

## **Evolution of Development in the Changing Context of the United Nations**

**Majidreza Momeni<sup>1\*</sup>, Aramesh Shahbazi<sup>2</sup>**

1. Assistant Professor, Faculty of Law, Allameh Tabataba'i University,  
Tehran, Iran

2. Assistant Professor, Faculty of Law, Allameh Tabataba'i University,  
Tehran, Iran

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### **Abstract**

The concept of development has changed over periods of time and gained momentum particularly after the end of WWII. The establishment of the United Nations (UN) brought about a new dimension to this concept in international relations. In other words, the development then came into a concrete meaning, mostly understood as economic growth and one-sided process dominating the functioning of the UN and relations among the States during the Cold War. Although, the issue has gone through many changes and phases in the context of the UN, yet the end of the Cold War and the emergence of globalization are considered as turning points in bringing about a whole new idea, giving development a multi-dimensional meaning and becoming a multitude process under the framework of Sustainable Development which eventually led the UN to play a proactive role unlike the past. This paper tries to study and analyse the fact that how the concept of development has qualitatively changed under the UN auspices and the emergence of globalization in order to offer a better understanding of the changing role of the UN in the realization of sustainable development and future nature of international system.

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\* Corresponding author's e-mail: majidreza.momeni@atu.ac.ir

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## I. Introduction

Development has been a serious concern of human societies since ages and it was initially synonymous with words such as evolution, progress, modernization and growth. Many traced back the roots of the concept of development in the European societies and particularly in the era of Enlightenment. However, it was the end of WWII and establishment of the UN which gave an international aspect to the issue of development and ever since we have been witnessing the momentum in the status and concept of development and consequently the changing role of the UN.

Though, there are criticisms labelled against the UN and its ineffective role in realization of development, especially at the very beginning of its inception largely due to the Cold War and chasm between the developed and other countries in the international system, yet one should not overlook the fact that the issue of development and human concerns have been mentioned in different ways in various documents of the UN as one of the organization's central mandates is the promotion of higher standards of living, full employment, and conditions of economic and social progress and development. As much as 70 per cent of the work of the UN is devoted to accomplishing this mandate.<sup>1</sup> Guiding the work is the belief that eradicating poverty and improving the well-being of people everywhere are necessary steps in creating conditions for lasting world peace.<sup>2</sup> The UN has unique

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1 [http://www.un.org/esa/about\\_esa.html](http://www.un.org/esa/about_esa.html) (last visited on 10/04/2018)

2 According to article 55 of the charter of the United Nations:

“With a view to the creation of conditions of stability and wellbeing which are necessary for peaceful and friendly relations among nations based on respect for the principle of equal rights and self-determination of peoples, the United Nations shall promote:

- a. Higher standards of living, full employment, and conditions of economic and social progress and development;
- b. Solutions of international economic, social, health, and related problems; and international cultural and educational cooperation; and
- c. Universal respect for, and observance of, human rights and fundamental freedoms for all”

strengths in promoting development and since its creation, one of the main aims of the United Nations has been to support and protect the disadvantaged, the weak and the vulnerable. Such conditions of adversity occur in a wide variety of forms—from economic deprivation to social exclusion, lack of choices and even lack of freedom—and at all levels—from continents to countries, regions within countries, communities and individuals. One of the over-arching purposes of each of the world conferences was to agree on remedies to these inequalities. Within each Conference's specific area of interest, they all focused on the need, indeed the global responsibility, to address various inequalities by improving the situation of the poorest, weakest and the most vulnerable segments of the world community.<sup>3</sup>

Therefore, it may be right to say that the UN has played a crucial role in building international consensus on action for reaching its goals especially through different aspects of development. Beginning in 1960, the General Assembly has helped set priorities and goals through a series of 10-year International Development Strategies. While focusing on issues of particular concern, the decades have consistently stressed the need for progress on all aspects of social and economic development<sup>4</sup> and it is equally true to say that the UN keeps on framing new development goals in such key fields of activities such as sustainable development, the advancement of women, human rights, environmental protection and good governance while trying its best with programmes to materialize them.

Nevertheless, the UN has been seriously affected by a number of obstacles and faced with many tough challenges in its mission to achieve all these goals. The Cold War, decolonization process, the impact of high politics, expansion of activities in the UN and its new

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<sup>3</sup>The United Nations Development Agenda: Development for All Goals, commitments and strategies agreed at the United Nations world conferences and summits since 1990, ST/ESA/316, United Nations, (2007), p.2.

<sup>4</sup>See Policy Note, Committee for Development Policy, The United Nations Development Strategy Beyond (2015), available at [http://www.un.org/en/development/desa/policy/cdp/cdp\\_publications/2012cdppolicynote.pdf](http://www.un.org/en/development/desa/policy/cdp/cdp_publications/2012cdppolicynote.pdf) (last visited on 10/01/2018).

functions are just to name a few. All these and other factors at the international arena made the UN to fall short of its tasks, particularly regarding the issue of development, and in some phases of its life to become ineffective and passive. Despite the fact that the UN was left behind and could not really live up to its principles for some time, just in the later decades with the changes in the international system specially the events of 70s, formation of G77 and strengthening of Third World countries and even later on the end of the Cold War and the emergence of globalization have positively affected the UN towards a stronger global organization and recognition of its significant global role.

The paper tries to study and analyse the fact that how the concept of development has qualitatively changed under the UN auspices and the emergence of globalization in order to offer a better understanding of the changing role of the UN in realization of sustainable development and future nature of international system. In this regard, this piece of research work is an attempt to answer the main questions as to how the concept of development has evolved under the international changes and events? And how has its status been in the UN? The hypothesis to answer the questions is based on the fact that the conception and application of development as a serious issue among the states has greatly changed towards materialization of Sustainable Development Goals, concerted efforts by the global community and eventually the salvation of the UN from international politics so that to render its true functions, including promotion of peace and cooperation for a better world. The study is done through a descriptive-analytical method and uses both the primary and secondary resources including documents, reports, books, articles and websites. The following section will address the meaning and changing perception of development as the conceptual framework of the paper.

## **II. Conceptual Framework**

Development has become a controversial word as it may entail different ideas and perceptions to different thinkers. By looking at the historical root of the concept of development, one can clearly see that

how this concept has dramatically changed over periods of time as its origin is dated back to the era of Enlightenment in Europe and even earlier when it was substituted with words such as evolution, progress, modernization and growth. From a historical reality and sociological perspective, from the Renaissance onwards the deep-seated, fundamental, structural and revolutionary changes in European societies occurred and consequently a new set of interactions and relations in all different fields came up which were totally different from those of the pre-Renaissance era. The rational, scientific and cultural revolution through Protestantism based on the Protestant Reformation and Copernican and Newtonian revolution led to the emergence of new worldviews with centrality of human, rationale and science and eventually the relations of human with the world, nature, society and government went through a serious change. The industrial revolution linking with these changes started from Britain and spread all over Europe, and the application of science, technology, machine and energy brought about a great change to the method, means, quantity and quality of production in the context of Capitalism and as a result industrialization and mass production affected the world as a whole. The changes in the agrarian, feudal and traditional societies into industrial, modern and capitalist ones through the cultural, political and economic development made the modern humans dominate their surrounding natural and social environment which brought them the material enhancement and public welfare and prosperity. Therefore, the Europeans with a positive attitude through the capabilities of rationale and science in exploring the truth and overcoming all problems and obstacles based on the rationality and empiricism with the passage of time from 17<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> centuries could move from the Enlightenment era and entered into the era of progress. These changes and positivist attitudes played an important role in the formation of the idea of progress and theory of social evolution, modernity and modernism.

