Negative: Quality of Life

By Steven Errico

Resolved: Economic stability is more important than economic growth.

This case is intended to counter my affirmative quality of life case. While stability is important, it’s growth that primarily impacts the lives of the citizens, especially the poor. Don’t forget that as the negative, the middle ground in the debate is yours. Own it. Make sure that you communicate to the judge that if stability is not clearly more important, you win the round.

The criterion of standard of living simply serves to make the measurement of success more precise since quality of life in and of itself can be vague. This criterion will be especially useful when interacting with your applications. However, feel free to run the case without the criterion if it complicates things or confuses you.

Be specific in your argumentation and impact your applications clearly. You will be far more persuasive if the judge can feel the impact of your examples.

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Negative: Quality of Life

In a resolution like the one we’ve been given this year, we have to evaluate priorities. Of course, stability and growth are both important, but which one is MORE important? It is my belief that what is most important about any economy are the people it impacts.

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 Chappelow 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: Quality of Life

Definition

Wordnik “Quality of Life” [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 general well-being of individuals and societies, including not only wealth and employment, but also the built environment, physical and mental health, education, recreation and leisure time, and social belonging.

Reason to Prefer: Incentivizes Participation

The economy has a direct effect on the quality of the lives of the citizens in a country. An ideal economy is one that makes life better for those who participate in it. And in turn that encourages more participation in the economy.

CRITERION: Standard of Living

Definition

Investopedia “Standard of Living” <https://www.investopedia.com/terms/s/standard-of-living.asp>

A standard of living is the level of wealth, comfort, material goods, and necessities available to a certain socioeconomic class or a certain geographic area. The standard of living includes basic material factors such as income, gross domestic product (GDP), life expectancy, and economic opportunity. The standard of living is closely related to quality of life, which can also include factors such as economic and political stability, political and religious freedom, environmental quality, climate, and safety.

Reason to Prefer: Concrete Standard

Since quality of life is difficult to quantify on its own, standard of living will make evaluation much easier.

CONTENTION 1: Economic growth increases quality of life

Economic Growth Improves Quality of Life

OECD Department for International Development 2007 (The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) is an international organisation that works to build better policies for [**better lives**](http://www.oecdbetterlifeindex.org/). Our goal is to shape policies that foster prosperity, equality, opportunity and well-being for all. We draw on almost 60 years of experience and insights to better prepare the world of tomorrow.) “Growth: Building Jobs and Prosperity in Developing Countries” <https://www.oecd.org/derec/unitedkingdom/40700982.pdf>

Economic growth is the most powerful instrument for reducing poverty and improving the quality of life in developing countries. Both cross-country research and country case studies provide overwhelming evidence that rapid and sustained growth is critical to making faster progress towards the Millennium Development Goals – and not just the first goal of halving the global proportion of people living on less than $1 a day. Growth can generate virtuous circles of prosperity and opportunity. Strong growth and employment opportunities improve incentives for parents to invest in their children’s education by sending them to school. This may lead to the emergence of a strong and growing group of entrepreneurs, which should generate pressure for improved governance. Strong economic growth therefore advances human development, which, in turn, promotes economic growth.

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 decreases quality of life

Lack of Growth = Loss in Quality

The Economic Times 2013 (Dr. Samuel Paul established Public Affairs Centre (PAC) to primarily ensure that citizens are protected to have a rightful place in the flow diagram of procedures and access.) “Economic Growth Does Impact Quality of Life” <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/opinion/et-commentary/economic-growth-does-impact-quality-of-life/articleshow/27878584.cms>

Is the quality of life of the urban poor in the southern states better than that of their northern counterparts, measured in terms of private assets and public services?

We examine select private assets such as percentage of households having toilets within their premises, televisions and mobile phones. Our analysis from Census 2011 shows that on average, only two-thirds of households in the slums of northern states, compared to 75% of slum households in the southern states, had a toilet within their premises. Only 60% and 59% respectively of slum households in the northern states, compared to 77% and 62% of slum households in southern states, had televisions and mobile phones.

So, there is evidence to believe that access to private assets improves with higher incomes as a result of rapid economic growth in the southern states.

While the purchase of private assets is determined by income, public services such as water supply, electricity and open drains reflect the government’s ability and willingness to deliver them. On average, 66% of slum households in the southern states obtained their tap water from a treated source compared to only 44% for their counterparts in the northern states.

Further, while 95% of households, on average, had electricity as the main energy source in the slums of the southern states, only 82% were covered in the northern states.  
Open drainage and defecation cause diseases. On average, southern states had 38.28% of their slum households having open drainage, compared to 55.24% in the northern states. Also, the proportion of households with their waste water connected to an open drain is much lesser (38%) in the slums of southern states. Over 30% of slum households in the northern states practiced open defecation compared to 16% in the south.

