2 ZERO HUNGER

3 GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

17 PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS

9 INDUSTRY, INNOVATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE

15 LIFE ON LAND

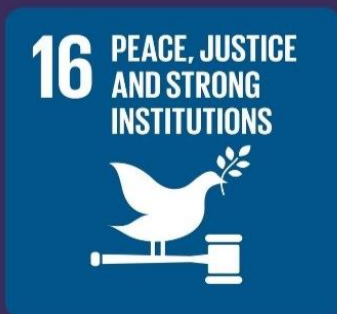**16 PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS**

4 QUALITY EDUCATION

The Sustainable Development Goals

The Challenge of Making Our Societies More Resilient, Inclusive and Equitable

Introduction

to the Warwick Think Tank Report

This policy report is Warwick Think Tank Society's second formal one. It spans five policy areas - Foreign Affairs; Energy & Environment; Healthcare; Technology and Education - and is unified by the theme: The United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals[1] (SDGs).

At its heart, the 17 SDGs are an urgent call for action to all countries. It recognises that ending poverty and other deprivations must go hand-in-hand with strategies that improve health and education, the environment, and technology – all while creating a sense of duty among member states to act against injustices occurring elsewhere.

In each policy area, we explore cases of the SDGs going unmet/violated, and the problems arising as a result. The report looks at what sustainable development should be in the various public-policy areas, primarily in the context of the UK, but also in regions of the world like South America, USA, India and Hungary.

The team behind each policy area has put forth a submission[2]; their findings will be presented in the following format:

1. Briefing Note
In this section, we summarise the current state of affairs by providing key details and note trends. The phenomena are broken down into sections; trends in each section are presented.

2. Insight
In this section, we provide explanations of the trends by breaking phenomena down into key underlying themes.

3. Policy Recommendations
Finally, each submission is concluded by providing solutions for dealing with the issue and ensuring that the SDGs are met, comprising an extensive action plan.

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[1] United Nations, The 17 Goals
[2] There are two submissions from Foreign Affairs, addressing Goal 16 in multiple regions of the world.

to the Research Team

Richa Kapoor
Research Head & Blog Editor
Richa is a final-year Philosophy, Politics and Economics (PPE) student, intending to pursue a career in journalism. As Research Head, she provided the guidelines for the report structure, edited the report. She is also the Editor for the WTT Blog; she was a WTT research analyst last year.

the Mentor Analysts

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Lucy Young

Technology

A third Year Law and Sociology Student, who works within the Law School (SSLC Chair) and the Law Society (Careers Officer) to instil a stronger student community. Lucy runs her own digital blog, looking at different legal and sociological issues and discussing potential policy shifts. Her favourite areas of research include technology and social impact, cryptocurrency and intellectual property law.

Aarthi Raguraj

Technology

Aarthi is a final year Law student who works within the Negotiations Committee of Law Society. She relishes opportunities received in the pro bono field, as a volunteer for the Death Penalty Project and Support Through Court. As an editor for the Law page of NewroTimes, a student-run blog, she writes articles on the existing challenges within commercial law.

Jasmine Walker

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Jasmine is a final year French and Italian student with plans to pursue a Master's in Gender Studies with a particular interest in gendered violence. She has enjoyed writing for *The Boar* over the course of her time at Warwick and working in the Italian Society Exec during her second year.

the Mentee Analysts

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Shilp is a first year Politics and International Studies student and a Foreign Affairs Analyst. She is also a Talks Team member for Warwick Congress, and has written for Warwick Politics Society's *Perspectives* blog. She was a TEDx speaker and enjoys researching issues within the political economy.

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Gian is a first year History student who works with the History Department (SSLC Representative) and the History Society (Fresher Representative) with a particular interest in international relations and international history. He is also the Chief Editor of a student-run History blog 'RR History' with a focus on global history to engage students with the subject outside of the standard syllabus.

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Energy & Environment

First year Global Sustainable Development student who works with Enactus consulting as a junior consultant working on entrepreneurial-based projects to create sustainable progress within communities. Mariam was the founder of Amnesty International society at her school and continues to be passionate about human rights and social sustainability.

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Thomas is a first year Philosophy, Politics, and Economics student who aims to become a politician after having experienced the financial services industry. He intends to find nuanced and objective solutions to modern-day issues through his academic studies, presidency of the Factum Think Tank, and independent research projects. He also represents the PPE students as the Secretary of the PPE Student Staff Liaison Committee.

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Alicja is a first year Management student who used to lead a foundation which aimed at spreading the awareness of the changes on the future labour market due to the technological changes. Currently, she investigates the influence of digital technologies on the workforce and business by working with digital start-ups in Poland and South Africa.

Vriddhi Khattar
Education
Vriddhi is a first year Philosophy, Politics and Economics student, intending to pursue a career in social analysis and research. She was also the founder of Epanortho, an intellectual property rights campaign programme and was lauded by the Dubai Customs Authority for her endeavours. She is currently a part of the research initiative 'Resilient Together' and actively writes for Warwick Amnesty's blog and continues to passionately work towards human rights.

Contents

Corruption and Good Governance: Latin America Case Study

By Anita Goga & Shilp Burman Roy

Briefing Note

This section focuses on **Sustainable Development Goal 16[3]**, and the target to, '**Substantially reduce corruption and bribery in all their forms**'. The briefing highlights the findings of studies and surveys linking corruption to obstacles in achieving sustainable development through strong institutions in Latin America. As such, painting a picture about the necessity to combat corruption in this region by looking at economic and political consequences as well as impacts on stability.

Overview

- **Corruption inhibits economic growth and development through various means such as reduced tax revenue, reduced investment opportunities, and the exacerbation of inequalities.**

- **A feedback loop between corruption and weak state institutions leads to significant public inefficiencies. Corruption breeds malpractices which weaken state institutions, and costly bureaucracies leads to further corruption.**

- **Corruption additionally has a destabilizing effect leading to increased levels of conflict and crime. It limits access of citizens to inclusive judiciary institutions**

- **These effects of corruption combine to deter important values such as democracy, fair representation, and inclusive societies**
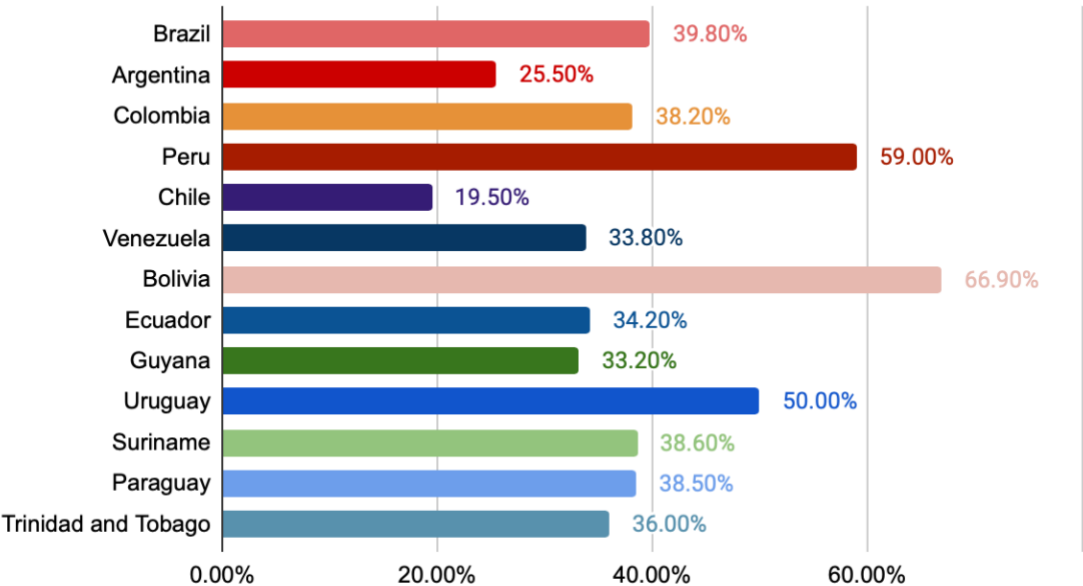
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[3] "Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels"

Economic Consequences

Corruption reduces tax revenues by promoting tax evasion and a shadow economy, which hamper efficiency of development policies

- As a result of decreased tax revenue, and wasteful public spending through cost inflation and budget distortion, state cans experience high levels of public debt, and significant fiscal deficits which hinder economic development[4]

- A recent study presented at the "THEORETICAL AND PRACTICAL ASPECTS OF PUBLIC FINANCE 2015" conference proves a strong empirical support for the negative effect of corruption on tax revenue in Latin American Countries. With indirect taxes being more strongly correlated to high levels of corruption[5].

- Personal Income tax revenues are low in Latin American countries, due to a significantly large shadow economy[6];

Average Size of Shadow Economy

Country	Percentage
Brazil	39.80%
Argentina	25.50%
Colombia	38.20%
Peru	59.00%
Chile	19.50%
Venezuela	33.80%
Bolivia	66.90%
Ecuador	34.20%
Guyana	33.20%
Uruguay	50.00%
Suriname	38.60%
Paraguay	38.50%
Trinidad and Tobago	36.00%

- Corruption through shadow economies, tax evasion, as well as other issues such as underperforming tax administration and political reasons to keep tax effort low result in states collecting less tax revenue than their potential measured through 'tax effort'.
    - Argentina, Bolivia, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Panama, Paraguay, Peru Are all collecting under 87% (world average) of total

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[4] IMF Staff Discussion Note, 2016, Corruption: Costs and Mitigating Strategies
[5] Jan Hunady, 2015, The effect of corruption on tax revenue in OECD and Latin America countries
[6] Inter-American Development Bank, 2013, Taxation and Economic Growth in Latin America

tax revenue potential. With Panama and Paraguay only collecting 69.14% and 68.82% respectively.

- A report by Inter-American Development Bank concluded that indirect taxes were the most effective tax system in raising tax revenues and influence economic growth, as such a large shadow economy undermines development policies[7].

- The United Nation University World Institute for Development Economic Research shows that one of the greatest intensity of losses in global revenue by corporate tax avoidance occurs in Latin America.[8]

Corruption increases uncertainty about future costs and revenues to investors which lower investment level

- In 1997, IMF published and important, large-scale study with over 100 countries, showing that when corruption increases by two points on a ten-point scale, GDP decreases by 0.5% and investment decreases by 4% (https://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/issues6/issue6.pdf)

- Rice University Baker Institute, a public policy think tank, reported in a study on Corruption in Latin America, that higher levels of corruption correlate with lower levels of FDI. An increase in the Corruption Perceptions Index by one unit generates an increase of average FDI of 0.08% of GDP. (https://www.transparency.org/en/cpi/2019/index/nzl)

- European Bank published similar findings that corruption deters FDI, and control of corruption is associated with increases in FDI. However, these increases come from countries with low corruption, while reducing corruption attracts more investment but from countries with high incidence of corruption which harms national institutions.

Rampant corruption derails public spending on welfare and infrastructure services, exacerbating economic inequality.

- Brazil has the highest income inequality rates globally. In 2015, Brazil's unemployment rate was 14% whilst government authorities increased their salaries by 26%[9]. In 2017, Brazilian President Tamer allegedly received over $11 million USD in bribes while public spending and welfare contracted[10].

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[7]Inter-American Development Bank, 2013, Taxation and Economic Growth in Latin America
[8] UNU-WIDER, 2017, Global distribution of revenue loss from tax avoidance
[9] Rueckert, 2017, Brazil's President Charged With Corruption
[10] Ibid

- Former governor of Rio de Janeiro Sérgio Cabral transferred over $100 million USD from public to personal accounts while in office. These funds were allocated to support the Pacifying Police Unit social services program and contract state inequality[11].

- In 2017, Rio de Janeiro's former governor Cabral was found guilty of embezzling $67.1 million USD. These funds were administered to improve infrastructure in lower-income dwellings. Embezzlement aggravated disparity between politicians and lower-income civilians[12].

- In 2015, Brazilian President Dilma Rousseff allegedly siphoned funds from state-run energy company Petrobras. Petrobras consolidated a net loss of $10.2 billion USD, resulting in soaring unemployment for white-collared workers and exacerbated inequality[13].

- Corruption and failed government policies left millions of Venezuelans in absolute poverty. Bloomberg reports estimate Venezuelan unemployment surpassed 44% in 2019, inflaming inequality between political elites and the labour force[14].

- Aside from Haiti, Colombia has the highest inequality levels in Latin America. Politician Sergio Fajardo asserts that its economic inequality is conducive to a culture of corruption associated with narcotrafficking and guerrilla conflicts[15].

Dependence of countries on oil and gas exports has been linked to greater levels of corruption[16]

- An OECD study (2017) revealed that extractive industries have higher levels of corruption due to high profit margins[17].

- The oil, refined products, and gas exports of Latin American countries, with the exception of Venezuela, make up 20-40% of their total exports and their governments receive 30-40% of their revenues from oil and gas sales

- States less dependent on oil and gas exports such as Argentina, Brazil and Mexico tend to have lower levels of corruption as perceived by investors, NGOs, and other experts when compared to Venezuela, Ecuador, and Colombia that are more dependent on oil and gas exports[18].

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[11] Asta, 2017, Brazilian Corruption Steals from Nation's Poorest
[12] Asta, 2017, Brazilian Corruption Steals from Nation's Poorest
[13] Woody, 2019, The Consequences of Brazil's Corruption Scandal May be More Than Political
[14] Business Insider, 2019, 9 Mind-Blowing Facts about Venezuela's Economy
[15] Woody, 2019, The Consequences of Brazil's Corruption Scandal May be More Than Political
[16] Rehman, 2014, Corruption, Constitutions, and Crude in Latin America
[17] IMF Staff Discussion Note, 2016, Corruption: Costs and Mitigating Strategies
[18] Rehman, 2014, Corruption, Constitutions, and Crude in Latin America

● Leite and Weidman (2002) in a study by IMF, use a growth model to determine that capital intensive natural resources are determinants of high corruption. They also showed that states with larger oil and gas exports were associated with worse corruption scores when compared to states with high agriculture and food exports. The former being prevalent in countries without strong institutions[19].

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[19] Leite and Weidmann, 1999, Does Mother Nature Corrupt?Natural Resources, Corruption, and Economic Growth

Political Consequences

Corruption inhibits development and strong institutions by having a negative effect on confidence in public institutions.

- A study Published in the World Bank Economic Review finds quantitatively large and statistically significant negative effects of corruption on confidence in public institutions. Furthermore, noting the effect of low confidence on decreased levels of political participation which is also perpetuating factor of corruption[20].

- Mitchell A. Seligio used a comparative method to analyse four Latin American countries finding that: interpersonal trust is an important variable in the formation of lasting civic associations and concludes that those who experience corruption are less likely to believe in the legitimacy of their political system[21].

- A 2018 Gallup World Poll showed that on average in Latin America only 39% of citizens had confidence in their national governments this is compared to 45% in OECD average. Below you can see by country, percentage of respondents who answered yes to the question, "Do you have confidence in your national government"[22]

## Percentage of People who have confidence in the national government

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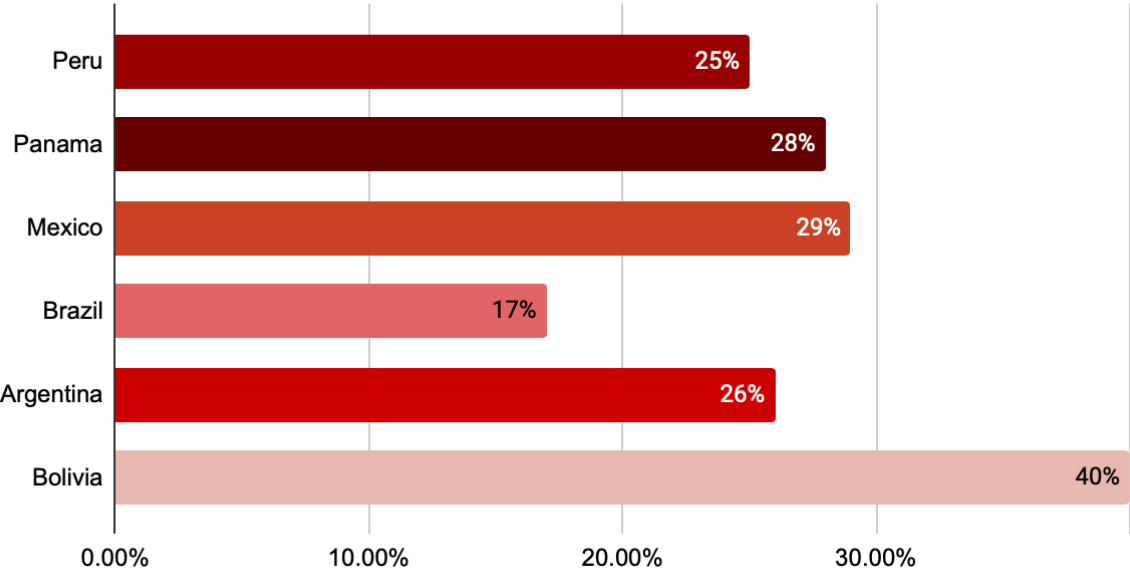
[20] The World Bank, 2011, Corruption and Confidence in Public Institutions: Evidence from a Global Survey

[21] Seligson, Mitchell, 2002, The Impact of Corruption on Regime Legitimacy: A Comparative Study of Four Latin American Countries

[22] Gallup World Poll, 2019

- Gallup World Poll published a report in 2013, looking at well-being, attitudes, and behaviours of residents from over 160 countries. To measure confidence in key institutions they asked respondents whether corruption is widespread in government, here are the results (% of people agreeing with the statement based on their own country of origin)[23]

Perceptions of widespread corruption in government

Country	Percentage
Brazil	63%
Venezuela	63%
Uruguay	50%
Paraguay	77%
Mexico	63%
Ecuador	62%
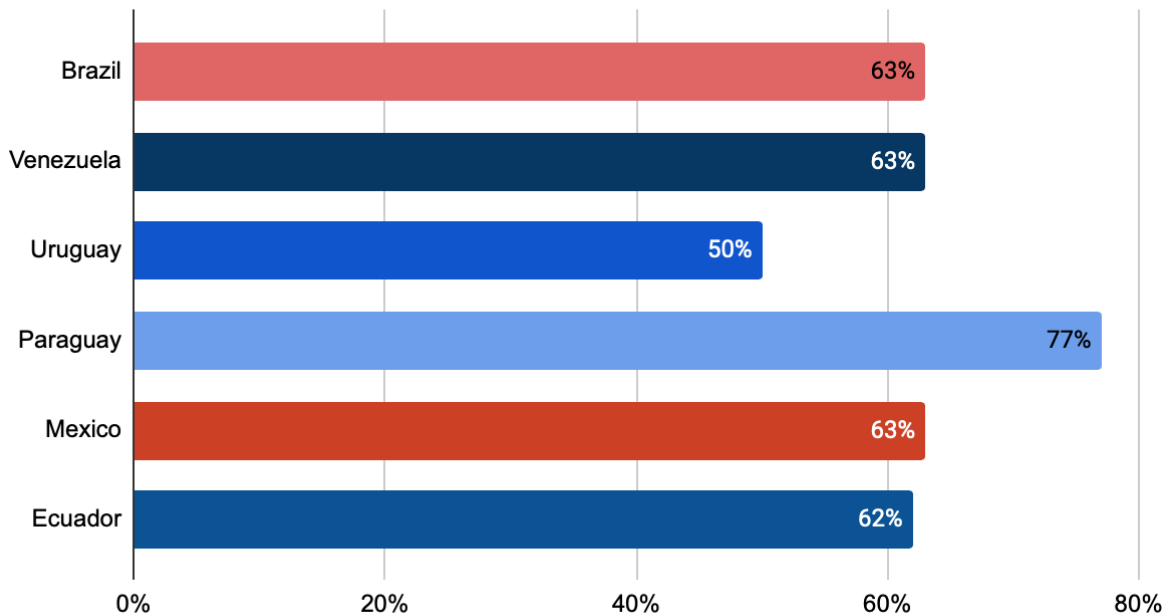
Studies show that the democratic transition is likely to decrease levels of corruption

- Pellegrini (2001) examined 107 countries and found that democracy can reduce corruption after a minimum of 10 years but not exceeding 45 years of uninterrupted democracy[24].

- However, a study by Rock in 2009, proved an inverted U pattern where in very young democracies corruption rises at first, but then declines after a certain point. A period of anywhere in between 4-15 years[25].

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[23] Gallup Analytics, 2013, Global States of Mind
[24] Institut der deutschen Wirtschaft Köln, 2017, Causes and Consequences of Corruption – An Overview of Empirical Results
[25] Rock Michael, 2007, Corruption and Democracy

- However, the situation of expanding democracy in Latin America has mixed results on democratic progress[26] ;

- A number of Latin American democracies have seen a decrease in democratic performance, and many suffer from weak democratic institutions. Overall, these resulted in a decline in public support for democracy, from 70 per cent in 2008 to 58 per cent in 2017[27].

- of the 16 transitioned democracies, 4 are still considered fragile with Cuba being non-democratic since the start of the third wave of democracy.[28]

- Uruguay and Trinidad and Tobago scored highly on all democratic attributes, while Costa Rica, Chile and Jamaica score highly on four of the five attributes.[29]

- Nicaragua and Brazil have seen democratic backsliding and erosions to democracy.[30]
- The region suffers from the highest levels of socio-economic inequalities in the world leading to differentiated access to political voice which undermines democracy.[31]

Corruption inhibits Good Governance[32] from developing and leads to institutional inefficiencies

- Corruption undermines productivity as it leads governments to follow vested interests over public interests, therefore resources aren't allocated in efficient ways[33].
- As much as 4.4% of GDP of the region might be wasted through inefficient government spending[34].
- Corruption in public service provision of services such as education and health inhibit productivity of human capital. For example, an average 15-year-old student in Latin America is 3 years behind when compared to a student in the OECD[35].

- Latin American countries invest less in research and development than OECD countries with the exception of Brazil. Additionally, costly bureaucracies deter companies from research as it is expensive and timely to obtain patents[36].

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[26] International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, 2019, The Global State of Democracy
[27] IDEA, 2019, The Global State of Democracy 2019
[28] Ibid
[29] Ibid
[30] Ibid
[31] Ibid
[32] Good Governance refers to the way Public Institutions manage public resources and effectiveness of Public Policy
[33] OECD, 2020, Good governance for Latin America and the Caribbean: Representing the interest of all
[34] Inter-American Development Bank, 2018, Better Spending for Better Lives
[35] OECD, 2015, Consequences of Corruption at the Sector Level and Implications for Economic Growth and Development
[36] OECD, 2020, Good governance for Latin America and the Caribbean: Representing the interest of all

- Public procurement represented 6% of GDP in Latin America in 2017. However, Public procurement is the most common cause of bribery.[37]

- In Latin America, there is a link between elicit campaign contributions and bribery to obtain government contracts. Which undermines efficiency of large infrastructure projects.[38]

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[37] OECD, 2020, Good governance for Latin America and the Caribbean: Representing the interest of all

[38] Inter-American Dialogue, 2019, Anti Corruption, Transparency, and Integrity in the Americas

Corruption and Conflict

Political elites wield police forces and violence to suppress anti-corruption protests.

- Igarapé Institute reported that 65% of the Brazilian population supported and planned to participate in violent anti-corruption protests in 2017. Military officials were frequently deployed to quell rising discontent and active conflict[39].

- In 2019, Brazilian Justice Minister Sergio Moro was condemned for excluding leftist leader Lula da Silva from the 2018 presidential election. Thousands of Moro supporters clashed with anti-corruption protests, resulting in violence[40].

- Over 50% of Brazil's 81 senators have been implicated in corruption scandals and wield police forces to suppress opposing voices. In 2018, the New York Times reported that police-linked squads skilled around 17 civilians every day[41].

- In 2019, Venezuelan government officials had captured nearly 400 political prisoners and anti-corruption protestors, according to the Penal Forum[42].

- Human Rights Watch uncovered that Venezuelan security forces and armed pro-government militias attacked anti-corruption demonstrations and committed abuses against detainees including beatings, asphyxiation and sexual violence in 2014 and 2017[43].

- In 2018, the United Nations reported that indigenous protests against corruption-induced austerity measures in Educador resulted in hundreds of civilians wounded and 4 deaths[44].

Corruption renders judicial processes ineffective, allowing violent crime to persevere.
- Ecuador's judiciary is plagued with corruption, inefficiency and political interference which has obstructed justice and adequate law enforcement. The Correa administration

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[39] Igarapé Institute, 2017, Brazil's Democracy Suffers from Corruption
[40] France-Presse, 2019, Thousands of Anti-Corruption Protesters Rally in Brazil in Support of Justice Minister Sergio Moro in wake of 'Car Wash' Probe
[41] Patricio, 2019, Brazil Awash in Corruption and Violence
[42] Human Rights Watch, 2020, World Report 2020: Venezuela
[43] Ibid
[44] Amazon Watch, 2019, Brutality, Violence, and Repression in Ecuador

reported government abuses against 456 victims from 1984 to 2008. Yet, the 2010 prosecutorial unit initiated judicial procedures for fewer than 15 cases[45].

● In 2017, the Office of the Public Prosecutor received 2,067 complaints of sexual harassment and merely convicted 12 perpetrators[46].

● Guerrillas, paramilitaries and mafia gangs have benefited from widespread corruption and complicity of security forces in Venezuela. This has entrenched violence in civil society – every 30 minutes a civilian is killed[47].

Corruption adversely impacts prison populations, subjecting them to illicit violent crimes.

● In 2018, the UN Subcommittee on Prevention of Torture said that Bolivian prison officials' "system of inmate self-government" and rampant corruption had heightened prisoner violence and torture. In 2019, 8 police officers were charged with sexual violence against inmates in Rurrenabaque prison[48].

● In 2000, Teotônio Vilela Commission for Human Rights reported that 140 homicides were committed among inmates in Brazil without effective judicial repercussions. It exceeds 8 times the rate in North American prisons[49]

● Corruption among officials in Central and South America has enabled overcrowding and gang wars among prison populations. In 2017, over 140 inmates were killed in prison violence in the states of Roraima and Amazonas[50].

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[45] Human Rights Watch, 2020, World Report 2020: Ecuador
[46] U.S. Department of State, 2018, 2018 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Ecuador
[47] International Crisis Group, 2011, Violence and Politics in Venezuela
[48] Human Rights Watch, 2020, World Report 2020: Bolivia
[49] Salla, 2007, Brazil's Prison Debacle
[50] Fevrier, 2019, Prison Violence in Ecuador: Overcrowding, Corruption and Gang Control

Insight

Overview

The aim of this section is to (1) explain the link between corruption and its detrimental effects on the development of an equal society and just institutions, and (2) identify the root causes of economic underdevelopment, weak state institutions, and lack of social cohesiveness. Root causes such as colonialism, explain how the political and economic systems inherited from Spanish colonisers lead to specific developments in Latin American history which manifest in corrupt practices today. This is done to show how goal 16: *Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels*, links to corruption.

What we hope will become evident through the sections is that corruption is often interlinked with the issues discussed. While it promotes problems such as inequality, large levels of inequality in turn breed more corruption. That is why the origin of political and economic institutions lies at the centre of understanding why Latin American states are prone to corruption.

Economic Consequences - Underdevelopment and corruption are rooted in the organization of colonial economy

The relationship between poverty and corruption is reciprocal as one feeds into the other. Poverty and low development breed corruption which in turn impedes further economic growth. As such, creating a vicious cycle where countries that have high levels of poverty will also be more likely to have high levels of corruption. A significant number of studies link Macroeconomic indicators with high levels of corruption and show that the latter hinders economic growth (Reinikka and Smith 2004, Mikaelsson and Sall 2014, Murshed and Mredula 2018, Carballo 2010)[51].

While the link has been established, it is also important to understand the mechanisms behind this. The presence of a significant shadow economy and common practices of tax evasion reduce tax revenues available for states to invest in long-term economic development. Additionally, lack of public trust in government institutions leads to the general population being less willing to comply with tax laws and it becomes easier to pay bribes than to pay taxes[52]. A recent study presented at the Theoretical and Practical Aspects of Public Finance 2015 conference proves a strong empirical support for the negative effect of corruption on tax revenue in Latin American countries.

A lot of businesses move into the informal or 'shadow economy' as a means to avoid corrupt officials and an environment which incurs additional costs. Studies done by Schleifer (1997) and Friedman et al. (2000) identify corruption as the main driver of entrepreneurs into the show economy[53]. These two mechanisms of corruption limit public revenue available to; build strong institutions which can deliver public services; invest in social and economic development programmes.

Another way corruption stifles economic development is by deterring foreign direct investment (FDI). On one hand, foreign businesses will avoid investment in corrupt states as it increases the cost of investments[54]. On the other hand, the political instability that comes from corruption and the changes in political decisions leads to less certainty of return on investments for foreign firms[55]. Overall corruption breeds a bad environment to business development and entrepreneurship which harms further growth.

However, the root causes of prolonged poverty and underdevelopment come from economic structures founded during colonialism. The Spanish rule established in Latin America, followed a model of mercantilism where imports were minimised and exports maximised, with Spanish merchants establishing monopolies and dominating the import-export business. Until 1872, Spain retained exclusive access to trade in the region, only opening up the Latin American economies to international trade through a series of liberalising policies passed by Bourbon rulers. As such

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[51] Murshed and Mredula, 2018, Impacts of Corruption on Sustainable Development
[52] IMF Staff Discussion Note, 2016, Corruption: Costs and Mitigating Strategies
[53] Jan Hunady, 2015, The effect of corruption on tax revenue in OECD and Latin America countries
[54] IMF, 1997, Why Worry About Corruption
[55] European Bank, 2015, Does corruption matter for sources of foreign direct investment?

the wealth was concentrated in the hands of the European colonists, and extraction models made sure precious resources left Latin American States[56]. While economic development took place, it was orchestrated under the colonial extraction system that aimed to transfer wealth to the coloniser. The rapid economic growth seen in Latin American Colonies during the 1700s was caused by opening up the region to international trade, and technology transfers from Europe. However, the growth was only dependent on the abundance of natural resources in Latin America, and the ability of the rest of the world to buy them, as such leaving the region vulnerable to the global economy[57]. Additionally, Engerman and Sokoloff (1997) argued that in order to exploit natural resources, The Spanish colonists relied on forced labour and large slave plantations. This resulted in concentration of wealth in a small Spanish elite who were protected by property rights that did not extend to the wider population. Ultimately the wealth inequality and weak property rights led to lasting economic institutions that were unfavourable to economic participation of the broad population[58].

Overall, Latin American states were left with economies dependent on natural resource exports, and underdeveloped social capital and economic institutions which are required for long-term prosperity. The lasting effects of the integration of Latin America in the global economy, by European settlers, can be seen in Latin American dependency on commodities. Although ever since the 1950s there were efforts to diversify exports by investing in manufacturing, these investments were not successful. By 2000-2008, Latin American economies became reliant once again on exporting commodities to Chinese markets. Thus far, it has allowed economic growth, but not in a sustainable manner. Economists such as Mauro Guillem argue the only way out is by investing in education and infrastructure as well as regulatory framework to attract investment[59].

