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Kerala, Bihar and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals
India and inequality between regions

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"Much of India's development agenda is mirrored in the Sustainable Development Goals. […] Sustainable development of one-sixth of humanity will be of great consequence to the world and our beautiful planet."

Narendra Modi, 2015

ABSTRACT

In many ways, India remains an unknown country for scholars, due to its vastness and substantive differences between regions. And, even if the country´s economic growth is ranked today third in the world and second in number of citizens, its social, political and regional development is not at the same level as these other factors. In this dissertation we will seek to prove how the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are being implemented in the country and the impact that they are having in two specific states: Kerala and Bihar. Using these SDGs established by the UN in 2015, we will try to explore their implementation process and the impact in these two specific regions. To illustrate this, we will briefly look into India´s situation, as well as the power that the Indian government has in these two regions.

KEY WORDS

Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), Kerala, Bihar, government, economic growth, United Nations (UN).

RESUMEN

En la actualidad, la India sigue siendo un país desconocido para muchos académicos por su gran extensión y las diferencias entre sus regiones. Además, a pesar de tener la tercera tasa de crecimiento más alta del mundo y la segunda por número de ciudadanos, el desarrollo social, político y regional no se encuentran al mismo nivel. En este trabajo, se buscará analizar la implantación de los Objetivos de Desarrollo Sostenible (ODS) en el país y su impacto en dos áreas específicas del país, Kerala y Bihar. Utilizando estos Objetivos establecidos por la ONU en 2015, se estudiará el proceso de implantación y el impacto en estas dos regiones. Para demostrar esto, se analizará la situación en la India, así como el poder que ejerce el gobierno indio en estas dos regiones.

PALABRAS CLAVE

Objetivos de Desarrollo Sostenible (ODS), Kerala, Bihar, crecimiento económico, Organización de las Naciones Unidas (ONU).

ABBREVIATIONS

CCIT   Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism

CRI   Commitment to Reducing Inequality Index

CRR   Commitment to Reducing Inequality Index

GDP   Gross Domestic Product

HDI   Human Development Index

MDGs   Millennium Development Goals

NFSA   National Food Security Act

SDGs   Sustainable Development Goals

UK   United Kingdom

UN   United Nations

U.S.   United States of America

WIR   World Inequality Report

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1. AIM OF THE PROJECT AND MOTIVATION

1.1. AIM

The aim of this dissertation is to study how the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), adopted by the United Nations in 2015, have affected growth and development in India, most specifically in two regions: Kerala and Bihar. The timeframe chosen will start prior to the adoption of the SDG, as it is crucial to show the situation before and after its implementation. Moreover, we believe that national and foreign policy have also shaped the way SDGs are being implemented in India. We believe it is there we will find the key to better our understanding of India and the implementation of the UN Goals.

A parallel goal of this dissertation is to gauge how important the governmental power is in India. India is said to be the biggest democracy in the world, but it is also the second-most populous country in the world and geographical differences between citizens, regions and living standards are very remarkable nowadays (BBC, 2019). Due to its largely unchangeable nature, it follows that geography has produced unchangeable foreign policy principles.

Very often India is seen and studied through a Western perspective. My intention though is to focus on the Indian perspective, trying to unearth and understand the implementation of the SDGs in two specific regions: Kerala and Bihar.

1.2. Motivation

The country of Republic of India and its unique circumstances have fascinated me for a long time, having read and studied extensively about Indian economy, politics, development and society. The main motivation for undertaking this dissertation topic is the will to understand India, its regional differences and how these affect its citizens, due to the fact that it is a very unequal and heavily undistributed country.

We also want to focus this dissertation on India´s development and the implementation of the SDGs, as we feel that too many times mainstream media and academia portrait India through the lens of just business and economic links with the West, especially the US and Europe, and that India sees the West as more modern and developed, due to the historical, cultural and colonial links with this part of the world (Mahmood, 2017). Due to the scope and length of this dissertation, it will not be possible to explore India, as a country with different identities, in a completely comprehensive manner, which would include a broader historical focus and an exploration of its relationship with its neighbors and economic, as well as political relations with other countries. However, we will touch on its relationship with the United Nations, and we will briefly explore its relation with other partner countries.

The time period chosen for the analysis, which is since the adoption of the SDGs, is born out of the interesting and dynamic evolution that the country is experiencing right now. This change, which entails shifts in economy, living standards, promotion of equality between all Indian citizens, and development, will be really useful in showing how the country is changing, depending on the region we look at in a time of political turmoil and uncertainty after the winning of Narendra Modi in the elections of 2019 (Kazmin & Barber, 2019).

