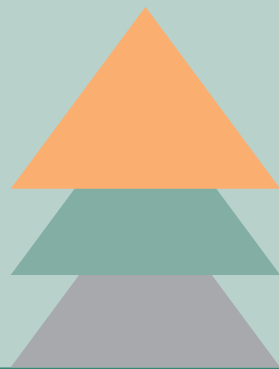


# Religions and Development Research Programme

## An Overview of Development Studies: Background Paper

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Working Paper 2 - 2007



# Religions and Development

## Research Programme

The Religions and Development Research Programme Consortium is an international research partnership that is exploring the relationships between several major world religions, development in low-income countries and poverty reduction. The programme is comprised of a series of comparative research projects that are addressing the following questions:

- How do religious values and beliefs drive the actions and interactions of individuals and faith-based organisations?
- How do religious values and beliefs and religious organisations influence the relationships between states and societies?
- In what ways do faith communities interact with development actors and what are the outcomes with respect to the achievement of development goals?

The research aims to provide knowledge and tools to enable dialogue between development partners and contribute to the achievement of development goals. We believe that our role as researchers is not to make judgements about the truth or desirability of particular values or beliefs, nor is it to urge a greater or lesser role for religion in achieving development objectives. Instead, our aim is to produce systematic and reliable knowledge and better understanding of the social world.

The research focuses on four countries (India, Pakistan, Nigeria and Tanzania), enabling the research team to study most of the major world religions: Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Sikhism, Buddhism and African traditional belief systems. The research projects will compare two or more of the focus countries, regions within the countries, different religious traditions and selected development activities and policies.

The consortium consists of six research partner organisations, each of which is working with other researchers in the four focus countries:

- University of Birmingham, UK: International Development Department, Department of Theology and Religion, Centre for West African Studies, Centre for the Study of Global Ethics, Department of Political Science and International Relations
- University of Bath, UK: Centre for Development Studies
- Indian Institute of Dalit Studies, New Delhi.
- Nigerian Institute of Social and Economic Research, Ibadan.
- University of Dar es Salaam, Tanzania
- Pakistan

In addition to the research partners, links have been forged with non-academic and non-government bodies, including Islamic Relief.

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ISBN: 0 7044 2542 4  
978 0 7044 2542 2

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This document is an output from a programme funded by the UK Department for International Development (DFID) for the benefit of developing countries. The views expressed are not necessarily those of DFID.





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# 1 Introduction

The main aim of this background paper is to provide an understanding of the development studies literature and how this has evolved over time, to inform work on the relationships between religions and development, especially for those who are engaging in research on development issues for the first time. Central to the review is an understanding of 'development' and how it has been conceptualised from different perspectives and in different eras. The review starts by examining the meaning of 'development' and different approaches to development, starting from classical understandings to contemporary conceptualisations. The debates leading to the current pre-occupation with 'poverty reduction' are summarised, with a specific section devoted to conceptions of poverty. In Section 4, self-styled alternatives to the mainstream areas of development literature are discussed briefly. Finally, an outline of some areas within the development studies literature that deal with issues of religion/faith is included. These are only presented in a summarised form, as disciplinary literature reviews have covered the issues raised in more detail (see, for example, Tomalin, 2006a; Shah et al, 2007; Jackson and Fleischer, 2007).

## 2 The meaning of development

### 2.1 Classical development

While it can be argued that all societies have experienced social change and economic development, consciousness of the notion of 'development' and the idea that development can be fostered are relatively new. Consciousness of the notion of development is closely associated with the critique of feudal society and emergence of capitalism. The work of classical political economy presents the first formulations of the conception of development, more commonly referred to at the time as 'progress'. Because theories of development have evolved in tandem with the evolution of the capitalist system, it is apt that conceptions of development are examined in relation to the different stages of capitalist development. Larrain (1989) identifies three main stages of capitalism: the age of competitive capitalism (1700-1860), the age of imperialism (1860-1945) and late capitalism (1945 onwards).

The age of competitive capitalism represents capitalism in its earliest stages, as Britain, for example, emerged from feudalism. In economic development terms, this era was characterised by numerous small firms producing final consumption goods traded in a competitive market environment. This stage of capitalist development was thus marked by the emergence of an industrial bourgeoisie which sought to wrest political and economic power from feudal landowners. As far as the conception of development was concerned, two key schools of thought are identifiable: political economy and the ideas of Marx and Engels (Corbridge, 1986). In reference to the struggles by the emerging industrial class against feudalism, political economy emerged to articulate what was considered the progressive route being taken by mankind: economic progress under the control of privately owned capital, after the removal of artificial impediments that existed under feudalism. Adam Smith and David Ricardo, the two key figures of classical political economy, contended that one of the key elements that was important for capitalism (the only and necessary mode of production) to flourish was international trade. Like Ricardo and Smith, Marx and Engels saw capitalism as a historical necessity, capable of advancing the development of productive forces to an unprecedented level. However, they rejected the idea that capitalism was the absolute mode of production and indeed went as far as postulating the possibility that capitalism would inevitably suffer from its own internal contradictions, leading to its eventual demise and replacement by some other mode of production.

As capitalism developed, some small firms expanded and others merged into large organisations that were capable of harnessing the benefits of economies of scale. This expansion meant that there was increased thirst for markets and raw materials from different parts of the world. This marked entry into



the age of imperialism, which, as alluded to above, was characterised, *inter alia*, by the replacement of small firms by large monopolies, concentration of capital in large organisations, rapid economic and technological development, and increased export of capital from the industrial centres to the periphery, leading to loss of control over both raw material production and capital accumulation by peripheral countries (Leys, 1996). Classical political economy ceased to be the main approach to understanding development, being replaced by the neo-classical economics, whose key proponents were Walras, Marshall, Menger and Jevons, and had the theory of equilibrium as its main concern. Unlike classical political economy, neo-classical theorists disregarded the importance of the socio-political set up of society as if it did not have any relevance for economic analysis. By divorcing development from the socio-political context, neo-classical theorists conceived the development process as straightforward and harmonious, evolving almost automatically with the expansion of knowledge and technology (Larrain, 1989). Nevertheless, following the world depression experienced in the 1920s and 1930s, neo-classical theory's blind faith in the market had to be tempered and there was increased agreement in the industrialised countries that state intervention was necessary to counteract the worst effects of the depression and secure full employment.

Alongside neo-classical theorists, Marxists developed the theory of imperialism, which regards imperialism as a necessary stage in the development of capitalism - when the rate of profit declines at home, the response by capitalists is held to be to export capital abroad, where returns are greater. Given the limitations of mercantilism, colonialism is regarded as simply the political means by which the safety and profitability of exported capital is ensured. Supporters contended that the forced expansion of capitalism abroad by means of colonial conquest and the export of capital would eventually bring about the industrialisation of colonised societies. By the 1940s, the theory of imperialism also began to adjust to the fact that the postulated industrialisation in the colonised territories was not materialising, conceding that breaking the colonial bond between colonies and colonisers (removing imperialism through political independence) was key to realising development.

The period following the end of the Second World War (WWII) is what is generally referred to as the age of late capitalism (Larrain, 1989). Following the end of WWII, the emergence of nationalism in the Third World; weakening of the major colonial powers and a global power shift to the US, which had little colonial history; the start of decolonisation; and the expansion of socialism by Russia altered the dynamics of the international political economy and the development discourse. Among the key

concerns of the time were the likely political and economic trajectories of ‘underdeveloped’ or ‘developing’ countries, then emerging from colonial rule. Consequently, concerns for economic development and poverty in the developing world were forced back on the international agenda. There was similar added vigour to academic interest in issues of international development. Various scholars whose work falls under the rubric of ‘modernisation theories’ were at the forefront of explaining the process of development. Development economics emerged as a sub-discipline of academic economics (Section 2.2), while other social scientists, especially sociologists, focused on the transition from ‘traditional’ to ‘modern’ societies (Section 2.3). Critics emerged from within (Section 2.4) and from other theoretical traditions (Section 2.5)

## 2.2 State-managed economic growth

After the Second World War, as noted above, *laissez faire* gave way to general acceptance of state intervention in the economy, based on the principles of Keynesian economic management. The new sub-discipline of development economics was distinguished by “its exploration of the problem of government-engineered economic transformation” (Toye, 2003, p.1). Against a background of non-existent or limited markets in factors and commodities, limited capital of all kinds and fragile political structures, economic transformation could, it was argued, only be achieved by state intervention, through national economic development planning (Leftwich, 2005).