The inheritance of colonial economic institutions has set Latin American countries on a path of economic underdevelopment, despite periods of rapid economic growth. This is exacerbated due to the legacy of inequalities left behind by the extraction system, which means economic growth is not felt by significant portions of the population. Additionally, as argued by Acemoglu and Robinson, in societies with wide disparities, corruption is more prevalent and possible because the elite have little concerns for the well-being of the others because they are different from the rest of the population.

Furthermore, the impacts of colonial penetration on social and economic development were tested by James Mahoney. He showed how the two were negatively correlated, and states that were central to the Spanish empires (with the exception of Mexico) became the least developed following independence. The peripheral states however saw a 'reversal of fortunes' and became most developed[60]. The basis of his argument is that Spanish colonial rule created institutions that subsequently impeded social and economic development. Therefore, the economic situation

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[56] Mahoney, 2003, Long-Run Development and the Legacy of Colonialism in Spanish America
[57] Coatsworth, 2008, Inequality, Institutions and Economic Growth in Latin America
[58] Coatsworth, 2008, Inequality, Institutions and Economic Growth in Latin America
[59] Wharton, 2016, Can Latin America Free Itself from Dependence on Commodities?
[60] Mahoney, 2003, Long-Run Development and the Legacy of Colonialism in Spanish America

which breeds underdevelopment and corruption can be linked to colonial organisation of Latin American economies.

Political Consequences - Origins of corruption lie in the extractive state system Latin American countries inherited from 300 years of colonialism

Widespread corruption in Latin America can be traced back to colonialism which set in a path-dependence of state institutions. Despite movements and wars of independence that lead to the reconstruction of the national state, 300 years of colonial rule left a mark on this process as various political institutions persisted beyond independence and even through to today. This results in the continuance of a culture of corruption, whereby legal and political practices sustain a narrow elite who seek personal interests rather than the public good.

This stems from the method of ruling colonies imposed by the Spanish Empire whereby the political system in the colonies was set up with the purpose of extraction. The extractive state system was characterised by an authoritarian and highly centralised structure which could easily control the indigenous peoples and concentrate wealth in the hands of a small elite[61]. Latin America was split up into four Viceroyalties, each with several Audiencias (similar to cities) based around economic and political centres. This system of ruling undermined local government power as most decisions were made through the Viceroy. These positions were reserved for Spanish settlers[62]. With systems such as the encomienda to subjugate indigenous peoples, the settlers were able to use the state apparatus to protect their own interests rather than investing in development. Thus, resulting in a political arrangement which promoted extraction, and had no means or norms to promote investment in social capital or development[63].

However, despite independence, the colonial ruling structure creates a path-dependence for political institutions which promoted inequality and corruption. A study by Acemoglu and Robinson (2009) showed how in areas such as Latin America that were less favourable for large European settlements (when compared to Australia, United States, and New Zealand) the presence of a minority ruling elite created institutions that favour a small elite and thus persisted to present times in various ways. Drivers behind corruption and persistence of such institutions is explained through path dependence. The new elites which emerged following independence, inherited extractive, colonial institutions which would make introducing new institutions a costly endeavour[64]. As such it was easier to take elements of colonial institutions, than introduce completely new ones. Secondly, European settlers delegated administrative tasks to a domestic elite which often were the ones to gain control after independence. This narrow elite had

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[61] Ruaburo, 2016, State Development, Corruption & the Consequences of Colonization
[62] Mahoney, 2003, Long-Run Development and the Legacy of Colonialism in Spanish America
[63] Acemoglu and Robinson, 2009, The Colonial Origins of Comparative Development: An Empirical Investigation
[64] Acemoglu and Robinson, 2009, The Colonial Origins of Comparative Development: An Empirical Investigation

incentives to maintain an extractive system as much as possible, as they would retain higher personal benefits.

This is not to say that modern Latin American political institutions are similar to those of colonial times, but rather to highlight that the inheritance of extractive institutions from colonialism disincentivized elites from undertaking significant reform. The culture of a narrow elite following their own self-interest was maintained is present today through a culture of corruption throughout state institutions. It is important to note that the argument is not that colonialism is sufficient cause for corruption, but rather a necessary one. This section argues that origins of corruption lie in the extractive state system Latin American countries inherited from 300 years of colonialism which trickle down to modern politics despite significant reforms.

The second part of this section will briefly highlight two examples of how colonial institutions can be seen in today's Latin American governance. These examples are specific in order to show the various ways colonial institutions affect modern political and legal systems. Firstly, a study of the Venezuelan Education ministry reveals that the administrative incompetence originates from a centralised system of decision-making that overloads higher authorities with insignificant requests. All decisions are sent to higher levels of authority within the administrative hierarchy, as no decision is made without central approval. However, this highly impacts efficiency and leads to corruption through bribes in order to get requests approved at faster rates. Hanson argues that "the administrative model that has dominated the scene in Venezuela is basically a living artefact of the structures laid down by the Spanish monarchy during the 300 years of colonial rule"[65]. As such we see how modern-day state structures, although differing in content to those of colonies, are reminiscent of generally employed structures during colonialism.

Another example is that several legal elements used during colonialism can be found in Latin American legal codes today. For example, the Spanish imposed a forced heirship regime where it was difficult for individuals to have autonomy over their testaments as a large amount of their inheritance was given to children regardless of individual will[66]. These reflect the emphasis of Spanish on the communal placement of the individual and highlight the importance of family ties. While states such as Mexico rejected this ideal, most South American countries kept a 'forced heirship regime'.

This example shows how colonial legal institutions are present in today's legal practices of Latin American states. It raises the issue that if the entirety of Spanish colonial rule was centred around benefiting those in power, the persistence of legal elements is representative of this colonial inheritance. It allows those in power to maintain power and breeds corruption as a means to support their endeavours.

High levels of corruption hinder democratic processes and make it more difficult to develop fair and inclusive societies. Lows levels of trust in government institutions, they lose legitimacy and

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[65] Hanson, 1974, Organizational Bureaucracy in Latin America and the Legacy of Spanish Colonialism
[66] Chicago Unbound, 2016, Confronting the Colonial Legacy : Retaining and Rejecting Spanish Colonial Law in Nineteenth Century Latin America : Mexico and Argentina

create an environment difficult to pass effective public policy[67]. Additionally, low engagement with politics leads to politicians not being held accountable through public participation[68].

Conflict – Corruption delegitimizes political and judicial institutions, eroding social cohesion and equality.

Social cohesion is a product of shared norms and values inculcating organic solidarity within societies[69]. Historical institutionalist approaches interlink corruption with undermined social cohesion and conflict in Latin American states. Corrupt tendencies can constrain the effectiveness of political and legal institutions[70]. Normative institutionalists contend that corruption exploits legitimate institutional practices to benefit political elites acting in their own interests[71]. Hence Latin American polities are corrupted by extraneous influences which distort decision-making processes and thereby impair functioning capacities in accordance with constitutional values[72].

Warren (2004) argues that institutional corruption violates the principle of equality[73]. Representation and cohesion within political institutions are distorted since each individual does not have the opportunity to proportionally impact decision-making processes[74]. This weakens the effectiveness of democratic institutions to achieve its purpose and creates a system of influence that creates and sustains institutional corruption and conflict[75].

Sapsford (2017) coins "crony capitalism" in which institutional opportunities are reserved for political elites and their supporters[76]. This exacerbates inequality and conflict among classes in Latin American societies thereby contracting social cohesion[77].

Governmental corruption induces inequity in hiring processes; it is probable that discriminatory behaviours are replicated in Latin American educational and private sectors[78]. This dovetails with path dependency; corrupt patterns constrain political institutions to historical trajectories and reproduces conflict in Latin American states.

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[67] OECD, 2013, Trust in government, policy effectiveness and the governance agenda
[68] Nicolescu-Waggonner, The Negative Effect of Corruption on the Consolidation of Democracy
[69] Benson, 1988, Corruption in law enforcement
[70] Capshaw, 2005, The Social Cohesion Role of the Public Sector
[71] Thompson, 2018, Theories of Institutional Corruption
[72] Thompson, 2018, Theories of Institutional Corruption
[73] Warren, 2004, What Does Corruption Mean in a Democracy?
[74] Thompson, 2018, Theories of Institutional Corruption
[75] Brenson, 1988, Corruption in law enforcement
[76] Sapsford, 2017, Corruption, Cohesion and the Rule of Law
[77] Sapsford, 2017, Corruption, Cohesion and the Rule of Law
[78] Warren, 2004, What Does Corruption Mean in a Democracy?

Ultimately, corruption divides a polity into an elite class extorting bribes and dispensing favours and an inferior class bestowing bribes excluded from favour[79]. This indicates conflict and a breakdown of social cohesion. The fundamental principle of rule of law asserts that Latin American citizens are equal under the constitution[80]. Nevertheless, corruption erodes informal social norms and fosters institutional uncertainty and violence[81].

Poveda's (2019) governance model suggests that corruption reduces governance capacity and generates weaker political and judicial institutions and lower quality government management, services, security and infrastructure[82]. Inadequate welfare systems aggravate inequality and social dissension in Latin American societies[83].

Fragile law enforcement mechanisms fuel violent illegal activities to continue divorced from legal repercussions. For instance, Charry (2002) notes that conflict and the narcotics trade has implicated corrupt legislators, judges and military officials[84]. Hence judicial institutions are unable to respond with appropriate sanctions, penalties and sentences[85].

To conclude, corruption delegitimize political institutions issuing legal constraints and equal opportunities[86]. This facilitates a fertile ground for unrest, criminal activities and inequality. Hence social cohesion and inclusion cannot cultivate in Latin American societies.

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[79] Poveda, 2019, Relations between economic development, violence and corruption
[80] Sapsford, 2017, Corruption, Cohesion and the Rule of Law
[81] Warren, 2004, What Does Corruption Mean in a Democracy?
[82] Poveda, 2019, Relations between economic development, violence and corruption
[83] Poveda, 2019, Relations between economic development, violence and corruption
[84] Charry, 2002, For A Global Approach to Fighting Corruption
[85] Sapsford, 2017, Corruption, Cohesion and the Rule of Law
[86] Thompson, 2018, Theories of Institutional Corruption

Conclusion

- Corruption originates in political, economic, and legal institutions which were inherited from colonialism

- Extractive State system's imposed by Spanish Colonists prompted the emergence of a narrow elite

- Corruption is interlinked with the issues it perpetuates and leads to vicious cycles where corruption promotes problems that spur more corruption

- Corruption delegitimizes political and judicial institutions, eroding social cohesion and equality.

Policy Recommendations

Overview

Our policy recommendations aim to outline tools the international community can utilise to encourage and promote the fight against corruption in Latin America. An important aspect is that Latin American states will need to undertake institutional reform in order to address the root causes and driving forces behind corruption. By strengthening institutions, emphasising the importance of the rule of law and transparency, incentives to engage in corrupt behaviour would decrease significantly. Ultimately, the goal is for the international community to offer the necessary aid for meaningful institutional reform to be a possibility in Latin America.

- **Action 1** - Latin American states should utilise policy instruments such as **international standards and initiatives** to evaluate anti-corruption measures, guide policy reform, and exchange information on best practices.

- **Action 2** - Financial Institutions that offer **Development Aid should rework** conditionality and the way aid is provided to promote anti-corruption measures.

- **Action 3** - States that trade with Latin American countries should **use Free Trade Agreements to promote anti-corruption measures**, doing so in a multi-lateral manner where possible and supplementing with bilateral trade agreements.

- **Action 4** – Latin American states should **install external regulatory agencies to monitor and report corruption** allegations in political and judicial institutions to foster social cohesion and equality.

Action 1 - Latin American states should utilise policy instruments such as international standards and initiatives to evaluate anti-corruption measures, guide policy reform, and exchange information on best practices.

The IMF has created a set of norms and standards to promote fiscal transparency amongst states. The **Fiscal Transparency code is an international standard** which conducts how public finances are to be made public. This is centred around four pillars of transparency, Fiscal reporting, fiscal forecasting and budgeting, fiscal risk analysis and management, resource revenue management[87]. Alongside this there is the fiscal transparency handbook which provides guidance on how states should implement practices and principles[88]. Lastly, member states can request an evaluation through The **Fiscal Transparency evaluation** where the IMF assesses how current standards and practices measure up to the standard[89]. Transparency is very important in combating corruption as irresponsible budget spending can be publicly scrutinised and politicians who do not make decisions reflecting the public interest lose political support. As a result, these measures aim to increase efficiency of resource allocation through fiscal policy. Countries in Latin America can **call upon international initiatives to guide institutional reform** and increase fiscal transparency.

Another set of international standards that are important to adhere to comes from the **Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI)**. As shown in the Briefing, extractive industries are more likely to have occurrences of corruption as revenues are very high and it can lead to misallocation of resources. EITI is centred on the principle that natural resources belong to citizens, and poor governance in this sector has led to more corruption and conflict. As a result, it is important for states to implement a set of transparency standards which **puts pressure on public officials to use natural resource revenues to benefit the publi**c. This initiative provides data to inform greater transparency and accountability in the extractive sector. Member states are committed to providing information along the extractive industry value chain, as well as how revenue is used throughout government[90]. It is important for more states in Latin America to adopt such standards as not only would it mean they can make significant steps towards curtailing corruption, but commitments to transparency can also **fuel citizen confidence in state institutions** as these are evaluated through the EITI. Currently, several Latin American states such as Brazil, Paraguay, Chile, Bolivia, etc, are not members of the EITI and our belief is that by joining such initiatives Latin American states can exemplify their commitment to fighting corruption.

Furthermore, the **United National Convention against Corruption (UNCAC)** is the only **legally binding, universal, anti-corruption tool**. All states need to actively engage in implementing the convention in order to strengthen institutions, as implementation is an ongoing process. This convention takes into account that corruption has negative impacts on the economy as it undermines fair competition and discourages investment and trade. It also **highlights that**

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[87]IMF Staff Discussion Note, 2016, Corruption: Costs and Mitigating Strategies
[88]IMF, 2019, Why Fiscal Transparency Matters
[89]IMF, 2019. How Does the IMF Encourage Greater Fiscal Transparency?
[90] Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative, 2021, Who We Are

corruption is a human rights issue as it disproportionately impacts people living in poverty[91]. The United Nations launched the Fast-Tracking UNCAC project, states are supported in the implementation of UNCAC on a regional basis. The project gathers information to see where each state is in the implementation process and identify gaps in order to support anti-corruption activities[92]. States should utilise such support schemes in implementing anti-corruption measures and engage with projects such as the Fast-Tracking UNCAC project. By utilising international standards, it is possible to draw on the expertise of multiple countries, and regional information gathered by UN agencies. Additionally, this project goes beyond a 'one-size-fits-all' approach and offers country specific guidance.

Exchange of information and best practices is helpful for state officials to share expertise on how to combat corruption, as Latin American states face similar issues when it comes to corruption. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime launches a "**Global Judicial Integrity Network" which allows judges to share practices and information** on developing new tools and guidelines to protect the judicial system from corruption[93]. This is important because a judicial system that is free from executive influence, can properly prosecute corrupt politicians.

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[91] UNODC, 2004, United Nations Convention Against Corruption
[92] UNODC, 2021, Fast-Tracking UNCAC
[93] Lasusa, 2018, 5 Ways to Fight Corruption in Latin America

Action 2 - Financial Institutions that offer Development Aid should rework conditionality and the way aid is provided to promote anti-corruption measures.

Instruments such as **conditionality and development aid can be re-worked** by international financial institutions and aid providers to serve the goal of incentivising anti-corruption measures in Latin American countries.

The importance of Good Governance in maximising the efficiency of aid has become more evident as governments need strong state institutions to ensure economic and social resources are managed in such a way to yield development. The **success of public policy is contingent on an efficient framework** within which it is implemented[94]. As a result, when rethinking aid and using conditionality to encourage anti-corruption measures, **three areas must be considered for reform**.

- **Accountability** is at the core of good governance as citizens should have access to the decision-making and public spending that happens within their government. This entails the formulation of oversight bodies and a process of de-politicising public administration to ensure a system of checks and balances.
- **The legal framework** must be stable and predictable and important areas such as property rights and contract enforcement must be ensured. Additionally, the judiciary should be independent from executive power, and be able to prosecute corrupt executive officials in order to respect the **rule of law**.
- Reforms should focus on **increasing public participation** in order to increase legitimacy of government bodies. This extends beyond voting behaviour to public consultations with civil society and supporting policy reform coalitions[95].

Firstly, when re-thinking aid, it is important that conditions move away from Washington Consensus policy prescriptions. During the 1990s, these policies aimed to reduce the role of the state by liberalising the economy through deregulation and privatisation[96]. However, the World Bank became aware that **this policy paradigm in fact weakens state institutions** as they lose oversight of the economic situation[97]. Instead, a paradigm shift in development policies relies on **promoting state reform and strengthening government institutions**; thus, leading to more effective policy making and economic management.

Therefore, conditions for aid become the willingness of states to implement anti-corruption measures as mentioned above. **Financial institutions must undertake more research on a regional basis** to offer a clear pathway to strengthening institutions and enforcing rule of law[98]. This would in turn, maximise the effect of aid and curtail corruption through strengthening the state. Developing countries lack the funds to undertake such reforms to achieve good governance

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[94] Santiso, 2002, Good Governance and Aid Effectiveness: The World Bank and Conditionality
[95] Ibid
[96] Santiso, 2002, Good Governance and Aid Effectiveness: The World Bank and Conditionality
[97] Booth, 2014, Aiding Institutional Reform in Developing Countries
[98] Ibid

and fight corruption which makes aid very important.

Secondly, **financial institutions should practice greater selectivity** when it comes to offering developmental aid. This is because financial incentives alone are not enough to lead to institutional reforms and anti-corruption measures. This means, international organisations such as the World Bank **should become more prudent in offering aid to countries that have proven they are willing to further enact institutional reforms and combat issues such as corruption.** Only then will aid effectiveness be felt by the population.

The Highly Indebted Poor Country Initiative exemplifies this as relieving debt burdens is dependent on policy reform[99]. Greater selectivity should be introduced more widely in offering development aid as it would incentivise domestic political actors to undertake meaningful reforms in order to receive aid.

Lastly, reform packages **should not be provided on a 'one-size-fits-all' basis** as the political context is very important in **understanding the challenges and opportunities to institutional reform.** The previous point is important in this aspect as well, because partnering with agencies, political coalitions, or policy entrepreneurs who show commitment to fight issues such as corruption, allows their unique expertise of the domestic political context to benefit reform initiatives and make them feasible. Local political leaders are very important in making reforms successful as they are able to build necessary formal and informal coalitions. However, domestic actors may lack the resources to enact change on their own, which is why aid is still an important element which can facilitate anti-corruption measures[100]. This goal can be achieved if **conditionality and the focus of international financial organisations is reworked to promote institutional reform, specific to political context,** in order to maximise benefits of aid and bring in meaningful change.

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[99] IMF, 2021, Debt Relief Under the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Initiative
[100] Booth, 2014, Aiding Institutional Reform in Developing Countries

Action 3 - States that trade with Latin American countries should use Free Trade Agreements to promote anti-corruption measures, doing so in a multi-lateral manner where possible and supplementing with bilateral trade agreements.

This recommendation is inspired by the actions of the European Union who has intensified the fight against corruption. The EU utilised **trade agreements whereby trading partners have to agree to take up certain measures towards good governance and to eradicate corruption**. For example, trade agreements have included chapters on; management of public tenders and customs procedures; or asking nations to sign up to the UN convention against corruption. These agreements go beyond the WTO baseline on procurements and customs[101]. Since the EU has more trading power due as a bloc, its trade agreements are influential on the international scene. In this case, **these agreements should be seen as a baseline to build upon in multilateral agreements and target corruption as an important provision**. Similarly, the new US-Mexico-Canada Agreement requires trading partners to pass anti-corruption laws prohibiting off-the-book records of corporations, inadequately or fraudulently identified transactions, or the use of false documents[102].

More specifically, the **United States**, as the region's largest trading partner, **should re-enter the Trans-Pacific Partnership Agreement** which included an anticorruption chapter in the pact. These provisions aim to eliminate bribery and corruption. They also require parties to ratify the UNCAC, encourage participation of groups and individuals to prevent corruption, as well as adopt and enforce minimal corruption-related offences and sanctions[103]. Furthermore, as the TPP doesn't cover all Latin American countries, **it is also important for the United States to promote similar provisions in bilateral agreements.**

With China's growing global influence, it has become the region's top trading partner and Chinese companies have invested $12.8 billion in Latin America. Since 2000, **China has evolved into the first or second most important trading partner for Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Costa Rica, and Peru**[104]. China has also signed a free-trade agreement with the EU that includes anti-corruption measures, and Xi Jinping's anti-corruption campaign has targeted many high-level officials and expanded its scope. As such, **if China wants to prove its commitment to fighting corruption** it can build trade agreements with Latin American countries that also **put pressure on public officials to enact measures that fight corruption**[105]. This would be significant as for example, 19 governments across the region are already part of the Belt-and-Road initiative. **Additionally, China has FTA agreements with Costa Rica, Peru, and Chile, in which it could implement bilateral measures to promote the fight against corruption**[106].

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[101] Dreyer, 2018, FTAs: How the EU is approaching the fight against corruption
[102] Thomson Reuters Tax & Accounting, 2018, Anti-Corruption Provisions in Free Trade Agreement
[103] Thomason, 2019, Trade deals increasingly taking corruption into account
[104] Nugent, Campell, 2021, The U.S. and China Are Battling for Influence in Latin America, and the Pandemic Has Raised the Stakes
[105] BBC, 2018, China's anti-corruption campaign expands with new agency
[106] Nugent, 2021, The U.S. and China Are Battling for Influence in Latin America, and the Pandemic Has Raised the Stakes

Action 4 – Latin American states should install external regulatory agencies to monitor and report corruption allegations in political and judicial institutions to foster social cohesion and equality.

The World Bank recognizes that corruption delegitimizes political and judicial institutions, distorting domestic social cohesion[107]. Latin American states must overcome vested interests to foster transparency and open governance[108]. **Reform can be expedited through professional accountability systems** that detect and deter corruption and cronyism.

Anti-corruption agencies (ACAs) are independent from Latin American governments and empowered to investigate corruption allegations. Currently, there are over one hundred ACAs globally[109]. The United Nations Convention Against Corruption envisages **ACAs as pivotal agencies in reducing institutional corruption**[110]. However, sovereign Latin American states must commit to scrutinising domestic oversight mechanisms and installing ACAs[111].

Independence is a fundamental requirement for anti-corruption specialised institutions. The OECD (2008) reports that independence required is proportional to the level of corruption, rule of law and governance in Latin American domestic institutions[112]. Formal and fiscal **independence of international instruments is essential to combat systemic corruption** and fragile law enforcement and financial control institutions[113]. International commitment to funding ACAs can propel anti-corruption functioning in Latin American states[114].

ACAs encompass multiple functions to stimulate cohesive and equal political environments. Agencies receive and respond to corruption allegations and impartially gather intelligence in Latin American institutions[115]. **ACAs can conduct extensive investigations in public and private sectors** to scrutinise asset declarations and financing[116]. Alluding to international standards, agencies can issue administrative orders and hold political elites accountable to corrupt activities[117]. Moreover, **external regulatory agencies can engage in prospective and preventive functions** which foster transparent and accessible political environments. ACAs can implement awareness and educational training across governmental ministries and the law enforcement sector[118]. Imparting ethics policy guidance, compliance reviews and public

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[107] The World Bank, 2020, Combating Corruption

[108] Ibid

[109] Transparency International, 2021, Anti-Corruption Agency Strengthening Initiative

[110] World Bank, 2021, Anti-Corruption Agencies

[111] OECD, 2008, Specialised Anti-Corruption Institutions

[112] Ibid

[113] Ibid

[114] Institute of Development Research and Development Policy, 2014, The Role of Anti-Corruption Agencies in the Investigation and Prosecution of Procurement Related Corruption Cases

[115] Transparency International, 2021, Anti-Corruption Agency Strengthening Initiative

[116] OECD, 2008, Specialised Anti-Corruption Institutions

[117] The World Bank, 2020, Combating Corruption

[118] Institute of Development Research and Development Policy, 2014, The Role of Anti-Corruption Agencies in the Investigation and Prosecution of Procurement Related Corruption Cases

information can cultivate social cohesion and encourage citizens to report corrupt behaviour[119]. Hence, external agencies can effectively transform the political culture and capacities of political and judicial institutions.

For instance, The Bank Group's independent Sanctions System includes the Integrity Vice Presidency which investigates corrupt practices in World Bank-funded initiatives[120]. Such agencies empower oversight and supervision in Latin American-based projects. Concerned governments receive the Integrity Vice Presidency findings and are afforded opportunities to improve their internal compliance programs[121]. Nevertheless, **uncooperative Latin American governments and firms can be publicly debarred and sanctioned from World Bank financed activities**[122]. In October 2020, over one thousand firms and individuals were sanctioned through the Integrity Vice Presidency[123].

Therefore, Latin American states can engage in institutional reform through implementing external regulatory agencies. Monitoring and reporting corruption will improve social cohesion and trust in governmental and private projects[124]. Though corruption is embedded in the political culture of Latin American states, **ACAs are pivotal agencies which can uphold standards of the UN Convention Against Corruption**[125]. International cooperation is essential to sustaining the functioning of ACAs providing prospective and retrospective responses to corruption[126].

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[119] Institute of Development Research and Development Policy, 2014, The Role of Anti-Corruption Agencies in the Investigation and Prosecution of Procurement Related Corruption Cases
[120] The World Bank, 2020, Combating Corruption
[121] Ibid
[122] Ibid
[123] Ibid
[124] Transparency International, 2021, Anti-Corruption Agency Strengthening Initiative
[125] Institute of Development Research and Development Policy, 2014, The Role of Anti-Corruption Agencies in the Investigation and Prosecution of Procurement Related Corruption Cases
[126] Transparency International, 2021, Anti-Corruption Agency Strengthening Initiative

Conclusion

As corruption is interlinked with underdevelopment, social inequalities, and lack of democratic values, it becomes a very difficult issue to overcome.

Furthermore, since the roots of corruption in Latin America stem from 300 years of colonialism, significant change comes from meaningful institutional reform. However anti-corruption and reform manners must be accompanied by a change in the political culture of states. While the international community can aid initiatives to fight corruption and can promote such measures, the success of any programme depends on the willingness of domestic public officials to implement change.

Democratic Backsliding on a Global Scale: Focus on United States, India and Hungary

By Andrew Dover & Gian Remnant

Briefing Note

This section will provide a high-level description of recent events and policy changes in three nations - India, the United States of America, and Hungary - that were *previously* considered highly democratic.

Now, they are considered *flawed democracies* by the Economist's Democracy Index and have seen their scores on this index decline since 2006.[127] The circumstances causing their slippage are, of course, radically different in each nation, but this report will attempt to parse common themes and trends of the cause of the backsliding, and of the tactics used by the leaders in these nations, and how citizens can organise themselves to counteract these setbacks. This submission of the report therefore aims to provide some recommendations and guidance towards the improvement of democratic institutions to promote greater freedoms and the protection of human rights for citizens of countries where they are being increasingly eroded - in-line with **Sustainable Development Goal 16**[128].

Overview

- **All three of the nations mentioned have recently, or are currently, led by figures with notably populist / nationalist impulses - that have attempted to weaken institutions, fracture societies, and subvert or manipulate election results.**

- **Each of these leaders has attempted to centralise power and delegitimize opposition, thereby stoking pre-existing tensions in each of these nations.**

- **Each has been roundly condemned by the international community for aspects of their domestic and foreign agendas, with little to no avail**

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[127] The Economist, 2021, <u>Global Democracy has had a very bad year</u>
[128] "Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels"

India

Civil rights have been eroded by the current government in India in multiple areas

- According to the Economist Intelligence Unit's Democracy Index, India is now 53rd in the world - the higher a country is, the more democratic it is. From almost being considered a 'full democracy' in 2014, its democratic institutions have been eroded ever since, and now it is closer to being referred to as a 'hybrid regime' rather than a 'flawed democracy'[129].

- According to V-Dem as of March 2020, a research institute, the academic-freedom index as well as the freedom-of-expression index have shown the most dramatic decline out of the various democratic indexes used. The most extreme of which has been government censorship, falling from a healthy 3.4 to 1.8 (the highest possible is 4). The civil-liberties index and the rule-of-law index has also dropped, although less so[130].

- The Citizenship Amendment Act which came into effect in 2020, grants citizens of particular religions and faiths a quicker path to full integration into Indian society through citizenship. It omits Muslims from the list, though, a clear act of discrimination, also violating the core principles of the Indian constitution[131]. The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi have also been reducing the civil rights of the 200 million strong minority group of Muslims that reside in India.

Freedom of speech has been particularly clamped down upon by the BJP

- Criticism of the government in the press has been stifled by the police and Indian government. Prime Minister Narendra Modi unsuccessfully attempted to have the country's highest court force the media to publish only official accounts of the COVID-19 pandemic, but instead wrote to leading editors of major publications in India asking them to refrain from publishing negative stories[132].
    - Regardless, police have arrested several dozen journalists who reported about the mishandling of the pandemic by the Indian government[133].
- The state of the media and journalism can be described as 'lapdog media'. Against the self-proclamation of most journalists of acting as 'watchdogs'— for which they are universally applauded—the 'lapdog media' model backs the agenda of the socio-political elite and perpetuates exploitation and social inequalities[134].

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[129] The Economist, 2021, Global democracy has a very bad year
[130] V-Dem, 2020, Democracy Report 2020
[131] The Economist, 2020, Narendra Modi's sectarianism is eroding India's secular democracy
[132] Foreign Policy, 2020, How Press Freedom Came Under Attack in 2020
[133] The Guardian, 2020, India arrests dozens of journalists in clampdown on critics of Covid-19 response
[134] Frontline, 2021, Muzzling the media: How the Modi regime continues to undermine the news landscape

- As the government continually cracks down upon journalists who criticise them, as a result, the media is having to resort to toning down their writing, and increasingly rely on government approval for their publications.

The ability to protest on mass peacefully is being restricted

- In an attempt to clamp down on the organisation of mass protests against the government, the Indian government now directly runs the mobile connections of the state itself, which also gives the government the option of temporarily suspending connection to the internet for citizens
  - It has been employed as a crowd-control mechanism; in 2020 the internet was shut down for a total of 8,928 hours, which also puts the country at the top of a list of 21 countries that restricted internet access to citizens in 2020[135].

- On 1 February 2021, hundreds of Indian Twitter accounts including those belonging to news websites, activists and actors were suspended for more than 12 hours after the government claimed that users were posting content inciting violence due to their use of the hashtag #FarmersProtests. Twitter reversed its decision by the evening[136].
  - However, two days later, on 3 February, the Indian government served a notice on Twitter to comply with an order to remove content and accounts related to hashtags linked to the farmers' protest. The same day, many news media organizations reported that journalists' access to the protest sites were being hindered by the police[137].