In many ways, India is unknown, and unknowable, in its vastness and harshness, and the European cultural imaginary has primarily put the focus on their interests on Indian ancient cultures and religions (Tzoref-Ashkenazi, 2006).

2. OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY

2.1 OBJECTIVES

This dissertation has three initial objectives that will guide the dissertation and serve as the starting point of research.

➢ Try to prove that the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are not being equally implemented in all areas in India and, because of that, wealth and living standards are really unequal and different in the country.

➢ Explore how the Indian government has used the SDGs to suit the interests of very specific sectors of the population. The dissertation will explore the relationship that the government has with the different social sectors in the country, especially since the year 2015, but linking it to previous instances. Also, it will be explored the relationship that the Indian government has with other states and its approach towards the implementation of international agreements, initiatives and protocols.

➢ Delineate the main tenets of India´s national policy and also explore India´s foreign policy. The characteristics of national and foreign policies will be shown in this dissertation.

The combination of these three initial objectives will serve as the starting point to prove main objective of this dissertation, which is to shed a light on the implementation of the SDGs in India, policies that are being implemented in the country by the government to meet these Goals and differences between two specific states: Kerala and Bihar.

2.1 METHODOLOGY

As it has been mentioned before, the aim of this project is to study the implementation of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in India and how it has affected differently the living standards of citizens in Kerala and Bihar, using a wide range of interdisciplinary sources and methods to provide as nuanced an

analysis as possible. To do so, it is necessary to understand inequality in India, differences between classes and the geographical division of India.

The first part of the dissertation, the state of the issue, will use a predominantly interpretative methodology, with qualitative research methods such as critical analysis and historical overview. It will explore India´s history and main events, focusing on the period since the adoption of the SDGs.

The second part of the dissertation will use theory and academic works to lay the theoretical groundwork that will be used later in the analysis. Sources will be primarily secondary, using books by academics, and will draw a view on the main goals that were established by the SDGs.

The third part of the dissertation, the aforementioned analysis, will be a case study of the implementation of the UN SDGs in Kerala and Bihar, and how these have had an impact on people´s living standards in these two regions. The analysis will use primarily sources such as government documents and official sites of the UN, as well as reliable secondary sources such as journalistic articles relevant to the dissertation.

3. STATE OF THE ISSUE

Given the length and scope of this dissertation, it would be impossible to do a comprehensive review of India´s characteristics and how the government has taken the decision to implement SDGs differently depending on the region, due to the independency of states in India. Therefore, we will briefly look at the following fields, in order to give a broad overview of the factors that will become relevant in the analysis section of this dissertation: history, geopolitics, economy and resources, wealth, territorial distribution, demography and ethnicity, languages, and finally, religion. In the next two sections we will give a brief description of India´s current situation. Then we will focus on India´s relation with other countries and its position as a BRICS country. Finally, we will look at the differences between Kerala and Bihar.

3.1 BRIEF OVERVIEW OF INDIA IN THE 21TH CENTURY

"Geographically giant in size, politically disunited and disintegrated, socially heterogeneous and ethnically divisive and diverse"

B.M. Jain, n.d.

Nowadays, India has become a very different country if compared to its situation after independence and at the end of the British rule. The country has developed a five years plan to recover its economy, it has introduced advances in agriculture and in industries in order foster production and productivity and it has created projects to improve irrigation in rural areas and produce energy. Besides, the country has improved its communication and transportation systems and the government has increased its alliances with different international actors and other states to ensure peace and security for all its citizens (Mahato, 2018).

On the other hand, the government has not been able to check the population growth and corruption is still a big issue in India. Further, poverty, inequality and human rights violations are putting India´s security at stake. Also, pollution is a big issue in the sub-continent, as a country going through an industrialization process that

produces many greenhouses gases that contribute to climate change. Finally, India is also seen as a very unequal country in terms of women and children´s rights and every state works independently. All these issues are leading to more division and tensions (Mahato, 2018).

3.2 INDIA´S FOREIGN RELATIONS

3.2.1 INDIA´S RELATION WITH THE UNITED STATES

As stated in site of the Indian government, India´s bilateral relations with the U.S. have developed into "a global strategic partnership" (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of India, 2017). The Indian government has even designed a motto to guide these relations: "ChaleinSaathSaath" (Forward Together We Go) and "SanjhaPrayas, Sab ka Vikas" (Shared Effort, Progress for All) (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of India, 2017). These two mottos, which guide bilateral relations between both countries, were adopted during the first two summits held in 2014 and 2015 between the Prime Minister of India, Narendra Modi, and the former U.S. President, Barack Obama. Besides, high-level political visits have often taken place in order to foster bilateral cooperation and expand dialogue. Nowadays, India-U.S. relation is based on "trade and investment, defence and security, education, science and technology, cyber security, high-technology, civil nuclear energy, space technology and applications, clean energy, environment, agriculture and health" (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of India, 2017, p. 1).

