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OCR Geography A-level

# Human Rights

PMT Education

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# Human Rights

## What is human development and why do levels vary from place to place?

### Concepts of Human Development

- Definitions of development have traditionally been based on economic measures but this has been challenged by broader definitions involving environmental, social and political measures on the quality of life.
- GDP was once commonly used to measure human development but it has since been recognised that the relationship between human contentment and levels of wealth and income are complex.
- This is reflected in the Happy Planet Index 😊 which measures sustainable wellbeing and how well nations are achieving long and healthy lives. Wealthy western countries, which are often seen as more successful, do not rank highly as their ecological footprints do not correlate with their life expectancy.
- Many new measures record the progress of human development at all scales, taking into account human rights and welfare. However many dominant models, such as the Sharia Law, remain heavily contested.
- Rosling, who created Gapminder, believes that improvements in environmental quality, health, life expectancy and human rights are more significant goals of development whilst economic growth is the best means to deliver them. Economic growth is fundamental to provide a successful and developed society.
- Education is central to economic development, human rights creation and the understanding of human wellbeing. This view however is not universally shared as there are attitudes to gender equality in education which hinder access to education and standards of achievement.
- This varies greatly amongst countries. For instance, more men than women are literate in the whole of India. However there is national variation as Kerala in India has equal numbers of literate men and women.



### Variations in Human Health and Life Expectancy

- There are variations in health and life expectancy in the world which can be explained by differences in access to:
  - **Health Care:** This involves the number of people per doctor. Smaller the number, better the care. The USA requires citizens to pay for healthcare whereas the UK offers free accessible care.
  - **Economic Development:** Richer countries have better access to medical technology.
  - **Education:** People learn healthy eating and lifestyles as well as sanitation, contraception and childcare. A good education system allows more people to become doctors and nurses.
  - **Age:** The old are more susceptible to diseases so in a population with a high percentage of elderly people, the death rate may be higher.
  - **Food and Water Supply:** This prevents the spread of disease and malnutrition.
  - **Culture and Lifestyle:** In Afghanistan, women cannot be seen by male doctors and cannot be educated to become nurses, limiting their healthcare. Traditional foods in the Mediterranean are culturally believed to increase life expectancy.
- Variations thus result from differences in lifestyle, deprivation levels and the availability/cost of medical care.
- There are internal variations in health and life expectancy within countries which correlate to ethnic variations, such as of the Aboriginal people in Australia, income levels and inequalities which influence lifestyle.



### Development Targets and Policies

- The relationship between economic and social development is complex and so depends upon decision made by governments to improve social progress. This ranges from welfare states with high levels of social spending and totalitarian regimes run by elites who spend little on health and education.
- IGOs (such as the IMF) have promoted neo-liberal views of development by promoting free trade, privatisation and the deregulation of financial markets. Recent programmes have been aimed at improving environmental quality, health, education and human rights.



## Why do human rights vary from place to place?

### International Laws and Agreements

- The United Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) is a framework for foreign policies to explain economic and military intervention but not all states have signed the Declaration.
  - It states the basic rights and fundamental freedoms to which all humans are entitled to. This includes rights such as the right to education, the right to privacy and the right to clean water. Reading through the rights, it is apparent that not all are met globally. This is due to access of rights as well as extraneous variables, such as government corruption, which can prevent rights altogether.
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- The European Convention of Human Rights (ECHR) was created by the Council of Europe to prevent conflict. This was integrated into the UK by the Human Rights Act of 1998 but some see the ECHR as controversial as it erodes national sovereignty as it is not a British concept.
  - The European court of human rights is an international court set up in 1959 and implements the ECHR. The court is responsible for monitoring respect for the human rights of 800 million Europeans within 47 member states that have ratified the convention.
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- The Geneva Convention forms the foundation of international law prosecuting individuals and organisations who commit war crimes. This convention was endorsed by 196 countries but few cases come to trial whilst 150 countries continue to engage in torture.
  - This displays the difficulty of setting up international laws as there will almost always be conflict amongst countries and their interests. If everyone does not agree to the law then how can it be put into place effectively?
  - The convention sets out war laws to protect civilians and minimising damage. This is taken from philosophical theories, by Aquinas in the 13<sup>th</sup> century, on Just War Theory and the conduct before within and after a war.
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### Differences in the Definition and Protection of Human Rights

- In international meetings, some states invoke debates on human rights whilst others prioritise economic development, a possible example being China who is neither capitalist nor entirely communist.
  - Some superpowers and emerging nations, such as India, have favoured the democratic system but the degree of democracy and freedom varies globally. The more democratic a nation, the greater the protection for human rights and freedom of speech.
  - It has been reported that China pressurised Google to filter out search results on topics such as human rights. Is this not a breach of the nation's human rights?
  - Levels of corruption vary and can be measured using the Index of Corruption. High levels of corruption are a threat to a country's development and human rights as laws can be subverted and broken without punishment.
  - Some argue that corruption is part of development. For instance both the bureaucracies, such as the police force, were corrupt in industrial Britain and Italy which are now developed nations. However, the abuse of human rights is nonetheless not favourable. Development surely arises from the control of corruption via laws.
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### Variations in Human Rights

- There are variations between countries in the implementation of human rights and this is due to different levels of social development. In some states, particularly post-colonial states, there are groups defined by gender/ethnicity that have fewer rights than the dominant group. This has been an issue in South Africa.
- Differences in rights correlate to differences in health and education levels, such as between the indigenous populations in both North and South America. A demand for equality from women and ethnic minorities has been influential in the history of many states such as Afghanistan and Australia.



