Strategic Socialization: How China Shapes International Human Rights Regime

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Abstract

Research to date shows that the international human rights regime is politicized. Despite claiming to uphold the normative standard, states review their allies' human rights records less harshly than their adversaries'. The politicized human rights regime may reasonably be a product of the major powers taking advantage of the review system. How can a major power like China improve its standing in the international human rights regime without improving its domestic compliance record? I demonstrate that China, a major power with little intent to comply with liberal-based norms, can use rewards and punishments to influence reviews of its human rights record. It seeks to bypass the human rights norms underlying the international monitoring system. Leveraging the time lags between sessions of the UN Universal Periodic Review, a recurring human rights monitoring institution, I show that China uses economic rewards to stimulate lenient reviews and economic sanctions to deter harsh reviewers. Under such undue pressure, countries economically dependent on China give lenient reviews in return. In contrast

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with the conventional wisdom that socialization incentivizes states' benign compliance, I demonstrate how a major power can influence other states to resist and bypass norms in a liberal-based international institution.

Introduction

States can formally acknowledge international norms, complying in form but falling short in practice. The international human rights regime is well-established to incentivize states to protect the rights of their citizens and track how states perform. International agreements and organizations are set up to codify and regulate the general principles and norms, despite these international institutions lacking direct enforcement power. What is unique about the international human rights regime is that it incentivizes states to comply through socialization. States, especially those with an ambition to advance their claim to global leadership, care deeply about how others perceive their performance. However, a miscreant may struggle to improve its standing in the international norm-based community but often fails to fulfill its human rights commitments domestically. In this project, I demonstrate how China addresses this challenge using an alternative strategy: China plausibly leverages its economic ties to influence and co-opt other states to jeopardize the current norm-based regime.

What motivates states to comply with international law is an age-old but challenging question. In the area of international human rights, states may comply for instrumental or normative reasons. Through socialization, states learn the expected costs and benefits of defection, becoming more cooperative due to material concerns (Chayes and Chayes 1993; Gilpin 1981; Keohane 1984). From a normative perspective, states learn and mimic "good citizens" in the international community and eventually internalize the norms of that community (Finnemore 1996; Risse 2000). The literature focuses on how socialization can (or cannot) induce states' genuine commitments, but it does not yet explore the possibility that socialization does not necessarily promote normative results. Instead, during socialization, states can leverage their power to escape their obligations while they appear to demonstrate commitments. States not only learn to comply with norms and standards, but also learn to bypass or negate them within the institution.

In addition, the perspectives of major powers are underplayed in studying how the international human rights regime evolves. Scholars anticipate that international institutions are constructed to constrain the states, not vice versa (Keohane and Martin 1995). Although the international system imposes restraints on the behaviors of all states, powerful states can seek to alter the system in its favor (Gilpin 1981). Cutting-edge work reveals that the international human rights regime is "deeply politicized," meaning the political interests of individual states are at stake in states' interactions when practicing norms (Terman and Byun 2022). However, how a rising power meddles with this politicized regime to advance its interests is still overlooked. In particular, when a major power has little intention to conform with the liberal-based principles, how it attempts to change the game is not yet explored.

My project addresses these two limitations in the literature and suggests that a major power resistant to international norms can use material and social punishments to change the game. A major authoritarian country like China is particularly resistant to liberal-based human rights norms. Still, it strives to gain recognition and global leadership in this issue area because the high political salience of human rights is a double-edged sword to its global and domestic governance. I identify three possible ways to improve a state's status and standing in this liberal-based regime: 1) be a sincere player to improve its human rights records, 2) influence other states in its favor to cheat the current regime, and 3) propose an alternative narrative and set of rules to replace the regime. Given China's domestic interests and still-rising power status, it has not succeeded in the first and the last tactics thus far. While China faces the dilemma between a desire for global status and its reluctance to comply with liberal-based norms, this research demonstrates how China has pursued the middle path. I delve into China's subtle uses of power over other states through socialization in the international human rights regime.

Specifically, I ask: How can a major power like China improve its standing in the international human rights regime without improving its domestic compliance record? I

argue that China wields its economic power and uses reciprocal reviews as punishments to influence states' reviews of its own record. As a result, countries economically dependent on Chinese overseas development finance may give more lenient reviews in future iterations due to this pressure.

