

**THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF UNDERDEVELOPMENT: THEORIES, HISTORY OF UNITED NATION'S EFFORTS ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLICATIONS FOR TRADE UNIONISM**

Moses Adesola Adebisi

Department of Sociology, Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Ilorin, Ilorin, Kwara State, Nigeria

**ABSTRACT**

This paper examines the key role of The United Nations in reducing underdevelopment especially in developing countries through various programmes and policies channeled through some of its various agencies in concert with its major development partners. It adopts both theoretical and historical approaches, identifying the root causes of underdevelopment on the one hand, and examining theoretical approaches that try to provide explanations for these causes of underdevelopment, on the other. The paper also attempts a critical analysis of the *Millennium Development Goals* (MDGs) and the *Sustainable Development Goals* (SDGs) as development media established by the United Nations to address the problems of underdevelopment in the world. Sustainable development and sustainability are two key objectives of the United Nations as far as bringing about economic development without compromising environmental stability and sustainability. How can this be achieved? Finally, it tries to explore the possible leeway for dealing with some of the social, cultural, political, governance and technological obstacles that militate against the attainment of these lofty and ambitious objectives of the United Nations.

**Keywords:** Political Economy, Development, Underdevelopment, Sustainability, Sustainable Society, Millennium Development Goals, Sustainable Development Goals.

## INTRODUCTION

Several development theories have been constructed in an attempt to provide some explanatory and analytical tools for the state of development and underdevelopment in different parts the world. The developing world represents the focal point of attention given its dire need for development. The state of underdevelopment in the Third World Countries, especially in Africa, cannot be explained in isolation of some historical events: the trans-Atlantic Slave Trade, Colonialism, Neo-colonialism, Imperialism and Globalization.

These events had had devastating effects on the socio-economic and political development of the region. Some four hundred years of slavery and economic pillage of the resources of the third world, especially Africa, which culminated in formal imperial and colonial control devastated the continent of Africa and relegated it to the lowest rung of the global development ladder, as statistics of the *Human Development Index* (HDI) have shown over the years. A number of theoretical perspectives had attempted some explanations on the causes and effects of underdevelopment on the region as well the role being played by the United Nations to mitigate

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the scourge of underdevelopment through the mobilization of global efforts and resources on its platform for the reduction of poverty, inequality, hunger, diseases and general backwardness. The *Millennium Development Goals* (MDGs) and *Sustainable Development Goals* (SDGs) are cardinal development programmes of the UN specifically designed to address the problem of underdevelopment in the third world. The success of the MDGs which ended in 2015 and succeeded by the SDGs and its potentials or chances of achieving its stated goals by 2030 are examined in this paper on the basis of some development theories which provided the analytical tools for understanding the history, character and challenges of development and underdevelopment in Africa and the third world in general.

### **What is Political Economy?**

From the extant literature, there is no single definition of the term 'political economy' but there is common agreement that its definition revolves around "analysis that studies the linkages between politics and economics".

([http://siteresources.worldbank.org/EXTSOCIALDEV/Resources/PEPR\\_Chapter2\\_Dimensions\\_of\\_Political\\_Economy.pdf](http://siteresources.worldbank.org/EXTSOCIALDEV/Resources/PEPR_Chapter2_Dimensions_of_Political_Economy.pdf), retrieved 19/03/2016). The site traces the origin of this term to the seminar works of Adam Smith (*The Wealth of Nations*), David Richardo's *Principles of Economics* and Karl Marx's *Das Kapita* where political economy is regarded as "the conditions of production organization in nation-states".

In *The Theory of Political Economy*, Jevons (1963) states that "The science of political economy rests upon a few notions of an apparent character. Utility, wealth, value, commodity, labour, land, capital, are the elements of the subject; and whosoever has a thorough comprehension of their nature must possess or be soon able to acquire a knowledge of the whole science".(ibid.).

