

**SAMPLE**

**Global Politics  
Teach Yourself Series**

**Topic 8: Global Challenges: Ethical Issues and Debates –  
Human Rights**

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# Global Challenges

## Ethical Issues and Debates

The ethical issues for this area of study are:

- human rights
- people movement
- development
- arms control and disarmament

NB This paper will focus on Human Rights as the selected case study

## Glossary

### As it appears in Unit 4

The following is a glossary of key terms you will be expected to know for Area of Study 1 – Ethical Issues and Debates as outlined in the Study Design. The terms are also relevant to each of the four areas of study across unit 3 and 4. You should consider defining key terms using examples.

#### **Cosmopolitanism**

(U4 AOS1) The ideology that humanity is one single community, regardless of state, culture or levels of economic development. All humans are equal and should be treated equally and global actors should act with this motivation.

#### **Ethics**

(U4 AOS 1) Seeks to address questions of morality. This extends to global politics on the basis that a common humanity binds all human beings beyond individuals in states to the world as a whole, thus necessitating certain actions. (Guantanamo Bay (2002) detention, mistreatment of prisoners and denial of human rights)

#### **Justice**

(U4 AOS1) Concept of moral rightness based on ethics, law, fairness and equity that, importantly, also seeks punishment when said ethics are breached. Extends to global politics through international systems of justice, such as the ICC and ICJ, which seek to uphold international law and deter future violations. (ICC sentence of Congo rebel leader Lubanga for war crimes 2012)

#### **Realism**

(U4 AOS1) the ideology that the global political arena is made up of individual states and every state acts in its own national interests to ensure its sovereignty. Any cooperation made by states with other global actors is only to further their own national interests.

#### **Advice to teachers (VCAA revised study design 2016-2017):**

##### **International treaties:**

“International law is broader than treaties and teachers must ensure students study relevant treaties for the ethical issue. Students should understand the distinction between declarations and international treaties. Declarations, such as, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights or the Millennium Declaration are not international treaties. According to the United Nations, international treaties are legally binding multilateral agreements between states in written form and governed by international law. Intergovernmental organisations may also be party to a treaty. An overly deep legal understanding of international treaties is not necessary. Emphasis should be placed on the ability of states and institutions of global governance to uphold and enforce international treaties and indict actors who flout them.”

## Review Questions

1. Define the term realism as it relates to the study of Global Politics.
2. Explain the difference between justice and ethics.

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# Human Rights

## Perspectives on Ethics

### As it appears in Unit 4

The perspectives on ethics outlined below are used to frame our understanding of ethical issues and debates from a theoretical standpoint. They are not intended to describe global actors but rather how global actor responses can be interpreted or how debates can be framed.

#### Perspectives on ethics

##### *Cosmopolitanism or 'Cosmopolitan School'*

- Argues for a common humanity with a single set of moral standards regardless of the state, culture or levels of economic development. Argue that ethical principles should be the foundation of foreign policy

##### *Realism or 'Realist school'*

- That individual states each have their own standards and no moral obligation to one another with no common morality. Argue that foreign policy should be based purely on calculations of national interest and power.

##### *Pluralism or 'Pluralist School'*

- That the global political arena is made up of separate communities (states) but with some shared standards with regard to ethics. Contend that ethics should play a role in foreign policy but also recognise that conflicting ideas about morality between states/cultures make this challenging

#### Review Questions

3. Notes on notes: summarise the perspectives on ethics in 5 key points

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4. Describe the cosmopolitan ethical framework.

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## Solutions to Review Questions

1. The ideology that the global political arena is made up of individual states and every state acts in its own national interests to ensure its sovereignty. Any cooperation made by states with other global actors is only to further their own national interests.
2. Morality and the view that “a common humanity binds all human beings beyond individuals in states to the world” is the basis of understanding the meaning of the term ethics. The concept of justice on the other hand can be understood as based on “moral rightness” pursued by the rule of law and in the global sphere an international system of justice.
3. 5 key points on ethical perspectives:
  - Cosmopolitanism argues for: “common humanity with a single set of moral standards”
  - Realism argues that: “individual states each have their own standards and no moral obligation to one another”
  - Pluralism argues that: “separate communities (states) with some shared standards with regard to ethics” make up global politics
  - Cosmopolitanists emphasise ethics in foreign policy pursuits
  - Realists emphasise national interest and power in foreign policy
4. The international system of human rights law framed by the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) exemplifies the cosmopolitan ethical framework. The articles of the declaration emphasise the moral standards all member states of the UN should adhere to, although it is a non-binding agreement and human rights violations remain a global issue. However, the cosmopolitan principles of the declaration at a practical level can be seen in the UN Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The eight goals established in 2000 include the achievement of ‘universal primary education’. While there has been some progress in the achievement of this goal as evidenced in enrolment and attendance figures for the Middle East/North Africa, East Asia and the Pacific and Latin America and Caribbean regions according to UNICEF, the Middle East/North Africa, South Asia and West/Central Africa need to do more to adopt the gender parity goal in primary education.
5. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child has 54 articles in total. The provisions of the Convention set out the range of rights that children have and how global actors should work together to make sure that all children get all of their rights. The CRC has been the most readily and widely ratified international human treaty in the global political arena. Article 24 outlines that “children have the right to an education”. One of \*UNICEF’s initiatives, first implemented in the 1990s, is the School-in-a-Box (supplies and materials) concept, which seeks to ensure that children in emergency situations are able to return to learning more quickly after an emergency.  
\*The United Nations Children’s Fund
6. The issue of girls right to education, under the provision of the Convention on the Rights of the Child was brought to public attention to by the attack on Malala Yousafzai, a 15 year old Pakistani student activist, on a school bus in October 2012. Malala was shot by Taliban gunmen because of her advocacy for girls education in Pakistan, particularly the Swat Valley where the Taliban had banned girls from attending school. Malala’s case symbolises the fight for children’s rights and her attack coincided with the release of UNESCO’s ‘Education For All Global Monitoring Report

2012, which was launched in her honour. UNESCO's findings affirmed the need for girl's education all over the world and Pakistan's case was seen to be crucial to meeting development targets. Pakistan has the second largest number of children out of school at 5.1 million and two-thirds are girls. In the Swat Valley, only around one in three girls are in school. UNESCO's report and the work of other agencies and global actors is a work in progress to reduce gender disparity and girls access to school under the provisions of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

## 7. Debate: Responsibility to Protect vs Sovereignty in relation to Human Rights

### a. Perspective 1

R2P is a new international norm of fundamental ethical importance. The Responsibility to Protect (R2P) declaration has 3 pillars:

- the R2P stipulates that every state has the R2P its population from: Genocide, War Crimes, Ethnic Cleansing & Crimes Against Humanity and from their incitement, all based on the concept of sovereignty.
- the international community has the responsibility to assist states to fulfill their R2P, particularly the causes of: Genocide, War Crimes, Ethnic Cleansing & Crimes Against Humanity
- in situations where a state has failed to protect its own population from the four crimes, then the international community's responsibility is to take timely and decisive action (peaceful and non-peaceful) to bring about end to the threat.

In 2011 the Security Council invoked R2P in Resolutions: 1970 and 1973 on the situation in Libya.