

Sample material

FOR THE
IB DIPLOMA
PROGRAMME



Global Politics

Ben Fugill
Jane Hiron
Brian Hull



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Global Politics for the IB Diploma

Ben Fugill, Jane Hirons
and Brian Hull



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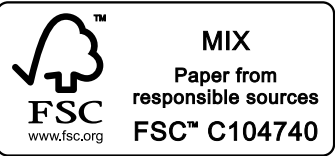
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How to use this book

The following features will help you to consolidate and develop your understanding of global politics through concept-based learning.

Key terms

◆ Definitions appear throughout the margins to provide context and help you understand the language of global politics. There is also a glossary of all key terms at the end of the book.

SYLLABUS CONTENT

- ▶ This coursebook follows the exact order of the contents of the IB Global Politics Diploma syllabus.
- ▶ Syllabus understandings are introduced naturally throughout each topic.

Exploring solutions

This feature includes key inquiry statements to explore, presented with either context or more questions to consider.

Key theorist

Introduces key theorists as well as competing perspectives.

ACTIVITY

A range of activities to help you understand some of the most difficult global politics concepts.

Perspectives

In this feature you will explore different political issues and perspectives.

CASE STUDY

Real-world international examples and case studies are used to bring the subject to life.

Case studies form the basis of this course. The course encourages the use of inquiries, contemporary examples and case studies at a variety of levels, from the local to the global, as well as from smaller scale businesses to multinational ones. Throughout the coursebook, we have chosen case studies that reflect the context in which you are learning, as well as case studies that allow for comparisons across contexts.

Questions are often included to allow you to analyse and synthesize your understanding.

Discussion point

Questions to either discuss as part of a group in class or to think about individually. These will challenge you to apply some of the global politics concepts locally.

Common mistakes

These detail some common misunderstandings and typical errors made by students, so that you can avoid making the same mistakes yourself.

Extended essay

Investigate a topic of special interest, either through one of your six DP subjects or through an interdisciplinary approach. The EE helps you to develop the self-regulated research and writing skills that you need to fulfill your aspirations at university.

TOK

Links to Theory of Knowledge (TOK) allow you to develop critical thinking skills and deepen understanding by bringing discussions about the subject beyond the scope of the content of the curriculum.

Concepts

Independence, power, theoretical perspectives, legitimacy, sovereignty and international law underpin the IB Global Politics Diploma course and are integrated into the conceptual understanding of all units, to ensure that a conceptual thread is woven throughout the course. Conceptual understanding enhances your overall understanding of the course, making the subject more meaningful. This helps you develop clear evidence of synthesis and evaluation in your responses to assessment questions. Concepts are explored in context and can be found interspersed in the chapter.

Chapter summary

At the end of each chapter, there is a summary of the key points addressed to help you to develop and understand the depth of knowledge you need to acquire for the course.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

Review questions are also included at the end of each chapter to allow you to consolidate your learning.

SYLLABUS CONTENT

By the end of this chapter, you should understand:

- ▶ how to distinguish between stakeholders and actors
- ▶ systems: structures and dynamics
- ▶ legal frameworks, norms and institutions.

1.1.1 Framing global politics

What is a political issue?

Political issues are at the heart of Diploma Programme (DP) Global Politics. But what is a 'political issue'? It is any situation or matter that deals with how power is distributed and how it operates in the real world. We can see this by looking at how people engage with issues that impact their lives, their community and the wider world. In fact, political issues are all around us, and it is a mistake to think they simply involve governments and politicians. We encounter political issues on a daily basis, whether that be in news sources or on social media, through to education and health care, taxes and following the law, or even when chatting with friends. All political issues involve *people*: actors and stakeholders.

The interaction of actors and stakeholders is at the centre of all global political issues. Questions to bear in mind when examining case studies and examples of these groups include:

- Who has power?
- Who are the powerless?
- Who is trying to bring about change?
- Who is resisting change?
- Who is impacted by these interactions?

All of these questions help us to better understand the world around us.

TOK

The question 'what is a political issue' is, from a theory of knowledge perspective, related to the 'scope' of this particular form of knowledge. Different types of knowledge can be distinguished by their primary concern, or focus. The primary concern of global politics is knowledge about the distribution and application of power in the world. As this is a form of human behaviour, the study of global politics is considered to be part of the human sciences.

Other human science subjects include:

- economics, the study of the distribution of money and other resources
- psychology, the study of the relationship between human behaviour and human cognition
- sociology, the study of the development and interaction of social dynamics
- anthropology, the study of human cultures.

There is, of course, a lot of overlap between these subjects and other areas of knowledge (global politics has to consider, for example, the economic practices of states), but the primary concern of each subject is always unique.

How do we distinguish 'actors' from 'stakeholders'?

Actors: When talking about political issues, we refer to those who have the power to bring about change as actors. Actors can be seen at all levels of our global society, from international to local. A worker holding up a sign demanding better wages is just as much an actor as the factory owner who has the power to give those higher wages. Both are exercising power in their own ways.

Stakeholders: Sometimes political issues impact people who are not directly involved in the issue. These people may not be aware that they could exercise power, or they have no interest in doing so. Additionally, many people live in societies where it is unsafe to openly seek change. Often these people have little to no power to take action, but they are nonetheless impacted by those who do. In politics, we call these individuals 'stakeholders'. For example, the child of a striking factory worker who is able to attend university because their parent took action and received higher wages would be considered a stakeholder. They didn't actively participate in the political issue, but their life was impacted by it.

1.1.2 The state

There are many types of actors and stakeholders on the global political stage, but as a starting point it can be helpful to first consider what is arguably the most powerful actor in global politics: the state. In this section, you will be introduced to the state, the internal governance of a state and the global organizations that have states as their members.

What is a 'state'?

Our modern understanding of the state comes from the Treaty of Westphalia (1648) and the Montevideo Convention (1933) (see Table 1.1).

Table 1.1 The Treaty of Westphalia and the Montevideo Convention

Treaty of Westphalia (1648)	Montevideo Convention (1933)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Ended one of the most destructive conflicts in Europe's history, the Thirty Years War. ● Named after Westphalia, an area of north-west Germany. ● Set out to prevent future conflict by recognizing that states have certain rights and responsibilities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Agreement signed in Montevideo, Uruguay. ● Established the standard modern definition of a state as a means to preserving peace. ● The agreement requires that no state shall intervene in the domestic or foreign affairs of another state.

Discussion point

How might having clear rules about the definition of a state preserve peace?

Based on both the Treaty of Westphalia and the Montevideo Convention, we can say that the characteristics of a state include:

- an independent government that has control over a clearly defined area – this area must have internationally recognized borders
- generally being seen as having absolute control over its own territory and people
- having the right to defend its territory within its borders and being recognized as a state by other states and actors
- systems of government, which can be national, regional and/or local, and some kind of legal system being in place

- having a permanent population
- having exclusive rights within its own territory including:
 - the use of force
 - control of the money and currency
 - laws and other requirements, such as taxes and rules surrounding citizenship.

What is a 'nation state'?

There are important differences between a 'state' and a 'nation state'. A 'nation' is an ethnic or cultural group with a common, defined culture. Nation states may have a sovereign territory, or they may not.

Nation states with clearly defined borders are somewhat rare in our increasingly interconnected and globalized world, but examples include Japan, Albania and Iceland. Nations can, however, exist without a physical homeland and also include members of the nation who are in **diaspora**, which means they do not live in their original homeland. Some examples of stateless nations include the Kurdish people, Rohingya people and Roma people.

How do we determine what is a state and what is not?

States have traditionally been seen as the most important and powerful actors in global politics. They have control over national interests and also contribute to a kind of international community that exercises power in many contemporary global political issues.

States, therefore, continue to be seen as the primary actors in global politics, although in recent decades challenges to the supremacy of the state have emerged as more stakeholders engage with political issues. Today, it can no longer be said that the international community is composed exclusively of states, but they may still be its strongest component.

◆ **Diaspora** refers to a large group of people living somewhere that is not their original homeland. Sometimes these people have moved by choice, but other times they may have been forced to relocate.

CASE STUDY

Sealand

Sealand is a Second World War offshore platform located in the North Sea off the coast of England. In 1967, a former British army major purchased Sealand and named himself Prince Roy of Sealand.

Sealand issues its own passports (which are not recognized outside of Sealand) and has its own stamps, flag, currency and government. Its website lists the population at 27, but this fluctuates. In recent years, many have accused Sealand of being a place where hackers, pirates and criminals operate freely.

Sealand has declared itself to be an independent sovereign state, but no other state recognizes it and

most people don't take it seriously. Based on your understanding of the characteristics of a state, do you think Sealand qualifies?



■ **Figure 1.1** Sealand: an independent sovereign state?

Different systems of government found in different states

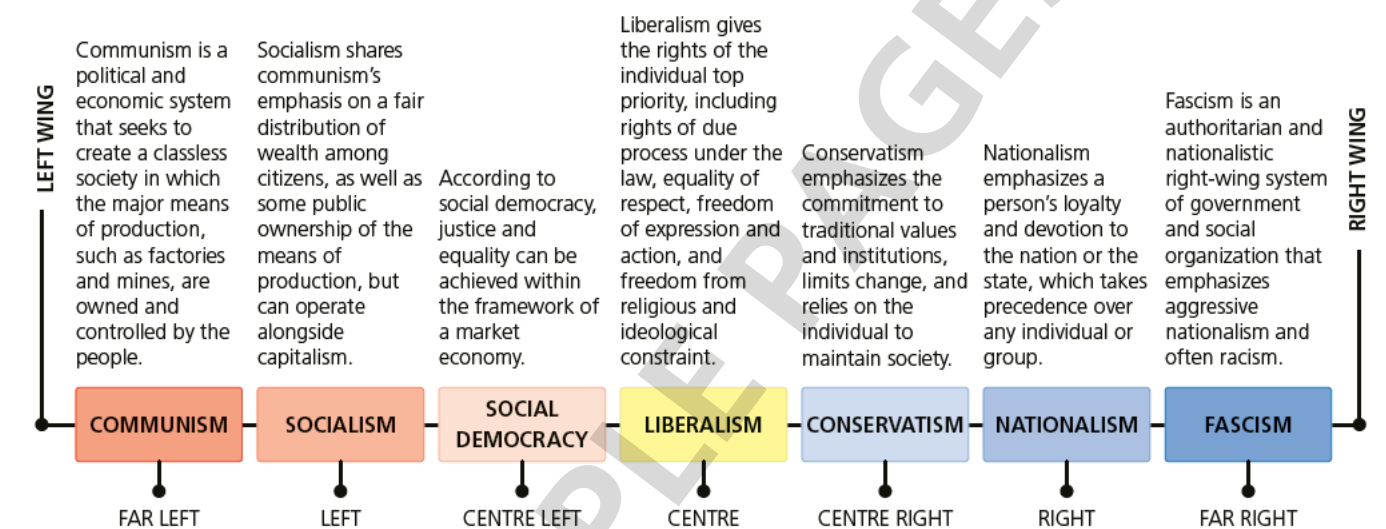
Although the Treaty of Westphalia and the Montevideo Convention provide us with a definition of the rights and responsibilities of a state, a quick look at the world we live in tells us that not all states function in the same way.



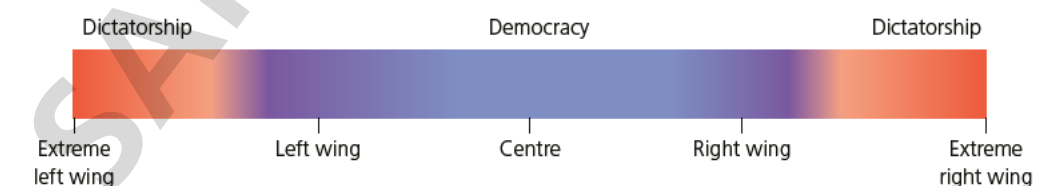
TOK Exhibition Question: #35. In what ways do values affect the production of knowledge?

Many of the differences between these different political systems can be discussed in terms of what each one values or regards as important. These values then lead people to take different views (or, in other words, construct different knowledge claims) on particular issues. Towards the left, you might find beliefs that economic equality is most important with an expectation that it's the government's role to ensure this occurs. Towards the right, you might expect to see less value given to governmental intervention in social and economic issues. For the TOK exhibition, you might find an object that appears to be non-political, but that different people at different points on this spectrum view in quite different ways.