Theory: Socialization

Socialization is central to understanding states' compliance with international norms and rules at the international level. States structure and use formal organizations to create and implement norms and assist in enforcing their commitments (Abbott and Snidal 1998). Forum-like international institutions allow states to express principles, discuss common issues, and interact with each other. The main purpose of socialization is to hold some states accountable for eliciting norm-conforming behavior. There are two camps to explain why socialization incentivizes state compliance: one believes states internalize the norms, and the other believes states are more sensitive to the external incentives of compliance after socialization.

To constructivists, in an ideal scenario, states internalize the human rights values and norms with a character of "taken-for-grantedness" (Risse 2000, 6). States are persuaded; as a result, their interests and identities change. Internalization is achieved through socialization, where the leading states and international organizations actively "teach" the novice states what is good and appropriate (Finnemore 1996). States comply with the norm because "it is the right thing to do" (Johnston 2008, 22), but the condition of internalizing norms is quite demanding.

On the other end of the spectrum, no beliefs change when we observe states' behavioral change. Here, for neorealists or institutionalists, socialization does not necessarily change states' attributes, identities or underlying preferences. What international institutions do is change the strategic calculations of governments (Moravcsik 1997, 513). States

comply not because they sincerely care about protecting the human rights practices of other countries. Part of the reason is they desire to establish a reputation for compliance (Erickson 2015; Kelley 2017; Simmons 2000). They want to be seen as embracing human rights, even if they have no interest in upholding human rights per se (Hafner-Burton and Tsutsui 2007). Governments care about how they are perceived by their citizens and members of the international community (Wendt 1999, 236–37). Hence, states have strong incentives to establish a reputation as global human rights defenders for domestic and international legitimacy.

Building off the mechanism that socialization motivates states for reputation concerns, I argue that socialization can be imposed from one state on other states. A major state power can shape and socialize other actors' behaviors to converge with its own interests. States' multiple interactions can result in common knowledge such that states reevaluate the rules of the game being played and shaped by the major power. Here, the "rules of the game" under the influence of the major power are implicit – they have to be learned over time. In particular, states sensitive to material interests may quickly converge with the interests of the major power in the normative institution. I argue that the leading major power can actively change the calculations of other states through an implicit strategic use of carrots or sticks in socialization. If the major power is a norm defector, its material sanctions and strategic behavior may produce feedback that frames the key actor as a norm complier. I define this kind of socialization as *strategic socialization*: states' behaviors are influenced by the subtle use of power under the guise of shared norms.

China's Dilemma in Pursuing Moral Leadership

China has pushed for subtle and significant changes in international regimes. For decades, it often abstained from votes in the UN Security Council, but its neutrality has

decreased significantly. Given its increasing weight in economic imperative and global politics, it has shed its humble and reactive posture and shifted to a more provocative and aggressive stance. In the international human rights regime, China was an outsider, a passive taker of criticism. Now it seeks to blunt the impact of liberal-based human rights norms to limit their influence on states' internal affairs. Any major country is expected to have a negotiating position to influence and shape an international regime (Nathan 2014). Nowadays, China is ready to be a shaper of human rights norms in the international community.

Human rights have been a sensitive issue for a rising authoritarian regime like China, and the toughest issue for its policy, as it is often a code word for subverting non-democratic regimes (Nathan 1997). However, as the oldest and most established international regime, the international human rights regime is critical to serving as a symbolic anchor for China to show that it plays by world rules and norms as a great power should do. Nonetheless, there are tensions between its political system as an authoritarian regime and its fear of associating the idea of human rights with democratization and Western values. Also, tensions lie in its foreign policy goal of being a respected and credible actor in the world community and its deteriorating treatment of domestic citizens to hold up the universal standards and norms.

China's approach to human rights has been balancing between the principle of state sovereignty and the universality of human rights, to avoid the political costs of taking unpopular stands (Weiss 2019). And yet, compared to its peers or other issue areas such as environment or international political economy, China is strikingly less embedded and reluctant to integrate into the international human rights regime (Dai and Renn 2016). Perhaps it is because the norms underpinning such a regime do not conform to the goals of the Chinese government, but instead resonate with the political sophisticates (Kent 1999, 2). Embracing the ideas of human rights presents a challenge to the resilience of a leading authoritarian regime. However, it is nearly impossible to become a global leader without

being recognized as a cooperative player in this norm-based international regime. Therefore, given China's status and ambition in the world community, it is critical to study China's approach to global governance in the issue of human rights.