Ever since, many scholars were affected by such crucial changes and tried to explain and generalize them in all other societies.<sup>5</sup>

As a matter of fact, it would not be wrong to admit that the initial concept of development was very much affected with the European understanding of change and progress equal to the industrialization and economic growth that could be applied to other places, particularly the Third World countries, which was prescribed under the modernization and development theories. Though, this notion of development and the assumptions of such theories were later rejected by a new group of thinkers under the influence of Neo-Marxist ideas such as Dependency Theory and later on even Alternative Theories of development. However, what is important is that the concept of development has taken a long journey theoretically and conceptually as well in the history of international relations and the turning point for such an inquiry could be dated back to the end of WWII and the establishment of the UN.

Since the Second World War the dominant understanding, favored by the majority of governments and multilateral agencies, has seen development as synonymous with economic growth within the context of free market international economy. Economic growth is identified as necessary for combating poverty, defined as the inability of people to meet their basic material needs through cash transactions. This is seen in the influential reports of the World Bank, where countries are categorized according to whether they are low-income, or high-income countries. Those countries that have the lower national incomes per head of population are regarded as being less developed than those with higher incomes, and they are perceived as being in need of increased integration into global market-place. An alternative view of development has, however, emerged from the occasional government, UN agencies, grass-roots movements, NGOs, and some academics. Their concerns have centered broadly on entitlement and distribution. Poverty is identified as the inability to provide for the material needs

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5 A. MOVASSAGHI, *The Political Economy of Development and Underdevelopment*, (Tehran: University of Tehran Press, 2008) at 4-7.

of oneself and one's family by substance or cash transactions, by the absence of an environment conducive to human well-being broadly conceived in spiritual and community terms. These voices of opposition are growing significantly louder, as ideas polarize following the apparent universal triumph of economic liberalism. The language of opposition is changing to incorporate matters of democracy such as political empowerment, participation, meaningful self-determination for the majority and protection of the commons.<sup>6</sup> The difference between the Orthodox and the Alternative views of the development are summarized as following:<sup>7</sup>

**Table 1 The Orthodox versus the Alternative View of Development**

The Orthodox View	The Alternative View
Poverty: A situation suffered by people who do not have the money to buy food and satisfy other basic material needs.	Poverty: A situation suffered by people who are not able to meet their material and non-material needs through their own efforts.
Purpose: Transformation of subsistence of economies defined as 'backward' into industrial, commoditized economies defined as 'modern'. Production of supplies. Individuals sell their labor for money, rather than producing to meet their family's needs.	Purpose: Creation of human well-being through sustainable societies in social, cultural, political, and economic terms.

<sup>6</sup> Thomas CAROLINE, Poverty, Development and Hunger in Baylis John and Smith Steve, eds., *The Globalization of World Politics: An Introduction to International Relations*, (London: Oxford University Press, 2001), at 562-63

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., at 563.

Core ideas and assumptions: The possibility of unlimited economic growth in a free-market system. Economies would reach a ‘take-off’ point and thereafter wealth would trickle down to those at the bottom. Superiority of the ‘Western’ model and knowledge. Belief that process would ultimate benefit everyone. Domination, exploitation of nature.	Core ideas and assumptions: Sufficiency. The inherent value of nature, cultural diversity and the community-controlled commons (water, land, air, forest). Human activity in balance with nature. Self-reliance. Democratic inclusion, participation, for example, voice for marginalized groups, e.g. women, indigenous groups. Local control.
Measurement: Economic growth; Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita, industrialization, including of agriculture.	Measurement: Fulfillment of basic material and non-material human needs of everyone; condition of the natural environment. Political empowerment of marginalized.
Process: Top-down, reliance on ‘expert knowledge’, usually Western and definitely external; large capital investments in large projects; advanced technology; expansion of the private sphere.	Process: Bottom-up; participatory; reliance on appropriate (often local) knowledge and technology; small investments in small scale projects; protection of the commons.

The above arguments may be better understood in the words of Heywood who sums up by saying that the Orthodox View of development is rooted in economic liberalism. In this view, poverty is defined squarely in economic terms, as a failure, through a lack of income or resources, to satisfy basic material needs. The reduction or even elimination of poverty is therefore clearly linked to the ability to stimulate economic growth, traditionally calculated on the basis of gross domestic product (GDP) per head of population. He further explains that the Orthodox View has dominated the thinking on matters related to poverty, inequality and development since 1945. Its influence expanded in the 1970s and 1980s through the rise of neoliberalism and the conversion of the institutions of global economic governance and a growing number of states, led by the USA, to pro-market economic



philosophy, and again in the 1990s through the widespread introduction of market reforms by former communist states. Nevertheless, the pro-growth and pro-market view of development has attracted growing criticism in recent years. Opponents have argued that economic reforms that expose countries to the vagaries of the market and the international trading system may be counter-productive, leading to economic and social dislocation rather than steady growth and the reduction of poverty. In the 1990s, such criticisms focused in particular on the impact of ‘structural adjustment programmes’ (SAPs), imposed by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank. Opponents have, furthermore, questioned whether market-based solutions attend equally to the interests of all states and all regions of the world. Neo-Marxist critics, for instance, argue that the global capitalist system is characterized by deep structural imbalances.<sup>8</sup>

The alternative view of poverty and development, according to Heywood, has become more prominent since the 1980s as disillusionment has grown with technocratic, top-down, pro-growth strategies. They have stemmed from various sources, including resistance movements in the ‘global South’, such as the Zapatista movement in Chiapas in Mexico and peasant protests in the southern Indian state of Karnataka, UN agencies, development NGOs and their various forums, including the World Social Forum, and the broader anti-capitalist or anti-globalization movement. However, there is no single or coherent ‘alternative’ package of ideas about development. While radical elements are strongly anti-western, anti-corporate and place a heavy emphasis on self-management and environmentalism, reformist elements may do little more than modify the application of orthodox liberal principles, seeking merely to rebalance the priorities of major states and the institutions of global economic governance. The ‘alternative’ view rejects the ‘one size fits all’ implications of orthodox

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<sup>8</sup> Andrew HEYWOOD, *Global Politics*, (UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), at 355-58.

thinking and, in particular, the idea of a linear transition from a 'traditional' society to a 'developed' one.<sup>9</sup>

The above mentioned discussion demonstrates a vivid understanding of the different arguments on the issue of development at various international formal and informal forums, particularly the UN, its specialized agencies, NGOs and various intellectuals and scholars, which actually paved the way for a more practical solution to the problems of increased poverty and inequality entailed by the international changes specially the emergence of globalization in order to provide development as a more inclusive, sustained and multitude process. Following such significant intellectual and practical inquiry, we see a great gradual change in the concept of development put forward.

Thus, the goal of development is the improvement of human well-being and the quality of life. This involves the eradication of poverty, the fulfilment of basic needs of all people, and the protection of all human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the right to development. It requires that governments apply active social and environmental policies and that they promote and protect all human rights and fundamental freedoms on the basis of democratic and widely participatory institutions. This definition is in fact that given in the UN Agenda for Development, issued by the Secretary-General in 1997. It represents a considerable advance from the early UN years, when the essence of successful development was seen "merely" as a sustained increase in a country's per capita income, a sustained increase in a country's total production, a long-term evolution of a country's economic structure and institutions, and a country's movement toward becoming a more industrialized economy of greater self-reliance. Human well-being has been made central to the definition of development. The focus has shifted to how a country's population has been affected by the process of development and how people have been strengthened as subjects of the process, not just as objects and recipients. None of this is to ignore development as a process of

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid, at 358.