Another source of definition is that presented by Frederick Engels, life-long friend and intellectual companion of Karl Marx. In *Anti-Duhring* (1976:186), Engels presented what can be regarded as a scientific definition of political economy thus: “the science of the laws governing the production and exchange of the material means of subsistence in human society”. This definition leads Engels to further clarify the scientific difference between *production* and *exchange* (italics mine):

Production and exchange are two different functions. Production may occur without exchange, but exchange – by the very fact that it is only an exchange of product – cannot occur without production. Each of these two social functions is subject to the influence of what are a large part special external factors, and consequently each has what are also a large part its own special laws. But on the other hand, they constantly determine and influence each other to such an extent that they might be termed the abscissa and the ordinate of the economic curve.

The conditions under which men produce and exchange vary from country to country, and within each country again from generation to generation. Political economy, therefore, cannot be the same for all countries and for all historical epochs.

This clarification between production and exchange led Engels to define political economy contextually in terms of its objectives and the legal basis of productive activities and exchange:

Political economy is therefore essentially a historical science. It deals with material which is historical, that is constantly changing; it first investigates the special laws of each individual stage in the development of production and exchange, and only when it has completed this investigation will it be able to establish the few quite general laws which hold good for production and exchange in all cases.

From the above, it might be save to infer a working definition of political economy here as the science of production and distribution achieved on the basis of the interplay between political and economic policies, ideologies, institutions and the laws which govern all production and exchange transactions. Therefore, development depends largely on the type of outcomes produced by the linkages between the economics and politics of production and exchange in a country.

#### **DEVELOPMENT AND UNDERDEVELOPMENT: Background analysis and the Origin of Theorizing.**

Development and underdevelopment are twin concepts that must be explained together because of the natural bonds that connect them. Historical evidence has shown that development processes in one region of the world are connected with the state of underdevelopment in the other regions of the world. While slave trade, colonialism, neo-colonialism, and globalization had increased prosperity, happiness and development in the western countries, the reverse has been the case in the developing

world as the level of poverty, hunger, misery, diseases and backwardness has increased. While development may be seen as a positive process of growth, underdevelopment is not necessarily the absence of growth or development, but rather it represents growth in the opposite or negative direction, like Lenin's *one step forward and two steps backward* hypothetical analysis of the economic impact of western capitalism on the poorest nations of the world.

#### THE UNITED NATIONS AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT: *Sustainability and Sustainable Development*.

The role of the *United Nations* in promoting sustainable development over the years is noteworthy over the years, given its records of developmental narratives, political sloganeering and propaganda. Since its founding in 1945, after the Second World War, it has promoted a number of programmes in the area of equality for all citizens, increased water supply, promotion of health for all, education for the underprivileged and above bringing about economic development and environmental stability on a global scale.

What is *Sustainable Development*? A number of definitions of what constitutes sustainable development abound in the literature but it is better to rely on the official definition provided in the Brundtland Report entitled *Our Common Future*:

''Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. It contains within it two key concepts: (i) the concept of needs, in particular the essential needs of the world's poor, to which overriding priority should be given; and (ii) the idea of limitations imposed by the state of technology and social organization on the environment's ability to meet present and future needs''[Bluntland Commission report, *Our Common Future*, 1987]. The key objective of sustainable development is the desire to strike a balance between economic development on the one hand, and environmental sustainability on the other. Hence, sustainable development 'provides a framework for the integration of environment policies and development strategies (United Nations General Assembly, 1987'[ cf: Emas, 2015].

Meanwhile, sustainability on the other hand, is defined as ''the study of how natural systems function, remain diverse and produce everything it needs for the ecology to remain in balance. It also acknowledges that human civilization takes resources to sustain our modern way of life''([www.environmentalscience.org](http://www.environmentalscience.org): retrieved 29/12/2016). Therefore, developmental policies and programmes that cannot bring about sustainability cannot lead to sustainable society. These twin concepts of sustainable development and sustainability must 'tango' together to make society sustainable. This why a sustainable society has been defined as ''one that can persist over generations, one that is far-seeing enough, flexible enough, and wise enough not to undermine either its physical or its social systems of support''(Meadows, D. H.; Meadows, D. L.; Randers, I., 1992)

Karl Polanyi and Joseph Schumpeter presented an economic and historical approach which laid the foundations for further global theories of development and underdevelopment.