There are many political systems and many different ways of representing them. You may come across different political systems presented as a linear diagram, as shown in Figure 1.2. Figure 1.3 is also linear.



■ **Figure 1.2** Sometimes, political systems are represented in this format, moving from 'left wing' to 'right wing'



■ **Figure 1.3** Another linear representation of political systems

These are, of course, very simplified versions of political systems and they have many limitations because real-world political systems are not necessarily on a 'neat spectrum'. However, the spectrums, and the terms within them, can help us to understand the complexities of real-world global political issues.

Political parties

Political parties are groups of people who have common views about how the government of a state should function. They are focused on political power; they either want it or want to hold on to it.

Additionally, in a well-functioning democracy, political parties who do not hold government power can challenge the decisions and policies of the political party that does have government power.

Political parties are often associated with democracies and elections, but they can be found in other systems of government too (see Table 1.2). Although the states in Table 1.2 represent a wide range of political systems, all have political parties. Some of these states, such as China, are one-party states, meaning there is only one legal political party allowed. Other states, such as the United States, have multiple political parties.

■ Table 1.2 Examples of influential political parties within states

State	Party	Notes
China	Chinese Communist Party	The only political party in China.
India	Bharatiya Janata Party	One of two major political parties in India. The other major party is the Indian National Congress.
Russia	United Russia	This is by far the largest political party in Russia and has maintained power there since 2007.
North Korea	Workers' Party of Korea	The only political party in North Korea.
Singapore	People's Action Party	The major political party in Singapore, which has maintained power since 1965.
United States	Democratic Party	One of two major political parties in the United States, the other being the Republican Party.
Argentina	Justicialist Party	Has held power in Argentina off and on since 1946.
South Africa	African National Congress	Has held power in South Africa since 1994.

Discussion point

What are the benefits of having a state with more than one political party?

1.1.3 Political leaders

Leaders are individuals who are in charge of a group of people. A political leader is in charge of some form of government, whether that be state, sub-national or local governments. Some are elected by the people of the state and some are appointed by a political party or a more powerful political leader. Sometimes, leaders first elected by the people manage to increase their power and remain in control indefinitely. Some leaders inherit power by birth and some seize power by force. Ultimately, political leaders come in many forms and make for interesting subjects of study in global politics.

Discussion point

Can you think of a real-world political leader who has seized power by force?

Common mistake

Students often use historical examples in their answers. But remember, IB DP Global Politics is focused on the world as it is today, so make sure your example isn't 'historical'. The course is an examination of real-world global political events that are happening now and/or directly impacting our world today. As a general rule, use examples from your own lifetime.

1.1.4 Sub-national and local governments

Sometimes when we think of leadership and power within a state we concentrate only on those political leaders who we see as the public face of the state. However, presidents, prime ministers, monarchs and heads of state cannot effectively govern a state without the support of sub-national and local governments.

In most states, much of the authority for planning, managing and allocating resources is transferred from the central government to regional or local government departments. Sub-national and local officials in government are closest to the people, and are in a better position to understand how local communities function and how best to meet their needs. Local political leaders, for example, usually deal with issues that impact the daily life of citizens and stakeholders, such as access to childcare, sanitation concerns or traffic congestion. However, decisions or policies created by the state's central government can certainly impact the lives of these stakeholders.

In a stable and well-functioning country, sub-national and local governments ordinarily interact quite regularly with the more powerful central government of the state. The power of the central government may be controlled by one political party or, in the case of a democracy, there may be several parties. All of these actors also interact closely with many other stakeholders and actors from within the state and beyond the state borders.

In democratic states, national, sub-national and local leaders are chosen in elections. National, sub-national and local governments should work in partnership and not as adversaries, although in many real-world situations this is not always the case.

Discussion point

Choose a country you are familiar with and investigate how its sub-national and local governments are structured.

■ Summary of actors closely connected to the internal operations of a state

Interactions between the following actors contribute to the governance of a state:

- the state
- political parties
- political leaders
- sub-national government(s)
- local government(s).

In a stable and well-functioning country, sub-national and local governments ordinarily interact quite regularly with the more powerful central government of the state. The power of the central government may be controlled by one political party, or several, in the case of a democracy. All of these actors also interact closely with many other stakeholders and actors, both from within the state and beyond the state borders.

From within, it is often sub-national and local governments who deal directly with the residents of the state. Local political leaders usually deal with issues that impact the daily life of citizens and stakeholders, such as access to childcare, sanitation, and traffic congestion. However, decisions or policies created by the state's central government can certainly impact the lives of these stakeholders.

Concepts

Liberalism and realism

In our increasingly globalized world, it appears that states cannot function effectively in isolation. Some argue that this interdependence is evidence of a global community working towards improving the lives of all, and that the state's power and influence are on the decline. This viewpoint is fundamentally liberal.

Others argue that ultimately the state remains the key player in global politics; any apparent 'cooperation' only takes place if the state sees its own interests improve. This viewpoint is realist.

Table 1.3 summarizes the main characteristic of liberalism and realism. (Note: liberalism and realism are viewpoints or interpretations of real-world global political issues, and we will explore both in more depth in the thematic studies sections of this book.)

■ Table 1.3 The main theories of liberalism and realism

Key theory	Key arguments
Liberalism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It is the duty and obligation of all states to ensure the rights of citizens. States who ignore the rights and well-being of their citizens are unstable and unjust. The fairest and most just government system is democracy. Other systems, such as monarchies or dictatorships, do not put the needs of the people first and are therefore problematic. It is important to ensure that governments do not become too powerful through continual monitoring and, if necessary, challenging the power of the state if it is seen to violate the freedoms of the people. Liberalism implies openness and open-mindedness and is concerned most with the rights of the individual.
Realism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We live in a world of states working in their own best interests, much like the opponents in a game of chess. States are the primary actors on the world stage; other actors are not really of much importance. The world is in a state of anarchy and there is no 'global governance', so states must take care of themselves. The world is a ruthless place where states must aggressively compete against each other to survive and maintain power.

Discussion point

In Global Politics, theories such as liberalism and realism are very complex and so it helps to examine them in relation to real-world examples. These theories, and many others, attempt to explain the reality of global politics.

Why do you think real-world examples are so important in a course like IB DP Global Politics?

1.1.5 Intergovernmental organizations

Intergovernmental organizations (IGOs) consist of two or more states who promise that they will work together on political issues that are of common interest to all. They usually operate under

a signed treaty, so that all states within the IGO are subject to international law and can be held accountable.

IGOs exist to create a place for states to successfully work together towards the common good of all. They focus on maintaining peace, economic development and global social issues. IGOs play a very important role in global politics as the world becomes more interdependent and globalized.

It is important to remember that states make up IGOs and therefore the decisions and actions taken by IGOs should reflect the decisions of the states involved.

As essentially a collection of states, IGOs obviously interact on an international level of global politics. However, they also interact with a wide range of other actors and stakeholders depending on the shared aims of the group. IGOs focused on development, for example, need to interact with other actors and stakeholders who have expertise in this area.

Many argue that world stability relies on states working together, and the most efficient way to facilitate cooperation is through IGOs. IGOs enable states to communicate openly and regularly and are therefore able to effectively address shared concerns. Additionally, issues that are not contained within the borders of states, such as climate change and pandemics, can be addressed collaboratively.

Although, as we have said, there is a general acceptance that no state shall intervene in the domestic or foreign affairs of another state, membership in an IGO can influence and change how a state operates.

Discussion point

Although IGOs are a collection of states and all states should be seen as equal within the organization, we know that in the real world some states are more powerful than others. In what ways could this impact the unity of IGOs?

■ Examples of intergovernmental organizations in global politics

The most well-known and powerful IGO is the United Nations (UN). The UN operates at the international level of global politics, and we will be exploring this IGO in greater detail later in this chapter.

Other well-known regional IGOs include the European Union (EU), the African Union (AU) and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). These IGOs often cooperate with the UN, but they also provide an opportunity for representatives of the same region to address concerns that are of specific importance to them.

Finally, you will find smaller but powerful IGOs working towards specific goals, including:

- trade
- the environment
- infectious disease
- economic interests
- security.

For example, the World Trade Organization (WTO) deals with issues around trade, and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) is an IGO concerned with international security.

Regardless of their size or purpose, IGOs are an example of collectivism, as the will of the group as a whole should take priority over the claims of any individual state. It is hoped that a collective of states is more powerful and more effective than states working in their own self-interest.

Discussion point

Can you think of any IGOs that deal with issues related to infectious diseases and pandemics? How about economic interests?

1.1.6 Organized civil society and non-governmental organizations

■ What is organized civil society?

Civil society is a term we use to describe organizations or groups of people that are not linked to the government. These organized groups usually have some kind of common purpose and goal. Sometimes they want to make changes in society and can challenge existing problems, attitudes or beliefs. There are so many organized civil society groups it would be difficult to list them all, but they include churches, charitable groups, cultural institutions, professional associations, and sometimes private businesses.

An active and engaged civil society is desirable in a democratic state, as it offers varying perspectives on how to improve society and provokes discussion and debate.

Civil society groups may be critical of government policies and hold governments to account over their actions. They may also:

- work towards ending poverty, corruption and economic inequality
- respond to crises (such as floods, earthquakes or fires) and help those in need
- promote law and order and prevent crime
- promote public freedoms
- advocate for transparency of government budgets
- protect the environment
- empower persons belonging to marginalized or disadvantaged groups
- deliver services to help disadvantaged groups in society
- fight against discrimination
- demand corporate social responsibility and accountability
- combat human trafficking
- empower women
- combat hate speech
- advocate for rights for the LGBTQ+ people
- empower youth
- advance social justice and consumer protection
- provide social services such as food kitchens and shelters.

As with most actors in global politics, civil society does not operate in isolation and interaction is frequent.

■ What are non-governmental organizations?

Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) may seem somewhat similar to organized civil society groups, and that's because they are! NGOs refers to a huge variety of organizations that also aim to

help people. NGOs, however, always try to remain independent from any kind of government influence and are usually non-profit.

The goals and methods of different NGOs can vary, but generally speaking they work towards:

- improving human rights
- helping those in need
- social and economic development.

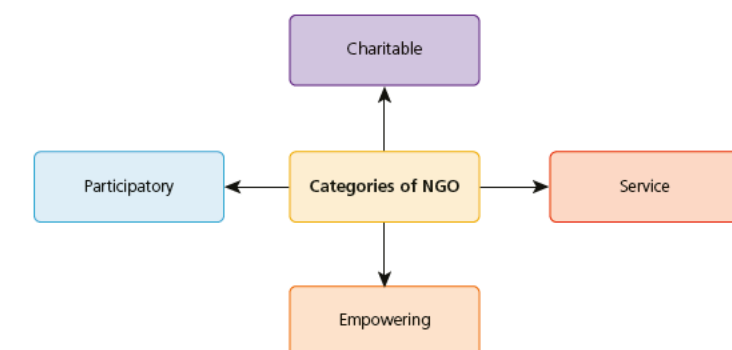
Some NGOs are smaller and work locally, while others operate regionally and yet others are international (see Figure 1.5). This is different from organized civil society, which may be influenced by regional and global trends but is generally focused on local society.



■ Figure 1.5 Types of NGO based on the level of involvement

Figure 1.6 illustrates the different categories of NGOs. These involvement:

- **Charitable NGOs:** directed at meeting the needs of the poor and disadvantaged. They may provide food and shelter, and help people in times of natural and human-made disasters. Generally, the 'receivers' of help do not have a role other than to accept what is offered.
- **Service NGOs:** provide people with some kind of service, for example, family planning or education. Those receiving help are expected to actively participate in the process to help themselves.
- **Participatory NGOs:** provide people with tools, land or materials necessary for them to then go on to help themselves and the community.
- **Empowering NGOs:** aim to empower people by helping them to understand their social, political and economic rights as individuals and as communities.



■ Figure 1.6 Different categories of NGOs

Discussion point

What NGOs have you heard about? Are there any NGOs in your community that you could engage with or have already engaged with?

1.1.7 Private actors and private companies

Private actors

Private actors in society are those who are not directly involved with the government but who have the ability to make change and influence people. A private actor could be a philanthropist, business leader or even a well-known athlete or celebrity. Or, a private actor may be any member of society who has somehow managed to influence the actions of others.

