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The 'Tianxia' formula for multilateral regime contestation: How China plans to subvert the UN Human Rights Council

Pekonen, Otso

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The 'Tianxia' formula for multilateral regime contestation:
How China plans to subvert the UN Human Rights Council

Otso Pekonen

s3268349

Supervisor: Dr. Rutger Hagen

Second reader: Dr. Femke Bakker

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Abstract

As the liberal international order recedes, China has emerged as the principal challenger of global governance institutions that promote human rights. While China used to act as an ostensible norm taker in the sphere of human rights, it is increasingly asserting its own authoritarian human rights norms ‘with Chinese characteristics’ on the global stage. Using Chinese ‘tianxia’ theory and realism, this thesis endeavours to uncover how China is working to subvert international human rights governance with a case study of the United Nations Human Rights Council (HRC); the preeminent global forum for safeguarding human rights. A discourse analysis of China’s ‘counter-institutionalisation’ of the HRC, reveals a strategic effort to block criticism, prevent independent monitoring, and change established conceptions about the very meaning of human rights. The robustness of the HRC’s mandate thus appears to be under growing duress. How other states respond to China’s affront may determine the direction of global human rights governance for decades to come.

Key words: China, United Nations, human rights, counter-institutionalisation, tianxia theory

1. Introduction

Ziya Öniş (2017) says that liberal democracies are living in “an age of anxiety” as they grapple with the end of the “post-hegemonic global order”. Indeed, the “unipolar moment” was unmistakably short-lived (Ikenberry, 2018). The rule-breaking conduct of authoritarian states like Russia, and the rising power and global influence of China, present a challenge to the structures and values of the existing multilateral system at a time when “Western powers appear to be losing their previous economic and moral appeal” (Öniş, 2017, p.32). Human rights and the rule of law form the bedrock of liberal norms that are increasingly being challenged both within established democracies and on the global stage (Öniş, 2017). Despite human rights being considered universal and indivisible in international law, it seems they are not always set in stone, but rather, an ongoing form of “moral globalisation” that is actively questioned (Zhang & Buzan, 2020). Accordingly, the central aim of this thesis is to ask how international human rights governance is being contested from the ‘top-down’, and more specifically, to examine China’s role in a world that is “morally divided on the meaning of human rights” (Zhang & Buzan, 2020, p.170).

China is traditionally cast as a having a troubled relationship with human rights governance (Foot, 2000). The country is widely known for its record of systemic abuses, yet it has moved to officially embrace human rights. In the 2000s China ratified a host of essential human rights conventions, like the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. However, these ratifications seemed to have little effect on the reality of continued violations (Ahl, 2015). Likewise, in the 1990s China enacted a public push for “*fazhi*”; the rule of law, in order to recuperate from the “lawlessness” of the turbulent Mao era (Ye, 2021). Nonetheless, political and civil rights in China remain dismal. For example, there is “limited enforcement” of the presumption of innocence in the Chinese legal system, despite being inscribed into the criminal code (Lin & Watters, 2017). These accounts exemplify how China has become socialised into formally endorsing human rights and the rule of law, with promotional rhetoric becoming “omnipresent in Chinese official discourse” (Zhang & Buzan, 2020, p.170). China thus acts as an ostensible norm taker, but increasingly, it has started to act like a norm maker in the sphere of human rights (Renouard, 2020).

At present, China is engaged in contesting various parts of the multilateral system, attempting to shift global governance institutions towards its own preferences, a form of strategic state behaviour called “counter-institutionalisation” (Zürn, 2018). Spurred by the advent of a globally assertive China under premier Xi Jinping, China has been flaunting its authoritarian conception of “human rights with Chinese characteristics” since 2017, making clear the country’s normative imprint on global human rights governance will expand (Chen, 2019).

In order to uncover China’s burgeoning role in shaping human rights, this thesis endeavours to analyse China’s ‘counter-institutionalisation’ of the United Nations Human Rights Council (HRC); the preeminent international governing body for human rights. The HRC was established in 2006 by the General Assembly (UNGA) to act as the UN’s highest intergovernmental body on human rights, comprising 47 member states that are elected for 3-year terms based on regional groupings. As it is a political body headed by states, the HRC effectively sets the agenda and political direction of the UN human rights system. The HRC is mandated with “promoting universal respect for the protection of all human rights and fundamental freedoms for all”; documenting and investigating human rights violations; raising the alarm on urgent human rights matters; and protecting people by providing a forum for governments to engage in dialogue and find solutions (UNGA, 2006, p.2). Be that as it may, China stands accused of attempting to reframe and weaken many aforementioned aspects of the mandate (Worden, 2020). As China appears increasingly compelled to obstruct the UN body’s ability to promote human rights and carry out its institutional functions, the continued robustness of the HRC’s mandate is at stake. While incorporating theoretical insights from both realism and Chinese ‘tianxia’ theory, a discourse analysis of key Chinese sponsored resolutions and its broader engagement within the HRC, culminates in an assessment of how the robustness of the mandate is affected. Hence, my research question is as follows:

“How do Chinese ‘counter-institutionalisation’ efforts affect the robustness of the UN Human Rights Council mandate?”

2. Literature review

The following literature review will firstly, examine academic literature to further elucidate the HRC. Secondly, the concept of ‘counter-institutionalisation’ is considered in the relevant literature. Thirdly, this review will seek to establish how China contests human rights governance norms within the HRC. Finally, a conclusion will be presented on the state of the literature - attempting to answer if there is academic consensus on how China’s contestation efforts affect the HRC mandate, culminating in a research gap.

2.1 UN Human Rights Council

Hug & Lukács (2014) say the HRC has been subjected to continuous criticism by scholars since its inauguration in 2006 when it replaced the former UN Commission on Human Rights (CHR). Shortly after the CHR’s inception in 1946, it took on the role of safeguarding the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), which applies to all human beings and forms the foundation of “our understanding of modern human rights” (Hug & Lukács, 2014, p.85). After decades of political interference and intergovernmental inertia, the CHR became known as the “shame of the UN”, with General Secretary Kofi Annan declaring that states sought membership “not to strengthen human rights but to protect themselves against criticism or to criticise others” (Hug & Lukács, 2014, p.86). As the HRC is an intergovernmental political body nestled with autocratic regimes, Hug & Lukács (2014) claim many of the CHR’s structural problems still persist in the modern HRC. Schimmel (2023) proclaims the HRC provides a platform for authoritarian states to appropriate human rights rhetoric to their benefit. As China was involved in negotiating the HRC mandate, Zhang & Buzan (2020) believe it partly explains the HRC’s highly political constitution. Despite such flaws, Chen (2019) maintains the HRC “remains one of the world’s most important global platforms for a variety of actors, including international and local civil society, to examine a government’s record, to speak for vulnerable groups, and to improve global human rights protection” (Chen, 2019, p.1180). Furthermore, the HRC embodies the “formidable task” of promoting, *inter alia*, the universality and indivisibility of human rights, and scrutinising national human rights records - functions that contemporary China vehemently seeks to impair (Chen, 2019).