#### **KARL POLANYI: 'Double Movement', 'The Great Transformation' and the concept of 'Embedded Economy'**.

Karl Polanyi's contributions to political economy are contained in a number of publications, but the *Double movement*, *The Great Transformation* and *Embedded Economy* stand out. According to Appelrouth and Edles (2008:800), ''The Great Transformation (1944)...now a classic study of the emergence of the contemporary market economy in the nineteenth century

and its connection to the development of the modern nation-state... details the role that governments played in supporting the economic interests of the rising bourgeoisie". In analyzing this work further, Dale (2010) states that Polanyi's main thesis was that:

“the Great War was seeded in the very institution that brought apparent economic success and stability to previous century – notably, an economic system founded upon an interconnected liberal markets (“exchange”) as the dominant, indeed primary, economic institution. And to facilitate the operation and integration of this market system with everyday life, the “fictitious” commodification of land, labour and money became a pre-condition for the expansion of the market economy. But creating this “fiction” out of labour, land and money was not only morally wrong but undermined the very basis of the market model, according to Polanyi, because it comes at a cost. It critically dislocates – “disembeds” – economy from society, a tendency to which social interests will eventually respond by (re)introducing social welfare policy instruments and market regulation, in a protective social impulse and response that Polanyi termed the “double movement”.

Quite obviously here the summation of Karl Polanyi on the fact that capitalism or market economy is characterized by what he calls “double movement” confirms Marx's thesis that the capitalist system was an inherently contradictory one that contains the seeds of its own destruction. Any economic or political system that cannot guarantee equality and bring happiness to the vast majority of the people in a country is obviously doomed. Therefore, pax Americana was rejected by Polanyi (Hettne, 2004) because “...since the market project he associated with US hegemony, like other universalisms which had been tried and which had failed, constituted the greater danger – a utopian project – to worry about. The fear of American hegemonic control of the world, especially the global economy, seems to be the main concern of less powerful nations around the world. This according to Hettne, led Polanyi (1945: 87) to suggest “a more planned, horizontal world order with ‘regional systems coexisting side by side’ (cf: Hettne, 2004). Such regional systems like the EU, BRICS, ECOWAS, SADC and so on should be able exercise some economic and political sovereignties at regional levels in the new world order. Such regional economic and political groupings should exercise needed powers over their regional interests in concert with state interventions at the local, country by country levels. Neo-liberal world economic system must incorporate regional autonomy in economic and political policies in other to avoid unwanted political interventions. As Hettne (2004) argues, globalization, which he sees as further deepening and expanding the market system, could have the undesirable effect of disrupting traditional societies, causing ‘social disturbances’ and ‘provoking various kinds of political interventionism’ (ibid.,2004). Stating that although globalization is not new but rather a long standing historical process, citing Hettne (1997, 2000), he sees globalism as “the current hegemonic development paradigm”...that...”implies as its ideological core the uninhibited growth of a world market. Since this process is seen as synonymous to increased economic efficiency and a higher ‘world product’, ideological globalists consider ‘too much government’ as a systemic fault” (Hettne, ibid. 2004). But this prescription of so-called ‘good governance’, which implies minimum governmental involvement in the market system is more of a ruse than reality as there is no economic system

anywhere in the world without state intervention in one form or the other. The global market system is made up of unequal members and rules which favour the big players at the expense of the small ones. This is due to the fact that globalization had created big producers and corporations that often take advantage of large scale production over the small producers. Therefore, the politics of the market as dictated by the authors of the so-called new world order created by the hegemonic power centres of America and Europe is designed to favour these big partners. The infiltration, pillage and disarticulation of the economic resources of the developing countries had already become a *fait accompli*.