## How are human rights used as arguments for political and military intervention?

### Forms of Geopolitical Intervention

- ➔ Interventionism is a broad term for the activity undertaken by a state to manipulate the economy, society and/or the political standing of another nation.
- ➔ Military intervention involves the deliberate act of a nation introducing its military force to solve a controversy usually in another country. An economic intervention is taken by the government to regulate issues of fraud, enforce contracts and provide public goods which would otherwise not be provided.
- ➔ Geopolitical intervention addresses development and human right issues by providing development aid, trade embargoes, military aid, indirect and direct military action.
- ➔ Interventions are promoted by International Governmental Organisations, for example the World Bank, national governments and NGOs, such as the Human Rights Watch. However the validity of these interventions is often debateable as they vary in aggression.
- ➔ Some Western governments, such as the USA, condemn human right violations and use them as conditions for offering aid, negotiating trade agreements and undertaking military intervention which can challenge ideas of national sovereignty as other nations may not want to adopt western rights and laws.



### Development Impacts

- ➔ Development aid takes numerous forms, from charitable gifts addressing hazard impacts to International Organisations offering loans. Charitable gifts are often given by NGOs such as Khalsa Aid, Oxfam, and Christian Aid as well as from national governments.
- ➔ After the Haiti earthquake of 2010, the United States offered aid and assistance to Haiti so the nation could recover quickly. Funds from the United States have supported food assistance programs (including a school lunch program that feeds 500,000 children daily), agriculture development programs optimising Haiti's coffee sector, teacher training programs, the opening of family planning practices in rural areas and health care programs for child immunisation.
- ➔ The impact of development aid is contested; successful programs include dealing with life threatening conditions, such as malaria, whilst improving human rights, particularly gender equality. Critics argue that aid and intervention has created dependency which invites corruption as elites gain power at the expense of human rights and minority groups.
- ➔ Some economic developments have serious environmental impacts which degrades locations inhabited by minority groups. This disregards to their human rights to their land and culture.
- ➔ For instance, land grabbing in East Africa (particularly in Kenya) from TNCs boxes out small rural communities who are powerless against large international corporations.



### Military Aid and Intervention

- ➔ Military interventions may be driven by global strategic interests but are covered by nations claiming they are reinforcing human rights. For instance, the USA's invasion of the Middle East was largely for economic gain though this was not admitted.
- ➔ Military aid, such as training and weapons sales, can support countries who have questionable human right records. A strong military could enforce human rights within the nation.
- ➔ Direct military intervention is becoming part of a 'war on terror' to eliminate torture and the abuse of human rights.



## What are the outcomes of geopolitical interventions in terms of human development and human rights?

### Measuring the Success of Geopolitical Intervention

- To measure success, a wide range of variables need to be considered. These include improvements in:
- **Health:** More citizens will be vaccinated than before and infant mortality would have declined.
  - **Life Expectancy:** This would increase for men and women.
  - **Education Levels:** Literacy levels would improve.
  - **Gender Equality:** Women would be as literate as men and have access to the same opportunities.
  - **Freedom of Speech:** Fewer restrictions on media and opinions.
  - **The Management of Refugees:** An efficient system would be implemented.
  - **Increases in GDP per capita:** Growing wealth.
- For some governments and IGOs, the introduction of democratic institutions and the freedom of expression is vital for future development, especially for democratic and capitalist states such as India and the USA respectively.
- For other countries, such as China, success is measured through economic growth which provide promising future projections. These nations regard issues such as human wellbeing as less influential on the development of human rights and of democratic institutions.

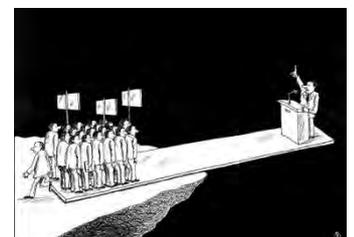


### The Success of Development Aid



- There is a complex relationship between aid, development, health and human rights. This relationship is not fully understood as it is unclear how these factors interplay with one another.
- For instance, there have been success stories in Botswana after aid provision but relative failure in Haiti and Iraq, who have become dependent on outside states.
- In states receiving large amounts of development aid, such as Africa receiving benefits from China (due to the 2006 African Policy implemented by China), economic inequalities have increased.

- For example, it has been the elites of Africa who have largely benefitted from the aid China has provided. The deepening of inequalities has severe impacts on health and life expectancy.
- Development aid is perhaps a method of achieving a superpower presence. Wealthy nations may use aid as an extension of their foreign policies, judging success by their access to resources, political support, military alliance and the formation of allies.
- From this perspective, China has been successful in creating a superpower presence by donating development aid to Africa, now an allied nation to them.



### The Success of Military Intervention

- Military intervention and its success is debateable. The recent history of interventions, both direct and indirect, suggest that there are significant costs involved, leading to the loss of human rights and sovereignty.
- It is questionable whether short term interventions are beneficial in the long-term when secondary impacts come into force. Lack of action could create further negativity, hence Cote d'Ivoire in 2011 was successful.