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[135] Business Standard, 2021, 8,927 hrs of blackout: Worst internet shutdowns cost India $2.8 bn in 2020
[136] Amnesty International, 2021, India: Government must stop crushing farmers' protests and demonizing dissenters
[137] ibid

Hungary

Increasingly xenophobic rhetoric has been used by Viktor Orbán

- The Hungarian government revoked the ability of the Central European University's Budapest campus to issue US accredited degrees, a move not undertaken by any other European government or university[138]. Though the Hungarian government has stated that this is merely an administrative matter, the university was founded by George Soros who has been the target of much ire from Orbán's government.

- Prime Minister Orbán's vision for Hungary is uncomfortably non-multicultural for other EU member states, with the government promoting a Christian, "*ethnically homogenous*" nation, has been consistently anti-refugee and espoused blatantly Islamophobic rhetoric[139].

The government has been extending the powers of the executive branch

- Though ultimately it was revoked, during the height of the pandemic, the Hungarian parliament passed an emergency resolution that granted the Orbán government to impose prison time for those who have been judged to be spreading misinformation[140], and an ability to circumvent parliament to enact swathes of legislation.

- Orbán currently controls an estimated 78% of Hungarian news media[141], allowing his government to go virtually unchallenged. This has only been achieved through weakening legislation that prevents the concentration of media ownership.

- In late 2018, the Hungarian government proposed establishing a new branch of *administrative courts* under the purview of the government appointed justice minister, effectively giving control of a large portion of the judicial system to Orbán's cabinet. This policy was later reversed after pressure from other EU member states, and heavy domestic opposition[142], but is yet another demonstration of the current regime's attempt to dismantle any countervailing institutional forces.

The European Union is aware and is attempting to halt the authoritarian actions being enacted by Orbán and his government

- In an unprecedented vote, the European Parliament voted by over two thirds to suspend Hungary's voting rights as a result of Hungary's breach of core EU values[143]. This has

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[138] POLITICO, 2018, Parliament denounces Hungary's illiberalism
[139] Brookings Institute, 2019, Anti-Muslim populism in Hungary: From the margins to the mainstream
[140] The Atlantic, 2020, The EU Watches as Hungary Kills Democracy
[141] Sven Giegod, 2019, Green study reveals dangerous media concentration in Hungary: 78 percent of news media under Orbán's control
[142] FIDH, 2020, Hungary Judicial Independence Brief
[143] POLITICO, 2018, Parliament denounces Hungary's illiberalism

started the European Union's Article 7 process, which could ultimately suspend the county's voting rights in the European Council and the European Parliament[144].

- The reasoning underpinning this decision made by the European Union surrounds concerns about a number of activities happening within the borders of Hungary. The list of concerns mentioned includes: the constitutional and electoral system, privacy and data protection, freedom of expression and religion, academic freedom and freedom of association as well as equal rights, particularly for refugees and minorities such as Roma and Jews[145].

- The relationship has soured further in recent weeks, with Viktor Orbán withdrawing his Fidesz party from the European People's Party (EPP), the largest group in the European Parliament with a centre-right leaning.
    - This came as the EPP agreed to a set of rules that would make it an easier process to expel a delegation from a country, like Hungary whose rule of law violations have put a stain on the party[146].

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[144] EUR-LEX, 2012, Consolidated Version of the Treaty of the European Union
[145] BBC, 2018, EU parliament votes to punish Hungary over 'breaches' of core values
[146] The New York Times, 2021, Hungary's Ruling Party Breaks With Conservative E.U. Allies

United States of America

Political polarisation has been exacerbated by ex-President Donald Trump, subverting the democratic institutions of the country

- Ideological polarisation has driven the Republicans and Democrats increasingly further apart over recent decades[147]. This dynamic has become increasingly dangerous since the Presidency of Donald Trump, who has frequently demonstrated authoritarian and anti-democratic tendencies - which have subsequently been adopted by the Republican party writ large. In many cases, simply striving to ensure that institutions and elections remain democratic has been seen as a party-political enterprise.

- President Trump categorically refused to accept the results of the November 2020 election, alleging claims of mass voter fraud, which have been repeatedly rejected by state and federal courts[148], including by many judges President Trump nominated.
    - This all culminated in the storming of the Capitol in January 2021, as the mob of Trump supporters attempted to block the peaceful transfer of power. The chaos that ensued put on clear display the fragility of American democracy and the institutions in place to allow for a smooth transition between parties[149].

- Republicans lawmakers in the House of Representatives and the Senate refused to acknowledge the result over a month after the election[150], and many later voted on January 6th, 2021 to challenge the formal certification of the results, normally a routine process[151].

Party politics has eroded representative democracy in the country

- Republican politicians have attempted to enact voting ID laws since the Presidency of George H W Bush, with the clear aim of disenfranchising likely Democrat voters[152]:
    - In 2013, in a 5-4 decision, the United States Supreme Court voted to roll-back crucial sections of the 1965 Voting Rights Act [153], which acted as a deterrent against states enacting laws which would make voting increasingly difficult for racial and ethnic minorities.
    - As racial and ethnic minorities on the whole tend to vote for the Democratic party, with 65% of Latino voters voting for Biden in 2020 along with 87% of black

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[147] Pew Research, 2019, In a Politically Polarized Era, Sharp Divides in Both Partisan Coalitions
[148] Financial Times, 2021, Lawsuit tracker: Donald Trump's legal battle runs into repeated dead ends
[149] The Economist, 2021, Trump's supporters storm the Capitol to block the transfer of power
[150] Washington Post, 2020, 220 congressional Republicans won't say whether Biden or Trump won the election
[151] CNN, 2021, Congress finalizes Biden's win after riot disrupts Capitol
[152] Alliance for Justice, 2020, What Drives the GOP Obsession with Restricting Voting? Race.
[153] The Guardian, 2020, In 2013 the supreme court gutted voting rights – how has it changed the US?

voters, 68% of Asian Americans and 65% of Indian American voters[154] - disenfranchisement of racial minorities favours the Republican party's chances of garnering more votes.

- Gerrymandering is a partisan process and has led to districts being drawn in a way that benefits one of the parties in a way that does not represent the true voting patterns of voters. Hence, it is not a democratic practice
    - From 2012 to 2016, the voters of Michigan cast more than 50% of their ballots for Democratic Party legislative candidates. They voted for Democrats 52% of the time for the Michigan state House of Representatives; a little more than 50% for the Michigan Senate; and 51% of the time for the federal House of Representatives. It would be expected that the Democrats would receive slightly more than half of Michigan elected officials during this time[155].
        - Instead, Republicans held an advantage at every level of government. Democrats received only 44% of seats in the Michigan House of Representatives; 31% of the seats in the Michigan Senate; and 35% of the seats in the federal House of Representatives[156].

- Out of the 50 American states, according to the Center for American Progress, there are a total of 36 have been gerrymandered in a way which favours one of the two main parties in the US House of Representatives. Of these, 11 favour the Democrats, and 25 favour the Republicans[157].

The electoral system is flawed when it comes to effectively representing the electorate

- The electoral system of the United States uniquely rewards minoritarian coalition building. The Senate, one of the two federal legislative bodies, is composed of two Senators from every state in the Union - each of which have radically different populations. The New York Times has noted that 62 Senators represent the same number of people as the 6 from New York, California and Texas[158].
    - This effectively means that a vote from a smaller state carries significantly more weight than a single vote from a larger state population wise.

- The use of the filibuster in the Senate has been a partisan tool used by members of both parties to stop a bill passing through the chamber. The filibuster stops debate from taking place, and hence it limits the democratic operations of the Senate.

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[154] Wall Street Journal, 2020, How We Voted in the 2020 Presidential Election
[155] Center for American Progress, 2019, Voter-Determined Districts
[156] ibid
[157] ibid
[158] New York Times, 2013, The Small-State Advantage in the United States Senate

- They have been used increasingly, which can be seen through the increase of votes in favour of cloture motions which put a time limit on the consideration of a bill[159].

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[159] United States Senate, 2021, Cloture Motions

Insight

Overview

The purpose of this section is to illuminate several common themes that underlie the democratic backsliding in both India, Hungary and the United States - we discuss heightened political polarisation, the weakening of key institutions, and the muted reaction from the international community. Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 16 is eroded by these trends as it emphasises "*access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels*".

Political polarisation leads to less accountable organisations; during any given election opposition parties are portrayed as an existential threat to a nation's existence even if the prevailing party has participated in democratic backsliding. Weak institutions ensure that governments cannot be held to reformed or shamed by their actions - state owned media will not perform a watchdog role and judiciaries will enforce arbitrary and inequitable laws, and the lack of a reaction from the international community implies that these trends are likely to continue.

The Limited Reaction from the International Community - Authoritarian activity has been allowed to continue unchecked

The failure to condemn and apply meaningful sanctions from strong, democratic countries and international groups has left the increasingly autocratic nations free from any repercussions of their anti-democratic behaviour. Without any meaningful reaction from the international community and only condemnation, the increasingly authoritarian nature of governance in India, Hungary and the United States will go unchecked and continue in the future.

Hungary, a member state of the European Union, has received limited punishment for the authoritarian tendencies that Viktor Orbán has developed recently. The EU faces a great dilemma regarding the best way to sanction Viktor Orbán and his government, without hurting the citizens of the country, as well as the opposition parties[160]. The delayed response from the EU is a result of formulating policy which will change Orbán's behaviour without pushing the electorate of the country towards an anti-EU stance.

Currently, funding to Hungary makes up a total of 3% of the country's GDP, one of the highest proportions of any of the member states[161]. Most of the funding which comes from the EU goes to local government bodies which provide essential medical and healthcare facilities to the residents. In fact, the residents are well aware of the benefits that they receive from EU membership, and so the EU wants to keep this positive image that they already have.

The West faces a similar problem with targeted sanctions against India, only on a larger scale than Hungary. Both the EU and the United States have been reluctant to comment on or condemn the actions of Narendra Modi's government as India is a key ally in the region. Its importance surrounds the geopolitics of the region, particularly with an increasingly powerful and expanding China - the US and EU therefore find in India a state that will stand up to the actions of China, and acts as a buffer.

The concern of Washington with India's status in the region as a key ally has been demonstrated recently with India's purchase of five Russian S-400 self-propelled surface-to-air systems for $5.4 billion[162]. The Biden administration is keen to check both Russian and Chinese geopolitical aggression, and this has resulted in floating the idea of sanctions against India for supposedly violating US law, specifically the "Countering America's Adversaries through Sanctions Act" ("CAATSA")[163].

This reveals how the primary concern for the Biden administration with India currently is having a strategic alliance and cooperating on a security and defence basis especially. The fact that Washington is currently considering sanctions for violation of a defence treaty but unwilling to

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[160] Reporting Democracy, 2021, EUROPE'S SANCTIONS DILEMMA: HOW TO PUNISH HUNGARY WITHOUT HURTING HUNGARIANS
[161] ibid
[162] Forbes, 2021, Why India Is Facing Possible U.S. Sanctions
[163] ibid

condemn the authoritarian tendencies of Modi's government shows where the priorities of the US lie.

The Trump administration was less likely to blink an eye to the crackdown on rights by Modi's government, considering that they share a more authoritarian strongman style of governance. This was solidified in Trump's description of Modi as "an exceptional leader"[164]. The more values-based Biden administration, however, may choose to take a tougher stance against the actions of the Indian government, though, they will have to weigh up their values-based system and the geopolitical priorities in the region carefully.

Political Polarisation has led to populist, authoritarian leaders to take advantage of divisions within the electorate

Though religion has been a driver of political polarisation in both Hungary and the US, it has been preeminent as a divisive factor in Indian politics since the 1980s[165]. India was founded as a secular nation, as stated by its constitution's preamble[166], and this sentiment was echoed by the vast majority of politicians including its first Prime Minister Nehru. However, Muslims have always been between 10 and 15% of India's total population, and Hindus have always comprised the majority (at approximately 80%)[167]. The BJP was founded in 1980 as an explicitly Hindu Nationalist party, many of their earliest causes and actions were explicitly anti-Muslim; for example, in its 1991 election manifesto the party supported the destruction of a 450-year-old Mosque - when this was deemed illegal by the Indian judicial system the party organised a rally that quickly turned violent and was demolished by Hindu nationalists[168]. BJP leaders were later arrested for incitement of the violence.

India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi, a member of the BJP has heightened this religious polarisation. Modi, as Chief Minister of Gujarat was complicit in the lack of a state response to the pogroms that resulted in the deaths of over 1000 Muslims in 2002[169], and was denied a visa to the US in 2005[170]. Since becoming Prime Minister in 2014, he has advanced an unapologetically Hindu nationalist platform; since his re-election in 2019 the Indian parliament passed the Citizenship Amendment Bill (allowing a path to citizenship for religious minorities from neighbouring regions but excluding Muslims, leading to widespread protests[171]), revoked the

[164] The Atlantic, 2021, The Trump-Modi Playbook
[165] Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2020. Mounting Majoritarianism and Political Polarization in India
[166] 1950, Constitution of India.
[167] Indian Census Data, 2011. Religion PCA (India & States/UTs/District/Sub-Distt/Town Level)
[168] Journal of Political Studies, 2015. The Babri Mosque and Hindu Extremists Movements
[169] Rana Ayyub, 2016. Gujarat Files: Anatomy of a Cover Up
[170] The Guardian, 2016. Narendra Modi's US visa secure despite Gujarat riots guilty verdicts
[171] BBC, 2019. Citizenship Amendment Bill: India's new 'anti-Muslim' law explained

special status granted to Jammu and Kashmir (the only majority Muslim state in India which could previously make its own laws on all issues excluding defence and had its own constitution).

During the pandemic, while Modi has often called for unity, sectarian violence is still widespread. Muslims have been blamed for spreading the virus [172], and during the early stages of the pandemic many were beaten or lynched.

Viktor Orbán has deliberately exacerbated the polarisation of Hungarian politics along every conceivable dimension. Orbán is notorious for delegitimizing his political opponents, stretching well beyond the bounds of normal politics; he labels his opponents as henchmen of George Soros[173], and therefore part of a grand international conspiracy, after a recent election victory he proclaimed that he would seek retribution against civil society groups and political opponents[174].

Orbán has attempted to solidify this power by ensuring that the vast majority of media outlets are pro government and has ensured the "*near total consolidation of the media in pro government hands*"[175]. Oligarchs friendly to Fidesz have purchased regional newspapers in wide circulation[176], ensuring that dissenting voices in the media-ecosystem are becoming increasingly rare. The government was able to pressure the Editor in Chief of one of Hungary's only remaining non-loyalist news sites Index, sparking mass resignations and protests, after a pro-Orbán businessman took a controlling stake in the site[177]. Opposition media are referred to by the government as traitors and foreign instigators.

Fidesz has attempted to catalyse culture wars with inflammatory rhetoric and policies, in 2019 the Speaker of the House compared LGBT couples that adopt children to paedophiles (and subsequently preventing these couples from adopting)[178], has ended legal recognition for transgender people, and has banned gender studies from being taught at university.

All of these factors have sought to fracture the populace and ensure that Fidesz loyalists and political opponents live in entirely separate information ecospheres. The countryside is generally pro-Fidesz territory, whereas metropolitan areas continue to support opposition parties; those who listen to state owned media are not exposed to any viewpoints remotely critical of the government.

Political polarisation in the United States is a well-documented phenomenon and has drastically intensified in recent decades. After the passage of the 1964/5 Voting Rights Act, signed into law by Democratic president Lyndon Johnston which removed many hurdles preventing African Americans from voting, and the GOP's subsequent adaptation of a Southern Strategy to further

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[172] NYT, 2020. In India, Coronavirus Fans Religious Hatred
[173] BBC, 2018. The man who thinks Europe has been invaded
[174] Washington Post, 2018. Viktor Orbán promised 'revenge' against his enemies in Hungary. Now they're preparing for it.
[175] Freedom House, 2019. Media Freedom: A Downward Spiral
[176] LSE, 2017. The state of Hungarian media: Endgame
[177] BBC, 2020. Hungary's Index journalists walk out over sacking
[178] Prospect, 2020. How democracies die: the case of Hungary

stoke racial tensions by campaigning for white votes with explicitly racist rhetoric, partisan polarisation along racial lines began to take hold in the US. This racial polarisation is still present in US politics, in the 2020 Presidential election Joe Biden received 87% of the black vote and only 41% of white votes[179], with much of the campaign emphasising racial justice issues.

This polarisation is exacerbated by *winner takes all* systems on local, state and federal levels - which encourages two party competition as voters believe third party candidates cannot succeed and will therefore not vote for them. It is within this framework that Democrats and Republican's primaries for office holders at all levels of governments encourage extremes from both ends of the political spectrum. The fractious nature of the US political system has facilitated Democrats and Republican voters increasingly disparate political views - in 2001 75% of Democrats and 45% of Republicans agreed that "*Government should be responsible for healthcare coverage*", in 2016 these figures were 77% and 24% respectively.[180]

The Roles of Institutions - Formal institutions have been eroded by authoritarian leaders

Without a strong opposition in place to check the actions and policymaking tendencies of a government, the party in power can effectively push the boundaries without any formal backlash in the legislative chamber. In India, the opposition to Modi's government has been steadily fading away as many opposition party members have actually defected to the BJP, leaving the opposition limited in its numbers and influence.

Though formally never acknowledged by the BJP, many of the defections have been accompanied by reports that large amounts of money have exchanged hands to influence these moves[181]. In the cases where money has not reportedly influenced certain defections, businessmen who have turned to politics and are now in the legislative chambers have allegedly been coerced into either joining or supporting the policymaking ambitions of Modi's government under threats of government action through agencies such as Enforcement Directorate (ED) and the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI)[182].

Even though none of these allegations have been proven, what makes the claims believable is that many legislators and parliamentarians who faced a number of cases of fraud and other allegations have found the charges either dropped or moved to the bottom of the priority list once they joined the BJP - this signals a certain level of corruption within the government[183].

The biggest concern for Hungary in terms of its democratic backsliding is the slow erosion of the rule of law and the powers of the judiciary. The findings of the European Association of Judges

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[179] New York Times, 2020. Election Exit Polls
[180] Gallup, 2017. Partisan Differences Growing on a Number of Issues
[181] TRT World, 2019, India's political opposition wakes up to new reality under Modi & Co
[182] ibid
[183] Forbes, 2019, Corruption is Still Thriving in Modi's India

and the European Commission about the deteriorating independence of Hungarian courts was: "The Hungarian judiciary has been facing a kind of 'constitutional crisis' since May 2018" while "checks and balances, which are crucial to ensuring judicial independence, have been further weakened within the ordinary court system"[184].

Pressure on individual judges has increased significantly. In July of 2019, the Hungarian National Authority for Data Protection and Freedom of Information (DPA) found that in February 2019 a regional court president had illegally black-listed 51 judges in his district who were members of a judges' association. He also reportedly tried to persuade court leaders at his court to encourage judges to end their membership of the association. The DPA fined the court for breaching privacy rights. Government-aligned propaganda media has continued to target and discredit individual judges, including members of the National Judiciary Council (NJC) and other judges who have publicly criticised the judicial administration[185].

While Hungary's emergency law to fight COVID-19 has expired, a new law is about to be introduced to allow Orbán to rule by decree, with even fewer checks on his power. It excludes parliament from the decision-making process if the emergency act should be reintroduced. Just another example of how Orbán has been exploiting the pandemic to push through his political agenda beyond health or economic concerns, including attacks on data protection for example.

Viktor Orbán has also used the COVID-19 pandemic as an excuse to erode the system of checks and balances which are so essential to the health of a democracy. Whilst Hungary's emergency law (which gave the executive branch of government more extensive powers) to fight the pandemic has expired, a new law is going to be introduced to parliament which would allow Orbán to rule by decree, with even fewer checks on his powers[186]. This has been the culmination of a deliberately anti-democratic series of efforts by Fidesz, after their 2010 election victory the party ensured that its support base in urban areas were concentrated in relatively few parliamentary districts, whereas sparsely populated countryside districts were centres of Orbán support [187].

Formal institutions in the US have been attacked by the Trump administration and this has led to public distrust in these institutions which ultimately negatively affect the functionality and effectiveness of them. In particular, executive authority and influence has increased over the past four years. Although Trump did not enact as many executive orders as previous US presidents, he used the executive order to push through many controversial policies - notably Executive Order 13769, titled *Protecting the Nation from Foreign Terrorist Entry into the United States* as well as Executive Order, resulting in numerous legal challenges but ultimately receiving full implementation from the Supreme Court[188]. The use of the executive order by the Trump administration was essentially an effort to undermine and bypass the process of Congress enacting policy into law, particularly when considering the fact that such controversial policies most likely would not have ascended to law if it had gone through Congress.

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[184] European Association of Judges, 2019, Report on the fact-finding mission of the EAJ to Hungary
[185] Liberties, 2019, Slowly and Stealthily: Rule of Law Being Undermined in Hungary
[186] New York Times, 2020, Hungary Moves to End Rule by Decree, but Orbán's Powers May Stay
[187] Vox, 2020. It happened there: how democracy died in Hungary.
[188] BBC, 2017, Trump travel ban: Supreme Court lets restrictions take full effect

In particular, the executive branch of government in the US has taken a hold on foreign policy. In Congress, the combination of declining foreign policy expertise among members and increasing political polarization has reduced the ability of legislators to supervise the executive branch even if they had the appetite to do so. The bureaucracy, meanwhile, has lost its incentive to cultivate and wield expertise as decision-making has become centralized in the White House and congressional action and oversight on foreign policy have declined[189]. A prime example of limited congressional oversight over a crucial foreign policy action was the crucial decision to assassinate general Qasem Soleimani in 2020[190].

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[189] Council on Foreign Relations, 2018, The Unconstrained Presidency: Checks and Balances Eroded Long Before Trump
[190] BBC, 2020, Qasem Soleimani: US kills top Iranian general in Baghdad air strike

Policy Recommendations

Overview

The aim of these recommendations is to highlight ways in which multinational institutions as well as national governments can prevent democracies from backsliding under particularly authoritarian leaders. Whether these policies will effectively prevent the current wave of authoritarianism from subsiding may not entirely reverse the process, however a policy response on the international and national scale must be put in place to prevent further backsliding from taking place

The policy recommendations are as follows:

1) **Action 1** - Democracies worldwide should come together to form a new group who work together on a co-ordinated mission to uphold democratic practices globally
2) **Action 2** - Technology companies which have undermined democratic practice and taken a state-like role in some cases should be held back with stronger data privacy laws
3) **Action 3** - Institutions such as the judiciary should be reformed to ensure that checks and balances can prevent authoritarian leaders from hijacking the political system

Action 1: An Organisation of Democracies Globally

Proposed policy - form a club or organisation of democracies in a similar fashion to the G20 to hold each to account by offering incentives to membership

The first priority of this organisation of democracies should signal that the upholding of democracy is valued and important in the modern world to tackle rising authoritarianism. The organisation should seek to show clear intention to stand and work together on important global issues such as climate change.

Another goal that the organisation should work towards is ensuring that their own democracies remain in order by holding each other to account on freedom indexes. By holding each other to account, each country can ensure that they do not slip into authoritarian tendencies. For this to be achieved, the group should not simply be symbolic, but should actively work together to align policies on climate change, foreign policy, and technology.

The main way in which can be realised is coordinated responses to issues, such as climate change, and perhaps make more ambitious goals than would be established at say the upcoming COP26 climate conference (Economist, 2021). In this way, the organisation can become a beacon for progressive attitudes and action which may not be possible through other multilateral institutions.

This organisation can build on the preliminary work of the Community of Democracies (CoD), which has been established for 20 years dedicated to bringing democracies together to support each other (Center for American Progress, 2020). The CoD has representation from all over the world at various stages of democratic development.

The new organisation of democracies, though, should take into account that countries which are members of the CoD have been in the process of democratic backsliding.

So, this new organisation should create a clear set of values, and protocols which can be enacted quickly compared to other multilateral institutions (such as the European Union's response to Hungary and Poland). Through these protocols, the organisation must establish what may result in either sanctions or restrictions to certain mechanisms that benefits the member states of the organisation, or temporary expulsion.

Most importantly, the organisation must not become a group of states with the primary aim being to counter China's authoritarian approach to governance (Financial Times, 2021). If this were to happen, it would severely limit the scope of potential that the organisation could achieve, and, in addition, would contribute to already growing tensions. Hence, the organisation should seek to form a working relationship with authoritarian governments, whilst simultaneously displaying how democracy is the more viable and beneficial alternative to autocracy.

Action 2: Reigning in Big Technology to Protect Democracy on a Global Scale

Proposed policy - regulate technology companies such as Facebook, Google and Microsoft to protect fundamental rights and prevent such companies from taking a state-like role in certain aspects

Governments need to urgently reclaim their role in creating rules and restrictions that uphold democracy's core principles in the technology sphere. Up to now, these governments have slowly begun to do that with laws at the national level or, in Europe's case, at the regional level (MIT, 2020).

Governments should adopt a clear definition of freedom of expression for social media companies to adhere to. This definition could be similar to the mostly shared European approach for example, where expression is free but there are exceptions for hate speech and threats of violence

Democratic countries should also do more to limit the practice and scope of microtargeting political ads, as seen in the Cambridge Analytica scandal with both the American Presidential Election and the EU referendum in the UK in 2016 (New York Times, 2016). Policy could be enacted which could restrict companies from allowing advertisers to tailor and target advertisements based on collected personal data.

To tackle the above point in a direct way, governments should get tougher on privacy laws that restrict the abilities of companies such as Facebook and Google in particular to harness personal data. This would in turn limit third party manipulation of such data to be used to influence democratic elections (Zuboff, 2018).

This is particularly important when it comes to foreign interference in elections. Technology is utilised by countries which seek to influence elections - as seen in 2016 with the Russian attempt to interfere in the US Presidential Election - that ultimately benefit the ruling party in said country which is attempting to meddle in the election (U.S Department of Justice, 2019).

This regulation of technology companies also links to action one of the policy recommendations in this section of this report. An organisation of democratic countries could set norms, rules, and guidelines for technology companies, and agree on specific protocols for international digital activities (MIT, 2020).

This organisation could provide a key alternative to the two existing models of technology governance currently present across the globe, the privatised (as practiced by democratic governments so far), or the authoritarian (in the case of China and Russia). The organisation should be a truly global, democratic effort to restrict and regulate technology companies which have led to democratic erosion across the world (MIT, 2020).

Action 3 - Reform of Institutions

Proposed policy - reformation of institutions can produce a stronger system of checks and balances, preventing authoritarian leaders from hijacking respective national political systems

The multinational institution of the European Union can curb democratic backsliding in Hungary (as well as Poland and Belarus) can create a stronger judiciary to check the authoritarian leaders in power. The European Court of Justice (ECJ) can bring court cases against the countries - and leaders - and put them in a court case regarding a violation of the founding EU principles (Financial Times, 2020). In 2018, funding from the EU made up 4.97% of Hungary's economy and 3.43% of the Polish economy (European Union, 2018). By trying these countries in the ECJ, the EU can withhold key funds from these countries which are crucial for their national economies.

Linking into the previous policy recommendation, a reform of privacy and data protection laws can prevent 'micro-targeting' political advertising can perhaps prevent political polarisation which forms online (Internet Policy Review, 2019). Preventing micro-targeted political advertising could potentially result in a less polarised online community, which may translate into a less polarised society.

Constitutional reform through the democratic election of governments running on a platform to enact such policies provides a strong alternative to producing a system of checks and balances. Undemocratic practices such as the filibuster in the United States, which do not even stem from the constitution, can be prevented through amending the constitution (Economist, 2021). Constitutional reform requires the democratic election of a government willing to enact such changes though, and this limits the feasibility of such change.

To prevent foreign intervention in elections and persuasion of governmental officials abroad, stronger laws requiring greater transparency about governmental officials' handling of public finances as well as campaign donations can create a stronger trust amongst the electorate in their political leaders and system. This could include passing legislation to enforce the principles of the constitution's foreign emoluments clause, closing loopholes in rules on reporting foreign influence, and modernizing financial disclosure requirements for elected officials (Freedom House, 2020).

To root out corruption in democratic governments, stronger laws should be passed to create oversight. Stolen funds are routinely funnelled through international financial markets, laundered via seemingly legitimate purchases in democratic nations. Democracies should strengthen transparency laws to ensure that accurate identifying information about purchasers and their funding sources is available. Governments should ensure robust enforcement of laws and investigate and prosecute violators when necessary to build public trust in democracy and good governance (Freedom House, 2020).

Conclusion

As we witness the erosion of democratic values at the institutional scale, it can feel extremely difficult to imagine how public policy might improve the situation - one is seemingly depending on the very oppressors to engage in non-exploitative behaviour (not to mention the extensive need to make amends).

As such, the essence of the recommendations is actually to equip pressure groups, individuals and various kinds of political collectives with the knowledge and expertise they need to demand legislative improvements. It is an endeavour to empower each person of the various societies, and across societies, to collectively demand liberation and guarantee the protection of their human rights.

Tackling Biodiversity Loss in Tropical Rainforests

By Sidharth Banerjee & Mariam Dunseath

Briefing Note

This briefing report will provide details of the extensive biodiversity loss in tropical forests - Deforestation, Overexploitation of ecosystems, and Climate Change - and its impacts on the large tropical forests. It addresses **Sustainable Development Goal 15**[191], which aims to halt land degradation and halt biodiversity loss.

Overview

- **Indiscriminate deforestation is the driving factor behind biodiversity loss in tropical forests.**

- **Political actions have exacerbated deforestation in countries where profitability has been prioritised over conservation.**

- **Large-scale logging and mining have led to greater pollution, especially air pollution, in which the quality of air has had negative impacts on both aquatic and land species.**

- **Over-exploitation of large-body mammals in tropical regions has increased their risk of extinction.**

- **Forest fires, destroying large masses of land, have become increasingly common around the world due to rapid climate change.**

- **Tropical forests are slowly transitioning to savannahs due to rising temperatures and irregular rainfall.**

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[191] "Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss"

Deforestation

Deforestation is a significant driving force behind the extinction of tropical species

- According to the World Animal Foundation, the Earth is losing 137 species of plants, animals and insects every day due to deforestation[192].

- Research from University of York and Sheffield suggest that 62% of tropical forests are currently unable to protect their tropical species from becoming extinct[193], due to high deforestation levels.

- According to a University of Sheffield study, deforestation has led to disconnected and isolated patches of forests. This reduces the area available for wildlife to escape rising global temperatures[194].

- Study from the Proceedings of National Institute of Sciences predict that tropical extinction rates are 100 times the base levels, and this rate could trigger a mass extinction event since Earth's terrestrial biodiversity is heavily concentrated in tropical ecosystems[195].

Deforestation of the Amazon Rainforest has accelerated during Jair Bolsonaro's regime through decisions that incentivise exploitation.

- During 2020. 11,088 sq. km of rainforest was razed due to Bolsonaro government's decision to dismantle its environment protection policies[196].

- Scientists have warned that 17% of the forest has already been lost due to decades of deforestation and human activity and at this rate, the Southern Amazon will become barren within 100 years[197].