2.2 “Counter-institutionalisation”

Addressing a fundamental dynamic of international organisations (IOs), Gruber (2005) asserts that powerful states perform far better at shaping the mandates and activities of IOs than weaker, usually small states. When IOs are initially formed, the “institutional preferences” of powerful states are thus much more significant *vis-à-vis* weaker states. This entails “distributional consequences” that become structurally embedded in the long term, with potentially lasting negative repercussions for states that did not ‘get to write the rules’ (Gruber, 2005). Zürn (2018) agrees that the institutional structures of IOs are a reflection of power asymmetries, which in turn, produce domineering hierarchies amongst states. Zürn (2018) asserts that differing institutional preferences are inevitable, and therefore, widespread dissatisfaction with the status-quo becomes common amongst states that did not ‘get to write the rules’. The ensuing distributional conflict leads to what Zürn (2018) describes as “*counter-institutionalisation*”: a deliberate effort of regime contestation by dissatisfied states that comes in two main forms.

One type of ‘counter-institutionalisation’ can be thought of as *regime shifting*, which occurs when states attempt to shape the functioning of an international governance regime towards their preferences from the inside. Hefler (2009) concurs, adding that regime shifting involves attempts to fragment an existing order. A distinct type of regime shifting is *forum shopping*, whereby states deliberately become passive or minimise financial contributions within one organisation, while shifting focus to another forum with a mandate that better fits their preferences (Hefler, 2009). Zürn (2018) says that a second type of ‘counter-institutionalisation’ can be thought of as *competitive regime creation*. This strategy entails the formation of a new institution that operates within the same issue area as an existing institution. The literature appears to concur that utility from engaging in novel regime creation arises from the opportunity to ‘write the rules in your favour’, and to challenge the global governance authority of a disfavoured existing institution (Morse & Keohane 2014; Urpelainen & Van de Graaf, 2015; Stephen, 2021).

While the term “counter-institutionalisation” was coined by Zürn (2018), the phenomenon itself is also widely observed in earlier literature on IOs, taking on various names. Urpelainen and Van de Graaf (2015) refer to regime shifting as *institutional capture*, while Morse and Keohane (2014) use *competitive multilateralism* to address the phenomenon. Furthermore, Ikenberry and Lin (2017) refer to *institutional statecraft* when analysing China’s notorious creation of the Asian Infrastructure

Investment Bank, which was purportedly set-up to challenge the US-dominated World Bank. China's comparatively unobtrusive 'counter-institutionalisation' of the HRC, however, is an example of its lesser-known regime shifting behaviour. Given China's status as the preeminent rising global power, its capacity for asserting institutional preferences in the multilateral system is only set to expand - highlighting China's growing impetus for engaging in 'counter-institutionalisation' (Stephen, 2021).

2.3 China in the HRC

Several scholars have sought to uncover China's regime shifting in the HRC. Chen (2019), Piccone (2018), Renouard (2020), Worden (2020), Zhang and Buzan (2020), and Larkin (2022), all broadly agree on a few major trends that characterise China's ambitions for shaping the UN body's activities. Piccone (2018) points to three main objectives underpinning China's conduct in the HRC. Firstly, China wants to block criticism against its own record, which is tainted by violations that have stirred exceptional global controversy. Most prominently, the arbitrary mass detention of the Muslim minority Uyghur people in China's Xinjiang province. Secondly, China wants to promote its own principles on sovereignty, a distinctly strict conception with a low threshold for what constitutes an 'internal affair'. Thirdly, China wants to advance its own version of human rights with "Chinese characteristics", that detract from any state commitment to protecting the individual person (Piccone, 2018; Chen, 2019; Renouard, 2020). Moreover, China wants to remodel the HRC as part of its broader ambition to "transform human rights into an instrument of twenty-first century global authoritarianism" (Larkin, 2022, p. 2285).

Many scholars point to China's efforts for watering down HRC resolutions, using "vague and ambiguous language that weakens fundamental human rights principles" (Worden, 2020, p.3). Renouard (2020) remarks that China continually attempts to introduce its own language like "win-win" and "mutual respect" into resolutions, to profess moral equivalence between states. The authors also contend that China tries to frame economic development as furthering human rights - where promoting material welfare equates to fostering and protecting human dignity *vis-à-vis* inalienable rights for individual persons (Renouard, 2020). Another activity on display, is China's affront to human rights defenders and civil society, as it continually seeks to shape HRC resolutions to delegitimise their role (Worden, 2020). Moreover, the aforementioned scholars agree that China seeks to undermine independent monitoring mechanisms with the capacity for scrutinising national

human rights records. Piccone (2018) says that China is highly keen on curbing state obligations to comply with such mechanisms, as they could allow for potentially intrusive and revealing investigations.

Besides shifting the HRC's agenda through instilling its language into resolutions, China has also been accused of using coercive tactics to pursue its 'counter-institutionalisation' goals (Chen, 2019). The Chinese delegation has reportedly pressured other national delegations in Geneva not to attend events that feature NGOs or human rights defenders speaking out against China, saying it may endanger bilateral ties and economic cooperation (Piccone, 2018). Chen (2019) asserts that human rights defenders are subjected to threats and intimidation by the Chinese state. Furthermore, Chinese government sponsored NGOs have been mobilised to overcrowd speaking slots for civil society groups at different UN meetings (Hasmath & Hsu, 2021).

When considering how China is enabled to pursue its contestation endeavours, Chen (2021) points to an informal UN-voting block called the "like minded group". These are predominantly illiberal, developing states that profess commitment to 'South-South' cooperation. The "like minded" states are described as a loose allegiance that vote along the same lines in the HRC, usually in contrast to liberal democracies (Chen, 2021). Authoritarian states with historical socialist ties in particular, such as Cuba, Russia, and Venezuela, consistently support China in the HRC. This "like-minded" group is embedded within a broader "non-aligned" block of developing states, that also diverges from the Global North. The voting power of these blocks - and China's economic and political influence over these states - is said to be crucial for China's ability to shift the HRC towards its institutional preferences (Chen, 2021).

2.4 State of the literature & research gap

To conclude, the featured literature exhibits a high degree of convergence about the overall disposition of China towards human rights and how it operates within the HRC. The aforementioned scholars clearly illustrate how the HRC's human rights norms and governance competencies are being contested by China. Moreover, they all use fairly similar, complementary arguments for outlining the rationale and method behind China's regime shifting effort. However, despite the salient approaches featured, the authors did not provide an exhaustive account of what China's behaviour entails for the continued robustness of the HRC mandate. Many questions about

China's activities and their consequences for the mandate remain. The years following China's first self-sponsored HRC resolution in 2017 have seen an evolving behavioural dynamic that remains understudied. The application of the following theoretical perspectives will help to remedy the gap.