I identify three possible alternatives for China to seek moral leadership roles in this liberal-based regime: 1) be a sincere player to improve its human rights records, 2) influence other states in its favor in the current regime, and 3) propose an alternative narrative and set of rules to replace the regime. Unsurprisingly, the first and the last two options have been unsuccessful or undesirable thus far. In the issue domains of civil and political rights, China's three cycles of review before the Human Rights Council – 2009, 2013, and 2018 – coincided with periods of "cautious hope, increasing uncertainty, and alarm," respectively (Lewis 2020, 137). Since Xi assumed power, China has actively resisted civil and political rights norms. Topics like universal values, citizens' rights, and freedom of the press are banned for research and teaching, viewed as in favor of the liberal normative order as well as dangerous to China's political system (Economy 2014). The official narratives relegate civil and political rights, seen as values underpinning democracies, to lower importance and place economic rights, possibly supplied by autocracies, to a higher rank (Ji 2022). China's selective emphasis on norms seems to satisfy domestic audiences and appeal to like-minded autocracies and efficient technocrats. While China's aspiration for global leadership lends itself to investing in normative power, it is still far from sufficient to propose a full-fledged alternative normative order to challenge the substance of the existing liberal one (Zhao 2018). China's counter-narrative to the liberal normative order is hard-pressed to inspire other countries to align with, especially in the human rights issue. Motivated by moving up to the hierarchy of prestige, a rising power attempts to replace the current rules and rights embodied in the system, but such "systemic change" is hard to realize yet (Gilpin 1981, 41–43).

Therefore, recognizing the conflicting interests of not being a liberal norm follower, and the inherent difficulties of establishing a new moral leadership by replacing the ex-

isting normative order, China can seek the middle ground. It can leverage the economic power to coerce the other states in the current system. While China is experiencing a downturn in protecting civil rights and is short of normative power to replace the liberal norms, its rising economic power helps it shape the norm-based regime into a version that converges with Chinese interests. Since the human rights regime by no means requires a standard of strict compliance, as long as states are perceived to have an "acceptable" level of overall compliance, they can stay comfortable (Chayes and Chayes 1993). Hence, achieving a mediocre standing and distancing itself from the worst offenders in the peer review system seem to be realistic goals for China. This project will showcase how a global power like China can use punishments to influence states' behavior in its favor in a liberal-based international human rights regime.

The UN human rights regime allows states to socialize through communication, exchange and reflection to diffuse the predominantly normative practices in human rights. In particular, the UN Human Rights Council has set up a Universal Periodic Review (UPR) system that holds all states accountable to their peers' recurrent reviews of the treatment of the domestic population. The monitoring power lies in a formal forum-like institution for states' socialization. In its ideal version, the UPR can provide "neutral, depoliticized or specialized forums" for comments, critiques and recommendations for improvement (Abbott and Snidal 1998, 10). In practice, the UPR is far from neutral (Terman and Byun 2022; Terman and Voeten 2018). States tend to review selectively, condemning their adversaries harshly while going easy on their friends and allies (Terman and Byun 2022; Terman and Voeten 2018). That said, the UPR is a laboratory to test the power dynamics in socialization because it is a recurrent monitoring mechanism that elicits reputational concern in forum-style interactions. Moreover, multiple cycles of reviews can reveal changes in a single state's review record over time.

Putting these two perspectives together, I propose to study how an emerging power like China, aiming to improve its standing in the human rights domain, can take advan-

tage of the politicized UN human rights review system. Major power like China can use economic rewards to elicit lenient reviews and punishments to deter harsh reviews. This misuse of power may further dampen the integrity of the review system.

Argument and Expectations

I propose that socialization can also form interactive dialogues where major state powers can reveal their interests and shape actors' behaviors to converge to their own. States' multiple interactions can change common knowledge such that states reevaluate the rules of the game being played and shaped by the major power. Here, the "rules of the game" under the influence of the major actor are implicit – they have to be learned over time. States sensitive to material interests may converge with the interests of the major power in the normative institution. The major actor can actively change the calculations of other states by material rewards and punishments. In particular, if the major power is in fact a norm defector, to achieve a better standing in the peer review system in human rights institutions, its carrots and sticks can feed back to influence other states to make the major power appear as a norm complier. This is a subtle use of power under the guise of shared norms.

