
Volume 8 | Issue 21

Article 1

6-23-2000

A Future of Human and Civil Rights in Zimbabwe: Ideology and Outcome Research

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Recommended Citation

Editor, IBPP (2000) "A Future of Human and Civil Rights in Zimbabwe: Ideology and Outcome Research," *International Bulletin of Political Psychology*: Vol. 8 : Iss. 21 , Article 1.
Available at: <https://commons.erau.edu/ibpp/vol8/iss21/1>

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Title: A Future of Human and Civil Rights in Zimbabwe: Ideology and Outcome Research

Author: Editor

Volume: 8

Issue: 21

Date: 2000-06-23

Keywords: Civil Rights, Human Rights, Zimbabwe

Abstract. This article describes two common approaches to achieving human and civil rights and what may be needed to select among these and other approaches.

The Republic of South Africa's foreign policy initiatives towards politically violent events in Zimbabwe underlie a basic controversy about achieving human and civil rights and preventing or stopping human and civil rights violations in a nation-states often viewed as an ally.

Two politically violent events are of highest significance. One is the seizing of farmland owned by white farmers (and the concurrent killing of at least one white farmer and the beating of many black farmhands) by black veterans of Zimbabwe's war for independence, thugs from and supporters of Zimbabwean President Robert Mugabe's political party, ZANU-PF, some of Zimbabwe's many poor and downtrodden, and various antisocial and criminal elements. The other is the intimidation, injuring, and killing of members of the political opposition, especially the Movement for Democratic Change, by the same types of political actors involved in land seizures. For each, the approach of former President Nelson Mandela has been contrasted with that of current President Thabo Mbeki.

Mandela's approach has been described as overtly and explicitly citing violations and advocating for change in a very directive manner replete with threats of sanctions--even if the sanctions are not economic or military but political (largely the very disapproval of a revered African icon.) This approach is approvingly evaluated as facilitating a clear understanding of what needs to be changed and of the disapproval that the violations have generated.

Mbeki's approach has been described as a two-pronged technique. One prong is characterized as overtly and explicitly continuing to praise the accomplishments of the ally--or perhaps toning down the praise or at most making hopeful statements that the violations (often referred to only in code words or in metaphor) will soon cease. The other prong is characterized as firmly and respectfully pressing for a cessation of violations out of the public eye. This approach is approvingly evaluated as helping the violator save face and as reducing psychological reactance.

Most of the many approaches to achieving human and civil rights violations are but aspects or combinations of Mandela's and Mbeki's. Unfortunately, the public discourse about the merits of the many approaches are exemplified by two kinds of ideology. The first kind of ideology comprises belief systems that are reinforced by hegemonic authorities and that are intended to maintain and protect the status quo of political power. In other words, public discourse leading to favoring one's position is but a reflection of false consciousness and a vehicle to maintain or exacerbate the status quo of violation. The second kind of ideology comprises a belief system that there is a contest among approaches and one will bear up as more efficacious than the rest across situations. Here the ideal is the enemy of many partial goods. The two kinds of ideology may overlap but both ignore significant psychological research. This research strongly suggests that there will be a most effective approach for each of the myriad sets of people, environments, historical moments, sociocultural contexts, and yet other variables at many different levels of specificity.

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Thus, supporters of human and civil rights need to advocate for a psychological and social science of the achievement of rights. This outcome research will not necessarily mimic logical positivism but also other epistemological perspectives. In fact, it may engender new epistemological approaches so vital in a multicultural world with interdependent, macro-social phenomena permeating the field of human behavior. Otherwise, the wretched of the earth once will continue to bear the brunt of the best of intentions leading to the worst of consequences. (See Goonan, G., Healy, B., & Moynihan, P. (2000). The death of the subject: Human rights, due process, and psychiatry. *International Journal of Law & Psychiatry*, 23, 23-41; Handwerker, W.P. (1997). Universal human rights and the problem of unbounded cultural meanings. *American Anthropologist*, 99, 799-809; Loveman, M. (1998). High-risk collective action: Defending human rights in Chile, Uruguay, and Argentina. *American Journal of Sociology*, 104, 477-525; Snodgrass Godoy, A. (1999). "Our right is the right to be killed": Making rights real on the streets of Guatemala City. *Childhood: A Global Journal of Child Research*, 6, 423-442; Spini, D., & Doise, W. (1998). Organizing principles of involvement in human rights and their social anchoring in value priorities. *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 28, 603-622; Swarns, R.L. (June 19, 2000). New pragmatism in South Africa's foreign policy disappoints some old supporters. *The New York Times*, p. A8.) (Keywords: Civil Rights, Human Rights.)