- Since Bolsonaro assumed Brazil's presidency in 2019, deforestation has soared by 50% and environmental penalties have dropped by 42%. The federal government has also slashed funding for environment enforcement by 27.4%[198].

The U.S. government's anti-environment sentiment during the Trump era has led to further deforestation of North America's only rainforest, the Tongass National Forest

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[192] World Animal Foundation, 2020, Deforestation: Clearing the Path for Wildlife Extinctions

[193] University of York, 2019, Climate Change and Deforestation push tropical species towards extinction

[194] Science Daily, 2019, Climate Change and Deforestation together push tropical species towards extinction

[195] Mongabay, 2017, Science finds hundreds of thousands of tropical species at risk of extinction due to deforestation

[196] The Guardian, 2020, Amazon deforestation surges to 12-year high under Bolsonaro

[197] Time Magazine, 2019, The Amazon Rainforest is Nearly Gone

[198] The Guardian, 2021, Jair Bolsonaro could face charges in The Hague over Amazon rainforest

- In 2019, then President Trump authorised his Agriculture Secretary to exempt the Tongass National Forest from logging restrictions which were put in place during the final days of the Clinton Administration[199].

- The tropical forest is referred to as the "lungs of the country" and contains centuries old western cedar, hemlock and Sitka spruce trees and houses and 400 species[200].

- As of 2020, nearly 9.4 million acres of forest, which include old growth forests such as red and yellow cedar, Sitka Spruce and Western Hemlock have been undergoing logging[201].

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[199] The Washington Post, 2019, Trump pushes to allow new logging in Alaska's Tongass National Forest
[200] The Guardian, 2020, Trump to gut protections in Alaska's Tongass forest, the 'lungs of the country'
[201] Anchorage Daily News, 2020, Trump administration to strip logging and development protections from most of Southeast Alaska's Tongass National Forest

Overexploitation of Ecosystems

Overexploitation by human activity has had significant impacts on tropical habitat

- Human activity and development in tropical rainforests such as logging, mining, agriculture oil and gas extraction, cattle ranching, poaching, hunting, and poaching, has led to a massive loss in habitat for animals and a disruption in food chains.[202]

- About 500 million hectares of tropical forests have been degraded due primarily to overexploitation.[203]

- Harvesting of wildlife animals such as mammals, birds and reptiles is increasing at a rapid pace, as in the Amazon 9.6-23.5 million of this wildlife has been harvested.[204]

Small-scale agriculture and impoverished farmers are over-exploiting the Congo Basin's, changing the ecology of the forests.

- Only 5% of global wealth has trickled down to the poorest 60%. Poor farmers often depend on fragile ecosystems and diminishing forests in the Congo for subsistence[205].

- Research conducted by the University of Maryland says that the driving force of deforestation in the Congo Basin is small-scale subsistence agriculture. This accounts for 80% of the region's deforestation[206].

- With bleak livelihood prospects, most village farmers engage in subsistence farming through logging and farming in the forests. Small scale agriculture has contributed to 84% of Congo Basin's deforestation. This grazing increases fragmentation of the soil, changing the naturally ecology of countless species in the forests[207].

Poaching and excessive wildlife harvesting has led to a decline in endangered large body mammals in tropical regions.

- Functional extinction levels are much higher for threatened species and large body mammals in hunted sites, with a defaunation index of 0.66 to 0.91[208].
- Average wildlife harvesting rates of tropical mammals in tropical rainforests are approximately 6.0 animals/sq. km/year in Southeast Asia (2 studies), 17.5 animals in Africa (2 studies), and 8.1 animals in Latin America (5 studies)[209]

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[202] Mongabay, 2012, Threats To Rainforests From Humankind
[203] Sasaki, N., Asner, G., Pan, Y., et al., 2016, Sustainable Management of Tropical Forests Can Reduce Carbon Emissions and Stabilize Timber Production
[204] Mongabay, 2012, Hunting/Poaching
[205] Solidaridad Network, 2019, Fighting Inequality and Deforestation in the Congo Basin
[206] Mongabay, 2018, Congo Basin rainforest may be gone by 2100, study finds
[207] Mongabay, 2018, Congo Basin rainforest may be gone by 2100, study finds
[208] Tilker, A., Abrams, J.F., Mohamed, A. et al., 2019, Habitat degradation and indiscriminate hunting differentially impact faunal communities in the Southeast Asian tropical biodiversity hotspot
[209] Mongabay, 2012, HUNTING/POACHING

- In the tropical Congo Basin, the historical lack of enforcement of game codes has led to the critical depletion of the rhinoceros, which is hunted for its horn, and of the African elephant, which is slaughtered for its ivory[210].

Overexploitation in the Amazon rainforest has damaged animal ecosystems and polluted aquatic ecosystems

- In the Tapajos River (a river located south of gold mining areas) fishermen found 90% of fish caught were contaminated with methylmercury.[211][212]

- In the 1990s, the IMAZON (Institute of Man and Environment of the Amazon) documented that for every commercial tree removed, 16-27 other trees more than 10 cm in diameter are damaged, 40 m of road are created and 600 m² of canopy is opened.[213]

- Oil drilling and extraction has created massive oil blocs in the Peruvian Amazon. In 2013, the Peruvian government declared an environmental state of emergency due to the high levels of lead, barium, and chromium found in the Pastaza River.[214]

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[210] Britannica, Poaching and Biodiversity Loss
[211] Mercury is a pollutant that is used in the extraction of gold in the Amazon and has had impacts on the atmosphere and aquatic ecosystems
[212] WWF, 2020, Amazon Mining
[213] Yale School of the Environment, 2021, Reduced Impact Logging in the Amazon
[214] Mongabay, 2013, After decades of turning a blind eye, Peru declares state of emergency due to oil contamination in Amazon

Climate Change

Climate change is slowly eliminating tropical forests worldwide, as they are becoming more grassland savannah-like ecosystems

- As of 2020, 40% of the Amazonian rainforest is considered a savannah instead of a tropical rainforest, due to its grassland characteristics and change in climate. [215]

- If greenhouse gas emissions increase as predicted by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's high-emissions scenario, the minimal forest area in the Amazon would shrink by 66%. [216]

- Studies of the Amazon basin, such as Malhi's study[217], predicts a "dieback" scenario, where a rise in temperature corresponds with a 10-20% reduction in rainfall, followed by change from forest ecosystems to savanna ecosystems. [218]

- In the "dieback" scenario, lower forest cover results in greater carbon emissions, less water retention, further drying, and a pernicious feedback cycle.[219]

Forest fires resulting from climate change have created a loss in plant and animal species in the Amazon rainforest

- The Amazon is expected to increase by 2-3 degrees Celsius by 2050[220] which will lead to an increased level of drought in the Amazon, triggering mass deforestation that would create a loss in biodiversity. [221]

- According to Brazil's National Institute for Space Research (INPE), by August 2019, about 76,000 fires were burning across the Amazon rainforest which was 80% more than the forest fires the year before. [222]

- Fires can be followed by insect colonization and infestation which disturb the ecological balance.[223]Forest fires have created the growth of fire-prone species, such as pyrophytic grasses.[224]

- Burned forests become impoverished of small mammals, birds and reptiles, and carnivores tend to avoid burned areas, thus the reduction in densities of small mammals such as rodents have adversely affected the food supply for small carnivores. [225]

[215] The Guardian, 2020, Amazon near tipping point of switching from rainforest to savannah- study
[216] Mongabay, 2020, The Amazon savanna? Rainforest teeters on the brink as climate heats up
[217] Y. Malhi, Roberts, J., Betts, et al., 2008, Climate Change, Deforestation, and the Fate of the Amazon
[218] Yale School of the Environment, 2021, Climate Change and Tropical Forests
[219] Ibid
[220] WWF, n.d., Climate Change In The Amazon
[221] National Geographic, 2019, See how much of the Amazon, how it compares to other years
[222] Ibid
[223] R. Nasi, R. Dennis, E. Meijaard, et al., 2002, Forest fire and biological diversity
[224] Ibid
[225] Ibid

- Two species in the Amazon rainforest are predicted to be extinct due to fires: the Milton Titi monkey from the southern region, and the Mura Saddleback Tamarin monkey from the central region. [226]

Climate change has proven to create significant biodiversity loss in the Congo Basin

- According to the European Union's Capacity4dev, since 1980 the Central African Elephant population has declined by 62%.[227]

- According to a 2021 study by the Centre for International Forestry Research, rising temperatures and irregular rainfall has caused a loss of 80% of edible mushrooms and caterpillars, which has impacts on the local people who rely on local sources of food.[228]

- The rising temperatures and low water levels have impacted the animal resources within aquatic ecosystems such as rivers, as in the Central African Republics Mpoko River, fishermen have seen a large drop in fish stocks as 51.7% confirmed a decrease in crab production, and 16.7% mentioned the decrease in prawn production.[229]

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[226] National Geographic, 2019, What the Amazon fire means to wild animals
[227] European Union, 2014, Threats to the Congo Basin
[228] Boris Ngounou, 2021, CONGO BASIN:Climate change threatens biodiversity
[229] D.Sonwa, , G. Martial, and F.Félix, 2020, Living under a Fluctuating Climate and a Drying Congo Basin

Insight

Overview

This section aims to understand the motivations driving the loss of biodiversity in tropical rainforests around the planet. This addresses UN Sustainable Development Goal 15, which aims to promote the sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems. The goal focuses on reversing land degradation and halting biodiversity loss.

One of the prime reasons for biodiversity loss is exacerbating deforestation rates in several parts of the world. As the human population grows, our demands for necessities such as housing, food, and energy are growing. To accommodate those needs, governments and private companies are ramping up deforestation. Due to inadequate access to energy sources in rural regions, people excessively depend on wood as a source of fuel.

However, not all reasons for biodiversity loss are driven by the demand for necessities. Trophy hunting, an age-old phenomenon, targets species that are considered elusive by society. Often the targets of trophy hunting are near-extinct species. Poachers also operate with the incentive of collecting rare animal parts, which can be used to make cultural artefacts and ornaments.

Finally, forest fires are driving up extinction rates by creating unlivable habitats for tropical species. Several species are subject to unsurvivable burns due to forest fires. Those who survive have to adjust to rising temperatures and dryer climates left behind by these forest fires.

Deforestation driven by the economics of demand

Prospects for tropical forests and their biodiversity seem inherently stark owing to unabated deforestation undertaken for logging and agricultural expansion[230]. In a systematic study conducted by the University of Queensland, findings indicated that tropical biodiversity reduction due to deforestation accelerated linearly in nearly all groups of species[231]. Hence it is vital to examine the factors that lead to large-scale deforestation.

Conversion of forests for land uses such as roads and infrastructure.

In 2017, the Bolivian government passed a law downgrading protection for their tropical rainforest, thus allowing planned road conversions to go ahead[232]. The TIPNIS rainforest region, located adjacent to the Amazon and the Andes, hosts one of the largest megafaunas of biodiversity on the planet. Roads built midway will lead to destabilisation of the region's habitat[233]. Furthermore, in Brazil, a decrease in deforestation regulations by the conservative Social Liberal Party, a fierce opponent of climate change, has led to accelerating road projects in the region[234].

The Quarterly Journal of Economics suggests that standard economic models and government incentives help explain deregulation measures. The study reports that as elastic demand for housing and infrastructure grows, government officials and corporations have economic incentives to increase deforestation[235]. It is important to note that this demand does not come out of the ether; it is driven by the need to accommodate an ever-expanding population. The benefits of such actions are two-fold: this increases the country's economic activity, giving it subtle boosts in GDP and construction companies often get deals at attractive rates. This enables construction companies to offer housing at affordable prices, satisfying those seeking housing facilities.

Over-harvesting of fuelwood for domestic or commercial trade use

During the 1970s and 1980s, several countries that rely on woodfuel to sustain their economy were in a panic as reports of dwindling forest areas were being forecasted. Wood fuel use in Africa, Asia, and Latin America is believed to be one of the driving forces of tropical deforestation in the region[236]. Fuelwood shortages further panic governments to increase deforestation to satisfy the supply-demand relationship and meet growing urban demands in regions where it is the predominant energy source[237]. In addition, rural households also depend on fuelwood for daily energy production. The fuel is often gathered freely and without governments' knowledge,

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[230] Xingli Giam, 2017, Global biodiversity loss from tropical deforestation

[231] John Alroy, 2017, Effects of habitat disturbance on tropical forest biodiversity

[232] Fernandez-Llamazares et al., 2018, New law puts Bolivian biodiversity hotspot on road to deforestation

[233] Fernandez-Llamazares et al., 2018, New law puts Bolivian biodiversity hotspot on road to deforestation

[234] Philip Fearnside, 2015, Highway construction as a force in destruction of the Amazon forest

[235] Burgess et al., 2012, The Political Economy of Deforestation

[236] Terrence Bensel, 2008, Fuelwood, deforestation, and land degradation: 10 years of evidence from Cebu province, the Philippines

[237] Ever Mercer and John Soussan, n.d., Fuelwood Problems and Solutions

creating unsustainable patterns in logging behaviour[238]. In the Brazilian Atlantic Forest, roughly two thousand hectares of tropical forest are used up annually for the energy needs of the rural population[239]. Hence, fuelwood harvesting is a chronic source of tropical deforestation in areas where the local populace has not been provided access to the country's energy grid. This practice will continue if people's energy demands are not met through alternative fuel sources.

Mining projects in tropical rainforests put pressure on forests and freshwater ecosystems

Scientists report that nearly ten per cent of deforestation in the Amazon rainforest between 2005 and 2015 was due to mining activities[240]. Often mining projects also require the construction of roads and infrastructure to support those mining activities. The image below shows the environmental footprint of mining activities in Brazil.

A satellite view of the Carajás iron mine in Pará state near the city of Marabá. It is run by Brazil's Vale mining company. Mining, if not properly managed, can do significant environmental and social harm, polluting rivers and groundwater, deforesting large areas, and displacing indigenous and traditional communities. Image courtesy of NASA

To add to the apathy of these reports, the Brazilian government eased restriction on mining activities in the Amazon region, which is rich in minerals[241]. Brazilian rainforests are home to the world's largest copper reserves (this is in addition to the iron ore, manganese and gold already mined there)[242]. In the electrical engineering domain, copper has the best electrical and thermal

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[238] Ever Mercer and John Soussan, n.d., Fuelwood Problems and Solutions
[239] Maria Joana Spect et al., 2015, Burning biodiversity: Fuelwood harvesting causes forest degradation in human-domincated tropical landscapes
[240] Zoe Sullivan, 2017, Mining activity causing nearly 10 percent of Amazon deforestation
[241] Zoe Sullivan, 2017, Mining activity causing nearly 10 percent of Amazon deforestation
[242] WWF Roger LeGuen, n.d., Amazon Mining: Open cast mining in the Amazonian rainforest

conductivity, making it a key material for the production of electronic equipment[243]. An increase in demand for electronic equipment to meet the growing needs of the population invariably increases the demand for copper. It is of little astonishment that countries are lining up to mine their copper reserves at the expense of tropical rainforests.

Trophy hunting and lucrative sales of animal parts used in cultural artefacts

One of the overarching threats attributable to loss of biodiversity is hunting in tropical biodiversity hotspots[244]. There are several reasons attributable to why the culture of hunting still exists. This report explores two overarching reasons, trophy hunting and the use of animal parts to make cultural ornaments. Although 'poaching' remains illegal in several places, once a permit is obtained from the government, hunters systematically target those species that have the most value[245]. Whether a permit is approved or not, the motivations behind hunting near-extinct species remain the same.

One of the primary reasons for indiscriminate hunting is the concept of trophy hunting. Annually, trophy hunters kill thousands of animals, taking their heads, paws, antlers and coats as souvenirs. In several tropical hotspots within the African region, wealthy tourists pay five to six-figure sums for the privilege of shooting a lion[246]. Countries with few regulations on trophy hunting, such as Brazil, attract several individuals annually for hunting endangered and rare species. Recently, Brazil announced that trophy hunters would shoot jaguars and other endangered species for sport in their rainforests[247]. Under this bill, scientists expect that nearly 1,100 species of the Amazon rainforests will face threats of extinction[248].

This selective hunting of species also presents other dangers. For example, scientists and the Queen Mary University of London note that trophy hunters usually target high-quality males with large secondary sexual traits[249]. Since these males can father a higher number of offspring with good genes, their removal from the ecosystem inhibits their species' healthy growth. This phenomenon is not new, and trophy hunting had led to the extinction of several tropical species like the Quagga, which were once common[250]. Unfortunately, the trade of animal parts imports remains legal in several places, which incentivises this process's continuity. Between 2006 and

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[243] Copper Development Association, n.d., The Copper Market: Demand and Economic Value

[244] Tilker, et al., 2019, Habitat degradation and indiscriminate hunting differentially impact faunal communities in the Southeast Asian tropical biodiversity hotspot

[245] BBC News, 2015, When is it hunting and when is it poaching?

[246] Rainforest Rescue, 2020, Completed Campaign: Ban trophy hunting - save the lions

[247] Jane Dalton, 2019, Brazil will let hunters shoot endangered jaguars, parrots and monkeys in rainforests under new law, warn conservation experts

[248] Jane Dalton, 2019, Brazil will let hunters shoot endangered jaguars, parrots and monkeys in rainforests under new law, warn conservation experts

[249] Helgen Briggs, 2017, Trophy hunting remove good denes and raises extinction risks

[250] Helgen Briggs, 2017, Trophy hunting remove good denes and raises extinction risks

2015, trophy hunters legally traded 3,744 tropical giraffe hunting trophies into the U.S. - which is equivalent to more than a giraffe a day[251]. Current estimates predict that circa 68,000 mature giraffes remain in the wild, but at this rate, they face extinction in less than two decades[252].

Another reason for poaching is for trade which comes with economic benefits for both poachers and countries[253]. This phenomenon is commonplace for rhino horns, tiger-related products (e.g., carpets), and elephant ivory, which have great demand in the Asian continent[254]. Elephant ivory has had great demand over history as it is used for various items that consumers enjoy, such as jewellery, ornaments, piano keys, and billiards balls[255].

Additionally, elephant ivory has explicitly had detrimental impacts on the elephant species as poachers kill about 20,000 elephants every year for their tusks which are usually traded internationally with countries such as China, Vietnam, the United States of America and Thailand[256]. These ivory tusks serve as a need for elephants' survival as they protect the trunk, which is needed to perform basic tasks like drinking, breathing, and eating[257]. Despite this, they are still heavily poached as illegal poachers in Africa have significantly higher incomes than their peers[258]. For example, in Kenya, a poacher will make $3 per kilo of ivory[259], which would be higher than the daily earnings of those around them, and have gangs sell it at $1,100[260] per kilo to international traders such as China; thus, there is a significant economic incentive. Similarly, the African rhino faces great extinction as their horns are also sold to Asian markets as their horns are made into a commonly used powder in traditional Asian medicine[261]. Rhinos benefit the ecosystem largely as they graze the land, consume large amounts of vegetation and provide ecotourism, as elephants do; thus, their continuous killing is unsustainable for countries own economic and environmental purposes[262].

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[251] Elizabeth Claire Alberts, 2020, Does trophy hunting hurt giraffe populations? A Planned lawsuit says it does

[252] Elizabeth Claire Alberts, 2020, Does trophy hunting hurt giraffe populations? A Planned lawsuit says it does

[253]WWF, n.d., Illegal Wildlife Trading

[254] Ibid

[255] For Elephants, 2020, Why Elephants are Poached

[256] WWF, n.d., What is ivory and why does it belong on elephants?

[257] Ibid

[258] Karl Mathiesen, 2016, Elephants on the path to extinction- the facts

[259] Adam Vaughan, 2016, Kenya's new front in poaching battle: 'the future of our communities'

[260] The Guardian, 2015, Ivory price drop in China signals fall in demand, report says

[261] WWF, n.d., African rhinos

[262] Ibid

Forest fires are exacerbating the extinction of tropical species.

Reasons for forest fires

Forest fires are a long-term threat to both society and the biodiversity of animal and plant species. The leading causes of forest fires are anthropogenic and physical, with the anthropogenic ones being land clearing with fire, fire being used as a weapon in land tenure or land use disputes, accidental or escaped fire, and fires connected with resource extraction[263]. The physical reasons are longer and more severe dry seasons, which humans cause as these extreme dry seasons are caused by climate change and deforestation[264].
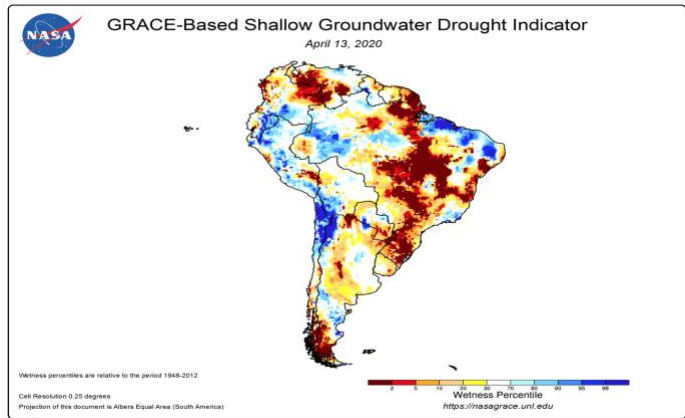

Image: NASA's GRACE[265] satellites of groundwater drought in South America, where the rain season in 2020 was at 75% of the season's usual rainfall[266].

Impact of forest fires on vegetation and insects

The data from NASA's GRACE satellites show low groundwater levels in the Brazilian Eastern Amazon and Cerrado, making these areas more susceptible to forest fires[267].

With the extension of dry seasons, the water in the soil that plants rely on to live dries up, which in turn causes plants to die and leave leaf litter.[268] This leaf litter is hazardous as these leaves are ripe for burning; thus, if a fire starts, these leaves will create more fire[269]. With fires burning trees, trees' density is significantly lower, allowing sun and energy into the forest, thus shifting the whole ecosystem[270]. Additionally, trees in tropical forests are at risk of extinction due to forest fires as trees have not developed resistance against fire; thus, if a fire burns for the first time in a rainforest, most small trees and seedlings are killed, and about 50% of large trees are killed[271]. Many of these trees are being replaced by fire-resistant tree species, like pyrophytic grassland and ground cover of weedy grasses, which is not a survivable habitat for many Amazon species

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[263]The Convention on Biological Diversity, 2001, Impacts of human-caused fires on biodiversity and ecosystem functioning, and their causes in tropical, temperate and boreal forest biomes

[264] Liz Kimbrough, 2020, As the amazon burns, what happens to its biodiversity?

[265] The Mongabay, 2020, Image

[266] Shanna Hanbury, 2020, Satellite data show Amazon rainforest likely drier, more fire-prone this year

[267] Ibid

[268] Liz Kimbrough, 2020, As the amazon burns, what happens to its biodiversity?

[269] Ibid

[270] Natasha Daly, 2019, What the Amazon fires mean for wild animals

[271] Liz Kimbrough, 2020, As the amazon burns, what happens to its biodiversity?

that rely on the cool and moist climate of the region. In addition to this, Dung beetle's species have been altered due to the burning of Amazon forests, as seen in the study by researchers at the Journal of Insect Conservation[272], a problem for the forest ecosystem a crucial role in seed dispersal and nutrient cycling[273]. They are altered due to the way forests are layered, as organic matter sits on top of the soil and is burned in forest fires, but this organic matter is home to small invertebrates like the Dung beetle; thus, their homes are essentially destroyed[274].

Impact of forest fires on animals

In wild forest fires, species that are more likely to survive are quick and can flee, such as jaguars and pumas[275]. In contrast, slower species and smaller species like frogs, anteaters, or sloths are less likely to survive[276]. Animals in the Amazon are more specialist than in other forests; for example, the Toucans birds eat fruits that other animals cannot access, but with the cutting down of trees, the Toucan bird is at risk of survival[277]. Marine species and animals that rely on marine species in the Amazon are at risk as fires occur; the ashes get into water sources would alter oxygen levels in the water and put marine species at risk[278]. The water sources' temperatures will also rise, making it hard for marine species, like fish, to survive, thus putting animals like giant otters at risk of survival as fish are their food source[279]. Furthermore, when forest fires have occurred once, they have a high probability of recurring again, which is one reason why the rainforest biome is changing to a more savannah-like ecosystem, thus killing biodiversity.

[272] Rafael Andrae,et al., 2014, Tropical forest fires and biodiversity: dung beetle community and biomass responses in a northern Brazilian Amazon forest

[273] Ibid

[274] Katie Pavid, n.d., Experts explain the effect of the amazon wildfires on people, animals and plants

[275] Natasha Daly, 2019, What the Amazon fires mean for wild animals

[276] Ibid

[277] Ibid

[278] Robert Giaquinto, n.d., How the Amazon Rainforest Fire Impact Animals

[279] Ibid

Conclusion

- Deforestation that threatens the rainforest biodiversity is driven by the most fundamental economic needs of the poorest, who remain at the bottom of deeply unequal societies.

- The culture of trophy hunting, stemming from a desire to possess the most elusive and exotic artefacts, is a threat to the most reproductively capable animals. Perpetrators are often emboldened by lax government enforcement and the ability to 'buy' permission.

- Forest fires are accelerating the rate of species extinction and are themselves driven by anthropogenic actions of clearing forest land with fires.

Policy Recommendations

Overview

The policy recommendation section aims to suggest policies that alleviate the root causes of biodiversity loss in tropical regions. The policies indicated in this section have been implemented in various regions and have had a net positive effect. These recommendations will help attain the Sustainable Development Goal 15 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which aims to halt biodiversity loss.

Our recommendations are as follows:

- **Action 1** - Establish Zero Deforestation and Zero Illegality through incentives and strict enforcement of current policies

- **Action 2** - The creation of species-specific trade policies and measures by the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), such as the National Ivory Action Plans

- **Action 3** - The Presidents of Columbia and Peru's 'Leticia Pact for Amazonia' that ensures the protection of the forest's biodiversity

Action 1 - Establish Zero Deforestation and Zero Illegality through incentives and strict enforcement of current policies

High rates of deforestation are not a recent phenomenon. As such, several think tanks, organisations and governments have implemented policies to tackle deforestation systematically. Brazil has historically had high deforestation levels compared to the rest of the world, however between 2005 and 2012, and they reduced their emissions by 75%[280]. These hard-fought gains were fragile. The New York Times reports that almost all of the policies that helped Brazil reduce deforestation have been slashed under Brazil's far-right leader, Jair Bolsonnaro[281]. In response to this, The Zero Deforestation Working Group, a coalition of NGOs, proposed a policy paper at the COP23 climate summit in Germany for implementing policies that can significantly drop deforestation in a short period. The report advises on the adoption of three essential guidelines.

Policy 1: Promote Zero Deforestation and Zero Illegality in commodity supply chains[282]

> Companies should actively track how their supply chain companies are sourcing their products. Sometimes supply chain companies are not forthright with their environmental compliance, primarily when the supply chain company is located in a country with different regulatory frameworks. Governments should establish forest zones with a zero-deforestation policy mandate that no company's products are being sourced from those zones.

Policy 2: Creation of positive economic incentives for forest conversion and reduced deforestation.

> A previous policy, the National Plan to Prevent and Control Amazon Deforestation, failed to materialise because it was penalty focussed rather than incentive focussed[283]. However, the policies that reduced deforestation in Brazil from 2005 and 2012 were incentive focussed[284]. This policy paper suggests creating incentive streams such as tax credits for companies who move their supply chain dependency from Zero Deforestation zones to sustainable sources.

Policy 3: Strengthen forest governance and policy design for sustainable land use and forest protection.

> Forest protection policies, through regulation and enforcement of current policies. The document suggests that nearly 73% of local deforestation happens because policies have not been enforced. The provincial government can create a pardon for non-compliance if the companies engaging in deforestation stop immediately. However, if the practice continues, then the local government should start levying fines. In conjunction with the

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[280] Zero Deforestation Working Group, 2017, A Pathway to Zero Deforestation in the Amazon
[281] Casado, L. and Londono, E, 2019, Under Brazil's Far-Right Leader, Amazon Protections Slashed and Forests Fall
[282] Zero Deforestation Working Group, 2017, A Pathway to Zero Deforestation in the Amazon
[283] Zero Deforestation Working Group, 2017, A Pathway to Zero Deforestation in the Amazon
[284] University of California, Santa Barbara, 2020, Success in the Amazon: Reducing Deforestation

media, Amazon social movements should begin creating a messaging strategy that brings more awareness about deforestation so that companies can steer clear from unethical practices to maintain their brand reputation.

The policy document suggests that these steps will build momentum for zero deforestation within 3-5 years. This goal was set out in 2017 with a zero-deforestation goal in 2020. However, this has failed to materialise because of intense lobbying by the 'Bancada Ruralista Agribusiness Lobby'[285]. However, certain local governments in Para, Mato Grosso and Acre have been able to reduce deforestation. Besides, due to increased media coverage as a direct result of Policy 3, the Brazilian government has set up a $10 billion plan to reach zero deforestation[286].

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[285] Ortolani, 2018, Brazil has the tools to end Amazon deforestation now: Report
[286] Iglersias, S. and Lombrana, L., 2020, Brazil puts a $10 Billion-a-Year Price Tag on Carbon Neutrality

Action 2 - The creation of species-specific trade policies and measures by the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), such as the National Ivory Action Plans

CITES is an international agreement among nations to ban or regulate wildlife species' trade, both animals and plants. They are considered the reason that many species are not extinct yet[287]. It is a treaty created in 1975 and is signed by over 182 states, including many Least Developed Countries (LDC's)[288]. Representatives from each country under CITES meets every two to three years to discuss the progress made and re-evaluate the list of species that need to be under protection or banned from international trade[289]. CITES also has direct links with law enforcement, national parks, police and wildlife authorities in individual countries, especially for specific animals who are constantly targeted like elephants and rhinos[290].

