

**Political and Economic Development: Human-centred sustainable society**

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Since the early days of drafting the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), the relationship between the economy and human rights was established, in recent years this relationship and its significance has increasingly gained recognition.

It is based on this emphasis on the relationship between the economy and human rights that new instruments complementing the UDHR preventing practices of slavery, child labour, and economic exploitation were developed, including the creation of a preventative body - the International Labour Organisation (ILO). In reality it may be argued that human rights and the rights outlined in the ILO constitution are not distinct but are in fact complementary and in full harmony with each other. The constitution of the ILO emphasizes that: 'all human beings, irrespective of race, creed or sex, have the right to pursue both their material well-being and their spiritual development in conditions of freedom and dignity, of economic security and equal opportunity'. Accords and recommendations submitted by the ILO emphasise the need for the right to freedom of expression to be respected and protected in the defence of independent labour bodies and unions on the one hand, and for highlighting workers' safety, limiting work hours and protecting children's rights on the other.

It should be noted that these accords, recommendations and articles form an interrelated body of universal human rights covenants, which serve as means of advancing and improving human rights. Given the need to continue to explore the relationship between economics and human rights, this article will examine specific elements from the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) as well as the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR).

*The Human Freedom Index*,<sup>2</sup> published by The Cato Institute, examined individual and economic freedoms and found a strong relationship between them. Among the 152 countries included in this study, the Islamic Republic of Iran ranks lowest; meaning compared to an average rating of 7.08 measuring personal freedom, Iran measures at 3.85. In case of economic freedom, once again, Iran ranks at 5.10, below the global average on this list. In the combined ranking, the Freedom Index, Iran is given a rating of at 4.484 compared to the global average of 6.96.

In order to better grasp the relationship between human rights and economics, a brief look at classical Western philosophy, including the works of John Locke, bears merit. According to Locke's 'Two Treatise of Civil Government' all human rights stem from the most fundamental right to life for all human beings.<sup>3</sup> In effect, the right to life serves as the foundation for the right to ownership, which through a 'natural condition' results in private ownership. In order to ensure private ownership does not contradict others' natural right to ownership, Locke determines two important conditions:

1. Ownership of natural resources is permissible so long as it does not infringe on the rights of others
2. Ownership of natural resources is permissible so long as such ownership leads to the removal of the possibility of using these resources.

John Locke - known by many as the 'father of classical political economy' - advocates the belief that private ownership results in the expansion of wealth at the individual and societal level. Most critics of such a view do not address the notion of ownership, but instead advocate the need to transform ownership from a private phenomenon to a state one.

It is based on this view that the first part of Article 23 of the UDHR states: 'everyone has the right to work, to free choice of employment...'. Under such conditions, work and non-exclusivity serve as two main elements of the protection of and respect for human rights. If we agree with this approach, where human rights are divided into two - basic rights and fundamental rights, then the right to work is one of the most fundamental human rights, without which other essential rights such as cultural and social development are not possible.

A return to the philosophy formulated by the Levellers Movement during the first civil war in Great Britain presents the same argument. This movement did not only seek to promote economic equality but also

<sup>1</sup> Constitution of the International Labour Organisation, 2010 <http://www.ilo.org/public/english/bureau/leg/download/constitution.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> Cato Institute, Human Freedom Index, 2015, <http://www.cato.org/human-freedom-index>

<sup>3</sup> John Locke, Two Treatise of Government, 1823, available via <http://socserv2.socsci.mcmaster.ca/econ/ugcm/3ll3/locke/government.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> The United Nations, The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, December 1948, [http://www.claiminghumanrights.org/udhr\\_article\\_23.html#at25](http://www.claiminghumanrights.org/udhr_article_23.html#at25)

sought to eliminate privileges accorded to the government, in order to ensure citizens stand equally before the laws of the land.

We find a similar view in the writings of Alexis De Tocqueville and his definition of 'equalizing social conditions'. However, this is not the same as economic equality because of the repeated emphasis that the establishment of such a model is neither possible nor favourable. What he means instead is the removal of privileges and anti-individual constructs in order to ensure all citizens have equal access opportunities. In order to preserve this right, the state must be administered by a true representation of the population; for when citizens enjoy equal rights, then no one individual (or group of individuals) can advance based on privilege. On the other hand, when economic freedom is recognised then dictatorship of the majority (collective tyranny) or even a benevolent citizen-oriented system (as opposed to democracy) cannot be formed in a society.

Following such definitions it can be surmised that the concepts of freedom (political) and equality (economic and legal) as well as a contractual approach to the main power structure are truly democratic. Based on this view, in many developing nations, experts seek to define the relationship between economic development and democracy. According to some researchers, studies show that from among those countries experiencing a transition from a totalitarian system to one based on democracy in recent times, almost 60 per cent have experienced economic development. Such conclusions lead political science experts to pursue research at the national level in order to forecast beyond the democratic process.

It should be noted that during the early decades following the second industrial revolution (1870-1914), many believed that economic development was concomitant with democracy. However, the economic crisis of the 1970s and the expansion of economic development as a global phenomenon emphasised the fact that democracy provides the conditions under which development can take place. In addition, many point out that although economic development is an essential aspect of democracy, it is not enough on its own. One example is the economic development and (the lack of) advancement of democracy in People's Republic of China. Countries responded in their own way to a specific period of economic growth when student bodies demanded democratic changes. For example during the late 1980s in the case of South Korea, respecting the demands of protest movements led to the formation of a democratic nation, whereas in the case of China, military tanks silenced the protesters in Tiananmen Square. However, we cannot deny the fact that with the existence of democratic bodies and the lack of considerable distance among citizens, political aspirations will advance considerably. Based on this assumption a dynamic economy and open market will enable economic development to result in the expansion of political freedom, demonstrating the symbiotic relationship between these two dynamics.

In order to investigate the validity of this argument it is useful to evaluate African states with new-found freedom, where emerging forms of freedom following independence, in the absence of economic development, often resulted in large and small dictatorships, in turn often further limiting economic development. According to Milton Friedman, freedom is key in every struggle for economic development and social welfare.