Table 1.4 examines two globally influential and well-known private actors: Jeff Bezos and Mark Zuckerberg.

Table 1.4 Two influential private actors

Private actor	Background
Jeff Bezos, Amazon	Jeff Bezos founded Amazon in 1994. He donated more than \$400 million worth of Amazon stock to multiple civil society organizations in 2022, though it's unclear which organizations received those shares. He owns the influential US newspaper the <i>Washington Post</i> . He also owns Blue Origin, an aerospace company that develops rockets, and he briefly flew to space in 2021.
Mark Zuckerberg, Facebook/Meta	Zuckerberg started Facebook at Harvard in 2004 at the age of 19. Facebook changed its name to Meta in November 2021 to enable a shift of the company's focus to the metaverse. In June 2021, anti-trust cases were filed against Zuckerberg by national and sub-national governments within the United States. Zuckerberg won.

Discussion points

Both Jeff Bezos and Mark Zuckerberg are enormously wealthy private actors who have been, or currently are, heads of powerful private companies. Why might some states see these wealthy private actors as threatening? Why might other states welcome collaboration with such actors?

Private companies

Private companies are not directly involved with the government and are usually motivated by profit. However, in many countries, private companies are influencing public policy and traditionally state-run institutions like never before. Some people have expressed concern over the increasingly influential role of certain private actors and companies in recent decades. In particular, commercial technology firms, such as Facebook/Meta, have unprecedented access to citizens' private data.

Globally, we see the increasing involvement of private companies in services traditionally governed by the state, such as education, prisons, transportation systems and hospitals. This process, known as 'privatization', may mean governments are selling state-owned business to private companies.

We have previously mentioned that states like to have control over what happens within their borders and to their people, so why would they allow private companies to take over these services? Many economists argue that state governments are inefficient when managing state-run companies. They argue that private companies increase efficiency and deliver a better 'product'. Often states are hopeful that privatization will benefit economic development. However, a growing number of real-world examples contradict this claim.

Discussion point

The cartoon in Figure 1.7 is critical of the privatization of essential services. It makes the claims that ordinary people will have to pay more for these services to ensure profits are made. What are the arguments against this claim?

1.1.8 Social movements

Social movements are groups of people who share a common concern about how society is functioning. These movements attempt to change attitudes and behaviour among the social community. In countries where expressing yourself is legal, you may see social groups organizing themselves to come together as a group and publicly discuss how society can improve. In countries where it's dangerous or illegal to publicly identify yourself as someone who wants change, these groups may communicate online or arrange private meetings to discuss common goals.

These groups can begin spontaneously without a formal structure, but they share a common outlook and a desire for change. Social movements cover a wide variety of societal problems ranging from drunk driving, discrimination against women or attitudes towards LGBTQ+ people.

Stages of social movements

Figure 1.8 examines the lifespan, or the stages, of typical social movements.

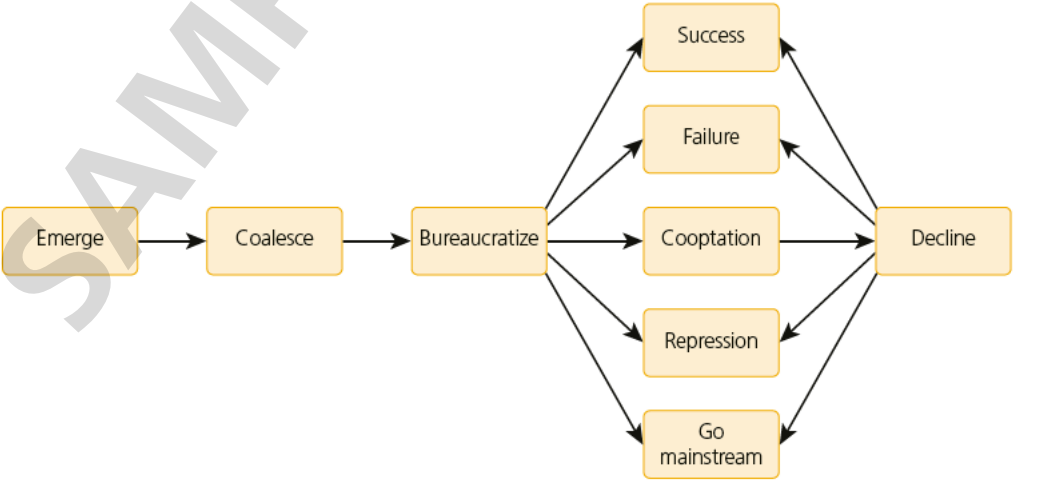


Figure 1.8 The stages of social movements

Discussion points

Why might a state 'repress' a social movement? Can you think of any real-world examples of this happening?

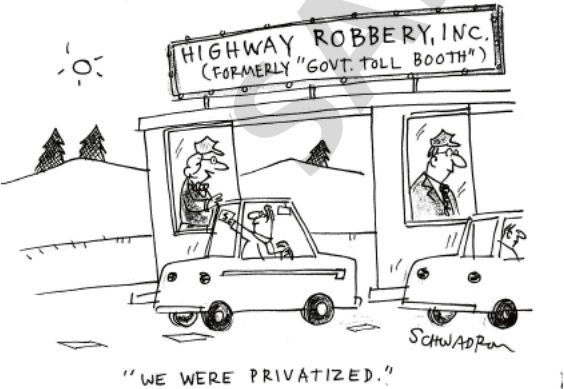


Figure 1.7 The cartoon portrays ordinary people paying more for services that have been privatized

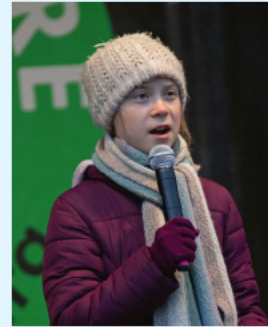
CASE STUDY

Schools Strike for Climate

In August 2018, Swedish school student Greta Thunberg began a school strike to bring attention to climate change. At first she was alone, but soon many other young people joined her.

In the weeks leading up to the Swedish elections the students sat outside the Swedish Parliament demanding that political leaders take action on the climate crisis. Her activism inspired a social movement and #FridaysForFuture started trending on social media.

Although the original point was to apply pressure on Swedish politicians, this social movement soon transformed into informing and motivating young people to become involved in the climate crisis. School Strikes for Climate and Fridays for Future spread globally and saw students walking out of the classroom in many countries.



■ **Figure 1.9** Greta Thunberg, founder of Schools Strike for Climate

Discussion point

Using the stages of social movements model shown in Figure 1.8, where do you think the School Strikes for Action/Friday for Future movement currently stand?

1.1.9 Resistance movements

Similar to social movements, resistance movements are groups of people who want change but whose complaints are more directed towards particular government policies, laws and leadership. Therefore, resistance movements provide more of a challenge to those in power than do social movements. However, in real-world situations, protest and social movements are often interconnected, as true change in society often involves changing both community attitudes and structural power.

In states where the freedoms of citizens are limited, it can be very dangerous to be part of a resistance movement because by doing so you are challenging the authority of the state. The US Department of Defense describes a resistance movement as 'an organized effort by some portion of the civil population of a country to resist the legally established government or an occupying power and to disrupt civil order and stability'. Clearly, this definition sees resistance movements as illegal and something to be feared. Others believe that, if laws or governments are oppressive or corrupt, resistance movements can bring positive change.

There are two types of resistance movements: those that use violence and those that don't.

TOK

You may hear the phrase 'one person's terrorist is another person's freedom fighter'. To what extent does the definition of terrorism depend on different perspectives?

Key theorist

Erica Chenoweth (1980–)

Erica Chenoweth is a professor at Harvard University and has authored several books and articles on mass movements, non-violent resistance, terrorism, political violence, revolutions and state repression.

Chenoweth has concluded that, if resistance movements are to succeed, they must be non-violent in nature. This is because the use of violence stops a lot of people from joining. The more people joining the resistance, the more severe the disruption to daily life and the greater impact. Also, if changes are achieved through violence, Chenoweth argues, the power structure that follows is often as oppressive as the one it replaced.

Extended essay

In early 2020, a spate of non-violent demonstrations against the government of Prime Minister Prayut Chan-o-cha in Thailand erupted. The protesters' demands included the reform of the Thai monarchy, something previously unheard of.

Many young activists were arrested as the government attempted to shut down the movement. However, several of the activists, including Chonthicha 'Lookkate' Jangrew, have since decided to enter politics to attempt to make changes from within the system. She and other activists continue to attempt to reform the government and monarchy, despite multiple charges against them. They argue that the people of Thailand demand change.

Jangrew is just one of many young activists globally who are resisting government policies and laws peacefully. If you're thinking of writing an extended essay on social or resistance movements, examining the methods used by activists such as Greta Thunberg or Chonthicha 'Lookkate' Jangrew would be a good place to start. However, remember that a good extended essay must consider multiple perspectives, and always discuss your ideas and potential research questions with your extended essay supervisor.

Is a violent resistance movement the same as a terrorist group?

Regardless of whether they are successful or not in achieving change, violent resistance movements can cause destruction in and destabilize a society. The term 'non-violent resistance movement' is not particularly controversial, but resistance movements that use violence can be divisive.

There are dozens of definitions of the term 'terrorism'. Terrorism is subject to a lot of debate and study, not only concerning its definition but also regarding its causes and ways of combating it. Some argue that the way to distinguish a terrorist organization from a violent resistance movement is to examine the motives and goals of the group. Does it merely want to seize power? Is it carelessly hurting and killing innocent people in the process? Does it appear to want to create a society that would be even more corrupt, unfair or violent than the one it's fighting against?

1.1.10 Interest and pressure groups

■ Interest groups

An interest group is a formally organized group of people that aims to influence public policy. Interest groups exist in all states, regardless of the system of government. There are thousands of types of interest groups, ranging from those representing the interests of certain industries, such as the pharmaceutical industry or dairy farming, to religious groups or those that focus on a particular issue, such as gun control.

■ Pressure groups

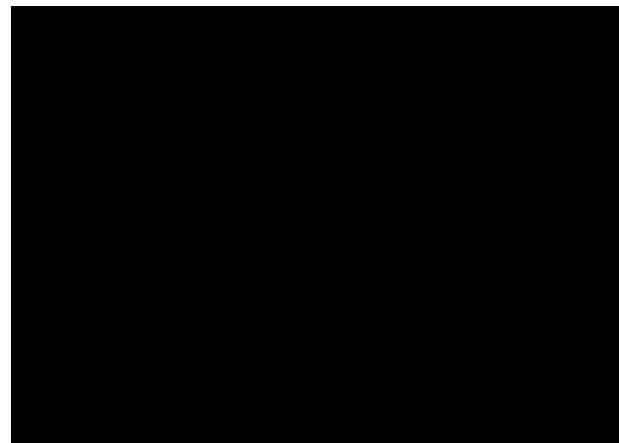
Pressure groups are very similar to social movements, and often the two terms are used interchangeably. They are usually found within interest groups, and they directly and openly work towards influencing those with power. Two prominent pressure groups active in global politics today are Black Lives Matter and People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA).

Both types of groups use a variety of tactics to draw attention, including:

- marches
- sit-ins
- petitions
- social media campaigns
- advertising through posters or billboards
- holding public meetings
- contacting local government
- staging some kind of stunt to attract attention.



■ Figure 1.11 A Black Lives Matter march in Berlin, 2017



■ Figure 1.12 PETA protesters outside the 2008 Republican National Convention in St Paul, Minnesota

1.1.11 Formal and informal political forums

In global politics, ‘forums’ refer to meetings of actors to discuss and debate different perspectives on a political issue. There are two main types of forum: formal and informal.

■ Formal forums

As the name suggests, formal forums are regulated and have a definitive structure, rules and regulations in place. For example, the UN frequently hosts different formal forums on a wide variety of political issues.

Within democratic states, formal forums are sometimes established to provide an opportunity for a range of actors and stakeholders to express their opinions about issues impacting their community or state.

Formal forums regulate the interactions between actors and tend to produce definitive approaches to political issues, but some people question whether the structure and formality of such forums limits their creativity.

■ Informal forums

Informal forums are gatherings of actors who meet to discuss and debate different perspectives on a political issue. An informal forum ranges from a group of residents of a city street meeting to discuss common concerns about crime, to regional or global meetings involving states and non-state actors.