Primacy was given to the achievement of economic growth, measured in terms of the total value of economic activity (GDP and GNP). The dominant model used had been formulated by economists interested in ensuring stable economic growth in developed countries. It holds that the more an economy is able to save and invest out of a given GNP, the greater will be the rate of growth of that GNP. According to this theory the main constraint on growth in developing countries is the relatively low level of investment. If this shortage of capital or ‘savings gap’ is held to be the main constraint on growth, it follows that it can be filled by foreign aid or foreign direct investment – hence the justification for the post-war advocacy of foreign aid and particular foreign investment as being an essential but temporary prerequisite for starting the developing countries on the road to rapid economic growth, borne out by the apparent success of applying a similar prescription to the reconstruction of war-damaged economies in Europe under the Marshall Plan.

One of the many problems of the Keynesian model was that it was concerned with maintaining economic growth and full employment rather than how to achieve economic development in the first place, which was the problem faced by many developing countries. Economists concerned with enabling ex-colonial countries to escape the trap of dependence on natural resources (especially low productivity agriculture) differed on how economic development could be launched, although most believed in a 'big push' approach to breaking the vicious cycle of low production, a small domestic market, sparse capital and limited savings, influenced by Rostow's classification of societies into one of five stages of economic growth (1960). Rostow identified three conditions for 'take off' to industrialisation and self-sustained growth: an increased rate of productive investment, emergence of one or more branches of manufacturing as 'leading sectors', and political and social changes enabling advantage to be taken of these modernising impulses to achieve continuous growth. While some economists in the 1950s believed that the concentration of investment in a single industry or leading sector would generate linkages elsewhere in the economy, others considered that more balanced investment in a number of industries would be more likely to enlarge the market of raw materials and industrial output.

Typically, import-substitution behind protective barriers was favoured as the first stage of industrialisation, while exports of primary products continued. As the work of the UN Economic Commission for Latin America showed, limitations of this model were already becoming clear in Latin America by the 1950s and 1960s: ISI was constrained by its dependence on limited domestic markets and imported parts and equipment, political and bureaucratic obstacles prevented the dismantling of excessive protective measures, the terms of trade for primary products were deteriorating, but rich country protectionism hindered the development and export of manufactured goods.

Most regarded the economies of developing countries to be dualistic, in which a modern, dynamic, capitalist, capital intensive sector existed alongside a traditional, low productivity sector dominated by subsistence agriculture. Much of the labour in the latter was assumed to be 'surplus', and thus transferable at low wages to industrial employment without adversely affecting agricultural output. Reinvestment of profits by industrialists was expected to fuel manufacturing growth without increasing wages, until such time as all the 'excess' labour in agriculture was absorbed, whereupon incomes would rise throughout the economy (Lewis's model of economic growth). Inequality (between sectors and incomes) was inevitable, even essential, for economic growth to occur, but would eventually

decline as part of the normal process of economic growth (Kuznet's curve) (Lewis, 1955; Sumner, 2003; Toye, 2003). As the assumptions of this development model were explored and tested in the 1960s, criticisms emerged of the mechanistic link between capital investment and economic growth, its lack of attention to how labour would be 'skilled' to become an industrial workforce, its simplistic view of rural-urban migration and its negative view of the potential role of agriculture (Toye, 2003).

### 2.3 Modernisation theories<sup>1</sup>

In the 1950s and early 1960s, modernisation theory was developed by a number of social scientists, particularly a group of American scholars, of whom the most prominent was Talcott Parsons. In constructing their accounts of development, these theorists drew on the tradition-modernity distinction of classical sociologists, a structural-functionalist view of society and the ways in which role relationships in a society and therefore social structure, it is suggested, can be explained by ascertaining the particular value orientations characteristics of that society (Hoogvelt, 1982; Leys, 1996). A structural-functionalist conception of a social system views it as made up of interdependent parts, including cultural beliefs, legal or political institutions, economic/technological organisations and social patterns of family organisation. So long as these parts are compatible, it is suggested, the social structure is in equilibrium, but if one of the parts becomes incompatible with the others, changes in the social structure occur to restore the equilibrium. In the pursuit of economic development, one structural component, the economic/technological organisation, is considered to be primary. Attempts to transform the economic structure of developing countries led to a realisation that economic behaviour and institutions are embedded in social and cultural institutions. From considering that an inevitable outcome of economic change would be social transformation, a jump was made to assume that a reorganisation of social and cultural institutions would *facilitate* economic growth.

The distinction between tradition and modernity was first used in an attempt to explain the transformation of European and North American countries from traditional, pre-capitalist societies into industrial capitalist economies. To most classical modernisation theorists, the trajectory followed by the West in its transition from 'tradition' to 'modernity' provided a template that would inevitably be

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<sup>1</sup> See Almond (1956), Hagen (1962), Hoselitz (1960), Inkeles (1983), Lewis (1955), McClelland (1961), Pye and Verba (1965) and Rostow (1960).

followed by all other societies. It was believed that all societies would eventually achieve the industrialisation, urbanisation, secularisation and rationality already experienced in much of Europe and North America. Modernisation was thus perceived as an inevitable and irreversible universal process and it was expected that modernity would be attained sooner or later by all mankind. All that was thought to be required was to devise the mechanisms and policies necessary to accelerate this otherwise inevitable process. Indeed, as Shills (1966) noted, modernisation can be equated with Westernisation, whereby other societies are expected to move away from their traditional values and adopt those associated with Western countries.

Within this broad modernisation approach, different scholars place emphasis on different factors. For instance, Rostow (1960), as noted above, presents the different stages of economic growth that societies have to go through on their development journey and suggests the nature and magnitude of investment he considers necessary to propel them through these stages. McClelland (1961), on the other hand, emphasises psychological factors, arguing that the emergence of a class of entrepreneurs with the motivation and need for achievement is a pre-requisite for economic growth. One of the first economists to draw attention to non-economic factors in development was Hoselitz (1960), who simplified the sociological concept by holding one set of values to characterise traditional societies and the other to characterise modern societies. Modernisation then became the problem of ensuring a transition from dominance by traditional values to dominance by modern orientations for action. Development could, it was suggested, be achieved by a shift from “emotive, primary and diffuse social relations to neutral, secondary and specific social relations, from prescriptive to elective actions, from ascribed and particularistic roles to achieved and universalistic roles” (Larrain, 1989, p.11). Melkote et al (2001, p. 74) try to capture these different dimensions in a definition of modernisation as “a transition from primitive, subsistence economies to technology-intensive, industrialised economies; from subject to participant political cultures; from closed, ascriptive status systems to open, achievement-oriented systems; from extended to nuclear kinship units; from religious to secular ideologies”.

Modernisation conceptions of development gained prominence in the 1950s and 1960s, popularised by American scholars in the aftermath of WWII and the start of decolonisation in much of the South. It has been opined that one of the covert reasons for fronting modernisation theories of development was to justify intervention by the US in the economies and politics of independent countries,

particularly in Latin America, Asia and Africa (Sachs, 1992). Pieterse (2001, p.20) posits that “modernisation emerged as the theoretical corollary of American globalism in the context of the cold war and decolonisation”. At the end of World War II, there was a remarkable rise of nationalism in much of the developing world, particularly in Africa and Asia, largely aimed at securing political independence from the erstwhile colonial rulers. The support extended by the Soviet Union to many of the nationalist movements that emerged raised concerns in the US about the spread of communism, which would, *inter alia*, lead to loss of raw materials and markets for Europe and N. America, thereby threatening the spread of capitalism. Like their predecessor colonisers, the West, led by the US, assumed the ‘moral responsibility’ of spreading modernity to the countries of the South. This apparent altruistic concern (seen as paternalistic by critics) was central to the famous January 20<sup>th</sup> 1949 inaugural speech made by Harry Truman, in which he appealed to the US and the developed world to apply their scientific and technological knowledge to alleviate the misery of the poor peoples of the world who lacked adequate food, were victims of disease, and lived primitive and stagnant economic lives. Besides making modernisation ideals central to US policy towards the developing world, Truman’s speech reinforced the interventionist stance of the development agenda, with the aim of accelerating what some scholars (e.g. Sachs, 1992) perceived as a Westernisation project, although efforts were made to de-link this new intervention from the negative aspects of colonialism, which was actively being brought to an end.

Spearheaded by the US, modernisation thus became the predominant discourse in the global development agenda in the 1950s and 1960s. In this discourse economic growth was, at the very least, taken to be a pre-requisite for development and at times synonymous with it. It is thus not surprising that most development policies at the time were geared towards promoting economic growth and elimination of what were perceived to be the impediments to achieving this objective, including traditional customs and values. A range of policies was fostered by modernisation theory, including injection of capital to aid both industrial ‘take-off’ and the commercialisation of agriculture; training of an entrepreneurial elite in the values and motivations most likely to promote free enterprise; expansion of education programmes; the development of mass media to disseminate ideas and encourage increased awareness about society; the replacement of patterns of authority based on traditional loyalties with a rational system of law coupled with representative national government; and providing assistance only to ‘democratic’ countries (Davis and Trebilcock, 2001).