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economic growth and structural change. But the definition focuses on the significance of growth and structural change for people. Unless we know how people have been affected by growth and structural change and how these changes have affected people's capabilities to make choices, we do not have the information needed to judge whether or not the whole process should be counted as progress. An expansion of human freedoms—and the capabilities to fulfil them—becomes the goal of development.<sup>10</sup>

Today's human-focused approach would and should assess progress not only by how much people's economic and social standards have advanced but by whether the process of development has been one in which human freedoms in political and civil and cultural space have been protected. In the world of today, no country or community is an island unto itself. Progress in individual countries and communities is closely linked with progress in other countries and communities and with the world as a whole. Therefore, the global policy and action to expand choices and opportunities for people in all countries, including the poorest, is also important. From the beginning, the UN has been centrally concerned with this global situation—what could be called "building an enabling framework on a global scale." In terms of human development, this involves concern for international action to ensure the opportunities that allow countries and individuals to develop their capacities and exercise their human capabilities.<sup>11</sup>

Perhaps the most direct international assertion about development in the context of the United Nations could be found in the 1986 Declaration on the Right to Development, when the UN General Assembly recognized an "inalienable human right" to development.<sup>12</sup>

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10 Richard JOLLY, Louis EMMERIJ, Dharam GHAI, and Frederic LAPEYRE, (2004), *UN Contributions to Development Thinking and Practice*, USA: Indiana University Press, 2004), at 13.

11 *Ibid*, at 14.

12 Declaration on the Right to Development, G.A. Res. 41/128, U.N.

The Declaration describes development as a comprehensive process that involves political freedoms and "equality" of opportunity for all in their access to basic resources, education, health services, food, housing, employment and the fair distribution of income.<sup>13</sup> According to the Declaration, each human being is entitled to participate in, contribute to, and enjoy economic, social, cultural and political development, in which all human rights and fundamental freedoms can be fully realized.<sup>14</sup> The claim of a right instead of a goal emphasizes the perceived centrality of development to human dignity and well-being.<sup>15</sup> The preamble of the Declaration has expressly referred to peace, economic development, social development and supportive national governance as the basic foundations for development.<sup>16</sup> It has recognized that international peace and security are essential to any perception of development.<sup>17</sup>

It could be said that another important document that emphasizes the new concept of development has been the UN Agenda for Development, issued by the Secretary-General in 1997 which later paved the way for Millennium Declaration and Millennium Development Goals that actually brought about a great achievement in the UN as a global consensus on the issue of development and its new concept.

At the Millennium Summit in September 2000, world leaders accepted a set of Millennium Development Goals aimed at eradicating extreme poverty and hunger; achieving universal primary education; promoting gender equality and empowering women; reducing child mortality; improving maternal health; combating HIV/AIDS, malaria

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13 Ibid., article 8.

14 Ibid., article 1.

15 Hector GROS ESPIELL, "The Right of Development as a Human Right" (1981) *International Law Journal*, at 189

16 Declaration on the Right to Development, preamble.

17 Ibid.

and other diseases; and ensuring environmental sustainability — through a set of measurable targets to be achieved by the year 2015.<sup>18</sup>

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) mark a historic and effective method of global mobilisation to achieve a set of important social priorities worldwide. However, the probable shortfall in achievement of the MDGs was indeed serious, regrettable, and deeply painful for people with low income. The shortfall represents a set of operational failures that implicate many stakeholders, in both poor and rich countries. Promises of official development assistance by rich countries, for example, have not been kept. Nonetheless, there is widespread feeling among policy makers and civil society that progress against poverty, hunger, and disease is notable; that the MDGs have played an important part in securing that progress; and that the globally agreed goals to fight poverty should continue beyond 2015. In a world already undergoing dangerous climate change and other serious environmental ills, there is also widespread understanding that worldwide environmental objectives need a higher profile alongside poverty-reduction objectives. For these reasons, the world's governments seem poised to adopt a new round of global goals to follow the 15 year MDGs period.<sup>19</sup>

In fact, the above mentioned words may reveal the reality of the current world and international system and the necessity for further evolution of the concept of development in order to be able to fit into the present global affairs and tackle the challenges and fulfil the needs of global community. It is in this context and shortcomings of the MDGs and further enhancement of development goals that the idea of

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18 Resolution adopted by the General Assembly, 55/2. United Nations Millennium Declaration, 18/11/2000 available at [http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view\\_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/55/2](http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/55/2) (last visited on 10/03/2018).

19 Jeffrey SACHS, "From Millennium Development Goals to Sustainable Development Goals", View Point, Lancet 2012; 379: 2206–11, available at: [http://www.grips.ac.jp/forum/IzumiOhno/lectures/2015\\_Lecture\\_texts/S16\\_From-MDGs-to-SDGs-Lancet-June-2012.pdf](http://www.grips.ac.jp/forum/IzumiOhno/lectures/2015_Lecture_texts/S16_From-MDGs-to-SDGs-Lancet-June-2012.pdf) (last visited on 03/12/2017).

sustainable development becomes more prominent in the framework of Sustainable Development Goals which would work towards the further evolution of the concept of development.

At the 2010 High-level Plenary meeting of the General Assembly on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), Member States of the United Nations reaffirmed their commitment to achieving the internationally agreed development goals, including the MDGs.<sup>20</sup> They also recognized the need to consider further steps to advance the United Nations' development agenda beyond 2015. In response, the United Nations system mobilized international efforts on the post-2015 development agenda, in order to support the consultation process with analytical inputs and capabilities. This collaboration is critical to ensure an open, inclusive consultation process that engages all relevant stakeholders. The MDGs have provided a powerful tool to sustain global attention and galvanize support in many countries. The process of defining a post-2015 UN development agenda should build on the principles of the Millennium Declaration and the experience with the MDG framework, both successes and areas for improvement.<sup>21</sup>

UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon's high-level global sustainability panel, appointed in the lead-up to the Rio+20 Summit in June, 2012, issued a report recommending that the world adopt a set of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).<sup>22</sup> Ban then indicated that after the Rio Summit he plans to appoint a high-level panel to consider the details of post-2015 goals. What is so striking at this stage of

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20 High-level Plenary Meeting on the Millennium Development Goals, Available at: [http://www.un.org/en/mdg/summit2010/pdf/HLPM%202010\\_CRP\\_Side%20events.pdf](http://www.un.org/en/mdg/summit2010/pdf/HLPM%202010_CRP_Side%20events.pdf) (last visited on 10/03/2018).

21 Committee for Development Policy Note: The United Nations Development Strategy Beyond 2015, United Nations, 2012, available at: [http://www.un.org/en/development/desa/policy/cdp/cdp\\_publications/2012cdppolicynote.pdf](http://www.un.org/en/development/desa/policy/cdp/cdp_publications/2012cdppolicynote.pdf) (last visited 20/03/2018)

22 Rio+20 - took place in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil on 20-22 June 2012. It resulted in a focused political outcome document which contains clear and practical measures for implementing sustainable development. See <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/news/communications-material/> (last visited on 11/11/2017).

development is that how the aspect of sustainability is defined and incorporated into the concept of development and giving a new dimension.

According to the international Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD), sustainable development has been defined in many ways, but the most frequently quoted definitions is from Our Common Future, also known as the Brundtland Report: “Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”.<sup>23</sup> It contains within it two key concepts: - The concept of needs, in particular the essential needs of the world’s poor, to which overriding priority should be given; and - The idea of limitations imposed by the state of technology and social organization on the environment’s ability to meet present and future needs.

The 2030 Agenda for sustainable development represents a paradigm shift to replace today’s growth-based economic model with a new model that aims to achieve sustainable and equitable economies and societies worldwide and ensure greater public participation in decision-making, in line with Principle 10 of the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development. The 2030 Agenda is strongly grounded in international human rights standards and sets out a transformative vision for people and planet-centred, human rights-based, and gender-sensitive sustainable development. It has equality and non-discrimination as its centrepiece with the overall aim “to leave no one behind” by “reaching the furthest behind first” and by ensuring that the SDG targets are met “for all nationals and peoples and for all segments of society”.<sup>24</sup> In comparison to MDGs, the key component of

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<sup>23</sup>Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development: Our Common Future, 1987, Available at <http://www.un-documents.net/our-common-future.pdf>(last visited on 15/02/2018).