Strategic socialization is plausible with the dynamics of the review system. First, I study how reviewing states assess China in the UN Universal Periodic Review. Then I investigate China's reactions to the reviews, and how those reactions shape the reviewing states' subsequent decisions to monitor human rights violations in China. Finally, I assess the effect of punishment by examining reviews in the next cycle. Hence, the politicized UN review system may result from strategic socialization.

The power dynamics in the states' review interactions imply that China can impose material rewards and costs to incentivize states to give lenient reviews and punish states that give harsh reviews. The effects, however, are heterogeneous. China's friends or allies

may have already colluded with China to provide lenient reviews from the beginning. Material incentives will not dampen the integrity of the 'noble' states that always uphold human rights norms and standards. Hence, only those swaying in critics and dependent on the Chinese economic imperative may change their reviews. More specifically, this group of states may not have good human rights records and be financially reliant on Chinese oversea loans and aid projects.

Between UPR review sessions, I expect China to reward states by offering debt rescheduling or forgiveness, and punish states by prolonging or suspending oversea financial assistance. Those harsh reviewing states dependent on Chinese Chinese overseas finance may concede and review China more leniently in the subsequent cycle of reviews.

Research Design

Identifying Mechanism of Reciprocal Review

There have been three cycles of Universal Periodic Review so far. In each cycle, all countries are under review; however, each country will be assessed in a specific review session. When China was under review, the review sessions occurred in 2009, 2013 and 2018, respectively (OHCHR 2022). A country under review writes a self-assessment of its human rights practices. Reviewing states then provide comments and issue recommendations for the state to improve upon, and the state under review can choose to accept or take note of the recommendations. Since reviewing states have limited space to ask questions and issue recommendations, states tend to use their monitoring power selectively and strategically to mention issues they are most concerned about. They reduce the complex reality of five years in a country to a condensed statement with comments and recommendations. Through this selection, we can infer that the statement reflects the

most critical and meaningful problems in a country under review from the perspective of the reviewing states.

With 2-3 sessions per year, each cycle requires about 13 sessions to cover all countries. Data is available from the first session in April 2008 through the 37th session in November 2020 (Info} 2023). To show that China attempts to exert power over other states' regarding the reviews it receives, I collect and compare two episodes for each China-country X pair. First, China receives its review from country X in Cycle 2[1], where I distinguish harsh versus lenient reviewers. Cycle 2 occurred in October 2013, where 125 countries issued 284 recommendations to China's human rights records. Second, country X reviews China again in Cycle 3. Cycle 3 occurred in November 2018, where 135 countries issued 387 recommendations. I analyze the effectiveness of China's strategy by measuring the relative harshness of country X's second review.

Measuring Review Harshness in Review Chains

I examine the reviews and rank them based on harshness. I assess a review's harshness with reference to the other reviews China receives in the same session. Each review starts with a comment, acknowledging the country's significant progress in selected issue areas and critiquing the most concerning ones for immediate improvement. Then it ends with a number of recommendations. There is a wide spectrum of comments and recommendations in substantive issue areas and tone in states' reviews. UPR Info, an NGO aiming to raise awareness and provides tools to promote human rights, has published a data set that classifies 56 issue themes in the reviewing states' recommendations and ranks the severity of each recommendation based on its verb choices (Info} 2023). Similarly, I follow UPR Info's coding strategies to classify states' comments on Chinese human rights conditions into 56 issue themes. Building off the existing typologies in the human rights literature (Park, Greene, and Colaresi 2020), I slightly adapted Terman and Bynn's

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[1]The reason that I skip Cycle 1 is because there were only 47 countries participated in the review process.

7 clusters of thematic categories to 9 clusters of issue topics ([Terman and Byun 2022](#))[2].

