

REVIEW PAPER

Achieving Sustainable Development for Regions where Problems of Political Culturization Exist

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ABSTRACT

The article makes an attempt to comprehend the process of achieving sustainable development goals from multi-aspect point of view, taking into account the evident difference in political culturization among regions and countries, capable of influencing the vector of results obtained due to efforts on achieving SDGs. After analysis of theoretical basis, in particular, the case of the least developed countries is considered as example.

HIGHLIGHTS

- The study claims that political culturization landscape' diversity has direct influence on the results of individual countries' efforts on SDGs achievement, which can take negative instead of positive nature.

Keywords: Sustainable development, SDGs, Postcapitalism, Political culture

At the current stage, solving the problems of forming a sustainable community is directly related to the quality of political governance the ability of political subjects to create a mechanism for flexible response to a changing reality, to apply the latest technologies, and power influence. The range of debatable issues in managing sustainable development is quite wide from general problems of sustainable development to technologies for solving environmental and economic problems at the level of the state, organization, enterprise, and individual, from problems of global governance to managing the development of a territory. At the same time, the attention of researchers is still more focused on economic problems rather than on social and

political issues, while practice increasingly clearly demonstrates the importance of a combination of factors that ensure the sustainability of society.

In modern political science, there are a number of concepts that define management in the sphere of politics along with "political management" – "public administration", "public policy", "political management", however, their interpretation indicates that there is no clear distinction between the subject fields of each. One thing is certain:

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political management is connected with the sphere of influence, the relationship between government and society, its component is public administration – not only the “soft” influence of one side on the other using technological methods, but also the use of power coercion in a complexly organized social organism, where each political subject strives to implement its interests (Basu, 2019).

In modern conditions, it is necessary to look for new models of interaction between society and the state, a combination of private and state initiatives, overcome corruption and the influence of lobby groups. All this is critically needed in the context of achieving the SDGs.

The key political factor in the implementation of global sustainable development (SD) in the long term is associated with the formation of a new system for the development and implementation of political decisions at the global level. However, the objective reality is the difference in national political cultures, therefore the factor of political culturalization acquires critical importance in the field of sustainable development, and the presence of problems of political culturalization clearly hinders the processes of achieving the SDGs.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Working on the conceptual foundations of sustainable development, scientists gradually went beyond environmental, socio-economic, technical and economic problems, developing an idea of sustainable development as a social, political, socio-cultural problem. Today, the scientific community considers it a subtle ideological construct, drawing attention to the subordination of sustainable development to the challenges of globalization (Bexell and Jonsson, 2021). This statement brings the concept of sustainable development into the realm of big politics, the interests of world powers in the struggle for priorities on the world stage. However, the political aspect of sustainability also concerns internal development, both at the national level and at the level of a separate territory.

The concept of SD in its current form in the ideological and conceptual sense is quite complex. Within it, theoretical approaches of various directions in the study of international relations, world politics and political global studies coexist. De facto, the SD concept is based on such approaches as neo-

Marxism, neoliberalism, theoretical developments in the field of interstate cooperation, as well as political ethics.

Today, the concept of SD is a scientific approach that is of significant interest in the context of studying global political dynamics. This concept focuses not on the stable state of the international community, but on the potential of this community to carry out qualitative changes that should ensure the survival of the world community in the long term. In this regard, the issue of design and management of SD is central (Gabay and Ilcan, 2020). Among other things, the implementation of SD involves the development of more effective risk and safety management mechanisms. In addition, research in line with the SD concept is designed to find and specify acceptable ways to achieve the Millennium Development Goals.

However, the concept of SD also has an internal political (national-state) dimension, which determines the need to take into account regional and country political characteristics. Under these conditions, the need to study the political aspect of the SD concept is becoming increasingly more apparent, and the research discourse includes problems of political culturalization.

RESULTS

The term “sustainable development” has become so familiar that many people, automatically perceiving it positively, do not even try to truly understand the meaning of this phrase, perceiving it only as concern for the environment and the conservation of biodiversity and natural resources. Meanwhile, what we have before us is not so much an ecological construction but rather a very subtle ideological one.