<sup>24</sup>On September 25th 2015, countries adopted a set of goals to end poverty, protect the planet and ensure prosperity for all as part of a new sustainable development agenda. Each goal

the SDGs is the new, more visually understandable agenda of goals and targets. It is comprehensive and integrated, yet relatable and built upon decades of trying to build a different kind of paradigm around how we approach sustainability and development issues.<sup>25</sup>

What we perceive from the discussion is the fact that development has taken a long journey towards its evolution in order to be more applicable and appropriate to tackle the present challenges and needs of the current world. The concept of development has gone through a number of theoretical and practical scrutiny and tests which were also affected by the international changes and events such as the end of the Cold War and the emergence of globalization. What we could actually say, in short, is the point that there has been a sea change in the conception and application of development which is altered from simply an economic growth to a multitude process known as sustainable development and it is equally important to note that since it has become a comprehensive and multitude process, it would require a collective and concerted efforts, too, by the state and non-state stakeholders to be realized.

The UN has been affected by the issue of development at some points of time and left behind passive. However, no one could ignore the fact that the UN and its specialized agencies have also played a significant role in the changing concept and process of development and the realization of its goals. In the following section we will look at the role of the UN so that to gain a deeper understanding of the present status of development.

### **III. Development in The Context of United Nations**

The UN as a world organization and its specialized agencies has gone through many changes since its genesis and has faced with many

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has specific targets to be achieved over the next 15 years. See <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals> (last visited on 21/03/2018).

<sup>25</sup>Gracie COOK, "The Future of the Sustainable Development Goals", May 18, 2016, Wilson Centre, available at: <https://www.newsecuritybeat.org/2016/05/future-sustainable-development-goals/>(last visited on 10/09/2017).



challenges that are the outcome of the international system in which it works. The UN has failed in many cases, yet there have been cases of success in the history of its existence too. Although, there are many criticisms against this world organization and its structure and functioning, despite of all its achievements, but what is so important is the fact that it has been able to overcome many challenges and cope with many obstacles. As long as the issue of development is concerned, the history of the UN is also a mix of failures and successes where at some phases it could not really play an effective role while at some other times it has not only offered a leading role but also paved the way for great theoretical and practical changes as well.

In the post-war period, economic development became an important theme, if always somewhat side-lined, of economic thinking and analysis. The growing concern with development among economists resulted from three different challenges: the reconstruction of Europe after 1945, the development of the socialist countries and the Cold War, and the priorities of national development in the South. Newly independent countries considered economic development to be their main challenge and pushed, especially within the UN, for that issue to be put high on the international agenda. There was something of a Eurocentric bias in development theory. Development thinking in the 1950s and the early 1960s was heavily influenced by the concrete experience of Western economic history. It was the great period of the modernization paradigm and dual models. The path to development was provided by the Western model of development, which underdeveloped countries were supposed to reproduce.<sup>26</sup>

Toward the end of the 1940s and in the early 1950s, two outstanding documents were published by the UN which had far-reaching repercussions for development thinking and practice during the decade and even after. These two major intellectual contributions were: 1) Prebisch's document i.e. the Economic Development of Latin America and its Principal Problems, published by the UN in 1950, and the

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26 JOLLY, UN Contributions to Development Thinking and Practice, at. 49-50.

development of his structuralist approach in the Economic Survey of Latin America, published in 1951; and 2) the report of the UN group of experts, which included Theodore W. Schultz and W. Arthur Lewis, Measures for the Economic Development of Underdeveloped Countries, which was published in 1951. One of the more interesting discoveries that digging into the UN archives of the 1950s is the central role of the UN in developing the thinking regarding two major issues which have been at the genesis of the emergence of development economics as an autonomous branch of knowledge and which even today are at the heart of the debate on development. These are the role of the state versus the role of the market and the role of external versus internal factors. The work of the UN regarding economic development in the 1940s and 1950s focused mainly on the ways to get development going. The UN view was clearly on the side of interventionist strategy, in which public intervention and strengthened government capacity played a key role.<sup>27</sup>

As a matter of fact, one could say that economic development was a serious concern of the UN from the very beginning which was reflected in many works and it is in many ways the most prominent component of development, and it represents a dominant policy goal of most governments. Several important financial institutions and international agreements were created in the post-war period to foster development, especially economic development. For example, the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, known as the World Bank, was created to rebuild war-damaged economies and to encourage development in less developed countries by providing low interest loans, grants and other assistance.<sup>28</sup>

It is noteworthy to indicate that the issue of development and its significance was something that rooted in the years earlier than the creation of the organization while its establishment and later on the process of decolonization gave momentum to it. However,

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid., at 51.

<sup>28</sup> United Nations Development Programme, Generation: Portrait of the United Nations Development Programme, 1950-1985, (New York, UN Publications, 1985), at 12-28

unfortunately, the issue became entangled in the power rivalry of the Cold War and was used by either of the power blocs for its own influence and dominance.

Robert Cox recalled how the early euphoria about the UN was cut short by growing East-West tensions: “*We were going to rebuild the world. . . . There was a tremendous sense of something new and something good that was going to happen and a great deal of optimism.*” It was, however, “*a spirit that didn’t last very long.*” The partnership among great powers all too soon landed in the historical dustbin. The mistrust between the Soviet Union and the West actually had begun with the Bolshevik Revolution in 1917 and was but temporarily suspended during World War II as part of the solidarity to defeat fascism. The high hopes for the United Nations and the post-war world were based on a continuation of such solidarity, which was quickly replaced by a return of ideological, political, and economic tensions. Guido de Marco employed religious imagery, “*The United Nations was born with an original sin, the sin of the Cold War.*” The impact of the Cold War on America’s engagement with multilateral cooperation and on UN efforts to maintain international peace and security was immediate; the UN Security Council was unable to function as planned because of the need for unanimity among its five permanent members. This phenomenon has been the focus of substantial scholarly and policy analysis, but no less obvious was the impact of East-West tensions on the organization’s economic and social activities.<sup>29</sup>

The explosion of dozens of newly independent countries on the world scene and the escalation of the Cold War between Moscow and Washington and their respective allies and clients led to growing and different demands for development by the Third World. It also resulted in a different kind of U.S. engagement with the world organization—

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29 Quoted in Thomas G. WEISS, Tatiana CARAYANNIS, Louis EMMERIJ and Richard JOLLY, *UN Voices: The Struggle for Development and Social Justice*, (USA: Indiana University Press, 2005), at 161-62.

one that was far more sceptical and far less supportive than at the world organization's founding. The need to accommodate the particular social and economic concerns of these newly emerging states coupled with fierce competition among the superpowers for backing from these countries created new coalitions and new UN institutions to advocate for or challenge orthodoxy. Increasingly, what is now known as the Global South relied on UN secretariats for ideas and approaches to their own development trajectories. Preparations for the UN Conference on Trade and Development began in 1962 and its secretariat was institutionalized in 1964. For the next decade, it acted as an essential hub for the UN's intellectual activity on economic and social issues.<sup>30</sup>

According to Dadzie, the first phase stretches from 1945-1963. In this post-war, colonial period, systematic thinking on economic development- at least in so far as it concerns what were then called underdeveloped countries- was still in its infancy. The intellectual landmark of this period was a report prepared in 1950 by a group of five experts, entitled '*Measures for Economic Development of Under-Developed Countries*'. It is interesting to recall that this report followed upon an earlier one devoted to developed countries, entitled '*National and International Measures for Full Employment*'. In fact, the former group had been asked to prepare a report on '*unemployment and underdevelopment underdeveloped countries and the national and international measures required to reduce such unemployment and underdevelopment*'. The group, however, decided to address the more general question of economic development, this being, in their view, the means by which unemployment in the underdeveloped world could be overcome. With hindsight, one may well remark that despite the economic progress achieved, unemployment has grown progressively larger.<sup>31</sup>

This 1950 report set the stage for the United Nations' development activity- thus it is important to appreciate its central characteristics and

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30 Ibid., at 186.

