

Imperialism, Self-Determination and human development

SDPCW-2, seminar notes by Dr. Tim Anderson

Overview

1. Imperialism: some history
2. Self Determination: a turning point
3. Human development

Q: How and why did the principle of self-determination emerge?

Overview

Imperialism - many but not all powerful nations sought to extend their power over other peoples and states, generally to seize or secure resources on favourable terms.

Self-determination - the demand arose over centuries of foreign domination and interventions including colonisation, genocide and slavery. As the colonial era came to an end (1940s-60s) the principle of self-determination of a people (not just of states) came to be embedded in international law. It is important to review the history of imperialism, to see why such a demand for self determination arose.

Human development - a current which began to challenge the liberal emphasis on crude 'economic growth', which downplayed human capabilities. This became a useful tool in social analysis, but does not resolve arguments over the means of development.

1. Modern imperial history: colonisation, genocide & slavery

□ The first and second imperial ages: 1400-1715, 1875-1914

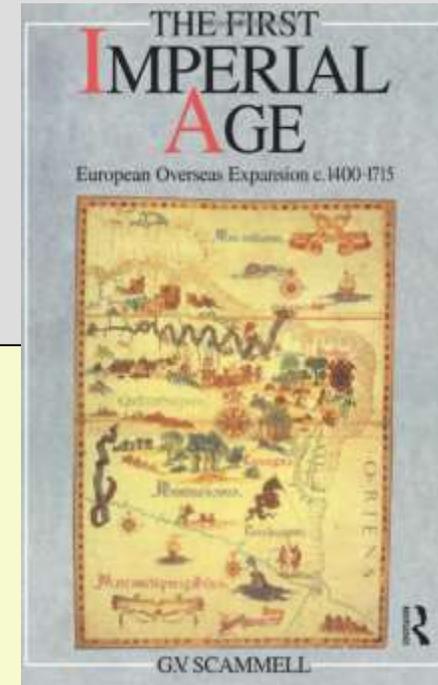
Geoffrey V. Scammell (1989) *The First Imperial Age: European Overseas Expansion 1500-1715*

Eric Hobsbawm (1987) *The Age of Empire: 1875-1914*

□ Empires and slavery

- ancient and 'modern' slavery
- Liberal rights and slavery
- Abolition and emancipation

Why European expansion? One suggestion: with the 1453 'Fall of Constantinople' (Roman empire fell to the Ottomans), European traders looked for new routes to Asia.





Ancient imperial slavery - the original 99%

- ❑ **Non-citizens** were often central to building and extending imperial projects of domination. **Slaves** were one significant section of non-citizens over which a tiny group ruled, even when (as in ancient Athens) they were called 'democracies'.
- ❑ Scheidel (2008) suggests slaves in the Roman Empire were not much more than 15% of the populations of Roman cities, but were only one of several excluded classes. '**Genuine slave economies**' are rare in history, except in Athens and Rome [i.e. well organised empires]
- ❑ Knapp (2013) estimates that slaves and other 'ordinary people' comprised **more than 99%** of the population of imperial Rome. The full citizens came from 'no more than 100,000-200,000 people, less than half a percent of the empire's population of 50-60 million'. As only adult males counted, the **franchised elite** of the Roman Empire was about 40,000; yet that elite controlled almost everything.'

Walter Scheidel (2008) in E. Dal Lago, C. Katsari (eds) *Slave Systems: Ancient and Modern*, CUP
Robert Knapp (2013) *Invisible Romans*, Profile Books

Imperialism *helped build* the European economies

- ❑ Imperialism of the modern era was of benefit to the European elites, and often to broader European society, it provided the basis for the construction of contemporary Europe.
- ❑ Eric Williams argues that Caribbean slavery was essential for the development of British capitalism.
- ❑ Where would British, Spanish, Portuguese and Dutch capitalism be without the centuries of wealth (precious resources, enslaved labour force) from India, Latin America and Indonesia?
- ❑ Vast amounts of gold and silver were exported from the American colonies while the local people were decimated and left deeply impoverished. e.g. exports from Bolivia and Peru
- ❑ These countries were later said to be undeveloped, and then in great debt, because of 'a lack of capital'.
- ❑ The ugly personal and family reality for millions of human beings.