I create an Issue Sensitivity index that ranges from 1 to 3, with 3 as the most sensitive issue topic. Civil and Political Rights, Physical Integrity Rights, and Racial, Ethnic, and Religious Minorities have high issue sensitivity, scoring 3. Migration and Labor; Protection of Vulnerable Populations have medium sensitivity, scoring 2. Socio-economic rights, International commitment, Governance and public services and General/other have low sensitivity, scoring 1. Note that each recommendation may belong to one or more issue topics, depending on the associated issues identified. For example, Czechia recommended China "review laws and practices in particular with regard to ensuring protection of the freedom of religion, movement, protection of the culture and language of national minorities, including Tibetans and Uyghurs" ({UPR Info}, 2023). Based on UPR Info, this recommendation was coded as regarding issues of "Freedom of movement," "Freedom of religion and belief," and "Minority rights." Then each belongs to the broader issue topics: "Civil and political rights," "Migration and Labor," and "Racial, Ethnic and Religious Minorities." Since I identify these issues topics as high, medium and high sensitivity, this recommendation will receive the highest sensitivity score, 3.

Each recommendation starts with a verb to indicate the urgency and level of action needed for the state under review to change its course. Recommendations range from requesting the state under review to conducting minimal action to conducting specific action for policy changes. Based on the level of action, each recommendation receives an action category score: a recommendation that receives 3 entails a high level of action, considering policy change or a specific action to improve the country's human rights conditions; 2 entails a medium level of action, usually related to a general element of improvement; 1 entails a low level, regarding sharing information or technical assistance or emphasizing continuity of the current practice.

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[2]1) Civil and Political rights, 2) Governance and Public Services, 3) Migration and Labor, 4) Physical Integrity Rights, 5) Racial, Ethnic and Religious Minorities, 6) Socio-Economic Rights, 7) Protection of Vulnerable Populations, 8) International Commitment and 9) General/Other
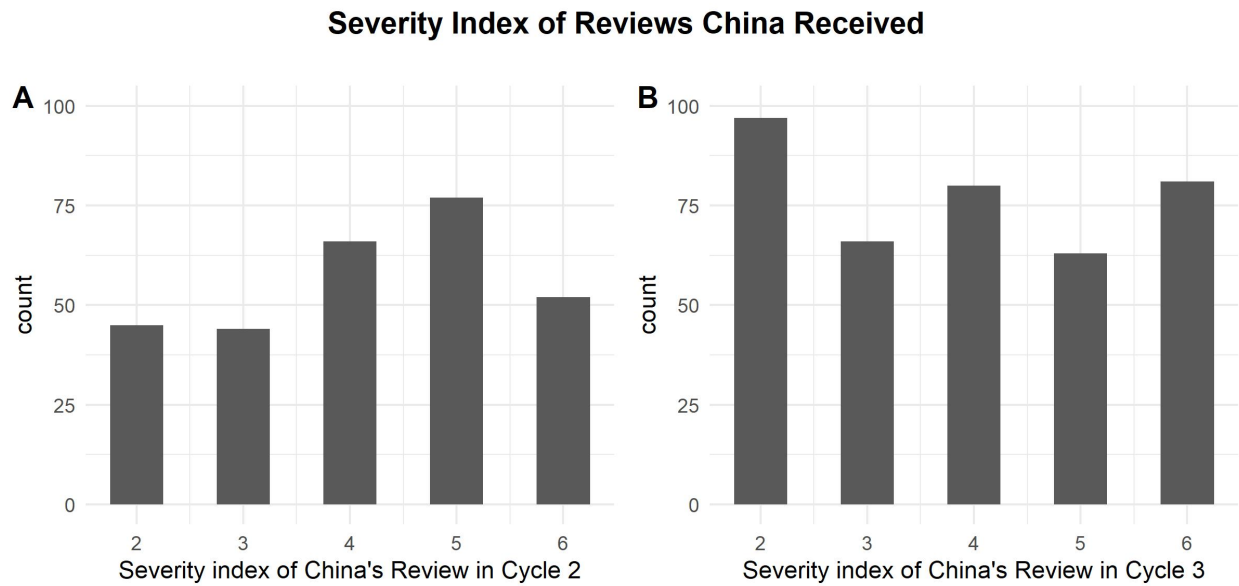
Severity Index of Reviews China Received

Figure 1: Distributions of severity index of Reviews China received in Cycles 2 and 3

The measure of severity is a composite index, as a sum of issue sensitivity and action category score. The range of the severity index is from 2 to 6. Figure 1 presents the distributions of the severity index of reviews China received in Cycles 2 and 3. We can see there are more recommendations in cycle 3 than 2. A big jump in the recommendations scoring 2 and 3 means the newer additions of the recommendations are on the lighter end. At the same time, there are significantly higher numbers of harsh recommendations scoring 6 in Cycle 3.