3. Theoretical framework

This section will firstly, offer a conceptualisation of the HRC mandate and explain what its robustness entails. Secondly, a generic definition of realist theory is presented, followed by a conceptual mechanism that culminates in several hypotheses. Finally, an explanation of Chinese 'tianxia' theory is presented, forming a second theoretical mechanism that yields a further set of hypotheses. This section aims to provide a conceptual framework to link China's 'counter-institutionalisation' with the dependent variable; the mandate's robustness.

3.1 Robustness of the HRC mandate

Simply defined, the robustness of the mandate can be measured in terms of how well the UN body is able to carry out its objectives. The idea of a mandate is two-fold. As a legal function, the mandate refers to the governance authority of the HRC to act in line with defined powers granted by the UN General Assembly (UNGA). A monitoring mechanism that endows the HRC with a specific oversight function is an example of what the HRC is *allowed* to do. Nonetheless, the mandate also refers to what the HRC is *supposed* to do. According to the UNGA resolution establishing the HRC as a subsidiary body, its mandate includes, *inter alia*, "promoting universal respect for the protection of all human rights and fundamental freedoms for all", and "address situations of violations of human rights, including gross and systematic violations, and make recommendations thereon" (UNGA, 2006, p.2). The mandate can thus be understood in terms of the overall mission; purpose, or normative objective of the HRC. If only considering the legally defined operational authority of the body, one could argue that its mandate is limited to begin with, but when considering the broader normative responsibility conferred onto the HRC by the UNGA, then its mandate is immense. An important facet of the mandate's robustness is therefore also the normative weight that it impresses on the international community. Furthermore, no regime shifting effort within the HRC can formally change its founding principles *de-jure*, as the mandate is given by the UNGA. However, as the UN's highest intergovernmental body on human rights, the HRC actively shapes the norms and standards of the entire UN system, and can adopt resolutions that *de-facto*

weaken the mandate in numerous ways. With these facets of robustness considered, the mandate's standing can be compromised in two principal ways:

a) the HRC's governance authority is weakened; for example, if the use of an independent monitoring or reporting mechanism is restricted.

b) the HRC's mission and normative function is weakened; for example, if it fails to address gross violations or promote the universality and indivisibility of human rights.

3.2 Realism: generic definitions

Moving on to the theoretical conceptualisation, we must first define realism in international relations. According to Kenneth Waltz's (1979) *Theory of International Politics*, the starting assumption of realism is the absence of any central global authority. Realists thus assume the world is ordered in an effective state of anarchy, where states embody the highest form of authority. A second basic assumption is that power is understood in terms of relative gains, which renders inter-state relations as a zero-sum game where one's loss is equated with the gain of another. Mearsheimer (2001) points to a third assumption, that states can never know about the intentions of their potential rivals. As such, there can be no guarantee that a competitor will refrain from using their offensive capabilities. Mearsheimer (2001) also contends that power is bound by material capacity. A state's ability to exert itself is only guaranteed by way of yielding tangible resources. In practice, a state's simplified measure of 'real' power is their economic and military strength. When taking stock of these assumptions, realism can lend significant explanatory power for understanding the Machiavellian behaviour of many states; for instance, why they violate human rights or use coercive means to influence other states.

When considering why states form or join international organisations in the first place, realists hold that it always functions as a deliberate strategy for maximising power (Mearsheimer, 2019). When applying a liberal-institutional, rational-choice argument for joining IOs, states have demand for international governance regimes because they can, *inter alia*, centralise knowledge; externalise tasks; reduce transactions costs; or establish symmetrical information, i.e. to overcome a collective action problem (Abbott & Snidal, 1998; Keohane, 1982). Nevertheless, realists believe these cooperative, utilitarian justifications, are all ultimately propelled by a strategic state desire for

power maximisation. Crucially, realism can also help explain state behaviour within the institutions of the multilateral system.

3.3 Realism in China's 'counter-institutionalisation'

Before presenting specific hypotheses, it is paramount that the conceptual mechanism behind the independent variable is elucidated, because Zürn's (2018) rationale for 'counter-institutionalisation' reflects a distinctly realist logic. Namely, that state power - economic, military and ensuing political influence - is the core determinant in deciding how institutional preferences are distributed when IOs are formed. To reiterate, the core assumption in realist thinking is that states have an innate interest in maximising power, which underlines their institutional agency; the capacity to exert preferences (Mearsheimer, 2019). If the rules and norms of a governance regime can constrain the behaviour of another state in line with one's institutional preferences, then it may be considered a relative gain in realist terms. IOs can thus function as platforms for exerting influence over other states; an institutionalised means for shaping state behaviour (Gruber, 2005). Conversely, the obligations formed under an international regime can also act as a restraint if states perceive them as limiting their agency, incentivising regime contestation (Mearsheimer, 2019). This logic is precisely why China views multilateral institutions and international law as vehicles for political power (Larkin, 2022).

When applied to the HRC, its ingrained values and mandate do not reflect China's present institutional preferences, but rather, those of the post-war liberal international order (LIO) which still prospered in 2006. Conversely, China was a newly emerging market that did not seek to vocally challenge the LIO, or to forcefully assert its preferences within the multilateral system, including on human rights (Renouard, 2020). China was involved in negotiating the mandate - yet the HRC's instilled norms entail, *inter alia*, the universality and indivisibility of human rights; state accountability towards the rights of the individual; the scrutiny of national human rights records; and independent monitoring (Chen, 2019). China views these HRC norms and governance competences as exerting undue influence; limiting its agency, and infringing upon its sovereignty (Renouard, 2020). As contemporary China espouses a state-centric realist worldview, I would expect China to shape HRC resolutions to limit institutional capacities for scrutinising its human rights record; to shape resolutions against any forms of binding state commitment; and contest

human rights conceptions that entail state accountability or checks on power. I hence propose the following hypotheses:

H1: China will seek to limit any scrutiny of its human rights record.

H2: China will seek to instil its strict interpretation of sovereignty.

Furthermore, China's realist posture is plainly visible in its engagements with other states. It has previously used economic retribution and diplomatic pressure against other states to challenge human rights norms (Piccone, 2018). China also enjoys heavy economic influence and diplomatic clout over a large number of developing countries, especially amongst the "non-aligned" and "like minded" groups of the HRC (Chen, 2021). Realism forthrightly assumes that China will leverage asymmetrical relationships in this regard, and even use coercive means like threats of economic retaliation to achieve its goals. I therefore hypothesise:

H3: China will leverage influence over 'non-aligned' states to support its regime shifting.