The last decades have passed under the sign of the concretization of the global action plan for SD. In many countries of the world, national councils for sustainable development were created, sustainable development concepts were developed, steps were taken to implement them, including institutional reforms, improving the regulatory framework, etc. The issue of sustainable development was actively discussed in the political and scientific communities, which contributed to the identification of a certain “core of ideas” that is recognized by all parties. Nevertheless, the range of positions in modern debates about sustainable development is quite

wide. Various reasons are given: anthropocentric and ecocentric understanding of nature, “different interpretations of “development” due to differences in the vision of the relationship between economic, political, environmental, and social development, global prospects in general” (Rivera, 2013), “the struggle for what is beneficial to each participant in the discussions on understanding of the term “SD” (Beisheim, 2023) (researchers count up to a hundred of its interpretations), caused by material, financial, political interests, which ultimately form sustainable development strategies that are different in their formulations and goals, etc. So, speaking of diversity of modern political SD concepts, the following positions can be distinguished: protective (“sustainable growth”), ecological modernization, structural greening, radical traditionalism, “noospheric restructuring” (Gabay and Ilcan, 2020).

The SD concept is primarily a normative forecast (scenario), developed through a long search for compromises between people of very different views and beliefs, and for this reason it is not yet an ideology capable of consolidating the world community and laying the foundations of a global institutional infrastructure. The goals of “building an effective planetary risk management system,” among which the central place is occupied by purely political risks associated with the instability of systems based on the inequality of planetary regions, are in conflict, on the one hand, with the desire of most countries to transform universal guidelines for sustainable development through the prism of their interests, on the other hand with “the presumption of force as the main instrument of the coercive and widespread imposition of ... order” (Jean-Francois, 2021). The SD concepts developed by countries are mostly “based on old approaches to economic growth” and “abstracted from solving global problems of sustainable development” (Biermann *et al.* 2022). An assessment of the SD concept “from the point of view of its ability to optimize the achievement of political goals and regulate the behavior of political actors at all “branches” and “floors” of government” shows that it “can be considered a political concept (or doctrine) with a significant caveat: only at the national level of individual countries (since at the global level, the concept of sustainable development often loses in its competitiveness to the priority of economic development “at any cost”) (Singh, 2017).

In conditions when the world system has gone far beyond the “limits of growth” defined by the well-known reports of the Club of Rome, the primary task is to preserve its integrity and minimal stability. Despite the fact that from a strictly scientific point of view, the concept of “sustainable development” retains significant debatable potential, there is a consensus that there is no alternative to it. In this sense, such a characteristic of sustainable development is unique and determinative in relation, for example, to political-economic-scenario models of the future that preserve multivariateness. At the same time, there is a need to supplement the conceptual field of “sustainable development” with new concepts. From a research point of view, this is impossible without analyzing the main phenomena of our time, primarily in politics and economics.

The first of these phenomena is the crisis of the modern economic model and the active process of intellectual construction of post-capitalism as a new reality. The second one can be described as the gradual disappearance of classical liberal democracy from the modern map of political processes. On a historical scale, one can state the completion of a certain stage of globalization and the defeat of a group of universalist liberal worldviews. They are being replaced by global populism, mimicking various types of pseudo-ideologies (Mason, 2017). The consequence of this is the loss of the logic of ideological guidelines for the future by residents of developed capitalist countries of the West. An important remark in the context of the interrelated problems of sustainable development and global governance is that, despite all the imperfections of the general democratic components of liberalism, namely these ideologies provided legitimacy to the proto-institutions of global political governance the League of Nations and the UN.

Two fundamental processes, conventionally designated as “the inevitability of post-capitalism” and “the search for models of post-democracy”, in our opinion, will become (along with global environmental issues) crucial for the prospects for sustainable development as a whole. The further development of integration processes will also retain its significance, regardless of the dynamics of national and interstate systems irreversibly changing the competitive field. Integration is still accompanied by regionalization, an ambivalent

process that, if it reaches a certain critical mass, can divide the world into economic battlefields between integration systems (Galvao *et al.* 2023). Many authors today consider integration and regionalization as complementary processes of planetary dynamics. Let us note that the recent increase in geopolitical tension has a negative impact, primarily on integration processes. Instead of integration opportunities, the leaders of some countries are increasingly using trade wars and protectionism, using the levers of ideological nationalism and state propaganda. There is a renaissance of disintegrating geopolitical theories – ‘ghosts’ of the last century, in some cases reinforced by the “official” revisionism of history and the militarization of public consciousness.

The propaganda nature of many theses about the need to ensure sustainable development, as well as a rather formal description of the essence of this phenomenon without justifying the need for its real implementation, are present in many scientific works, which are then recorded in official documents, political and state (and interstate) programs. For example, the importance of sustainable development is often defined as: “...environmental governance, social equity and economic prosperity are integral components of sustainable human progress” (Gabay and Ilcan, 2020). Such “argumentation” subsequently leads to a simple declaration of the principles and objectives of sustainable development in the regulatory documents of individual countries and in action programs.