What does all this imply? A significant increase in per-capita income in the southern states enabled a larger proportion of their urban poor to acquire private assets when compared to their counterparts in the north with lower incomes. Further, access to basic public services is also much better in the slums of the southern than in the northern states. Better governance in these states has enhanced the reach and spread of public services to the urban poor. A notable lesson is that a combination of rising incomes and good governance is the prerequisite for improving the quality of life of the poor. Better public service delivery makes growth inclusive and creates momentum to raise productivity.

Impact: In a study of the economic data, Dr. Samuel Paul concluded that economic growth along with good governance significantly improved the quality of life of citizens in India and that the lack of growth made it worse.

Application 1: Health

The Journal of Mental Health Policy and Economics 2011 (Written by Maria E Davalos, PhD and Michael T French, PhD) “This Recession Is Wearing Me Out! Health-related Quality of Life and Economic Downturns” (Brackets added as a reading aid) <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/21881162/>

Findings consistently indicate that an increase in the average state unemployment rate worsens an individual's HRQL [Health Related Quality of Life], suggesting that the loss of jobs and income and/or the economic distress associated with economic downturns have a detrimental effect on people's daily lives. Although the magnitudes of the changes are generally small, results show that mental health decreases more than physical health during tough economic times.

Application 2: 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: Quality of Life

The best way to counter this negative case is through the arguments found in my affirmative quality of life case. In addition to this, using the evidence below you can and should also argue that stability is foundational to growth and therefore necessary for quality of life to be improved.

There are several cards of evidence in my affirmative quality of life 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, just in case (pun intended). Use as many independent lines of argumentation as you feasibly can to strengthen your case.

Economic Growth Does Not Guarantee Benefits to Citizens

Global Policy Forum 2011 (Author Robin McAlpine is the director of the Jimmy Reid Foundation, a Scottish think-tank) “Rising GDP Will Never Add up to a Just Society” <https://www.globalpolicy.org/social-and-economic-policy/poverty-and-development/economic-growth-and-the-quality-of-life/50568-rising-gdp-will-never-add-up-to-a-just-society.html?itemid=id#983>

For decades, at the core of western politics has been the belief that simple GDP growth is either in itself the solution to society's problems or that from it, all solutions spring wholly-formed. But this just doesn't seem to be true.  
In the past 30 years the proportion of GDP which goes in wages has fallen from 58 to 53 per cent. Which is to say that the more the economy has grown, the less ordinary people have shared in it. And of all the income growth in the past decade, four fifths of it has gone to those with above average salaries and two fifths to the richest 10 per cent.  
So for this generation, the richer Britain has become the more unequal it has become. But this is not inevitable - during the most impressive period of growth in the history of capitalism (the three decades leading up to the mid 1970s) inequality fell and social mobility increased. It's all about how you grow.  
But does this matter? By far the balance of evidence strongly suggests that it does. Pot-shots have been taken at the research which shows this because it so fundamentally undermines the philosophy of neoliberal capitalism, but it remains compelling. Societies with lower levels of inequality have lower levels of crime, better records on health and higher levels of reported happiness. The same is broadly true of everything from educational attainment to teenage pregnancy and obesity.  
And one of the most telling factors is that this is as true of poor countries with low level of inequality (such as Cuba) as it is of rich countries (such as the Nordic nations) and is as true for the wealthiest members of these societies as the poorest. Much more important than how rich we are is how much we feel that we share in society's total wealth. The limited economic powers we currently have in Scotland mean that the pressure from international money markets to show growth for its own sake is absent. Also absent is the old belief that growth must automatically create jobs, undermined by the jobless growth of speculative financial markets. And many were nothing more than the cheapest jobs possible, which simply outsources the problem to the taxpayer who has to top-up inadequate pay through benefits and tax credits.

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

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.”]

Counter Application: Great Britain

The Guardian 2020 (Fiona Harvey is an award-winning environment journalist for the Guardian. Prior to this, she worked for the Financial Times for more than a decade. She has reported on every major environmental issue, from as far afield as the Arctic and the Amazon, and her wide range of interviewees include Ban Ki-moon, Tony Blair, Al Gore and Jeff Immelt) “Britons want quality of life indicators to take priority over economy” <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2020/may/10/britons-want-quality-of-life-indicators-priority-over-economy-coronavirus>

The [focus on GDP](https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2019/jun/10/uk-obsessing-gdp-wellbeing-new-zealand) means economic growth can take place at the expense of the environment, and people’s quality of life, without any of the resulting damages ever being taken into account, the report argues. That in turn encourages ministers and officials to seek ways of raising the GDP figures, even if rising nominal growth is accompanied by environmental degradation, worsening health, poor educational attainment and increasing poverty.

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The Guardian 2020 (Fiona Harvey is an award-winning environment journalist for the Guardian. Prior to this, she worked for the Financial Times for more than a decade. She has reported on every major environmental issue, from as far afield as the Arctic and the Amazon, and her wide range of interviewees include Ban Ki-moon, Tony Blair, Al Gore and Jeff Immelt) “Britons want quality of life indicators to take priority over economy” https://www.theguardian.com/society/2020/may/10/britons-want-quality-of-life-indicators-priority-over-economy-coronavirus