## **JOSEPH SCHUMPETER AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP**

Like KARL Polanyi, Schumpeter provided a lucid analysis of economic development by glorifying the virtues of capitalism especially highlighting the key role played by the individual entrepreneur in the growth and expansion of the capitalist system. According to Appelrouth and Edles (2008:799), Schumpeter “championed the individual entrepreneur as the source of great innovations that not only advanced capitalism as a system of production and economic organization, but also improved the living standards of the general population”. Schumpeter, like Marx, they say, believe that the failure of capitalism is embedded in its very success, but unlike Marx, “Schumpeter saw capitalism imploding on itself because of moments of ‘creative destruction’ in which the constant, beneficial innovations sparked by the entrepreneurial spirit would in time lead to the rise of monopolies that are better able to withstand the costs associated with ‘progress’ “. The process according to Schumpeter will usher into the economic arena, i.e. the market, monopolies and the big corporations with the needed wherewithal to absolve the rising costs and risks necessitated by the need to replace outdated technologies, products and skills by new innovations (Appelrouth and Edles, *ibid.*). What then becomes of the entrepreneur? Listen to Schumpeter as quoted by these authors:

The slow extinction of the entrepreneur produces a workforce increasingly uncertain about its prospects for employment. Coupled with the intellectual class’s growing protests against the social inequities stemming from capitalist production, the stage becomes set for the emergence of socialism.

The *Schumpeterian* conclusion here tallies with Karl Marx’s prediction of the eventual demise of capitalism and the birth of socialism.

### **Summary of Schumpeter’s contributions**

- I. Innovation is the critical catalyst for change
- II. Entrepreneur-spirit as the driving force of capitalist development
- III. That economic change revolves around innovation, entrepreneurial activities and the power of the market
- IV. That technological innovation creates monopolies and corporatism
- V. That increasing workers’ self-management, industrial democracy and regulatory institutions would evolve non-politically into liberal capitalism”
- VI. Capitalism will be weakened by itself and eventually collapse

- VII. That unemployment and lack of fulfilling work will give rise to intellectual critique, discontent and protests
- VIII. That the success of capitalism would create corporatism and create values that are inimical and hostile to capitalism
- IX. That the intellectual and social climate that are needed for entrepreneurship to thrive will be destroyed and replaced by “laborism”
- X. That entrepreneurial innovations would bring about what he calls “creative destruction”

**THE DEPENDENCY THEORIES: Andre Gunder Frank and the *Development of Underdevelopment*.**

The problem of underdevelopment has generated a lot of debate and theoretical activities over the years. The inspiration for the search for explanatory theoretical schema came from the widespread cases of underdevelopment with high levels of poverty, diseases, unemployment and inequality to mention but a few. Frank (1966) states that to understand the concept of underdevelopment, one need to know the historical process that gave rise to such conditions. In his article ‘The Development of Underdevelopment’ (1966), Andre Gunder Frank opines that:

We cannot hope to formulate adequate development theory and policy for majority of the world’s population who suffer from underdevelopment without first learning how their past economic and social history gave rise to their present underdevelopment. Yet most historians study only the developed metropolitan countries and pay scant attention to the colonial and underdeveloped lands. For this reason most of our theoretical categories and guides to development policy have been distilled exclusively from the historical experience of the European and North American advanced capitalist nations.

The concern of Frank here is to show that the status of underdevelopment in the third world is related to its historical relationship with the first world, i.e., the developed countries. The relationship can be seen in the following forms: slave trade, colonialism, neo-colonialism and other forms of imperial control of the third world by the developed world. Frank therefore presented a historical account or analysis of the process of the development of underdevelopment especially in Latin America.

Also from the *Development of Underdevelopment* he writes that ‘The now developed countries were never *underdeveloped*, though they may have been *undeveloped*... Contemporary underdevelopment is in large part the historical product of past and continuing economic and other relations between the satellite underdeveloped and the now developed metropolitan countries’ (Frank, 1966: 18, cf: Kay, 2005: 1180). Through this dependency structure the core nations maintain a relation of ‘unequal exchange’, thereby making the peripheral nations to contribute to the development of other countries at their own expense. From this Frank formulated some hypothesis of development as presented by Reyes (2001):

1. That development of third world nations necessitates their subordination to the core;
2. That the level of development in the peripheral nations of the third world was at its peak when its contact or ties to the core was weakest, and vice versa;

3. That the recovery of the core from its economic crisis enables it to reestablish investment ties with the periphery; it therefore completes the full incorporation of the periphery, thereby stifling industrialization process.