One of the species-specific measures taken were towards the protection of elephant ivory. The National Ivory Action Plans (NIAP) started in 2013 and targeted eight countries that have been most involved in illegal trading, including China, Malaysia, Thailand, Kenya, Philippines, Vietnam, Tanzania, and Uganda[291]. Each country had to submit their plans to CITES, including the specific goals and the targeted time to achieve these plans[292]. Each country varies in its programs and timeframe, but as an example of the types of aims that countries had, Malaysia had five pillars in place with specific actions:

1. **Legislation and regulations**
   - Action 1: Revise the Wildlife Conservation Act 2010 to deter ivory trafficking and illegal wildlife trade through solid penalties, including custodial sentences;
   - Action 2: Conduct a review of wildlife crime cases before court to identify measures to improve the successful prosecution rate;
2. **National level enforcement action and inter-agency collaboration**
   - Action 1: Various cooperation between enforcement agencies conducted.
   - Action 2: Conduct capacity building activities for enforcement agencies in combating wildlife crime;
   - Action 3: Plan and initiate at least five joint national intelligence-driven wildlife crime operations targeting places most affected by or used for wildlife crime, particularly at protected areas and border points;
   - Action 4: Develop country-specific national-level risk profiles and indicators to combat wildlife trafficking, in particular, ivory trafficking;
3. **International and regional enforcement collaboration**
   - Action 1: Participate in a regional and international program to improve networking, intelligence sharing and joint enforcement collaboration in dealing with wildlife crime;

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[287] WWF, n.d., CITES
[288] Sofie Flensborg, 2019, Trade in wildlife as a pathway to sustainable development in poor countries-critical assumption
[289] WWF, n.d., CITES
[290] WWF, n.d., CITES
[291] CITES, n.d., Eight countries submit national action plans to combat illegal trade in elephant ivory
[292] Ibid

- Action 2: Establish a record of DNA samples of wildlife seizures by the National Wildlife Forensic Laboratory for further analysis;

4. **Outreach, public awareness and education**
   - Action 1: Increase public awareness on activities related to the enforcement of wildlife crime;

5. **Reporting**
   - Action 1: Initiate stock-count process and complete an inventory of national ivory stockpiles using an appropriate inventory protocol, to facilitate reporting on ivory stockpiles per the provisions of Resolution Conf. 10.[293]

Every year CITES releases more ambitious plans. The convention can threaten trade sanctions on countries that do not take adequate measures to curb poaching but rarely do so (WWF, 2016). Perhaps the most glaring failure has been its inability to curb the poaching of rhinos. One of its first measures since its establishment in 1975 was the global ban on rhinos, but four decades later, rhinos are being poached at very high rates in southern and eastern Africa (WWF, 2016). However, there have been some positive outcomes, as well. Countries such as India have taken vital decisions to tackle the trade of Asian big cat due to the CITES initiative[294]. It has led to the removal of the peregrine falcon and mountain zebra from the endangered species list[295].

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[293] CITES, 2013, National Ivory Action Plan (Malaysia)
[294] EIA, 2019, Outcomes from the 71st meeting of the CITES Standing Committee and 18th Meeting of the Conference of Parties to CITES
[295] WWF, 2016, CITES has its critics but record breaking conference is critical for world's wildlife

Action 3 - The Presidents of Columbia and Peru's 'Leticia Pact for Amazonia' that ensures the protection of the forest's biodiversity

This recommendation covers many aspects of forest protection but particularly the conservation of biodiversity and will require actors from the international, governmental, and national level (i.e. the people) for it to be effective. The Presidents of Columbia and Peru, Ivan Duque and Martin Vizcarra created the Leticia Pact that combined seven countries who have parts of the Amazon forest, including Brazil, Ecuador, Guyana, Peru, Columbia, Suriname, and Bolivia[296]. The pact is relatively new as it was signed on the 6th of September 2019 by the Presidents of Peru, Columbia, Ecuador and Bolivia, and the Vice-president of Suriname, the Brazilian Minister of Foreign Affairs, and the Minister of Natural Resources of Guyana[297]. The European Parliamentary Research Service sums up their key eight recommendations as a part of this pact:

1. **Creation of a cooperation network to deal with natural disasters**, to coordinate their national systems to deal more effectively with regional emergencies such as forest fires;

2. **Focus on the areas affected by fires and illegal mining,** to restore, recover and reforest the areas affected by fires and illicit activities, and recover the affected ecosystem and species;

3. **Establishment of an early warning system on deforestation and degradation** to better prevent disasters;

4. **Closer monitoring of climate and biodiversity, as well as water resources**, based on the water basin and its communities;

5. **Promotion of sustainable use of ecosystems, and responsible use of resources** to promote sustainable value chains and methods of production, respecting biodiversity;

6. **Empowerment of indigenous women, as well as all Amazonian indigenous peoples**, so that they may play a more significant role in the preservation and sustainable development of the region;

7. **Education campaigns** to raise awareness of 'the role and function' of the Amazonian region and the threats and challenges faced by the forests and their population;

8. **Strengthening of financial mechanisms**, both private and public, to protect Amazonia and implement the Pact.[298]

The Leticia pact effectively generates further regional collaboration and control over protecting the forest and its biodiversity. A key difference in this pact to other past recommendations is education and empowerment. It is essential to tackle the issue through the local indigenous people who live in the forests. They play a fundamental role in the future of the Amazon and

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[296] Enrique Ramirez, 2019, Amazon wildfire crisis
[297] Ibid
[298] Ibid

significantly impact the conservation of the region's forest[299]. In objective six, there is a clear emphasis on empowering women as indigenous women in the Amazon have always been at the forefront of environmental movements. Still, their voices are often unheard and not published due to the gender bias in society and media[300]. According to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), there is a direct correlation between gender equality and lower rates of deforestation, air pollution, and other forms of environmental deterioration[301]; thus, empowering indigenous women would play a key role in implementing change.

However, there have been significant criticisms of this pact as being made as a publicity stunt. It is vague in its wording, lacks clarity about implementation, and lacks a timeframe. Furthermore, Peruvian organisation Derecho Internacional Público concluded that "this 'Pact' represents an attempt to respond to international pressure. The Amazon and indeed the planet deserve and require a much more convincing level of commitment"[302]. Moreover, past proposals, such as the Triple-A corridor meant to protect over 200 million hectares of the Amazon from connecting the Atlantic Ocean, the Amazon, and the Andes[303], have not materialised.

Moreover, there have been no concrete examples of this pact's positive impacts, as it is relatively new. In 2020 there were the Covid-19 pandemic and political tensions across the region. Thus, it can be concluded that this pact hasn't been appropriately implemented yet and is therefore ineffective for now.

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[299] Peru Support Group, 2019, The Leticia Pact: A Fresh Start or Just More Empty Rhetoric?
[300] Mongabay, 2020, Meet the 'Women Warriors' Protecting the Amazon Forest
[301] United Nations Development Programme, 2011, Human Development Report
[302] Peru Support Group, 2019, The Leticia Pact: A Fresh Start or Just More Empty Rhetoric?
[303] Antonio Cardona, 2019, Leticia pact: this is what seven countries agreed to protect the Amazon

Conclusion

The policies that are most likely to be implemented and carried out are set by International conventions or organisations like CITES, as many governments of countries are less likely to act if there is no pressure on them. All of these policies have been created and promised to be implemented. Still, there is only significant progress in the National Ivory Action Plans. It was implemented in 2013 and CITES continued to pressure governments and kept close contact with the police, conservation organisations, and landowners.

The policies placed for Zero Deforestation's plan failed to hit the 2020 target and can be expected to keep extending due to the goal being very hard to achieve. Especially with deforestation that arguably many lower-income countries may rely on for income and survival. The Leticia Pact is the weakest policy recommendation out of the three as it has not been appropriately implemented. It is not worth implementing, given the vagueness of it and lack of real timed targets. Thus, to conclude, we would recommend the CITES National Ivory Action Plans to be continued to be implemented as it has proven highly effective and will continue to do so.

Preventing Diseases caused by Obesity, Alcohol Abuse and Tobacco Consumption

By Venus How & Thomas De Monchy

Briefing Note

The aim of the policy-report is to allow the health sector to consider ways in which the UK government can promote good health and wellbeing - inspired by **Sustainable Development Goal 3**[304]. To do this we will be highlighting the main healthcare problems preventing this sustainable development goal, and proposing preventative measures the government can implement to tackle obesity, smoking and alcohol abuse. In the Briefing Note, we will be describing how the health sector has been affected by non-communicable diseases (NCDs)[305], by exploring the impact obesity, alcohol and cigarettes have had.

Overview

- **It is clear that obesity has severe health risks, and it has become a bigger risk within the last decade. To combat this, the UK government has introduced anti-obesity measures. However, these have been faced with backlash by those in the food and beverages and manufacturing industry.**

- **Despite the extreme health consequences of cigarettes, smoking has become more popular over the last decade. Nevertheless, whilst the smoking industry is of a considerable size it is steadily shrinking with extensive government measures put in place to tackle the UK's smoking crisis.**

- **Whilst there is no clear long-term trend in the amount of alcohol consumed in the UK it is well versed that abuse of alcohol consumption is seriously harmful. Despite this the alcohol industry in the UK is of a significant size and continues to grow. As a result, the government has implemented measures in order to regulate the nation's alcohol consumption.**

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[304] "Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages"

[305] Non-communicable diseases, otherwise known as chronic diseases, are not transmitted between people. They are usually of long duration with generally slow progression. Common NDCs are heart disease, chronic lung disease and cancer. In this research paper we will be focusing on the NDCs caused by obesity, alcohol abuse and smoking.

Obesity

Obesity has severe health risks

- According to the Centres for Diseases, obesity is a known cause of mental illnesses such as anxiety and clinical depression.[306]

- Childhood obesity has been associated with a higher chance of breathing difficulties, increased risk of fractures, hypertension, early markers of cardiovascular disease, insulin resistance and psychological effects.[307]

There are already in measures in place trying to tackle obesity

- 'The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development recognizes NCDs as a major challenge for sustainable development. As part of the Agenda, Heads of State and Government committed to develop ambitious national responses, by 2030, to reduce by one-third premature mortality from NCDs through prevention and treatment (SDG target 3.4).'[308]

- 'The *"Global action plan on physical activity 2018–2030: more active people for a healthier world"* provides effective and feasible policy actions to increase physical activity globally. WHO published ACTIVE: a technical package to assist countries in planning and delivery of their responses. New WHO guidelines on physical activity, sedentary behaviour and sleep in children under five years of age were launched in 2019.'[309]

- The UK government is looking to accelerate the expansion of the NHS Diabetes Prevention Programme to support those most at risk. This will be done by providing access to high-impact weight loss services for those that need it the most.[310]

- The UK government has stated their support for the healthcare system as it tackles these challenges. It has claimed that there is a need to increase interventions to obesity in primary care and seeks to bring forward a programme with incentives for GPs and referral pathways into weight management services in local healthcare[311].

Despite these measures, obesity has become more prevalent over the last decades

- In 2016, over 1.9 billion adults were found to be overweight and of these over 650 million were obese.[312]

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[306] Centres for Diseases, Control and Prevention, 2020, The Health Effects of Overweight and Obesity
[307] World Health Organisation, 20202, Obesity and overweight
[308] Ibid
[309] Ibid
[310] GOV.UK, 2020, Tackling obesity: empowering adults and children to live healthier lives
[311] Ibid
[312] World Health Organisation, 20202, Obesity and overweight

- In 2016 over 340 million children and adolescents between the ages of 5-19 were overweight or obese.[313]
- In 2019, 38 million children under the age of 5 were overweight or obese.[314]
- Worldwide obesity has almost tripled since 1975.[315]

Measures that attempted to tackle obesity have received backlash

- Food manufacturers have rejected the UK Prime Minister's proposal for anti-obesity campaigns, arguing that the reforms will be ineffective, expensive and impede innovation.[316]
- Cancer Research's obesity campaign faces backlash as critics claim it encourages fat-shaming.[317]
- More than 800 food and drink manufacturers have signed a petition against the UK government's obesity plan, and 3,000 UK brands claim the proposal lacked detail and effectiveness.[318]
- Conversative MPs have rejected Boris Johnson's obesity plan to ban junk food advertisements, arguing that 'people should assume responsibility for their own health.'[319]

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[313] World Health Organisation, 20202, Obesity and overweight
[314] Ibid
[315] Ibid
[316] Evans, Judith, 2020, Food groups weigh in on Johnson's obesity crackdown
[317] Harrington, John, 2018, 'This is not about fat-shaming': Cancer Research UK stands by anti-obesity campaign after backlash
[318] Goodfellow, Maddie, 2020, Industry backlash at plans to ban online junk food ads
[319] Maidment, Jack et al. 2020, Fury at 'nanny state' ban on junk food adverts that No 10 wants to introduce just two months after promoting fast food bonanza with Eat Out to Help Out

Smoking

Smoking is a prevalent problem leading to severe health implications

- Approximately 70% lung cancer deaths in the UK are caused by smoking or second-hand smoking[320].
- Cancer can cause cancer in every part of the body[321].
- Smoking damages your heart, lungs and blood circulation and causes impotence for men[322].
- 78,000 people die from smoking each year in the UK[323].

There are already extensive measures in place to reduce the amount and extent of smokers in the UK

- Part 1, Chapter 28 of the Health Act 2006 outlines the restrictions on smoking such as the rules regarding smoke free premises, no smoking signs, penalties of breaching smoking regulations and the age for sale of tobacco[324].

- In October 2019, the UK government endorsed Stopober, a 28-day challenge to stop smoking. Information on the challenge and resources on how to quit smoking was published on government websites providing individuals with online literature and support[325].

- The Department of Health released a roadmap towards a smoke free generation and a tobacco control plan in 2017[326].

Interestingly, smoking has become less popular over the last decades

- The number of smokers in the UK decreased from 14.7% in 2018 to 14.1% in 2019[327].
- In 2011 smoking prevalence was at 20.2% in the UK[328].
- In 1974 45.6% of the UK population were smokers[329].

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[320] NHS, 2018, <u>What are the health risks of smoking?</u>
[321] Centres for Disease Control and Prevention, 2021, <u>Smoking and Cancer</u>
[322] NHS, 2018, <u>What are the health risks of smoking?</u>
[323] Ibid.
[324] <u>Health Act 2006</u>
[325] GOV.UK,
[326] Department of Health, 2017, <u>Towards a Smoke Free Generation</u>
[327] Office for National Statistics, 2020, <u>Adult smoking habits in the UK: 2019</u>
[328] Ibid.
[329] Office for National Statistics, 2019, Adult smoking habits in the UK: 2018

- Although most smokers are young people, their prevalence has dropped the most since 2011 (8 percentage points in the 18-24 age group, compared to 2 percentage points in the 65+ age group)[330]

The tobacco industry is of a significant size, but it is becoming smaller

- In 2016 cigarette sales added up to £12 billion[331].

- Sales have been declining since their peak in 1974.

- The total annual expenditure on tobacco has decreased from more than 30 billion pounds in 2005 to less than 18 million pounds in 2019[332].

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[330] NHS, 2019, Statistics on Smoking, England - 2019 [NS] [PAS]
[331] ASH.fact sheet, 2017, The UK Tobacco Industry
[332] Statista, 2020, Annual expenditure on tobacco in the United Kingdom from 2005 to 2019, based on volume

Alcohol Consumption

Abuse of alcohol consumption is seriously harmful

- Alcohol consumption has both short-term (alcohol poisoning, injuries, etc.) and long-term health risks (cancer, liver and heart diseases, etc.), but also non-physical problems like depression, lost productivity and family problems.[333]

- Alcohol was the main cause of roughly 358,000 hospital admissions in 2018/2019, which is an increase of 19% compared to 2008/2009 and 6% compared to 2017/2018.[334]

- There were 5,698 alcohol-specific deaths in 2018, which was 7% higher than in 2008 but 2% lower than in 2017.[335]

- 1.26 million hospital admissions per year (7.4% of all admissions) are related to alcohol consumption.[336]

There are already measures in place trying to regulate alcohol consumption

- In 2012, Change4Life, endorsed by the UK government, launched a drinking awareness campaign that sought to warn people of the severe health consequences of drinking more than the lower-risk alcohol guidelines.[337]

- In 2015 the UK government proposed a new scheme with the National Health Service that would allow those between the ages of 40-75 to participate in an alcohol risk assessment.[338]

- In 2015 the UK government launched a drug and alcohol recovery pilot programme that for the first time involves paying treatment providers for receiving results in three areas of peoples' lives ('payment by results'): service users become free from drug or alcohol addiction, reduced re-offending or continued non-offending, and the improved health and wellbeing of their patients.[339]

- Through the UK government's Public Health Responsibility Deal, companies have partnered with the government's efforts to regulate alcohol consumption by encouraging a culture of responsible drinking. Further, they have made commitments to provide consumer information about the relationship between alcohol and health, including providing unit information, the lower risk drinking guidelines and a caution about drinking

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[333] CDC, 2021, Alcohol Use and Your Health
[334] NHS, 2020, Statistics on Alcohol, England 2020
[335] Ibid
[336] Alcohol Change UK, 2020, Alcohol statistics | Alcohol Change UK
[337] GOV.UK, 2012, Change4Life launches its first alcohol campaign
[338] GOV.UK, 2015, 2010 to 2015 government policy: harmful drinking
[339] GOV.UK, 2015, 2010 to 2015 government policy: harmful drinking

during pregnancy on at least 80% of their product labels by 2013, and simple and consistent information about units and other health information in pubs and shops.[340]

There is no clear long-term trend in the amount of alcohol consumed in the United Kingdom

- 81% of all UK citizens, aged over 16, have drunk alcohol in 2017, of which 17% have drunk between 14 and 35/50 units per week on average, and 4% more than 35/50 units per week on average.[341]
- Reports on alcohol consumption often underestimate the amount by 40-60%, compared to the total alcohol sales, because people typically forget the alcohol they drank on special occasions.[342]
- Although alcohol consumption has fallen from 11.6 litres per person in 2004 to 9.8 litres in 2018, it has risen from the 9.3 it was in 2014.[343]
- The amount of alcohol consumed seems to be connected to the relative economic growth.[344]

The alcohol industry in the United Kingdom is of significant size and grows

- The industry contributed to 2.5% of Gross Domestic Product and 3.7% of consumer spending in 2014.[345]
- The alcohol industry was worth 46 billion pounds in 2014.[346]
- Taking into account the impact of Covid-19, the UK alcohol industry revenue has grown from 39.8 billion pounds in 2012 to 49.3 billion pounds in 2019 and is expected to grow to 60.2 billion pounds in 2025.[347]

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[340] Ibid
[341] Drinkaware, 2019, Alcohol Consumption UK
[342] Ibid
[343] Institute of Alcohol Studies, 2020, Alcohol Consumption
[344] Ibid
[345] Institute for Alcohol Studies, 2018, Microsoft Word - FS industry.docx (ias.org.uk)
[346] Ibid
[347] Statista, 2021, Alcoholic Drinks - United Kingdom | Statista Market Forecast

Insight

Overview

This section of the report will focus on the reasons behind excessive alcohol consumption, obesity and tobacco.

The primary factor behind these health problems are the social norms associated with eating, drinking and tobacco use. All three are common social activities and are often a gateway for subsequent health problems associated with these activities[348].

A second contributory factor is mental health issues. Pre-existing mental health issues such as depression or anxiety are often major motivators behind the use of tobacco, excessive consumption of alcohol, and an unhealthy diet, as individuals utilise these methods to combat the problems they are experiencing[349]. It is clear that the relationship between mental health and alcohol, obesity and smoking is symbiotic and to tackle these problems a heavy focus must be laid on mental health problems. The final explanation explored in this research paper for alcoholism, obesity and smoking is the accessibility of each issue. Society is richer than ever before, resulting in more accessibility to food and alcohol. Despite this, wealthier countries experience higher rates of obesity in lower-income neighbourhoods due to the lack of accessibility to healthy foods[350]. Whilst the government places heavy restrictions on the usage of cigarettes they remain marketable and continue to serve as a social activity globally.

It is important to note that whilst all three topics share similar factors and consequences not all considerations apply to all the topics explored within this research paper. The reader will be explicitly notified when this is the case.

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[348] Reno, R. Raymond, 1993, The Transsituational Influence of Social Norms
[349] Alcohol Change, Alcohol and Mental Health
[350] McKinsey&Company, 2014, Overcoming obesity: an economic analysis

Social Norms Encourage the Misuse of Substances and Food

As mentioned in the overview, it is important to find out why people want certain products and how accessible those products are. Social norms offer one perspective on the question as to why people have an unhealthy lifestyle. They do that in two different ways. Firstly, peoples' behaviour is often influenced by social norms. And secondly, the amount of education on the negative consequences of obesity, smoking and alcohol consumption also depends on the social norms regarding that topic.

So, in what way is people's behaviour influenced by social norms? There are two different social norms: descriptive norms, that describe what is typically done in society, and injunctive norms, that describe what is typically approved in society. Although the injunctive norms have, as opposed to descriptive norms, a better impact on pro-social behaviour, both have been proven to influence behaviour[351].

McKinsey's 2014 obesity report demonstrates that a person's attitude towards weight and diet-standards are often highly dependent on the norms within their social environment. You will eat more if your friends eat more. The report mentions a study that shows that someone is 57% more likely to become obese if one of their friends has become obese[352]. We see a similar relation when it comes to smoking. Many people start smoking in their adolescent years and do this due to the social environment they are in (e.g., their parents smoke) or direct peer influence.[353] However, a clear distinction has to be made between passive peer influence and direct peer pressure. Contrary to popular belief (demonstrated by government policies), many studies have shown that peer pressure does not have a significant influence on smoking initiation among adolescents[354]. It is passive peer influence (peer smoking) that increases the chances of someone smoking[355]. Young adults look around them and imitate the people in their environment. So smoking cessation projects should be focused on interaction with peer smokers and awareness about the dangers of smoking, as opposed to peer pressure. Moreover, social norms also play a significant role in the amount of alcohol consumed by adolescents and students[356]. Yet, in contrast to tobacco use, alcohol abuse among those young people is influenced heavily by peer pressure. Students are pressured into drinking excessive amounts of alcohol and the social norms in those environments make that seem common and acceptable[357].

Social norms offer both an explanation of the issue and, as mentioned before, a solution through raising awareness. A way to do this is via education, but we first have to acknowledge that the amount of accessible education (e.g., via school) on obesity, smoking and alcohol consumption

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[351] Cialdini, Robert, 1993, The-Transsituational-Influence-of-Social-Norms.pdf (researchgate.net)
[352] McKinsey&Company, 2014, Overcoming obesity: an economic analysis
[353] American Cancer Society, 2020, Why People Start Using Tobacco, and Why It's Hard to Stop (cancer.org)
[354] Denscombe, Martyn, 2009, Peer Group Pressure, Young People and Smoking: new developments and policy implications: Drugs: Education, Prevention and Policy: Vol 8, No 1 (tandfonline.com)
[355] Harakeh, Zeena, 2012, The impact of active and passive peer influence on young adult smoking: An experimental study - ScienceDirect
[356] Lee Christine, 2011, The Social Norms of Alcohol-Related Negative Consequences (nih.gov)
[357] Borsari, B, 2001, Peer influences on college drinking: a review of the research - PubMed (nih.gov)

also depends on the social norms. A fitting example is the United States where government intervention remains rather limited compared to many European countries. The social norm regarding government intervention could be an explanation for the fact that formal health and nutrition education is lacking in the United States[358] compared to the Netherlands, where obesity prevention is actively practiced within school[359].

Poor Mental Health is a Significant Driver of Unhealthy Behaviours

It is undisputed that mental health has a significant part to play in the abuse of alcohol, use of cigarettes, and as a contributory cause of obesity. Regarding the abuse of alcohol, of the estimated 589,000 people dependent on alcohol, around a quarter of them are receiving mental health medication for issues such as anxiety or depression[360]. Further, those with a history of alcohol problems are also found to have an increased risk of death by suicide[361]. From 2007 and 2017 a total of 5,963 mental health patients with a history alcohol abuse committed suicide[362]. In 2019 the UK government collected data from those in alcohol treatment and found that over half of these individuals (55%) recognised a need for mental health support, and 79% of them already received such support. This all points to the undeniable link between mental health and its negative impact on the use of alcohol.

The relationship can be explained by the term 'self-medicating', which illustrates the way in which an individual may use alcohol to combat mounting mental health issues[363]. However, this method of self-medication only compounds the problems an individual is experiencing. An excessive use of alcohol over a prolonged period of time leads to the growth of pre-existing mental health issues, particularly depression and anxiety[364]. Further, by continually smothering mental health with alcohol the individual disregards these problems, allowing them to continue unaddressed[365]. Alongside using alcohol as a tool to combat mental health problems, studies have shown that a significant motivation leading to alcohol abuse is the desire to enhance sociability. Termed as 'social-effect motives' by Mulford and Miller (1960), this motivation sees individuals introduced to alcohol in social settings who are then more prone to abusing alcohol later in life[366]. Consequently, there is a strong correlation between mental health issues and the use of alcohol to combat these issues.

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[358] Youdim, Adrienne, 2016, Lack of health education leads to a rise in obesity rates | TheHill

[359] Royal Society for Public Health, 2019, RSPH | Guest blog: What The Netherlands can teach us about obesity

[360] O'Connor, Rosanna, 2020, Alcohol dependence and mental health

[361] Ibid.

[362] Ibid.

[363] Alcohol Change, Alcohol and Mental Health

[364] Ibid.

[365] Ibid.

[366] Antonia Abbey, et al. 2015, The Relationship Between Reasons for Drinking Alcohol and Alcohol Consumption: An Interactional Approach

Mental health issues also contribute to obesity through the development of an unhealthy and detrimental psychological relationship with food[367]. Similarly, to the negative motivations behind excessive alcohol consumption, many use food as a mechanism to combat mental health problems such as anxiety or depression[368]. The problems an individual may be trying to suppress through food might not be as severe as these issues; food can simply comfort an individual as they attempt to shield themselves from feelings such as anger or loneliness or low self-esteem[369].

This method of self-medication is not without consequences. A compulsion such as binge eating disorder, which may be brought on by a family history of eating disorders, extreme pressure or sexual abuse, often induces guilt or shame, compounding pre-existing mental health problems. Like with alcohol, although an individual uses food as a tool to cope with their problems, excessive consumption might only worsen these issues. Harvard Health Publishing explains the way in which 'overweight people are also more likely to lose the psychological benefits of exercise. If they feel rejected, unattractive, or suffer social discrimination, the emotional strain may cause further weight gain. The problem is worse if they fail to lose weight and are blamed (or blame themselves) for lack of self-control.'[370] A recent study in western Europe shows that 18.7% of obese people suffered from stigma and for those with severe obesity this figure increased to 38%[371]. Studies have shown that children are particularly affected by the stigma surrounding obesity. School-aged children suffering from obesity are 63% more likely to be bullied in school[372]. In 2020 it was recorded that in England, 1 in 3 children finishing primary school are overweight, with 1 in 5 living with obesity[373]. The social consequences of obesity are likely to worsen pre-existing mental health issues, highlighting the way in which mental health and its negative consequences fit into a cycle.

A third health problem that mental health has a significant correlation to is the use of tobacco. In 2020 the NHS recorded a toll of 74,000 smoking induced deaths[374]. The World Health Organisation further states that cigarettes kill over half its users, illustrating its severity as one of the biggest health risks known to man with some labelling it as an epidemic[375].

These statistics can be explained through the psychological motivations behind heavy tobacco use, alongside the addictive substances that compose cigarettes. The common misconception that tobacco eases mental health problems such as anxiety led most to smoke under the impression that cigarettes can be used to relieve stress. In 2018/19, 26.8% of adults with long term mental health problems smoked, in comparison to 14.5% of the general smoking

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[367] McKinsey&Company, 2014, Overcoming obesity: an economic analysis
[368] Ibid.
[369] Harvard Health Publishing, 2004, Effects of obesity and exercise: Is obesity a mental health issue? The Harvard Mental Health Letter investigates
[370] Ibid.
[371] World Health Organisation, 2017, World Obesity Day: Understanding the social consequences of obesity
[372] Ibid.
[373] Public Health England, 2020, Obesity Profile
[374] NHS, 2020, Statistics on Smoking, England 2020
[375] Ibid.

population[376]. However, tobacco only increases anxiety and smokers are more likely than non-smokers to develop depression as a result[377]. Further, people with pre-existing mental health problems such as schizophrenia are more likely to smoke than the general population at a heavier rate and are therefore more likely to need higher doses of antipsychotic medication and antidepressants due to the way tobacco interferes with these medicines[378]. The consequences of medicating mental health problems with smoking are more likely to be fatal, with smokers dying on an average of 10 to 20 years earlier than those without mental health problems.

Accessibility to Harmful Substances Explains Behaviour Patterns

This theme relates to the second part of this insight, which is trying to understand how easily people can get their hands on certain products, such as unhealthy foods and drinks, cigarettes and alcohol. This accessibility also refers to the other side of obesity, which is access to physical activity.

First of all, we will discuss the accessibility of unhealthy products and exercise regarding obesity. Our ancestors experienced scarcity of food and abundance of physical activity, making their hormones encourage them to try and find an excess of food. Food accessibility was an insecure part of life, while exercise was a necessary part of it. Because those hormones are unable to prevent over-consumption of calories, and because physical demand in the modern world has decreased significantly, just in the last few decades the US net energy balance has reduced by 100 calories[379]. This change has really taken over since the 1980s. Obesity was not a major issue before that time, but the 'built urban environment' has changed our world in such a way that obesity has become much more prevalent. Apart from the widespread implementation of labour-saving inventions, such as escalators, and passive and online forms of entertainment (from playing football to playing video games), it has also resulted in the cheap and constant access to highly processed foods and drinks with an excess of sugar, as this is the easiest and most inexpensive way to make products taste better[380].

The relationship between accessibility to food and socioeconomic positions is a tricky one. Countries with a higher GDP per capita, on average, have a higher obesity rate. That is because people in poorer countries often undertake more physically demanding work and have less disposable income for food. However, within wealthier countries, obesity is more prevalent in economically disadvantaged environments, because wealthier people have better access to nutritious food (which is often more expensive) and means of exercise, such as the gym[381]. So, obesity arises where people can afford to eat, but not to consume healthy foods and drinks. As

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[376] GOV.UK, 2020, <u>Health matters: smoking and mental health</u>

[377] NHS, 2018, <u>Stopping smoking for your mental health</u>

[378] Ibid.

[379] McKinsey&Company, 2014, <u>Overcoming obesity: an economic analysis</u>

[380] Meldrum, David, et al. 2017, <u>*Obesity pandemic: causes, consequences, and solutions-but do we have the will? (fertstert.org)</u>

[381] McKinsey&Company, 2014, <u>Overcoming obesity: an economic analysis</u>

the United Kingdom is a wealthy country and the subject of this research, this ought to be the focus point for anti-obesity measures.

Secondly, compared to unhealthy foods and drinks, access to alcohol and tobacco has been far more restricted, especially for young people[382]. As the government has achieved a lot in reducing accessibility in those two areas, this theme largely applies to obesity. However, one does have to keep in mind the illegal access minors have to alcohol and tobacco products.

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[382] evidence provided in the briefing

Conclusion

- A significant reason for these health problems are the social norms associated with eating, drinking and tobacco use. All three are popularised social activities and are often a gateway for subsequent health problems associated with these activities.

- The relationship between mental health problems and alcohol, smoking and obesity is cyclical; individuals use food and alcohol and cigarettes to combat pre-existing mental health issues only for subsequent health problems induced from these three issues to drive them further into suffering from mental health problems.

- The improved accessibility of food (particularly unhealthy foods) and alcohol means the population is more likely to use these to an excess.

- On the other hand, a limited accessibility to healthier foods or methods of controlling consumption such as gyms or parks are more likely to lead lower-income individuals to suffer from obesity.

- Despite the heavy restrictions placed on tobacco it remains accessible.

