

Essay and Discussion Questions

Development Higher Education Questions

Help students understand more about the opportunities and challenges of global development through these essay and discussion questions.

Question 1

Evaluate the factors used to determine whether a country is considered developing or developed. To what extent are these determining factors accurate? Should we rethink which countries are considered developed and which are not? Craft your own definition of development citing specific examples of the most significant determining factors for development. Explain why this definition is suitable.

- Why is development difficult to define?
- Why are each of the five conditions for economic growth—peace and stability, education, access to capital, rule of law, and opportunity—considered necessary for development?
- How does inequality complicate measuring development? How does the GINI coefficient ultimately measure development by measuring income inequality?
- How do taxes impact development?

Question 2

What were the most significant contributing factors that allowed South Korea to successfully develop over the second half of the twentieth century while North Korea did not? In what ways did global affairs post–Cold War have an impact on this development?

- How did the political landscape in both North and South Korea change post–World War II?
- How does a command economy differ from a market economy?

Question 3

Discuss the history of U.S. foreign aid and the United States' use of development assistance as a strategic tool, rather than purely philanthropic aid. To what extent was the Marshall Plan beneficial to the United States? How beneficial was it to the Western European countries that received money under the plan? Should donor countries consider their own self-interest or solely the benefit of the countries receiving aid? Why or why not?

- Who are the top ten recipients of U.S. economic aid? Why are these countries the top recipients?
- Should the United States increase or decrease the amount of foreign aid it currently provides? Why or why not?
- How has U.S. aid in different regions of the world changed over time?

Question 4

To what extent were the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) a success? In what ways are the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) an improvement on the MDGs? What role do the SDGs play today, and have they had an impact? In your opinion, which of the SDGs are most pressing in today's world? Why? How should governments approach these goals?

- What are the three main characteristics that distinguish the SDGs from the MDGs?
- In what ways are the SDGs interconnected?

Question 5

What does the inequitable distribution of COVID-19 vaccines among developed and developing countries tell us about the state of global development? How should the international community most effectively address gaps in humanitarian aid concerning global issues that affect both developed and developing countries?

- What challenges did countries face in COVID-19 vaccine production and distribution?

Question 6

How should the international community most effectively address the negative effects of oil production on the global economy and the environment, especially for developing countries? How can governments, international organizations, NGOs, and other actors pursue sustainable energy sources while ensuring economic stability?

- What is the connection between oil and development?
- What challenges does the international community face balancing development with the need to use oil?
- What is the role of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) members in the prevalence of oil in the global economy?
- What are price shocks and how do they impact the economy?

Question 7

Drawing from what you know about the Industrial Revolution and the Green Revolution, what can you predict about the role of technology in social and economic development for the next 50 years? In your opinion, what are the costs and benefits of technology revolutions for international development? How do technological advancements impact developed countries compared to developing countries?

- What are contemporary development challenges?
- In what ways might the digital revolution impact development?