'Today's 'developers' are like the alchemists of old who vainly tried to transmute lead into gold, in the firm belief that they would then have the key to wealth. The alchemists disappeared once it was realized that true wealth came from elsewhere – from people and from trade. When will we realize that well-being does not come from growth?'

GILBERT RIST (2008) HISTORY OF DEVELOPMENT: FROM WESTERN ORIGINS TO GLOBAL FAITH

CHAPTER 2

DEVELOPMENT:
THE STORY OF AN IDEA

TONY DALY AND M. SATISH KUMAR

This chapter explores current thinking and debates about the nature and scope of development. It sketches out the evolution and definitions of the term from early world views via colonialism, the decolonisation process and the emergence of the 'age of development' following the Second World War. Modernisation theory, dependency theory and broader 'Third World' critiques of the theory and practice of development are also explored and debated. The era of the MDGs and SDGs and the associated critiques and challenges is also reviewed. Debates surrounding divergent definitions of development and key phrases such as 'Third World' are also analysed.

KEYWORDS:

NATURE AND HISTORY OF DEVELOPMENT; **DEVELOPMENT DEFINITIONS AND DEBATES;** GENDER; **ENVIRONMENT;** HUMAN RIGHTS; **HUMAN DEVELOPMENT;** MODERNISATION THEORY; **DEPENDENCY THEORY;** THIRD WORLD PERSPECTIVES; **SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS**

Photo: John Ferguson/Oxfam

INTRODUCTION

The half century between 1950 and 2000 has been characterised by many as the 'age of development', one, it is now argued, that has been superseded by the 'age of globalisation' and the era of sustainable development. In the aftermath of World War Two, the re-building of Europe, the rise of the United States and the beginning of the process of decolonisation, international development became a dominant focus in international relations. This vision and agenda is perhaps best captured in the 1949 inaugural address of US President Harry S Truman who proposed:

'We must embark on a bold new program for making the benefits of our scientific advances and industrial progress available for the improvement and growth of underdeveloped areas. The old imperialism - exploitation for foreign profit - has no place in our plans. What we envisage is a program of development based on the concept of democratic fair dealing … More than half the people of the world are living in conditions approaching misery. Their food is inadequate. They are victims of disease. Their economic life is primitive and stagnant. Their poverty is a handicap and a threat both to them and to more prosperous areas. For the first time in history, humanity possesses the knowledge and the skill to relieve the suffering of these people.'

The decades that followed were characterised by the Cold War (with contrasting views of, and strategies for 'underdeveloped' countries); the establishment of the institutions and structures of the United Nations (especially those directly addressing development); widespread decolonisation; the eventual collapse of the Soviet Union and the opening up of Eastern Europe. While, in development terms, much was achieved in many developing countries (in health, literacy, basic needs and education), the fundamental divide and inequalities that characterise the world continued to grow and deepen.

In compiling the second edition of the Development Dictionary in 2010, editor Wolfgang Sachs insisted that today:

'The idea of development stands like a ruin in the intellectual landscape. Delusion and disappointment, failures and crimes, have been the steady companions of development and they tell a common story: it did not work. Moreover, the historical conditions which catapulted the idea into prominence have vanished; development has become outdated. But, above all, the hopes and desires which made the idea fly are now exhausted; development has grown obsolete. Nevertheless, the ruin stands there and still dominates the scenery like a landmark…'

Despite such dismissals, development remains a key frame of reference in international relations as well as in the popular imagination and it also forms a core element in the architecture of international cooperation. Despite the fact that 'pro-poor' development is regularly deemed to have failed (especially when viewed from the perspective of the poor) it continues to be financed, debated, measured, monitored and evaluated – development remains big business!

THREE KEY PERSPECTIVES

In the course of the past six decades, the idea of development has been expanded to encompass a great variety of perspectives and emphases, many of which are explored below but at this stage, three particular perspectives are worthy of note – the 'feminist'; the 'ecological' and the 'human rights'.

The feminist perspective has been outlined by many commentators, few more authoritatively than Gita Sen and Caren Grown in 1988:

'The perspective of poor and oppressed women provides a unique and powerful vantage point from which we can examine the effects of development programmes and strategies … if the goals of development include improved standards of living, removal of poverty, access to dignified employment, and reduction in societal inequality, then it is quite natural to start with women. They constitute the majority of the poor, the underemployed and the economically and socially disadvantaged in most societies. Furthermore, women suffer from additional burdens imposed by gender-based hierarchies and subordination.'

The environmental or ecological perspective has always paralleled the 'development story' but, in more recent decades it has become intrinsically central to it and vice versa. This view was elegantly outlined by Indian activist Vandana Shiva in 1989:

'Among the hidden costs (of development) are the new burdens created by ecological destruction, costs that are invariably heavier for women, both in the North and the South. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that as GNP rises, it does not necessarily mean that either wealth or welfare increase proportionately … In actual fact, there is less water, less fertile soil, less genetic wealth as a result of the development process.'

Vandana Shiva (1989) Staying Alive: Development, Ecology and Women in Micheline R. Ishay, (ed., 1997) The Human Rights Reader, Routledge, London.

In more recent years, the interface between human rights and human development has come more to the fore with significant implications for both. This perspective was coherently outlined by the UNDP Human Development Report for 2000:

'If human development focuses on the enhancement of the capabilities and freedoms that the members of a community enjoy, human rights represent the claims that individuals have on the conduct of individual and collective agents and on the design of social arrangements to facilitate or secure these capabilities and freedoms.'

One area in which there is almost unanimous agreement is that the definition of development is both controversial and contested – there is little agreement as to its precise definition and meaning with different groups emphasising different dimensions at different times. For those who argue that we now live in a 'post development age', it is time to abandon the very concept of development itself while for others in the era of the Sustainable Development Goals, it is far too soon to write its obituary.

The remainder of this chapter explores the debate.