I divide reviewing states into two groups: harsh reviewers and lenient reviewers. There are two dimensions to measure the harshness of a review: action category and issue sensitivity of the recommendation. Harsh reviewers issue severe recommendations on sensitive topics, whereas lenient reviewers show the opposite. Here, I provide two contrasting examples to show the different choices in tones and issue areas a harsh and lenient reviewing state make. Canada was coded as a harsh reviewer and the Philippines as a lenient reviewer, when China was under review in Cycle 1:

"Canada *welcomed* the measures taken to reduce immediate death sentences, reserving them for 'exceptionally grave' crimes and reinstating Supreme People's Court authority to review death sentences. Canada *expressed deep concern* about reports of arbitrary detention of ethnic minorities members …." (Nations General Assembly} 2009, 6, *emphasis added*)

"The Philippines said its people have *enjoyed friendly relations* with the Chinese people, to which it is bound by strong commercial and cultural ties. It noted China's *tremendous gain* in human rights protection and promotion, considering its challenges as a large developing country with over 20 percent of the world's population. …" (Nations General Assembly} 2009, 2009, p. 8, *emphasis added*)

In terms of issue areas, Canada addressed issues in the death penalty and the rights of ethnic minorities in its comment. These two are presumably sensitive human rights issues to all countries (Terman and Byun 2022). In contrast, the Philippines highlighted the poverty reduction programs in China, an area that China has been proud of making significant progress over the last decades. Economic rights is an issue area China itself prefers to emphasize. In terms of word choices, Canada used "welcome" for its praise and "expressed deep concern" for its concern. The Philippines used "enjoyed friendly relations" and "tremendous gain" in its comment. Here, the contrast between these two comments shows a wide spectrum of what and how reviewing states comment on Chinese human rights conditions.

Canada's nine recommendations explicitly called for reforms on sensitive issues such as the death penalty, abolishing detention of ethnic minorities, and responding to requests for external review on freedom of religion in its practices. From the perspective of Chinese authority, all of those criticisms are of high political salience. By contrast, in the same cycle, the Philippines provided two recommendations: "continue its endeavor" to build

a welfare system and "share best practices" with other developing countries on poverty-reduction programs (Nations General Assembly} 2009, 2009, p. 8). On both issue topics and tones, these recommendations of the Philippines are light, easy to embrace, and positive.

Economic rewards or sanctions

The "treatment" in this study is the changes in Chinese overseas development projects. Changes can be positive or negative for the recipient countries. I do not consider the launch of overseas development projects as part of the rewards mechanism here because there are much higher stakes for commitment than adjustment. The variables reward and sanction are binary, indicating whether a country receives economic reward or sanction from China between Cycles 2 and 3 of the UPR review.

One way to infer the decision of Chinese economic sanctions is the prolonged implementation or withdrawal of Chinese oversea development projects between 2013 and 2017. AidData's Global Chinese Development Finance Dataset captures 13,427 development projects financed by Chinese government institutions and state-owned entities across 165 countries from 2000 to 2017 (Custer et al. 2021). This fine-grained dataset provides milestones for the life cycles of China-sponsored development projects: time of pledge, commitment, and implementation, and the current project status (completed, suspended, or canceled). I identify and infer an economic sanction occurs after China is under review in the UPR under two circumstances: 1) there is a significant delay between the pledge and commitment/implementation; 2) the project is suspended or canceled. Relatedly, to infer Chinese economic rewards, I use the debt rescheduling or debt forgiveness of the current development projects Chinese government institutions financed between 2013 and 2017.

Preliminary Analysis

First, I count reviewing countries that give zero recommendations to China, recommendations in both cycles, recommendation in Cycle 2 or Cycle 3 only. We can see 39 countries did not issue recommendations to China in either 2013 or 2018. I further investigate who these countries are and whether they tend to be silent players in the UPR process.