Informal forums are not restricted by a complex structure and rules, which some people think leads to more creative solutions.

The World Economic Forum

The World Economic Forum is an informal forum based in Geneva, Switzerland. It hosts an annual meeting in the Swiss town of Davos, giving it its informal name.

A wide variety of actors from the fields of business, media, civil society, government and academia come together at Davos to discuss solutions to some of the world’s most pressing problems in an informal setting, enabling different people representing different perspectives and skills to debate and propose innovative and creative solutions to global problems.

One criticism of Davos is that it is a meeting of the world’s ‘elite’, as most of its participants are very wealthy and powerful men. Some question how a group that controls most of the world’s wealth can find solutions to benefit all.

Discussion point

Formal and informal forums can be found at all levels of global politics, local to international. Why is it beneficial to bring together people with diverse opinions and perspectives?

1.1.12 The media

The media, including print, television and online, have long had an impact on political issues. Different news agencies may claim to be impartial, but achieving such a goal, even if the agency is sincere, is not always possible.

Social media have emerged as powerful tools in global politics. Social media platforms can be relatively safe places for people to express opinions and be exposed to the opinions of others.

As we mentioned earlier, states like to have control over what happens within their borders and, to varying degrees, the actions of their own people. As a result, some states feel their power is threatened by social media and they attempt to restrict citizens' access to it. Additionally, in recent years the online world has become a place where states and other non-state actors spread disinformation in order to shape and manipulate public attitudes, opinions and issues of concern.



The impact of social media is huge and often we are not even aware of the ways in which we are influenced. Research the ways in which social media 'algorithms' curate consumers' experiences when viewing social media. Do you think that these algorithms provide a limited view of the world? How might our understanding of political issues be impacted by these algorithms?

The power of social media is demonstrated by the concern many states have expressed over their use. Table 1.5 is a partial list of states that have placed restrictions on or banned social media.

Table 1.5 States that have banned or restricted access to social media

State	Reasons for ban/restrictions
Nigeria	For several months ending in 2022, Nigeria's government ordered telecommunications companies to block Twitter (now known as X) after a series of tweets started trending, criticizing President Muhammadu Buhari. The government claimed the tweets were a threat to national and economic security.
China	China began to block Facebook and other platforms in 2009, arguing that they threatened Chinese interests. We-chat, a multi-purpose messaging service, is allowed, as all data collected by We-chat are shared with Chinese authorities.
India	In 2020, India banned TikTok along with many other mobile apps, claiming that they were threatening state security and social stability.

Discussion point

To what extent do you agree that social media can threaten state security?

1.1.13 Systems and interactions in global politics

'Systems' in global politics refers to the structures in place that limit the actions of all the actors previously mentioned in this chapter. You have already seen that government systems and structures can influence whether or not certain actors are allowed to openly operate. We can clearly see that all states have sub-national and local governments and the vast majority of states belong to some kind of IGO. Rules, societal norms and institutions further regulate many of the other actors we have examined.

When you explore global political issues, always be on the lookout for these actors and stakeholders and consider what role they play in the issue. Be aware that not every political issue involves all of these actors and stakeholders.

By examining a real-world political issue, we can better understand the role actors and stakeholders play in global politics today. This is something you will undertake both with the support of your teacher and independently.

CASE STUDY

A deconstruction of a political issue: the Ebola virus breakout in West Africa, 2014

In 2014, the viral disease Ebola surfaced in Liberia, Guinea and Sierra Leone. At the time this region of West Africa was already facing political instability, unstable borders, a weak health care system and poverty.

Actors involved from the start: the states of Liberia, Guinea, Sierra Leone, Nigeria, Mali and Senegal.
Stakeholders involved from the start: the people living in those states and the wider regional and global community.

At first, local government health authorities in all three of the originally infected countries struggled to understand the disease, which was not unknown but incredibly rare.

States with Ebola infections authorized various methods to halt the spread of the disease. Sierra Leone made residents stay home for three days, while Liberia closed most of its borders. All of these actions further crippled the states' economies and did little to stop the spread of the disease, which quickly reached Nigeria, Mali and Senegal.

Despite these and other efforts, states quickly realized they needed the support of regional IGOs, the AU and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) to deal with the crisis. Additionally, states and regional IGOs sought out the support of global IGO the World Health Organization (WHO). However, these organizations were later criticized for acting too slowly.

Regional and international actors: the AU, ECOWAS and the UN became involved at the request of the states originally impacted.

Ebola was quickly recognized as a threat globally, and soon dominated news and social media posts around the world. Global and regional NGOs, particularly those associated with medical expertise, offered assistance, as did state actors, private actors and companies. The political issue of how to control and manage the Ebola crisis soon involved a huge range of actors too numerous to list.

The WHO and multiple NGOs initially determined that Ebola was being spread through local customs and burial traditions in West Africa. In West Africa,

it is customary for individuals to touch or hold their deceased loved ones before burial. However, this is when Ebola is most contagious. According to Guinea's Ministry of Health, 60 per cent of Ebola's cases were linked to traditional burial practices and the WHO estimated that 80 per cent of cases in Sierra Leone were tied to burial practices. As a result, these types of burial practices were banned, causing huge upset and mistrust within local communities.

Then, in 2014, the NGO Médecins Sans Frontières (or Doctors Without Borders) had to stop working in a treatment centre in Guinea after its members were attacked by those who believed that the organization had brought the virus with them. Health care workers from within West Africa also took great risks in helping those infected with Ebola and suffered violent attacks by community members who viewed them with suspicion. Additionally, many community stakeholders began to question whether the virus was real, and misinformation quickly spread.

As a result of these experiences, some experts have concluded that respecting community stakeholders should be the key to controlling any kind of disease outbreak. As the crisis evolved, a priority was placed on making burials safe and dignified, but was it too little too late?

Health care actors: alongside local health care workers in West Africa, the WHO and state health agencies including the US Center for Disease Control and NGOs such as Médecins Sans Frontières (also called Doctors Without Borders) became involved in the crisis. Additionally, volunteer health care workers from many other countries offered assistance to Ebola clinics in West Africa.

The media: the global media began reporting on the crisis as it evolved.

Eventually Ebola was brought under control and West Africa was declared Ebola-free in May 2015, after over 11,000 people lost their lives.

While we have covered some of the actors and stakeholders involved in addressing this political issue, It is important to remember that other individuals and collective actors played a role in these events – far too many to list in full. Many of these groups do not fall into the categories mentioned in this chapter. This is, however, yet more evidence that we live in an interconnected and globalized world.

Discussion point

Local governments and government officials are often the first actors to become aware of and respond to health emergencies. The local government health authorities in West Africa were quickly overwhelmed with concerns regarding the containment and treatment of this virus. Why would they turn to the central governments of their countries before seeking help from IGOs or other actors outside of the state?

Chapter summary

In this chapter we have covered:

- what is meant by the term 'global political issue'
- who actors and stakeholders are, and how they interact with each other and global political issues
- what is meant by 'the state'
- what types of systems make up a state
- the ways in which actors and stakeholders within systems interact and are involved in real-world political issues.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

Now that you have read this chapter, reflect on these questions:

- What is the difference between an actor and a stakeholder?
- What is generally accepted to be the definition of a state?
- Would a state be potentially more threatened by a resistance movement or a social movement? Why?
- What are some of the functions of intergovernmental organizations (IGOs)?
- Draw a diagram or some kind of mind-map that shows the interactions between multiple actors and stakeholders involved in the 2014 Ebola crisis in West Africa.

2.4

Debates on rights and justice

SYLLABUS CONTENT

By the end of this chapter, you should understand:

- ▶ diverse standards and understandings of rights
- ▶ the politicization of rights and justice
- ▶ humanitarian stakeholders and debates surrounding humanitarian intervention
- ▶ claims on individual and collective rights.



■ **Figure 2.40** Debates about rights and justice are complex – like this piece of art, there are not simply two points of view but many views, of varying intensity and complexity

When we think of 'debates' we might think of a formal debate where we have two individuals or teams arguing opposite points of view on a specific topic. Formal debates are often very clear-cut: one side agrees completely and the other is in complete opposition. In global politics, however, debates are not so black and white, and disagreements or differing opinions are more refined and complex. Most rational human beings agree that there are 'good' ways to treat people and that society needs some kind of justice. So when we look at debates, we must appreciate the complexity of the arguments and avoid simplifying the perspectives of various stakeholders and actors.

TOK

Looking at debates as a TOK student, you might take time to consider what is happening 'behind' the actual words and ideas being used in the debate. When understanding what each side is saying, you should consider where each side is 'coming from'. Each voice will bring to the debate a whole series of background ideologies, assumptions and beliefs that can be considered the reasons why they hold the views they do. To truly understand what points are being made, take time to understand the core values from which the points in the debate are coming. A debate in the United States about abortion, for instance, might have quite different starting points: arguing for 'freedom of choice' is about the individual liberties of women, while arguing for a 'pro-life' position might come from beliefs about the sanctity of human life.

2.4.1 Diverse standards and understanding of rights

Although the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) is by far the most widely accepted international standard of human rights, as we have seen throughout Section 2, there are other standards and understanding of rights as a global political concept. When we examine real-world

political issues we should always consider the points of view of various stakeholders and actors to better appreciate the diverse standards and understandings of these issues.

Chapter 2.1 summarizes many different contested meanings of rights and justice, but two of the main opposing viewpoints – universalism and cultural relativism – are embedded in many global political debates on rights and justice.

The following is a brief recap on these two opposing viewpoints.

■ Universality

There are many who believe that there are certain rights that all people have simply because they are human. There are no exceptions and a person cannot 'give up' these rights or have them taken away for any reason. For example, the United Nations (UN), the UDHR and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) such as Amnesty International support the claim of universality.

They argue that, if you adapt or change rights on the basis of culture, then you are basically allowing states to continue to oppress marginalized groups, such as women or indigenous people, in the name of 'culture'. They dispute the argument that the UDHR is 'Western' because the multicultural committee that created it was designed to prevent this.

■ Cultural relativism

Cultural relativists disagree with universalists, arguing that cultures differ from one another, and so do the moral frameworks that structure relations within different societies. Cultural relativists are not saying that there are no such things as rights; instead, they are saying that rights should be considered within the context of culture. Some observe that in many cultures the rights of the community are more important than the rights of the individual.

They argue that 'universal' rights are focused on Western-centric values and come from a long Western philosophical tradition. By imposing universalism, the Western world is continuing to try to dominate and control the global community.

2.4.2 The politicization of rights and justice

In rights and justice, politicization means that actors are directed by political motives, rather than being genuinely concerned with rights and justice. Politicization, therefore, is seen when the actions and intentions of stakeholders are centred on gaining or manipulating power. When you examine real-world examples and case studies, you may come across those who seem to be motivated by political gain and those who are not.

Discussion points

Are universalists really just trying to impose Western values on the global community, as claimed by cultural relativists? Are cultural relativists simply opposing universality so that they can pick and choose which rights they support, and oppress some members of their communities? It's not always easy to see the true intentions of actors and stakeholders, but it's also important to remember that there can be a variety of motivations and intentions even within a group.

The absence of politicization is widely considered to be the ideal situation with regard to ensuring the credibility of international organizations (IGOs) concerned with rights and justice. This is the reason why many NGOs focusing on rights and justice avoid any kind of government funding and fiercely value their independence. But for IGOs, avoiding politicization can be difficult as,

of course, they are groups of states, and it is not always easy for a state to avoid putting its own interests first.

Evidence of politicization can negatively impact the legitimacy of IGOs, and most take the threat very seriously.

In 2006, UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan (see Figure 2.41) attempted to put an end to the politicization that was impacting the legitimacy of the UN Human Rights Commission by establishing the Human Rights Council. The council would conduct independent reviews of the commission to review the decisions and actions of member states to safeguard against politicization. Speaking of the newly formed council, he said:

It was intended to give concrete form to our shared principles of universality, non-selectivity, objectivity and cooperation. The world looks to the Council to develop a review mechanism that lives up to those ideals.

Discussion points

The European Union and the Council of Europe consider the death penalty to be an example of torture. Do you agree? Why or why not? Are there diverse points of view on this within your class?

■ Why would a state ratify a human rights treaty and then go on to violate it?