EARLY IDEAS ABOUT DEVELOPMENT

Today, development is strongly associated with the idea of change but this has not always been so. The Ancient Greeks (from whom much of the West's thinking springs, especially from the philosophy of Aristotle) argued that all things have an essential and inherent nature and that life is a matter of cycles; all things that are born and grow will also fade and die, in a perpetual series of new beginnings followed by decline and decay. Arabic philosophers argued similarly. Gilbert Rist, in his influential History of Development (2008), argues that there are three important links or continuities between modern development thinking and historical philosophy:

– one, 'development' is seen as natural and necessary

– two, linking development with nature and the natural

– three, the links implied between science and myth (development as scientific progress but also as a religion).

However, with the rise of the Judaeo-Christian tradition, the idea of a God intervening in human history became crucial. This implied a couple of key ideas which are still with us, and which are still hotly debated.

- First, there is a universal history for all humankind *(is there?)*
- Second, history is a historical progression from creation to the end of time *(is it?)*
- Third, this is God's plan, unalterable by humans *(is this true?)*

This increasingly linear view of history (and of development) was strengthened further during the 17th and 18th centuries, particularly by the social evolutionism of the Enlightenment. In general, social evolutionism argued that the progress of civilisation is a 'one-way street' that all societies follow, from hunter gatherers to mid-nineteenth century England and Western Europe. Comparing societies with each other, scientists concluded that the march of civilisation could be divided into a series of sequential steps. The assumption that all human cultures develop along a single or unilinear path is illustrated, for example, by the ideas of American Anthropologist Lewis Henry Morgan who identified a series of steps from *'savagery and barbarism'* to *'civilisation'* with each society moving from step to step over time.

COLONIALISM AND DEVELOPMENT

The high point of colonisation occurred at the end of the 19th century spearheaded primarily by Britain, France and Germany with many different views and policies as regards the role and development of their colonies. While some liberal economists questioned the costs and the supposed benefits of having colonies, the armed forces, the merchants and the missionaries supported colonisation in their own interests.

From the beginning, colonisation was characterised by ambiguity - on the one hand, colonies were there to be exploited in the interests of Europe but, against this, colonisation was also seen to be a moral responsibility of Europe – the famous *'White Man's Burden'*. The colonisers offered a vision of worldwide 'civilisation' for all and argued that there

was common cause between coloniser and colonised. However, the reality of colonialism pivoted around resource, economic, political and military agendas while intellectual and popular commentators argued that the 'development' of a nation (especially 'undeveloped' nations) paralleled that of human life and was, thus, inevitable and a moral duty.

This remained the situation until the end of World War I in 1918 when Germany lost its colonies to Britain and France. In this context, the League of Nations was founded (the precursor to the United Nations) with security and the settlement of disputes by peaceful means as its primary goals (it also had a number of other development related goals). While the United States did not join the League, it was very influential in 'redefining and reshaping' colonialism especially in the creation of a 'mandate system' where some countries were deemed ready for independence; where others could achieve it in the future and where a third group were seen to have little prospect of independence. Article 22 of the founding articles of the League stated that in territories which ceased to be under the sovereignty of states, inhabited by peoples:

> *'...not yet able to stand by themselves under the strenuous conditions of the modern world', the tutelage of such peoples 'should be entrusted to advanced nations' and that the character of the mandate should differ 'according to the stage of the development of the people...'*

Thus, the concept of 'stages of development' was introduced, justifying a classification system with 'developed' nations at the top of the ladder. The language used also exhibited a strong humanitarian and religious tone with words such as '*civilisation*', '*material and moral well-being*', and '*social progress*', '*sacred trust*' legitimising western intervention in other regions and countries.

Colonisation meant not only taking control of people and places but also of peoples' minds – in the West as much as elsewhere. It contributed

significantly to the emergence of ways of thinking and a language about development which has lasted to the present time. It created the illusion of a world united and it also created the basis for the emergence of the Third World, although that term only emerged later (see below).

THE 'AGE OF DEVELOPMENT' BEGINS

The period following World War Two heralded the modern age of development – one that had much in common with the past while also rejecting some of its key characteristics (e.g. its racial overtones and much of its social evolutionism) and creating much of the architecture of international development today. The politics and ideology of the world were fundamentally reshaped following 1945. The Allied Powers sought to ensure that many of the conditions which gave rise to WWII – mass unemployment, protectionist policies, competitive currency devaluations, collapse of commodity prices – would not recur.

Pre-eminent among the creations of the Allies were the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (better known as the World Bank) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), both located, tellingly, in New York, representing growing US hegemony internationally. The Bank and the Fund were to be specialised agencies within the United Nations (established in 1945), much like the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) or the International Labour Organisation (ILO), located in Rome and Geneva respectively. The UN was to be the focal point for international economic management and the World Bank was set up to promote economic growth and development. At that stage, no distinction was made between these two closely related ideas.

By now, the idea of development was inextricably linked with economics, an economics that assumed economic growth was the fundamental necessity. Over time, the World Bank and the IMF became the dominant power brokers as regards development

and, unlike the UN (which is run on a one-country, one-vote system), they were run on a one-dollar, one vote system. In this way, the Bank and the Fund came to represent powerful financial interests and the development role of the UN was steadily transferred to them.

It was against this background that the idea of 'development' (and 'underdevelopment') came to be defined, most notably in the inaugural speech of President Truman in 1949 (referred to earlier). Truman's speech was important for a number of reasons - firstly, the adjective 'underdeveloped' appears for the first time (meaning economically 'backward') in an official document and subsequently the idea of 'underdevelopment' was introduced. These new words actually altered the way the world was seen. Development was now something one agent could do to another, whereas underdevelopment was apparently a 'natural' cause-less state. This obscured historical processes which created the conditions of development and underdevelopment, a view that was contested by many critics (for example, Guyanese historian and activist Walter Rodney in his influential book How Europe Underdeveloped Africa, 1972). The old dichotomy between coloniser and colonised was now replaced by that between 'developed and underdeveloped'. The latter group of countries could achieve the development status of the former through adopting a set of strategies and institutions characteristic of 'developed' states.

