Negative: Human Rights

By Steven Errico

Resolved: Economic stability is more important than economic growth.

This case is intended to counter the affirmative human rights case. Your goal is to establish that, while growth may not in itself be sufficient for human rights, it is at the very least necessary. If you can prove its necessity even arguing on the middle ground, you have succeeded. As the negative, the middle ground in the debate is yours. Own it.

In addition, with this case you can also argue that growth is not only necessary but also primary in the fight for human rights. A stagnant economy restricts access to human rights, even if those protections technically exist by law. Use that impact to your advantage. Concrete analysis will persuade your judge far more effectively than statistics will.

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Negative: Human Rights

Imagine owning a car that’s permanently locked up in a garage far away. It’s of no use to you unless you actually have access to it. The same is true with our human rights. We may technically have them and our government may claim to protect them, but without access to them they’re not of much use and it’s difficult to tell when they’ve been taken away. In order to make use of our rights within the economic sphere, the economy has to be growing.

DEFINITIONS

Economic Stability

Business Dictionary “Economic Stability” <http://www.businessdictionary.com/definition/economic-stability.html>

A term used to describe the financial system of a nation that displays only minor fluctuations in output growth and exhibits a consistently low inflation rate. Economic stability is usually seen as a desirable state for a developed country that is often encouraged by the policies and actions of its central bank.

Economic Growth

Investopedia updated 2019 (Jim holds a Bachelor of Arts in Economics from the University of Alaska and Master's from the University of Maine. Jim was awarded the 2013 Douglas E. French Prize for excellence in the study of Austrian economics.)“Economic Growth” <https://www.investopedia.com/terms/e/economicgrowth.asp>

Economic growth is an increase in the the production of economic goods and services, compared from one period of time to another. It can be measured in nominal or real (adjusted for inflation) terms. Traditionally, aggregate economic growth is measured in terms of gross national product (GNP) or gross domestic product (GDP), although alternative metrics are sometimes used.

VALUE: Human Rights

Definition

American Heritage Dictionary “Human Rights” [https://www.ahdictionary.com/word/search.html?q=human+rights](https://www.ahdictionary.com/word/search.html?q=human+rights&submit.x=34&submit.y=23)

The basic rights and freedoms to which all humans are considered to be entitled, often held to include the rights to life, liberty, equality, and a fair trial, freedom from slavery and torture, and freedom of thought and expression.

Reason to Prefer: Foundation of Economics

Economic theory is built upon anthropology. In order to argue the resolution then we have to presuppose something about the people who participate in the economic system we advocate for. All human beings have fundamental rights that must be protected. This is the foundational understanding of any good government and any good economy.

CONTENTION 1: Economic growth is necessary to access and protect human rights

Economic Growth Improves Human Rights

Wade M. Cole copyright 2017 (Wade Cole (Ph.D., Stanford University, 2006) is Professor of Sociology at the University of Utah. A macrosociologist, he conducts research in the areas of political sociology and global/transnational sociology, with substantive emphases in human rights and the rights of minority groups. He previously held positions at Montana State University, where he was Assistant Professor of Sociology, and the Washington State Institute for Public Policy, where he conducted policy-relevant education research for the Washington State Legislature.) “Too Much of a Good Thing? Economic Growth and Human Rights, 1970 to 2010” https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssresearch.2017.08.002

In this article I analyzed the relationship between economic growth, measured over five-year intervals, and rated levels of respect for basic human rights for a diverse sample of 149 countries between 1960 and 2010. Several sets of findings emerged from these analyses. First, using two-stage regression models with instrumental variables, I demonstrated that economic growth is exogenous to human rights. To the extent that growth and rights are linked in my analysis, it is the former than “causes” the latter. This finding, by itself, constitutes an important and non-trivial contribution to the debate over the modernization thesis, bolstering [Inglehart and Welzel's (2009](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0049089X16306287?casa_token=QUv1Zpz1ZYwAAAAA:MRBeU5qOBfrrYVjQ21aud8kq2MIJhm4NrG5gmWxRwJk__PaoY0QBoWHMFvixMcv3QRzyMje4C7ds" \l "bib59):42) conclusion that “causality runs mainly from economic development to [democratization](https://www.sciencedirect.com/topics/social-sciences/democratization).” Using a measure of substantive human rights protections rather than indicators of procedural democracy common in the modernization literature, I find that causality runs from economic growth to human rights.