As pointed out earlier, modernisation theory set out optimistically, portraying development as a straightforward process that was not only inevitable but could very easily be accelerated by adopting the right kind of pro-economic growth policies and replacing traditional institutions with modern ones. However, by the late 1960s, there was little sign of the fruits promised by modernisation theorists: convergence of the Third World and the developed world. On the contrary, the gap between rich and poor countries was widening and there was evidence of worsening living conditions in much of the South. In addition, the theories were criticised for their over-simplified division of societies into traditional and modern; their assumption that developed equals 'modern' equals westernised and that this is an inherently desirable goal for all countries; and their assumption that development is a unilinear evolutionary path along which all countries will eventually proceed. Because of the theoretical criticisms and practical shortcomings, the modernisation approach came under criticism in the late 1960s and early 1970s; the main and most severe attack coming from those working within radical Marxian sociology, but also from within.

## 2.4 Growth, inequality and poverty

In the 1950s, improvement in worldwide statistical coverage by UN agencies started to provide evidence that while the economies of rich countries were booming, the per capita rate of growth of GDP in poor countries was actually slowing down. This was blamed on the efforts to assist developing countries having been too limited and too slow. In response, in 1961, the UN inaugurated the First Development Decade, with the aim of attaining more rapid per capita economic growth in developing countries, assisted by an increased volume of official and private financial flows, to equal 1% of the GNP of developed countries. Neither was achieved. By the end of the decade it was recognised that, despite many developing countries having achieved fairly rapid economic growth rates, not only were international economic inequalities increasing but so were inequalities within countries, both spatial inequalities between regions and inequalities between the rich and the poor<sup>2</sup>. It became increasingly clear that 'trickle down' was not working. In the late 1960s, the World Bank recognised that 40% of the population of developing countries had been excluded from the benefits of economic growth.

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<sup>2</sup> Indeed, the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD), established in 1963, was tasked to examine issues of social development during different phases of economic growth.

Studies of the outcomes of development policies were accompanied by attempts to redefine development and to devise better indicators. In particular, the Institute for Development Studies at the University of Sussex collaborated with the International Labour Office and the World Bank, first in a study of Kenya and then in an international comparative study. Under ILO influence, Singer and Jolly's study of Kenya placed employment at the centre of development goals, attributing a positive developmental role to the informal sector, and proposed redistribution from growth, suggesting that the incomes of the richest 1% of Kenya's population remain constant in real terms for a decade, freeing resources for education, health and other pro-poor investment (Singer and Jolly, 1972).

The IDS-World Bank study analysed the relationship between economic growth and income distribution in both rich and poor countries, the determinants of inequality and the characteristics of poverty groups. The limited evidence available showed that rapid economic growth had been accompanied by worsening income distribution (e.g. Brazil) or relatively egalitarian income distribution (e.g. Taiwan) and that the poor were predominantly subsistence farmers or in non-wage urban employment. The study argued for growth policies that could be tempered by redistribution in order to increase the incomes of poor people more rapidly than mere trickle down. Theoretical and empirical analysis of alternative redistribution strategies came to the conclusion that channelling some of the increments of economic growth into investment in agriculture, education and health would increase the productive capacity, production and incomes of the poor more than policies to increase their consumption directly through progressive taxes and subsidised services, and would be more politically feasible than redistribution of assets (especially land) (Chenery et al, 1974).

Despite its welcome focus on equality and poverty, this strategy, more accurately described as redistribution *from* growth than redistribution *with* growth, has been criticised as merely an attempt to give capitalism a more human face while leaving intact the structures and processes that cause inequality and poverty (i.e. the unequal ownership of the means of production, especially land), and for its attitude that redistribution is something done for the poor by, or with the consent of the rich.

The political difficulties surrounding redistribution and the likelihood that results would be slow led others to advocate direct investment in meeting the basic needs of all, not primarily to increase productivity (as in *Redistribution with Growth*) but as an end in itself. The basic needs approach (BNA) to development emphasises the definition of a bundle of minimum private consumption and essential



service requirements (Hettne, 1990, p. 167-71)<sup>3</sup>. Although there was consensus on the core basic needs, it was also agreed that the bundle needed to be country, region and time specific and that a hierarchy of basic needs could be distinguished, for example, bare survival, continued survival, productive survival and non-material needs. The BNA emphasises the need to improve delivery systems, to make sure that the goods and services available are designed to meet the needs of the poor, that they can gain access to these goods and services and to ensure that increases in the incomes of the poor are not neutralised by increases in the prices of goods and services they require. The supporters of a BNA include orthodox development economists, to whom economic growth is central and a basic needs strategy complementary and ameliorative; their critics who believe that basic needs satisfaction should be the primary objective of development strategy, although without specifying how the necessary changes to capitalist patterns of production can be achieved; and radicals who believe that basic needs cannot be satisfied without redistribution of assets following the redistribution of social and economic power. Key issues include the relationships between basic needs satisfaction and both economic growth and regime characteristics, and who should define the basic needs bundle. Evidence soon emerged that high levels of basic needs satisfaction were achieved during the 1970s in countries with varying per capita GDP and varying economic and political systems including, for example, South Korea, Taiwan, Tanzania and Sri Lanka. Some practitioners were criticised for adopting a technocratic approach to basic needs definition, but most advocate an approach that enables poor people to participate in decision making.

Another key figure in the 1970s debates<sup>4</sup> was Mahbul ul Haq, a leading World Bank economist, who also acknowledged that a high growth rate provides no guarantee that poverty will be reduced or eliminated. Conceding that an exclusive focus on economic growth was faulty, Haq (1976, p. 92)<sup>5</sup> pointed out that:

“we conceived our task not as eradication of poverty but as a pursuit of certain levels of average income...[and argued that] Development goals must be redefined in terms of reduction and eventual elimination of malnutrition, disease, illiteracy, unemployment and inequalities...We were told to take of our GNP as this would take care of poverty. Let us reverse this and take care of poverty as this will take care of GNP”.

<sup>3</sup> The BNA approach was supported by the ILO (1976, 1977) and some World Bank staff, such as Paul Streeten (e.g. Hicks and Streeten, 1979)

<sup>4</sup> As we shall see later, there were other key scholars, Amartya Sen in particular, who not only agreed with the importance of focusing on poverty reduction but also helped in conceptualising poverty in non-material terms.

<sup>5</sup> This seminal study is considered to be the precursor to the human development approach.

Using his influence in the international financial institutions (IFIs), Haq made a significant contribution towards a shift in the development discourse away from a blind faith in economic development towards paying more direct attention to poverty and social development issues. “Concern for distributional issues faded in the mid to late 1970s and disappeared altogether in the 1980s as the debt crisis dominated and [as we will see below] there was a return to growth-centric development” (Sumner, 2003, p. 5). However, when inequality and poverty re-emerged as concerns for development economists in the 1990s, a link can be traced between the RwG and BNA approaches of the 1970s and some of the more recent development perspectives such as the Human Development and capabilities approaches, which are discussed later in this paper.

## **2.5 Dependency theories**

As pointed out earlier, the fiercest critiques of modernisation theory were Marxian sociologists, whose ideas about development crystallised into what came to be referred to as the dependency school of thought. Critically, while the dependency school rejected the modernisation theorists’ notion that all countries and societies can be expected to follow a similar development trajectory, it did not question the goal of modernisation. The dependency school of thought did, however, dismiss the contention that capitalism was a mode of production capable of delivering development. Dependency theory is essentially a refurbishment of the theory of imperialism. It seeks to account for the continued lack of development in decolonised territories, contrary to the postulations of the classical theory of imperialism (Leys, 1996). Based on studies undertaken mainly in Latin America, where most countries had, by the late 1960s, been independent for a relatively long period of time and yet remained underdeveloped, the early dependency theorists sought to explain the persistence of this underdevelopment and countries’ inability to attain the modernisation goal that political independence had been expected to usher in. The slow and distorted progress recorded was blamed on the historical processes that had “stripped colonies of resources, reorganised their lands, pauperised their labour, and created parasitic elites – all so western countries could have and sustain the once-ever industrial revolution” (Sylvester, 1999, p. 706). The underlying theory is one of unequal exchange, in which the products of developed countries are sold at more than their value and the products of developing countries at less, so that every transaction involves a flow of value out of poor countries, reducing the speed of accumulation there. The mechanisms have changed since colonial days, but the problems of developing countries still arise from the adverse terms of their incorporation into the global economy, terms that they cannot change.