The key to prosperity and happiness for all would be achieved through increased production, measured by the new standard of Gross National Product (GNP). Later, broader and more 'sensitive' indices of development were created (see Chapter 1). The consequences for newly independent states were they now had to follow the path of development mapped out for them by others – that of western capitalism or, alternatively, the communist Soviet Union. The 'age of development' created a situation where countries were no longer, in the words of Gilbert Rist '... *African, Latin American or Asian*

(not to speak of Bambera, Shona, Berber, Quechua, Aymara, Balinese or Mongol), they were now simply 'underdeveloped'.

Predictably, given the nature and politics of the anti-colonial struggle in many parts of the world, this view of development and of recent world history was rejected as well as its constructions of 'development' and 'underdevelopment'.

DEVELOPMENT AS 'MODERNISATION'

With the rise of these new economic and political institutions and world order (post 1945 and especially in the context of the emergent 'Cold War' precisely at the time when the field of 'development' was taking shape), one of the most influential theories, claiming to provide a universal model of development applicable to all countries, was that of economist Walt Rostow in his 1960 Stages of Economic Growth, tellingly sub-titled A Non-Communist Manifesto. Rostow argued that all societies developed through a series of stages beginning with stage one (a traditional society), via stages two (preconditions for take-off – based on a reading of earlier European history), three (when societies integrated 'growth' as an integral part of the habits and structures of that society), four ('the drive to maturity' when a society gears itself to 'efficient' modern production) to a final stage five (that of high mass consumption), when that society became 'developed'.

A central criticism of Rostow's theory was that it was based on the particular case of a limited number of Western economies and was not only inappropriate to other societies but was fundamentally inapplicable. It was also heavily criticised for failing to adequately integrate the realities of colonialism and imperialism, historical realities that not many states could emulate. A third criticism was that not all societies value the accumulation of material goods equally or indeed seek to establish an age of high mass consumption and yet these are deemed to be fundamental to development.

Nevertheless, Rostow was a product of his time. Ten years prior to his 'take-off' thesis the report prepared by the United Nations group of experts tasked with designing concrete policies and measures 'for the economic development of underdeveloped countries' stated:

> *'There is a sense in which rapid economic progress is impossible without painful adjustments. Ancient philosophies have to be scrapped; old social institutions have to disintegrate; bonds of cast, creed and race have to burst; and large numbers of persons who cannot keep up with progress have to have their expectations of a comfortable life frustrated. Very few communities are willing to pay the full price of economic progress.'*
>
> United Nations, Department of Social and Economic Affairs 1951: 15

Rostow's theory was but one in a school of thought that viewed development as 'modernisation' in the mode and manner of western 'capitalist' societies. For example, US political scientist David Apter offered a political analysis linking democracy and good government with modernisation; while US psychologist David McClelland argued that modernisation is impossible in a society that does not value free enterprise and success; while Israeli sociologist Shmuel Eisenstadt argued that:

> *'Historically, modernisation is the process of change towards those types of social, economic, and political systems that have developed in Western Europe and North America from the seventeenth century to the nineteenth and have then spread to other European countries and in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries to the South American, Asian, and African continents.'*
>
> S. Eisenstadt 1966, Modernisation, Protest and Change

Stages theory and modernisation theory were ultimately criticised for being theories about the 'westernisation' of the world rather than about development *per se*; for emphasising capitalism and

western values over others and for the maintenance of western dominance worldwide. Logically and inevitably a range of counter-theories emerged, the most important of them being 'Dependency Theory'.

DEVELOPMENT AND DEPENDENCY – THE THIRD WORLD CRITIQUE

The anti-colonialist and anti-imperialist movements that emerged worldwide post 1945 gave rise to many detailed critiques of western theories of growth, development and modernisation as being essentially about maintaining and strengthening western capitalist dominance. Forged in the furnace of political and armed struggle, they highlighted the violence and inequities that western development generated and imposed on others. They challenged the core idea that Third World countries could (or should) follow free market models as 'benign' or level playing fields in which developing countries could compete. They also highlighted the need for strong state intervention in support of development and were, in many fundamental ways, the intellectual and practical opposites of western modernisation theory. The intellectuals and activists who promoted these theories gradually came to focus on US policy and were routinely referred to as 'Third Worldists'.

Dependency Theory emerged from North American Marxists and Latin American intellectuals during the 1950s as a critique of modernisation – it represented a general school of thought followed by different intellectuals from a variety of disciplines and countries and was never set out as a coherent theory. They studied real history in concrete circumstances with countries being treated as part of an international structure and not as individual entities. They viewed colonialism and imperialism as processes in which 'things fall apart' (echoing Nigerian writer Chinua Achebe in his 1958 novel of the same name) and where development is not contrasted with tradition but rather 'underdevelopment' and, contrary to commentators

such as Rostow, the expansion of western values and institutions does not produce development but rather its opposite - underdevelopment. In the words of economist Andre Gunder Frank:

> *'…historical research demonstrates that contemporary underdevelopment is in large part the historical product of past and continuing economic and other relations between the satellite underdeveloped and the now developed metropolitan countries. Furthermore, these relations are an essential part of the capitalist system on a world scale as a whole.'*
>
> Andre Gunder Frank (1966) *The Development of Underdevelopment, New York, Monthly Review Press.*

Dependency theorists also argued that the development of young or emerging economies required their withdrawal from the structure of exploitation that existed worldwide and in many cases the adoption of socialism rather than capitalism. Since capitalism was inextricably intertwined with colonialism and imperialism, then anti-colonialism needed to adopt socialism – this analysis was also fuelled significantly by the realities and ideologies of the Cold War.