Policy Recommendations

Overview

- **Action 1** - Introduce 'Wealth for Health' tax plan to fiscally promote a healthy lifestyle

- **Action 2** - Change the curriculum to teach students about healthy and unhealthy lifestyles and encourage the former

- **Action 3** - Develop a parental guidance handbook which will be given to parents when they register their child to educate them on pedagogical matters regarding nutrition, physical activity, drugs and alcohol consumption

- **Action 4** - Increase governmental support and funding for mental health facilities with a focus on healthy ways to deal with mental issues

Action 1 - Introduce 'Wealth for Health' tax plan to fiscally promote a healthy lifestyle

There are already extensive fiscal policies in place to promote healthy lifestyles, such as the duties on alcohol and tobacco, mentioned earlier in the report. HM Treasury has currently set a nation-wide 20% standard VAT rate on most products (including alcohol, tobacco, confectionery and soft drinks), and a 0% rate on foods and drinks such as vegetables, water, meat and poultry[383]. However, we believe **more extensive fiscal measures need to be put in place**.

Firstly, we recommend the HM Treasury to implement a **30% VAT rate on products** that have a (severe) negative impact on people's health with the possibility of increasing it to 40% in the next ten years. The list of these products will definitely include all tobacco goods, alcoholic products, soft drinks and juices, fast food, and unhealthy snacks, but in order to have a carefully selected and accurate list of products, we would involve Public Health England in forming the list. Secondly, all the extra **revenue as a result of this VAT increase should be spent on subsidising healthy products**, such as vegetables and fruits. Again, Public Health England could advise on the selection of that list. Thirdly, the VAT on gym memberships is still 20% which we advise to be reduced to a 0% rate. This used to be impossible, due to EU law, but since Brexit this decrease is possible[384].

This is a national policy that will affect all UK citizens, but mostly those that are currently unable to afford a healthy lifestyle. It will also have an impact on both businesses that sell unhealthy products as businesses that sell healthy products. As mentioned before, the main bodies involved in this policy recommendation are the HM Treasury and Public Health England, which is rather logical, since it is a fiscal proposal targeting diseases, caused by obesity, alcohol abuse and smoking. The measure (apart from the 40% VAT rate, which could be implemented in the next ten years) will be implemented on the first of January.

The main outcome of this tax increase is, however, not that it will severely decrease the consumption of unhealthy products, but that it **raises money that can be invested in healthy lifestyle programs**[385]. This is exactly why we believe that all the money raised by this tax increase should be spent on subsidising healthy products. This method has been influential in the decrease of alcohol consumption and tobacco use[386]. The 20% VAT that is already in place has proven to be successful.

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[383] Government, 2020, [VAT rates - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)](#)
[384] BBC, 2018, [Pure Gym boss calls for VAT-free memberships - BBC News](#)
[385] Franck, Caroline, 2013, [Taxing Junk Food to Counter Obesity (nih.gov)](#)
[386] Gruber, Jonathan, 2012, [http://www.nihcm.org/pdf/ExpertVoices_Gruber_April2010.pdf](#)

Action 2 - Change the curriculum to teach students about healthy and unhealthy lifestyles and encourage the former

As explained in the insight, many people start to form bad habits during their adolescent years and even earlier when it concerns bad foods and drinks. It is, therefore, crucial to inform people on healthy and unhealthy lifestyles in that period of their lives, and to create healthy social norms at school.

Firstly, it is important that **students are properly taught about** nutrition, alcohol and drug use, and the dangers of having an unhealthy lifestyle. Since 2000, the government has recognised the importance of such education through the **Personal, Social, Health and Economic (PSHE) education**, which is a compulsory but non-statutory subject in primary and secondary education that teaches children about drugs, healthy diets, sex and relationships, and finance[387]. Although this is a great step, the time allocated to the subject can be decided by the school, meaning that some schools do not provide good PSHE education to their students[388]. We recommend that the schools have **at least one hour per week of PSHE education** from year seven to year eleven. Furthermore, currently, a minimum of two hours per week of PE is mandatory for all students up to the age of sixteen. After that age, it is optional[389]. As our second measure of this policy recommendation, we propose a **minimum of three hours per week of PE** up until the age of sixteen and a compulsory two hours per week from sixteen to eighteen. Thirdly, although the government has standards for the food provided at schools[390], many schools do not uphold those standards[391]. In order to make sure students are encouraged to eat healthy at school, we recommend the Department of Education to increase both regulation and funding for schools that are currently not following the guidelines.

These recommendations will affect all students in primary and secondary schools in the country. The actors that need to implement the measures are the **Department of Education with possible consultation from the PSHE Association**. To ensure schools have sufficient time to prepare for and implement these measures, they should be implemented over the next three years.

As a result of such legislation, millions of UK children will be more inclined to live a healthier lifestyle. They will exercise more, be encouraged to eat and drink healthier, and less likely to use drugs and tobacco. They are more likely to live healthier[392]. Lastly, these are not new measures but improvements of the already existing measures that have proven to be positive.

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[387] Government, 2020, Personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)
[388] PSHE Association, 2016, PSHE Association raises concerns about drop in PSHE provision in schools (pshe-association.org.uk)
[389] Department of Education, 2020, Statutory curriculum | Department of Education (education-ni.gov.uk)
[390] Government, 2020, The School Food Standards - poster (publishing.service.gov.uk)
[391] The Independent, 2019, Why are school lunches still so unhealthy? | The Independent | The Independent
[392] McKinsey, 2014, mgi_overcoming_obesity_full_report.ashx (mckinsey.com)

Action 3 - Develop a parental guidance handbook which will be given to parents when they register their child to educate them on pedagogical matters regarding nutrition, physical activity, drugs and alcohol consumption

Apart from PSHE education at schools, parental influence on the social norms of children also plays a significant role[393]. The influence of parents on a child's eating habits is considerably large, and especially when the child is under five years old[394]. Schools can give ample education, but when a child constantly eats too much and unhealthy food at home, that can only do so much. Furthermore, **parents have a considerable influence** on teenage drinking[395] and the children, who have smoking parents, are more likely to start smoking as well[396]. It is, therefore, important that parents set a good example for their children and teach them on the dangers of alcohol abuse, tobacco use, and both obesity and anorexia. On the other hand, though, those parents should also not be too strict and restrictive as this will lead to an unhealthy relationship between the parents and the child, mental health problems and rebelliousness[397].

Walking the fine line between not setting enough limits and being too strict is a difficult task for parents. Thus, a **parental guidance handbook** that offers scientifically proven advice that is approved by pedagogical experts, as opposed to contradictory information on the internet, would be very useful. As pedagogical advice is broader than just the themes of this report, we acknowledge that this policy recommendation **could be a part of a wider measure**, that will aim for a parental guidance handbook on all relevant aspects, also including, for example, the child's safety, the child's commitment to school, and fights between parent(s) and the child. Even though the report will be **automatically given to parents when they register their child**, it should **also be available online** for people who want to prepare before the child's birth.

This would, again, be a **nationwide measure**, as the parental guidance handbook should be given to all people who have a child in the country. The handbook should be formed by the Department of Education in collaboration with the Department of Health and Social Care, and experts / think tanks that have knowledge of the matter. A good example of such a source of expertise is the Education Policy Institute. The handbook should be **made and reviewed in a two-year time period**, after which it should be published online and distributed nationally. As a result of this parental guidance handbook all parents will have immediate access to pedagogical expertise. What is most important is that it should not be written in a manner that looks down on parents but in a way that sympathises with their difficulties in raising a child and tries to help them. The specific execution of this policy recommendation has not been done before, but there is an unlimited amount of pedagogical advice on the internet and academically published.

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[393] McKinsey, 2014, mgi_overcoming_obesity_full_report.ashx (mckinsey.com)

[394] Savage, Jennifer, 2007, Parental Influence on Eating Behavior (nih.gov)

[395] Alcohol Think Again, 2020, Parents Influence of Teenage Drinking | Alcohol.Think Again

[396] Alves, Joana, et al. 2016, role of parental smoking on adolescent smoking and its social patterning: a cross-sectional survey in six European cities | Journal of Public Health | Oxford Academic (oup.com)

[397] Aha Parenting, Strict parenting actually creates behavior problems in children. Here's why. (ahaparenting.com)

Action 4 - Increase governmental support and funding for mental health facilities with a focus on healthy ways to deal with mental issues

One policy proposal is to introduce mental health into the education system. Approximately ¾ of adults experience mental illness before 25[398]. With the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, more than half of all students in England report that their mental health has worsened since September 2020[399]. In a survey of 2,000 students, the Office for National Statistics found that 57% of said students experienced a worsening in their mental wellbeing during the autumn term[400], and 63% felt that the pandemic posed a significant risk to their mental health[401]. It is clear that students are a prime demographic regarding mental health problems and so by concentrating mental health education in the education system we would be targeting a large cohort experiencing mental health issues. **It would also allow us to get to the root of informing society on a pressing matter** affecting 1 in 4 people[402].

The same emphasis should be placed on **mental health as it is on physical education**. This can be done by including the education of mental wellbeing into the syllabus of PSHE modules for instance. Focus should be placed on **teaching the situations and circumstances likely to develop mental health problems** such as abusive households or toxic environments that nurture issues. By teaching students about the root causes of mental health problems this will enable individuals to understand how and why mental health issues develop, improving their ability to combat these issues. Further, students should be taught how to **recognise symptoms of the leading mental health problems**, including eating disorders, depression and anxiety, and those most prevalent in the taught demographic. Methods on how an individual can aim to control their mental health issues (for example breathing exercises), alongside distribution of literature with the necessary information on who and where an individual can go should they need help. It is particularly important that the syllabus explore and deconstruct the stigmas surrounding mental health issues as this is often the reason why an individual may not report their problems and seek the help they need. In doing so we can teach generations to create an attitude of support for those needing help, thereby **improving society's perspective on mental health**. The education of mental health should be consistent throughout lower and higher education and continue in the workplace through presentations or workshops. In this way it can be shown that mental wellbeing is an integral aspect of human life and should not be disregarded.

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[398] Thorley, Craig, 2017, Not by degrees: Improving student mental health in the UK's universities
[399] Weale, Sally, 2020, More than half of students polled report mental health slump
[400] Ibid.
[401] Ibid.
[402] Mental Health Taskforce to the NHS in England, 2016, The Five Year Forward View For Mental Health

Conclusion

Firstly, as the wealth for health tax plan is not a completely new concept, but more of an improvement of the existing fiscal legislation, it does not seem difficult to implement. Two difficulties might be the resistance from certain industries that are affected by this proposal, and the complexity of implementing subsidies on healthy products. However, both are manageable and do not form a threat to the policy recommendation.

Secondly, changing the curriculum is a more difficult to implement proposal, as it requires structural changes to school environments and more funding. However, the policy recommendation allows sufficient time to prepare for these structural changes and the increase in tax revenue due to PR1 could partially be used for this recommendation.

Thirdly, the parental guidance handbook is not difficult to implement at all. It requires some time to be made, but the printing and distribution of it is not complex. The only issue that could arise is that people could disagree on the content of the book, but again, that does not pose a threat to the implementation of this recommendation.

Lastly, the fourth policy recommendation is comparable to the second one in terms of the difficulty of implementing it. Making sure teachers are well educated enough on mental health issues would be the biggest obstacle in implementing this measure, but it is more than worth it, considering mental health problems are a significant issue in society.

The Technological Impacts of the Fourth Industrial Revolution upon Mankind

By Lucy Young, Aarthi Raguraj & Alicja Marchewka

Briefing Note

The western world is becoming more reliant upon technocratic corporations to deliver basic human needs. This report will examine **Sustainable Development Goal 9**, and specifically focus on the extent to which technological infrastructure and innovation supports economic development in the United Kingdom. We are going to magnify existing groundwork concerns in the UK, assess impacts upon the general population and incoming struggles that everyone may face. This includes insufficient infrastructural mechanisms to support ordinary people, interference from AI in the workplace, as well as the all-encompassing industrial revolution, which is set to shift economic and innovative perspectives again, despite current volatility in almost every realm of socio-political and diplomatic relations.

Overview

- **The global pandemic has exposed insufficient technological infrastructure to support low-income communities in the U.K. This includes problems relating to internet connection, digital payments and even seeking medical assistance or official authorities.**

- **Sustainable development has gained enhanced assistance from AI to ensure effective and linear growth in different sectors, including politics, finance and social work. While algorithms calculate strategy in less than a few seconds, we must observe the impact on working specialists who may be, or have been, replaced.**

- **The fourth industrial revolution is one empowered by technology and synchronicity of global leaders and corporations. As Manuel Castells stated, "In all moments of major technological change, people, companies, and institutions feel the depth of the change, but they are often overwhelmed by it, out of sheer ignorance of its effects", and there are harsh technological impacts upon mankind in light of the potential for a new revolution.**

Technological Poverty in the U.K

The lack of internet access, connectivity and usage across the country reduces educational opportunities for children in the UK.

- According to the Good things Foundation, 61% of adults aged 16-75 categorised internet access as an essential utility, like electricity, thus demonstrating its value in this fourth industrial revolution[403].

- 700,000 11-18-year olds (12%) do not have a laptop, desktop or tablet to access the internet at home and a further 60,000 11-18-year olds do not have any home internet access at all[404]. In fact, of those in this age group, 68% who did have home internet access, reported that they would find it difficult to complete schoolwork without it, highlighting the detrimental educational and academic implications for those without internet access[405].

- Prior to the pandemic, 11-15-year olds indicated they spent nearly half (49%) of all their time online at home completing homework, depicting young people's dependence on a permanent internet connection at home[406].

- 51% of households earning between £6000-10,000 had home internet access compared with 99% of households with an income of over £40,001[407]. Therefore, it is palpable that disadvantaged children are less likely to have a home environment conducive to learning due to limited access to internet and devices.

The digital skills shortage has intensified the digital divide as it diminishes employability and has consequently worsened socio-economic disparities in the UK.

- According to the 2020 Lloyds Bank UK Consumer Digital Index, 9 million adults struggle to use the internet on their own, while 17 million adults lack all the essential digital skills that we need for living and working in the UK today[408].

- The Lloyds Bank Tech Partnership Basic Digital Skills framework outline the five basic digital skills to measure digital inclusion as "managing information, communicating, transacting, problem solving and creating"[409]. These are activities used to estimate the digital skills shortage and approximately 8% of the UK's population have zero basic digital skills, illustrating the severity of the skills shortage[410].

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[403] Good Things Foundation, 2020, Blueprint for a 100% Digitally Included UK
[404] Office for National Statistics, 2018, Exploring the UK's digital divide
[405] Lloyds Bank, 2018, UK Consumer Digital Index
[406] Ibid
[407] Office for National Statistics, 2018, Exploring the UK's digital divide
[408] Lloyds Bank, 2020, UK Consumer Digital Index
[409] Tech Partnership, 2020, Basic Digital Skills Report

[410] Office for National Statistics, 2018, Home Internet and Social Media Usage

- The House of Lords report 'Make or Break: The UK's Digital Future' shows how the whole economy has become digitised, thus transforming digital skills into necessary life skills[411].

- According to the Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport, 'baseline' digital skills[412] are required across the UK and at least 82% of job adverts low-skill, middle-skill and high-skill occupations require digital skills[413].

- The expectations of digital capability of individuals will only grow in the future workforce, with predictions that 35% of all jobs are likely to become automated in the next 20 years, with 90% of all jobs requiring some level of digital skills[414]. This demonstrates how those who are digitally excluded or lack digital skills will typically be disadvantaged in the current and future employment market.

- According the UK Commission for Employment and Skills, the digital skills shortage is one of the leading causes of the digital divide and it was found an estimated 23% of UK adults do not have basic digital skills[415]. Moreover, the UKCES found "the greatest recruitment challenges are currently experienced by those seeking workers with digital skills", thus depicting employers' emphasis on software skills, especially with increased remote working during the pandemic[416].

Technological change results in a lower standard of living for those who are digitally excluded.

- The ONS 2020 survey found that the likelihood of an individual regularly using the internet decreases with age as 100% of respondents in the 16–34 age group said they go online daily or almost daily, compared with 67% in the 65+ age group[417].

- The ONS 2020 survey suggests that those on low incomes are less likely to have an internet connection in the home as only 51% of households earning between £6000-10,000 had home internet access compared with 99% of households with an income of over £40,00.[418]

- Increased dependence on the internet is not just evident in the workplace, but across several aspects of life, meaning individuals who are digitally excluded are missing out on

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[411] House of Lords; Select Committee on Digital Skills, 2015, Make or Break: The UK's Digital Future
[412] 'Baseline' digital skills, such as navigating through Microsoft Office and other similar software tools, are often a requisite in jobs across a plethora of sectors and skills levels.
[413] Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport, 2019, No Longer Optional: Employer Demand for Digital Skills
[414] Department for Business, Innovation & Skills, 2016, Review of Publicly Funded Digital Skills Qualifications
[415] Ibid
[416] Ibid
[417] Office for National Statistics, 2020, ONS Internet access : Households and Individuals
[418] Office for National Statistics, 2018, Exploring the UK's Digital Divide

the plethora of benefits offered by digital technology, especially with online retail shopping and online banking[419].

- 4.5 million people in the UK have never used the internet and thus have not been able to reap the convenience benefits or the monetary savings yielded from shopping online[420]. The Centre for Economics and Business Research UK holds that online shopping saves people on average 13% compared to shopping in-store, which is the equivalent to £143.00 per person per year[421]. Thus, demonstrating how individuals lacking basic digital skills or internet access are digitally excluded and consequently immediately excluded from these financial benefits.

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[419] Tech Partnership, 2020, Basic Digital Skills Report
[420] The Centre for Economics and Business Research UK, 2020, The Economic Impact of Digital Inclusion in the UK
[421] Ibid

Man vs. AI in the workplace

Automation and robotisation pose a serious threat to some occupations which are at risk of being replaced by algorithms.

- According to the report of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 25% of UK jobs have a 50-70% risk of automation and an additional 12% have a 70%-plus risk, caused by robotics[422] and artificial intelligence [423].[424]

- Evidence from reports made by organisations House of Commons shows that professional and vocational occupations consist of non-routine tasks which require a higher level of cognitive and social skills or significant manual abilities have a low probability of being automated in the UK. However, the most likely to be automated are mainly administrative work and structured, routine jobs for example operating machinery. This group of employees has a 66% probability of being automated.[425]

- It is expected that the implementation of digital technology in the United Kingdom will result in the replacement of roughly 7 million present jobs. Statistics of PwC show that the manual-task-focused sectors are at the highest risk of automation such that the manufacturing sector may be reduced by roughly 25% consisting of 700 000 jobs.[426]

The implementation of new technologies in the workplace will create many "jobs of the future", which represents a chance to reduce unemployment

- According to a 2018 OECD report, every new high-tech occupation will create between 2.5 to 4.4 additional local jobs mainly in low-skilled and medium-skilled in-person services like gardeners, home health aides or manicurists which are non-routine manual tasks.[427]

- Artificial Intelligence (AI) and other technologies are predicted to generate as many occupations as they replace over the following 20 years in the United Kingdom. According to estimates of PwC (2018) roughly 7 million jobs will disappear, while 7.2 million will be generated. Although it seems that the overall impact on the labour market is neutral, it will affect various sectors at different levels. For example, the very positive influence of technological changes will be visible in the healthcare and social work sector, where according to estimates, the number of new employed may rise by roughly 1 million, which is 20% of current jobs in these two sectors.[428]

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[422] machines which deliver physical work

[423] AI - software algorithms which make calculations and perform cognitive activities

[424] OECD, 2018, Automation, skills use and training

[425] House of Commons, 2019, Automation and the future of work.

[426] PwC, 2018, Will robots really steal our jobs?

[427] OECD, 2018, Automation, skills use and training

[428] PwC, 2018, Will robots really steal our jobs?

Digitalization may be a serious cause for income, gender and education inequalities

- Goos and Manning in their work "Lousy and Lovely Jobs" state that there is a visible worldwide trend towards labour market polarization, with increasing employment in high-income cognitive occupations (7.5% between 1995 and 2015) and low-income manual job[429] (2% increase between 1995 and 2015) while the share of middle-skill jobs in total employment decreased by 9.5% at that time.[430]

- UK citizens with only GCSE-level education or lower are at severe risk (46%) of losing their job to automation, much higher compared to those with undergraduate degrees or higher (12%). These will deepen the income gap between highly skilled workers and less-skilled workers.[431]

- According to the OECD report from 2018, digitalization may negatively affect women's position in the labour market because of gender-based digital exclusion (Borgonovi et al., 2018). In the United Kingdom, only 17 per cent of the workforce in the technology sector is made up of women. The most noteworthy reasons are limited access to digital tools mainly due to affordability, educational and social-cultural barriers. [432]

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[429] Goos M., Manning A., 2007, Lousy and Lovely Jobs: the Rising Polarization of Work in Britain
[430] BBVA, 2019, Inequality in the Digital Era
[431] British Academy, 2018, The impact of artificial intelligence on work
[432] Deloitte, 2015, The impact of technology on jobs in the UK

The Fourth Industrial Revolution

The '(dis)empowered citizen' is becoming more alienated from societal bonds and services as technological dependency broadens across modern communities.

- The Global Risks Report 2016[433] describes the '(dis)empowered citizen', something coined as individuals feeling empowered through use of technologies, but alienated from access to services, employment and the community as a result (World Economic Forum).

- Digital technologies are said to enable new forms of alienation, ranging from technophobia to technophilia [434], but can be used to provide a sense of purpose and meaning for some. Hassan[435] suggests internet-based news degrades political literacy, reducing the audience's ability to apply critical thought and reason. Marcuse [436] suggested this may result in one-dimensional thought, leading to segmented, unrelatable belief, even amongst religious communities that exercise collective ideology.

- Deleause and Guattari[437] stated, "electric language does not go by way of the voice or writing: data processing does without them both". As we continue to lean upon technology for everyday tasks, we lose basic and essential human capabilities, becoming reliant upon image-dense comprehension.

The Internet of Things[438] has always been an invasive tool geared for consumerism, but it will eventually redefine humanity.

- The internet of things (IoT) will continue to expand and integrate further into human life, meaning we must adapt strong policy to avoid exploitation of laymen within society. This may include further cybersecurity and employment policy relating to the 'on-demand' economy (A.K.A. the sharing economy). This relates to a statement made in a TechCrunch article, "Uber, the world's largest taxi company, owns no vehicles. Facebook, the world's most popular media owner, creates no content. Alibaba, the most valuable retailer, has no inventory. And Airbnb, the world's largest accommodation provider, owns no real estate"[439].

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[433] World Economic Forum, 2016, *The Global Risks Report* [Insight Report]

[434] Kellner, D. (2005) *Media Spectacle and the Crisis of Democracy.* Boulder: Paradigm.

[435] Hasan, R. (2003) *Globalization, Literacy and Ideology.* World Englishes 22(4).

[436] Marcuse, H. (1964) *One-Dimensional Man.* Beacon Press, Massachusetts, United States.

[437] Deleause, G. and Guattari, F. (1972) *Anti-Oedipus.* Les Editions de Minuit, Viking Press.

[438] The British government defines the scope of IoT products as extending from smart TV's or cameras, as well as connected baby monitors and wearable health trackers. These are objects we use in the home, that are connected to the internet for autonomous tracking and maintenance of personal activities.IoT exists with the intent to reduce waste and human labour.

[439] Goodwin, T. (2015) *The Battle Is For The Customer Interface.* Techcrunch.

- The Internet of Things is the result of the Fourth Industrial Revolution; as people, we are becoming more reliant upon robotics and AI to handle daily tasks; 'the Internet of Things is expected to be worth $3 trillion by 2025, with over 27 billion heterogeneous things connected to the internet'[440]

- The autonomy and individuality in the modern workplace have encouraged the defeat of 20th century Taylorism, and the introduction of the network-enterprise, where workers redefine their own work, resulting in increased urgency for production and labour due to the globalised nature of our modern economies[441].

New technologies will make it impossible for humanity to return to modern society as we know it today

- Having access to new realms of technological capabilities will alter personal insight and identity, in association with government, surveillance and security in relation to other people. Some of the largest concerns highlighted by Amnesty include redefining privacy, personal security concerning governance, employee rights and greater inequalities[442].

- As there are still insurmountable flaws with many current products on the market, heightened legislation is required to keep the continuously developing industry in check. The EU established the Cybersecurity Act in 2019[443], and the U.K. have published an extended Code of Practice for Consumer IoT Security[444], with a statutory bill still going through a consultation stage in government.

- Whilst Orwell's future is one of fiction, it is evident that our growing reliance upon the internet of things in our everyday lives allows audiences to have an ease of access for mass consumerism; large companies are able to conduct analyses through use of tech in the home, to obtain "detailed knowledge about their customers and trends affecting the markets can be used to segment their customers, introduce more suitable products and devise precise marketing campaigns, pricing, and promotions to enhance their profitability"[445]

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[440] Fortune, 2016, *Why Smartphones are Bringing Down Internet-of-Things Revenue Forecasts*

[441] Flichy, P. (2004) (Trans. Libbrecht, P.) *Connected Individualism between Digital Technology and Society*. Reseaux 124(2).

[442] Amnesty International, 2016, Five ways technology will shape the future of politics, society and human rights

[443] European Parliament, 2019, Cybersecurity Act

[444] Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport UK, 2018, Code of Practice for consumer IoT Security

[445] Shuo-Yan Chou, 2019, The Fourth Industrial Revolution: Digital Fusion with IoT

Insight

Overview

While some see technology as a powerful tool to enhance productivity, it is also encouraging alienation in every respect - from the product and process of labour, from others and from the self.

As the shiny new tool of consumerism and the capitalist agenda, technology and the Internet of Things is devolving the human experience down to a generation assisting the machinist evolution. In our current epoch of evolutionary technology throughout every aspect of our lives, we must also account for those forgotten by the new digital age of humanity. All potential variables and concerns we have covered throughout touch upon subcategories of society that fall at a detriment to the expanding association between human life and technological bounds. Exclusion of social class, whether it be through income, education, age or disability, is abandoning an entire population that would benefit from the ease that certain devices could introduce.

The Digital Divide (age, income, disability)

Within today's evolving digital age communication technologies have become a fundamental part of all social, economic and political activities in the UK, to the extent that internet access and connectivity are recognised as fundamental, basic necessities[446]. The pace at which technology is evolving is ever increasing and the digital era has witnessed the growth of a plethora of technologies from advancements in 5G to the creation of digital disruptors such as Uber and Airbnb. However, though many people in the UK may categorise digital technologies as a pivotal part of their lifestyle, there are individuals who are digitally excluded and unfortunately those who are not engaging with the digital world are at risk of being left behind[447]. This division is more commonly known as the 'digital divide' which is simply a gap between people in the UK who have complete access to digital technologies and those who do not. This section will explore the main components influencing this digital exclusion in the UK, namely age, income and disability.

One of the main factors contributing the digital divide in the UK is age, especially as many older people are excluded due to an absence of digital skills, a lack of self-confidence and reduced accessibility to devices[448]. There are a multitude of barriers preventing the older generation from digital inclusion. For example, many lack self-confidence as they perceive themselves to be not 'technology minded' and this results in a lack of motivation to utilise new technologies[449]. In addition to psychological barriers, many face physical barriers, for example the text on a device may be too small or difficult to read[450]. It is evident that the lack of inclination from the older age groups to gain the relevant technological skills and engage with the digital world is worsening the digital divide.

Socio-economic disparities are a major factor exacerbating the digital divide in the UK as typically households with lower incomes are more digitally excluded in terms of accessibility to devices due to the high cost of purchasing and maintaining technological devices. Britain has one of the world's largest internet economies, but digital inequality still exists due to regional and local patterns and differences of internet access and use[451]. One of the main reasons for these digital inequalities is inconsistent cellular and broadband connectivity across the country[452]. Due to a lack of home internet connectivity within lower income households, individuals are forced to use public access points for the internet. However due to the effects of the pandemic, this is no longer possible, and these households have become further digitally excluded. Studies from Oxford University's Digital Inclusion Project found that the price of purchasing a digital device is not the fundamental barrier excluding lower income families, but it is the cost of maintaining these devices. Those on the lowest incomes are disadvantaged because device ownership requires the ability to keep it charged with electricity, topped up with call and data credit and repaired when

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[446] UK Digital Authority, 2015, A Digital Inclusion Strategy for London
[447] Office for National Statistics, 2018, Exploring the UK's Digital Divide
[448] UK Parliament, 2020, COVID-19 and the Digital Divide
[449] UK Centre for Ageing Better, 2020, How the digital divide affects older adults' use of technology
[450] UK Centre for Ageing Better, 2020, How the digital divide affects older adults' use of technology
[451] Good Things Foundation, 2020, The Real Digital Divide
[452] The ONS 2020 survey suggests that those on low incomes are less likely to have an internet connection in the home as only 51% of households earning between £6000-10,000 had home internet access compared with 99% of households with an income of over £40,000.

damaged, and unfortunately many struggle to keep up with such payments[453]. The cyclic nature of this digital divide warns of the amplification of income disparities because those on lower incomes who are digitally deprived will, as a consequence, be limited to the benefits of digital inclusion such as greater access to financial opportunities and financial benefits[454].

Over time, disability has been acknowledged as a facet of the digital divide, yet still it is often passed over briefly, and not well understood[455]. Across all age groups, disabled adults make up a large proportion of adult internet non-users and in 2017, 56% of adult internet non-users were disabled[456]. ONS data tell us that 22% of disabled adults have never used the internet (compared to 9% for the adult population as a whole), thus highlighting the extent to which those with long-standing illness, disability or infirmity are digitally excluded in comparison to other groups[457]. Individuals with a physical disability affecting their hand dexterity, such as quadriplegia resulting from spinal cord injury, multiple sclerosis or cerebral palsy are likely to struggle to interact with touch screens, mouses or keyboards without the presence of assistive technology to bridge the gap[458]. Moreover, those with cognitive, hearing and visual impairments are likely to be limited to using assistive technologies such as screen readers, text-to-speech software and Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) devices[459]. However, though such devices may appear to diminish the digital divide, in reality many are prevented from accessing such technological advancements due to their extremely high prices thus leaving only a select population with the ability to take advantage of them.[460]

The Fourth Industrial Revolution

Research tends to focus on how technology can help to excel mankind further into the future - but we are looking at the contrasting side effects of its trajectory. The fourth Industrial Revolution could globalise trade and enhance strategy, whilst also risking the working lives of thousands. As we become more dependent upon technology for menial tasks, alienation of the citizen is encouraged for efficacy, ultimately inhibiting critical thought and political literacy. The Internet of Things (IoT) will play a large role in enhancing human capabilities, in both leisure and employment. The IoT Agenda defines it as "a system of interrelated computing devices, mechanical and digital machines, objects, animals or people that are provided with unique identifiers (UIDs) and the ability to transfer data over a network without requiring human-to-human

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[453] University of Oxford, 2020, The Oxford Digital Inclusion Project

[454] Digital and Technology Cluster Institute of Development Studies, 2019, Leaving No One Behind in a Digital World

[455] Disability is defined under the Equality Act 2010 as someone who has a current physical or mental health condition(s) or illness(es) lasting or expected to last 12 months or more and that limits their ability to carry out day-to-day activities.