Hugh Thomas (2005) Rivers Of Gold: The Rise Of The Spanish Empire, From Columbus To Magellan

Eric Williams (1944) Capitalism and Slavery



The Americas - Bartolome de las Casas

- ❑ Contemporary historian of the Spanish colonisation of the Americas, **Bartolome de las Casas** noted the enthusiasm for slavery amongst ordinary sailors who would share in the spoils. However in less than a decade he was so horrified at the experience that he had become a priest and the **main Spanish critic** of the treatment of indigenous peoples.
- ❑ De las Casas had found the **Caribbean people** 'as open and innocent as can be imagined'. Yet the **Spanish colonists**, 'pretending to be Christians have wiped them from the face of the earth', by war, murder, slavery and disease.
- ❑ **Hispaniola** (Haiti / Dominican Republic) had been densely populated, with around 3 million; 50 years later there were 200.
- ❑ **Cuba**, similarly, had become 'to all intents and purposes uninhabited'; two million more were kidnapped and enslaved from the mainland Paria Peninsula (**Venezuela**) 'and taken to the islands of Hispaniola and Puerto Rico to be sent down the mines or put to other work ... [where] they perished in droves'.
- ❑ This was **as complete a genocide** as has ever been seen. De las Casas wanted to see his country escape divine punishment for the crimes committed against these native peoples.

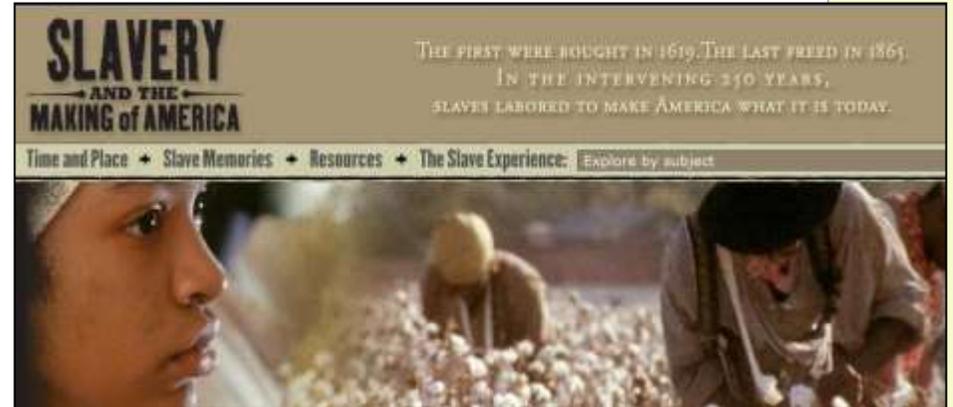
Bartolomé de las Casas (1542) *A Short Account of the destruction of the Indies*, Penguin Classics, 2004 edition, New York

Slavery in the Americas, it got much worse before it ended

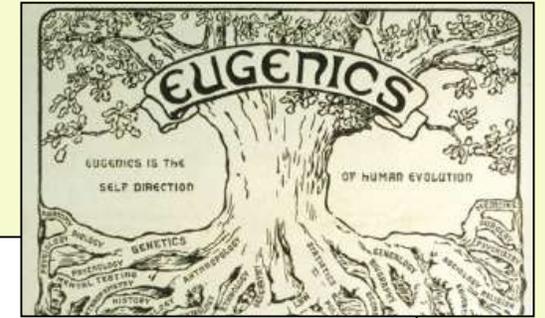
Video: 'Early slavery in the Americas' (2'44"), excerpt from the PBS documentary series 'Slavery and the Making of America', longer version here:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L9x4tSMefnI>

Points to observe:

- Slavery was central to North American economic development
- Africans came as wage labourers to North America, 1530 - 1619
- 'Servitude' was initially not completely racialized, nor for life, nor did it deny all rights – that happened later, between the 1640s and the 1690s
- Africans slaves were used as a force against Native Americans
- Slavery got worse and was not helped by liberalism or the 'American revolution'



Exterminate or assimilate?



Racial theories

- ❑ Subjugation of entire peoples and mass slavery required racial justifications, so **racial theories** were popularised. In the less savage of these we see **de las Casas**, who said human beings were equal but barbaric cultures had to assimilate European values.
- ❑ **Montesquieu**, an important figure of the 'enlightenment', said: "[we] were obliged to make slaves of the Africans, for ... sugar would be too dear if the plants ... were cultivated by any other than slaves ... It is impossible for us to suppose these [African] creatures to be men".
- ❑ Such prejudice was refined into scientific form. In **Darwin's** *The Descent of Man* (1871) he suggested: 'At some future period ... the civilised races of man will almost certainly exterminate and replace throughout the world the savage races'.
- ❑ **Herbert Spencer** developed brutal ideas about racial extermination, while **Emile Durkheim and Karl Marx** adopted ideas about 'primitive' and 'backward' societies which had no future.
- ❑ Drawing on **Durkheim** the **French empire** was seen as a single unit within which all would adapt to French language and culture, in a great '**civilising mission**'.
- ❑ **Australian liberals** (Daisy Bates) spoke of 'smoothing the dying pillow' of the race.