As with modernisation theory, there were significant problems associated with dependency theory. The wealth of the developed countries was not solely due to colonial exploitation, but was also due to state regulation and the growth of domestic markets. Also, it did not pay sufficient attention to the cultural aspects of development or to the ecological consequences of treating industrialisation as necessary for collective well-being. In this way it did not offer an idea of development based on assumptions fundamentally different to those of modernisation.

But it became a strong component of a growing Third Worldist critique of western ideas and practices around the 'development idea' and it strengthened the view that underdevelopment was

not a 'natural' state but could actually be created and, in the world of the 1960s and 70s, was being created by the West (for an excellent introduction to this literature and analysis, see Majid Rahnema and Victoria Bawtree eds. 1997, *The Post Development Reader*, London, Zed Press and Vijay Prashad 2012 *The Poorer Nations: A Possible History of the Global South*, Verso).

In the African context, Guyanese historian and activist Walter Rodney offered a scorching critique of colonialism and its impact on development in his How Europe Underdeveloped Africa (1972) in which he argued that European powers deliberately and systematically exploited and underdeveloped Africa and offered a new African insight into the issue. He wrote:

> *'AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT IS POSSIBLE ONLY ON THE BASIS OF A RADICAL BREAK WITH THE INTERNATIONAL CAPITALIST SYSTEM, WHICH HAS BEEN THE PRINCIPAL AGENCY OF UNDERDEVELOPMENT OF AFRICA OVER THE LAST FIVE CENTURIES.'*
>
> Walter Rodney (1983) How Europe Underdeveloped Africa (preface)

As a trained psychiatrist, the French philosopher and revolutionary Franz Fanon had taken a different view based on his own Algerian experience. The colonial state was an implant that imposed itself on the colonised society by restructuring social arrangements and reimaging the past to fit its own imperial agendas. Natives were actively alienated from their historical experiences and new social divisions were put in place. Moreover, Fanon believed that Africans should no longer be tempted by development by European design or as inspiration; his was a radical confrontation with the Western model of progress

> *"THE BASIC CONFRONTATION WHICH SEEMED TO BE COLONIALISM VERSUS ANTI-COLONIALISM, INDEED CAPITALISM VERSUS SOCIALISM, IS ALREADY LOSING ITS IMPORTANCE. WHAT MATTERS TODAY, THE ISSUE WHICH BLOCKS THE HORIZON, IS THE NEED FOR A REDISTRIBUTION OF WEALTH. HUMANITY WILL HAVE TO ADDRESS THIS QUESTION, NO MATTER HOW DEVASTATING THE CONSEQUENCES MAY BE."*
>
> Franz Fanon (1961) The Wretched of the Earth

'DEVELOPMENT' REDEFINED

The 1980s and 1990s witnessed the emergence of a strong challenge to the dominant economic models and analyses of development through what later became defined as the human development approach (known more popularly for its measurement index – the Human Development Index (HDI) and the annual Human Development Report). This approach is associated primarily with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the work of economists Mahbub Ul Haq and Amartya Sen. The first Human Development Report published in 1990 made explicit its approach and values base *'to shift the focus of development economics from national income accounting to people centred policies'* and its opening lines stated: '*People are the real wealth of a nation*' (United Nations Development Programme 1990); people were not simply the *'beneficiaries'* of economic and social progress in a society, but were active agents of development and change.

Within the then dominant economic model, characteristic of the vast majority of 'official' documents and policies whether from the World Bank, the IMF, the World Trade Organisation or many bi-lateral governmental aid organisations, the purpose of 'development' was to stimulate growth and from that 'growth' benefits would 'trickle

down' to society. The primary purpose of the state should be to provide support and an *'enabling environment'* for that growth; other areas of focus - social, cultural or environmental issues - should be of only secondary importance. The economy, rather than human beings, occupied centre stage and while much (if not all) alternative academic and NGO analysis vehemently disagreed with this model, orthodox development theory and practice continued to promote it. In contrast, the approach advocated by the human development perspective fundamentally challenged this view and offered a much broader agenda - a comprehensive approach to all aspects of development, a set of policy priorities, tools of analysis and measurement and a conceptual framework.

The foundations of the human development approach were rooted in the approach of Indian economist Amartya Sen who, in 1989, defined human development as a process of enlarging people's *'functionings and capabilities to function, the range of things that a person could do and be in her life'* later expressed in terms of expanding 'choices'. Sen went on to argue (in 1999) that key *'freedoms are not only the primary ends of development; they are also among its principal means'*. Development should be seen as a process of expanding such freedoms. Development, he argued, requires the removal of poverty, tyranny, lack of economic opportunities, social deprivation, neglect of public services, and the machinery of repression and, additionally, *'the formation of values and the emergence and evolution of social ethics are also part of the process of development'*.

The concept of human development became far more complex, extensive and political/social than previous dominant models; development became about people being able to live in freedom and dignity; being able to exercise choice, pursue an engaged and creative life. Priorities in development thus came to focus on removing limitations such as illiteracy, ill-health, and lack of access to - and control over - resources, as well as increasing

participation in the community, in decision-making and in strengthening the ability to challenge social, cultural and political oppression. In 1995, the UNDP declared that *'one of the defining movements of the 20th century has been the relentless struggle for gender equality, led mostly by women, but supported by growing numbers of men. . . Moving toward gender equality is not a technocratic goal – it is a political process'*.

The era of the predominance of economic models of development had come to an end.

THE ERA OF DEVELOPMENT GOALS: FROM MDGS TO SDGS

Since 2000, much of the debate on development has been dominated by, initially, the Millennium Development Goals and, subsequently, the Sustainable Development Goals (see below). While neither amount to a theory of development, they both have adopted much from previous ideas and understandings. Progress in human development has been impressive, especially since 1990, and much of this has been attributed (not without disagreement) to the MDG agenda. While that agenda was framed to focus direct aid interventions on a range of human development indicators, it also recognised the broader international context of development. The MDGs have been both praised and criticised not simply for their content, choices, measurement and assessment but also as a broad framework for advancing human development in a world characterised by extreme and sustained inequality and climate change.