[456] UK Government Department for Work and Pensions, 2017, Family Resources Survey

[457] Office for National Statistics, 2018, Exploring the UK's Digital Divide

[458] Ibid

[459] Ibid

[460] Good Things Foundation, 2020, Blueprint for a 100% Digitally Included UK

or human-to-computer interaction[461]." Ironically, heightened interconnectivity will result in an increased independence and subsequent alienation of the working man - as we have learned throughout the international lockdown, we are social creatures and require interaction, thus total dependence on technology for work and entertainment is an equation for cataclysmic societal destruction.

Technology integration has always been a divisive issue, especially for sceptical generations at the end of the 20th century. The influence of technology on trade and GDP growth per capita has reaped positive outcomes for developing nations (Huawei & Oxford Economics. (2017)), but it has also negatively affected collective societies, weakening social bonds and resulting in a dispersed modern state that exists for the function of the market. Companies like Uber and Facebook are perfect examples of this, with business models morphing to support the self-sufficient entrepreneur. For example, the Uber driver must first have a licence and a car, the Facebook content creator must first have a device and videography gear. Simultaneously, it enables individuals to reap the benefits of their own labour, but a percentage of this income will go to the larger giant company. The economy is also likely to be digitised, as we have already seen with increased investment opportunities in blockchain and other forms of cryptocurrency.

This doesn't just apply to the basic understanding of labour, but also to the underlying traits of mankind that enable them to be useful for fruitful labour; through scientific understanding, the human genome can be enhanced through technological means. People can be raised and 'tailored' to be best suited for a particular career path, with brain-to-brain communication and enhanced memory capacity[462] coming to fruition in scientific studies right now. Legislation has been introduced to assist the implementation of this network of things, including the Cybersecurity Act in 2019[463] (EU) and Code of Practice for Consumer IoT Security[464] (U.K.), but it is more likely that this area of law will develop incrementally, through the courts, until an established framework can be published. This will obviously have a severe impact on those who are likely to experience the first few injustices at the fault of insufficient support nets provided by the government, thus we will provide potential policy shifts that can be addressed ahead of the technological innovation boom, meaning the normal person can be legally protected regardless of how little the common law touches upon their specific technical matter.

The ambiguity of the impact of digitization on the labour market

The implementation of digital technologies in the workplace helps increase efficiency and as a result profits by reducing the costs of capital and delivering enhanced flexibility. Digitalization of the workplace, new smart business models and customized products can provide revenue

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[461] Tech Target, 2020, Iot Agenda
[462] The New England Journal of Medicine, 2012, Memory Enhancement and Deep-Brain Stimulation of the Entorhinal Area
[463] European Parliament, 2019, Cybersecurity Act
[464] Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport UK, 2018, Code of Practice for consumer IoT security

increases of 25% at the firm level and $371 billion in net industry value for production over four years by implementing data-driven processes[465].

Benefits from digitalization motivate companies to adjust their workplaces to technological advancement, impacting current and future employees by posing threats as well as opportunities for them. According to Mokyr and Vickers (2018), in hindsight, although a large number of jobs were lost during the previous industrial revolutions, in the long-term they created new, more productive and gratifying roles[466]. However, the OECD (2018) argues that some past scenarios cannot be applied to the future and in this case, there are many concerns that cheap and highly advanced digital technologies may prompt substitution of capital for labour[467].

Massive redundancy can be experienced primarily by workers whose work consists of a cognitive routine and non-routine manual tasks characterized by structural, repetitive systems easy to automate[468]. Thanks to large gathered data, algorithms have been dominating the fields of storage and access to information. This is accelerated by one significant advantage of Machine Learning (ML) algorithms - scalability. Compared to human skills, these algorithms are able to handle big calculations and detect patterns in a much more effective and faster way[469]. Moreover, through the implementation of advanced user interfaces, algorithms can solve more problems and substitute a wider range of human workplaces which significantly changes the definition of work and employment. Jobs which will not experience full automation will still be integrated with algorithms, like perception and manual tasks. In such activities, robots (Co-Bots) cannot deal with multifaceted perception tasks like distinguishing between objects and their uses in a limited field of sight and operation[470]. Therefore, integration with human work in such sectors is necessary to fully benefit from the effectiveness of robots.

Nevertheless, the elimination of workplaces due to the automation and integration of human work with robots will require common reskilling of the workforce. According to the World Economic Forum (2020) roughly 40% of employees will be expected to reskill and 94% of managers emphasise that they will require workers to gain new abilities[471]. Simultaneously, the European Commission's research (2017) depicts that roughly 35% of labour does not have the requisite digital dexterity and it is predicted that this gap will rise with the expansion of automation[472]. Therefore, a lack of these demanded skills and the necessity to gain new ones may result in

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[465] World economic Forum,2017, Technology and Innovation for the Future of Production: Accelerating Value Creation,

[466] Journal of Economic Perspectives, 2018, The History of Technological Anxiety and the Future of Economic Growth,

[467] OECD,2018, Labour Share Developments Over The Past Two Decades,

[468] University of Oxford, 2013, The Future of Employment: How Susceptible Are Jobs to Computerisation?,

[469] Scientific American, 2009, The Origins of Computing,

[470] Citi GPS, 2016, Technology at work,

[471] World Economic Forum, The Future of Jobs, 2020

[472] European Economic and Social Committee, 2017, Shaping Europe Digital Future,

diminishing possibilities for existing workers on the labour market, causing higher unemployment[473].

On the other hand, changes in the workplace may also have a positive effect on the conditions and new opportunities for workers. Automation will mostly relate to difficult and dangerous tasks which creates not only a safer environment but also enables workers to participate in more challenging and developing tasks. Moreover, many work opportunities in social and creative sectors await future employees. For example, The World Health Organisation estimates there will be a healthcare workforce gap of around 14.5 million by 2030, indicating growing opportunities in jobs requiring soft skills[474].

Changes in the proportion of employment are also caused by emerging work systems such as online platforms. Their impact on the labour market will intensify every year which indicates the growth of the on-demand economy since 2013, with total revenue growing 58% in 2014 and 79% in 2015[475]. According to OECD (2019), gig economy platforms may boost employment as they reduce entry barriers for workers, designing alternatives to formal requirements to signal the quality of providers, such as reputation rating mechanisms, and workers typically do not incur the cost of creating a business[476]. Nevertheless, this system does not provide sufficient work to generate income similar to that earned in traditional jobs. Only about 6% of platform workers on-demand confirm that they receive all of their income from the provision of on-demand services which causes instability of work and high fluctuation in employment[477].

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[473] Infuture Institute, 2020, The Jobs of the Future
[474] World economic Forum,2017, Technology and Innovation for the Future of Production: Accelerating Value Creation
[475] European Economic and Social Committee, 2017, Shaping Europe Digital Future
[476] OECD,2019, An Introduction to Online Platforms and Their Role in the Digital
[477] European Economic and Social Committee,2017, Shaping Europe Digital Future

Conclusion

- The digital divide between those who have access to information and communications technology and those who do not, gives rise to inequalities in access to opportunities, knowledge, services and goods, thus illustrating the cyclic nature of digital exclusion.

- The intensification of automation may cause technological unemployment especially in terms of low and mid-skilled jobs, as well as significant increase in demand for high-skilled employees.

- The Internet of things (IoT) is drastically changing how we live and work within society and online. Not only does this result in global corporations gaining yields in excess of what is ethically comprehensible, but it also alienates the typical working individual.

Policy Recommendations

Overview

The following policy recommendations have been made with the aim of attaining Sustainable Development Goal 9, specifically how accessibility to technological infrastructure and innovation can be improved in order to support economic development in the United Kingdom.

- **Action 1** - Solidify U.K. cybersecurity regulation and recommendation within a water-tight piece of legislation, being one of the first to officially do so.

- **Action 2** - The implementation of a financial assistant scheme offered to disabled or elderly people to offset the cost of assistive technology and increase accessibility to digital technologies.

- **Action 3** - Professional reintroduction of employees vulnerable to technological unemployment through education and training reforms.

Action 1 - Solidify U.K. cybersecurity regulation and recommendation within a water-tight piece of legislation, being one of the first to officially do so

We briefly explored the British government's approach to starting cybersecurity regulation, called the Code of Practice for Consumer IoT Security. Whilst this is a strong step in the right direction, the statements made under this code are simply made to follow a global trend seen elsewhere, like in Australia[478], The U.S. and Singapore[479], which is to make guidelines that aren't legally binding. If an entity who manufactures and distributes a device that can be connected to the internet in a certain way, and fails to follow the code of practice, there will be no direct legal consequence if the consumer suffers at this expense. Alternatively, the consumer could go about suing under a private, civil dispute, but in reality, this may prove to be costly. Ultimately, the government needs to begin to take cybersecurity more seriously. With the saturation of users growing by the day, **legislation needs to be in place to act as a safety net for when the Internet of Things suffers a breach, and individuals suffer technological consequences, which can be life-threatening**. Legislation enacted within the U.K., including the Data Protection Act 2018, the Communications Act 2003 and the Network and Information Systems Regulations 2018, fail to cover the sheer extent of damage that could be acquired as a result of malpractice and improper risk assessments of new technology.

While technology is a universal concept, and as the government continues to peddle funding into research and design for new socially enhancing technology, **they must also focus the same degree of energy towards protecting the individual from exploitation as a result of his own naivete**. The United States government has provided sound foundational documentation on the risk assessment[480] and governance of IoT devices, something that the British government isn't really maintaining. The U.K.'s National Cyber Security Centre website discusses the Internet of Things but has only provided two outdated 'weekly' reports, with the last being published in October 2020. The world has developed vastly since then, with greater consideration for digital healthcare, remote teaching and learning and ESG concerns.

With growing reliance upon this technology, **one must consider the repercussions that normal people will face, in light of company costs, and heightened efficiency in machines and machine learning**. Employment is likely to drastically change when workplaces begin to reopen, and the government must legislate and participate in active debate in favour of protecting the average person. The World Economic Forum's global Risks Report from 2017 predicts robot incorporation being more important for labour than globalisation - yet **there is still little legal development in the tortious legal areas of vicarious liability, which would ensure employers are responsible for employee negligenc**e. If the technology or machinery is not deemed to be an employee, any injured person will be unable to pursue justice. This similar

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[478] Australian Government, 2020, Code of Practice - Securing the Internet of Things for Consumers

[479] Singapore Info-communications Media Development Authority, 2020, Internet of Things (IoT) Cyber Security Guide

[480] US Department of Commerce, 2020, IoT Device Cybersecurity Guidance for the Federal Government

instance can even be seen with humans, and whether they are legally deemed to be independent contractors or employees. The recently concluded Uber case (Uber BV and Others v Aslam and Others) appealed up to the Supreme Court after a trail of yo-yo judgements. Eventually, it was concluded that Uber drivers are actually employees, but mass-scale companies like Uber continued to assert the alternative throughout the ongoing trials.

Action 2 - The implementation of a financial assistant scheme offered to disabled or elderly people to offset the cost of assistive technology and increase accessibility to digital technologies.

The insight section of this report has highlighted the need for a fundamental rethink of digital inclusion policy specifically targeting elderly and disabled people as they are the two most digitally excluded societal groups in the UK. The recent increase of the development of assistive technologies such as screen readers, text-to-speech software and Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) devices is a positive step forward in bridging the digital divide for individuals suffering from cognitive, hearing and visual impairments either due to a disability or their age. However, **assistive technologies are predominantly produced in western economies and can be very cost-prohibitive** which is counter-productive as the aim of such technologies is to limit digital exclusion, but due to their extortionate market price only a select population can afford to purchase them.

Therefore, the i**mplementation of a financial assistance scheme by the government which is tailored to disabled or elderly people** will likely remove several barriers to digital inclusion and encourage the purchase of assistive technologies. The implementation of a financial assistance scheme such as a grant or loan will not only increase accessibility to technology but is also likely to remove a plethora of barriers which currently exacerbate the digital divide. For example, if a greater proportion of the older generation are able to access assistive technologies, this **removes physical barriers** because the devices are tailor-made to overcome such issues. Moreover, the **existing psychological barriers are likely to decrease** as studies have shown those who would typically be demotivated to try using complex technology will be more confident in using assistive technologies[481]. The removal of such barriers highlights the likely success in this recommendation in resulting in an increase of the older generation and individuals with a disability immersing themselves in the digital world and consequently diminishing technological poverty in the UK.

The **government would undoubtedly play a pivotal role in this implementation, but they could work in conjunction with external agents such as technology providers**. The World Bank Group's report in 2018 highlighted how accessible technology brings a strong return on investment (RoI) for governments, employers, and technology developers even when upfront costs are high[482]. Therefore, technology providers are likely to be incentivised to cooperate with the government on the provision of the aforementioned scheme as studies highlight that accessible devices result in a larger customer base and greater return on investment, which is attractive to technology providers[483].

However, it must be acknowledged the mere provision of accessible technologies will not reduce the digital divide as the relevant training is needed in order to ensure individuals have the right

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[481] Good Things Foundation, 2020, Blueprint for a 100% Digitally Included UK
[482] World Bank Group Development Report, 2018, Bridging the Disability Divide through Digital Technologies
[483] Ibid

skills to navigate the devices. Nevertheless, this recommendation is a crucial stepping stone to reducing technological poverty and digital exclusion in the UK, most notably among the older generation. **Overall, the potential positive benefits from the elderly, those who are disabled and technology providers from the provision of this financial assistance scheme is indicative of the success of this policy.**

Action 3 - Professional reintroduction of employees vulnerable to technological unemployment through education and training reforms.

Digitalization of the workplace leads to many vacancies in high technology and skilled job positions mainly because the twentieth-century education system does not provide future workers with effective and updated training necessary to prepare people to fulfil those positions[484]. Political engagement and social vision are necessary for the age of massive digital systems to respond to the question: **What is the role of higher education when technological unemployment becomes the rule rather than the exception?**

According to the article "The Fourth Industrial Revolution: Opportunities and Challenges" (2018) **the old education system should shift to a life-long learning paradigm**. It means that employees should be constantly trained to be able to meet the requirements of the dynamically changing labour market and to benefit from these changes[485]. One of the solutions to this problem is the system of **Massive Open Online Courses** (MOOCs) which creates a chance to provide people with accessible, affordable and high-quality courses through online platforms. MOOCs will enable workers to reskill quickly thanks to fast-track completion of university courses. Nevertheless, it would require the educational institutions to adopt new financial models and delivery systems as well as academic labour to respond to the needs of future workers. Therefore, **cooperation between educational institutions and policymakers is necessary to update education**. The aim would be to create a more democratised education system (open source, open access, open education, open science, open management) while also generating profit for these educational institutions[486].

The government is also trying to implement special programmes in order to **provide people with digital skills**. One approach for helping workers to adapt to the changing labour market is introducing STEM fields (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) in early education. Following that, the **new computing curriculum was introduced in schools at primary and secondary leve**l in England in 2014 and in Wales in 2016, becoming the first initiative in the world to adopt mandatory coding classes at such an early stage of education. This initiative intended to make computing lessons more inspiring for young people and more adequate to the current technological progress[487]. Furthermore, the British government is also trying to help students in higher education by **reforming the apprenticeship system** to enable employers to design apprenticeship standards that reflect their needs[488]. Additionally, the government cooperating with the Bank for International Settlements (BIS) and other partners has further supported one million people in gaining digital skills over the period 2015-2020 with particular reference to the learners

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[484] Technology & Policy Research Initiative,2015, How Computer Automation Affects Occupations: Technology, Jobs, and Skills,

[485] International Journal of Financial Research,2018, The Fourth Industrial Revolution: Opportunities and Challenges,

[486] Educational Philosophy and Theory, 2016, Technological unemployment: Educating for the fourth industrial revolution,

[487] Ecorys UK, 2016,Digital Skills for the UK Economics,

[488] Gov UK,2016, Apprenticeship funding rules for higher education institutions,

in the 10 most deprived areas of England by committing additional funding for 45,000 participants[489].

Also, technological giants feel responsible for helping people to adjust to the changing requirements of the labour market by using their expertise. For example, Google intends to help 200,000 businesses in the UK to obtain digital skills and provide computer science training for 25,000 teachers [490].

The augmentation of digital skills to the performance of the economy is tangible. The 'technological sector' solely represents 6% of the UK economy with an approximated Gross Value Added (GVA)[491] per person in the region of £91,800, considerably above the UK average. Supposing that the technological changes will create many opportunities in the mentioned sector, **substantial investment in digital skills would probably produce a very good return on investment** regarding the UK economy[492].

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[489] NIACE,2013, The Inquiry into Family Learning in England and Wales,

[490] Ecorys UK, 2016, Digital Skills for the UK Economics,

[491] Metric that measures the contribution of a corporate subsidiary, company, or municipality to an economy, producer, sector, or region

[492] Pricewaterhousecoopers, 2013, Making Digital Government Work for Everyone,

Conclusion

The likelihood of the recommended policies being implemented is contingent upon a plethora of factors, most notably the extent to which it affects the relationship between the government, regulators, technology providers and the public.

Overall, there is a strong chance of the aforementioned policies being successfully implemented, not least due to the government's recent focus to reduce technological poverty following the effects of the pandemic. Moreover, there have already been a multitude of policies adopted internationally, with a similar aim of bridging the digital divide, therefore it is likely the above recommendations have the scope to be implemented in the UK to ensure digital inclusion during the fourth industrial revolution.

Whilst some of the recommended policy shifts seem to only scratch the surface, it is important to notice that this is the key issue with cyber legislation. The same issue of technological leapfrogging has been occurring throughout the global south for decades now; states have gained access to technology they haven't organically developed themselves and fail to implement sturdy regulation alongside, resulting in breach of privacy and cybersecurity concerns.

Whilst the policy we recommend is only a small footstep down the road to be explored, it's important we truly begin to explore further protection for those left vulnerable by an automated state.

Ensuring Quality Education by Tackling Food Insecurity at Primary School Level

By Jasmine Walker & Vriddhi Khattar

Briefing Note

Overview

Relevant SDGs

- Goal 2: End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture.
- Goal 4. Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.
- Goal 17: Partnership between goals.

Recent media and political campaigns have raised awareness of the issues surrounding free school meals. This issue has also been made more pressing in light of successive national lockdowns, during which time primary school aged children have had to learn from home. This report outlines the connection between equitable education and the issue of child poverty and hunger in the UK through the following sections:

- **Food insecurity and hunger negatively impacts child development and educational outcomes at primary school level which is a particularly important issue in the UK given the comparatively high rates of child food insecurity.**

- **Hunger in the UK is less about food and more about poverty as the pandemic reveals the shortcomings of the food system**

- **Adults with young children are the most affected by the pandemic but the least supported and represented by food banks**

- **As benefit-level government schemes become more common and unemployment increases, people turn to food banks which face huge tensions due to the lack of individual donations.**

- **Furloughing and Universal credit further disadvantage large families due to their two-child limit and leave them vulnerable to food insecurity and hunger**

- **Existing Government policy fails to resolve food insecurity and hunger among primary school aged children, especially in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic.**

- **Extra-governmental agencies have had to fill the gap left by inadequate government policy.**

The Relationship between Food Insecurity and Inequitable Education

Primary school aged children experience high rates of food insecurity

- In 2017, UNICEF reported that 10% of children under the age of 15 in the UK were living with severe food insecurity, characterised by experiencing hunger regularly, and 19% of children under 15 were living with moderate to severe food insecurity, characterised by compromising on quality and variety of food, reducing portions or skipping meals, and experiencing hunger.[493]

- Based on this 2017 UNICEF report, The Food Foundation states that the UK is one of, if not the worst, performing nations in the European Union (of which the UK was a member at the time).[494]

- The Food Foundation found that UK families with a household income of under £15,860, would need to spend 42% of their income (after housing) on food in order to meet the Eatwell Guidelines, which are promoted by the Government and the NHS. This makes food security unaffordable for families living in poverty.[495]

- Food insecurity has been worsened by the Covid-19 crisis. In a poll conducted five weeks into the first UK national lockdown, the Food Foundation found a 50% increase in the number of children living in food insecure households compared to before the start of the lockdown in March 2020. This represents over 5 million people in households with children where 200,000 children were missing meals every day.[496]

- A 2013 report produced by Kellogg's found that on average, 2.4 children out of a class of 23.5 children, arrived hungry to school in the morning, with 8,370 schools having children arrive hungry or thirsty in the morning. This has now increased to 6 children in every class, as of October 2020.[497]

There is a higher rate of educational inequality in the UK compared to other similarly wealthy nations

- According to a 2017 study from UNICEF, 29% of children under 15 in the UK do not achieve a baseline educational standard.[498]

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[493] UNICEF, 2017, Prevalence and Correlates of Food Insecurity among Children across the Globe: UNICEF - Office of Research - Innocenti
[494] Food Foundation, 2017, New evidence of child food insecurity in the UK - Food Foundation
[495] Food Foundation, 2018, The Food Foundation Annual Report 2018
[496] Food Foundation, 2020, The Food Foundation: The Impact of Coronavirus on Food, May 2020 Poll
[497] Politics.co.uk, 2020, Without more government funding, children will keep going to school hungry
[498] UNICEF, 2017, Building the Future Children and the Sustainable Development Goals in Rich Countries

- SDG 4.6 aims for universal literacy and numeracy by 2030. The UK has not provided literacy and numeracy data to UNICEF for the latest 2015 global survey; however, the UK is projected to fall to 14th place from 10th place in literacy and 11th in numeracy in tables published by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development based on data from 17 countries.[499]

- A 2018 study by the National Literacy Fund found that in England, 'fewer children on free school meals met the minimum standards for reading (62% vs 77%), writing (59% vs 74%), speaking (77% vs 86%) and listening (77% vs 86%) compared to their peers' who were not on free school meals by the age of 5.[500]

- The same 2018 study found that the 15% gap in reading and writing proficiency between children who are on free school meals and children who are not is maintained from the beginning to the end of primary education according to this data.

Hunger negatively impacts child development and educational outcomes

- A 2015 Paediatrics and Child Health publication reported that nutritional deficiencies during schooling years 'directly undermine students' cognitive capacities. The authors elaborate that 'children in food insecure households tend to have diets that are high in refined sugars and low in iron, which can have behavioural consequences including hyperkinesia (hyperactivity and poor concentration), inattention and poor memory.[501]

- A study published by the American Public Health Association in 2009 found strong associations between household food insecurity and low behavioural functioning and academic performance amongst school-aged children.[502] For instance school-aged children with severe hunger scores had parent-reported anxiety scores on the Child Behaviour Checklist that were more than double the scores for children with no hunger (6.3 vs 2.8).[503]

- The Borgen Project reports that hunger is a fundamental obstacle to child education because undernourished and malnourished children suffer from behavioural, physiological and psychological impediments at a higher rate than children who do not experience hunger.[504]

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[499] The Learning and Work Institute, 2019, Time for action: the UK must act now to improve skills or risk falling further behind in the world

[500] The National Literacy Trust, 2019, Education in England, Wales, Northern Ireland & Scotland | National Literacy Trust

[501] Pediatrics and Child Health, 2015, Food insecurity and hunger: A review of the effects on children's health and behaviour

[502] American Public Health Association, 2009, Material Hardship and the Physical Health of School-Aged Children in Low-Income Households

[503] Pediatrics, 2002, Hunger: Its Impact on Children's Health and Mental Health

[504] The Borgen Project, 2014, Effects of Hunger on Education | The Borgen Project

- In a 2013 Kellogg's study, 31% teachers report that they spend a disproportionate amount of time teaching children who arrive at school hungry compared to children who do not.[505] (n=700)
- The same report calculates that 'if a child arrived at school hungry once a week, they would lose 8.4 weeks of learning time (70% of a term) over the whole of their primary school life' which amounts to a significant educational disadvantage for children experiencing hunger and food insecurity.[506]

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[505] Kellogg's, 2013, R2_Kellogg_A_Lost_Education.pdf (kelloggs.co.uk)
[506] Ibid.

Food insecurity in the UK

Hunger in the UK is less about food and more about poverty

- From 2016 to 2018, 5.6% of the UK population were estimated to have experienced food insecurity based on the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the UN's (FAO's) globally set threshold for food insecurity.[507]

- 10% of adults lived in households classified as marginally food insecure, and 10% reported living in households with moderate or severe food insecurity, similar to 2016 data (Evidence and Network on UK Household Food Insecurity, 2019).

- 9% of adults experienced food insecurity in the last 12 months (2019) in terms of worrying that they would run out of food due to a lack of money or other resources (Evidence and Network on UK Household Food Insecurity, 2019).

- 6% of all adults said they had eaten less than they should for this reason, while 3% of adults said that they had run out of food (Evidence and Network on UK Household Food Insecurity, 2019).

The pandemic has revealed the shortcomings of the UK Food System

- The Covid-19 crisis has led to a dramatic increase in poverty and hunger; free school meals should be extended to a further 1.6 million children; another 1.1 million children in England should become eligible for holiday food programmes.[508]

- The UK imports 48% of its food - 84% for fresh fruit and 46% for vegetables.[509]

- The UK is heavily reliant upon European Union (EU) countries like Spain for vegetables and salads and Italy for ambient goods. However, despite advances in supply chain technology and logistics, this increased sourcing efficiency has paradoxically made supply chains more vulnerable to disruptions.[510]

- Heightened vulnerabilities within our food system, exposed by the economic and social crisis associated with the COVID-19 pandemic, occur against a backdrop of growing inequalities in access to food in the UK, themselves exacerbated - caused - by 'austerity' policies since 2010.[511]

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[507] Evidence and Network on UK Household Food Insecurity, 2019, Household food insecurity in the UK
[508] Rayner, J., 2020, This isn't a tough new food policy for post-Brexit UK. It's thin gruel and easy to set to one side | Jay Rayner
[509] Office for National Statistics, 2018, Household debt in Great Britain
[510] Power, M. et al., 2020, How COVID-19 has exposed inequalities in the UK food system: The case of UK food and poverty
[511] Lambie-Mumford, H., 2017, Austerity, welfare reform and the rising use of food banks by children in England and Wales

- These inequalities divide households and individuals who have adequate income, mobility and social support to be able to access food through 'normal' channels - purchasing fresh or prepared produce at shops, cafes and restaurants - from those who do not.[512]

- 10% of parents/guardians, affecting an estimated 1.9 million children, reported that food insecurity had affected their children in a variety of ways in the last 6 months (2020) forcing them to rely on only a few kinds of low-cost food to feed their children (6%) and provide unbalanced meals (5%), and to resort to smaller portions (1%) or skipping meals entirely (2%).

Adults with young children are one of the groups most affected by COVID-19 but least supported by Food Banks

- The Food Standards Agency (FSA) estimates that 13% of UK adults are 'marginally food insecure' and 8% are moderately or severely food insecure.[513]

- The variation between the extent of food bank use and the prevalence of food insecurity can be sharply captured at the local level: in York, for example, a survey of households with children found that only 20% of those in the sample reporting food insecurity had ever used a food bank.[514]

- Hunger and food bank use affected women disproportionately: they were twice as likely to be food insecure as men, because they were more likely to skip meals so their children could eat, while single mothers accounted for about a fifth of all food bank users[515] while there were no statistically significant differences in levels of food insecurity between men living on their own and women living on their own, or between men and women living with another adult (not partner) and no children[516]

- Assuming independent food banks in England, Wales and Northern Ireland distribute a similar number of food parcels on average as those in Scotland, the total number of food parcels distributed across the UK over 2018/19 by food banks in the Trussell Trust network and independent food banks would be around 3 million (Sosenko et al., 2019) with the estimated number of food insecure - 10.2 million - based on the FSA data.[517]

- Since the lockdown came into effect in early March 2020, 3% of respondents of The Food Foundation's 2020 survey have gone a whole day without eating; 14% report that

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[512] Garthwaite, K., 2016, Policy Press | Hunger Pains - Life inside Foodbank Britain, By Kayleigh Garthwaite

[513] Food Standards Agency, 2017, The Food & You Survey Wave 4

[514] Power, M.S., 2019, Seeking justice : how to understand and end food poverty in York

[515] Butler, P., 2019, Welfare changes drive rising poverty and food bank use, study finds

[516] Sosenko F, Littlewood M, Bramley G, et al., 2019, A study of poverty and food insecurity in the UK

[517] Loopstra, R., Reeves, A., Tarasuk, V., 2019, The rise of hunger among low-income households: an analysis of the risks of food insecurity between 2004 and 2016 in a population-based study of UK adults

someone in their household has had to reduce or skip meals because they could not access or afford sufficient sustenance.[518]

- This suggests that adults with young children - a population historically underrepresented at food banks - are amongst the groups most affected by COVID-19.

The Food aid system relies largely on individual food donations which have declined during the pandemic

- Food banks (and other community food providers) largely received food in three ways:

  1. Surplus food redistributed directly by supermarkets or indirectly by charities, such as FareShare.

  2. Food donated by individuals either within the supermarket itself (for instance, in a donation basket), directly to the food bank, or through other charities/organisations (e.g., a local church).

  3. Food purchased in bulk by the food bank from local supermarkets and shops. (The Food Foundation, 2020)
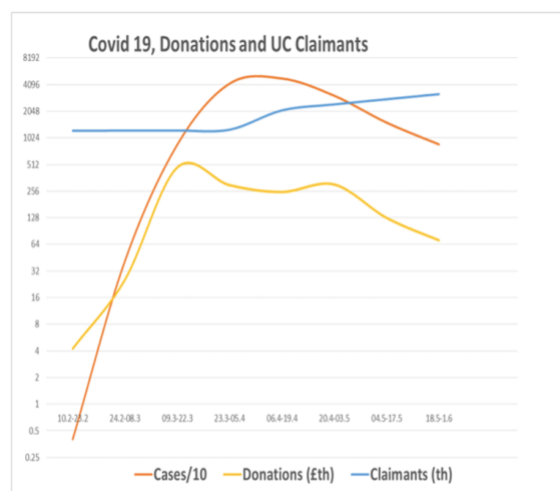
Note: the graph uses a logarithmic scale to show the rates of change rather than absolute numbers: both COVID-19 cases and food-bank donations rise rapidly in March and the big rise in UC claimants follows a bit later. Donations decline following COVID-19 cases despite the fact that the numbers in poverty continues to rise.

- Individual food donations have dropped sharply as households prioritise their own food supply despite an initial increase in donation at the peak of lockdown.[519] Many food banks are unable to purchase the non-perishable items required for standard food parcels, due to supermarket rationing and the poor availability of much of this produce as a result of stockpiling.[520]

- Before the pandemic, 75% of independent food banks relied on five or more volunteers each week. These volunteers tend to be older (over 70); social distancing rules have caused many of these volunteers to stay away from food banks, placing considerable additional pressure on volunteers and staff continuing to distribute food. (Butler, 2020)

[518] The Food Foundation, 2020, Vulnerable Groups
[519] Taylor-Gooby, P. and Petricek, T., July 2020, Food bank donations surged during the pandemic – but look closely at the data and there's trouble ahead
[520] Butler, P., 2020, Food banks ask UK supermarkets to set aside coronavirus supplies

Existing Government Policy and Implementation

School meal programmes[521] serve little purpose during the pandemic because substitutes are not received by eligible families

- According to the World Food Programme's latest calculations, 346 million children missed school meals due to the school closures that responded to the coronavirus pandemic[522]

- Low-income families with children who are eligible for free school meals will instead be provided with vouchers for local supermarkets, paid at a higher rate to reflect the increased costs attached to buying from supermarkets and the inability to purchase wholesale as schools do when providing these meals.[523]

- Whilst this response should ensure that these families are not disadvantaged in terms of diet, a recent poll by The Food Foundation in 2020 finds that around 40% of adults with children have not yet received a substitute for free school meals.[524]

Furloughing becomes the main support system, but larger families are disadvantaged by Universal Credit restrictions which leaves them vulnerable to food insecurity and hunger[525]

- It is less clear what level of protection the measures will provide in the short- to medium-term (The Food Foundation, 2020).