In sum, realism essentially assumes that human rights violations will always occur (Cardenas, 2004). Realism can thus help explain why China continues to violate human rights and why it cannot be forced to comply with treaty obligations. Realism says little, however, about China's seeming desire for promoting its own doctrine on human rights. A typical critique of realism in this regard, is the theory's insufficient capacity for explaining soft power influence, or why a state would pursue norm entrepreneurship for ideational reasons.

3.4 Tianxia theory: China's conception of the international order

China's imperative role in the global political economy has cast light on Chinese academia and its conceptions about international relations. "Tianxia" is translated as meaning "all under heaven", a theory stemming from an ancient East Asian international order where China was the central power; an undisputed hegemon (Dreyer, 2015). 'Tianxia' recognises inequality between nation-states as unavoidable, not because of differences in 'real' power, but because of the "cultural achievements and acknowledged superiority" of China (Dreyer, 2015, p.1016). In tianxia thinking, China's historical supremacy is described as benign, and its rule under an unquestionable emperor "the son of heaven" as benevolent; i.e. "for the benefit of all under heaven" (Dreyer, 2015, p.1016). Wang F.

(2015) calls 'tianxia' an "autocratic empire-world order" that is incompatible with Western notions of state sovereignty. When applying tianxia thinking to a modern historical context, China is seen as destined to regain its central position in the world order after a "century of humiliation" by foreign powers (Chan, 2015). Wang Q. (2007) says that Chinese thinking about history is far more long term, often emphasising its historical civilisation spanning several millennia *vis-à-vis* Western thinking focused on the contemporary context. A similar, albeit competing theory in China, is the idea of establishing a *Pax Sinica*, "peace under Chinese rule". This would entail the formation of a new world order aligned with Chinese interests and strengths, while maintaining the Westphalian system of state sovereignty (Wang F., 2015).

The study of Confucianism became highly prevalent in China after the pandemonium of the Mao era (Dreyer, 2015). Leninist-Marxist theory was no longer seen as an appropriate basis for justifying Chinese Communist Party (CCP) rule during Deng Xiaoping's era, and therefore, Confucian thinking and ancient Chinese history were looked back to as sources for state legitimacy (Dreyer, 2015). Confucian reasoning and collectivist social values are thus deeply instilled in tianxia thinking, which also made its way into "Xi Jinping thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era" hailed in 2017. This further cemented China's cultural-relativist conception of "human rights with Chinese characteristics" (Chen, 2021). Since the onset of the globally assertive Xi Jinping era, China has vocally committed itself to promoting its values on the world stage and becoming a major power (Zhang & Buzan, 2020). This has inspired academics to think about the effect that 'tianxia' has on China's normative worldview. In sum, the prevalence of tianxia thinking increasingly supports China's view of itself as a legitimate norm maker in the international community. This includes its own collectivist conceptions about human rights, where individuals are subservient to the priorities of the state. I therefore hypothesise:

H4: China will advance collectivist notions of human rights vis-à-vis individual persons.

Furthermore, because tianxia thinking asserts that China's rule is inherently benevolent and must be unquestionable, the legitimacy of its endemic norms must also remain unchallenged. Reflecting this logic, the modern CCP does not tolerate questions to its rule either, and it is disdainful of any challenges to its normative legitimacy - especially by actors whose authority falls below the state. I hence propose:

H5: China will seek to limit non-state actors who challenge its record or ideas on human rights.

4. Methodology

4.1 Discourse analysis

The HRC is an intergovernmental bargaining platform that is fundamentally discursive. Understanding how HRC resolutions are shaped to serve a political agenda entails an examination of how specific language is operationalised. Therefore, the use of discourse analysis is most appropriate. This also makes the analysis an interpretative and qualitative exercise - a choice informed by the methodological approaches of Piccone (2018), Chen (2019), Worden (2020), and Renouard (2020), who conducted qualitative research for their respective articles on China at the HRC. The interpretation of language in Chinese resolutions and other HRC texts were essential for their analyses, in combination with other accounts of China's conduct - underlining the basic methodological approach of this thesis.

To define discourse analysis, Herrera & Braumoeller (2004) attest to a core assumption: social reality is constructed through language. Firmly anchored in constructivist thinking, Hardy et al. (2004, p.20) say that "meaning, and hence social reality, arise out of ... discourses". The insight here is that novel terms and concepts always emerge out of discourse, but that new ideas also create purpose and lead to concrete practices. Likewise, human rights may be formally defined in international law, but conceptions of human rights are never static because they exist in a political context (Zhang & Buzan, 2020). These conceptions are bound to evolve over time, and it is up to the HRC member states' discursive production to determine how those rights are inscribed, interpreted, and potentially even practiced in the future. The utility of discourse analysis is thus especially clear when applied to the broader normative function of the mandate. However, specific terminology can likewise affect the HRC's governance competences. This is why participating states are often so heavily invested in scrutinising, debating, and amending specific texts before HRC resolutions are adopted. Moreover, discourse analysis is valuable for situating language in the historical and cultural context of Chinese ideas about human rights, and for explaining Chinese conventions of communication (Chen, 2005) - accentuating why discourse analysis is ideal for incorporating a 'tianxia' perspective.

4.2 Case selection & scope of analysis

The HRC’s discourse is best encapsulated by two principal sources of documentation; adopted resolutions and ‘joint-statements’ issued by governments. In order to uncover China’s endemic imprint on the discourse, only resolutions where China is the sole ‘main-sponsor’ will be analysed, because this means other states did not participate in drafting the resolution before it was ‘tabled’. China has been an elected HRC member since 2017. The following list of adopted HRC resolutions where China is the sole ‘main-sponsor’ is presented chronologically to outline the case selection:

Table 1

List of adopted Chinese solo-sponsored HRC resolutions (2017-2021)

Year	Resolution Symbol	Resolution Title
2017	A/HRC/RES/35/21	“The contribution of development to the enjoyment of all human rights”
2018	A/HRC/RES/37/23	“Promoting mutual beneficial cooperation in the field of human rights”
2019	A/HRC/RES/41/19	“The contribution of development to the enjoyment of all human rights”
2020	A/HRC/RES/43/21	“Promoting mutual beneficial cooperation in the field of human rights”
2021	A/HRC/RES/46/13	“Promoting mutual beneficial cooperation in the field of human rights”
2021	A/HRC/RES/47/11	“The contribution of development to the enjoyment of all human rights”

Source: OHCHR extranet (hrcmeetings.ohchr.org)

The list above reveals that China has two principal solo-resolutions; “the contribution of development” and “mutually beneficial cooperation” (MBC) introduced in 2017 and 2018. Accordingly, they will be analysed for ‘counter-institutionalisation’ as applied to the hypotheses, forming a first and second section of the analysis. China has also run two updates to the ‘development’ resolution in 2019 and 2021, which will briefly be compared to the original in the first section. An HRC ‘Advisory Committee’ report on the meaning of MBC will also be included to support the discourse analysis, forming a third section. China has likewise run two updated versions

of its MBC resolution in 2020 and 2021, which will be compared with the original in a fourth section.