Criticisms have included the following:

- MDG impact has been highly uneven across and within geographical regions.
- MDG 'targeting' of the poor has been problematic in that the focus was primarily on those easier to identify and reach while those at the margins were neglected.

- The MDGs did not adequately count the costs of climate change adaptation or mitigation.
- Insufficient account was taken of population increase and of the impact of ongoing population momentum which continues to put extraordinary pressure on limited natural resources.
- The re-classification of almost three-quarters of the world's poor from low to middle income and the definition of poverty itself remain controversial.
- The MDGs have been criticised severely for changing measurement dates (backwards) in order to 'manage and achieve' targets.

Finally, the MDGs have been criticised by many for 'reducing' human development to a set of 'measurable' indicators which, inevitably ignore many others, especially those related to power and powerlessness. The SDGs follow on directly from the MDGs and while they 'inherit' much of that agenda and approach, they are far more sweeping in scope and objectives (17 goals and 169 targets – a source of criticism in itself). While the MDGs were formulated essentially behind closed doors by 'high level' delegates, this was not the case with the creation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Civil society had unprecedented access to the negotiation rounds and were often able to have direct input. The MyWorld 2015 survey was filled in by 8.5 million people while 'on-the-ground' consultation work was also pursued in least developed countries in the largest public consultation exercise ever undertaken on priorities in international development.

The SDG agenda has been widely welcomed as offering an ambitious platform for advancing human development, yet it has been severely criticised for offering a model or framework for development which fails to address a number of key realities – realities that undermine much of its vision and ambition. In 2006, one of Africa's leading political economists, Samir Amin, described MDG-talk as:

'...intended to legitimize the policies and practices implemented by dominant capital and those who support it, i.e. in the first place the governments of the triad countries [US, EU and Japan], and secondarily governments in the South.'

As for cutting extreme poverty and hunger by half, Amin argued:

'This is nothing but an empty incantation as long as the policies that generate poverty are not analysed and denounced and alternatives proposed.'

This observation goes to the heart of the MDG (and by extension, the SDG) framework; from a development perspective, they offer remedial action without addressing the creation and re-creation of poverty and exclusion internationally. For some, (such as Patrick Bond, Director of Centre for Civil Society at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa), the MDGs have reduced development to a technical obsession, a mechanical enterprise which 'tortures' the data to infer success.

For Amin and many others, the real goals operating within the MDG and SDG context are expanded privatisation of resources and services; increased private appropriation of agricultural land; maximum de-regulation of markets; the free flow of capital without hindrance (but not of people) and increased limitations on the role of the state in selected areas. Three particular 'development' critiques have been made of the SDGs:

Financing the goals is problematic at two levels; one, it remains voluntary at state level, is deemed insufficient to achieve stated objectives and relies heavily on private capital. Secondly, as noted also by Stefano Prato in the *2016 Spotlight on Sustainable Development* report by Social Watch (2016:122), the agenda places excessive emphasis on financial resources instead of on the removal of the structural barriers that damage and restrict many (poorer)

countries; it ignores the 'financialisation' of the global economy and the need for systemic reform and it subjects the implementation of a global public agenda to the mechanisms and conditions of private investments and speculative markets.

For many critics the central problem rests with the ongoing belief in traditional economic growth-led models of development; as Gilbert Rist notes, infinite growth is impossible on a finite planet, yet, *'all the economic policies in operation preach the opposite. In a world that celebrates rationality, reason is giving way to faith'* (Rist, 2014).

A third critique echoes the observations of Patrick Bond, as noted above. With so many targets to be measured, data collection becomes paramount, so much so that many fear measurement will supersede delivery. One study by the Sustainable Development Solutions Network (a UN global initiative led by Jeffrey Sachs), estimates that it will cost $1 billion per year for the next 15 years for 77 low-income countries to bring their statistical systems up to scratch to support and measure the SDGs.

ON THE DIFFICULTY OF 'DEFINITIONS' OF DEVELOPMENT

Attempting to provide a clear and comprehensive definition of development that might be agreeable to the majority of people worldwide is a well-nigh impossible task as different contexts; timeframes and circumstances as well as perceptions and aspirations inevitably vary hugely. For example, we could usefully consider how development might be conceived by a poor farmer in Zambia, a mother living in a slum in Sao Paulo, an environmentalist living in San Francisco or a chief executive of a transnational company based in London.

As Gilbert Rist points out, different understandings of development depend on how each individual (or group of individuals) picture the ideal conditions for social existence (we should also add environmental

existence). Rist argues that conventional thinking on development swings between two extremes:

- The expression of a general wish among all peoples to live and experience a better life (however defined).
- something which ignores the fact that the very different ways of achieving this general objective or vision would immediately encounter very different political, economic and environmental ways of achieving it.

The vast range of (often conflicting) actions which are theoretically designed to achieve the greatest happiness for the largest number of people.

The central issue is not to simply point out that one set of countries (labelled 'developed') have more of some things (schools, roads, average calorie consumption, computers, democracy, industrial employment, supermarkets etc.) and less of others (illiteracy, poverty, high infant and maternal deaths during pregnancy etc.) while others (labelled 'developing') have the reverse. What is crucially important to note is the processes that underpin and reproduce such contrast. Rist also makes the obvious comment that 'development' is not simply a priority for poorer countries but equally for richer countries.

Rist then proceeds to outline a number of key components of a definition of development which is broad enough to capture history and different systems and practices and to pose the question whether 'development' might be viewed as a part of modern religion:

'Development' consists of a set of practices, sometimes appearing to conflict with one another, which require - for the reproduction of society - the general transformation and destruction of the natural environment and of social relations. Its aim is to increase the production of commodities (goods and services) geared, by way of exchange, to effective demand'

'Development' thus appears to be a belief and a series of practices which form a single whole in spite of contradictions between them'

This discussion takes us some distance away from mechanical or simplistic definitions of development into the fields of not just economics and politics but also philosophy and history and even into the area of myth.