- Employers, for example, are not required to fund the difference between salary costs paid by the Government under the retention scheme and the usual salary of the person (The Food Foundation, 2020).

- This means that some households could see their income reduce by a fifth for a sustained period of time, during which costs for utilities and food may increase as a result of families staying at home (The Food Foundation, 2020).

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[521] Children who have key workers as parents or who are defined as vulnerable, for example, looked after children and those with a child protection plan or special educational needs, will be able to remain in school but most children will now be unable to attend.(Department for Education, 2020, Closure of educational settings: information for parents and carers)

[522] Shahid, T., 2020, Coronavirus and the Disruption of Free School Meals

[523] Power, M., 2020, How COVID-19 has exposed inequalities in the UK food system: The case of UK food and poverty

[524] The Food Foundation, 2020, Vulnerable Groups

[525] The Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS), in which 80% of salary costs will be paid by the Government up to £2,500 per month pre-tax, with an equivalent scheme for those who are self-employed *may* mitigate large scale income shocks amongst the majority of the population, so limiting the extent of increases in food insecurity

- Important issues already known to increase poverty amongst social security claimants remain unaddressed. Universal Credit continues to be contingent on overall household income, whilst the benefit cap and the two-child limit (restricting the child allowance in Universal Credit and tax credits to the first two children in a family if the third and subsequent children were born after April 1, 2017) remain in place, severely disadvantaging larger families.[526]

People turn to food banks more as unemployment increases and benefit-level income becomes more common

- As of June 2019, there were an estimated 2,070 food banks in the UK, comprising 1,261 food banks in the Trussell Trust network and 809 independent food banks evidencing Trussell Trust as the primary source of Food Banks. This national charity provides food parcels to people referred to it by professionals such as doctors, health visitors, social workers and the Citizens Advice who meet certain requirements.[527]

- Food banks receive a lot of public support in the UK, including more than 4 million volunteer hours a year pre-pandemic. The support food banks offer can be vital in helping people cope with a crisis (May, 2020).

- However, the 560,000 people estimated to have used Trussell Trust food banks in 2016–17 are only a small proportion of the millions experiencing food insecurity in the UK as evidenced above and 3 days of food is not enough to meet the needs of people for whom food insecurity is an ongoing problem (May, 2020).

- Similarly, restricting the number of times people may use food banks does not meet the needs of those who move in and out of food insecurity on a regular basis (May, 2020).

- This happens to people who, for example, struggle to cope with expected but unaffordable bills, or rely on low-paid and insecure work as is common in society today a propos the economic recession due to the pandemic (May, 2020).

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[526] Power, M., 2020, How COVID-19 has exposed inequalities in the UK food system: The case of UK food and poverty
[527] May, J., 2018, Food insecurity in the UK

Challenges and Responses to Policy Implementation

Existing Government Policy excludes some primary school children from food security and anti-hunger initiatives

- Bills which aim to address child hunger in primary school, such as the 2020 School Breakfast Bill, take months to make it through parliament and are not supported by Conservative MPs. This particular bill was first heard in October 2020 and is still waiting for a date for its second reading, as of January 2021.

- Existing provisions leave gaps in food security; in England and Scotland, all children in the first 3 years of primary school can receive Free School Meals regardless of family income. For older children and all children in Wales and Northern Ireland, eligibility for free school meals is dependent on family income.[528]

- Only state schools are obliged to comply with School Food Standards. There are currently 6418 primary schools maintained by an academy trust, and a further 1456 independent primary schools. This leaves many children unprotected by the Schools Food Standards.

- In their 2018 report, The UK Stakeholders for Sustainable Development found that the most vulnerable places and people in our society are increasingly being left behind in the overall implementation of SDGs in the UK, with particular reference to Goal 2.'[529]

Funding for existing policy is insufficient, which leaves primary school children vulnerable to food insecurity and hunger

- In the past decade of Conservative government, beginning in 2010 with the coalition, funding for programmes addressing hunger in primary schools has come from international sources such as the EU's £3.1 m European Aid to the Most Deprived.

- Domestic sources include funds from the Government's Childhood Obesity Strategy, funded with £10 million from the soft drinks industry levy.[530]

- The practice of outsourcing food provision has proven vulnerable to profiteering and conflicts of interest, for example, the contract for the provision of £30 food bundles in January 2021 for children in receipt of free school meals, was given to Cartwell's, a private catering company with connections to former PM, David Cameron. Newspapers

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[528] End child food poverty, 2020, Government Schemes | End Child Food Poverty
[529] UK Stakeholders for Sustainable Development, 2018, Measuring up How the UK is performing on the UN Sustainable Development Goals
[530] Children and Society, 2018, 'Feeding Hungry Children': The Growth of Charitable Breakfast Clubs and Holiday Hunger Projects in the UK (wiley.com)

reported that families had received bundles that they valued at £5, leaving an unaccounted shortfall of £25.[531]

● Funding is given to schools for term-time provision. This leaves children on free school meals vulnerable to 'Holiday Hunger.'[532]

Covid-19 has challenged the Government to provide for food security in exceptional circumstances which is proving a challenge to existing policy and implementation

● A joint analysis from Save the Children and UNICEF, reports that the Covid-19 pandemic will reverse progress made towards ending childhood poverty 'by decades' which includes issues of hunger and food insecurity.[533]

● The Department for Education states in a January 2021 press release that between March and August 2020, £380 million worth of Edenred voucher codes were redeemed into supermarket gift codes.[534] This national scheme was restarted on the 18th January 2021 and runs for four weeks until the 12th February.

● This press release also allows for schools to continue providing free meals to eligible pupils through lunch parcels, caterers, or local shops not currently participating in the Edenred scheme (Department for Education, 2021).

● The Department for Education further specified that vulnerable families would continue to receive meals and other essentials during the February 2021 half term, through the £170 million Covid Winter Grant Scheme, as they did during the Christmas holidays (Department for Education, 2021).

The Child Food Poverty Task Force fills the gap of food insecurity where government prevention schemes fail

● The Food Foundation has joined the Child Food Poverty Task Force formed and spear-headed by Marcus Rashford which is calling on the Government to implement 3 National Food Strategy policy recommendations to support the most vulnerable children.[535]

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[531] The Mirror, 2021, Voice of the Mirror: No morsel of decency to be found in food parcel scandal - Voice of the Mirror - Mirror Online

[532] International Journal of Primary, Elementary and Early-Years Education, 2019, Hunger in the primary school setting: evidence, impacts and solutions according to school staff in the North East of England, UK: Education 3-13: Vol 48, No 2 (tandfonline.com)

[533] Save the Children, 2020, The COVID-19 pandemic and children 5 months on (savethechildren.org.uk)

[534] Department for Education, 2021, National free school meals voucher scheme opens to orders

[535] The Food Foundation, 2020, NEW FOOD FOUNDATION DATA: 14% of UK families with children have experienced food insecurity in the past 6 months

- While vital measures like the furlough scheme and Free School Meal vouchers may have prevented the situation worsening, a large number of children are still left in a precarious situation when it comes to securing the necessary healthy diet for them to grow, develop and participate actively in school and society.[536]

- Marcus Rashford's Task Force is asking the Government to allocate sufficient budget to implementing 3 policy recommendations included in the National Food Strategy:

  1. Expand eligibility for the Free School Meal scheme to include every child (up to the age of 16) from a household where the parent or guardian is in receipt of Universal Credit (or equivalent benefits1). Under this recommendation an estimated additional 1.5 million 7-16-year olds would benefit from Free School Meals.

  2. Extend the Holiday Activity and Food Programme to all areas in England, so that summer holiday support is available to all children in receipt of Free School Meals.

  3. Increase the value of Healthy Start vouchers to £4.25 per week and expand the scheme to every pregnant woman and to all households with children under 4 where a parent or guardian is in receipt of Universal Credit or equivalent benefits

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[536] The Food foundation, 2020, EDUCATION LEADERS JOIN MARCUS RASHFORD CAMPAIGN CALLING FOR GOVERNMENT TO ACT ON CHILD FOOD POVERTY

Insight

Overview

The UK Government ratified the UN's sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in 2015 as part of an international commitment to ending poverty and promoting economic growth. The implementation of public policy in line with these goals has had mixed results. Responsibility for overseeing sustainable development in the UK has fallen to the Office for International Development, a small office with negligible domestic powers in terms of influence and policy making. Collaboration between the government and various community leaders from faith groups, marginalised ethnicities, and representatives from the many UK regions has been limited which has resulted in a poor or inadequate performance in 76% of the SDGs.[537] Performance has been particularly poor for SDG 2 (ending hunger and food insecurity) and SDG 4 (ensuring quality education for all). Within a primary school context, these two SDG goals are strongly connected; hunger and food insecurity cannot coexist with quality education because these factors impede healthy development in children.

The ongoing Covid-19 pandemic has created unique challenges towards the realisation of SDG 2 as it pertains to SDG 4. The school closures over successive lockdowns have been disruptive to the consistent provision of free and nutritious meals to primary children. The pandemic has further reaffirmed that food insecurity in the UK is less the result of a lack of food and more a consequence of poverty. Families with children face the risk of being overlooked by already under-funded and overburdened public services. Government policies targeting schools, or the lack thereof, have only amplified these vulnerabilities and hindered the development of children while creating a cycle of intergenerational poverty and social inequality.

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[537] UKSSD, 2019, Measuring Up

Long term factors like austerity have significantly limited the progress towards SDG 2 which is negatively impacting the quality of education available to primary school children.

There are several characteristics which increase a child's risk of hunger and food insecurity, including their family's income level and their families access to government support such as Universal Credit, their ethnic background, the region in which they live, and the particular primary school which they attend. When children have multiple such characteristics their risk is amplified, by the intersection of these vectors of inequality.

Over a decade of austerity, following the 2008 global economic crash, have weakened or removed much of the community-level aid available to struggling families. The increasing unemployment and stagnating wages which defined the 2010s have proven a further obstacle to ending poverty. Children from the worst affected families are most vulnerable to these socio-economic circumstances because they have little to no access to resources in their own right. Their dependence on parents and guardians to provide for their material needs places them at heightened risk of being overlooked by already under-funded and overburdened public services.

The lack of a dedicated governmental department with policy-making power for the domestic implementation of SDG has contributed to a stalled approach to ending hunger and food insecurity among primary school children. The government has not prioritised SDG 2 as a means to achieve SDG 4 which also constitutes a failure to meet SDG 17, partnership for the goals. This failure to integrate SDG 2 and 4 contributes to piecemeal policy and ignores that food insecurity and hunger are underlying barriers to quality education in favour of short-term fixes like sporadic and insignificant cash injections.

Children who suffer from hunger and food insecurity are more likely to experience behavioural and developmental problems. These children are often subjected to disciplinary measures and/or pathologized, rather than being considered as malnourished and stressed by food insecurity and hunger.[538] Given that children from lower-income families and marginalised ethnicities are more likely to experience hunger and food insecurity, class and racial discrimination can compound the punishment or pathologisation that they are submitted to as a result of the behavioural and/or developmental challenges they experience. In these cases, primary school aged children not only suffer the consequences of hunger and food insecurity, they also carry the burden of their government's failure to recognise and take responsibility for SDG 2 and 4.

In this context, primary school pupils who suffer from hunger and food insecurity are denied a quality education, which puts them at a disadvantage at school. The long-term consequences of such an educational disadvantage can be seen in their later employment prospects and the health

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[538] Vivian Hill and Horatio Turner, 2016, 'Educational psychologists' perspectives on the medicalisation of childhood behaviour: A focus on Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder (ADHD)', *Educational and Child Psychology*, 33 (2).

and wellbeing of their future families. This creates a cycle of intergenerational poverty and social inequality.

Government insufficiencies in welfare benefits particularly disadvantage the homes of larger families with more than two children

Starting from 2016, the government has implemented a freeze on most working-age welfare benefits to unemployed households for four years, so they did not keep pace with inflation, partly reflecting a belief that the "positive and dynamic behavioural effects" of reduced welfare payments would incentivize work among poor people claiming welfare benefits.[539] The transition into work has occurred at a rate far below that expected by the government, which has only worsened due to COVID-19. Welfare advisers have also estimated that 40 percent of those affected by the freeze were responsible for children (The Human Rights Watch, 2019).

Welfare benefits have also not kept pace with rising food prices, even though the government's own macroeconomic data showed food prices rising faster than income levels for the poorest segments of the population for the four-year freeze period.[540] In April 2020, a 1.7% increase in benefits marked the end of this period however, this development was pulled back by COVID-19 (Kennedy & McInnes, 2020).

A particularly egregious policy, which began in 2017, is a "two child limits," curtailing any child tax credit to families for any child after their first two (with some exceptions, i.e., multiple births, adoption and children born from rape). This arbitrary limit on a means-tested benefit penalises low- and middle-income families for having more than two children.

The Universal Credit system has been beset with ongoing delays in its rollout. Whereas social security benefits used to be paid in advance, Universal Credit doesn't follow this framework leading to people being indebted quite early on in the process, leading to an increased reliance on the food aid system and hence increased tensions. The law provides for a one-off "hardship payment" if low-income families have faced financial difficulty as a result of sanctions applied under the Universal Credit system or the jobseekers' and employment support benefits under the "legacy" system. The hardship payment is a loan that must be repaid through deductions from future benefits, so this monetary advance results in augmented debt.[541]

Furthermore, the system to obtain hardship payments is cumbersome and the application form itself is complex.[542] For someone facing an immediate financial crisis due to the loss or withholding of benefits, as is common during the pandemic, this process is time-consuming, and can have

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[539] The Human Rights Watch, 2019, Nothing Left in the Cupboards
[540] Kennedy, S. & McInnes, R., 2020, Benefits Uprating 2020 - House of Commons Library
[541] The Universal Credit Regulations 2013, 2013, no. 376, The Universal Credit Regulations 2013
[542] UC10 Recoverable hardship payment application form, 2018, Recoverable hardship payment

the impact of discouraging applicants from trying to get key financial support to meet their basic needs as defined in the legislation (accommodation, heating, hygiene and food), hence making it difficult for claimants to navigate the system and receive needed funds.[543]

The impact of austerity on the long running free school meal program is a revelation of the shortcomings of legislation concerning food poverty

Since 2010, in response to the impacts of several global financial crises, successive Chancellors have made the case that financial austerity is an 'unavoidable' choice characterized by 'tough, but fair' decisions. These decisions focused on achieving savings by reducing the overall welfare budget.[544]

The government has not established a cumulative impact assessment of its welfare and tax changes repeatedly recommended by three UN committees (in 2016 and 2017) and its own national human rights institution (since 2015) (The Human Rights Watch, 2019). There is no clear policy or department that is responsible for ensuring that no one in the UK suffers from hunger as a result of inadequate or curtailed social security benefits or other government policies. Furthermore, there is no single nationwide Government measure for hunger in the UK.[545] In 2016, the government also did away with previously existing child poverty targets and the requirement to develop a child poverty strategy, as part of its broader post-2010 legislative overhaul of the welfare system as aforementioned.

In 2012, research sponsored by Kellogg's (and undertaken by YouGov) suggested that around 1 in 7 children were going to school hungry.[546] In addition to the problem of already being hungry when they reached school, it was revealed later in 2014 that 1.5 million children living beneath the poverty line were automatically disqualified from receiving free school meals because their parents worked.[547]

Eligibility for school meals therefore does not reflect need. Furthermore, the taboo around Food Aid also impedes uptake from the few schemes available. The lack of access and the taboo surrounding referrals to receive food aid creates a twofold barrier to achieving food security for primary school aged children. The All-Party Parliamentary Inquiry into Hunger in the United

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[543] The Universal Credit Regulations 2013, 2013, The Universal Credit Regulations 2013
[544] The Human Rights Watch, 2019, Nothing Left in the Cupboards
[545] Parliament UK, 2019, Sustainable Development Goals in the UK follow up: Hunger, malnutrition and food insecurity in the UK - Environmental Audit Committee - House of Commons
[546] Kellogg's, 2012, A Lost Education. The reality of hunger in the classroom.
[547] Forsey, A., 2014, An Evidence Review for the All-Party Parliamentary Inquiry into Hunger in the United Kingdom

Kingdom found that up to 38% of poor children in some parts of Britain are not receiving free school meals – even though they are entitled to them.[548]

The decade of austerity which immediately preceded the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic therefore weakened infrastructure supposed to provide for food security. Successive, short-sighted budgets removed or reduced funding from existing programmes and food security was not prioritised in policy making. Low-income families, especially those with more than two children, were therefore disadvantaged before the pandemic began, with the pandemic serving to compound existing obstacles to ending child food insecurity and hunger. Government policy regarding both domestic households and schools has failed to provide food security for primary school-aged children which increases the vulnerability of these pupils to hunger, which in turn has a detrimental impact on their educational quality.

The Government response to the Covid-19 pandemic has worsened food insecurity and hunger in primary schools which has in turn worsened educational quality.

The government's Covid response in relation to free school meals for primary school aged children has been defined by delays and U-turns which have created uncertainty and inconsistency in policymaking which ultimately leaves children going hungry or experiencing food insecurity. Since the beginning of the pandemic, the government has failed to commit to ensuring the provision of free school meals to primary children, especially during periods of lockdown. Increased food insecurity and hunger have compounded the detrimental impact of distance learning on education quality.

Children from families most affected by Covid measures have suffered the most from the lack of food security because their parents or guardians are more likely to have suffered unemployment or inadequate furlough and other income support schemes. These insufficiencies in policy framework were only further exposed by the COVID-19 pandemic. The Department for Education announced that it planned to set up an electronic voucher system so that families of children in England who normally receive free school meals could buy food at selected supermarket chains after closing schools in March 2020. However, the program did not start until March 31, almost two weeks later, and is deeply flawed. Rollout problems have left schools and families in England unable to access the electronic system.[549] Some families have waited for weeks to receive vouchers, and some were unable to use them in supermarkets once they arrived. The Department for Education's guidance to schools in England accompanying the voucher plan leaves it unclear whether schools can be fully reimbursed for costs they may incur whilst ensuring children have sufficient food outside of the electronic voucher program, such as food for parcels or vouchers purchased from local supermarkets. The lack of clarity effectively gives school managers

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[548] Smith, M. K., 2014, The impact of austerity on schools and children's education and well-being – infed.org:

[549] Speck, D., 2020, Coronavirus: Anger at 'broken' meals voucher scheme

incentives to use the government's faulty electronic voucher system, even though they do not work for many families, especially those whose digital literacy, access to computers, or knowledge of English is limited.

The outsourcing of government contracts to private firms, sometimes with connections to the party in power, has extended to free school meal provision which has resulted in subpar food packages being sent to eligible families at the start of 2021. The government's funding of food aid schemes has also faltered in other cases; funding for a food voucher scheme beginning in January 2021 lasted only four weeks. The provisions of the Covid Winter Grant Scheme are similarly short term in that they apply only to the February half term. This short-term approach limits the efficacy of government policy because provisions are only guaranteed intermittently which undermines food security.

The involvement of extra-governmental bodies such as NGOs and campaigns by public figures like Marcus Rashford demonstrate the inefficacy of government policy during the Covid pandemic because these organisations have had to 'fill a gap' in food provision for primary school children.[550] The widespread use of food banks, run predominantly by charities and faith-groups, points to a systemic failure in addressing SDG 2. The impact of this failure on SDG 4 is evident from the increase in educational inequality among primary school pupils who are most vulnerable to hunger and food insecurity. Teacher reports of lowered attendance and attainment among such students is proof of the immediate material impact of ineffective government policy in response to the pressures of the pandemic.

With the national vaccination programme underway and Prime Minister Johnson's announcement of his 'road-map' out of lockdown, there is the risk that SDG 2 will cease being addressed as a matter of urgency if leaders become complacent about the progress being made against the pandemic. There is the risk that leaders overlook the fact that hunger and food insecurity was rampant in primary school even before the outbreak of Covid-19. Once the UK leaves what has been a state of emergency the likelihood is that political attention will turn to issues such as the implementation of Brexit policies and even re-election campaigns. The lack of a dedicated department for a domestic approach to SDGs is an added risk factor to SDG 2 and SDG 4 falling off the agenda.

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[550] #EndChildFoodPoverty, 2021, Let's #EndChildFoodPoverty | End Child Food Poverty

Conclusion

- Even before the Covid-19 pandemic and Brexit, two factors which have impeded progress towards SDG 2, primary school aged children were at great risk of hunger and food insecurity, especially those who come from disadvantaged backgrounds. The government's management of these complicating factors has left even more children vulnerable to hunger and food insecurity which compromises the quality of their education

- Universal Credit severely disadvantages larger families due to a benefit cap accompanied by delayed rollout due to an absence of advance social security benefit payments

- Welfare benefits do not keep pace with inflation

- There is no clear policy or department that is responsible for ensuring that no one in the UK suffers from hunger as a result of inadequate or curtailed social security benefits or other government policies

- There is no single nationwide Government measure for hunger in the UK

- The Department of Education recommended voucher system, administered by a private multinational company, has been dotted with technical glitches, inadequate preparation and understaffing, difficulties and delays for school administrators using the online voucher portal, delays in families receiving them, and some supermarkets being unable to process them at checkout

- With the national vaccination programme underway and Prime Minister Johnson's announcement of the 'road-map' out of lockdown, there is the risk that SDG 2 will cease being addressed as a matter of urgency if leaders become complacent about the progress being made against the pandemic

Policy Recommendations

Overview

Action 1 - The child food insecurity and hunger brought to light by the Covid-19 crisis can be resolved with the development of a nationalised school meal programme which should remain in place beyond the pandemic.

     a) End outsourcing and privatisation to save money and streamline provision.
     b) Create a national standard to end the postcode lottery.
     c) Offer free school meals to every child, regardless of household income.
     d) Commit to sustainable funding to ensure consistency.
     e) Implement this in the next three years in order to reach the 2030 SDG targets.

Action 2 - Universal Credit should be improved to better respect the rights of people, including those living in poverty, to an adequate standard of living

     a) Department for Work and Pensions should take immediate steps to abolish the discriminatory two-child limit policy
     b) It should also consider revising the current system in which Universal Credit payments are made in arrears, to make them in advance or in a grant like manner
     c) Grants should include a cash rather than voucher component in order to ensure that people aren't left food insecure due to failure of the voucher schemes

Action 3 - The government should establish a cross departmental working group under the supervision of the Cabinet Office which aims to

     a) Review the human rights and policy implications of escalating levels of food poverty
     b) Ensure better coordination between ministries and government agencies
     c) Develop a nationwide anti-hunger strategy
     d) Support draft legislation seeking to develop a statutory requirement to measure and monitor food insecurity, with periodic reporting to parliament
     e) Incorporate ICESCR (International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights) into domestic law and ratify the revised European Social Charter
     f) Establish a cumulative human rights impact assessment of post 2010 tax and welfare restructuring

Action 1 - Nationalise free primary school meal provision

The **outsourcing of government contracts** to external parties, as part of the **continuous privatisation of the public sector since the 1980s**, has created an ineffective and obtuse infrastructure for delivering school meals which is **counter-productive to ending child food insecurity and hunger**. The use of tax-payer's money on these private contracts, sometimes even won by means of nepotism, constitutes a redirection of public resources to private interests at the expense of school children, whose health and education suffer the brunt of this government mismanagement.

The **nationalisation of free school meals should extend across England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland.** UK-wide consistency would end the postcode lottery that primary school aged children are currently subject to when it comes to accessing free school meals. Every child attending **state-funded primary school**, or being **home-educated**, should be served by the recommended national free school meals programme. Extending eligibility to all children regardless of their household income, would remove the taboo around accessing free school meals because this would no longer be stigmatised as a sign of poverty.

The government would need to enact **policy to support the nationalisation of the school meals system**, this would need to address **funding**, **supply logistics** and measures for **implementation**. Given the negative economic impact of the pandemic, funding is hard to negotiate. Much of the funds being spent on existing programmes could be redirected towards the new national system. The streamlining made possible by nationalisation would save money otherwise wasted on extortionate private contracts. Any short-fall could be made up for by redirecting by existing sources of revenue, such as the sugar-tax. Given the scope of this policy recommendation, a **period of transition** would be necessary. However, the urgent need to address child food insecurity, especially in relation to the detrimental effect of hunger on educational quality, means that this process must be prioritised and accelerated. The nationalisation of free school meals for primary school children should be achieved **before 2025**. This is important in terms of achieving SDG 2 and 4 by the UN target: 2030.

The development of a **centrally funded, centrally managed national free school meal programme** would directly help the six children in every primary school class who arrive at school hungry and or thirsty. It would also positively impact the rest of the class because teachers would not have to dedicate as much time and resources to the pupils who have increased educational and behavioural needs as a result of their hunger and food insecurity. The jobs created by a national free school meals programme would provide employment opportunities with job security, a liveable wage, and proper working conditions for hundreds, if not thousands, of adults, many of whom have dependent children.

Action 2 - Amend the policy framework of Universal Credit

The UK Government published its annual statistics on the number of households affected by the **two-child limit policy**, which restricts support through tax credits and universal credit to the first two children in a family. Because it only affects families with a third or subsequent child born on or after 6 April 2017, the policy did not come in with a big and noticeable bang – its impact was felt by only a relatively small number of families in its first year.[551] But its reach is growing steadily over time. The new figures show that **911,000 children now live-in affected households** (HM Revenue and Customs & Department for Work and Pensions, 2020). The majority (59 per cent) of those households contain three children (HM Revenue and Customs & Department for Work and Pensions, 2020).

Universal Credit itself can be improved to better respect the rights of people, including those living in poverty, to an adequate standard of living. The UK government should use the opportunity of its current pause on the further rollout of Universal Credit to **evaluate and address the system's structural flaws**, and not just problems with delivery. The Department for Work and Pensions should take immediate steps to **abolish the discriminatory two-child limit** policy, both as it applies to "legacy" benefits and as it will apply to future Universal Credit claimants in households with more than two children, and in the interim disapply it to ensure that it no longer affects any child whether or not they were born before April 2017.

The **Department for Work and Pensions** should also consider revising the current system in which Universal Credit **payments are made in arrears**, to either make Universal Credit payments in advance, with no penalty for, or recovery of, overpayment from the first payment; or offer a one-off, non-recoverable, grant-like payment to cover the period between entering the Universal Credit system and receiving the first payment, and thereafter continue to pay benefits in arrears. This would ensure that families don't enter into the debt cycle even before the avail Universal Credit as has been the case until now. This grant should also include a **cash component** rather than vouchers since the poor implementation of supermarket voucher programs can leave people without food, exacerbating the problem the vouchers are intended to solve. Even when they do work, vouchers can impose a burden on claimants and carry the risk of stigma and humiliation. Direct cash transfers and other systems better **respect families' dignity** and ability to choose adequate food for their children and better protect their right to an adequate standard of living. This method can not only help improve the Universal Credit system but can also be used to address the problems associated with the supermarket voucher scheme during COVID-19.

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[551] HM Revenue and Customs & Department for Work and Pensions, 2020, Child Tax Credit and Universal Credit claimants 2 April 2020

Action 3 - Create a cross-departmental working group to support draft legislation seeking to measure and monitor food insecurity

With around 8.4 million people in the UK struggling to get enough to eat even before, food insecurity is common.[552] These numbers have only increased in the years that followed with 14% of families with children in the UK being food insecure by September, 2020.[553] Children who are unable to access free school meals during the holidays and now COVID-19; parents on low incomes who skip meals so that their children can eat; individuals who are using food banks for the first time after a job loss; minority ethnic communities; people with no recourse to public funds who are excluded from accessing most welfare support, or older people left at home, unable to prepare meals without support are all instances that are a symptom of inadequate and/or insecure incomes, holes in the welfare safety net set up by the government, increased living costs and rising debt due to inflation and financial problems.[554]

First and foremost, the government should announce publicly that it **accepts the right to food as a basic human right**, and part of the human right to an adequate standard of living and accept its duty to ensure that no one in the United Kingdom goes hungry. The government should ensure an **effective remedy** (including legal protection) for those whose right to food has been violated by state action or inaction, so that they can effectively challenge government policy and laws to ensure that everyone has access to adequate food, and that those who do not **receive compensation.**

The government should establish a cross departmental working group under the supervision of the Cabinet Office—comprised of senior representatives of all relevant departments, including but not limited to: the Department for Work and Pensions, Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, Department for Education, Department for Health, HM Revenue and Customs, and the Treasury, at a minimum—to review the human rights and policy implications of escalating levels of food poverty, to ensure better coordination between ministries and government agencies, and to take responsibility for developing a nationwide anti-hunger strategy.[555] The group should aim to support draft legislation seeking to develop a statutory requirement to measure and monitor food insecurity, with periodic reporting to parliament. Furthermore, it should **incorporate ICESCR** (International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights) into domestic law and **ratify the revised European Social Charter.**

The group will also be responsible to **establish a cumulative human rights impact assessment** of post 2010 tax and welfare restructuring, which is independent of government, with particular

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[552] Sustainweb.org, 2016, 8.4m in UK too poor to eat
[553] The Food Foundation, 2020, NEW FOOD FOUNDATION DATA: 14% of UK families with children have experienced food insecurity in the past 6 months
[554] Sustainweb.org, 2020, What is food poverty? Who is most at risk?
[555] The Human Rights Watch, 2019, Nothing Left in the Cupboards

attention to impact on people with specific additional protections under domestic anti-discrimination laws and those arising from international human rights treaty obligations.

Conclusion

Given the increasing trend towards privatisation, seen from in transport, the postal service, the NHS, and other public services, it is unlikely that a nationalisation project will be embraced, especially by the ruling Conservative government who are responsible for the large part of this privatisation.

However, the pressure from the public and from campaigns like Marcus Rashford's could lead to increased government funding for existing infrastructure, which would be a step in the right direction. The creation of a dedicated governmental group for the ending of hunger and food-insecurity would aid in the nationalisation of free primary school meals but given the current situation regarding COVID-19, the NHS and vaccine rollout and other public services, the government is less likely to concentrate on recognising the right to food as a basic human right and creating a cross-departmental working group. The creation of such a group is also a Herculean task due to the links it has with multiple departments which would lead to discrepancies about the difference in the operation of all the departments with respect to the group.

However, the amendment of the Universal Credit framework is a fairly simpler task due to the fact that the changes to be made actually save the government a lot of money and time with respect to legislation and functionality. It also ensures that lesser people are in the debt cycle and this would have a positive impact on the GDP of the country since this would ensure that they are able to have better health and access to education which in turn would lead to them being assets to the country rather than liabilities.