While the ‘counter-institutionalisation’ objectives in *H1*, *H2*, *H4*, and *H5* can be uncovered in resolution texts, *H3* is likely to reveal itself in HRC voting results and ‘joint-statements’, as these are indicative of political relations between states. The final section is comprised of joint-statements and the analysis of secondary sources, which will further help to contextualise and establish a more comprehensive account of China’s engagement in the HRC. One should note that China has withdrawn some draft resolutions in this timeframe, and been a ‘main-sponsor’ of other adopted resolutions, but always in concert with other states.

5. Analysis

5.1 The right to development (2017)

A decisive moment for Chinese norm entrepreneurship in the HRC was its 2017 resolution titled “The contribution of development to the enjoyment of all human rights” (HRC, 2017). The resolution passed with 30 votes in favour, 13 against, and 3 abstentions, with only European nations, Japan and the U.S. voting against it (*see Appendix for complete voting results*). As China had never previously sought to self-sponsor a resolution, its adoption by the HRC marked a critical juncture in China’s institutional engagement.

The resolution “calls upon” states to promote the “2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, as it is conducive to the overall enjoyment of human rights” (HRC, 2017, p.1). Fostering development “for the people” is a reflection of the Chinese view that promoting human rights is best achieved by furthering the material well-being of citizens (Renouard, 2020). Chinese official discourse regularly highlights the Party’s success in lifting hundreds of millions of people out of poverty, accentuating the ‘tianxia’ idea of its benevolent rule. However, by pushing for programme related goals that are unrelated to the UN treaties, the Chinese text effectively shifts the idea of rights away from legally binding obligations. ‘Developmentalism’ also entails differing levels of commitment between states, because development goals are largely realised unilaterally. This means that countries get to effectively self-regulate how the fulfilment of the right should be pursued.

The most characteristically Chinese phrasing is “promoting partnerships, win-win outcomes and common development”, and “recognising the common aspiration to build a community of shared future” (HRC, 2017, p.2). With similar effect, this ‘soft’ language places emphasis on cooperation and dialogue rather than defined obligations for states to adhere to. While “win-win” and “community of shared future” may sound benign, the implication of these prevalent Chinese terms is that human rights must be based on mutual consent between states, and that states should pursue the advancement of human rights on their own terms. This evidences China’s realist posture, because the language implies a “statist” conception of human rights (Chen, 2019). In China’s view, only sovereign states can decide how to apply rights for their citizens, *as per contra*, a multilateral treaty-based ideal where supranational laws are made to be followed. The text thus clearly speaks in favour of *H1* and *H2*. It guides the HRC’s agenda towards a ‘right’ that does not entail any tangible scrutiny or criticism of the state, nor does it necessitate any monitoring or investigating that China may consider intrusive.

The resolution endorses “people-centred development ... for the people”, language which signals state commitment to the collective but not the individual (HRC, 2017, p.2). The deeper motivation for promoting ‘development’ as a human right stems from China’s desire to steer the focus away from the individual (Chen, 2021). In contrast, mainstream interpretations of the UN Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, would assert that all persons should enjoy human rights protections by virtue of their humanity. In line with Confucian thought, ‘developmentalism’ is a prime example of China’s advancement of so-called “collective human rights” (Chen, 2019), which also include, *inter alia*, the right to self-determination and the right to peace. In tianxia thinking, individual citizens are always seen as subjects of a benevolent ruler whose power must remain unquestioned (Dreyer, 2015). Individual persons are thus subordinate to the objectives of the state, which means that political and civil rights in particular, can never be privileged over the collective. Political and civil rights would grant too much agency to individual persons *vis-à-vis* the ruler, and they could be further explicated by citizens to rise against the state. In line with the ideals of ‘tianxia’ rule, the CCPs authority should also remain unquestionable, something individual rights may serve to threaten. ‘Developmentalism’ is also ideationally consistent with Xi Jinping’s “human rights with Chinese characteristics”, whereby individual rights and freedoms are likewise sublimated to the needs of the state (Renouard, 2020). ‘Developmentalism’ thus staunchly lends support for *H4*, because a ‘collectivist’ right is promoted at the expense of the individual person.

The 2019 ‘development’ resolution was adopted with nearly identical voting results. The text extensively addresses poverty and sustainable development, but employs surprisingly standard UN vocabulary to legitimise its promotion of ‘developmentalism’. While similarly calling for “people-entered development”, it has omitted the ‘win-win’ rhetoric, instead declaring the importance of “immediate alleviation and eventual eradication of extreme poverty” (HRC, 2019, p.2). The 2021 version directly repeats most paragraphs, but has added references to the Covid-19 pandemic, and is likewise less characteristically ‘Chinese’ *vis-à-vis* the original resolution.

In sum, ‘development’ can justly be considered a controversial emerging ‘right’, because its collectivist and non-binding attributes stand to question the *raison d’être* of UN human rights governance. Hence, the increased use of ‘developmentalism’ in the HRC’s evolving agenda will serve to weaken the body’s mandate in the future. In contrast to China’s vision, a robust HRC mandate should always be driven by the aspiration to protect individual persons by virtue of their humanity, a normative view which also explains the predominantly Western votes against the resolution.

5.2 Mutually beneficial cooperation (2018)

In 2018 China launched its second self-sponsored resolution titled “Promoting mutually beneficial cooperation in the field of human rights” (HRC, 2018). It passed with 28 votes in favour, 17 abstentions, and only the U.S. voting against it. The resolution makes use of ambiguous language and lacks a clear substantive meaning or tangible goal. It is centred on advancing “international cooperation” and “genuine dialogue” on human rights, based on “non-selectivity, non-politicisation, equality and mutual respect, with the aim of promoting mutual understanding” (HRC, 2018, p.2). Akin to the ‘development’ resolution, it also makes reference to fostering a “community of shared future for human beings”, which was notably used by Xi Jinping in his 2017 speech at the Communist Party Congress (Xiaochun, 2018). The Chinese premier used the phrase in conjunction with declaring the importance of creating a new international order (Xiaochun, 2018). While vague, the “shared community” jargon refers to China’s realist view of the international order as unbalanced and unfavourable, necessitating regime shifting efforts within the multilateral system. The “community” should therefore be considered a future version of the international order successfully reshaped to China’s own view. Considering ‘tianxia’, the “community” represents an international order where China is reinstated as the central power; acting as a global role model with

wisdom to share (Wang, 2015). Above all, the resolution serves as proof that Xi Jinping's own terminology has successfully made its way into the UN's official discourse.