For Swedish economist Bjorn Hettne:

'Development is a contested concept, which implies that it has meant different things from one historical situation to another and from one actor to another.'

In his 2009 analysis Thinking About Development (London, Zed Press), he insists:

'A critical approach is also necessary because much harm has been done to people in the name of development. Development practice in the so-called developing countries is ultimately rooted in colonialism, and has therefore sometimes contained a good measure of paternalism, not to speak of arrogance and racism.' (2009:1)

Echoing much of the approach of Rist, Hettne extends the debate on development significantly beyond the search for a definition:

'Development thinking in fact constitutes an exceptionally rich tradition in social science, encompassing important theoretical debates on the dynamics of social change, as well as an ambition to represent a global experience of empirical conditions in different local corners of the world.'

He concluded in 1995:

'There can be no fixed and final definition of development; only suggestions of what it should imply in particular contexts.'

B. Hettne (1995) Development Theory and the Three Worlds, Essex, Longman

ON LANGUAGE AND LABELS

'Developing countries' is the name that experts use to designate countries trampled by someone else's development...'

This is the telling comment of 'development' critic and 'Third Worldist' Eduardo Galeano in his brilliantly challenging book Upside Down: A Primer for the Looking Glass War. In the book, he relentlessly attacks many 'western' constructions and understandings of the world and questions how we 'label' and describe that world. In this he enters the contested agenda of how the world is divided and how such divisions are 'named' and 'labelled'. As 2005 Nobel Prize winner for Literature, Harold Pinter has commented *Language … is a highly ambiguous business. So often, below the word spoken, is the thing known and unspoken'* and no-where is this more apparent than in the world of 'international development'.

It is a minefield of language in trying to describe both the diversity and the uniformity of those countries most frequently described as the 'developing world' – even the use of the word 'developing' is problematic. 'Developing' towards what and from what? If we can have a 'developing country' can we have an 'underdeveloping country' – a country going backwards in terms of human development? From the perspective and experience of the world's very poorest people, the term 'developing' could well be interpreted as a deliberate insult to their experience of life and a deliberate refusal to accurately describe their condition.

For decades there has been a vigorous political debate on how to describe the divisions that characterise the world today. Is it accurate to describe the 'West' as 'the Developed World' (given the many characteristics of both underdevelopment and overdevelopment present) and the 'Rest' as the 'developing world' (given the historical sophistication and complexity of many of its 'societies' and economies)? At another level altogether, it is not possible to find a phrase that adequately encompasses the massive diversity that exists within both these worlds. Whatever phrases are chosen, it is clear that political choices and agendas cannot be avoided. Most recently, the World Bank has proposed abandoning the phrase developing world' in favour of a series of groupings based on income cut-off points, thus, once again, reinforcing the economic over the political.

In recent years, one of most vigorous debates, at least in the West, has been over the use of the phrase 'Third World' to describe the countries and agendas of Africa, Latin America and Asia collectively.

DEBATING 'DEVELOPMENT' AS FREEDOM TOWARDS DIGNITY

The persistence of underdevelopment in major regions of the world reiterates the lack of freedom, lack of dignity and respect. The term development has become far more seductive and politically sought after as a panacea for all the deprivations that plague the developing world. Development has highlighted the endemic contradictions of the plenty amidst the paradoxes of those who seek to survive. Development has become a contested terrain for engaging with diverse actors, institutions and structures. Development in other words, has really come to be understood as the management of uncertainty in a neoliberal world. *'Development implies security from famine, malnutrition, and unemployment as well as a social, economic and political uncertainty'* (Kumar, 2014: 77).

Development, therefore, despite its 'feel good' factor, suggests struggle and conflict over access to resources and increasing freedom of choice for the majority recognising the need to 'embed' development as a set of possibilities across geographically and spatially differentiated identities. Development has to be culturally grounded and placed in context for it to respect the dignity of life, where it is about sustaining communities rather than making them subservient to the dictates of global economic imperatives. What development means is a question, which has to be left to individual communities; this is the only way we can assure development becomes self-development thereby reinforcing the idea of development-by-people.

'Dignity' in the context of development today has become an accepted norm in decrying global poverty, inequality and under-development; goals of human dignity and social justice expand the very idea of development. The notion of dignity relates to ideas of gender equality, livelihood, freedom from exploitation and the security of human rights. Development with dignity implies the universal assertion of global ethics and justice for all. In Ecuador, for example, social activists have been crucial in institutionalising the principles of food sovereignty by successfully advocating for the concept's inclusion in the country's 2008 Constitution, known as Buen vivir or 'to live well', which seek to democratise access and control over resources like land, water, and seeds as introduced by *La Via Campesina,* the transnational movement of peasant organisations at the 1996 World Food Summit. A more people-centred approach can also be seen in recent discussions and arguments in developed and developing countries alike on 'fair wage' and 'decent work' (such as the Human Development Report: 2015: Work for Human Development) following the global economic recession in 2009.

As Japanese philosopher and peace activist Daisaku Ikeda noted in 2013:

'In order to create a society that upholds the dignity of life, a sense of irreplaceable value of each individual must be the foundation of the human bonds that sustain society' and indeed development.'

Critics opposed to the use of the phrase describe it as pejorative (it places these countries 'third' in an international pecking order); negative (it fuels negative stereotypes and attitudes); outdated (in that the Second World – the Communist Bloc no longer exists) and inaccurate (it ignores the real achievements of such countries). As an alternative, such critics offer phrases such as Majority World and/or Global South. Clearly, given what has been said above, there is obviously no 'right' or 'wrong' phraseology but the debate is telling as regards the politics of the 'development/underdevelopment' debate today.