One of the key proponents of dependency theory was André Gunder Frank, who used evidence from research undertaken in Chile and Brazil in the late 1960s to challenge assertions by modernisation theorists that underdevelopment was a result of traditional archaic institutions and shortage of capital (Frank, 1969). He contended that underdevelopment was instead generated by the very same historical process that had led to the development of capitalism. To him, economic development and underdevelopment are the opposite faces of the same coin. Other notable contributors to the various versions of dependency theory include Wallerstein, Baran, and Amin<sup>6</sup>.

Dependency theory essentially continues the central line of Marxist thought (although some Marxist critics have sought to dispute this) regarding the contradictory character of the needs of imperialism/ the process of industrialisation and the general economic development of 'Third World' nations. It is contended that economic development in underdeveloped countries (referred to as dependent/ peripheral economies) is inimical to dominant interests in the advanced capitalist countries (referred to as dominant/metropolitan/centre/core countries) and therefore the latter make it difficult for the former to attain any sort of development. This, it was posited, they accomplished through allying with pre-capitalist domestic elites, thereby giving advanced nations easy access to domestic resources, maintaining the traditional modes of surplus extraction, and enabling foreign capital or domestic elites to appropriate the surplus or use it for conspicuous consumption instead of productive domestic investment.

Dependency theorists were critical of the injustices in the existing international trade regime, which as noted above was characterised by ever-deteriorating terms of trade for raw material exporters. Some (e.g. Prebisch and UNECLA) suggested that developing countries could promote, plan and protect import-substituting industrialisation in order to become less dependent on industrialised countries. To others, development would remain a pipedream in much of the Third World unless the forces that perpetuated both mercantile/imperialist exploitation of poor countries' resources by rich capitalist nations and colonial relations through unfair trade structures were eliminated through a revolutionary class struggle and even guerrilla warfare. As correctly pointed out by Larrain (1989), others tend to de-emphasise the influence of external factors in the development of underdevelopment and focus

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<sup>6</sup> See Amin (1974, 1976, 1990), Baran (1957), Cardoso and Faletto (1979), Frank (1969), and Wallerstein (1974, 1980, 1988).

instead on internal processes and class struggles that act as impediments to development, and on their interaction with external forces. In this view, underdevelopment is the outcome of relationships between capitalist and pre-capitalist modes of production, influenced by past and contemporary modes of the penetration and accumulation of capital.

The late 1960s and early 1970s saw the ascendancy of theories of dependency and underdevelopment in development discourse, drawing the attention of significant organisations within the international development community. However, because of the radical nature of proposals put forward by dependency theorists and the general pessimism espoused by the school, it did not manage to wrest much ground from the modernisation paradigm. While modernisation theory set forth energetic principles for development, which if followed, promised to deliver substantial material benefits, dependency theory offered a revolution against the capitalist system as the way out of the underdevelopment stalemate. Dependency theories were also criticised for their abstract and totalising characteristics, being circular in nature (i.e. less developed countries are poor because they are dependent, and any characteristics they display signify dependence), failing to recognise that capitalist development has occurred in some (parts of) the economies of developing countries, having an overly passive view of national elites' and developing country governments' scope for autonomous action, and being unable to demonstrate a causal link between dependence and underdevelopment (for a detailed review of the critique of dependency theory see Larrain, 1989, p.188-93).

## **2.6 The rise of neo-liberalism and structural adjustment programmes**

Despite the major differences that existed between post-WWII development theories, there seemed to be agreement on two key issues: a belief in the concept of progress and agreement on the importance of the state as an analytic frame of reference and key actor in the delivery of development. The primacy of the state as a development actor was a reflection of how, starting in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the modern state increasingly took the initiative in the development process, reaching its zenith in the post-WWII phase of the welfare state in the West. State intervention was thus regarded as necessary to achieve externalities, realise economies of scale, particularly in infrastructural investment, and overcome imperfections and segmentation in markets. Indeed, during the 1960s and 1970s, most governments in the developing world owned major service provider parastatals and marketing boards; regulated commodity prices; owned or attempted to control all land; and were virtually the sole formal sector employer. However, between the 1980s and the early 1990s, the character of debates within

development studies shifted from disagreement over the specific role the state should play in the development process to whether the state should play a role at all.

This way of thinking reflected the intellectual dominance in the 1980s of neo-liberalism, an economic and political philosophy ideologically underpinning the pro-market ideology and monetarist ideas of contemporaneously influential governments, especially those of Margaret Thatcher in Britain and Ronald Reagan in the USA. The ideological power of neo-liberalism was arguably at its peak in 1989-91 when the cold war came to an end and the Eastern European communist bloc collapsed. To some observers, these interlinked developments appeared to offer spectacular evidence of the superior power of both liberal democracy and capitalism over their long-term rival, communism. The neo-liberal strategy became known as the Washington Consensus, a nomenclature that reflected its pre-eminence among Washington-based opinion leaders (in the US government, the IMF and World Bank). The central idea of the Washington Consensus was that, developmentally, the state's role should be downgraded and diminished, while that of private capitalists and entrepreneurs should be upgraded and augmented. While the neo-liberal shift was partly ideology, it was also a reflection of a resurgence of realism, particularly with regard to the obtaining political realities in many developing countries. There was overwhelming evidence that many politicians and rent-seeking bureaucrats in these countries were enriching themselves rather than developing their countries, thereby becoming stumbling blocks to the development they were expected to spearhead. It was also clear that the state in most poor countries lacked the capacity to fulfil all the developmental roles allocated to it. It was thus argued that less restricted market mechanisms would deliver better development than bloated kleptocratic governments and would also ease the debt crisis that was affecting many poor countries (Toye, 2003). Diagnoses of the problems focused on internal failures of governance and policy rather than external economic or political relations, the shortcomings of external advisers' expertise, or international agencies' over-optimistic expectations of the efficacy of planning, even though poor countries were both at a disadvantage in the world trading and financial systems and often pawns in cold war politics (Preston, 1999; Leftwich, 2005).

The development principles espoused by neo-liberals coalesced around the theory and practice of what were known as 'structural adjustment programmes' (SAPs)<sup>7</sup>. As indicated above, the underlying

<sup>7</sup> See, for example, Preston (1999), Toye (2003), Leftwich (2005)

elements of SAPs were 'downsizing' of the developmental role of the state and an increased faith in the ability of 'market forces' to bring about the rates of broad-based economic growth needed to achieve 'economic efficiency' and to deal with problems of poverty and underdevelopment in the developing world. It was argued that, once the market was free from state intervention and fully functioning, utility maximising individuals would respond rationally to market signals. Because of the vulnerable situation of many states in the south (with crippling debt), the proponents of neo-liberalism, which included the IFIs, had considerable leverage to push their ideas forward. The 1980s thus saw many poor countries being pressured by the IMF and World Bank to adopt adjustment and stabilisation policies aimed at eliminating impediments to the smooth functioning of the market. IMF stabilization packages were aimed at reducing trade deficits (especially the volume of imports) by cutting aggregate demand, by means of fiscal and monetary austerity and exchange rate adjustment. On the other hand, World Bank adjustment packages sought to raise GDP growth by improving the allocative efficiency of the price system. Trade liberalisation policies were formulated, to increase exports. To encourage inward investment, barriers to external flows were to be reduced. To encourage savings, positive real interest rates were introduced, and to equalise the returns to different financial assets, financial markets were deregulated. To help reduce real wages, with the intention of expanding employment and thus increasing production, labour markets were deregulated and taxes 'rationalized' (generally reduced). In addition, state owned enterprises were privatized, on the assumption that the private sector is more efficient. These reforms were all supposed to increase transparency and reduce corruption and rent seeking, but in practice, often both corruption and rent seeking increased (Pieper and Taylor, 1998).

Reforms were often prescribed with little detailed knowledge of the country concerned or consultation with its government, which was too desperate for the loan to argue over conditions. Rapid implementation of fiscal reforms such as price decontrol and import liberalization gave economies and enterprises little time to adjust. The result was slippage on implementation of conditions and varied but often limited effects. Mosley, Harrigan and Toye's (1995) evaluation demonstrated that, when the prescribed policies were implemented, they generally improved export growth and the external account balance, but nearly always had a negative effect on aggregate investment. They concluded that by the mid-1990s the influence of SA policies on economic growth, financial flows and distribution of wealth had been neutral overall, but that particular groups had suffered income cuts due to pressure to increase producer prices for agricultural goods, cut food and other subsidies, and make prices

more competitive. The conditions imposed, they suggested, were more appropriate for middle income countries with some industry; farmers who had access to credit, agricultural inputs and transport; and private entrepreneurs with sufficient capital to run privatized enterprises better than governments, i.e. excluding most African countries. However, not only did it become clear that liberalisers had downplayed the role of the government intervention in trade, industry and finance in East Asian countries in the 1960s and 1970s (Toye, 2003), the Asian financial crisis in 1997 subsequently threw some doubt on the applicability of the standard SA package, even in middle-income countries.