Charles Darwin (1871) *The Descent of Man*, John Murray, London

Resistance: challenges to slavery within the Americas

- ❑ Slavery was challenged from within the imperial cultures, mainly by **slave revolts**, not least the slave-led decolonisation of **Haiti**.
- ❑ Slavery and racial theories were challenged, e.g. by **Harriet Tubman**, former slave who helped thousands to escape, and **Frederick Douglass**, former slave and called 'the first national negro leader' of the USA
- ❑ Decades after the US civil war African-American writer **W.E.B. du Bois** would observe that human civilisation had begun in Africa, Asia and Central America; but those peoples had been 'conquered, enslaved, oppressed and exploited by stronger invaders'. That was due to the invaders having greater 'offensive technique', but not greater culture. That later racial characterisation had been 'influenced by propaganda, by caricature and by ignorance of the human soul.'

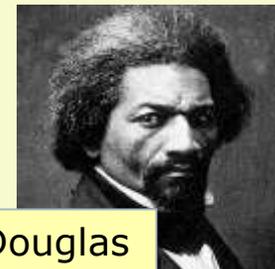
W.E.B. Du Bois (1945) *Color and Democracy*, Harcourt Brace and Company, New York



W.E. du Bois



Harriet Tubman



Frederick Douglass

Resistance: Emancipation, Abolition & Reconstruction

- **Haiti 1804** – first successful slave revolution **but:** sanctioned for decades
- **Legal abolition of slavery:** UK (1807-1830s) US (1865) Brazil (ind. 1822, 1850-1880s) Cuba (ind. 1898, 1886) **but:**
 - the Bishop of Exeter retained his 655 Caribbean slaves 'until he received over £12,700 compensation in 1833' (Williams 1944: 43)
 - US-controlled Cuba used Chinese coolies, and imported African cane cutters from Jamaica, Puerto Rico and Haiti, 1913-1924
- **US 'reconstruction' (1865+)** – failure of land reform, development of racial laws and prison labour system (mines and plantations)
 - 'Slavery in America didn't end 150 years ago, with Abraham Lincoln's 1863 Emancipation Proclamation' (Blackmon 2008).
<http://www.pbs.org/tpt/slavery-by-another-name/watch/>

W.E. Du Bois (1935) *Black Reconstruction in America 1860-1880*;
Douglas A. Blackmon (2008) *Slavery by Another Name*;
Eric Foner (1990) *A Short History of Reconstruction: 1863-1877*

Late colonialism - the 'Scramble for Africa'

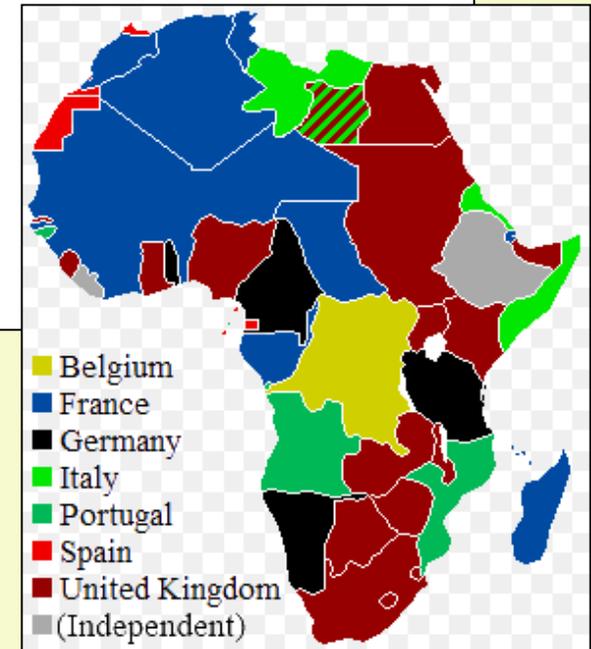
The Scramble for Africa (late 19th C) saw the European powers compete to rapidly take over most of the African continent. Why did this occur and why at this time?

