

Indo-Pacific Strategy For The New World Order And The White House - The Resilience Approach and The Global Resilience Index

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Abstract

What is development for us humans? This question has gone through a significant change throughout different periods as our definitions have become more refined. The most recent answer is the "Human Development Index," which is based on the Capability Approach. The fallacy in this approach is that it favors the section of the world that has already had an advantage due to historical horrors committed by them, such as slavery and colonization. Unlike the Principles of Equality, the capability approach is based on treating unequals as equals, which creates a disfigured and disillusioned canvas of Human Development in the World, further leading to perverse national socio-economic goals. This paper has the principal aim of introducing the "Cope-ability Approach" as the new standard to measure the development of humankind and the creation of the Resilience Index. The Cope-ability approach is based on the aspect of resilience in humanity, taking into account the capabilities one had and what they were able to achieve with them. The idea emanates from the coping mechanisms adopted by the Global South in combating the Covid-19 outbreak with respect to the Global North. By adopting a new definition of development and the creation of the Resilience Index, developing nations will be encouraged to change their paths from one of industrialized destruction of the environment to one of a sustainable future for all of humankind.

1. Current Standard of Development – The Human Development Index

The United Nations wholeheartedly endorses the Human Development Index to determine the level of development of a country and its citizens. This was an ideological departure from the callous method of calculating the Gross National Income in true Western style. After the introduction of the Capability Approach by Amartya Sen, the idea changed to the development of an individual in various other aspects of life other than economic aspects. At present, the Human Development Index is based on mainly three aspects of life: a) Health or Life Expectancy Index b) Knowledge or Education Index c) Standard of Living or GNI Index.

2. Health

Health, as an indicator of the Human Development Index (HDI), refers to the overall well-being and longevity of individuals within a country. It is typically measured by life expectancy at birth, reflecting the average number of years a person is expected to live. The health indicator recognizes that good health is fundamental to human development, as it enables individuals to lead productive and fulfilling lives, participate in social activities, and contribute to society.

3. Knowledge

Literacy, another component of the HDI, assesses the level of educational attainment within a country. It measures the percentage of the population aged 15 and above who can read and write. Literacy is essential for individuals to access information, engage in meaningful employment, participate in civic activities, and exercise their rights. It reflects the ability to acquire knowledge and skills, promoting personal development and contributing to societal progress.

4. Standard of Living

Gross National Income (GNI) is a key economic indicator within the HDI. It measures the total income generated by a country's residents, both domestically and from abroad, after accounting for external payments and receipts. GNI per capita is often used to compare the standard of living across countries. It reflects the economic resources available to individuals, which can influence their access to education, healthcare, and other essential goods and services. GNI provides insights into the economic well-being of a country and plays a crucial role in determining its level of human development.

5. The Issue with the Current Standard

The Human Development Index is, undoubtedly, a great ideological shift and a relatively better method of determining

development. As the UNDP website puts it –

“The HDI was created to emphasize that people and their capabilities should be the ultimate criteria for assessing the development of a country, not economic growth alone.”

Notwithstanding anything, a curiosity-filled question that takes birth in the mind is

“How is a poor and war-torn country supposed to excel at this index?” or

“Can a resilient country like India be said to have not developed at all when the poor citizens faced Covid with all their might and came out stronger than ever?”

6. Inherent Bias

The argument against this index is that it is inherently biased toward people who have been provided extensive capabilities to excel at life through historically unjustified means.

For example – The citizens of colonizing countries such as the United Kingdom, France, Germany, etc., have accrued immense wealth by exploiting countries in all parts of the world. Europeans have immense capabilities to excel at life than a person from a colonized country in Africa or Asia.

Therefore, determining which citizen in the list of countries is developing at a faster rate through the Human Development Index is fundamentally flawed.

7. Adverse Effect on Development Goals

The second argument against the Human Development Index is that enforcing such a narrow definition of development encourages perverse national policymaking. UNDP itself states –

“The HDI can be used to question national policy choices, asking how two countries with the same level of GNI per capita can end up with different human development outcomes. These contrasts can stimulate debate about government policy priorities.”