The phrase 'Third World' was introduced into the story of development by the French anti-colonialist writer and activist Albert Sauvy echoing the thinking and writing of many other earlier commentators such as Aime Cesaire (Martinique born poet and teacher), Ho Chi Minh (President and 'father' of modern Vietnam) and Franz Fanon who sought to highlight the common 'anti-colonialist' agenda of that world. Sauvy chose his phrase to echo the political struggles of French history where the monarchy had divided its servants into the First Estate (clergy), the Second Estate (aristocracy) and the Third Estate (the bourgeoisie). Sauvy emphasised the political nature of his categorisation by arguing that the: '...ignored, exploited, scorned Third World, like the Third Estate, demands to become something as well'.

The key point in Sauvy's analysis was that just as the Third Estate had been excluded from having a voice in the political life of France, so too had the Third World been similarly excluded. Sauvy was placing primary emphasis on the political agenda internationally. Jawaharlal Nehru (Prime Minister of India) echoed Sauvy's analysis in 1958 when he emphasised the need for countries outside the two dominant blocs of the capitalist and US-led West and the Communist, Soviet-led alliance to 'collect together' to oppose their plans for possession of the Third World. He argued that '...it is right that countries of a like way of thinking should come together,

should confer together, should jointly function in the United Nations or elsewhere'.

The political and economic agendas of the Third World acting as a bloc of countries in opposition to the dominant blocs and interests was carried forward well into the 1990's by the Group of 77 or, the G-77. Established in 1964 by 77 developing countries the G77 (now made up of 134 countries - the original name has been kept because of its historic significance) is the largest intergovernmental organisation of developing states in the UN. It provides a platform for the countries of the developing world to state and promote their collective economic interests and enhance their joint negotiating power in international meetings and agendas.

Proponents of the term 'Third World' continue to emphasise it as a 'political project' focused on *peace*, *bread* and *justice* in that the countries of that world remain largely excluded from international political and economic decision-making and that it is only in the last two decades that India and China (along with Brazil and post-Communist Russia) have become important and recognised political voices. (For more on this read Vijay Prashad's *The Poorer Nations: A Possible History of the Global South*, 2014).

IT IS A MINEFIELD OF LANGUAGE IN TRYING TO DESCRIBE BOTH THE DIVERSITY AND THE UNIFORMITY OF THOSE COUNTRIES MOST FREQUENTLY DESCRIBED AS THE 'DEVELOPING WORLD' – EVEN THE USE OF THE WORD 'DEVELOPING' IS PROBLEMATIC. 'DEVELOPING' TOWARDS WHAT AND FROM WHAT? IF WE CAN HAVE A 'DEVELOPING COUNTRY' CAN WE HAVE AN 'UNDERDEVELOPING COUNTRY' – A COUNTRY GOING BACKWARDS IN TERMS OF HUMAN DEVELOPMENT?

Those who prefer to use the phrases Majority World or Global South argue that the terms are non-judgemental and 'neutral', arguments rejected by others. Critics of these categories argue that they:

- Are weak analytically and have little substance in describing the realities, histories and agendas of the countries included
- Have the result of de-politicising a complex and rich agenda and reducing it to a dualism of simple Majority and Minority or to a geographical term Global South (but which must, of necessity, eliminate countries actually in the Global South)
- Ignore and even deny the history of the (unequal) relations between 'developed and developing countries'
- Ignore the ongoing reality of the 'exclusion' of the poor from the key debates about the structure and functioning of the world today.

POST-DEVELOPMENT?

In the preface to the 2012 edition of Encountering Development, Colombian anthropologist Arturo Escobar reviews a number of the dominant themes and debates in development thinking in the past decade-and-a-half in a world he claims has changed immensely. He notes the role taken on by China, and to a lesser extent, India; the realignment of world politics post 9/11 (and the invasion of Iraq in 2003) and the end of the 'Washington Consensus' and the influence of neoliberalism on development. For him, the pre-eminent challenge is the global ecological crisis (which has also generated a 'global consciousness'). For Escobar, all of these (and additional other issues) have generated a profound critique of the concept of 'development' itself and of writing and research around development. Central to this challenge has been the suggestion of the 'overthrow' of development as the dominant story or central organising principle of life in Africa, Asia and Latin America. This view was captured by Gustavo Esteva (a strong critic of dominant

development thinking, quoted by Escobar) as follows: '...*development failed as a socio-economic endeavour, but the development discourse still contaminates social reality.'*

Escobar (along with many others) argue that the 'industrial growth model' of development with its accompanying consumption patterns and its ideology of materialism is now under fundamental threat and is no longer sustainable. As a result, development thinking and practice is increasingly concerned with the debate on 'transition' – transition to a post-fossil fuel society based on ecological justice in addition to biological and cultural diversity. Central to the emergence of this 'transition' debate have been feminist, ecological and human development frameworks and, crucially for Escobar, indigenous organisations, especially in Latin America. A growing recognition of the 'rights of nature' has become increasingly important as outlined, for example by Uruguayan ecologist Eduardo Gudynas. For him, this new story of development marks a turning away from an anthropocentric view of modernity to one which recognises the relationship between humans and non-humans. For Escobar and many other commentators, this transition marks the end of globalisation – *'as we knew it'.*

DEVELOPMENT TOWARDS THE FUTURE: A CASE OF OLD WINE IN NEW BOTTLES?

To reimagine 'development' in the twenty-first century, especially in the wake of a weakening and an uncertain global economy, coupled with crisis of the three F's – *food*, *finance* and *fuel* – calls for a critical re-evaluation of priorities. Added to this is the issue of planetary limits imposed by climate change, sustainability and human security. Can 'development' today be advocated without imposing particular worldviews? How can issues of self-identity, individualism, and dissent square against rising inequalities - racial, financial, sexual and indeed geographical? The deepening of the

economic divide between not just the traditional North versus the South but also within the North and the South are challenges, which have only intensified over time. This has challenged the very idea of capitalism and its competitive market-based frameworks and calls for a reassessment of what development means, or will mean, for the future.

