U.S.’s and Russia’s international standing or, more specifically, the realization of their concrete international leadership claims.\textsuperscript{113} On May 08, for instance, the Malaysian Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Abdul made clear that the U.S.’s credibility as well as its image as a human rights champion had been dented and questioned by the international community. It was not enough for President Bush to apologize without taking “stern action to address the issue of torture and humiliation of Iraqi prisoners by US soldiers”\textsuperscript{114}. Especially these statements, which signal the highest possible damage to a state’s reputation as a legitimate great power, seem to be particularly effective based on a comparison of the six time periods. Whereas periods of “unsuccessful” criticism were characterized predominantly by lower degrees of disapproval, expressing, for instance, concern over an action or a perceived norm violation, announcements of consequences could be only observed in the two analyzed cases of criticism success.

\textsuperscript{112} Reus-Smit, “International Crises of Legitimacy,” 164.
\textsuperscript{113} Such announcements do not include threats of material sanctions, which do not fall under the criticism concept.
Finally, a number of interesting observations remain with respect to the characteristics of the addressees of international human rights criticism. Those can partially be connected to another important result referring to the interplay of international criticism with other instruments of influence: In particular, international criticism was accompanied, supported or transported by internal pressures in both analyzed cases of criticism success. This could not be observed in periods where criticism was not followed by behavioral changes. Such finding, being possible only through a comparative analysis of the two instruments of influence, is in line with the existing human rights literature, which explicitly or implicitly assumes that international pressures mainly serve to mobilize national actors and empower them to influence their government.\textsuperscript{115}

At the same time, a closer look suggests that internal pressures, though being crucial for criticism success, need not always be present to the same extent for a behavioural change to happen: Whereas in the U.S. case internal pressures, together with learning processes and problem awareness within the administration, played a relatively strong role in bringing about the analyzed concession, they were of much less importance in the case of the Russian retreat from the Grozny ultimatum, which can largely be traced to international criticism. Such variation in the amount of internal pressures needed suggests that there might be additional conditions of success which presuppose such pressures to varying degrees.

With a view on the U.S. case, a possible factor of influence which might be relevant in this respect is the type of a great power’s political system. In particular, in line with the existing human rights literature\textsuperscript{116} it can be assumed that democratic\textsuperscript{117} great powers are more likely to react to international criticism since external actors can more easily promote or mobilize internal pressures in those states. Such presumption corresponds to the empirical observation that internal pressures were more important in the U.S. than in the Russia case, with the U.S. being a democratic and Russia being a non-democratic great power. While the democratic political system of a great power might thus be a possible condition of success, the example of successful criticism in the Russia case suggests that it can hardly be a necessary condition. Instead, it can be


\textsuperscript{116}E.g. Ropp and Risse, Introduction and overview, 16f; Andrea Liese, Staaten am Pranger: Zur Wirkung internationaler Regime auf innenstaatliche Menschenrechtspolitik (Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, 2006) 20f. and 269; Simmons, Mobilizing for Human Rights, 44f; Simmons, From ratification to compliance: quantitative evidence on the spiral model, 44f.

\textsuperscript{117}Democracy is defined to have the following key features: 1) periodic, competitive, inclusive and mainly non-manipulated (“free”) elections; 2) designation of governments through elections; 3) fully non-manipulated (“fair”) elections; 4) political rights (freedom of information, association and assembly, freedom of speech); 5) government is bound to the law (Timm Beichelt, “Autokratie und Wahldemokratie in Belarus, Russland und der Ukraine,” accessed May 7, 2012, http://fbks.uni-mannheim.de/publikationen/fbks26.pdf).
suspected that functional equivalents to democratic regime type exist: In the case of Russia, such functional equivalent could be grounded in the fact that the Russian leadership, in contrast to the U.S., strongly perceived a lack of international recognition as a legitimate great power. At the same time, it did not engage in social competition in the initial of the “counterterrorist operation”, but rather demonstrated its readiness to overcome this lack by adapting to the Western-European status hierarchy to some extent. In particular, while the Russian Prime Minister and later President Vladimir Putin declared the restoration of the Russian Federation’s great power status as his primary foreign policy goal, he at least rhetorically and partially reconciled with the Western-European ideal of democracy and the rule of law, applying elements of social mobility and social creativity. While stressing from the beginning that he would not engage in creating a “second edition” of the U.S. or Great Britain but rather a “strong state”, Putin also made clear that a strong state power would be equaled with a democratic, constitutional state capable of acting. The strength of the nation did not consist in challenging the international community, was not being strong against other strong nations, but rather together with them. In general, such strive for (full) recognition as a great power in the Western European institutional framework played an important role in the Russian reaction to international criticism:

“(…) Putin came to power with an explicitly integrationist agenda. He spoke about special relations between Russia and Europe and he even mentioned a possibility of Russia joining NATO (…) he came up with a very clearly set intention to bring Russia closer to Europe (…) therefore, you know, I think there was a sensitivity at that time (…)”

Consequently, the Russia’s perceived lack as a legitimate great power, combined with its pronounced readiness to adapt to the existing status hierarchy in handling this deficit could explain the comparatively stronger, direct influence of international criticism in the Grozny case and might have served as a functional equivalent for the U.S.’s democratic regime type. In particular, it can be assumed that states commanding such characteristics are more responsive to international criticism than states that feel confident about their international position as a legitimate great power: In fact, a behavioral change might be the only option for them to gain recognition as legitimate great power. Both the perceived lack of recognition and the democratic regime type furthermore directly relate to the mentioned finding that criticism always requires an interplay with internal pressure to succeed.