Crucially, the resolution stresses the importance of the Universal Period Review (UPR). This intergovernmental reporting mechanism works like a peer-review, where states issue non-binding recommendations to each other (Schimmel, 2023). In practice, it can also enable 'like-minded' states to provide each other with accolades (Schimmel, 2023). The 2018 UPR on China is full of praise, saying "its system of democracy safeguarded the fundamental interests of the Chinese people", and that "freedoms of speech and of religious beliefs were protected" (HRC, 2018, p.3). In contrast, the resolution makes no mention of UN Special Rapporteurs, which are independent human rights experts that form part of the HRC's Special Procedures monitoring mechanism. Moreover, it emphasises the importance of "technical assistance and capacity-building" in the context of "mutually beneficial cooperation" (MBC) on human rights. If the HRC merely offers recommendations to help states with managing the "technical" aspects of human rights, then no real scrutiny will occur and the focus is once again shifted away from creating binding obligations and ways to independently monitor related compliance, corroborating *H1* and *H2*. In its final section, the resolution calls for the HRC Advisory Committee - the body's own 'think tank' - to "conduct a study on the role of technical assistance and capacity-building" and submit a report to the HRC before June of 2020 (HRC, 2018, p.2).

5.3 HRC Advisory Committee report (2020)

The report was led by Chinese representative Liu Xinsheng and released in January of 2020. Defining the central concepts of the MBC resolution, the report says: "In the view of the Advisory Committee, technical assistance is what a State is able to provide to another State (or States) in order to obtain some benefit for both parties in the field of human rights", and "technical assistance in the field of human rights is the one provided by the United Nations ... to States that request it" (HRC, 2020, p.6). The language here showcases several prevailing Chinese norms that weaken the HRC mandate - human rights promotion should be pursued on the basis of mutual consent; should entail 'win-win' outcomes; and states should request "assistance" at their own initiative. China is effectively saying that states do not 'need to be helped' unless they ask for it, something no authoritarian government with proven human rights infringements will ever do. This also speaks to China's strict interpretation of sovereignty and opposition to human rights monitoring. Hence, in

support of *H1* and *H2*, the promotion of “technical assistance” and “capacity building” is instrumentalised by China to avoid scrutiny and steer the agenda away from independent monitoring.

National delegations were able to directly submit statements on their own view of the resolution to the Advisory Committee, which incorporated their responses into the final draft. The report revealed widespread dissatisfaction with the aforementioned Chinese concepts, but any forthright criticism was principally only levied by liberal democracies. Members of the ‘non-aligned’ group - over which China exerts significant economic and political influence - did not offer any substantial criticisms, which speaks to *H3*. The report cites Australia’s statement that MBC was “not an agreed multilateral concept in human rights, but rather a domestic concept” and may “cause confusion and undermine clear long established and agreed principles”, a viewpoint also iterated in statements by Japan and New Zealand (HRC, 2020, p.7). Canada remarked that ‘win-win’ was generally applied to economic cooperation, implying its use was misplaced in human rights discourse. Corroborating *H5*, the Netherlands criticised MBC for excluding non-state actors like NGOs and other civil society groups, stressing that their inclusion should remain an established norm.

In a forceful rebuttal, the Chinese delegation asserted that “human rights issues were used to attack other countries and to interfere in their internal affairs, thus poisoning the global atmosphere of human rights” (HRC, 2020, p.7). This vocal affirmation of *H2* displays China’s ‘counter-institutionalisation’ agenda, and underlines its antagonism towards the entrenched values of the UN human rights system that are espoused by liberal democracies. The discourse over the MBC resolution thus vividly illustrates the political divide on human rights that exists between China, other nations hailing from the ‘non-aligned’ group, and the democratic nations purported to envelop the receding liberal international order.

5.4 Mutually beneficial cooperation (2020)

While China’s 2020 version of the MBC resolution was successfully adopted, the newfound pushback was plainly visible in the voting results, with 23 votes in favour, 16 against, and 8 abstentions. These results further showcase the divide between established democracies and ‘non-aligned’ states, as nearly all those voting against MBC were liberal democracies. Similarly, the 2021

version was adopted 26 to 15, with 6 abstentions. It is nearly identical in terms of content, with the only palpable difference being added references to Covid-19.

Interestingly, the updated resolution merely “takes note” of the Advisory Committee report instead of endorsing it outright, suggesting the Chinese delegation may have been dissatisfied with the final draft. The resolution reiterates support for the vague concepts outlined in the 2018 text, directly repeating many paragraphs. However, some of the language in the 2020 resolution more assertively pushes China’s stance. For instance, the 2018 text reaffirms “the significance of national and regional particularities and various historical, cultural and religious backgrounds” (HRC, 2018, p.1), in order to water down the universalism of human rights and promote cultural-relativism. While the 2020 version also calls for respecting cultural and regional differences, it goes further by asserting that “each State has the inalienable right to choose freely and develop, in accordance with the sovereign will of its people, its own political, social, economic and cultural systems, without interference from any other State or non-State actor” (HRC, 2020, p.2). This strong language is far more candid in its rejection of universalism and does not hide behind “national particularities” to promote its cultural-relativism on human rights. Instead, the statement evidences *H1*, *H2* and *H5*, asserting China’s realist worldview of states being free to apply human rights as they see fit “without interference”, and even seeking to delegitimise the role of civil society. While both versions call for “non-selectivity”, “non-politicisation” and the “equal treatment of all states”, the 2020 version goes further by calling for “the elimination of double standards and politicisation” (HRC, 2020, p.2) - a cryptic accusation about China being treated unfairly in the system, once again, highlighting China’s impetus for regime shifting.

The words “state”, “cooperation”, and “dialogue” are reiterated countless times, but the text fails to endorse the protection of the individual. To that end, the MBC resolutions all achieve the same result - Chinese terminology is consistently used to sideline the individual person and transform human rights into a matter to be discussed and resolved between states only. While MBC does not directly promote a ‘collectivist’ right, the effect of the resolution substantiates *H4*; weakening the role of the individual person in the HRC’s discourse.

5.5 OHCHR report on Xinjiang (2022)

While China's growing imprint on the HRC's discourse has been gradual, the trend is juxtaposed by China's acutely worsening human rights record. In 2018 the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) reported that it had credible evidence of China arbitrarily keeping up to one million ethnic Uyghur people in mass detention facilities (ISHR, 2022). UN treaty bodies like CERD are composed of politically independent experts nominated by states which have ratified a corresponding treaty. For example, China has never ratified the International Convention on Civil and Political Rights and is therefore not party to the associated treaty body, the UN Human Rights Committee. This makes it difficult for China to intervene in its activities, rendering treaty bodies an important part of the UN human rights system that can withstand Chinese regime shifting (ISHR, 2022). CERD's 2018 findings spurred unprecedented international media attention on China's human rights situation, and led many governments to issue condemnatory statements. It also prompted the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) to launch an official assessment of the allegations.