In Africa by the end of the 1980s, 30 countries had adopted structural adjustment policies, many implementing a succession of programmes, and even those that had not implemented a Bank-approved package had been heavily influenced by the policy regime. In general, many assessments of the performance of SAPs have suggested that, while these policies were generally useful, they were a far from sufficient means to achieve sustained growth, and in many cases they were actually a prelude to systemic crisis (see Sindzingre, 2005). Toye (2003) concludes that

“In general, the verdict on structural adjustment in the 1980s was that it delivered much less than its advocates had claimed for it.... Structural adjustment was a very large policy package, since it was composed of stabilisation, liberalisation and privatisation, and each of these sub-categories of policy consisted of many different specific actions that, for success, should have been pursued in a coordinated programme. Development economics was not well equipped to resolve the practical issue of the sequencing of this package of policies” (Toye, 2003).

Modifications to the programmes were instituted, resulting in what came to be referred to as ‘adjustment with a human face’. However, even the new adjustment policies that sought to take on board social concerns achieved little success, partly because of externally imposed conditionalities that neither give sufficient attention to local concerns nor are enforceable by the IFIs. As Leftwich (2005) correctly points out, the limited attention paid to political factors is an important part of the explanation for the patchy progress with reforms and the limited achievement of developmental goals.

## **2.7 The ‘Post-Washington Consensus’ and Human Development**

When it became increasingly clear that SAPs were not the expected panacea, there was a shift in development thinking - from the ‘Washington Consensus’ to the ‘post-Washington Consensus’ (Williamson, 2000). The shift has also benefited from an evolution of academic thought within

development economics. This highlights the shortcomings of blind faith in the market. For example, information asymmetry theory recognises that perfect information is not available to all market actors and identifies a number of market distorting factors (Stiglitz, 1989). New strands of thinking about the role of institutions in development were also noteworthy. In earlier formulations, institution-building referred to developing the capacity of the key government agencies involved in economic management and political organisations such as parties, legislatures and independent court systems. This was later extended to other formal institutions, for example those concerned with the definition and protection of property rights, the enforcement of contracts, the establishment and regulation of financial organisations etc. (Leftwich, 2005). The key insight, according to Toye (2003), was the acknowledgement that all transactions have a cost, and that all markets are organised on the basis of institutions, not only formal but also informal (Leftwich, 2005). However, associations, networks, customs, culture, etc. are all understood as the rational response to market imperfections, within economic theory that is still based on methodological individualism and utility maximisation (Fine, 2002). Fine is highly critical of 'economic imperialism' – the tendency of economics to 'asset-strip' the other social sciences in order to improve economics, noting that although the post-Washington consensus in development economics is "more temperate in its attitude toward the virtues of the market, [it] is otherwise more disturbing. For it not only seeks to set the analytical agenda as being confined to uncovering and addressing the incidence and consequences of market and nonmarket imperfections, it also claims that this exhausts the problem of development" (Fine, 2002, p. 2065).

Allied to the new emphasis on market imperfections is the 'bring the state back in' literature, which emphasises the fact that markets cannot work on their own - there is a need for some form of state intervention (Skocpol, 1985). This literature highlights some necessary functions of the state, such as provision of public goods; ensuring stability of the economic environment, of rules and individual expectations; and correction of market failure and information asymmetries. The concept of the 'regulating state', central to the post-Washington Consensus, has gradually inspired World Bank activities. This 'consensus' was accompanied by a shift to poverty (and, to some extent, inequality) reduction as a core mission of the international development community in the 1990s, a theme that has somewhat taken the place of 'development' as an objective. Consequently, at the end of the 1990s, the international community set itself the challenge of a renewed onslaught on poverty and related dimensions of human deprivation in the developing world, reflected in the UN Millennium Development Goals, declared in September 2000. This shift is also reflected in the support for poverty



reduction strategy papers (PRSPs), ostensibly prepared by countries themselves, and increased willingness to channel development support through governments.

PRSPs, which started as a pre-condition for debt relief by the IMF/World Bank under the Highly Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) initiative in 1999, have now become central to the provision of much development assistance. Indeed, most poor countries have already prepared PRSPs, not only to guide their poverty eradication efforts but also to act as overarching country-level policy documents to serve as a guiding framework for development assistance. The adoption of PRSPs resulted in the IMF's decision to change its framework for assisting low-income countries with concessional lending from the Emergency Structural Adjustment Facility (ESAF) to the Poverty Reduction and Growth Facility (PRGF). In a similar move, the World Bank has developed Poverty Reduction Support Credit (PRSC) to support PRSP implementation. PRSPs also provided a rationale for a new form of aid disbursement referred to as General Budget Support (GBS), marking a shift from linking overseas development assistance (ODA) to specific project activities to Budget Support whereby aid is channelled directly to partner governments using their own allocation, procurement and accounting systems. General budget support, as opposed to sector budget support (SWAPs or Sector Wide Assistance Programmes), is not earmarked for a particular sector or set of activities within the government budget, although this does not mean that the recipient country has a free hand on how to use the funds provided.

The so-called post-Washington consensus can be seen as essentially representing an incorporation of human development ideas into the neo-liberal approach. Human development is understood in much of the development studies literature as a process of enlarging people's choices, the most critical being those that lead to a long and healthy life, attaining education, and having access to the resources needed to enjoy a decent standard of living. Additional choices include political freedom, guaranteed human rights and self-respect. Human development has two sides: the formation of capabilities, such as improved health, knowledge and skills; and the use people make of their acquired capabilities – for leisure, productive purposes or being active in cultural, social and political affairs<sup>8</sup>. According to conceptions of human development, income is one option that people would like to have. However, although important, it is not the sum total of their lives. Development must, therefore, be

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<sup>8</sup> See Alkire (2002) for detailed discussion of the dimensions of human development.

more than just the expansion of income and wealth. GNP growth is regarded as necessary but not sufficient for human development.

The development studies literature is replete with terms that are used synonymously with human development, although subtle but important distinctions exist. They include: human capital formation, human resource development, human welfare and basic needs satisfaction. Theories of capital formation and human resource development view human beings primarily as means rather than as ends; they are concerned with human beings as instruments for furthering commodity production. Thus the concept of human capital formation (or human resource development) captures only one side of human development, not its whole. Human welfare approaches look at human beings more as the beneficiaries of the development process than as participants in it. They emphasise distributive policies rather than production structures. The basic needs approach usually concentrates on the bundle of goods and services that deprived population groups need: food, shelter, clothing, health care and water. It is said by critics to focus on the provision of these goods and services rather than on the issue of human choices (Alkire, 2002).

Because people do not isolate different aspects of their lives but rather have an overall sense of well-being<sup>9</sup>, measuring human development requires construction of a composite index. Human deprivation and development has many facets, so any index of human progress should incorporate a range of indicators to capture this complexity. The most widely used is the Human Development Index (HDI), which was developed by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and is central to its annual report, the Human Development Report. The HDI is a composite index derived from indices of three types of deprivation: life expectancy, literacy and the income needed for a decent living standard<sup>10</sup>. The ranking of countries according to the HDI is different from their ranking in terms of

<sup>9</sup> Given the lack of conceptual clarity surrounding the term 'well-being', its measurement is not unproblematic. As Gasper (2002) correctly points out, the term well-being remains ambiguous, being used to refer to whatever is assessed in an evaluation of a person's situation or 'being'. The literature distinguishes two forms of well-being: 'objective well-being' and 'subjective well-being', both of which can be individual or collective/social. As far as objective well-being is concerned, it is assumed that there are standard needs common to all individuals, and that these can be determined and measured by individuals (Kahn and Juster, 2001). A review by Felce and Perry (1995) identifies a number of indicators of objective well-being including housing, income, job, education and health. Subjective well-being, on the other hand, is defined as a broad category of phenomena that includes people's responses, domain satisfactions, and global judgements of life satisfaction (Gasper, 2004).

<sup>10</sup> The HDI is a composite index derived from life expectancy at birth; a literacy index derived from adult literacy – two thirds weight - and the combined gross enrolment ratio for primary, secondary and tertiary schools – one third weight (as a proxy for educational attainment, though admittedly it does not measure the quality of educational outcomes); and a decent standard of living as measured by GDP per capita in purchasing power parity US\$. Four other indices are also calculated: two human poverty indices and two gender-disaggregated indices (a gender-related development index and a gender empowerment measure) <http://hdr.undp.org/hdr2006/report.cfm> (accessed 4/01/07).

GNP per capita, demonstrating that well-being is influenced not only by income and wealth but also by the characteristics of economic growth and distributive policies.