But what is the nature of this causal effect? In the aggregate, it ranges from null to moderately positive, but analyses conducted on countries disaggregated by their level [of economic development](https://www.sciencedirect.com/topics/social-sciences/development-of-economics) produced results that were substantively stronger and statistically more robust. In fact, the effects of economic growth on human rights are largely confined to the world's least affluent countries. Economic growth generally improves rights conditions in low-income countries, although extremely rapid growth proves detrimental to human rights. The kinds of transformations spurred by growth—which include, according to [Kuznets (1973)](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0049089X16306287?casa_token=QUv1Zpz1ZYwAAAAA:MRBeU5qOBfrrYVjQ21aud8kq2MIJhm4NrG5gmWxRwJk__PaoY0QBoWHMFvixMcv3QRzyMje4C7ds" \l "bib69), “rapid changes in economic structure, in family formation, in urbanization, in man's views on his role and the measure of his achievement in society” (p. 250) as well as the overall “weakening of the political fabric of the society” (p. 252)—are felt most acutely in countries at the onset of economic development.

Unlike low-income countries, middle- and especially high-income countries do not experience growth as something novel and hence disruptive. They have already endured the trials and tribulations that accompany the transition from “less developed” to “more developed.” That being said, economic growth does not improve human rights practices among middle-income countries, and the effect of growth for high-income countries, while positive, is not particularly robust.

Nevertheless, my findings contrast with dour criticisms of the so-called “dominant economic growth paradigm” ([Nussbaum, 2004](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0049089X16306287?casa_token=QUv1Zpz1ZYwAAAAA:MRBeU5qOBfrrYVjQ21aud8kq2MIJhm4NrG5gmWxRwJk__PaoY0QBoWHMFvixMcv3QRzyMje4C7ds#bib80):329). Although GDP growth does not universally or incontrovertibly translate into increased wellbeing, neither does it necessarily portend disorder, disruption, and dislocation. In all but the most extreme cases, economic growth is at worst unrelated to human rights outcomes, and at best it promotes improved human rights conditions. It remains for future work to consider whether similar benefits extend to other categories of human rights such as civil liberties, labor rights, or the rights of women and ethnic minorities.

Application: Post WWII Development Policy

Christian Hainzl 2009 (The purpose and aim of the Icelandic Human Rights Center is to promote human rights by collecting information on and raising awareness of human rights issues in Iceland and abroad. The Center works to make human rights information accessible to the public by organising conferences and seminars on human rights issues and by providing human rights education.) “Human Rights and Development” <http://www.humanrights.is/en/human-rights-education-project/human-rights-concepts-ideas-and-fora/human-rights-in-relation-to-other-topics/human-rights-and-development>

The terms ‘human centred development’ and ‘human rights’ are prominent features in present policy documents and the strategy papers of most donor agencies. This placing of the individual at the centre of development and including human rights as one of the principal objectives of development co-operation is, however, the outcome of a crucial paradigm-shift in development thinking throughout the last decades.

* The development model after the Second World War focused on growth and development at the macro-economic level. Today we observe a broadening of the term development to include a distinct micro-level perspective which also takes into account individual well-being. This individual component is closely linked to the recognition of the instrumental role of individual participation and choice for development and underlines that particular attention has to be paid to disadvantaged and most-marginalised groups. Furthermore, the emergence of ‘good governance’ in the late 1980s reflects a growing awareness that development in economic terms cannot be detached from capacity building and institutional considerations in the political field.
* These changing perceptions eventually paved the way for increased attention to the relationship between economic development and democratic governance as well as for an enhanced role for human rights as a means and objective of development.
* With regard to the inclusion of human rights in development co-operation two approaches can be noted. From a more traditional perspective, development and human rights are in principle still viewed as two distinct concepts and fields of activity. Within such an approach, human rights projects and programmes are simply ‘added’ to the traditional activities of development co-operation, which itself is understood as aiming primarily at economic (and social) development.
* In contrast, the so-called human rights-based approach to development (HRBA) takes the view that the ultimate aim of development can be defined as the fulfilment of all human rights. Such an approach is based on the conviction that human rights and development are closely interrelated and mutually reinforcing and that neither human rights nor development are prerequisites of, or just ingredients of, the other.