In 2020 a group of 50 UN Special Rapporteurs issued a joint-statement expressing alarm over the abuses in Xinjiang, and called for the HRC to create an independent monitoring mechanism to address China's alleged violations (OHCHR, 2020). China reacted by discrediting the Special Rapporteurs and threatened to hold them to account for "misconduct" and interference in internal affairs (Liu, 2020). It displays China's intolerance towards public criticism and independent scrutiny, especially by non-state actors, affirming both *H1* and *H5*. In a show of political allegiance, Cuba issued a joint-statement on behalf of 45 'non-aligned' states endorsing China's actions in Xinjiang as "counter-terrorism" (Xinhua News, 2020). Showcasing the rift between the HRC's voting blocks, the Netherlands issued a joint-statement on behalf of 47 countries, calling on China to respect human rights and allow unfettered access to High Commissioner Michele Bachelet for her investigation into Xinjiang (Government of the Netherlands, 2022). The scale and cross-regional support was unprecedented, with several developing countries including Liberia, Honduras, Belize, and Guatemala joining the declaration.

Once released in 2022, the OHCHR report on Xinjiang determined that China's had likely committed "crimes against humanity", citing evidence of mass arbitrary detention, forced labour, and forced sterilisations (Davidson, 2022). The Chinese delegation responded with an indignant

rebuke - the “so-called ‘assessment’ which is not mandated by the Human Rights Council, smears and slanders China, and interferes in China’s internal affairs”, and is “based on presumption of guilt, uses disinformation and lies fabricated by anti-China forces” (Chinese Mission, 2022). The statement thus directly deflects criticism, questions the validity of the OHCHR’s mandate, and refutes the factual basis of the report. While this is not a direct assault on the HRC mandate, it is a salient display of China’s antagonism towards the broader UN human rights system. Corroborating *H1* and *H2*, China is effectively showing that it wants the UN system to be fully intergovernmental, where no UN body has a politically independent mandate to investigate human rights abuses.

Following the report, Pakistan delivered a joint-statement on behalf of 69 countries in support of China’s actions in Xinjiang. The statement used China friendly language, calling for the “respect for sovereignty”, “non-interference”, and asserting that “Xinjiang, Hong Kong and Tibet related issues are China’s internal affairs” (Chinese Mission, 2022). The statement also called for everyone to “respect the right of the people of each state to choose independently the path for development in accordance with their national conditions”, invalidating human rights universalism and emulating China’s cultural-relativist stance. The phrasing is practically indistinguishable from statements issued by China itself. While one cannot show that China coerces states behind the scenes, such statements do validate the notion that China leverages its political influence over other states to achieve its ‘counter-institutionalisation’ goals, lending tangible support for *H3*.

In a remarkably close call for China, the HRC rejected a draft decision in October 2022 to hold a “debate on the situation of human rights in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region” (HRC, 2022). The vote concluded with 17 in favour, 19 against, and 11 abstentions. While China managed to avoid open scrutiny, several of the abstaining countries usually vote in China’s favour. The country has seen significant success with shifting the HRC towards its anti-human rights agenda by garnering support from ‘like-minded’ states (Chen, 2021). But with its geopolitical posturing, increasingly aggressive rhetoric, and the fallout from the violations in Xinjiang, China may simultaneously have become harder for some countries to publicly endorse. This reflects a certain behavioural dissonance about China’s ‘counter-institutionalisation’ agenda. Whilst China conducts its realist foreign policy in an increasingly aggressive manner, its uncompromising show of public contempt towards human rights may have made it more difficult for China to achieve its ‘tianxia’ goal: to become the central international role model that shares its “Chinese wisdom” (Dreyer,

2015). Yet, China can never become a global role model if it continues to wield its coercive power to the detriment of its normative stature in the international community.

6. Conclusion

The following reflection on results, key take-aways, and recommendations for future research, will culminate in a conclusion to the research question. First off, the ‘development’ resolution shifts the HRC towards a ‘statist’ conception of human rights that entirely omits two crucial norms, the scrutiny of states, and the protection of the individual person, confirming *H1* and *H4*. Moreover, ‘development’ is a voluntary ‘right’ that is ideal for China to promote, as it will never entail interference in ‘internal affairs’, corroborating *H2*. The application ‘tianxia’ theory to ‘developmentalism’ helped to elucidate China’s collectivist disposition and intolerance towards any scrutiny. It also illustrated China’s opposition to checks on power and its disdain for accountability towards the individual person - which arguably, is the *raison d’être* of UN human rights governance. This conceptual discrepancy threatens the HRC mandate, as ‘development’ may slowly begin to displace core objectives, like safeguarding individuals against state abuse. As Chinese resolutions already attempt to frame ‘individualistic’ rights through ‘people-centred’ development, its prominence in the HRC may allow China and other authoritarian states to increasingly interpret all other rights through ‘development’. It is therefore imperative that democratic states and other stakeholders remain vigilant about challenging this emerging ‘right’. Given the limited analytical scope of the texts and this thesis, future academic research should be devoted to uncovering the broader evolving application of ‘developmentalism’ in human rights governance. This will raise awareness, and ideally, help safeguard the mandate of the HRC and the wider UN human rights system.

“Mutually beneficial cooperation” (MBC) appeared equally state-centric, turning human rights into an inter-state matter where the individual is sidelined, affirming *H4*. Grounded in mutual consent, MBC is only intended to bring ‘win-win’ benefits but not entail any scrutiny, confirming *H1*. By promoting the UPR while omitting independent mechanisms, MBC also shifts the HRC towards an expressly impotent governance mandate, because the ‘sovereignist’ Chinese state refuses to concede endogenous powers to bodies outside its political reach, confirming *H2*. The more hawkish, updated resolution explicitly evidences *H1*, *H2* and *H5*, by invoking cultural-relativism, asserting strict sovereignty, and discrediting non-state actors. Hence, in accordance with the expectations set by the

theories and findings from other literature (Piccone, 2018; Chen, 2019; Worden, 2020; Renouard, 2020), the discourse analysis revealed substantial support for *H1*, *H2*, and *H4*. On account of *H5*, I was surprised to see relatively few mentions of non-state actors in the resolutions, and expected more explicit language to weaken their role. When compared to other literature, China's affront to non-state actors like civil society groups, was mainly revealed through disparate coercive tactics that fall outside the resolutions (Piccone, 2018; Hasmath & Hsu, 2021).