	None	Both Cycles	Cycle 2 Only	Cycle 3 Only
Country Counts	39	107	14	22

Recommending states	Recs in Cycle 2	Recs in Cycle 3	Numbers of Projects
Bosnia and Herzegovina	48	66	29
Burkina Faso	97	117	0
Israel	173	173	15
Kazakhstan	277	259	124
Nicaragua	259	112	1
Panama	161	112	8
Somalia	39	47	50

It turns out that 32 countries have not recommended anything to other countries in the review process. The other 7 countries were quite vocal in the UPR review system, but still remained silent to China in both cycles. Although we do not know why these countries issued no reviews to China's human rights conditions, it is possible to do so out of economic or political reasons: they do not want to say anything to add tensions to the relationship with China. Here is the table of the selected countries that gave no review to

China, and their total recommendations issued to other countries in Cycle 2 nd 3, as well as how many China-funded projects in those countries. In particular, Kazakhstan has been one of the most active reviewing states in the system, but it has remained silent to China in both rounds. China supported about 124 development countries in Kazakhstan between 2000 an 2017, which is also in the upper tail of countries China assist. In the models below, countries that give no review to China receive a severity index of 0. I infer that when countries are silent on the records, they show leniency to the country under review.

Table 3: Bivariate relationships between severity index, severity ranking and the numbers of Chinese oversea development projects

	Dependent variable:			
	Severity(C2)	Severity Ranking(C2)	Severity(C3)	Severity Ranking(C3)
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Projects till 2013	−0.023**	−0.043		
	(0.010)	(0.100)		
Projects till 2017			−0.024***	−0.120*
			(0.008)	(0.065)
Constant	7.264***	81.156***	9.666***	91.263***
	(0.673)	(6.636)	(0.775)	(6.412)
Observations	189	189	189	189
R^2	0.026	0.001	0.049	0.018
Adjusted R^2	0.021	−0.004	0.044	0.013

Note: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Table 3 shows some evidence of a positive relationship between the numbers of projects China invest in developing countries from 2000 to 2013 and their leniency in reviewing China's human rights records in Cycle 2. Similar relationship persists for development projects invested from 2000 to 2017 and countries' leniency in reviews of Cycle 3. When countries receive more financial assistance from China, they tend to give less se-
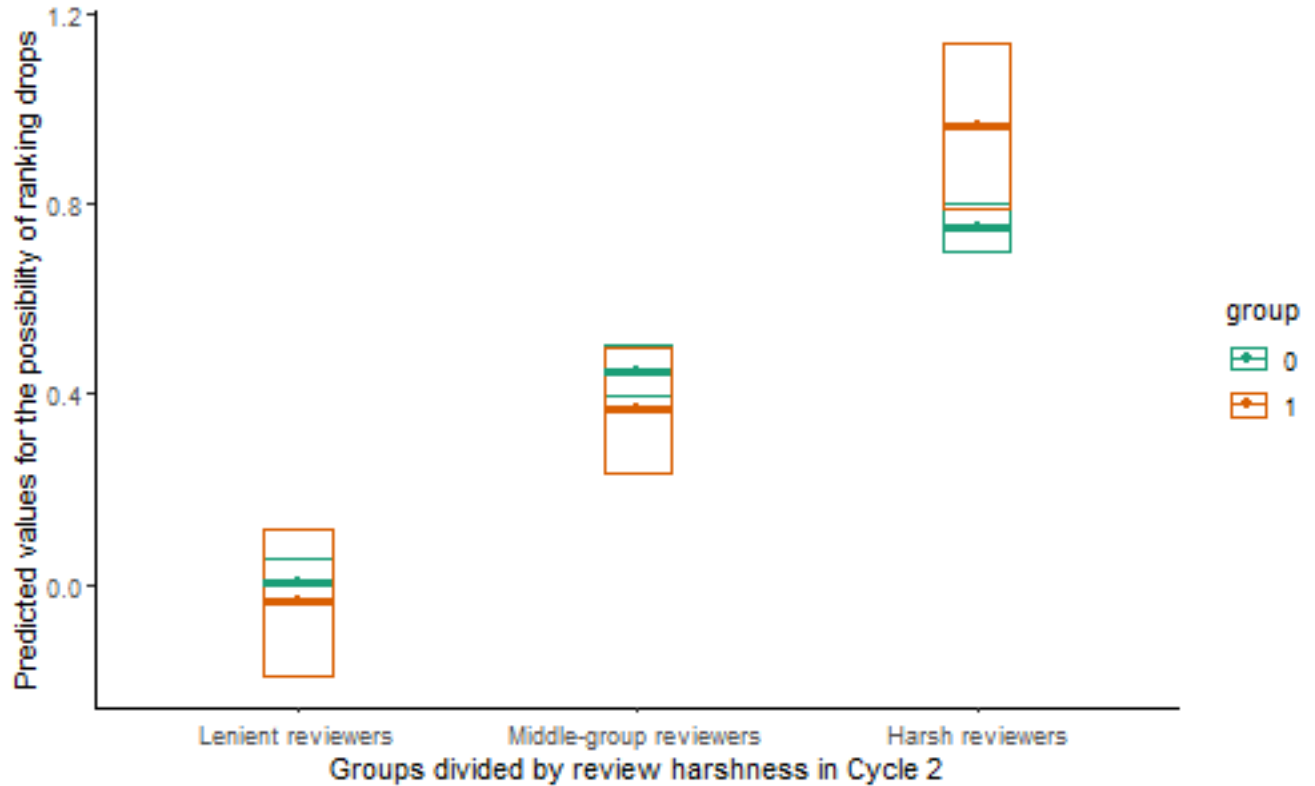
Figure 2: The probability of reviewing more leniently (ranking drops) from Cycle 2 to Cycle 3.