It is important to mention also people´s ties between both countries. In the U.S., there is a strong Indian community that accounts for 3.5 million citizens. This represents 1% of the total U.S. population (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of India, 2017). On the other side, India takes into account these Indian communities abroad, as they include "professionals, business entrepreneurs and educationalists" (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of India, 2017, p. 9) that have a strong power of influence on society. As a result, India and the U.S. have recently been working together in order to facilitate people´s flows between both countries and they signed in 2016 an agreement that

allows India to join the "Global Entry Programme" (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of India, 2017).

Further, there is a lot of cultural cooperation between India and the U.S. Both countries have huge diversity and, for example in the U.S., many Universities provide classes or education programs on Indian culture and arts. Besides, the Embassy provides updated information and there are media channels, TV series, media publications, and newsletters that provide information on development, investment, culture and tourism in India (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of India, 2017).

Furhtermore, both countries have developed a strong partnership in biomedical sciences and health, especially related to "HIV/AIDS, infectious diseases, diabetes, cardiovascular diseases, eye disease, hearing disorders, mental health, and low-cost medical technologies" (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of India, 2017, p. 8). Since 2015, both decided to work together in the areas of mental health and capacity building for traditional medicine.

Another major pillar of India-U.S. partnership is defence. This partnership started in 2005 with the signing of the "New Framework for India-U.S. Defense Relations" agreement and has led to an intensification of collaboration in maritime security and counter-piracy. Besides, the agreement was renewed and updated in 2015 for another 10 years (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of India, 2017).

3.2.2 INDIA´S RELATION WITH THE UNITED KINGDOM

India shares with the United Kingdom a strong partnership that is based on historical links. Both countries have always maintained a strong link at the highest political level since the independence of the former British colony in 1945.

In 2015, the Prime Minister of India, Narendra Modi, visited the UK. During his visit, Modi focused on cooperation in two specific areas: defence and security. This included joint cooperation of both countries on cyber security, counterterrorism and maritime security. Moreover, they both signed a joint statement on climate change (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of India, 2019). In 2016, UK Prime Minister, Theresa May, visited India. This visit became her first official bilateral visit outside the European Union and last year Modi visited again the UK in order to talk further on the future

relationship between both countries after the Brexit referendum, which means the departure of the UK from the EU. They both agreed that bilateral relations between both countries would not change after Brexit. In 2018, both Prime Ministers met for the last time to talk about investment and finance and how both countries could improve and increase their bilateral cooperation in these areas and new agreements on technology were signed (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of India, 2019).

Regarding economy and trade, they have been guiding matters in most of the institutional dialogues held between UK and India. This area of bilateral cooperation is coordinated by the India-UK Joint Economic and Trade Committee, Economic and Financial Dialogue and India-UK Financial Partnership (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of India, 2019). In addition, it needs to be highlighted that the UK is one of India´s major trading partners and it is always ranked in the list of India´s top 25 trading partners. India´s main exports to UK are "clothing accessories, […] machinery & equipment, petroleum, […] textile […], fabrics, […] footwear, medicinal & pharmaceutical products, […] road vehicles and other transport equipment" (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of India, 2019, p. 3) and its main imports are "[…] machinery and equipment […], transport equipment, beverages, electrical machinery and appliances […], professional, scientific and controlling instruments and appliances, chemical materials [and] products" (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of India, 2019, p. 4). Moreover, the UK is ranked the fourth larger investor in India, given that it invests 7% of total foreign direct investment in India and India is the third largest investor in the UK (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of India, 2019).

In the educational sector, both countries have started a dual partnership at school level to allow young bright students to experience the school system of the other country and for them to be able to develop a further understanding on culture, tradition and family systems. Thus, the UK plans to send 25,000 British students to India by 2020 (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of India, 2019). It can be stated that this educational partnership is linked to cultural linkages, given that since India´s independence in 1945, cultural linkages have been very extensive. The UK has made strong efforts to introduce Indian culture in the country, including but not limited to science, cuisine, cinema, religion, and arts (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of India, 2019).