As we saw in Chapter 2.3, many international human rights treaties and conventions appear to be widely accepted by the international community. The state is often seen as the most powerful stakeholder in global politics, and it's clear that states do hold great responsibility for the protection and enforcement of rights and justice. Although states may claim to value the rights outlined in treaties and conventions, the abuse of people, corruption, racism and inequality all persist in our world today. While it may be difficult to imagine a world where everyone lives in perfect peace and harmony, it can be confusing when we see many instances of people saying they believe in rights and justice, but acting in ways that seemingly contradict this claim.

On the global political stage, a state may ratify a human rights convention, only to later be accused of violating the treaty. Why might this happen? One reason for this could be that the state has a different understanding of the convention. Maybe the state lacks the resources or will to protect rights. Or perhaps states are attempting to politicize rights and get some sort of advantage by appearing to prioritize their citizens.

In any case, it's worth considering a real-world example in relation to this.

The Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment

The convention defines torture as the infliction of severe physical or mental pain and suffering in order to get information or a confession, or to intimidate or terrify someone, or as a form of punishment. It does not include pain and suffering that is the result of lawful imprisonment, such as loneliness or depression.

The obligations of the state outlined in the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment include the following:

- An obligation not to deport or transfer a person to a state where they would be at risk of torture or ill-treatment (non-refoulement) (Article 3). This article specifically refers to asylum

seekers or refugees who have legitimate claims that they will be tortured or mistreated if they are forced to return to their original country of residence.

- Torture will be criminalized under domestic law (Article 4).
- Ensuring that victims of torture can seek justice (Article 14).
- Making sure evidence obtained through torture is not used in any proceedings (the exclusionary rule) (Article 15).

As we noted in Chapter 2.3, this convention has been widely accepted and has been ratified by all permanent members of the UN Security Council (China, France, Russia, the UK, the United States). However, according to many human rights stakeholders and actors, the five permanent members of the Security Council have all violated this convention.

The following case studies outline some of the ways the treaty has been allegedly violated by both China and the United States.

CASE STUDY

China

State	Alleged violation	Response of the state to claims they are violating the treaty
China	<p>There is a long history of the persecution of Muslims in China and, since 2017, there has been widespread concern expressed among human rights activists about the establishment of inhumane forced detention camps and suspected genocide.</p> <p>In a 2022, 45-page UN report, China was condemned for its treatment of the Uyghur people, Kazakh people and other predominantly minority ethnic Muslim groups in China's Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region. The report claimed that there was state-organized mass imprisonment, torture and persecution amounting to crimes against humanity.</p>	<p>China called the report 'a farce' and responded with its own 131-page document claiming it was attempting to combat religious extremism by setting up vocational and educational training centres to help rehabilitate these people. 'To sum up, respecting and protecting human rights is a basic principle enshrined in the Constitution of China', the report states.</p> <p>The report claims anti-China forces in the United States and the West merely pretend to care about human rights and are using the Uyghur issue as a means to 'destabilize President Xinjiang and suppress China'.</p>

Could this be an example of China having a different understanding of 'torture'? Possibly. This could also be seen as an example of the politicization of rights and justice.

China, as a permanent member of the UN Security Council, and a world leader, is deeply concerned with external legitimacy. As it has ratified the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, it would not readily admit to violating it. It is also important to remember that there is extensive evidence from a wide variety of sources that extreme human rights violations are taking place against minority ethnic Muslim groups in China.

Politicizing rights means to use them for some reason which connects to power. What examples of politicization of rights can we see in the China example?

- 1 Many question why it took the UN so long to speak out against China. Could it be because China is very powerful and a permanent member of the UN Security Council? Could power be interfering with rights and justice?
- 2 China claims that the United States and the West are politicizing human rights as a way to discredit China by attempting to make it look bad on the world stage with false claims.

Discussion points

The relationship between China and the United States has been strained for many years. How might this have impacted China's response to the claims they are committing serious human rights violations against the Uyghur people?

Consider the claims made about another permanent member of the Security Council, the USA.

CASE STUDY

USA

State	Alleged violation	Response of the state to claims they are violating the treaty
United States	<p>The United States has been widely criticized for its post 9/11 'war on terror'. In 2022, the Watson Institute of International and Public Affairs at Brown University in Boston, in collaboration with Human Rights Watch, released a report stating that the CIA had secretly detained at least 119 Muslim men and tortured at least 39.</p> <p>The military also allegedly held thousands of Muslim men, and in some cases boys, in detention centres, including in Afghanistan, Iraq and Guantánamo Bay, Cuba. Nearly 800 men and boys were held in Guantánamo, and 39 remain detained as of 2023, 27 without criminal charges.</p> <p>Cases of US-facilitated indefinite detention continued under the Obama, Trump and Biden administrations.</p>	<p>Many activists and groups, both inside and outside the United States, have called for an investigation into the actions of the CIA.</p> <p>President Donald Trump used his first TV interview as president in 2017 to say he believes torture 'absolutely' works and that the United States should 'fight fire with fire'.</p> <p>On 26 June 2023, in honour of The International Day of Support for Victims of Torture, President Biden stated:</p> <p><i>It is our firm belief as a nation that we must hold ourselves to the same standards to which we hold others. This is why we continue to ensure that torture remains prohibited in all of its forms, without exception.</i></p> <p>The statement then goes on to condemn Russia, Syria and North Korea but makes no mention of allegations of torture conducted by the United States.</p>

President Trump's statement clearly prioritizes national interests over any concerns regarding the violation of rights.

President Biden, by contrast, avoids the topic completely, insisting, like the report produced by China, that the United States always prioritizes human rights. By deflecting attention to examples of torture taking place

in other countries, Biden is also politicizing rights, the implication being that the United States is still a world leader and other places are far worse. He is using the human rights abuses taking place in Syria, North Korea and Russia for the political gain of the United States. However, many see this stance as hypocritical and a cynical abuse of power.

Discussion points

Would you agree that the response of President Trump supports a realist view of global politics? Why or why not?

Discussion points

In 2023, the Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson Zhao Lijian criticized what he called the horrifying torture of prisoners that had taken place at American ‘black sites’. He claimed that Washington had no right to criticize any other country for human rights violations. Do you think this could be another way of politicizing rights? Was Zhao Lijian deflecting attention from what is allegedly happening in China?

Common mistake

As we have seen, particularly with the US example above, debates on rights and justice also take place within states. In states where civil society is more able to openly express opinions and disagree with government policy this can be more obvious, but even in oppressive states there can be evidence of dissent.

It is a common mistake to talk about government policies and positions as if everyone within the state completely supports the government. This is simply not the case and demonstrates a lack of understanding of the complexity of political issues and the debates on rights and justice.

2.4.3 Humanitarian stakeholders

What does ‘humanitarian’ mean?

What does the term ‘humanitarian’ mean? Generally, humanitarianism is a general dedication to and belief in the value of all human life. In global politics, it often refers to the international crisis response that has evolved from the founding of the Red Cross (and later Red Crescent) and the first Geneva Convention in 1864. As an organized response to a crisis, humanitarianism means helping people who have been impacted by natural disasters, conflict, famine and health crises, including pandemics.

Humanitarianism can be defined by the following:

- The principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence are fundamental to humanitarian action.
- Human suffering must be addressed wherever it is found, with particular attention to the most vulnerable.
- Humanitarian aid must not take any side in an armed conflict.
- Humanitarian aid must be given on the basis of need, without discrimination.
- Those who provide humanitarian relief must do so without political, economic, military or other objectives.

Humanitarian stakeholders

There are countless humanitarian agencies operating globally. The following agencies in Table 2.17 are some of the best known. There is frequent cooperation between these groups, NGOs and IGOs.

Table 2.17 A selection of the best-known humanitarian agencies

Agency	Aim
International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)	The ICRC was established in 1863. It aims to help people affected by armed conflict. It also responds to disasters in conflict zones because disasters are much worse if they impact a country already at war. It is focused on responding rapidly as emergencies are not always predictable. It operates at the international level. The ICRC closely follows the work of the UN Human Rights Commission, while maintaining its full independence. It has been awarded the Nobel Peace Prize three times.
International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent societies (IFRC)	The IFRC is a group of national societies operating globally in over 190 states, reaching over 150 million people per year. It acts at a more regional/local level to provide humanitarian aid. It works together with the ICRC and provides a more local perspective and focus during and after disasters and health emergencies.
Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) (Doctors Without Borders)	MSF brings medical humanitarian assistance to victims of conflict, natural disasters, epidemics or those unable to access health care. It operates globally and has worked collaboratively with the ICRC in conflict zones. The organization was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1999.
Oxfam	Oxfam’s mission is to fight inequality and end poverty and injustice. Across regions, from the local to the global, it works with people to attempt to make long-term change beyond responding to disasters. It is committed to the universality of human rights and supports the empowerment of women as a means of achieving these aims. Oxfam works in partnership with the UN Sustainable Development Goals.
Save the Children	Save the Children was founded in 1919 as a response to the need to help children suffering from the impact of the First World War. It remains an independent NGO but partners with corporations and foundations and also ordinary people, who provide donations in 120 countries. It operates globally, providing necessities to children caught up in armed conflict as well as helping children in both developed and developing nations who are particularly vulnerable. Save the Children created the initial draft for what would become the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1923. As we covered in Chapter 2.3, this was finally realized in 1989 and has been ratified by most states.

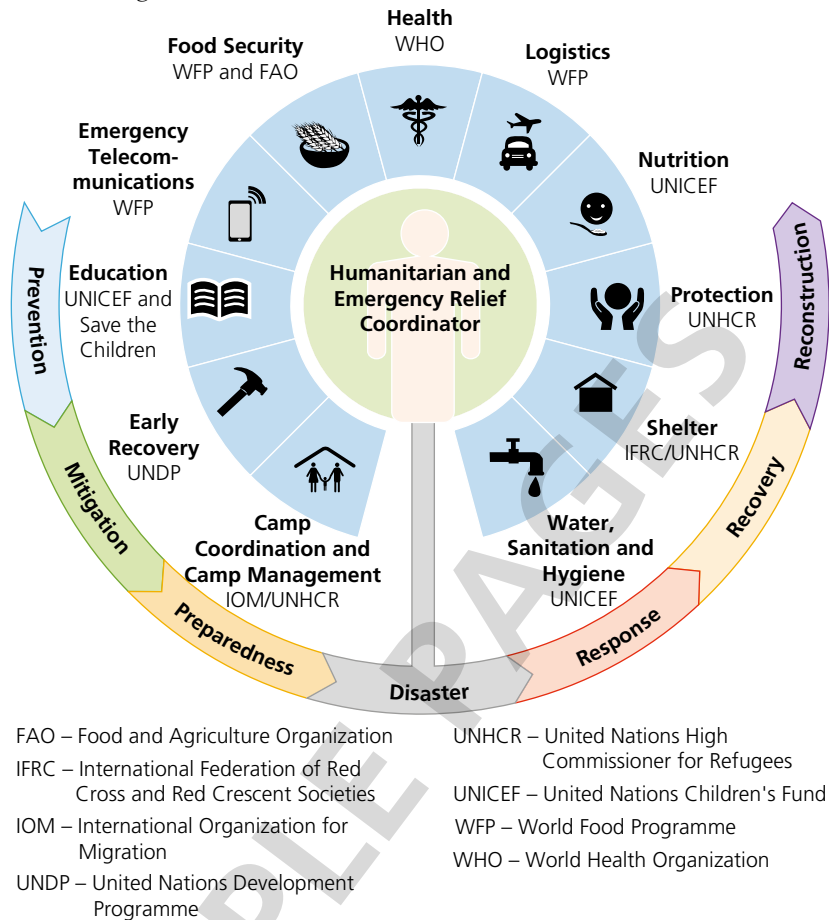


Figure 2.42 A medic administers an open-air vaccination to a child during the COVID-19 pandemic

The United Nations and humanitarianism

The UN frequently collaborates with independent humanitarian agencies, but also has its own designated agencies. In 2005, a major reform of humanitarian coordination, the Humanitarian Reform Agenda, took place so that all could work more efficiently and collaboratively. From this, the Cluster Approach was developed.

Clusters are groups of humanitarian organizations, both UN and non-UN, in each of the main sectors of humanitarian action, for example, water, health and logistics. They are designated by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) and have clear responsibilities for coordination, as shown in Figure 2.43.