- ❑ The British, French, German, Italians and Portuguese colonised the continent
- ❑ The slave trade had been brought to an end, but ... European capitalism was in a rising phase, needing new markets and new resources
- ❑ 20thC theorists, notably John Hobson and V.I. Lenin, suggested this modern imperialism was driven by finance monopolies

Video: The scramble for Africa (2'19"), longer clip here:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IQIpzS7kdM8>

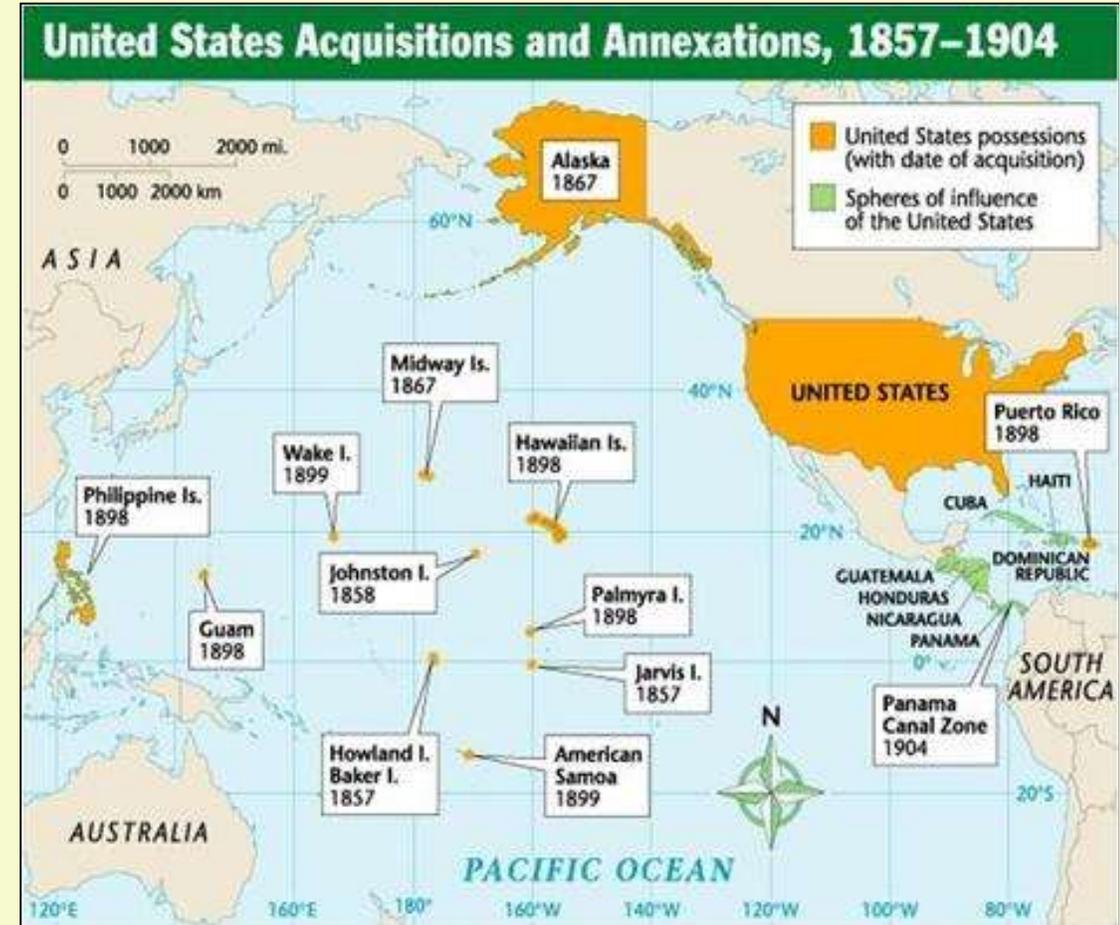
John Hobson (1902) Imperialism, a study

V.I. Lenin (1916) Imperialism, the highest stage of capitalism



The special character of US imperialism

- ❑ The US 'exceptional' project was different to that of the European empires
- ❑ Having rebelled against British colonial rule, the new republic saw itself as distinct
- ❑ Yet it maintained slavery for many decades and expanded the ethnic cleansing of Native Americans
- ❑ The USA expanded with purchases and conquests, taking land from Russia, France, Mexico and Spain (Cuba and the Philippines)
- ❑ To this day the USA maintains many small territories which were never called 'colonies'
- ❑ As a consequence, the US language of 'freedom' has long been 'flexible'
- ❑ Much of the post WW2 characterisation of 'US imperialism' has been of economic domination.





Axis Rule in Occupied Europe

Laws of Occupation, Analysis of Government, Proposals for Redress
SECOND EDITION by The Lawbook Exchange, Ltd.