CONTENTION 2: Economic recession harms human rights

Economic downturn has human rights costs

Thomas K. Duncan and Audrey Redford 2020 (Thomas K. Duncan, Ph.D., is an associate professor of economics at Radford University. He received his Ph.D. from George Mason University. Audrey Redford is the assistant professor of economics at Western Carolina University. She earned her Ph.D. in agricultural and applied economics from Texas Tech University.) “How Shutting Down the Economy Could Kill Tens of Thousands of Americans” <https://thefederalist.com/2020/03/30/how-shutting-down-the-economy-much-longer-could-kill-tens-of-thousands-of-americans/>

Getting the cost right is not simply a matter of valuing “profits over people,” as the social media memes may suggest. Rather, even in times of crisis, the ability to operate in a functioning economy is important for the people within it.

The economy is the people, and the people are the economy. The ability to continue to function in a market system does matter to individuals within the system, particularly when the ability of business to remain open and continue to employ them is in question.

We have already started to see some of these human effects as the [unemployment has quickly rocketed](https://www.cnbc.com/2020/03/26/weekly-jobless-claims.html?__source=facebook%7Cmain&fbclid=IwAR3QgPqwfvhND2KoDXAfbYM_ze5ka8OasO64U--th0T09mS0IuDtoFZcTv8) beyond even the early initial projections. A rise in unemployment is correlated with a number of negative socio-economic effects. For some, these effects can be quite deadly, particularly when the [changes are rapid](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0140673696032916), as is currently the case.

Application: The COVID-19 Pandemic

Juan Pablo Bohoslavsky 2020 (United Nations Independent Expert on the effects of foreign debt and other related international financial obligations of States on the full enjoyment of all human rights, particularly economic, social and cultural rights) “COVID-19: Urgent appeal for a human rights response to the economic recession” <https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Development/IEDebt/20200414_IEDebt_urgent_appeal_COVID19_EN.pdf>

While it is now clear that prevention and mitigating measures to contain the pandemic as soon as possible must be taken urgently, globally and in a coordinated manner by States, similar considerations should be given to address projected adverse human rights impacts of a drastic economic downturn. This is why the response must be framed and rooted in human rights law.

Application: The Financial Crisis of 2007-2008

Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights updated 2013 (The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (UN Human Rights) is the leading UN entity on human rights. The General Assembly entrusted both the [High Commissioner](https://www.ohchr.org/EN/AboutUs/Pages/HighCommissioner.aspx) and her Office with a unique mandate to promote and protect all human rights for all people. The United Nations human rights programme aims to ensure that the protection and enjoyment of human rights is a reality in the lives of all people. UN Human Rights also plays a crucial role in safeguarding the integrity of the three interconnected pillars of the United Nations – peace and security, human rights and development.) “Human Rights and the Financial Crisis” <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Development/Pages/PromotingHRbasedfinancialregulationmacroeconomicpolicies.aspx>

The improvement of human well-being, central to all human rights, including the right to development, is threatened by the global financial crisis that began in 2007. As a result of the financial crisis, many people have lost access to work, affordable food, housing, water and other basic necessities. The crisis has disproportionately impacted the rights of women, children, and vulnerable and marginalized persons. States have largely failed to address the root causes of the financial crisis identified by the General Assembly to include inter alia de-regulation of the financial sector, rising inequality and other systemic weaknesses.

Affirmative Counter-Brief: Human Rights

The best way to counter this negative case is through the arguments found in the affirmative human rights case. As the affirmative, it is your job to drive the point home that it’s stability that’s most important to protect human rights, and what’s more, using the evidence below you can and should also argue that stability is foundational to growth and therefore necessary for human rights on all counts.

There are several cards of evidence in the affirmative case that work well against this negative case, and a few of them are referenced again below. There are also some additional pieces of evidence below that are not found in the affirmative case because multiple independent lines of argumentation are stronger than just one.