■ **Figure 2.43** The Cluster Approach (adapted from Humanitarian Response, the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), 'What is the Cluster Approach?')

2.4.4 Debates surrounding humanitarian intervention

Helping people in times of conflict may not seem to be a very controversial or debatable topic. But, we know that, in real-world situations, it is extremely dangerous to send people into conflict zones. Additionally, to do so may usually mean violating rules of state sovereignty, which is ordinarily perceived as a hostile act.

The international community has long grappled with how to help the marginalized and vulnerable who are caught up in conflict. One aspect of this has been to consider the ethics of using deadly force to protect the rights of those being abused. 'Just war' theory is a Western philosophical guideline for determining when 'war' is acceptable morally. It originated centuries ago among Christian scholars who were troubled with how the violence of war contradicts the teaching of Christianity.

The principles of the 'just war' theory are:

- There must be a just cause.
- Other solutions to the conflict were tried and failed and war was the last resort.
- War is declared by a proper authority.
- There is a reasonable chance of success.
- The methods used are reasonable in order to achieve success – nothing more.

In Chapter 2.3 you were introduced to the idea of humanitarian intervention and the Responsibility to Protect (R2P), which evolved as a response to widespread criticism of the UN for seemingly doing nothing as thousands were killed in Rwanda and Bosnia in the 1990s. In this section, we look at why humanitarian intervention as a component of R2P is widely debated in the international community.

Discussion points

Review the section on Responsibility to Protect (R2P) in Chapter 2.3. What are the similarities between the 'just war' theory and R2P? What might a cultural relativist say about these similarities?

Debates on humanitarian intervention and R2P: real-world examples

There are several debates to consider when discussing humanitarian intervention and R2P, but these debates only come to life when you examine real-world examples. Remember, IBDP Global Politics is not focused on theory – you need examples and case studies to support your claims. So, as you consider debates in rights and justice, always think about how examples of this can be seen in our contemporary global political world.

Concerns regarding humanitarian intervention and R2P: the values of the United Nations

The use of military force seems to contradict the core value of the UN Charter, which bans the use of force when it violates state sovereignty. The use of military force to protect the universal rights guaranteed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights concerns many, as it disregards the essential principles of state sovereignty and UN ideology.

Concerns regarding humanitarian intervention and R2P: loss of life

The use of military force will cause death, destruction and violence. Critics argue it can be very difficult to predict the consequences of using armed force. There is the possibility that it could make the conflict worse and result in causing more human rights violations and loss of life. Armed conflict can quickly escalate in real-world situations and it can be difficult to control the actions of combatants and the evolution of the conflict.

Concerns regarding humanitarian intervention and R2P: politicization

When a state fails to respond to peaceful and diplomatic efforts, the UN Security Council can also employ more forceful measures such as sanctions, arms embargoes, or referrals to the International Criminal Court. As a last resort, the Security Council can authorize military action through the UN or a regional organization. Overall, the Security Council has significant flexibility when responding to an R2P crisis in determining how to implement its responsibility.

Critics argue that, although humanitarian intervention requires ‘neutrality, impartiality and independence’, it appears that the Security Council’s members consistently prioritize their own interests. As a result, they have been unable to respond quickly and decisively to major conflicts and human rights crises, including the civil war in Syria, the COVID-19 pandemic, Russia’s annexation of Crimea and subsequent invasion of Ukraine, the Rohingya crisis in Myanmar, and reports of extreme violations taking place in North Korea.



■ **Figure 2.44** Protesters against the military coup in Myanmar call for international intervention, Yangon, 12 April 2021

CASE STUDY

Libya and humanitarian intervention

Background

The Arab Spring was a series of anti-government protests, uprisings and armed rebellions that spread across much of the Arab world in the early 2010s. In February 2011, a violent crackdown was launched against protesters in Libya. An estimated 500–700 people were killed over several weeks as the government, led by Muammar Gaddafi, used the military to respond with force.

In response to these attacks, the UN Security Council invoked R2P, authorizing ‘humanitarian intervention’ to protect the people. In addition to the military action, sanctions against Gaddafi and associates were imposed. The Libyan National Oil Corp and the central bank, among others, had their assets frozen.

A NATO-led alliance of countries started by conducting air strikes against military targets in Libya. After several months of intense fighting, Tripoli was taken over

by Libyan rebel forces and the Gaddafi government collapsed in August 2011.

This intervention is generally acknowledged to be the international community’s first attempt to use ‘humanitarian intervention’ within R2P as a way to stop mass atrocity crimes.

Immediate concerns about R2P after the collapse of the Gaddafi government

A number of issues came to light after the Libyan intervention which have caused many to question the new global norm of R2P and to what extent state sovereignty can be ignored.

Many UN member states expressed concern that the strength of military force must, in future, be clearly defined prior to humanitarian intervention. In Libya, it was argued, too much power was given to the states conducting the intervention and not enough safeguards were in place to ensure that all action taken was solely to protect civilians.

Additionally, Gaddafi and the mechanisms of his government were directly targeted, and many felt this was beyond the mandate of R2P. NATO even supplied rebel groups with weapons to fight against Gaddafi forces. China was one state which expressed concern that R2P must not be used as a way to get rid of governments, as this is clearly a breach of sovereignty. Some argue that there were effectively two interventions in Libya: the legal one to avert a massacre of civilians, and the illegal one with the aim of regime change.

Widespread perceptions that the intervention was just a way for Western powers to control Libya’s oil reserves demonstrate the cynicism that many have about R2P and the UN in general. Barely two years after the fall of Gaddafi, most viewed the intervention not as a success story but as a case study on how *not* to intervene.

Impact on Libya

It’s generally agreed that the involvement of international forces significantly prolonged the conflict and led to further crisis:

- 1 Large stocks of weapons were quickly looted and sold within the region, contributing to regional instability and violence in places such as Mali.
- 2 African migrants living in Libya were no longer welcome, leading to tens of thousands of displaced people being left vulnerable to trafficking and abuse.

- 3 Gaddafi was hunted and his execution filmed and broadcast by NATO. Many say this normalized the unlawful killing of anyone labelled a supporter of Gaddafi’s government and contributed further to an atmosphere of chaos and violence.
- 4 Because Gaddafi had essentially ruled Libya for 42 years, there was no clear plan as to who could take over after his regime was destroyed. This led to armed groups at both the city and regional level attempting to seize power.

UN Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL)

This mission was set up in 2011 after the fall of the Gaddafi government as a political mission, not a military mission. This means it was established to help Libya with conflict resolution and the transition to a stable form of government, and to promote rights and justice. However, as late as 2023, the UNSMIL issued a statement describing disturbing events including abductions, arbitrary arrests, disappearances of ordinary people and public citizens, and oil fields being shut down by rebel groups.

The description from the UNSMIL clearly describes Libya as a failed state and has caused widespread concern about the unforeseen impact of using humanitarian intervention. However, others argue that Libya was already in crisis prior to the humanitarian intervention of R2P and therefore this cannot be blamed entirely on the intervention.

Perspectives

Claudia Gazzini on humanitarian intervention in Libya:

There was no international state building plan except for the idea of let’s put in place a UN mission to go and organize elections. There was no strong will or capacity for anything else.

Quoted by Peter Beaumont, ‘“War weary” Libya reflects 10 years on from Gaddafi and Arab spring’

Claudia Gazzini is the International Crisis Group’s Senior Analyst for Libya. She has covered this role since 2012. She was Head of the UN Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL) 2017–18.



■ **Figure 2.45** Claudia Gazzini

Consequences for R2P, humanitarian intervention and world norms of rights and justice

R2P has been invoked in more than 80 UN security resolutions concerning crises in Central African Republic, Côte d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Liberia, Libya, Mali, Somalia, South Sudan, Syria and Yemen. It is important for us to remember that R2P rarely deploys 'humanitarian intervention'.

Its continued use is the most powerful evidence that global norms of collective obligations to prevent atrocities remain in focus. However, the use of humanitarian intervention has been, and continues to be, heavily scrutinized and debated.

Concepts

Postcolonialism and R2P

Postcolonialists argue that R2P's 'humanitarian intervention' is viewed as anything but humanitarian. Instead, they state, it's nothing but a new name for old forms of violence and domination by powerful states. They point out that it goes against the internationally acknowledged principles of sovereignty and non-intervention, which are supported by the UN Charter. For a long time, the only accepted reason for a state to use armed force against another was for self-defence, but now, according to postcolonialists, we are seeing it used to serve states' self-interested goals.

Extended essay

If you're thinking of writing an extended essay on the effectiveness of R2P, as a starting point you could investigate a few of the other 80+ instances the UN Security Council has had it invoked. Make sure you discuss any potential research questions with your extended essay supervisor.

Sanctions: why are they controversial?

We have mentioned several times in Section 2 that sanctions are an alternative to the use of military force. They are generally regarded as 'safer' than humanitarian intervention, too.

Sanctions can take a variety of forms including:

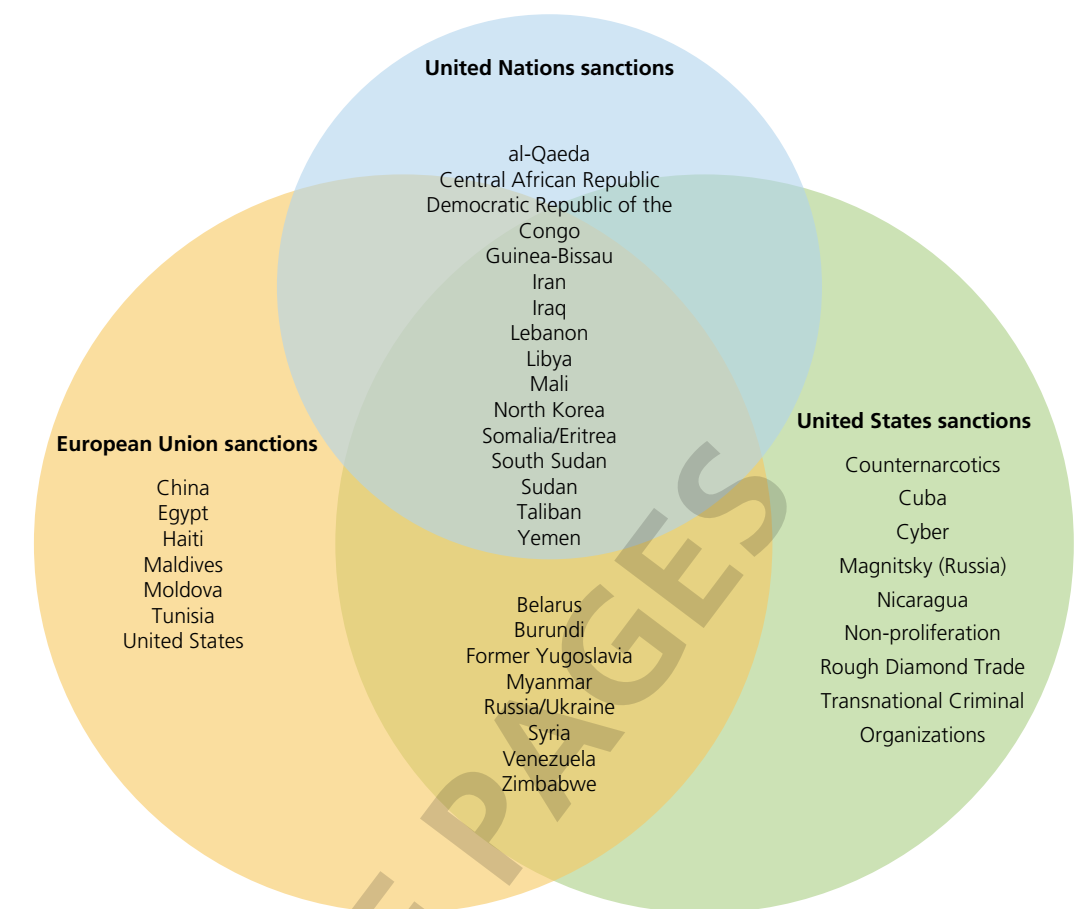
- travel bans
- asset freezes
- arms embargoes
- foreign aid reduction
- trade restrictions.

Usually they are used by states or IGOs to try to force a state, group or individual to change their behaviour. Often they are used when there are concerns about human rights abuses.