'Genocide': a 'new' crime

- ❑ The man who coined the term, Polish-Jewish lawyer **Raphael Lemkin**, wrote: 'genocide is not the result of the mood of an occasional rogue ruler but a recurring pattern in history'. He wrote of genocides under the Ottoman, Japanese, Mongol and Spanish empires.
- ❑ **Bloxham** wrote of the Armenian genocide under the Ottoman Empire, during the First World War. He agrees that genocide must be understood as the outcome of historical processes and 'structured relationships', rather than the 'evil intentions of wicked men'.
- ❑ As incorporated into international law, genocide means:
 - '**a coordinated plan** of different actions aiming at the destruction of essential foundations the life of national groups, **with the aim of** annihilating the groups ... disintegration of the political and social institutions, of culture, language, national feelings, religion and the economic existence of national groups, and the destruction of the personal security, liberty, health, dignity and the lives of individuals belonging to such groups'
- ❑ This crime was not simple ethnic conflict, prejudice or quarrel over land. It was the dreadful but logical outcome of a great project of domination.

The Nazi Holocaust: great crime against the European Jews

- ❑ A modern European state, with imperial ambitions, attacks a long-reviled ethnic minority (and others: Slavs, Gypsies)
- ❑ Persecution in 1933 becomes full scale extermination (the Final Solution) in June 1941, as Germany invades Russia
- ❑ In 4 years 5 to 6 million European Jews were murdered, half of them in death camps like Auschwitz, Treblinka and Belzec (in Poland)
- ❑ Exceptional case or 'recurring pattern'?

Yad Vashem (2015) 'The Holocaust', online: <http://www.yadvashem.org/yv/en/holocaust/about/04/introduction.asp>
Doris Bergen (2009) *The Holocaust*, Rowman and Littlefield, Lanham Maryland



Genocide: exceptional or recurring?

- ❑ **Dirk Moses**, drawing on **Lemkin**, says the Nazi genocide against the **Slavic peoples** in Poland and Ukraine was 'in the tradition of imperial conquests since antiquity', while the genocide of **European Jews** 'needs to be understood ... [as] subaltern genocide' including the idea that socialists and Jews 'were responsible for Germany's defeat in 1918'.
- ❑ **The Holocaust of the Jewish people** brought together 'different even contradictory imperial and colonial logics into one terrible paranoid mentality and praxis'. The Nazi holocaust was distinct but formed part of that 'recurring pattern' in history.
- ❑ **Bauman** says the ideology and technology of mass extermination came from the centre of **the European 'civilising process'**.

Dirk A. Moses (Ed) (2010) *Empire, Colony, Genocide*, Berghahn Books, Oxford, 37-40

Zygmunt Bauman (1988) 'Sociology after the Holocaust', *The British Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 39 No. 4, December, 469-497

What logic drives empires to commit genocide?

Wounded Knee massacre, 1890



The American Genocide

- ❑ The greatest **holocaust** in modern times was in **The Americas**. Colonisation led to the destruction of **between 75 and 145 million people**, with 2,000 cultures. Systematic killing, rape, enslavement in the mines were enhanced with death by disease (plague and smallpox).
- ❑ Within three decades **90 – 95 percent** of the region's native peoples had been destroyed. The Maya of Central America, for example, resisted strongly but lost 95% of their people. Destruction of Native Americans 'routinely reached and exceeded 95 percent' of pre-colonial populations.
- ❑ Churchill (1997) charts a similar pattern in **North America**, over a longer period. Using the population estimates of Dobyns (1966) and Thornton (1987), he says the US native population had fallen by the 1890s 'to slightly over 237,000, a 98 percent reduction' from the original 12 million.

David E. Stannard (1992) *American Holocaust: the conquest of the new world*, Oxford University Press, New York

Ward Churchill (1997) *A Little Matter of Genocide: holocaust and denial in the Americas, 1492 to the present*, City Lights Books, San Francisco, 97

Russell Thornton (1990) *American Indian Holocaust and Survival: a population history since 1492*, University of Oklahoma Press, Norman

Henry Dobyns (1983) *Their Numbers Became Thinned: Native American Population Dynamics in Eastern North America*, University of Tennessee Press, Knoxville

2. Self-determination - a turning point for the post colonial world

Self-determination

- ❑ begins as a principle for nation states, but became recognised (from 1960 onwards) as the right of 'a people'.
- ❑ became the founding principle of the twin International Covenants on Human Rights (1966), and was not a western creation.
- ❑ in general the post WW2 human rights agreements focused on *ends* and avoided the great debates about *means* (how to achieve the right).