Recent shifts in the development debate have been radical, from the increased focus on the under-developed South to the challenge of sustaining global development. The question is - has the 'South' become irrelevant because it is too complicated to be dealt with in one single story? The need to narrow the gap between the rich 'North' and the poor 'South' has been superseded by the demand of sustaining the global economy. Here, sustaining the global economy remains primarily focused on maintaining the lifestyles of the North. Managing the uncertainties of the prosperous North is deemed to be more critical than securing the aspirations of the South through tackling embedded inequalities.

Three challenges present themselves in the context of dominant ideas of development. The rise and demise of the 'Asian Tigers', the ascendancy of India and China, the position of the BRICS and the gradual decline in all that is economic in the developed North once again questions the notion of linear stages of development. Secondly, in terms of the complexities of development in practice, there has been a shift in emphasis from models of standardised economic growth to ones that prioritise fiscal resilience, border security and private wealth creation. Development then is no longer about an idealistic universal or democratic outcome for all but rather about 'normalising' what have become persistent inequalities.

Lastly, the intersection of global challenges such as those of climate change, human geography, terrorism and extreme inequalities (both social and economic) have presented a real crisis in development outcomes in the immediate future. This crisis demands an approach that enhances interdependence between and within countries rather than remedial tinkering with the structural contradictions that persist between the rich and the poor.

The prognosis for development for the future is clear – economic growth under neoliberal states (and its championing institutions, such as the IMF) deepening inequality and an undermining of social and environmental sustainability. The morality of economic growth needs to be squared with reducing inequalities, vulnerability and environmental security.

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MORE INFORMATION AND DEBATE

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SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

The SDGs (formally known as Transforming our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development) represents the latest framework for international development agreed in September 2015 by governments following a review of the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) and their impact. The Goals are built around the '5 P's':

People: 'We are determined to end poverty and hunger, in all their forms and dimensions, and to ensure that all human beings can fulfil their potential in dignity and equality and in a healthy environment.'

Planet: 'We are determined to protect the planet from degradation, including through sustainable consumption and production, sustainably managing its natural resources and taking urgent action on climate change, so that it can support the needs of the present and future generations.'

Prosperity: 'We are determined to ensure that all human beings can enjoy prosperous and fulfilling lives and that economic, social and technological progress occurs in harmony with nature.'

Peace: 'We are determined to foster peaceful, just and inclusive societies which are free from fear and violence. There can be no sustainable development without peace and no peace without sustainable development.'

Partnership: 'We are determined to mobilize the means required to implement this Agenda through a revitalised Global Partnership for Sustainable Development, based on a spirit of strengthened global solidarity, focussed in particular on the needs of the poorest and most vulnerable and with the participation of all countries, all stakeholders and all people.'

1 NO POVERTY
2 NO HUNGER
3 GOOD HEALTH
4 QUALITY EDUCATION
5 GENDER EQUALITY
6 CLEAN WATER AND SANITATION
7 RENEWABLE ENERGY
8 GOOD JOBS AND ECONOMIC GROWTH
9 INNOVATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE
10 REDUCED INEQUALITIES
11 SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES
12 RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION
13 CLIMATE ACTION
14 LIFE BELOW WATER
15 LIFE ON LAND
16 JUSTICE
17 PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

The 2030 Agenda is universal, not just because the SDGs are global in scope, but also because all countries have to do something to achieve them. No country can deem itself to be sustainably developed and having already done its part to meet the SDGs. The 2030 Agenda offers the opportunity to challenge the idea that development is a phenomenon that occurs only in countries of the global South while the North is already 'developed.' - Jens Martens (2016) in Spotlight on Sustainable Development report by Social Watch

MDG CHALLENGES FOR THE SDGS

MDG impact was been highly uneven geographically

MDG 'targeting' of the poor was problematic - the focus was primarily on the 'easy to access' leaving those at the margins neglected

The MDGs did not adequately count the costs of climate change

Insufficient account of population increase and its impact on limited natural resources

The definition of poverty used was highly debated

Re-classifying almost 75% of the world's poor from low to middle income remains controversial

Strong criticism for changing measurement dates backwards to 'manage and achieve' targets

Reducing human development to 'measurable' indicators ignored many significant issues, especially on power and powerlessness

The MDGs significantly ignored the structural causes of poverty and left extreme inequality intact

DEBATING THE SDGS

The SDGs have been praised for:
- Consulting millions of people on their content (8.5 million plus)
- Involving civil society extensively
- Placing obligations on all states worldwide
- Recognising the central importance of climate change

The SDGs have been criticised for:
- Promoting expanded privatisation of resources and services
- Increasing private appropriation of agricultural land
- Advocating the maximum possible de-regulation with the free flow of unhindered capital but not people
- Arguing for increasing limitations (in selected areas) of the role of the state

3 KEY SDG CHALLENGES

1 FINANCE

Finance: funding for the goals remains voluntary for states with too much reliance on the private sector and leaves damaging structural barriers intact

2 INEQUALITY AND GROWTH-LED DEVELOPMENT

Inequality and growth-led development: the SDGs rely on increasing economic growth-led development in a world of diminishing resources and climate change

3 DATA PROBLEMS

Data problems: data collection and availability (upon which measurement of progress depends) is hugely problematic and could undermine delivery; one estimate argues it will cost $1 billion per year for 15 to improve data systems for 77 low-income countries

Basically, the SDGs want to reduce inequality by ratcheting the poor up, but while leaving the wealth and power of the global 1 percent intact. They want the best of both worlds. They fail to accept that mass impoverishment is the product of extreme wealth accumulation and overconsumption by a few, which entails processes of enclosure, extraction, and exploitation along the way. You can't solve the problem of poverty without challenging the pathologies of accumulation. – Jason Hickel, anthropologist, London School of Economics 2015