Human rights cause economic growth, not the other way around

Danish Institute for Human Rights 2017 (The Danish Institute for Human Rights is an independent state-funded institution. Our mandate is to promote and protect human rights and equal treatment in Denmark and abroad.) “Human Rights And Economic Growth” <https://www.humanrights.dk/publications/human-rights-economic-growth>

As we expect the effect of freedom and participation rights on growth to be lagged, the test is performed for different lag lengths of the empowerment index. Specifically, we account for the development in the empowerment index 1-15 years back in time. The first column of Table 2 summarises the lag length (only lag 5-15 shown here), the second and third column the test statistics of the Granger causality test and corresponding p- value . The null hypothesis is rejected at a 10% significance level for lag 10-15. This means that freedom and participation rights causes economic growth when accounting for the development of freedom and participation rights 10-15 years back in time, indicating that there is a long-run relationship between the two variables. This is further supported by a Granger causality test for each of the seven sub-indicators: Freedom of religion, freedom of speech, freedom of domestic movement, freedom of foreign movement, freedom of assembly and association, self-electoral determination and worker rights. For each of the sub-indicators, we reject the null hypothesis for the different lag lengths, meaning that each sub-indicator Granger causes economic growth (see Annex 1, Table A.1.1.1-A.1.1.7 for the results).

Counter Application: The COVID-19 Pandemic in Greece - Economic stability is foundational to growth

Reuters 2020 (George Georgiopoulos — Reuters in Athens) “Greece sees economy tanking this year on coronavirus impact: stability programme” <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-greece-idUSKBN22F0SO>

“The coronavirus outbreak has imposed a burden on the Greek economy as on the rest of the world economy, reversing the initial favourable short-term forecast,” the finance ministry said.

The pandemic clouds the outlook for the global economy with a high degree of uncertainty. Demand, supply and liquidity shocks to the world economy set the stage for a deep global recession, worse than that of the 2008 financial crisis, the report said.

Counter Application: Brain Health – Economic instability ALSO harms human rights

Neurology Today 2019 (Inserm is the only public research organization in France entirely dedicated to human health. Its objective is to promote the health of all by advancing knowledge about life and disease, treatment innovation, and public health research.) “Income Fluctuations in Early Adulthood May Impair Brain Aging in Midlife, Study Finds” <https://journals.lww.com/neurotodayonline/Fulltext/2019/11070/Income_Fluctuations_in_Early_Adulthood_May_Impair.12.aspx>

To what extent does economic instability impact brain health? That question is at the heart of a new analysis that found that fluctuations in income and economic instability were not only associated with adverse health outcomes, they also affected cognitive abilities over time.

Previous studies have linked low socioeconomic status with poor health consequences—some have reported associations between income volatility and cardiovascular and mental health, said Leslie Grasset, PhD, a postdoctoral associate at the Inserm Research Center in Bordeaux, France, and the lead author of the paper published in the October 2 online edition of *Neurology*. Yet few studies have explored how economic instability and dramatic changes in household income affect cognition in the long term.

“Income volatility has been on the rise since the 1980s, yet previous studies have examined this relationship between income and cognitive health at one or maybe two time points,” Dr. Grosset told *Neurology Today*.

She and her colleagues decided to look more specifically at the relationship between brain aging and fluctuations in income by pulling data from the Coronary Artery Risk Development in Young Adults study (CARDIA), an ongoing prospective study of cardiovascular disease and its risk factors in young to middle-aged adults.

The CARDIA team collected data on self-reported pretax income of 3,287 young adults between the ages of 20 and 35 at six different points from 1990 through 2010; in 2010, they administered a battery of tests to assess verbal memory and word retrieval; processing speed; and executive functioning.

The researchers found that higher income volatility and subsequent income drops were, in fact, associated with a significant worsening of processing speed and executive functioning, as well as worse microstructural integrity of total brain and total white matter findings on MRI. [See “The CARDIA Study: Findings on Brain Health” for more specific data.”]

Unchecked growth is an incentive for human rights abuse

Center for Economic and Social Rights undated (The Center for Economic and Social Rights (CESR) is an international nongovernmental organization that fights poverty and inequality by advancing human rights as guiding principles of social and economic justice. Working in collaboration with partners around the world, CESR uses international human rights law as a tool to challenge unjust economic policies that systematically undermine rights enjoyment and thereby fuel inequalities. Our international and interdisciplinary staff team based in New York and Johannesburg comes from the human rights, development and social justice movements in different parts of the world.) “Human Rights in Economic Policy” <https://cesr.org/human-rights-economic-policy>

In accordance with human rights treaties that have been signed and ratified by almost all countries, governments are required to mobilize the maximum of available resources for the fulfillment of human rights. Their economic policies are also subject to precise standards of participation, transparency, accountability and non-discrimination. Moreover, these standards are applicable to both the national and international human rights impacts of economic policies, as governments are obliged to ensure such policies serve to advance, rather than impede, human rights in other countries. Much of the economic instability of recent years, and the pervasive deprivations that continue alongside unprecedented levels of wealth, can be traced back to governments’ failure to comply with their human rights obligations in this regard.