According to Joseph Nye, sanctions are hard power tactics. They are put in place to modify the behaviour of a group and weaken its power. Some people debate the effectiveness of the use of sanctions, which often end up negatively impacting the population of the state, while others see them as an essential strategy.

Figure 2.46 shows the global sanctions in operation today.

AQ: Any way of making this diagram more different to the original?



■ **Figure 2.46** Global sanctions in operation today (adapted from Jonathon Masters, 'What are economic sanctions?', with data from the Council of the European Union and the US Treasury Department)

Discussion points

What real-world evidence can you find that supports the claim that sanctions can be effective? From a TOK perspective, you might include what background assumptions there are about what 'effective' means in your response. What other assumptions about 'effective' might someone who disagrees with you have?

2.4.5 Claims on individual and collective rights

As we have seen throughout Section 2, although the needs of the wider community are considered, the rights of the individual tend to take precedence.

One criticism of the UDHR is that it strongly emphasizes the rights of the individual and therefore represents an inherently 'Western' perspective. Consider the following quotation from Chinese philosopher Lo Chung-shu (1903–85):

The basic ethical concept of Chinese social political relations is the fulfillment of the duty to one's neighbour, rather than the claiming of rights. The idea of mutual obligations is regarded as the fundamental teaching of Confucianism.

Lo Chung-shu, 'Human Rights in the Chinese Tradition'

Lo is claiming that obligations to the greater society, or the ‘collective rights’ of the wider society, traditionally take priority in Chinese cultural tradition. Of course, an emphasis on collective rights does not mean that individual rights have no significance, and Lo worked extensively with the UN to see how both collective and individual rights could complement each other. Once again, we see that debates on rights and justice are not simply black and white.

TOK

◆ **Affirmative action** is usually discussed in terms of American case studies and means that an effort has been made to improve educational and employment opportunities for marginalized groups by prioritizing them as applicants.

The above quote is an example of how pre-existing beliefs might affect how we interpret ‘rights’. If a collective unit like a family or group is the basic moral structure, then thinking about other political, economic, social or ethical issues might come out quite differently from when we think of the individual as the basic moral concern. This might impact the methods we use when we reason about issues.

Many modern social debates hinge on whether groups or individuals are affected. Debates around ‘**affirmative action**’, for example, are often characterized as being about two competing assumptions. For instance, one might prioritize the group an applicant comes from and support affirmative action in hiring decisions (possibly to the disadvantage of individuals), while the other might prioritize only the individual’s own merits, regardless of what group they belong to (despite the advantages that individual might already have being part of a group with high social power).

■ **Concerns about prioritizing the ‘collective rights’ of the majority in a state**

Societies that traditionally emphasize collective rights do not necessarily reject the human rights norms of our contemporary global political world. After all, we can see that most states claim to support and respect these norms as members of the UN.

However, one criticism that some have about the emphasis of ‘collective rights’ is that it assumes some kind of common agreement among all members of society. In our modern world, there are few examples of states in which the population is homogeneous (meaning of one cultural background). Most state populations identify with a variety of cultures, religions, traditions and ways of life.

When we speak of collective rights it implies that decisions are being made about what that society values based on whoever holds the most power. Will the views of the marginalized and vulnerable be considered as part of the ‘collective’? This is why some people argue that it is essential to emphasize universalism, and that all people be treated equally by focusing on individual rights.

■ **Collective rights for marginalized and vulnerable groups**

Another way to consider collective rights is to look at them from the perspective of the marginalized and vulnerable who seek protection of the collective rights of their particular communities. As we saw when discussing trade unions in Chapter 2.2, when a group, rather than just an individual, demands rights it can be more impactful.

Throughout Section 2 we have considered how women and members of the LGBTQ+ communities continue to do just that. Black Lives Matter is another example of people fighting for the collective rights of their community:

Discussion points

Can you think of any marginalized or vulnerable groups from your own country or region who have unified to demand their collective rights? What have they done to bring attention to their cause?

Exploring solutions

Identity politics is one of the HL Extension global political challenge topics that is an option as an extended area of inquiry. Consider the possible links between identity politics and collective rights.

■ **Indigenous rights**

Historically, indigenous people have faced widespread abuse and oppression. Many groups have struggled to maintain their languages and traditional way of life.

Despite the differences between indigenous populations across the world, many indigenous people experience similar struggles:

- Globally, they are more likely to experience extreme poverty and significantly lower life expectancy rates.
- Indigenous women and girls are particularly threatened by violence and discrimination.
- Climate change has negatively impacted their environments and livelihoods and, although they are seen to hold vital knowledge and expertise on how to adapt and reduce climate disaster risks, their voices are not always heard.

CASE STUDY

Collective indigenous rights

Indigenous people are distinct social and cultural groups who share collective connections to the land and natural resources where they live, or once lived. The land and resources are linked to the indigenous people’s identities, cultures and spiritual beliefs. They often have their own leadership systems and maintain a distinct identity from the wider society.

Different general terms and specific names are used to describe indigenous people in different areas of the world. Table 2.18 is a partial list.

■ **Table 2.18** General terms and specific names for indigenous people in different areas of the world

Country	Name
China	Ethnic minority
India	Adivasi
Japan	Ainu
Russia and northern Scandinavia	Saami
Botswana	San
Iran, Iraq, Syria, Türkiye	Kurds
North America	Native and First Nations
Australia	Aboriginal
New Zealand	Maori
Mexico and Guatemala	Mayan

Which group(s) identify as indigenous in your state or region?

AQ: As we can't use the maps, are there better statistics we could use in this table?

■ Table 2.19 The world's indigenous people

Region	Percentage of indigenous people
Africa	7%
Arabia	5%
Canada and USA	1%
China	36%
Latin America	8%
South Asia	32%
Southeast Asia	10%



■ Figure 2.47 The indigenous Hmong people of Vietnam

Indigenous rights and the global community

In our more globalized and interdependent world, the struggle to advocate for the collective rights of indigenous people goes beyond state borders. The emergence of the movement for indigenous rights in recent decades represents one of the most significant developments in international rights. Why? Because global norms of sovereignty and individual rights are being challenged on an unprecedented scale.

The creation of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) in 2007 was the result of cooperation and collaboration between civil society, states, regional IGOs and the UN. In particular, inter-American, African and European human rights systems contributed

greatly to the refinement and creation of this declaration.

The central themes of UNDRIP are:

- the right to self-determination, which means indigenous people, as a community, can make decisions about their legal systems, health and education
- the right to land, resources and territory
- the right to be recognized as a distinct group
- the right to be free from discrimination
- the right to protect the environment.

Discussion points

Which of these bullet points challenge(s) global norms of state sovereignty?

Extended essay

As we saw in Chapter 2.3, the United States, Canada, Australia and New Zealand all voted against UNDRIP in 2007, but later changed their positions. Exploring what contributed to these changes could be the start of an interesting investigation into power and global politics and could lead to an interesting research question for an extended essay. Always discuss your ideas with your extended essay supervisor!

Debates surrounding claims on individual and collective rights

Below are a few of the more common debatable issues on individual and collective rights.

- Different cultures and human conditions can lead to different interpretations of rights and justice, but focusing on individual rights does not acknowledge or respect those differences.
- Modern norms of rights clearly state that all people, regardless of culture, gender, religion, race, etc. have equal rights. So why is it necessary for certain groups to distinguish themselves as requiring collective rights? By claiming some groups deserve 'special' rights, are we actually creating division as well as denying universalism?
- When we discuss the 'collective' rights of a group of people we must remember that even within marginalized groups there can be discrimination. Is it possible that marginalized people within that group, for example, women and those who identify as LGBTQ+, could be ignored or forgotten?
- Many point out that there is a place for both individual and collective rights and that they are not in opposition but actually complement each other to make the world a fairer place for all.

Sharia law and rights and justice

Sharia means 'the correct path' and it comes from two main sources: the Qur'an and the sayings of the Prophet Mohammed. Sharia guides the personal religious practices of Muslims worldwide, but whether it should influence modern legal and political systems remains a subject of intense debate. Different Islamic scholars, religious leaders and political systems offer differing interpretations of the meaning of Sharia law. Many argue that Islamic law is always about the human interpretation of Sharia and therefore must be open to debate and change.

Is the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in opposition to Sharia Law and Islamic interpretations of rights and justice? As always, the answers are never a clear 'yes' or 'no'.

Perspectives

Dr Khaled Abou El Fadl on Islam and human rights

Dr Abou El Fadl is an expert in Islamic law, offering a unique perspective on the current state of Islam and the West. He is a strong proponent of human rights and is the 2007 recipient of the University of Oslo Human Rights Award, the Lisl and Leo Eitingier Prize. He was also named a Carnegie Scholar in Islam for 2005. He serves on the Advisory Board of Middle East Watch, and was previously on the Board of Directors of Human Rights Watch.

Political realities—such as colonialism, the persistence of highly invasive and domineering despotic governments, the widespread perception, and reality, of Western hypocrisy in the human rights field, and the emergence and spread of supremacist movements of moral exceptionalism in modern Islam ... are not consistent with a commitment to human rights.

Khaled Abou El Fadl, *Human Rights and Responsibilities in the World Religions*

Discussion points

Abou El Fadl argues that Islam is not in opposition to rights, but that other factors such as colonialism, despotic governments, Western hypocrisy and supremacist groups have led to misinterpretations of Islamic traditions and beliefs and a mistrust of global norms of rights and justice within the Islamic community. Which of the 'political realities' do you think has had the greatest impact?

Sometimes, differing interpretations of Sharia law can be in conflict with members of civil society as well as regional and international norms of rights and justice. Two of the more commonly debated aspects of Sharia law that are open to debate by Islamic scholars and others include the use of corporal punishment and women's rights.

Corporal punishment and Sharia law

One debatable issue with regard to Sharia law is if and when corporal punishment should be used. Corporal punishment means inflicting physical suffering as a deterrent, or way to scare people so that they don't commit crimes. This punishment can include flogging, stoning and amputation.

Today, most Muslim-majority states do not use corporal punishment. However, Indonesia, Iran, the Maldives, and Qatar are among the countries where flogging is still conducted, and Iran, Mauritania, Nigeria, Saudi Arabia, and Sudan have in recent decades punished convicted thieves with amputations. Additionally, in Afghanistan, the Taliban's interpretation of Sharia law means corporal punishment for offences including adultery, drinking alcohol, theft, banditry, religious betrayal and rebellion.

However, even within these countries, not everyone supports the interpretation of Sharia law that allows the state to use corporal punishment against its citizens. Some would point out that the states justifying the use of corporal punishment are oppressive states ruled by force and violence.

Women's' rights and Sharia law

The Qur'an states that women are morally and spiritually equal to men but also indicates that women have specific roles as wives and mothers. Some governments use their interpretation of Sharia law to significantly restrict women's rights, dictating what they wear and limiting their educational opportunities and participation in public life.



■ **Figure 2.49** A protester holds a portrait of Mahsa Amini during a protest in Istanbul, Türkiye

One such state is Iran, which saw widespread protests in 2022 after Mahsa Amini, a 22-year-old woman, was murdered by morality police for violating the country's strict dress code (she appeared in public without a hijab and with her hair showing). Her death sparked widespread protests against the Iranian government in Iran, despite threats to personal safety. Over 500 people died in these protests and tens of thousands were arrested, indicating that many Muslims do not agree with Iran's strict interpretation of Sharia law, which only mentions dressing modestly. Iranian expatriates and many others protested globally to demand justice for Mahsa Amini and to draw attention to Iran's violent regime. The protests indicate that there are widespread debates regarding the rights of women within the Muslim community and it is a mistake to assume that the oppression of women is an accepted aspect of Sharia law.

Critics argue that extreme modesty rules create inequality by limiting education and employment opportunities for Islamic women. Other laws prevent women from initiating divorce and marriage on their own, contributing to child marriages and gender-based violence.

Additionally, there is significant debate over what the Qur'an teaches compared with what practices come from local customs. For example, Muslim feminists have long argued that sexist interpretations of Sharia come from social norms, not from Islam. As an example, Saudi Arabia cited Islamic law when it finally allowed women to drive in 2018; many welcomed the development but also pointed out that it was the interpretation of Sharia that had changed, not the teachings of Islam, and therefore a lot of the rules that are called 'Islamic' are often local cultural traditions.