31 Kenneth DADZIE, "The United Nations and Problem of Economic Development", in Adam ROBERTS and Benedict KINGSBURY, eds., *United Nations, Divided World: The UN'S Roles in International Relations*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), at 140.

immediately striking feature is that no attempt was made to discuss what is meant by economic development, or, as it was otherwise called, economic progress. At that time, the meaning of these notions seems to have been considered self-evident. Again, with hindsight, one might question the wisdom of such an assumption. The main message of the report was that underdeveloped countries should promote '*progressive attitudes and organizations*', '*receptiveness to progressive technology*', increased domestic capital formation, and reduced growth of populations. Thus development was essentially, indeed most exclusively, a matter for 'measures requiring domestic action'. The report did, however, represent a departure from what was called '*colonial economics*', in that, it addressed the issue of society – and institution-building under the broad rubric of the preconditions for economic development, in which were included the removal of relevant structural impediments through, for instance, land reform. The report pointed to the administrative and legal actions, both in public and private sectors that were considered necessary for 'economic progress.' It also recognized a somewhat expanded role for governments in the promotion of economic development, going beyond the simple provision of physical infrastructures, social services, and administration.<sup>32</sup>

The impact on the UN Development activity was to be seen in the spread of '*development planning*', the techniques and priorities of which were spelled out in the expert group's report, in the sectionalizing of international assistance, and the related development of technical programmes, and in the targeting of development resource transfers from developed countries. The First UN Decade of Development, which was actually proclaimed in 1962, was in effect an operationalized version of basic ideas contained in the original expert group's report. This phase of UN involvement with economic development was also characterized by the absence of a collective presence on the part of the developing countries, by the implicit

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32 Ibid., at 140-141.

assertion of a wholly convergent process of world development, and by the assumption of an essentially benign external policy environment, and hence of the irrelevance of negotiated policy reform.<sup>33</sup>

In spite of the heavy UN involvement in economic development policy and planning in the 1950s, the idea of a Development Decade came from the U.S. administration of President Kennedy, not from within the UN. Soon after Kennedy's declaration, the General Assembly adopted the historic resolution 1710 (XVI), which designated the 1960s as the "*United Nations Development Decade. . . . Member States and their peoples [would] intensify their efforts to mobilize and to sustain support for the measures required on the part of both developed and developing countries to accelerate progress towards self-sustaining growth of the economy of the individual nations and their social advancement.*"<sup>34</sup>

The resolution on the Development Decade called for action to lessen the gap between developed and underdeveloped countries, to speed up the processes of modernization, and to release the majority of mankind from poverty. More particularly, it called for industrialization; the development of agriculture; effective national planning; the elimination of illiteracy, hunger, and disease; the promotion of education and vocational and technical training; an increase in the flow of public and private capital to developing countries; an increase in the export earnings of underdeveloped countries; and the utilization of resources resulting from disarmament for the purpose of economic and social development.<sup>35</sup>

Economic development was an element of the UN's business from the outset, but in the 1960s its prominence along with the assertiveness of claims from Latin America and the newly independent countries of Africa, Asia, and the Middle East became so quantitatively different as to constitute a qualitative shift. Broadening the avenues to development

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33 Ibid., at 141.

34 JOLLY, UN Contributions to Development Thinking and Practice, at 85-86.

35 Ibid.

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had by then become a preoccupation as the world organization approached truly universal membership. By the early 1960s, development in what was then called the Third World and would soon become known as the South was gathering steam through the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) and the Group of 77.<sup>36</sup>

The creation of UNCTAD<sup>37</sup> was one of the main achievements of UN Development Decade. It was the result of the emerging new international environment where North-South tensions were almost as serious as East-West tensions. The creation of UNCTAD stressed that the UN had a unique contribution to make toward the lessening of both. The world press had prophesied that the 1964 founding conference of UNCTAD would be an unqualified failure. The fact that this did not happen was largely due to cooperation and coordination among developing countries. The establishment of the Group of 77 was the first event to herald the success of the conference.<sup>38</sup>

The crystallization of developing countries into a single bloc for the purpose of international economic negotiations represented a direct challenge to industrialized countries. In parallel with the Non-Aligned Movement, which focused initially more on security issues, the Third World's "solidarity," or at least cohesion for purposes of international debates, meant that developing countries were in a better position to champion policies that aimed to change the distribution of benefits from growth and trade.<sup>39</sup>

In the words of Dadzie, the second phase in the evolution of UN involvement with economic development extends from 1963 to about 1982. The impulses for new orientations in this period were many. They included the decolonization process, the radical transformation in the UN membership, and the interest of many of the new nations with socialist doctrines. As the period progressed there was a clearer perception of the reality that political independence did not by itself

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36 Thomas G. WEISS, op. cit., at 188.

37 United Nations Conference on Trade and Development

38 JOLLY, UN Contributions to Development Thinking and Practice, at 104.

39 Quoted in WEISS, UN Voices: The Struggle for Development and Social Justice, at 194.

bring economic autonomy and development. This perception, together with the more blatant abuses by transnational enterprises and dramatic demonstrations of OPEC's power, contributed to the evolution of a new outlook on relations between the developed and developing countries. By the mid-1960s the UN was ripe for a major revision of its development philosophy. This time the intellectual underpinning was provided by the developing countries themselves, in the form of the doctrine of Raul Prebisch and his collaborators at the Economic Commission for Latin America. Although these ideas were being shaped from the latter part of the 1940s onwards, they did not emerge in the form of specific propositions for North-South, or, as it was then called centre-periphery, cooperation until the first United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) was held in 1964.<sup>40</sup>

The notions that informed the new approach to development theory and practice were radically different from those of the 1950s and the First Development Decade. A distinguishing feature of these new theories was their preclusion of the possibilities that spontaneous self-correcting forces might operate. Persistent divergence between North and South was seen as the natural order. If these tendencies were to be corrected, deliberate policy actions would have to be taken, and thus international policy negotiations would become a special and continuing responsibility of the United Nations. There was accordingly a concentration on improving the international economic environment to promote development across a broad front. This was an attempt to rectify the gaps and shortcomings of the post-war system (encompassing IMF, IBRD, and GATT) which had given insufficient weight to the development issue. In this sense, the original, virtually exclusive, preoccupation with 'measure requiring domestic action' as the critical determinant of development was relegated to a less important place in the UN approach to economic development.<sup>41</sup>

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40 DADZIE, *The United Nations and the Problem of Economic Development*, at 141-42.

41 *Ibid.*, at 143



As Thomas observes, the decade of 1970s was to be the high point of Southern achievements in terms of participating in decisions and effecting outcomes on the global economic stage. The negotiating environment changed dramatically for the South in the early 1970s as there were several factors which contributed in this change: the Bretton Woods system of fixed exchange rates was abandoned in 1971; the OPEC countries acting as cartel quadrupled the price of oil in 1973; commodity prices were strong during the first half of the 1970s. Even though oil-importing Southern countries were hurting economically, politically the South remained united, enjoying the new found empowerment. In 1974, the South called for a New International Economic Order (NIEO) at the UN General Assembly, and followed this a year later with a Charter on the Rights and Duties of States. At core, these represented a political demand for a sovereignty to be taken seriously. There were a number of economic demands, several geared toward reducing the vulnerability of the South to external factors (for example, index linking the price of raw materials to the price of manufactured goods) and exercising sovereignty (for example, control over foreign investment and domestic natural resources).<sup>42</sup>

As Dadzie further explains, the action taken by the OPEC in 1973 naturally gave a strong impetus to a 'policy negotiation' approach to international development cooperation. It lent credence to the possibility of fundamental change and to the aspiration that a world of economic equity and justice, as envisaged by the developing countries, might actually be created. The 1974 declaration on Establishment of New International Economic Order (NIEO) and its accompanying Programme of Action convey this new message of strength and purpose. These impulses for change, deriving from a new sense of commodity power, were so strong that the period from 1973 might well be considered a distinct sub-phase, or even a new phase altogether. Essentially they underscored the developing countries' conviction that