3.2.3 INDIA´S RELATION WITH FRANCE

India and France have traditionally maintained a close relation. In 1998, both countries signed the Strategic Partnership, which is an agreement on a wide range of international areas. The three main areas of this India-France cooperation agreement are: defence, space and nuclear cooperation (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of India, 2018). Later, both countries have also engaged in climate change cooperation, sustainable development and growth, which are also important issues for both countries. Additionally, France has extensively supported India in many of its important claims in various international organizations, such as for example its aim to become a permanent member of the UN Security Council (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of India, 2018).

Regarding security and defence, India and France have shown their frustration towards terrorism and they have joined forces against it by working together at the UN Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism (CCIT), which is a proposed treaty by both countries to eliminate all form of international terrorism (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of India, 2018). Besides, both countries decided in 2018 to establish an annual defence dialogue.

Furthermore, it is also important to mention economic cooperation, as "almost 1,000 French companies are present in India with a total turnover of US$ 20billion and employing around 300,000 persons" (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of India, 2018, p. 6).

Finally, regarding cultural cooperation between India and France, it is important to highlight that Indian culture is widely admired in France. It is estimated that "there are about 6,000 Indian students in France" (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of India, 2018, p. 8); given that French higher education centers offer a wide variety of classes in English. Thus, Indian students feel more confident and included in these types of centers provided in France. During the visit of Prime Minister Modi to France in 2015, both leaders decided to go a step further in this area and provide professional experience for students in both countries, after they have completed their academic studies. Finally, cultural cooperation is also possible due to the large number of Indian communities in France and most notably in French overseas territories, where we can

find "more than 50 Indian community organizations" (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of India, 2018, p. 9).

3.2.4 INDIA´S RELATION WITH RUSSIA

India has found in Russia a "longstanding and time-tested partner" (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of India, 2017, p. 1). Besides, the development and maintenance of the external relation with Russia has been key to India´s foreign policy.

In 2000, both countries signed the "Declaration on the India-Russia Strategic Partnership", which comprises a high level cooperation agreement in almost all areas, including but not limited to, politics, security, trade, economy, defence, science and technology and culture (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of India, 2017). In 2010, this dual partnership was promoted and reached a higher level. Currently, they annually celebrate the Annual Summit meeting, which is a high-level political meeting between the Prime Minister of India and the President of Russia (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of India, 2017).

In terms of defence and security, India produces some of the defence technology used by Russia, such as aircrafts and tanks. Both countries also cooperate in the hydrocarbons area, which is a really active area of cooperation for them, and Russia sees India as a peaceful country with advanced nuclear technology that has a high record of non-proliferation. Thus, Russia intends to mirror India in this area and it has become a key partner of Russia in this area (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of India, 2017).

In addition, Indian culture is very present in Russia. The Indian community in Russia is estimated to be about 30,000 people and many Indian business owners live in Russia (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of India, 2017). This had led to many Indian companies to move their headquarters to Russia, especially those companies connected to engineering, trade, banks, footwear and tobacco.

3.2.5 INDIA´S RELATION WITH PAKISTAN

As stated in the page of the Indian government, India desires "peaceful, friendly and cooperative relations with Pakistan in an environment free from terrorism and violence" (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of India, 2017). According to the Indian government, the current conflict with Pakistan can be solved using dialogue and there are only two parties that can lead to this dialogue: India and Pakistan. Yet, India is not willing to solve these problems using violence and terror (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of India, 2017).

In 2015, Nawaz Sharif and Narendra Modi, Prime Ministers of Pakistan and India respectively, met to talk about bilateral and regional interests. They both agreed that India and Pakistan must ensure peace in the region and promote development. Further, both leaders condemned all forms of terrorism and they agreed to work together to eradicate terrorism in South Asia (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of India, 2017). Both countries are currently carrying out efforts to promote people to people contact between both countries and they are willing to stabilize their bilateral relations away from terrorism and reach ceasefire.

These tensions between India and Pakistan started when India became independent from the British mandate and the territory was divided into two parts. At this point, the majority of Muslim area became Pakistan, but the problem started when they realized there were as many Muslims in India as there were in Pakistan.