Extended essay

If you're thinking of writing an extended essay about cultural relativism and challenges to global norms of rights and justice, one possible place to start could be to investigate different interpretations of Sharia law and how political systems interpret these laws. Be aware that debates in this topic are complex and multiple perspectives must be considered. Always consult with your extended essay supervisor about any potential research questions.

Chapter summary

In this chapter we have covered:

- diverse standards and understandings of rights
- the politicization of rights and justice
- humanitarian stakeholders and debates surrounding humanitarian intervention
- claims on individual and collective rights and real-world examples.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

Now that you have read this chapter, reflect on these questions:

- There are countless acronyms for political stakeholders associated with rights and justice. Many of these acronyms are very similar to each other and it can get confusing, but it's important you use these terms correctly. Make a chart in your notes listing all the acronyms, and their full names and purpose, using Section 2 for reference. Here are a few to get you started:

Acronym	Full name
UDHR	Universal Declaration of Human Rights
ICJ	International Court of Justice
ICC	International Criminal Court
???	???

- What are the arguments in support of using the Responsibility to Protect (R2P)? What are some of the arguments against?
- Why do humanitarian stakeholders such as Médecins Sans Frontières and the International Red Cross/Red Crescent always try to uphold principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence?
- What does 'politicization' of rights and justice mean?
- What are claims on individual and collective rights? Can you name a few real-world examples?

Exam-style questions: rights and justice

For generic advice on how to structure a response to a Paper 2 question, please see page 400. Remember, Section A questions are rooted firmly in one of the three thematic studies, while Section B questions will require you to integrate content from across the course.

Note, there are always claims and counterclaims expected in a Paper 2-style essay and this guidance identifies some of the claims and counterclaims you may choose to make. These are simply suggestions and you may choose to use other claims if appropriate.

Section A-style question

- 1 'The contested meaning of rights has contributed to their politicization.' Discuss this view with reference to two specific real-world cases.

General advice

In your response you may choose to include a definition of rights as basic claims and entitlements. You may go slightly further and define human rights as those rights that, many argue, one should be able to exercise simply by virtue of being a human being. You could address the fact that the contested nature of rights arises from differing perspectives on the origin, scope and universality of rights, as well as conflicting interests and cultural norms. You should also offer some definition of politicization. This may be done in terms of seeing (different conceptualizations of) rights being used as a political tool in partisan politics to block an opposing party or in identity politics to mobilize support, for instance. The most important thing is to demonstrate an understanding that politicization entails the use or manipulation of rights to achieve a specific goal.

You should be careful to note that the question requires you to refer to at least two specific contemporary real-world examples. These examples can be drawn from different scales such as national and regional. You should make sure that you show understanding of the different ways in which rights can be categorized, such as individual versus collective rights or by making reference to the different generations of rights.

Claims

Your claims should support the view that the contested meaning of rights has contributed to their politicization. They may include the following:

- Different conceptualizations of which rights matter most allows some states to refer to the human rights records of other states as a means to rationalize policy decisions (for example, trade preferences), to seek or justify punitive measures (for example, sanctions), or, conversely, to reward (for example, aid packages).
- The language of rights is often untethered to specific legal interpretations and so is too loose to prevent governments from politicizing them in the service of illiberal agendas, for example, Russia referenced the rights of minority ethnic groups in Crimea to justify its 2014 invasion.
- The existence of contested meanings of rights allows political actors to politicize such differences in order to achieve strategic goals, i.e. some have argued that prioritizing human

rights over the right of the sovereign state to non-interference in its domestic affairs can allow for regime change under the guise of humanitarian protection, for example, the NATO intervention in Libya (2011).

- Many countries in the global south see the existing human rights regime's focus on individual rights as a Western construct and a tool for continued Western domination. Such a culturally relative perspective argues that cultural differences are politicized and used as a weapon, for example, opposition to the International Criminal Court (ICC) within the African Union given the perception of neocolonialism, exemplified by Burundi's withdrawal from the ICC.
- The prioritization of collectivist interpretations of rights may be used to restrict or repress individual human rights, for example, the suppression of LGBTQ+ rights in many parts of the world on purported cultural or religious grounds.
- At the national level, contested conceptualizations of whose rights matter provide the grounds for their politicization, for example, the Trump administration's vilification of immigrants in the United States by building a wall ostensibly to protect the rights of US citizens, or lockdown restrictions and mandatory quarantine orders during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Counterclaims

Your counterclaims should support the view that the contested meaning of rights has not contributed to their politicization. They may include the following:

- Many rights are broadly agreed upon and so are uncontested, for example, the right to life appears in all regional codifications of human rights (the Inter-American Human Rights Convention, the African Charter of Human and People's Rights, etc.)
- The politicization of rights has been driven by a variety of other factors, including social and economic inequality, and the influence of interest groups, for example, anti-abortion groups in the United States. Growing income inequality globally has led to an increase in identity politics and the prioritization of 'native' rights over those of immigrants.
- The causal chain may work in the other direction, with increased political polarization in many parts of the world, meaning that adherence to one set of rights helps to identify the boundary of the group and acts as a 'gatekeeper', for example, many Republican politicians in the United States must subscribe to the inviolability of gun rights.
- Different conceptualizations of rights are interdependent and so the assumption that their meanings are contested might be a false one, for example, civil-political rights often depend upon the fulfilment of economic, social and cultural rights, and vice versa.
- The contested meaning of rights does not necessarily result in their politicization. It can be argued that the ongoing debates and diverse interpretations of rights are a natural part of the process of refining and clarifying the understanding of rights. For example, in the case of *Goodwin v. United Kingdom* (2002), the European Court of Human Rights ruled that the right to respect for private life, as guaranteed by Article 8 of the Equality and Human Rights Commission, includes protection for transgender individuals. This decision was a landmark moment in recognizing and affirming the rights of transgender people.

Some other possibilities

The examiner will be looking for you to demonstrate a clear understanding of rights and that the contested meanings of rights can be used as a political tool by states and non-state actors. Your response should contain references to specific contemporary real-world examples. Arguments in favour of the claim could note that moral rules, including (human) rights, function within

dynamic moral communities and so contestation is inevitable. The political contestation of rights serves as a catalyst for change, pushing societies to address gaps and injustices, for example, marriage equality and LGBTQ+ rights. You might make the point that politicians and interest groups may exploit the contested nature of rights to advance their own agendas or to divide society for their own benefit. For example, actors including non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and transnational rights activists often interpret rights through their own political biases, which politicizes human rights dialogues, for example, Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch see rights through a distinctly liberal Western lens.

On the other hand, you might choose to highlight the fact that rights are, by their nature, political, and so it is likely that they would be politicized regardless of whether their meaning was contested or not. You could also argue that the contested meaning of rights does not necessarily result in their politicization and that ongoing debates are a natural part of the process of refining and clarifying the understanding of rights. For example, Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) enshrines the right to freedom of expression. While this right has been subject to various interpretations and debates worldwide, the objective standard set forth by the UDHR has been instrumental in shaping international human rights law and jurisprudence.

Additionally, you might suggest that the politicization of rights is integral to their understanding, monitoring, protection and enforcement. The contested meaning of rights may provide opportunities for deeper exploration and education about the principles underlying these rights. As different interpretations are presented and debated, it may encourage a more nuanced understanding of these rights. For example, debates around affirmative action policies have prompted discussions about the intersectionality of rights and the historical context of systemic discrimination in both the United States and Europe, while the extension of the right of women to drive in Saudi Arabia was influenced by domestic and international pressure exerted by women's advocates. All of these would be considered valid approaches to tackling this question.

■ Conclusion

You should ensure that your answer leads towards a conclusion on the degree to which you agree with the claim that it is the contested meaning of rights that has contributed to their politicization.

Section B-style question

- 1 'The most significant cause of rights violations in global politics is structural violence.' Discuss this claim.

Your answer should include a definition of human rights as basic claims and entitlements that, many argue, one should be able to exercise simply because they are a human being. These rights are inalienable and essential for living a life of dignity. The examiner will also be expecting you to provide a definition of structural violence as a form of violence through which some social structure or social institutions may harm people by preventing them from meeting their basic needs and/or from allowing them to realize their full potential. You may also choose to define structural violence in terms of inequalities in the share of power to decide the distribution of resources.

■ Claims

Your claims should support the view that the most significant cause of human rights violations in global politics is structural violence. They may include the following:

- Structural violence constrains human agency to the extent that human needs (food, water, shelter, etc.) cannot be attained. It is therefore the most significant cause of human rights violations, both within a state and between states, for example, racial inequality in the United States and the distribution of the global poor.
- Structural violence is responsible for a greater number of human rights violations worldwide given the numbers of starving and diseased people as well as the hundreds of millions still living in absolute poverty, for example, poverty forces many families in the global south to rely on their children's labour to contribute to household income, often resulting in the denial of education, hazardous working conditions and low wages.
- Structural violence violates the right to development, which fully integrates civil and political rights as well as social, economic and cultural rights. Therefore, by perpetuating underdevelopment, structural violence is the most significant cause of human rights violations. For example, in sub-Saharan Africa, structural violence in the form of limited education opportunities disproportionately affects marginalized communities, continuing the cycles of poverty and inequality.
- In a related sense, structural violence is the most significant cause of human rights violations due to its impact on poverty and liberty. Amartya Sen has asserted that severe poverty causes massive under-fulfilment of fundamental social and economic as well as civil and political rights.
- Structural violence in the form of unequal access to education and health care, disproportionate rates of incarceration, restricted voting rights, structural economic inequalities and issues surrounding policing are present in both developing and developed states, for example, African Americans and Native Americans experience disproportionately higher rights of arrest and police violence in the United States.
- Structural violence is the most significant cause of human rights violations as it is entirely avoidable – inequalities associated with class, race, ethnicity, religion, etc. are not natural and betray the fact that an unrealized fundamental human right/need is avoidable.

■ Counterclaims

Your counterclaims should support the view that the most significant cause of human rights violations in global politics is not structural violence. They may include the following:

- Direct violence is a more significant cause of human rights violations in global politics than structural violence as it is more immediately devastating. Furthermore, it is more visible and so potentially pushes global and national actors to address its effects, for example, the displacement of millions due to the Syrian civil war.
- While structures and institutions may be significant causes of human rights violations, realists would argue that it is agency – the actual choices actors make to protect/violate human rights – that is more significant.
- By legitimizing structural violence, cultural violence is a more significant cause of human rights violations. That is, cultural violence allows structural violence to become more **intransigent** by providing cover for it to the extent that we are even unaware of the latter's existence.
- It may be easier to make legislative changes to institutions to correct structural violence (for example, policing reforms) than to address direct violence such as an inextricable civil conflict, for example, the wars in Yemen or Syria.

◆ **Intransigent** means someone or something refusing to change behaviour or attitudes.

- What qualifies as a human rights violation may vary. For example, cultural practices throughout the world systematically discriminate against women where they are denied the vote, suffer from domestic abuse and are excluded from employment opportunities. For example, women in Saudi Arabia still face limited legal protections and societal stigmatization when reporting domestic abuse and gender-based violence.
- An even more extreme view argues that the existence of cultural differences precludes even the notion of human rights violations as there is no such thing as universal human rights. For example, the recognition and protection of LGBTQ+ rights varies significantly across the world due to cultural, religious and societal differences.

■ Some other possibilities

You should remember to refer to specific examples to support your evaluation of the claim in the question. In support of the claim, you could reference data highlighting growing inequality, both within and between states, as well as any examples demonstrating how certain populations, especially the poor, experience more constraints and limits on their agency when it comes to fulfilling their human rights. For example, the World Food Programme has noted that poverty and hunger often occur together, with hunger being the number one cause of death in the world, killing more than HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis combined.

You may also decide to mention other forms of structural violence, for example, those that feature in economic, political, medical or legal systems. Arguments against the claim might reference any relevant example of more visible and immediate human rights violations, such as the incarceration of Uyghurs in Xinjiang or the ongoing operation of Camp Delta (Guantanamo Bay). You could also argue that it is neither easy nor accurate to distinguish between different forms of violence and so it may not be the case that any single form of violence is the most significant cause of human rights violations. All of these approaches would be considered valid and given credit by the examiner reading your paper.

■ Conclusion

Your answer should lead clearly to a conclusion on the extent to which you believe that structural violence is the most significant cause of human rights violations in global politics.

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