Many development theorists, of whom arguably the greatest is Amartya Sen, argue that human development is incomplete without human freedom (Sen, 1999). Objecting to the utilitarianism espoused by those who equate development with the expansion of income, Sen argues that such a conception of development is insensitive to human difference and thus to the distinct needs and capabilities of individual human agents. To Sen, development is freedom and the development process consists of the removal of various types of '*unfreedoms*' that leave people with little choice and little opportunity to exercise their reasoned agency. The intrinsic importance of human freedom as the pre-eminent objective of development is strongly supplemented by the instrumental effectiveness of freedoms of particular kinds in promoting freedoms of other kinds. By insisting that development is defined as a process of expanding real freedoms, Sen is able to overcome the weaknesses that he detects in utilitarianism and libertarianism. He operationalises 'freedom' as individual capabilities to do things that a person has reason to value. Sen does not underplay either the instrumental role of freely functioning markets in facilitating economic growth or the intrinsic value of an individual's freedom to engage in voluntary exchange. However, he is very clear that market freedoms by themselves are far from sufficient. His work has resulted in the formulation of the capabilities approach to understanding poverty, which will be considered later in this paper.

### **3 Poverty: meanings, measurement and approaches**

Development discourse arguably derives its existence and legitimacy from the presence of poverty (however understood) and thus current poverty conceptions deserve a bit of space in this paper. As a consistent thread, poverty has constantly re-emerged as a 'new' preoccupation for development discourses, from the 'discovery' of poverty in 1948 in the first World Development Report which focused on Chile, to its reconfiguration in the 1960s and 1970s as a 'social' concern, and to its current renewed configuration as a principal theme of the UN MDGs. Below we summarise some of the major understandings of poverty that are discernible in the contemporary development studies literature.

While, invariably, all definitions of poverty associate the concept with a deficiency or lack of basic requirements for human survival and welfare, differences exist in how these basic survival/welfare needs are defined and identified. At a broader level, what seems to be the main distinguishing factor between different definitions of poverty relates to whether the definition is based on an external analyst's perspective (conventional approaches) or the perspective of the poor themselves (participatory approaches). Conventional approaches use an externally determined scale based on income or other social indicators as proxy or surrogate measures of poverty. It is on the basis of the selected measure that individuals and households are classified as either poor or not, depending on whether their assessment falls below or above a set threshold (the poverty line).

Participatory approaches, on the other hand, allow flexibility. They give greater importance to local perceptions of poverty and recognise its many dimensions, including the importance of non-material aspects of wellbeing. Using various methods, often of an anthropological nature, analysts involve the class of people being assessed in defining poverty. They attempt to draw up a scale of measurement that is locally determined and reflective of the local context.

#### **3.1 Conventional approaches**

Based on the nature of the wellbeing indicator adopted, conventional approaches can generally be divided into three categories: monetary, capabilities and social exclusion (see, for example, Laderchi et al, 2003). Below is a brief discussion of what each of these entails.

### 3.1.1 *The monetary approach (Poverty of money)*

Poverty is, perhaps, most commonly understood in terms of *poverty of money*. This essentially means the lack of a minimum amount of money - often perched at US\$1 a day - necessary to afford basic necessities and sustain human life (Wratten, 1995). The monetary approach, thus, defines poverty on the basis of whether a household can afford to purchase a basket of basic goods, typically food, clothing and shelter. The assessment is based on a household's income or its consumption measured against the market value of a basket of basic goods - the poverty line. Due to inherent problems associated with under-reporting, concealment or temporary fluctuations in income, the general preference is to measure poverty in terms of consumption (expenditure) as opposed to income.

Poverty is defined as a shortfall in income or consumption from the poverty line. At the national or sub-national level, the monetary approach can be used to estimate the poverty rate in order to determine the proportion of the population that falls below the poverty line. It can also be used to estimate the depth and severity of poverty (Hulme and McKay, 2005). Today, economists agree that economic growth in general reduces poverty and growth in average incomes raises the incomes of the poor, although the extent to which it does so varies greatly, reflecting diversity in initial conditions, especially the initial share of the poor in national income; institutions; policy choices; external shocks and so on. They also generally agree that higher income inequality at the outset reduces the extent to which growth will reduce poverty. However, views differ on whether economic growth is sufficient for poverty reduction and inequality impacts adversely on the rate of economic growth, partly because of data deficiencies and methodological problems (Sumner, 2003).

The main shortcomings of the monetary approach include:

- Its inability to capture many dimensions of poverty, such as the exposure to environmental and health hazards of the urban poor.
- Difficulties in estimating the value of constituent elements such as owner-occupied housing, home-grown food and access to common property resources.
- Problems with how to account for household size and composition.
- Problems with capturing the realities of many poor families who lack a legal address, such as street dwellers and slum residents (deriving primarily from the methodology applied to capture data for measurement). (Laderchi et al, 2003).

Despite the above weaknesses, monetary measures of poverty can provide a general picture of the patterns and trends in deprivation that is important in resource targeting. However, according to Sumner (2003), economists still lack ways of analysing the links between growth, inequality and multi-dimensional poverty; know little about the transmission mechanisms linking poverty, inequality and growth; and are uncertain about the policies and conditions under which economic growth has most and least successfully reduced poverty.

### **3.1.2 The capabilities approach (Poverty of access)**

The capabilities approach, pioneered by Amartya Sen (1981, 1985 and 1999), is based on the contention that poverty is determined not by the lack or deficiency of money income, but rather by the failure of individuals to realise their full human potential or live valued lives - manifest particularly as ill health and lack of education (see also Clark, 2006). This approach argues that rather than measuring income or consumption, poverty should be measured using indicators of the freedom to live a valued life. With such an approach, money is considered only as a means to enhance capabilities, as opposed to being the outcome of interest. This approach emphasizes *poverty of access* - implying the lack of or inadequate access to basic infrastructure and services, such as clean water, sanitation, education, electricity and health services.

The good case presented for the capabilities approach by Sen notwithstanding, the approach has a fundamental flaw: it provides very little guidance on what should constitute the minimally essential capabilities, apart from merely citing good nourishment and ability to avoid preventable morbidity. Martha Nussbaum has sought to rectify this by developing a 'thick' notion of human capabilities (Nussbaum, 2000). Drawing on Aristotle, she puts forward a long list of human functional capabilities including: life, bodily health, integrity, thought, emotions, practical reason, affiliation, play, concern for other species and control over the environment.

It would seem advisable to select the dimensions of human capability and the dividing line between the poor and the non-poor on the basis of the general standards in the country or city where poverty assessments are made. As discussed above, the UNDP's human development indices draw to some extent on the capabilities approach.

### **3.1.3 Social exclusion (*Poverty of power*):**

With its origins in the developed world, the concept of social exclusion was originally coined to describe processes of marginalisation and deprivation in poor inner city neighbourhoods. It originally applied to labour markets, and then was extended to other areas because it was realised that unemployment tended to be compounded by other types of deprivation. It is used to describe a process through which individuals or groups are, for reasons beyond their control, excluded from full participation in the activities of the society in which they live, despite their interest in participating. Social exclusion represents a form of deprivation - referred to as *poverty of power* - and is seen as a key determining factor of various facets of poverty, such as monetary poverty. It is a measure of the voicelessness and powerlessness of individuals and households, which, in turn, leads to little or no possibility of the poor receiving entitlements, organising themselves, making demands and getting a fair response, or receiving support for developing their own initiatives (Laderchi et al, 2003).

Application of the concept to the developing world faces a number of challenges, arising from difficulties associated with identifying appropriate norms to provide indicators of exclusion, as the majority of the population tend to be excluded from formal sector employment or social insurance coverage. Furthermore, social exclusion, based on various axes of social difference such as caste, ethnicity and gender, is part of the social system in some societies. Moreover, in most urban areas of the developing world, the majority of the population lives in slums, often on land acquired illegally. Owing to the illegality of their status, they are often excluded from:

- a) formal credit facilities, due to their lack of collateral and regular employment
- b) electoral processes, due to their lack of a legal address
- c) infrastructure services, because of illegal land occupation and often non-payment of property tax and
- d) most planning and decision-making activities.

## **3.2 Participatory approaches**

One of the main criticisms levelled against the conventional poverty approaches described above is that they are externally imposed and as such, do not incorporate the views of the poor. The participatory approach seeks to address this shortcoming by offering an opportunity to engage the poor themselves in deciding what they perceive as indicators of poverty (Wratten, 1995).