Human Rights were never just a western tradition

- ❑ European traditions (property rights, freedom from arbitrary power)
- ❑ Union, chartist and women's movements
- ❑ Post-colonial currents (liberation from imperial power)
- ❑ Religious traditions (ethical values)
- ❑ Indigenous traditions (ethical and environmental values)

Charters of rights: Iran: Cyrus the Great's Cylinder (539 BC), *below centre*; India: Buddhist rights declared under Asoka (270-230 BC); UK: Bill of Rights (1688); France: Declaration of 'the rights of man and of the citizen' (1789); Ottoman Empire: Hatt-i Hümayun (1856) charter of rights; USA Bill of Rights (1791); Cairo declaration on Human Rights in Islam (1990), *below right*; Pachamama / Sumak Kawsay / Vivir Bien (Sth. America) *below left*.



'Human rights' emerge - Exposure of film from the Nazi death camps led to human rights being placed in the UN Charter, at 1945 San Francisco Conference. This was a commitment to develop the subsequent human rights agreements.

The International Bill of Rights - Declaration 1948 and Covenants 1966

A UN Commission on Human Rights from 1946 onwards drafts:

- ❑ the UDHR (1948) and twin Covenants (ICCPR & ICESCR, 1966)
- ❑ Drafting the UDHR 1945-48 (photo below): chairperson - Eleanor Roosevelt (US); chief drafter – Renee Cassin (France); chief negotiator – Charles Malik (Lebanon)
- ❑ Others: Race Discrimination (1966), Torture (1984), Women (1979), Children (1989), Migrant Workers (1990), etc.
- ❑ Over the 1950s and 1960s, more former colonies joined the UN and participated in this HR Commission, the UN became less Eurocentric.



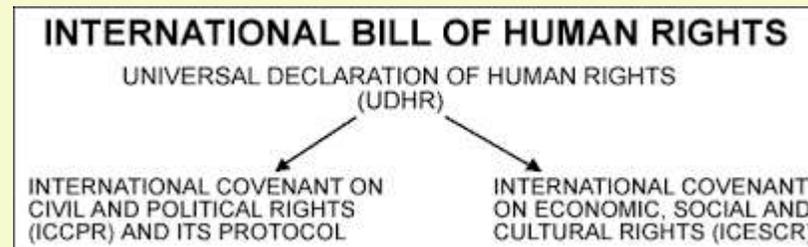
Some differences between the 1948 Declaration and the 1966 Covenants

UDHR (1948):

- ❑ **Art 17:** "1. Everyone has the right to own property alone as well as in association with others. 2. No one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his property."

The twin covenants: ICCPR and ICESCR (1966):

- ❑ NO substantial right to property in ICCPR or ICESCR
- ❑ **Intellectual Property – ICESCR 15 (1):** "the right of everyone ... to benefit from the protection of the moral and material interests resulting from any scientific, literary or artistic production of which he is the author."
- ❑ Article One of both covenants becomes '**the right of a people to self-determination**'



Self determination – article one - was a 'southern' contribution

Self determination appears in the UN Charter but not the UDHR – yet it emerges as the lead principle of the twin covenants – but how? It came from this UN resolution:

Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples (UN GA, December 1960), 1514 (XV)

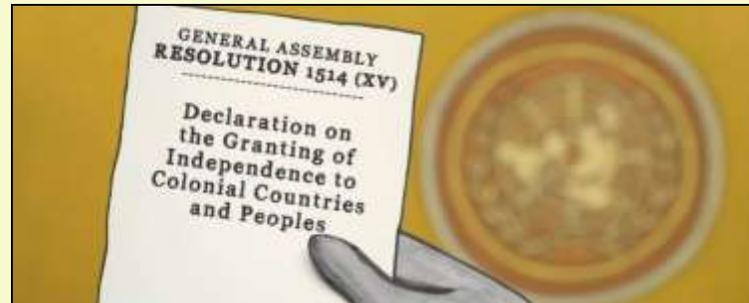
- “1. The subjection of peoples to alien subjugation, domination and exploitation constitutes a denial of fundamental human rights ...
- 2. All peoples have the right to self-determination; by virtue of that right they freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development.**
3. Inadequacy of political, economic, social or educational preparedness should never serve as a pretext for delaying independence ...”

Self determination (continued):

- ❑ **89 countries** voted for the 1960 'Declaration on Decolonisation', none voted against and **nine** (Australia, Belgium, Dominican Republic, France, Portugal, Spain, Union of South Africa, UK, USA), including all the major colonial powers, abstained
- ❑ By General Assembly resolution 1541 (XV), also in 1960, a Non-Self-Governing Territory can reach a full measure of self-government by:
 - Emergence as a sovereign independent State;
 - Free association with an independent State;
 - Integration with an independent State