The issue is that when highly industrialized Western countries are put on the pedestal of developed nations, with their citizens as examples of model citizens, it leads to the erosion of the values inculcated in different cultures in the Global South and a tremendous discriminatory imposition of Western ideas of development on the Global South. A fine example of this is the industrialization of different countries within the highly Western-leaning international economic order. The majority of Global South countries are attempting to industrialize themselves to imitate the lifestyle and societal order of Western nations. This has appropriately been termed the "Race to the Bottom" as it causes mass destruction of the environment.

To further illustrate this point, let us consider the situation of tribal people in various countries. The tribal population is one of the most marginalized sections of humankind, as their way of life is antithetical to that of Western civilization. However, through colonization and the Western economic order, such as globalization and

consumerism, tribal people are forced to adapt to this new way of life. Their fundamental values, deeply connected to the environment, must make way for "national development goals influenced by the Western idea of development." Such development is no development from the perspective of a tribal individual.

One could argue that fulfilling conditions such as health, knowledge, and income would no harm to any society. While it is true that the Human Development Index has some of the more creative indicators, the argument is that achieving such conditions through national policies is influenced by the methodology adopted by the West which is detrimental to the culture of the Third World Countries. The iron-fisted imposition of Western ideas of development, led by consumerism and globalization, is challenged. Thenceforth, it is pertinent to reinvent the definition of development.

8. Sen's Capability Approach

Amartya Sen's Capability Approach is a theoretical framework that focuses on enhancing individuals' freedom and well-being by evaluating their capabilities, opportunities, and choices rather than solely relying on their income or resources. It was developed by the Nobel laureate economist Amartya Sen in the 1980s and has since gained significant recognition in the fields of economics, development studies, and social justice.

The Capability Approach emphasizes that the well-being of individuals should be assessed based on their capabilities, which are the substantive freedoms they have to live a life they value. According to Sen, capabilities encompass a person's real opportunities to achieve functionings, which are the various things a person may value doing or being. Functionings include things like being healthy, being educated, having access to clean water, participating in decision-making processes, and enjoying social relationships.

Therefore, the capability approach has two constituting elements to it, namely, functionings and capabilities. As explained earlier, functionings are states of 'being and doing' and capability refers to the set of valuable functionings that a person has effective access to. The innovative approach to determining development must be appreciated. However, the approach has been incorrectly used as a theory to base the Human Development Index. The capability approach is more appropriate for a detailed and intricate look at the status of development among an equal community. This point is further illustrated when the issue regarding the capability approach is taken into consideration in the next section.

9. Capability Approach and HDI

First and foremost, it must be explicated that the capability approach in itself is an efficient framework. The emphasis on freedom is truly commendable and in line with the arguments being made in this paper. The issue, however, is with the use of the capability approach in determining development between different countries using the Human Development Index.

10. What is a Good Life?

This has been a major criticism of the capability approach, that it is far too subjective and unclear. There can never be a consensus among all the countries as to what would constitute the functionings to determine the capability of a country. What constitutes a good life is highly subjective, and thus, the capability approach cannot be applied on a global scale to rank different countries; rather, it is best suited for analysing the socio-economic structure of one country or community with some level of equality in them with respect to capability sets. This criticism is countered by Sen through the argument of heterogeneity, meaning that different people will achieve and convert different functionings even when the capability set is consensually decided by everyone. Essentially, this points to the fact that the issue is bound to arise regardless of consensus or not. However, that is not a viable solution to an imminent and fundamental question.

Sen argues that it is possible to reach a substantial agreement on guiding action. This can be achieved in two ways. Firstly, different perspectives on values can intersect and lead to similar judgments, even though they may use different arguments. Secondly, the agreement can be expanded by introducing ranges of weights instead of precise numbers. For example, if there are four conflicting views on the relative importance of literacy compared to health, expressed as $\frac{1}{2}$, $\frac{1}{3}$, $\frac{1}{4}$, and $\frac{1}{5}$, there is an implicit agreement that the weight on education should not exceed $\frac{1}{2}$ or fall below $\frac{1}{5}$. In this case, having one unit of literacy and two units of health would be considered better than having two units of literacy and one unit of health.