Another serious and pronounced problem in the practical application of the concept of sustainable development is that the ideas of sustainable development are interpreted differently in different countries and regions of the world and, accordingly, are embodied differently in national policies, in the actions of business structures, authorities and management, behavior of the population, activities of various public organizations. At the same time, national approaches to the development of strategies, programs, and measures to ensure sustainable development are based on various scientific theories that provide a conceptual basis for making certain political and government decisions, choosing tools and means of influencing nature and society, measuring the effectiveness

of measures taken and achieved success, etc. As a result, the ideas of sustainable development are increasingly becoming an area of contradictions and contention between states and entire regions of the world, primarily between economically developed and environmentally prosperous countries of the world and regions of poverty, hunger, lack of basic sanitary and hygienic conditions, diseases, and military conflicts (Dean, 2018).

In states where there are problems of political culturalization, these trends find protest outlet in the social and political spheres. The feeling of an eternal crisis, the decline of the middle class and the resulting growth of distrust in the ruling classes have become a catalyst for rather heterogeneous and contradictory processes, which nevertheless have a single anti-elite vector. As a result, declaring commitment to sustainable development and the SDGs, and even some actually taken measures lead to a completely opposite effect – increased political tension, protest sentiments, deepening social gaps, etc.

Specifically, Wei *et al.* (2023) assert that poverty is a major obstacle to achieving the SDGs, preventing collaboration and increasing trade-offs between them. For several SDGs, it converts synergies into trade-offs, and the inhibiting influence of poverty varies throughout SDGs and groups.

Filho *et al.* (2020) suggested a table (Table 1) showing connections between SDG challenges and governance. As can be seen from the Table 1, challenges in fact relate not only to objective reality but to political culture (culturization).

Moreover, the least developed countries (LDCs) are highly dependent on non-renewable natural resources (Table 2), and this fact also creates risks: reducing carbon economy percentage within short period of time can lead to decline in GDP and quality of life, catalyzing corruption and social upheavals. Without proper political culturization this result is actually inevitable.

Developing nations should also be concerned about the possibility that automation and digital technology could exacerbate economic inequality and upend society. Nike “shifting toward automation”, especially in lower-margin nations like China, Indonesia, and Vietnam, as seen by the 106,000 fewer contract workers it utilized in 2013

Table 1: Connections between SDG challenges and governance

Global action areas (2020-2030)	SDGs challenges	Governance aspects
Global action	Collective action	International collaboration, political leadership and guidance at international level, political stability
	Accountability	Clearly defined obligations to international organizations and state governments
	Financial constrains	Global resources for the SDGs, economic fairness, and funding from the private sector
	Capacity building	Knowledge transmission, clever solutions, and cross-border exchange
	Technology and data	Open data and an integrated global monitoring architecture
Local action	Accountability	Clearly defined roles within public sector organizations, scalability to multiple stakeholders, and several governance levels
	Collective action	Platforms or procedures for collaboration that are organized and include many different parties at the local and national levels
	Capacity building	Initiatives and resources for capacity building
	Trade-offs	No silos approach and balanced commitment to all SDGs
	Vagueness of goals	Aligning SDGs with national/local agendas and budgets, synergize Targets and Indicators with local national benchmarks
People action	Collective action	Integrating various populations in the SDGs processes and reaching out to all societal strata (youth, civil society, media, the commercial sector, unions, academics etc.)
	Culture	Increase public knowledge of and advocacy for the SDGs' advantages for various societal groups and people
	Financial constrains	Financial resources to support people' and communities' commitment to the SDGs

Source: Filho et al. (2020).

compared to 2012 (McAfee, 2014). The emergence of additive manufacturing and 3D printing has the potential to shorten global supply chains and re-localize portions of the production process, which could have a big impact on jobs in low-value added manufacturing in developing nations. Due to the “premature deindustrialization” that these trends are causing, emerging nations must carefully choose where they wish to stand in global value chains (Rodrik, 2013). This suggests a unique problem for developing nations like Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia, whose working-age population is expanding quickly. These nations may find it more difficult to hire the millions of new workers into these burgeoning basic industrial sectors.

We should applaud the SDGs for being universal. It is important for the international community to remember that the LDC category exists because each member of the group has distinct problems in addition to a unique set of development-related barriers.