Regardless of the outcome, it’s economic freedom that protects human rights

The Heritage Foundation 2007 (Anthony B. Kim researches international economic issues at The Heritage Foundation, with a focus on economic freedom and free trade.) “The Link Between Economic Freedom and Human Rights” <https://www.heritage.org/report/the-link-between-economic-freedom-and-human-rights>

Economic freedom is essentially about ensuring human rights. Strengthening and expanding it guarantees an individual's natural right to achieve his or her goals and then own the value of what they create. Amartya Sen, a Nobel laureate economist who has made considerable contributions to development economics, once noted that "Development consists of the removal of various types of unfreedoms that leave people with little choice and little opportunity for exercising their reasoned legacy."[[2]](https://www.heritage.org/report/the-link-between-economic-freedom-and-human-rights" \l "_ftn2" \o ") People crave liberation from poverty, and they hunger for the dignity of free will. By reducing barriers to these fundamental human rights, forces of economic freedom create a framework in which people fulfill their dreams of success. In other words, the greater the economic freedom in a nation, the easier for its people to work, save, consume, and ultimately live their lives in dignity and peace.

This relationship is well documented in the *Index of Economic Freedom*, published annually by The Heritage Foundation and *The Wall Street Journal*, which measures economic freedom around the globe. The *Index* identifies strong synergies among the 10 key ingredients of economic freedom, which include, among others, openness to the world, limited government intervention, and strong rule of law. The empirical findings of the *Index* confirm that greater economic freedom empowers people and improves quality of life by spreading opportunities within a country and around the world. As Chart 1 clearly demonstrates, there is a robust relationship between economic freedom and prosperity. People in countries with either "free" or "mostly free" economies enjoy a much higher standard of living than people in countries with "mostly unfree" or "repressed" economies.[[3]](https://www.heritage.org/report/the-link-between-economic-freedom-and-human-rights" \l "_ftn3" \o ")

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American Heritage Dictionary “Human Rights” https://www.ahdictionary.com/word/search.html?q=human+rights

Wade M. Cole copyright 2017 (Wade Cole (Ph.D., Stanford University, 2006) is Professor of Sociology at the University of Utah. A macrosociologist, he conducts research in the areas of political sociology and global/transnational sociology, with substantive emphases in human rights and the rights of minority groups. He previously held positions at Montana State University, where he was Assistant Professor of Sociology, and the Washington State Institute for Public Policy, where he conducted policy-relevant education research for the Washington State Legislature.) “Too Much of a Good Thing? Economic Growth and Human Rights, 1970 to 2010” https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssresearch.2017.08.002

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Thomas K. Duncan and Audrey Redford 2020 (Thomas K. Duncan, Ph.D., is an associate professor of economics at Radford University. He received his Ph.D. from George Mason University. Audrey Redford is the assistant professor of economics at Western Carolina University. She earned her Ph.D. in agricultural and applied economics from Texas Tech University.) “How Shutting Down the Economy Could Kill Tens of Thousands of Americans” https://thefederalist.com/2020/03/30/how-shutting-down-the-economy-much-longer-could-kill-tens-of-thousands-of-americans/

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Center for Economic and Social Rights undated (The Center for Economic and Social Rights (CESR) is an international nongovernmental organization that fights poverty and inequality by advancing human rights as guiding principles of social and economic justice. Working in collaboration with partners around the world, CESR uses international human rights law as a tool to challenge unjust economic policies that systematically undermine rights enjoyment and thereby fuel inequalities. Our international and interdisciplinary staff team based in New York and Johannesburg comes from the human rights, development and social justice movements in different parts of the world.) “Human Rights in Economic Policy” https://cesr.org/human-rights-economic-policy

The Heritage Foundation 2007 (Anthony B. Kim researches international economic issues at The Heritage Foundation, with a focus on economic freedom and free trade.) “The Link Between Economic Freedom and Human Rights” https://www.heritage.org/report/the-link-between-economic-freedom-and-human-rights