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42 Caroline THOMAS, *Globalization and Development in the South*, in Ravenhill John, ed., *Global Political Economy*, (USA: Oxford University Press, 2006), at 326-27.

change was needed in the operation of the intentional economic system, and that the change could be effected through a process of global negotiation, in the context of strengthened bargaining power on the part of developing countries and of the concrete demonstration by the OPEC of world interdependence. It is worth noting, for example that the NIEO was ostensibly proclaimed to reassert and strengthen the 'spirit, purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations'. In practical terms, the new consciousness of and stress on 'permanent sovereignty over natural resources' gained in influence, while the notion of interdependence emerged more explicitly and with greater clarity as a rationale for international economic management. These notions, together with the basic ideas associated with founding of and developments in UNCTAD, merged with the older development currents of 1950s to influence the shape and contents of the International Development Strategy as proclaimed for the second and third UN Development Decades (which began respectively in 1971 and 1981).<sup>43</sup>

The 1970s were a paradoxical decade: creative thinking and action on the one hand, mounting economic difficulties on the other. Creativity was evident in such fields as the environment, population policies, gender questions, employment creation, and development strategies—all themes of UN world conferences during those years. From the vantage point of the early twenty-first century, it might seem as if concerns about the environment, social development, the role of women, or the plight of poor countries have always been with us. In reality, the ways that we now talk and think about these issues would not be the same without the work of the United Nations during that decade. Moreover, perspectives about what now flows in the mainstream have moved substantially over time as a result of discussions in and around the UN beginning in the creative decade of the 1970s. The decade also witnessed the two oil-price hikes, in 1973 and 1979. Initially, this stimulated hopes in developing countries for a New International Economic Order, and for a while, this led to lengthy

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43 DADZIE, *The United Nations and the Problem of Economic Development*, at 144.

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negotiations on how it might be achieved, one of the first attempts to change what came to be called in a later decade “global governance.” Transnational corporations were an important dimension of these negotiations. But the emergence of “stagflation,” mounting debt and interest rates, and economic recession at the beginning of the 1980s killed the NIEO debate and reversed the alternative economic policies developed during the 1970s.<sup>44</sup>

It is worth referring to the words of Dadzie again as he holds that the third and final phase dates from the early 1980s. The new strength and hopes inspired by the OPEC and the NIEO were to be relatively short-lived. By about 1982, the servicing of the massive petro dollar borrowing of developing countries ran into severe difficulty as self-induced recession in the North, under the impact of anti-inflationary monetary and fiscal policies, curtailed the export earnings of developing countries. Besides this, a number of other influences have had a modifying effect on the UN’s development philosophy. There has been much disappointment over the failure to negotiate and implement important aspects of the international agenda—international commodities agreements, the Common Fund for Commodities, the Code of Conduct for the Transfer of Technology, the NIEO. The weakening of the OPEC and of commodity power generally has diminished the Third World bargaining power. And the revival of the arms race and persisting East-West tensions have put the North-South dialogue lower on the agenda of international concerns. We are witnessing a return, primarily at the insistence of developed market economy countries, to a preoccupation with national measures and policies of developing countries, similar to that of the 1950s. In major Western economies, the ascendancy of neo-classical economics with its faith in market forces, together with the trend towards deregulation, has gone hand-in-hand with a reduced interest and investment in forms of international management. Both of these tendencies seem to imply a diminished concern with negotiated international policies in the design

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44 WEISS, *UN Voices: The Struggle for Development and Social Justice*, at 216.

of development cooperation. They also seem to point to a greater role for the private enterprise sector in the promotion of international cooperation and development.<sup>45</sup>

The confrontational strategy of the 1970s to level the global playing field successfully brought many ideas to the international agenda. However, the battle scars from various struggles to redress global trade, financial, and technological inequalities between the Northern and Southern Hemispheres were clearly evident in the 1980s. The simultaneous ascendance of conservative leaders in the United States and the UK brought to a halt any forward motion on the ideas of the NIEO—in discourse and in practice. Instead, a new hegemony of Western liberalism fatally cracked the South's solidarity of the previous decade. The North-South dialogue was effectively killed at the 1981 session of the Conference on International Economic Cooperation in Cancún—the last of its kind.<sup>46</sup>

The changes and events in the international system towards the end of 1980s, particularly the momentum in the ideas of neoliberals, the end of the Cold War and the emergence of the globalization brought about unprecedented transformation in the working and position of the UN in the international arena and regarding the issue of development. While the changes negatively affected the previous efforts of the UN, yet they also led the UN to deliver a ground-breaking stances and understanding of development for a new era of cooperation.

The debate about development had to be related to a long-term process of changing thinking about the process of globalization, and the associated development of more liberal arrangements. By the 1980s, the agenda of neoliberalism was in the ascendant and academics such as Biersteker reported its widespread adoption in the developing world in the 1980s and 1990s. The reasons for this according to Biersteker, were mainly a coincidence of the development of ideas, the appearance of favouring interests in states, the obvious failure of the

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45 DADZIE, *The United Nations and the Problem of Economic Development*, at 145.

46 WEISS, *UN Voices: The Struggle for Development and Social Justice*, at 258.

previous policies, and the crisis of the early 1980s. First reactions to the crisis in Mexico in 1994 and the financial crises in the Far East were indications of the folly of any alternative to the approach. In the late 1990s, there were a number of shifts in the pattern of alliances on neoliberalism, which were reflected in thinking about the way to develop successfully. The alliances were, first, the developing countries which, despite their abandonment of the principles of the New International Economic Order in favour of liberalism, nevertheless wanted a greater degree of development support, in terms of finance and policies. Attached to this lobby was a large number of sympathetic citizens and groups based in the North. This group preferred to work through the parts of the UN system which it judged most favoured its interests, and where it had a majority, such as the General Assembly, and the UNCTAD. A number of development NGOs were attached to this group. Second was an alliance of multilateral companies, right-wingers in the US Administration and Congress and some EU governments, which preferred to work through the institutions where they had a majority. This group supported a neoliberal agenda and tended to be cautious about the continuing extension of aid to the developing world. The institutions which they favoured included International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank and to a lesser extent the World Trade Organization (WTO). The US was anxious to protect the role of the IMF and the WB where Washington could lead, and opposed any move of responsibilities to the UN's central system.<sup>47</sup>

In response, the UN Secretariat and leading UN officials in the late 1990s began placing the greater stress on working with business to promote development and responsible social policies in the development process. The Secretary-General stated in December 1999: *'Today, I am pleased to acknowledge that, in the past two years, our relationship has taken great strides. We have shown through*

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47 Paul TAYLOR, *International Organization in the Age of Globalization*, (London: Continuum, 2005), at 174-75.