Furthermore, one might also add the fact, based on Frank's writings, that the core nations established and maintained a relation of 'unequal exchange with the peripheral nations of Latin America and Africa. This helps it to pillage and disarticulate the economic resources of the third world nations it has successfully incorporated. Other members of the dependency school of thought are Paul Baran, Paul Sweezy, Samir Amin, Theotonio Dos Santos and Enrique Cardoso, amongst others.

### **MODERNIZATION THEORY AND UNDERDEVELOPMENT OF THE THIRD WORLD.**

A number of epochal historical events have been identified as facilitating the rise of the modernization school or theory. According to So (1991: 17-23; cf: Reyes, 2001), three main historical elements or events gave rise to the modernization school of thought:

1. The rise of the United States as a superpower; especially after World War II during which it used atomic bombs to force Japan to surrender and by implication brought an end to the war;
2. Rise of communist Russia and the spread of communism, especially to Eastern Europe, China and the Korean peninsula;
3. The disintegration of European colonial empires in Africa, Asia and Latin America.

The main thrust of argument or theoretical proposition of the modernization school of thought is that some countries are underdeveloped because of the socio-psychological processes which determine socialization, personality and development. In order to develop therefore, the third world countries must literally jettison their negative socialization and other cultural practices and embrace the western model of development.

What they recommend are:

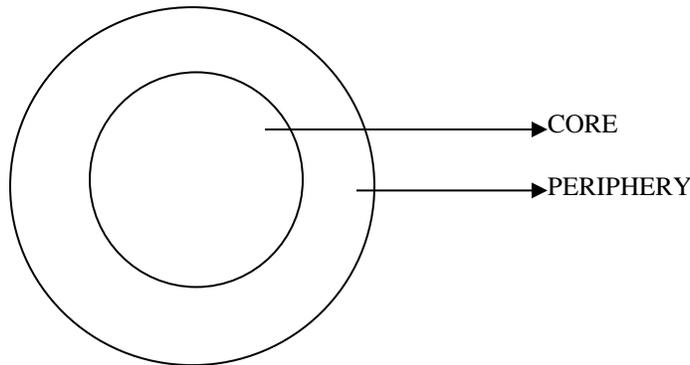
- ❖ Transfer of technology from the West to the third world
- ❖ Liberalization of the economy – marketization of the economy and leaving the commanding heights of the economy in private hands; encouraging foreign investments, etc.
- ❖ Copying of western cultural practices.

Some of the key figures of modernization theory are

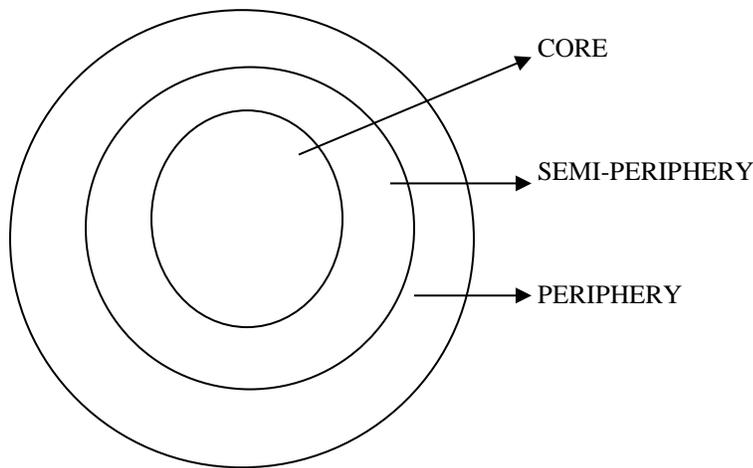
- W.W. Rostow: *The Stages of Economic Growth*
- Talcott Parsons: *The Pattern Variables*
- Pareek Udai: Psycho-Dynamic School
- David McClelland: *N-arch Theory*

**IMMANUEL WALLERSTEIN AND *THE WORLD SYSTEMS THEORY*.**

Wallerstein’s publication of *The Rise and Future Demise of the World Capitalist System: Concepts for Comparative Analysis* (1974) and *The Modern World System I: Capitalist Agriculture and the Origins of the European World-Economy in the Sixteenth Century* (1976) represented his *magnum opus*. In these works and several others, Wallerstein refined the dependency’s scope of analysis beyond the *centre-periphery* schema as two tier relationship model.