120 Interview with a high-ranking member of the Russian International Affairs Council, Moscow (June 05, 2013).
Finally, in both the case of the Grozny ultimatum and the Abu Ghraib releases a (perceived) leeway for a reconcilability of relevant domestic and foreign policy interests could be observed. Such leeway could be another condition for criticism success with respect to the characteristics of the addressees of international criticism. In the case of the Grozny ultimatum, the Russian military leadership had an alternative strategy of how to respond to the international demands for a retreat from the ultimatum without neglecting the domestic goal of bringing the “counterterrorist operation” quickly to an end. During the so-called “chase of the wolves” the remaining fighters in Grozny were trapped by the Russian military into a corridor where they were shot by the artillery\textsuperscript{121}.

By contrast, the announced reduction of the number of detainees at Abu Ghraib at least minimally responded to the country’s domestic (strategic) interests. Whereas the U.S. primarily sought to identify and eliminate potential security risks, parts of the U.S. military were even before the Abu Ghraib scandal aware of the fact that innocent civilians were being detained at the prison. International criticism, while partially bringing about such awareness itself, was able to draw on those initially ineffective efforts aimed at speeding up the detainee review process.

All in all, based on a comparison of relevant time periods eight success conditions of international human rights criticism could be identified\textsuperscript{122}:

\textbf{Characteristics of the Senders of International Criticism}
- State character (states, international organizations) of the senders of international criticism
- Core membership in a great power’s social constituency
- Large amount of critical statements by a broad variety of criticizing actors

\textbf{Charakteristika verbaler Kritik}
- High degree of articulated disapproval including announcements of consequences

\textbf{Characteristics of the Addressees of International Criticism}
- Democratic, political system
- Strongly perceived lack of international recognition as a legitimate great power with pronounced readiness to adapt to the existing status hierarchy in handling this deficit
- Existence of a (perceived) leeway for a reconcilability of interests

\textbf{Criticism+X}
- Criticism + internal pressure

\textbf{Table 1: Overview of Potential Success Conditions of International Human Rights Criticism}

\textsuperscript{121} Interview with a high-ranking member of the Russian human rights organization "Memorial" (as in note 60).
\textsuperscript{122} Apart from the factors listed in table 2, the degree of public dissemination of a critical statement as well as the credibility of the criticizing actor could be identified as possible success conditions based on a comparison of the analyzed time periods.
VII. Conclusion

Drawing upon two case studies, the Russian human rights abuses in the Second Chechen War and the U.S. norm violations in the Bush administration’s ‘War on Terror’, the paper investigated into an issue largely neglected in the human rights literature: the influence of international human rights criticism on great powers. Starting from English School assumptions, it was argued that a great power cannot easily ignore such criticism, since it may pose a threat to its power and identity as a so-called legitimate great power. Such assumption was supported by an in-depth analysis of two examples of behavioral changes by the U.S. and Russia: the Russian military’s retreat from the so-called Grozny ultimatum and the U.S.’s military’s announced reduction of the number of detainees from the infamous torture prison Abu Ghraib. Furthermore, eight conditions were identified which might be relevant for criticism success: Amongst others, a high degree of articulated disapproval for the human rights abuses, a large amount of criticism by a variety of different actors, in particular the important members of a great power social constituency, as well as a strongly perceived lack of international recognition as a legitimate great power, combined with a pronounced readiness to overcome this deficit by adapting to the existing status hierarchy, were deemed relevant.

While the paper, with its explicit focus on more limited, so-called “tactical” concessions, thus marks a substantial contribution to the human rights literature and, especially, the study of naming and shaming, more efforts will be necessary to gain a thorough understanding of its multiple facets of influence. Most importantly, more rigorous testing of the introduced success conditions should be pursued in future studies. In doing so, special attention could be paid to the interactions and interrelations among certain conditions. For instance, it could be analyzed to what extent great powers that are characterized both by a democratic political system and a strongly perceived lack of international recognition as a legitimate great power might be particularly vulnerable to international human rights criticism. In this respect, a possible contribution of international criticism to more long-term behavioral changes could be more closely examined. Neither of the two investigation periods in the U.S. and Russia case witnessed behavioral changes that were sustainable on both a politico-institutional and substantial level. However, a preliminary analysis suggests that international criticism might have contributed to such developments later on. In the case of Russia, international criticism, together with internal pressure and the “Chechenization” of the conflict, might have played a role with respect to the mentioned fact that over time the patterns of violence in the region began to shift from indiscriminate “cleansing operations” to more targeted methods of counterinsurgency.
Without doubt, more work remains yet to be done to gain get more clarity about the role of international criticism as well as the conditions that drive its success or failure. Already at this point, it should, however, it can be clearly stated that the international community – NGOs, states and international organizations alike – should not shy away from making unequivocal statements when confronted with the human rights violations of great powers – in the end, such criticism could save lives.