vere reviews to China. The lower the ranking of severity is, the more lenient the reviewing country is to China. For example, Australia ranks the first in ranking of severity in Cycle 2, meaning that its review is the harshest among all the reviewing countries. The average number of Chinese development projects is 66. The effect of projects is substantial: when the project increases by 66, the severity index decreases by around 1.32 on average in both cycles. For Cycle 3, the ranking of severity drops by 8 if China invests the average number of project in countries. This piece of evidence shows that the review system is quite politicized. When countries review China's human rights records, they consider how heavily China has invested on the ground. If it has strong economic cooperation with China, it tends to give more lenient reviews on its human rights performance. This table provides strong evidence that the UPR review system is politicized based on the geo-economic relationships between reviewing countries and China.

Figure 2 shows suggestive evidence that there is positive relationship between China's debt relief on countries and their more lenient reviews in return. The dependent variable is a binary variable of review ranking drop, capturing whether there is a drop of severity index in terms of ranking in Cycle 3 compared to Cycle 2. Receiving 1 in the ranking drop variable means a country reviews China's human rights records more leniently in Cycle 3 compared to its own review in Cycle 2. I also take into account how harsh the countries' reviews in Cycle 2 are, by dividing the reviewing countries into three groups: lenient reviewers, middle-group reviewers, and harsh reviewers. I also control for the covariate indicated above, the numbers of development project until 2013. The `Debt Relief` is seen as a hypothetical "treatment" in this study. I hypothesize that if a country receives economic reward in the form of debt relief, it is more likely to review China more leniently as a return. Figure 2 suggests that lenient reviewers are not likely to have ranking drops between the two cycles, possibly due to the ceiling effect for countries sharing friendship with China that has already reviewed leniently initially. Middle-group reviewers are likely to change their review patterns, but the perceived treatment effect is null. The most interesting change is in the group of harsh reviewers. China's debt relief significantly increases their likelihoods of reviewing China less harshly in Cycle 3, and the marginal effect is substantial.

Summary

To summarize, I expect the harsh reviewers to receive lower or slower foreign assistance as punishment and lenient reviewers to receive debt forgiveness or rescheduling as rewards. Among the harsh reviewers, those more sensitive to the changes in material benefits are more likely to provide more lenient reviews to China in the next cycle.

Major powers' punishment tools can induce other actors to deviate from the norms embodied in an international institution. To the best of my acknowledge, this is the first

attempt in the literature to empirically assess how material incentives directly influence states' interactions within a norm-based international institution. This perspective can provide new insights into specifying the conditions of international cooperation influenced by major powers in a normative setting. In addition, this paper provides a nuanced measure of economic rewards and sanctions in the Chinese aid, and shows how they can be important economic means to achieve politica goals. I point out the micro-processes of socialization that can hinder the effectiveness of norm compliance and diffusion within the institutional social environment. I bring the 'realpolitik,' the major power and its interests, back in to understand the limitations of socialization in promoting norms.

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