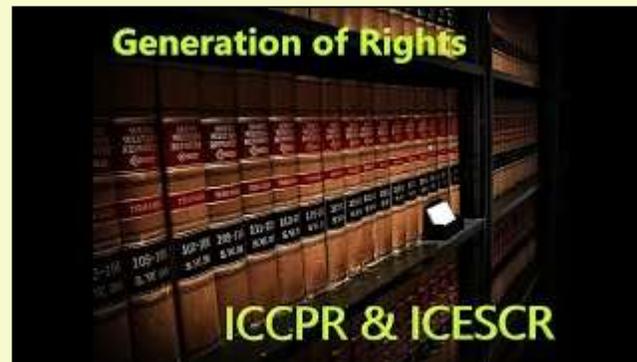
Video: self-determination in UN resolutions (1'21" excerpt)

Full video here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yIg061CTxvs>



The Twin Covenants on Human Rights 1966

- ❑ Clause 2 of the DoD was lifted, word for word, into article one of **both** the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and the International Covenant on Economic Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR).
- ❑ OHCHR (1984): SD an “essential condition” for the guarantee and promotion of all other rights, standing “apart from and before all the other rights” in the Covenants. One important consequence was that “states must refrain from interfering in the internal affairs of other states” so as not to compromise this right.



Power struggles at the UN lead to a new human rights council, 2006

- ❑ March 2006: UNGA replaces old Commission on Human Rights with a new Human Rights Council - works with the OHCHR and advises the UNGA
- ❑ resolution by a recorded vote of 170 in favour to 4 against (Israel, Marshall Islands, Palau, United States), and 3 abstentions
- ❑ Human Rights Council is directly elected by UN GA (previous Commission was elected by participant members of the Economic and Social Council) likely greater emphasis on HR themes, across countries, rather than the targeting of particular countries
- ❑ Members: African 13, Asian 13, East Europe 6, LatAmCar 8, Western Europe and Other 7 - members elected for three years terms



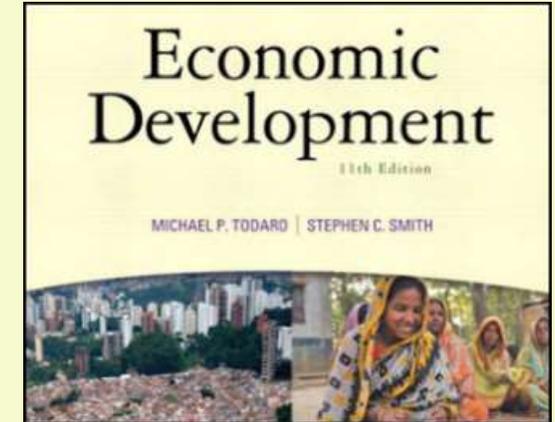
3. Human Development

'Human development' ideas were a reaction to 'economic development' based on crude 'economic growth', which magnified the role of giant corporations. The new focus would be on 'human capabilities'. That has helped inform the UN's MDGs and SDGs.

Key economic ideas: utility (pleasure from consumption), economic growth, GDP.

What does economic growth miss?

- Economic 'bads' (pollutants, weapons)
- Distribution
- Environmental costs
- Shared social benefits
- Social and human values



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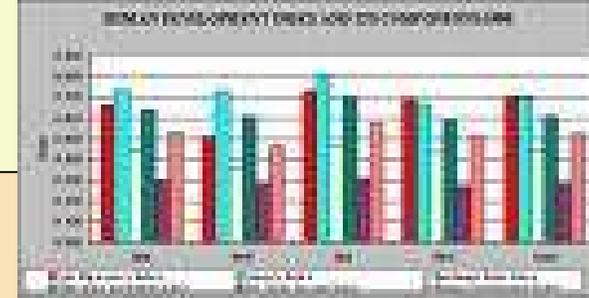
The next frontier

Human development and the Anthropocene

Human development

- Human development = 'enlarging choices', human outcomes cf. financial means, HDI, HDR indicators (UNDP, ul Haq)
- Expanded human capabilities, beings and doings (Sen)
- Other approaches to the 'capabilities' idea:
defined capabilities, justice (Nussbaum); 'basic needs' (Streeten); 'collective capabilities' (Evans); going beyond Sen's 'methodological individualism' (Deneulin and Stewart); 'critical role of social institutions' (Stewart); 'human development enabling state' (Anderson)
- Gender development, multi-dimensional poverty, human security, HDRs → the UN's MDGs (2000) and SDGs (2015)

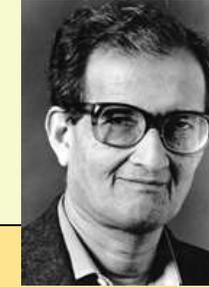
UNDP (1990-2015) Human Development Reports
UN (2000) MDGs; UN (2015) SDGs