Sen also suggests that in many cases, a subset of crucial capabilities related to basic needs can be easily identified and agreed upon as urgent moral and political priorities. These "basic capabilities," such as education, health, nutrition, and minimally adequate shelter, represent the minimum requirements for a decent life. While these basic capabilities do not cover the full scope of the capability approach, they serve as a starting point for identifying and addressing egregious deprivations. They can be particularly useful in assessing the extent and nature of poverty in developing countries.

Indeed, this is a laudable method to get a basic idea of development in a country. Nonetheless, once again, we face another pertinent issue, which is that Western European and North American countries will always have an edge over the rest of the Third World as they have accumulated immense wealth and expertise in various sectors, which overshadow many of the functionings. So, would it be correct to label them as developed, and their citizens as more developed than the citizens of Third World countries? At this juncture, Mahbub Ul Haq's insightful observation reminds us that the mere fact that a nation's GDP is significantly boosted by the production and sale of weapons should not lead us to consider it more "developed" compared to a country that consciously abstains from manufacturing and exporting

weapons. This paper expounds this line of argument and expands its horizons.

11. Reinventing the Definition of Development

Coming back to the above question and rephrasing the situation for a better understanding of the issue at hand, let's take two examples –

Example 1: A person born in a highly developed European country in a rich household, excels at school and achieves a prestigious scholarship at a world-renowned university such as Oxford or Cambridge to study medicine. This person goes on to make significant contributions to the field of medicine.

Applying the capability approach to this person would lead one to mark this person as highly developed, as they have perfectly utilized their capability set and achieved the functionings required of them. Even if the person was not from a rich or middle-income household, and if we were to consider they were from a low-income background, they would have still had the freedom to choose a life they valued for themselves given the socialist and welfare schemes adopted by the highly developed European countries. Therefore, both the country and the citizens can be said to be developed according to the capability approach led human development index.

Example 2: A person born in a least developed African/Asian country in a poor household, who did not go to school past the 5th grade and could not establish themselves in academia or any prominent field of study or business, now runs errands and does different odd jobs to sustain his family.

Applying the capability approach and indicators of the human development index, the person satisfies none of the conditions deemed to lead a developed life. Many of the functionings have not been achieved, and not a lot of capabilities set was given to the person due to the economic background of the person and the unstable government. Both the person and the country cannot be said to have developed at all according to the capability approach led human development index.

The examples laid down above are not too far-fetched from reality, it is a matter of fact that currently 9 out of the 10 countries with the Highest HDI score are Western and northern European countries and 9 out of the 10 countries with the lowest HDI score are in Africa. A rather emotive example might be put forth to illustrate the ridiculousness of the scale of measurement we use to measure development.

In 2016, when the country of Burundi was in immense political turmoil, The Guardian quoted a young man saying "I want to forget everything about Burundi, even our names," the young man had collapsed at a refugee registration post after carrying his 16-year-old sister, pregnant after rape, across a river to safety. They left behind the grave of another sister, killed last year by a government bullet.

Now when this person, who economically did not have much, to begin with, goes to live in Tanzania and makes

a living doing odd jobs, could it be said that he has not developed at all in comparison to his Western counterpart?

12. The Cope-ability or Resilience Approach

The point of the human development index is to put emphasis on the individual. It is their development and capabilities that determine the development of the country. And precisely for that reason, this paper places great reliance on the aspect of individual development and introduces the Cope-ability or Resilience Approach.

Resilience Approach – This approach draws its gravamen from the resilient and coping attitude of humans which is distinct from the capability approach because this approach is based on what an individual has achieved (functionings) with the capabilities given to them taking into account both the national policies in place and the response of the individual, and by putting the individual effort in the center, this approach is capable of being free from the biases of other methods of determining human development.

It cannot be denied that the purpose of global rankings is to question national policies, but there needs to be a context to everything. Human Development Index is incapable of providing a correct picture of national policies and citizens' aspirations. It portrays the national policies in a vacuum, leading to fallacious assumptions such as since a country is low ranked in the HDI then it must be having incorrect national policies, and conversely, if a country is high ranked in HDI then the policies must be the model for everyone to follow. Such assumptions are highly dubious and must be done away with.