These approaches are part of the departure, in the last two decades, from the top-down planning approaches that had hitherto pervaded development practice. Participatory approaches arose out of widespread recognition of the importance of context, the subjectivity of poverty definitions and poor people's ability to understand and analyse their own reality. This approach recognises that drawing on the life experiences of people provides an opportunity to capture different dimensions of poverty. Evidence from a number of participatory poverty assessments reveals that, for poor people, the critical dimensions of poverty are:

- (a) food insufficiency and insecurity
- (b) unsatisfied basic needs, especially for clothing, water and sanitation
- (c) precarious livelihoods, which lead to shortages of money for necessities, including healthcare and education
- (d) lack of assets to provide a basis for secure livelihoods and a safety net against insecurity
- (e) powerlessness and lack of self respect
- (f) isolation, and
- (i) vulnerability to stress and shocks.

In contrast, the key dimensions of well-being that were identified in the World Bank's *Voices of the Poor* studies include not only basic needs satisfaction, reduced vulnerability and increased security, control over one's life, participation in society and political voice, but also "'harmony' with transcendent matters (which might include a spiritual life and religious observance)" (Alkire, 2006, p. 303).

Since the early 1990s, participatory approaches have become central to poverty alleviation programmes around the world (Wratten, 1995). It is argued that intervention programmes based on participatory poverty assessments have a greater chance of addressing the root causes of poverty and meeting people's perceived needs. Equally important is the ability of this approach to focus and target poor people's priorities. It challenges a dominant view of the poor as passive or irresponsible, as well as the assumption of experts that poor people are there to be planned for (Laderchi, 2006).

The approach's flexibility and consideration of local contexts is reflected in the variety of tools employed to identify and measure poverty, which includes participatory mapping, seasonal calendars, and wealth and well-being ranking. This approach contrasts with approaches discussed in the previous sub-section, where more rigid frameworks and methodologies are employed.



Participatory poverty assessments have brought to the fore two important concepts, vulnerability and entitlement, which significantly contribute to understanding poverty. While vulnerability is not synonymous with poverty, it represents some of the critical elements in the lives of the poor – defencelessness, insecurity and exposure to risk, shocks and stress. These elements are linked with assets, such as investment in health and education, productive assets, access to community infrastructure and social networks. An understanding of how people deplete household assets or resources to survive or cope in the face of shocks and stresses is useful in explaining how household/individual well-being can decline, even when there are improvements in labour market or production opportunities.

Entitlement, on the other hand, refers to the complex ways in which individuals or households command resources. The concept of entitlement is useful in explaining how poverty affects different people differently, even within the same household (see also May, 2006). Such disaggregation is central to the analysis of household survival strategies during periods of stress.

## 4 Alternative Development and Post-Development

### 4.1 Alternative development

Disillusionment with earlier economic policies, structural adjustment programmes and neo-liberal ideology has also led to the development of a plethora of poverty-oriented alternative development approaches. Sometimes locating themselves as enlightened descendants of the dependency or Keynesian schools, those claiming an alternative vision of development today can be environmentalists ('greens'), gender and development feminists<sup>11</sup>, socialists, postmodernists or advocates of religious economics. As Sylvester (1999) points out, what marks their views as 'alternative' is their approach to the 'agents, methods and objectives or values of development'. Their goal is to satisfy basic needs, which is seen as a return to the poverty emphasis that was swept aside by the dominant modernisation approach. Alternative approaches also seek to endogenise the development process by encouraging self-reliance through community participation, often with the help of non-governmental organisations. Indeed, some of these approaches have advocated the development of civil society organisations to take the place of the ineffective state and distorted market. Pieterse is sceptical about claims that alternative development presents clear alternatives to mainstream development thinking, practice and history. He and others argue that perhaps the "big hiatus no longer runs between mainstream and alternative development, but between human development and structural adjustment" (Sylvester, 1999, p. 709).

### 4.2 Post-development

The emergence of what can be broadly referred to as postmodernism was arguably one of the most significant developments in social science in the 1980s,

"as part of the ferment that included post-structuralist rejection of meta-theories and grand narratives; critical social theory; concern with the deconstruction of ideology and official discourses; a growing cynicism about established orders and vested power; ... and, partly as a result, the so-called 'cultural turn' in terms of which renewed attention has been paid to the explanatory value of cultural factors, rather than the political and economic" (Simon, 2002, p. 122).

Until the 1990s, and as reflected in many development studies texts published in that decade, development studies was one of the few social science disciplines that seemed to have maintained a modernist approach, not least because many of the poor in developing countries have not yet

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<sup>11</sup> For a discussion of various gender-related approaches see Visvanathan et al. (1997).

achieved modernity and the expressions of postmodernism in the North as “playful, leisured heterodoxes and new forms of consumption centred on individualism which can best be described as self-indulgence by the well-off” seem irrelevant (Simon, 2002, p. 123). In arguing that these criticisms are misplaced, Simon distinguishes between conceptions of the postmodern that refer to the chronological period that succeeds modernism (characterised, for example, by flexible production and small group or individual tourism), a form of expression in the creative disciplines and an intellectual practice, where it

“..supposedly represents fundamentally different ways of seeing, knowing and representing the world. The modern approach, rooted in Enlightenment thinking about rationality, is concerned with a search for universal truths, linked to positivist scientific methodology and neo-classical economics. Proponents of different theories held them to be superior to all their competitors, to have global relevance even if based on limited empirical evidence from specific contexts, and ultimately to represent *the* truth. Hence, for example, debates between modernisation theorists and adherents of *dependencia* and other neo-Marxist variants, were often ideologically driven contests for supremacy against a background of Cold War geopolitics.... In theory, at least, postmodern practice rejects such singular explanations in favour of multiple, divergent and overlapping interpretations and views....different accounts are all accorded legitimacy.” (Simon, 2002, p. 124-5).

As discussed in preceding sections, while different analysts and schools of thought disagreed over the best route to development, there seemed to be general agreement that it was the right destination for which to aim. The last 15 years or so have, however, seen a proliferation of literature contesting the content and desirability of development, many of which can be grouped under the rubric of post-development or post-structuralist critiques. Partly because of the widening gap between rich and poor countries, the growing awareness of the negative effects of economic development on the environment and the fact that the end of real-existing socialism removed socialist-inspired development trajectories from academic and political agendas, the 1980s saw growing pessimism with respect to ‘development’ (Sachs, 1992). Even for those who still thought development was desirable, there was an argument that attaining a middle-class lifestyle for the majority of the world population is either impossible or environmentally unsustainable (Dasgupta, 1985). Others expressed fear of the unintended consequences of technological progress, prompting the German sociologist Ulrich Beck to introduce the term ‘*risk society*’ to describe a generalised feeling of pessimism, the feeling that it is useless to look ahead, to plan, because of the increasing influence of the unintended consequences of technological growth (Schuurman, 2000).

Like much post-colonial literature, the more left-inclined post-development writers dismiss 'development' in all its manifestations, arguing that it is a direct continuation of the colonial project; a cultural westernisation and homogenisation endeavour (Sachs, 1992). Post-development theorists maintain that the goal of development is intimately linked to modernisation, which for them entails the extension of control by the Western world and its nationalist allies in developing countries (Latouche, 1996). To this end, development projects are said to have as their principal aim the incorporation of previously autonomous communities within the networks of power of the nation-state, in order to consolidate the power of modernising elites. Any improvements in living standards that follow from these projects are incidental results of the principal goal of building hegemony (Nustad, 2001). It is further contended that development severs indigenous peoples from their cultural roots and exposes them as helpless victims of a global, exploitative capitalism that, through manipulation in the media, urges them to consume the wrong things for the wrong reasons with money they do not have. Yet others have suggested that development was a creation of the US aimed at halting the spread of communism (Pieterse, 1991).

Post-development thought began as a series of discrete innovations emerging from varied intellectual traditions, but arguably some of the key works could be considered to be Wolfgang Sachs' *The Development Dictionary* (1992) and Arturo Escobar's *Encountering Development: The Making and Unmaking of the Third World* (1995). Inspired by Foucault, post-development scholars suggest that development is a discourse that orders and creates the problem that it seeks to address (Escobar, 1995). To them, poverty cannot be equated with material poverty, as subsistence economies which serve basic needs through self-provisioning are not poor in the sense of being deprived (Andreasson, 2005). Yet the ideology of development declares such economies poor because they do not participate primarily in the market economy, and do not consume commodities provided and distributed through the market. Simon (2002) notes that post-development discourses have features in common with both earlier basic needs, participatory and grassroots development approaches, and postcolonialism, which also emerged as part of postmodernism and is concerned with the cultural politics and identities of previously subordinated groups. Postcolonial analyses attempt to challenge the dominant discourses of imperial Europe, western control of knowledge, and terms such as 'progress' and 'modernity', as well as to recover the lost voices of the colonised and marginalised. The best analyses draw on both political economy and the Marxist tradition and the cultural and linguistic analyses of post-structuralism to analyse "the apparatuses of power and domination within which [the] texts [of

development] are produced, circulated and consumed ... [and] the links between the words, practices and institutions of development, and between the relations of power that order the world and the words and images that represent the world” (McEwan, 2002, p. 129). Critics accuse postcolonial analysis of preoccupation with the past and failure to say much about or influence the way forward, an overly theoretical approach, and over-emphasis on discourse at the expense of material concerns, while supporters emphasise its ability to “loosen the power of Western knowledge ...reassert the value of alternative experiences and ways of knowing” (McEwan, 2002, p. 130) and assert the potential for agency on the part of dominated groups.