Human Development Reports

- UNDP (2010: 12): 'People are the real wealth of a nation. The basic objective of development is to create an enabling environment for people to live long, healthy and creative lives'
- Human development measures (1990+)
 - a wide range of social and economic indicators, specifically as a counter-weight to GDP [but what is GDP?]
 - the Human Development Index (HDI) combines (i) income with (ii) two measures of education and (iii) longevity
 - Many specific (effective) rights measures, e.g. infant mortality, maternal mortality, access to clean water, death from infectious disease, undernourished children, levels of immunisation
 - gender development index, human poverty index → millennium development goals (2000) and the sustainable development goals (2015)

Human development (UNDP), 1990+



Mahbub Ul Haq (1934-1998)

- Human development to 'enlarge peoples' choices'; the HDI would 'measure at least a few more choices besides income and to reflect them in a methodologically sound composite index' (Ul Haq 2003: 127)

Amartya Sen (1933+)

- 'Economic development (suggests) ... expansion of people's capabilities ... (but) economic growth is only a means and often not a very successful means' ... 'focusing on entitlements – what commodity bundles a person can command – provides a helpful format for characterising economic development' (Sen 1983: 760)
- 'Human capability ... focuses on the ability of human beings to lead lives they have reason to value and to enhance the substantive choices they have ... Human capital, on the other hand, focused on 'the agency of human beings, through skill and knowledge as well as effort, in augmenting production' (Sen 1997: 1959)

Development as Independence

Actual human development is often said to represent independence, in that it is breaking from neo-colonial under-development.

Notable human development achievements in recent decades are those of the Peoples Republic of China and the Islamic Republic of Iran.

UNDP data (1) recasts economic development as human development and (2) often provides a useful means of arbitrating international controversies

However the human development ideas developed at the UNDP do not resolve the **means** of advancing human capabilities ...

Human Development Report 2019

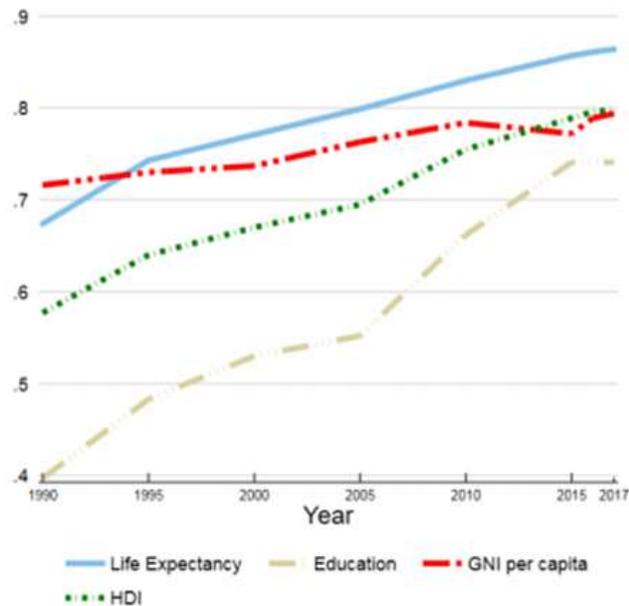
Beyond Income, Beyond Averages, Beyond Today:
Inequalities in human development in the 21st century





The UNDP's human development data can, for example, help resolve political slogans, e.g. US President Trump's claims of Iran's "40 years of failure". In fact China and Iran are the world leaders in human development advances, in recent decades.

Figure 1: Trends in Islamic Republic of Iran's HDI component indices 1990-2017



"Between 1990 and 2017, the Islamic Republic of Iran's life expectancy increased by 12.4 years [and] mean years of schooling increased by 5.6 years."

<http://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/Country-Profiles/IRN.pdf>

1990-2017: Iran's HDI grew on average 1.21% per year over those 27 years, and China's 1.51% (UNDP 2018b: Table 2). In China this was due to exceptional, sustained per capita economic growth; in Iran it was due to exceptional, sustained improvements in life expectancy - mainly health care improvements and child survival - and to improvements in education (UNDP 1999; UNDP 2018a).

In summary:

- ❑ **Imperialism** has been at the root of the greatest crimes of human history: colonialism, genocide and mass slavery;
- ❑ The key response at the UN was the Declaration of Decolonisation (1960) and Article One of the twin Covenants (1966);
- ❑ **Self-determination** gained recognition in the 20thC as the founding principle of human rights. It was placed there by the former colonies, accepted begrudgingly by the former colonial powers;
- ❑ **Human development** has become an important alternative to the liberal 'religion' of economic growth, but it does not proscribe the means of advancing human capabilities - that is another argument.