Table 2: LDCs dependence on non-renewable natural resources

Country	Non-renewable natural resource rents (% of GDP)
Equatorial Guinea	53.3
Mauritania	41.9
Angola	34.6
South Sudan	25.8
Chad	23.3
Congo, Dem. Rep.	21.1
Eritrea	18.8
Zambia	16.6
Yemen	15.7
Burkina Faso	13.7
Lao PDR	10.3

Source: Dahlman and Mealy, 2020.

DISCUSSION

Managing a sustainable community takes into account the ambiguity of culture: it is as complex

a phenomenon as any other in the social organism. Ideas about positive and negative formed at different times, moral norms, and value orientations of the population change. Only that which is encoded in the history of a people, its experience, historical memory and is passed on from generation to generation as proven values has an enduring character. However, the process of transfer and the goals that are pursued in this case may serve not creation, but destruction, not stability, but renewed destabilization. As long as the current state of affairs remains, society is always on the verge of collapse, the victory of chaos and large amplitude of the swing of the social pendulum. The constructive element of culture is the organization, the ordering of the life of society, outside of which the people remain a crowd (Aliexieienko *et al.* 2022; Treshchov *et al.* 2022).

In the context of growing global dependencies, material and spiritual inequalities, culture is turning into a deep fundamental matrix of knowledge, beliefs and political practices that can guarantee the safety of social and political changes. Successful modeling and forecasting of these changes becomes impossible without the integration of science into the sphere of political and civil relations and the use of scientific-measuring and organizational-managerial techniques and procedures (Kryshtanovych *et al.* 2023b; Kryshtanovych *et al.* 2023c; Kryshtanovych *et al.* 2023d).

The strategy for sustainable development of society arises on the basis of the process of formation of the current digital political environment and culture. Dynamic functional changes are taking place in the content and life of civil society participation. A new socially oriented and controlled democracy is emerging in place of the declining elitist democracy, which was mainly limited to electoral processes. New, modern democracy is becoming an instrument of a totally developed civil society, permanently improving the constitutional and legal foundations, mechanisms and procedures for managing resources and interests in the center and regions of the country.

Meanwhile, today, political economic discussions have firmly established the deep conflict between capitalism and democracy in their modern forms. Moreover, both universals are in a “mutually

enriching crisis” that threatens to undermine the prospects for sustainable development of the international system. An important line of contemporary research has been to understand the striking dichotomy between the spread of liberal constitutionalism and the democratization of new political spaces that has given rise to “illiberal democracies” (Al-Zo’by, 2019). The response to the current situation was the search for updated universal paradigms. Increasingly more modern researchers are connecting the prospects for a more harmonious model of the socio-economic world order with the concepts of post-capitalism, as claimed by M.Kryshtanovych (Kryshtanovych *et al.* 2021; Kryshtanovych *et al.* 2022a; Kryshtanovych *et al.* 2022b; Kryshtanovych *et al.* 2023a).

Also, it seems to be a correct point of view according to which modern populism can be considered as a consequence of the crisis of traditional ideologies, in particular neoliberalism. Moreover, today a number of researchers are bringing populism from the marginal field to the mainstream of modern politics (Dahlman and Mealy, 2020). At the same time, it is post-democracy, identified with the erosion of parties and the mediatization of politics, that gives populism its new look and high-speed dynamics, which is especially characteristic of countries where there are problems of political culturalization.

The peculiarity of the modern sociopolitical and sociocultural situation is that a new political culture and a strategy for consolidated sustainable development are making their way to life simultaneously along parallel courses. There may be turns and setbacks along this path, but the course of development remains unchanged. It is determined by the needs of objectively occurring processes in the relationship between man, society, and nature.

Taking into account all these circumstances, it is necessary to state the urgent scientific and social need to develop a new conceptual apparatus, new theoretical and methodological approaches to the analysis of sociocultural reality and to the development of new principles of political activity to ensure sustainable development of society, taking into account the socio-regulatory potential of political culturalization.

CONCLUSION

The United Nations has lately given “culture” a major place in its universal vision for transformational development, acknowledging the limitations of the traditional global framework for sustainable development programs. However, the concern of political culture still remains out of sight. Meanwhile, as our research shows, countries where problems of political culturization exist can experience not only positive but also negative consequences of the efforts on achieving SDGs, and get quite opposite results.

In this landscape, a logical question arises: how optimistic can the prospects for sustainable development ensured through global regulation be in a world of local conflicts? The answer to this key question requires a summation of meanings and conclusions, primarily based on an understanding of the fact that sustainable development is influenced by complex risks, including those of a political nature.

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