Critics of post-development complain that post-development authors focus on discourse while neglecting poverty and capitalism, which are the real problems of development; critique an over-generalised view of development, ignoring the enormous variations in practice; take an extreme relativist position that makes it impossible to agree on any collective action; romanticise local traditions and social movements while neglecting the power relations and inequalities they reflect, thus being socially conservative; and deliberately overlook the evident fruits of development over the last couple of generations (Simon, 2002; Rapley, 2004; Escobar, 2006). Indeed, as Sylvester (1999) points out, the key challenge for post-development thinkers is to transcend mere resistance and propose alternative development models that are practical and realistic. Post-development thinkers respond that modernity and capitalism are simultaneously systems of discourse and practice, their aim is to understand development as discourse and not to examine variety in its outcomes, and that realist analyses fail to unpack their own views of concepts such as ‘livelihood’ or ‘needs’ (Escobar, 2006). It can, they assert, be a fruitful approach for deconstructing dominant conceptions and approaches to development, addressing local diversity and the agendas of groups from the South, and empowering poor people (Simon, 2002).

## 5 Religion and development

As Alkire (2006) notes, the literature on religion and development is sparse, diverse and unconsolidated. Remarkably little reference is made to religion in the mainstream development studies literature, although it sometimes appears in the modernisation literature as an aspect of culture. In 1980, Goulet lamented the neglect of religion by development writers and practitioners, even though “Most persons in developing countries still find in religious beliefs, symbols, practices and mysteries their primary source of meaning (Goulet, 1980, p. 482). Despite the “growing chorus of voices, in rich and poor countries alike, [who] proclaim that full human development is not possible without regard for essential religious values” that he detected (p. 488), little more attention was given to religion in the development debate in the subsequent twenty years than in the previous two decades. A variety of reasons may be suggested including the dominance of development and policies by neo-classical economics, with its assumptions about rational individualistic utility maximising economic behaviour; the dominance of the ‘aid business’ by western educated social scientists who tend to take the religious and cultural underpinnings of their development thinking for granted; and the reluctance of secular development cooperation agencies to cooperate with religious organisations lest they be accused of supporting one over another (or even proselytising).

Because much of the literature relating to religion/faith and development has been reviewed<sup>12</sup> in the disciplinary review papers, the key areas will only be briefly highlighted here.

1. Perhaps the earliest and most enduring link between religion and development is postulated in Max Weber’s famous theory of the Protestant ethic and the spirit of capitalism. Weber sought to explain economic development in Northern Europe in terms of individual attributes associated with the protestant religion – a concern with savings, entrepreneurial activity, the frugality which Puritanism demanded, and literacy to read the scriptures. The essence of Weber’s thesis was that nascent capitalism emerged in the 16<sup>th</sup> century in Europe on account of the Protestant ethic, which arose from the Reformation and which highlighted cultural norms. Ascetic Protestantism encouraged diligence, discipline, self-denial, thrift, capital accumulation and other economic activity due to the influence of Lutheran and Calvinist doctrines on robustly undertaking one’s calling. Temporal success in one’s calling was considered a duty - even a religious obligation – that conferred spiritual grace. This obligation, Weber argued, provided the impetus for savings, entrepreneurial activity and investment, which in turn

<sup>12</sup> See particularly Tomalin (2006a) and Jackson and Fleischer (2007).

fostered economic development (Iyer, forthcoming). Weber's thesis seems to be at odds with one of the key ideas about societal development after World War II, which was that nations would inevitably secularise as they developed (modernised). The idea of modernisation was strongly linked to urbanisation, industrialisation and an accompanying rationalisation of supposedly 'irrational' views, such as religious beliefs (e.g. belief in otherworldly or supernatural elements that, it was considered might foster fatalism, thus hindering the entrepreneurial spirit) and ethnic separatism. Loss of faith and secularisation dovetailed with the idea that technological development and the application of science to overcome the perennial social problems of poverty, hunger and disease would result in long-term human progress. However, with the decline in the belief in the efficacy of technological development to cure all human ills, it is suggested, has come a wave of popular religiosity, which also has significant political ramifications.

2. Recent academic interest linking religion and development has also centred on the economics of religion. Studies in this area can be categorised into three groups: first, those that have focused on links between religion and economic theory; second, those that have focused on policy, such as debates about faith-based welfare programmes, and the economic regulation of the church; and thirdly, those that have examined empirically the influence of religion on economic behaviour (Jackson and Fleischer, 2007).
  
3. A major theme in the economic analysis of religion has been the concept of religion as social capital, contributing to the building of networks among people (Candland, 2000). Three aspects are emphasised: social networks, social norms, and sanctions to penalise deviations from norms. Corresponding to this, economists of religion have examined spiritual or religious capital, which is said to embody the norms, networks and sanctions exercised by groups that are organised on the basis of religion and religious networks. There are a number of ways through which religious capital might affect economic growth. It may affect output through changing the manner in which technology and human capital is used. It may also exert a positive impact on human capital by increasing educational levels. Furthermore, greater trust fostered by religion encourages repeated interactions which can lead to more cooperative behaviour within a single network (Iyer, forthcoming).

4. A religion-development nexus may also be implied in the human rights approach to development<sup>13</sup>. Haussermann (1998) argues that what is distinctive about such an approach is that it works by setting out a vision of what ought to be, providing a normative framework to orient development policy and cooperation. In doing so, she suggests, it brings an ethical and moral dimension to development assistance. However, whether the moral justifications for poverty reduction and development intervention can be attributed to any particular religious faith is a matter of debate<sup>14</sup>. The Millennium Development Declaration (MDD) expresses a global commitment to development in a way that seems to draw heavily on ethics, although these do not necessarily have a religious basis. It identifies a series of fundamental values: freedom, equality, solidarity, tolerance, respect for nature and shared responsibility. Indeed, the UN MDGs and the Commission for Africa's work both espouse the moral obligations of the rich countries to the poor around the world.
5. Development thinking within religious organisations has sometimes advanced alternative views on the purpose and means of achieving development and wellbeing from dominant development theoretical and policy perspectives, for example Islamic economics, liberation theology and other Roman Catholic social teachings, or the Sarvodaya Movement in Sri Lanka.

Typically, modernisation theory considered religion to be one aspect of the culture of 'traditional' societies. It was expected to decline with secularisation and modernisation, and indeed, where it, along with other 'traditional' values and behaviour patterns, was considered an obstacle to modernisation, this was considered desirable. Today, there is greater recognition that aspects of religion can complement and motivate development as well as obstructing or undermining it, religion is resurgent rather than in decline, faith-based organisations play important service delivery and welfare roles and religious motivations underlie many social movements (Alkire, 2006).

The emergence of post-development analyses and the 'new institutional economics' may be leading to a greater willingness in the mainstream development debates to consider not only cultural factors in general but also religious issues more specifically. Although Kiely (1999) is dismissive of post-development approaches, Simon (2002) and Escobar (2006) believe that moderate postmodern approaches to analysis can lead to new understanding of how development works and a different

<sup>13</sup> See Cornwall and Nyamu-Musembi (2004) for a critical discussion of this approach.

<sup>14</sup> See also Tomalin (2006b)



agenda from the official agencies because it gives legitimacy to different social groups and their voices. Leftwich (2005) accuses most economists of failing to analyse the determinants of the shape and outcomes of institutions themselves. However, Fine concludes that “If the analysis [is] truly social in the sense of the systemic distinct from aggregating over individuals, then mainstream economics has very little, if not nothing to offer. For it is silent over the social relations, structures, power, conflicts and meanings that have traditionally been the preoccupations of the social sciences” (Fine, 2002, p. 2066). Both argue for a return not only to political economy but also for analysis of cultural and ideological phenomena, such as ideas, norms, values and cultural practices, in order to understand the ideas, interests and practices that shape institutions: “This rediscovery of institutions, and also, slowly and crucially, of politics as the prime determinant of their shape, returns the study of development to where it should always have been: at the intersection of social, economic and political relations” (Leftwich, 2005, p. 595). Thus Preston (1999) advocates the use of the full repertoire of political-economic, social-institutional and culture-critical analysis that constitutes the classical European tradition of social theorising and that is oriented to analysing the dynamics of complex change in development studies.

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