On account of *H3*, the voting results and joint-statements revealed an extensive, albeit loose coalition of states supporting China's agenda. However, democratic states also consolidated and improved at challenging China since 2017. Pakistan's statement was especially indicative of *H3*, as the language expressly served China's political agenda. Confirming *H3* outright, however, is disproportionate given the limited scope of this thesis, especially when compared to the extensive analysis of Chen (2021). Further research should be geared towards linking Chinese investments and lending with political support from of 'non-aligned' states, allowing for a more substantiated political-economy perspective of China's human rights contestation. Furthermore, China's resolutions and statements revealed a trend of using increasingly assertive rhetoric since 2017, but also an increased willingness to take centre stage in the discourse, showcasing China's transformation into an aspiring norm maker. Nonetheless, China's recent human rights violations and aggressive posturing have simultaneously hurt its standing in the international community. This catalysed democratic states to challenge China more vociferously, but also potentially galvanised some 'non-aligned' states to distance themselves from China, jeopardising Xi Jinping's 'community of shared future'.

Finally, the failed debate on Xinjiang is testament that China itself has become a pivotal obstacle for the HRC to fulfil its mandate. The HRC is supposed to promote the universality of human rights and hold states accountable for the gravest violations of human dignity. Yet, China's imprint on the organisation has proven that it cannot be held accountable by the system. China - which fervently calls for "mutual respect" and "equal treatment" - has shown with its political influence and Machiavellian behaviour, that it can afford itself special treatment and abide by its own rules. Because the HRC was designed to act as the predominant global standard-bearer for human rights as set out in international law, China's regime shifting has successfully weakened enshrined norms from the 'top-down'. To reiterate, the analysis revealed that China contested the HRC's norms and governance competences in line with all five hypotheses. However, *H3* and *H5* proved difficult to

adequately assess within the scope of this thesis. The HRC mandate is thus under significant strain and appears less robust in view of the findings. When considering the governance mandate, China's 'counter-institutionalisation' has potentially deterred the HRC's use of independent mechanisms like Special Procedures. In terms of the normative mission, China has unambiguously impaired the HRC's ability to carry out its objectives, hence rendering the mandate significantly less robust. How other states respond to China's affront may determine the direction of global human rights governance for decades to come.

7. Bibliography

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8. Appendix

Table 1

HRC voting results for Chinese solo-sponsored resolutions (2017-2021) & proposed “debate on the situation of human rights in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region” (2022)

Resolution Symbol	In favour	Against	Abstaining
A/HRC/RES/35/21 (2017)	Bangladesh, Bolivia, Botswana, Brazil, Burundi, China, Congo, Côte d’Ivoire, Cuba, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Ethiopia, Ghana, India, Indonesia, Iraq, Kenya, Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia, Nigeria, Philippines, Qatar, Rwanda, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, Togo, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates, Venezuela (30)	Albania, Belgium, Croatia, Germany, Hungary, Japan, Latvia, Netherlands, Portugal, Slovenia, Switzerland, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America (13)	Georgia, Panama, Republic of Korea (3)
A/HRC/RES/37/23 (2018)	Angola, Brazil, Burundi, Chile, China, Côte d’Ivoire, Cuba, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ecuador, Egypt, Ethiopia, Iraq, Kenya, Kyrgyzstan, Mexico, Mongolia, Nepal, Nigeria, Pakistan, Panama, Philippines, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, South Africa, Togo, United Arab Emirates, Venezuela (28)	United States of America (1)	Afghanistan, Australia, Belgium, Croatia, Georgia, Germany, Hungary, Japan, Peru, Republic of Korea, Rwanda, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Switzerland, Ukraine, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (17)
A/HRC/RES/41/19 (2019)	Afghanistan, Angola, Argentina, Bahamas, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Brazil, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Chile, China, Cuba, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Egypt, Eritrea, Fiji, India, Iraq, Mexico, Nepal, Nigeria, Pakistan, Peru, Philippines, Qatar, Rwanda, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Somalia, South Africa, Togo, Tunisia, Uruguay (33)	Australia, Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czechia, Denmark, Hungary, Iceland, Italy, Japan, Slovakia, Spain, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (13)	
A/HRC/RES/43/21 (2020)	Angola, Argentina, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Brazil, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Eritrea, Indonesia, Mauritania, Mexico, Namibia, Nepal, Nigeria, Pakistan, Philippines, Qatar, Senegal, Somalia, Sudan, Togo, Uruguay, Venezuela (23)	Australia, Austria, Bulgaria, Czechia, Denmark, Germany, India, Italy, Japan, Marshall Islands, Netherlands, Poland, Republic of Korea, Slovakia, Spain, Ukraine (16)	Afghanistan, Armenia, Bahamas, Chile, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Fiji, Libya, Peru (8)

A/HRC/RES/46/13 (2020)	Argentina, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Bolivia, Brazil, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, China, Côte d'Ivoire, Cuba, Eritrea, Gabon, Indonesia, Mauritania, Mexico, Namibia, Nepal, Pakistan, Philippines, Russian Federation, Senegal, Somalia, Sudan, Togo, Uruguay and Venezuela (26)	Austria, Bulgaria, Czechia, Denmark, France, Germany, India, Italy, Japan, Marshall Islands, Netherlands, Poland, Republic of Korea, Ukraine and United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (15)	Armenia, Bahamas, Fiji, Libya, Malawi, Uzbekistan (6)
A/HRC/RES/47/11 (2021)	Argentina, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Bolivia, Brazil, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, China, Côte d'Ivoire, Cuba, Eritrea, Fiji, Gabon, India, Indonesia, Libya, Malawi, Mauritania, Mexico, Namibia, Nepal, Pakistan, Philippines, Russian Federation, Senegal, Somalia, Sudan, Togo, Uruguay, Uzbekistan and Venezuela (31)	Austria, Bulgaria, Czechia, Denmark, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Marshall Islands, Netherlands, Poland, Republic of Korea, Ukraine and United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (14)	Armenia, Bahamas (2)
A/HRC/51/L.6 (2022)	Czechia, Finland, France, Germany, Honduras, Japan, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Marshall Islands, Montenegro, Netherlands, Paraguay, Poland, Republic of Korea, Somalia, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America (17)	Bolivia, Cameroon, China, Cote d'Ivoire, Cuba, Eritrea, Gabon, Indonesia, Kazakhstan, Mauritania, Namibia, Nepal, Pakistan, Qatar, Sudan, United Arab Emirates, Uzbekistan, Venezuela (19)	Argentina, Armenia, Benin, Brazil, Gambia, India, Libya, Malawi, Malaysia, Mexico, Ukraine (11)

Source: OHCHR extranet (hrcmeetings.ohchr.org)