*cooperative ventures-both at the policy level and on the ground- that the goals of the United Nations and those of business can, indeed, be mutually supportive*'. Some of the business organizations themselves saw advantage and entered into agreement, and working arrangements, with parts of the UN system including the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). At the same time, the more cautious institutions, such as the World Bank, were brought to face the need to adopt a social agenda alongside the economic one. The argument that social change would be a natural result of liberalization, and therefore need not be addressed directly, was modified. The UN could be seen as increasingly attempting to build a new agreement with business. The UN had been anxious to demonstrate its preparedness to work with the private sector as was reflected in Kofi Annan's speech to businessmen at the World Economic Forum at Davos in January 1999. He repeated this from the words in later such conferences. He also stressed the need for business to accept a code of social practice. *'Without your active commitment and support, there is a danger that universal values will remain little more than fine words'*, he said, *'and unless those values really seem to be taking hold, I fear we may find it increasingly difficult to make a persuasive case for the open global market'*. British Chancellor of the Exchequer, Gordon Brown, also argued for such a code. This would be a *'code of global best practice in social policy which will apply for every country, will set minimum standards and will ensure that when IMF and WB helped a country in trouble they agreed the programme of reform will preserve investment in the social, education, and employment programmes which are essential for growth'*.<sup>48</sup>

There was, therefore, some evidence that major international financial institutions, particularly the WB, had decided to humanize their approach to development questions and their move to be more involved with 'issues of social capital, good governance, safety nets and so on'. In this the need for a holistic approach involving cooperation between all the relevant actors, including the UN system,

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48 Ibid., at 175-78.

was stressed. Even organizations such the UNDP had moved by early 1999 to cooperate in a rather controversial agreement with sixteen international companies which had contributed a seed fund of around US\$50000 each to what was described as a ‘privatized shell institutions’ called the Global Sustainable Development Facility. The end of 1999, UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan’s targeting of international financial instability as a central concern in his end – of – the – year review, and his promise of new initiatives to link the United Nations with business, were among indications that the world body was responding to globalization and its adverse consequences by stepping up participation in international economic dialogue. What seemed to be happening was that the UN had moved to stressing the role of regulating international business in development precisely when the US administration was likely to move to a harder right-wing position. The UN was now trying to capture business, having recognized it as a primary target. But perhaps the most important change in institutional relationships, from the point of view of development policy in the late 1990s and the early twenty-first century, was the moving together into an overlapping policy space of the main financial institutions of the IMF and the World Bank and the UN agencies. Previously they had been frequently at loggerheads, with the former pursuing the Western style neoliberal agenda, and the latter retaining an aura of radicalism left by the New International Economic Order (NIEO). Both had changed in the direction of the other by 2001, which made them possible now to cooperate. The biggest changes were, of course, the abandonment of the triumphalism of the Bretton Woods agencies, and the compromise with business of the UN.<sup>49</sup>

From the outset, the architects of the UN recognized the interconnectedness of economic and political issues. This largely reflected an awareness of the links between the economic turmoil of the Great Depression and the rise of political extremism and the growth of international conflict. The UN Charter thus committed the

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49 Ibid., at 178-80.

organization to promoting 'social progress and better standards of life'. However, in its early phase, the UN's concerns with economic and social issues extended little beyond the post-war reconstruction and recovery, in Western Europe and Japan in particular. A major shift in favour of the promotion of economic and social development was nevertheless evident from the 1960s onwards. This was a consequence of three factors. First, and most importantly, the process of decolonization and the growing influence of developing states, within the ever-expanding UN, focused more attention on the unequal distribution of wealth worldwide. The North–South divide thus came to rival the significance of the East–West rivalry within the UN. Second, a greater awareness of interdependence and the impact of globalization from the 1980s onwards meant that there was both an increased acceptance that economic and social problems in one part of the world have implications for other parts, and that patterns of poverty and inequality are linked to the structure of the global economy. Third, as acknowledged by the transition from peace-making to peace-building, the rise of civil war and ethnic strife underlined the fact that peace and security, on the one hand, and development, justice and human rights on the other, are not separate agendas.<sup>50</sup>

### **I. Challenges and Prospects in the Era of Globalization**

Today, many social and economic phenomena such as peace, crime, migration, production, employment, technological developments, environmental risks, distribution of income and welfare, and social cohesion and identity are considered to be affected by the process of globalization.<sup>51</sup> Some believe that globalization is "*the modes of connection between different social contexts or regions become networked across the earth's surface as a whole*".<sup>52</sup>

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50 Andrew HEYWOOD, *Global Politics*, (UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), at 446.

51 S. BRAKMAN, H. GARRETSEN C. VAN MARREWIJK, and A. WITTELOOSTUIJN, *Nations and Firms in the Global Economy. An Introduction to International Economics and Business*. (UK: Cambridge University Press, 2011), at 25-26.

52 Anthony GIDDENS, *Consequences of Modernity*, (UK: Polity Press, 1990), at 64.



It could be said that the globalization process was started, to some extent, deliberately by political decisions. However, it was also caused and/or supported by technological, social, and economic developments. The intensified cross-border transfer of resources, such as assets, capital, and knowledge, is in part a result of the liberalization policy of many nation state governments after WWII. The growing cross-area and cross-country social exchange was also made possible through technological innovations and achievements (e.g., telecommunications, mass media, the Internet, transportation, etc.). The exchange processes are accompanied by a growing interdependence between citizens from different communities through the emergence of global risks (e.g., nuclear weapons, global warming, global diseases, etc.) which connect the destinies of peoples with each other. In the following, we will describe some dimensions of globalization.<sup>53</sup>

Globalization is a process by which, international interactions have had increasingly greater importance on decision-making at all levels: local, national, regional and international. Globalization is also a powerful driving force in today's processes of economic, social and environmental change in the world.<sup>54</sup>

Globalization is, therefore, considered as an important element in the reform package and has its parameters: Permitting free flow of goods by reducing or removing trade barriers between the countries; creating an environment for free flow of capital and technology between the countries; and from the point of view of developing country, creating an environment in which free movement of labour can take place in different countries. In response to trade and foreign investment, the

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53 Andreas GEORG SCHERER, Guido PALAZZO, Globalization and Corporate Social Responsibility, in A. CRANE, A. MCWILLIAMS, D. MATTEN, J. MOON, D. SIEGEL, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of Corporate Social Responsibility*, (UK: Oxford University Press 2008), at 5-6.

54 Globalization and Sustainable Rural Development, DGIS-Wageningen UR partnership for pro-poor development, available at: [https://www.wur.nl/upload\\_mm/0/0/7/f6902bcb-6415-41bc-b2eb-c0b3dd33b183\\_dgiswurfinalfulltext.pdf](https://www.wur.nl/upload_mm/0/0/7/f6902bcb-6415-41bc-b2eb-c0b3dd33b183_dgiswurfinalfulltext.pdf) (last visited on 10/04/2018).

opportunity resulting from globalization, have embarked on the liberalization of a large and growing number of developing countries including India in their trade and foreign investment regimes, as well as the adaptation of their domestic economic structures and straightening of their export capacity. Taking a look at sustainable goals could prove that globalization could play an important role in their realization in international community. Hence, we will in brief, focus on the connection between globalization and sustainable development and the existing challenges.<sup>55</sup>

As mentioned above, three main elements characterise the notion of sustainable development: first, a broad view of human wellbeing, in which environmental and social elements are important as well as economic ones; second, the view that many of the effects of today's decisions will last over time, thereby affecting the well-being of future generations; third, the view that many of today's problems have their roots in actions and policies in other fields, whose unintended consequences may not be coherent with society's broader priorities and aspirations.<sup>56</sup>

Sustainable development - ensuring equitable economic growth while protecting the environment on which all depend - necessitates limiting the vulnerability of human populations and natural ecosystems and enhancing their resilience.<sup>57</sup> It is common knowledge within development circle that development involves a physical reality and a state of mind. Through development process, the interactions between social, economic and institutional processes must be continually sustained to meet up with increasing future demands in terms of

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55 Africa MAKASI, "Globalization and Sustainable Development: A Conceptual Model" (2015) *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences*, Vol. 6, No. 4, at 45-49.

56 Ibid.

57 Nguyen HUU NINH, Luong Quang HUY, "Prospects for Sustainable Development in Vietnam in the New Century", Centre for Environment Research, Education and Development, Available at: <http://sedac.ciesin.columbia.edu/openmtg/docs/Ninh.pdf> (last visited on 10/10/2017).

population growth and continuous use of natural, human and material resources.<sup>58</sup>

Though, sustainable development has ecological, social and economic aspects, yet the difficulties in optimizing all three aspects for present and future generations has led to the rise of concepts that embody dualities of this trinity—green economy/growth, green society, inclusive growth and inclusive development.<sup>59</sup> In order for sustainable development to be carried out and to take effect, it is necessary to redefine the objectives of economic and social development in all countries.<sup>60</sup> Sustainable development is a balanced concern for the carrying capacity of natural systems together with social, political, and economic prospects faced by humanity.<sup>61</sup> The concept of sustainability is often used to describe an economy in equilibrium with life support systems.<sup>62</sup> The principles of sustainable development policy are as following:

First: A commitment to best practice in the pursuit of environmental, social, and economic goals in planning and policies;<sup>63</sup>

Second: The need for good governance and the equal opportunity and community participation in sustainable communities;

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58 Akintoye Victor ADEJUMO, Opeyemi Oluwabunmi ADEJUMO, Prospects for Achieving Sustainable Development Through the Millennium Development Goals in Nigeria (2015) *European Journal of Sustainable Development*, Vol. 3, No. 1, at 34.