**The two-tier model of ANDRE GUNDER FRANK [centre-periphery relation].**



**The Three-tier model of Immanuel Wallerstein [core, semi-periphery and periphery relations].**

Wallerstein’s refinement of Frank’s two tier model of dependency gave birth to the three tier model with the introduction of the semi-periphery as median zonal structure of *exploiters and exploited nations* [italics mine]. Some structural elements of Wallerstein’s World Systems Theory have been identified:

1. Exploitation of the periphery carried out by a world capitalist profit-seeking system;
2. That the modern world system has a three-tier structure:

- i. The core or developed nations
  - ii. The semi-periphery
  - iii. The periphery.
3. Wallerstein's three-tier model is dynamic, relative to Frank's two-tier model;
  4. World Systems Theory of Wallerstein shares some similarities with Frank's dependency theory.
    - i. Both theories show how the core and the semi-periphery appropriate the surplus value of the peripheral countries of Africa, Asia and Latin America.
    - ii. The two theories also identified slavery, colonialism and neo-colonialism as the origins of exploitation of the peripheral states.

### **UNDERDEVELOPMENT, GLOBALIZATION AND TRADE UNION MOVEMENTS**

The following factors are responsible for the dwindling powers of trade unions in Nigeria and globally especially in the developing countries

- 1 Globalization
- 2 Corruption within the movement and inducements from politicians and governmental figures.
- 3 Generally weak economy and poor revenue base due to the excessive reliance on oil revenues.
- 4 The civil service remains the largest employers of labour in Nigeria. So employment and appointments are prone to political, ethnic, cultural and geopolitical interference
- 5 An emergent problem of unions now in the country is the rivalry and virulent competition amongst them for parity in salaries and allowances. This is due to the fact that the Nigerian workplace is heavily over-unionized.
- 6 Finally, the heavy cost of governance has eaten deeply into public revenues and little is left for public expenditures especially salaries and allowances, infrastructure and even security expenditures. The American-styled presidential system of government is, rather too expensive a project for Africa or as practiced in Nigeria. It is good for democracy and development but highly prone to corruption in Africa.

### **7 SOME NOTABLE EFFECTS OF MODERN WORLD SYSTEM ON LABOUR AND LABOUR MOVEMENTS WORLD-WIDE**

- a) De-skilling of labour
- b) Proletarianisation of workers
- c) Commoditization of workers
- d) Global exploitation of workers
- e) Mass unemployment
- f) Lack of job security
- g) Pauperization of workers due to low wages
- h) Alienation caused by technology and mechanization of production systems
- i) Loss of labour power i.e., through weakening of labour unions.

The United Nations efforts at improving on labour standards globally are channeled through its organ, the International Labour Organization (ILO), based in Geneva, Switzerland. This agency has over the years established some basic principles and standard labour practices on the platform of international best practices. In actual fact, many governments in Africa today have embraced and ratified some of these labour standards, though there is still some way to go in their acceptances of some of these best practices. The sustenance of these international labour standard practices remains to be seen in many countries. For instance, the 2004 Nigeria Labour Laws (Amended) was designed ostensibly to weaken the powers exercised by Nigerian trade union organizations in its failed attempt to make the payment of check-of dues by their members voluntary.

### **THE UNITED NATIONS AND DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES: FROM MDGs TO SDGs**

The following constitutes the key goals of the now ended Millennium Development Goals of the United Nations, which officially came to an end in 2015 and was replaced by the Sustainable Development Goals.

#### Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)

1. End poverty and hunger
2. Universal education
3. Promote gender equality and empower women
4. Reduce child mortality
5. Improve maternal health
6. Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases
7. Ensure environmental sustainability
8. Develop a global partnership for development

#### Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

1. End poverty
2. End hunger
3. Well-being
4. Quality education
5. Gender equality
6. Water and sanitation for all
7. Affordable and sustainable energy
8. Decent work for all
9. Technology to benefit all
10. Reduce inequality
11. Safe cities and communities
12. Responsible consumption by all
13. Stop climate change
14. Protect the ocean

15. Take care of the earth
16. Live in peace
17. Mechanisms and partnerships to reach the goals.

[Cited from: Dario Kenner (Why Green Economy?) [<http://whygreeneconomy.org/the-politics-of-the-sustainable-development-goals-sdgs>].

## **THE UN: POLITICS AND THE CHALLENGES OF GOALS SETTING.**

Since the establishment of the United Nations at the end of the Second World War in 1945, it has become the global platform for development debates and rhetoric. As an organization of free, sovereign and independent nations, it canvases for global peace and security for all nations of the world. The UN has several organs and institutions through which its numerous programmes are channeled. However, the lofty and often ambitious programmes of the UN are usually plagued by political intrigues and lack of serious commitment by the rich countries in America and Europe. Therefore, a number of questions beg for answers:

1. Interpretation. One of the questions that have been raised has to do with how the issue of the universality of SDGs is to be interpreted? Is it to be implemented on the basis of the ‘principle of common but differentiated responsibilities?’
2. Who funds the SDGs, i.e., which country/countries?
3. How will funding issues affect the priorities of the SDGs?
4. Who benefits from the implementation of such priorities?
5. Was the UN financing for development able to deliver much?
6. Will it address the fears expressed by the civil society organizations?
7. Will the SDGs as currently designed be able to reduce poverty and inequality?
8. Which economic model has been chosen as the basis or platform for the SDGs?
9. Can the SDGs reduce our appetite for environmental degradation, excessive wealth, and other patterns of consumption?
10. If it will take 100 years for the world’s poorest people to earn \$1.25 a day (Jason Hickel/*The Guardian*, March 2015) how much can the SDGs achieve by 2030, about fifteen years from now?

From the above, it is obvious there are more questions than answers. The UN is desirable in principle, but given its obvious challenges it remains a powerless tool for development of the developing countries but highly effective in the hands of the big powers to advance their objectives of global dominance and exploitation. In the long run, the SDGs remain “goals for the rich” (Civil Society Reflection Group on Global Development Perspectives / March, 2015).

## **CONCLUSION**

The role of the United Nations in promoting sustainable development on a global scale has been well-documented as dramatized by numerous programmes and activities over the years. Although these activities are laden with political rhetoric due to the nonchalant attitudes of its big global partners as a result of unenforceability of its decisions or resolutions, it must be given some credit for awakening the moral conscience and responsibilities of the leaders of the nations of the world towards building

a sustainable society. Studies in political economy have shown that the present structure of economic globalization and the hegemonic control of western industrial powers had exacerbated the economic and political fortunes of developing countries. These countries, given their being incorporated into a world capitalist system that is exploiting, disrupting and pillaging their human, economic and material resources have been relegated to the lowest rungs of the development ladder. The capacity of labour unions to effectively defend their members' interests has been weakened by the enactment of anti-labour laws in many countries by economic and political leaders who act as local petite bourgeoisie in service of their hegemonic masters in Washington and Europe. The new regime leaders of the third world must be wary of recommended reform agenda and policies that are being given surreptitiously for the emasculation of dissent from labour movements, civil society organizations, and the working class in general. The developing nations must continue to agitate for stronger voice from their fold in order to have real voting power at the UN Security council. Countries like Brazil, South Africa and Nigeria should be elected into the Security Council of the United Nations. The moral responsibility rest therefore more on the shoulders of the developed nations of the West to show leadership in bringing about the sustainable society by providing the needed financial, material or economic support for the poorer nations. This is how any development goals, *millennium* or *sustainable* can have meaningful effect.

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## **ABOUT THE AUTHOR.**

Moses Adesola Adebisi, [PhD] Lecturer 1, Department of Sociology, Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Ilorin, Ilorin, Nigeria. He has taught sociology for over two decades with special research interests in industrial sociology/industrial relations, development, complex organizations, social research political and theoretical sociology.