The Resilience Approach focuses on the harmony created by the national policies and the individual effort of every citizen, thereby focusing on true human development in the country. Questions such as –

“Does the national policy aim to develop each citizen of the country, or does it simply aim to maintain the status quo between the haves and have-nots?” or

“Are the citizens of the country resilient, adaptable to change, and capable of delivering despite hardships?” – are finally answered through the Resilience Index. By utilizing rankings, countries would be fairly evaluated based on how their citizens have responded to implemented policies and how much they have developed through their resilient attitudes.

13. Benefits of the Resilience Approach

The Cope-ability or Resilience Approach can change the course of the future, which is currently headed towards utter destruction. Due to the fact that most indexes put European countries at the top in every aspect of life, the rich nations kept getting richer and were hailed as the vanguard of human civilization in the modern world. Developing nations, despite the historical and contemporary challenges faced by them, are viewed with the lens of suspicion and their people have to face discrimination in many aspects of

international dealings. The developing nations were reduced to beggars, compelled to comply with the directives imposed upon them by the wealthier nations, as the proverb "beggars can't be choosers" gained prominence in the global arena. The Resilience Approach is an attempt to put an end to this dehumanising treatment of individuals from the Global South and other such nations. The following are some of the benefits of the Cope-ability or Resilience Approach –

14. Nation-specific National Goals

Throughout this paper, it has been stressed that until now, Western nations, which are placed high in the HDI, have become model countries for every country to follow in order to prosper. This results in the juxtaposition of foreign policies and ideals with culturally diverse nations of the Third World nations. National policies born out of this are adverse for the country, its citizens, and its environment. This phenomenon has been termed as the “race to the bottom”, coined by Supreme Court Justice Louis Brandeis in the case of *Liggett v. Lee*. In their pursuit of rapid industrialization for “development,” the national policies of Third World countries have placed excessive emphasis on monetary gain, neglecting the aspirations of the individuals within the country. The dire situation of the Tribal population must be realized and taken into account while assessing the veracity of this argument. While it is true that the human development index has tried to alleviate the situation, nevertheless, it portrays a distorted canvas of which policies are more effective in the global arena.

With the emergence of the Resilience Index, countries would be encouraged to understand how their policies have been received by their citizens and how they can help their citizens develop further while respecting their own culture and traditions. Industrialisation at the cost of human development and environment would be discouraged. Countries wouldn't have to implement environmental laws simply for namesake purposes but for their own development. Third World countries would no longer be able to excuse themselves from violating greenhouse gas emission regulations under the veil of development. The Resilience Index simply highlights the fact that happiness need not be Scandinavian or European in nature.

15. A Greater Incentive for Investment in Developing Nations

The Resilience Index is capable of providing statistical data to rank citizens of countries on their ability to perform under pressing conditions. One of the major issues faced by companies in international investment is Trust and Confidence in the Nation. By utilizing the Resilience Index, companies would have a stronger basis and greater motivation to trust the country's capacity to deliver the desired outcomes. This would further lead to higher Foreign Investment in developing countries where individuals are hungry for opportunities.

16. Enhanced Legislation and Labour Laws

The term “race to the bottom” discussed earlier, carries

with it the issue of inhumane treatment of individuals working in countries where the sole agenda is monetary profit. Until 1990, before the introduction of the Human Development Index, many countries suffered from the problem of having inefficient labour laws. In line with the change in national policies, through the resilience index, countries would be encouraged to place individuals at the center of their policies as a positive response of the individual, in terms of their output, to the national policies would directly prove if a national policy advances the interest of human development. Even developed nations, which have a high GNP, literacy, life expectancy, and high HDI due to historical gains made through unjustified means, would be forced to understand the response of their citizens and improve their laws. This is especially important for countries such as Japan with toxic work culture, as they may rank high in HDI but that may not be the case in the Resilience Index.

17. Conclusion

The concept of development is highly subjective, as evidenced by the ideological shift in the 1990s through the use of the Capability Approach to assess human development, and it regularly needs reinvention to ensure accurate portrayal through statistics. Through this paper, it has been established that the current measure of human development is insufficient and detrimental to the aspirations of an individual and the environment. The capability approach is inadequate for ranking different countries on a global scale and therefore, the need of the hour is that the Resilience Approach is deliberated upon and accepted. The Global Resilience Index allows for a holistic evaluation of national policies, placing the individual at the center of major considerations, eliminating biases, and providing an accurate representation of global human development.

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