59 J. GUPTA, I. BAUD, R. BEKKERS, S. BERNSTEIN, I. BOAS, V. CORNELISSEN, (2014). “Sustainable development goals and inclusive development”, available at: 2015/UNU- IAS Policy Brief no.4. <http://sdg.earthsystemgovernance.org/sdg/publications/sustainable-development-goals-and-inclusive-development>(last visited on 20/3/2018).

60 Neag MIHAI - MARCEL, “Globalization and Sustainable Development”, Available at [http://www.armyacademy.ro/reviste/rev1\\_2015/NEAG.pdf](http://www.armyacademy.ro/reviste/rev1_2015/NEAG.pdf)(last visited at 07/12/2017).

61Mohammad SHAMSAIE, “International Economic Law and the Principle of Sustainable Development” (2006) *Law and Politics Review*, Vol. 19, at 11-12.

62 H. BOSSELL, ed., *Indicators for Sustainable Development: Theory, Method, Applications: A Report to the Balaton Group*, (Winnipeg, Canada: International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD) 1999), at 80-89.

63 See Seyed Fazlolah MOUSAVI, *International Environmental Law*, (Tehran: Mizan Publishing, 2001), at 145-149.

Third: To recognize the global integration of localities and dealing systemically with risk, uncertainty, and irreversibility; and

Fourth: To maintain the biodiversity and ecological integrity and ensuring appropriate appreciation, and restoration of nature improvement of human and natural capital and inter-generational equity.<sup>64</sup>

In any case to achieve sustainable development in a globalizing world, the course of action suggested include ensuring full participation and equity among all especially developing nations; strengthening capacities of developing countries to encourage public and private initiatives that enhance the ease of access timeliness and coverage of information on countries; strengthening regional trade and cooperation agreements.<sup>65</sup>

Globalization involves multiple and complex sets of overlapping processes. Inevitably, there will be manifold and at times cross-cutting effects on the global environment. In spite of the potential of globalization to economic convergence, it paved for an increase in inequality resulting in increased environmental impacts such as climate change, protection of the ozone layer, biodiversity and desertification.<sup>66</sup>

Perhaps the greatest controversy in the world, today, is how to make sense out of the two dominant global objectives ushering the globe into the new millennium: sustainable development and globalization. Sustainable social progress cannot be achieved without creating an enabling environment in terms of politics, economics, law and culture.<sup>67</sup> However, globalization presents both risks and opportunities for international community. Thus, it is important to take wise

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64 Aramesh SHAHBAZI, "Sustainable Development or the Sustainability of Development in International Law" (2010) *International Law Review*, Vol. 42, at 127-28.

65 Akintoye Victor ADEJUMO, Opeyemi Oluwabunmi ADEJUMO, *Ibid.*, at 41.

66 Khushbu PRASAD and VivekVATSAL, "Impact of Globalization and sustainability in Africa" (2013) *Global Journal of Management and Business Studies*, Vol. 3, No. 8, at 925.

67 Marco Mira D'ERCOLE "Building Sustainable Societies: The Role of Social Protection, Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development", OSCE Conference on Globalization, available at <https://www.osce.org/secretariat/42275?download=true> (last visited at 20/02/2018).

measures while dealing with it so that to harvest its fruits without going through its negative consequences. The UN has not been an exception, as long as the impact of globalization is concerned. Globalization has caused the organization face a number of new challenges as well as opportunities which radically changed its role as a global organization. As Heywood holds, the UN role used to be to keep the peace in a world dominated by conflict between communism and capitalism. Now it is forced to find a new role in a world structured by the dynamics of global capitalism, in which conflict increasingly arises from imbalances in the distribution of wealth and resources. This has meant that the UN's role in promoting peace and security has been conflated with the task of ensuring economic and social development, the two being merged in the shift from 'traditional' peacekeeping to 'multidimensional' or 'robust' peacekeeping.<sup>68</sup>

It is in such context that one could assert that the UN has been successful, considering all the criticisms labelled against it, dealing with globalization and its consequences by setting forth programmes such as SDGs for creating a multilateral and cooperative agenda between state and non-state stakeholders in the structure of the UN in order to be able to cope with new challenges while rendering its functioning at the fullest possible.

#### **IV. Conclusion**

International system has gone through serious changes and transformations, particularly after the end of WWII and with the establishment of the United Nations. These changes brought about new ideas and concepts which have been unprecedented and affected the world and international relations. The Cold War and a bipolar system, the process of decolonization and formation of Non-Aligned Movement, oil shocks and new financial system, formation of G77 and G7, the end of the Cold War, the emergence of globalization have been among other important issues and events which are significant in the

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68 HEYWOOD, *Global Politics*, at 442.

study and analysis of the UN and the question of development. It is under such a background that the present research has taken up to study and analyze the evolution of the concept of development in the context of the UN with special regard to globalization. Thus, the paper posed two important questions: how the concept of development has evolved under the international changes and events? And how has its status been in the UN? To answer these questions in the conceptual framework, the authors have examined the changing concept of the development and hence; demonstrated that the concept of development has gone through a number of theoretical and practical scrutiny and tests which also affected by the international changes and events such as the end of the Cold War and the emergence of globalization among others. Indeed, there has been a sea change in the conception and application of development which is altered from simply an economic growth to a multitude process known as sustainable development and it is equally important to note that since it has become a comprehensive and multitude process, it would require a collective and concerted efforts, too, by state and non-state stakeholders to be realized where the role of the UN comes to prominence. We have also scrutinized different stages of the evolution of development in the structure of the UN as well as various positions that the world organization has taken in this long journey. As it is indicated, early in its life, the UN system was more of an arena of rivalry between Capitalist and Communist blocs and almost all issues were affected by such rivalry, particularly economic, social and over all development issues. Later on, with the decolonization process and increase of the member-states, a new phase came up where Third World Countries gathered a collective voice and raised their demand for an equal economic system, despite of the continued bipolar system. At this stage, one could admit that the role of the UN changed and became more active, though it could not live long. However, with the end of the Cold War and the emergence of globalization, the UN entered into a new phase of its life to play a more independent role, relatively free of the Cold War influence, and even take some radical stances regarding many issues against its earlier positions, such as the status of Multi-National Corporations (MNCs),

MDGS, SDGs etc. As a matter of fact, it is significant to note that the question of development and the UN are really entwined and one cannot study and analyse them separately and this engagement has come even to a close term under the impact of globalization. The emergence of globalization and its impact on the UN has been tremendous as it causes a number of crucial challenges in the organization. However, one should not overlook the fact that the forces of globalization have also brought about new opportunities which paved the way for a new context of cooperation than confrontation under the framework of sustainable development and diminished the influence of international politics. Therefore, the hypothesis of the research is proved as it emphasized on the fact that the conception and application of development as a serious issue among the states has greatly changed towards materialization of Sustainable Developments Goals, concerted efforts by the global community and eventually the salvation of the UN from international politics so that to render its true functions including its promotion of peace and cooperation for a better world. The final concluding statement is given in the form a suggestion that all stakeholders, including state and non-state actors, must cherish such a momentum and help the UN to function as a genuine global organization towards peace and sustainable development for the present and future generations.

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