3.2.6 INDIA´S RELATION WITH CHINA

In 1950, India became the first non-socialist country to establish diplomatic relations with People´s Republic of China. Former Indian Prime Minister, Sri Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, visited China for the first time in 1954. At that time, the border between China and India was an area of serious tensions and conflicts. Nonetheless, both countries decided to improve their bilateral relations and they signed in 1993 an agreement called "Agreement on the Maintenance of Peace and Tranquility along the Line of Actual Control (LAC)." Bilateral visits of leaders from both countries have been crucial to the improvement of relations and ties between India and China. In 2014,

Chinese President, Xi Jinping, visited India and leaders from both countries signed numerous agreements, including, "commerce [and] trade, railways, space - cooperation, pharmaceuticals, audio-visual co-production, culture, establishment of industrial parks, sister-city arrangements." Also, there are regular exchanges between the Communist Party of China and some political parties in India in order to facilitate exchanges between India and China.

On the other hand, cultural relations between China and India have been extensive over time. Cultural exchanges between both countries "date back to many centuries and there is some evidence that conceptual and linguistic exchanges existed in 1500-1000 B.C." Besides, during the first centuries A.D., many Buddhist scholars travelled to China using the routes of the Silk Road. It is important to mention also that there can be found Buddhist temples in China and that Indian Bollywood movies are extremely popular in China. And some traditional Indian disciplines, like yoga, are becoming increasingly popular in China too.

Furthermore, the Indian and Chinese government signed an education agreement in 2006 in order to foster cooperation in education between both countries. According to this agreement, "government scholarships are awarded to 25 students, by both sides" and students coming from both countries can learn reputable high institutions in the other country. Both countries also signed four years ago a Education Exchange Programme (EEP) agreement that provides exchanges for students in vocational education and high schools. Besides, they are also allowed to visit the other country to study Hindi or Chinese. These measures have resulted in an increase of the number of Indian students that decide to go study in China and vice versa.

Finally, all these measures are leading to an increase of Indian community in China.

4. THEORETICAL APPROACH

4.1 WHAT ARE BRICS COUNTRIES?

The term BRIC was coined by Jim O´Neill, from Goldman Sachs, in 2001. O´Neill believed these countries would dominate the 21st century´s. Later, in 2010, South Africa joined this group and the new term BRICS was coined. Goldman Sachs even created an investment fund to give opportunities to the BRIC economies. BRICS countries are the initializations for five specific countries: Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa (Tett, 2010). Scholars believe that these countries "will become dominant suppliers of manufactured goods, services and raw material by 2050" (Majaski, 2019). It needs to be said that some experts contest the adding of South Africa to this list, but in this dissertation South Africa will also be considered. The acronym used will be then BRICS countries.

Moreover, these five countries are put together because they are supposed to be at the same stage of economic development. However, scholars believe that China and India will become world dominant suppliers of goods and services and Brazil, South Africa and Russia will become dominant suppliers of raw materials (Majaski, 2019). Goldman Sachs (2010) even predicts that four within these five countries will be in the list of the ten largest economies in the world by the year 2050 (see Annex I).

Additionally, these five countries are found among the most populous countries in the world. In total, they represent 40% of the total world´s population and comprise more than 25% of the world's land (Majaski, 2019). Thus, they are seen as important actors for economic development, even if some of the countries among this list are not as industrialized economies as some Western countries. In addition, BRICS countries accounted for 11% of the total GDP in 1990 and today these figures are closer to 30% (Petersen, 2018).

A big issue in these five countries is also corruption, which has become nowadays more visible than ever. Also, these countries do not always respect human rights and the Universal Declaration on Human Rights (1948) is an issue of concern to

many scholars, as if they do not take into consideration human rights development will no longer be possible.

On the other hand, a criticism that has been often made to this group of countries is the projections made for these countries are based on the assumption that resources are limitless (Motesharrei, Rivas et al., 2016). Nonetheless, it is known that resources are limited and individuals are not always able to access them when needed.

Also, the development process of BRICS countries is leading to unpredicted and invaluable environmental consequences. Many scholars assert and believe that China is the most powerful and developed country in the group and it puts pressure on the rest of the countries. As David Rothkopf (2009) stated, "[w]ithout China, the BRIC[S] are just the BRI, a bland, soft cheese that is primarily known for the whine […] that goes with it. China is the muscle of the group and the Chinese know it […]" (Rothkopf, 2009). Furthermore, the relations that these countries have with other neighboring countries are very important for scholars. In the case of India, it has been criticized its relations with Pakistan, given that they have always been very tense.

Another criticism that has been made to this group is that there is not a real link between the five countries, given that Brazil, South Africa and Russia are major exporters of natural resources and China and India are manufacturing economies.

Finally, regarding additions to the list, there are two countries that stand as strong candidates to join the group. These two countries are: Mexico and South Korea. Currently, these countries represent the world´s 13th and 15th largest economics by nominal GDP, and they stay just behind the G7 economies (Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, United Kingdom and United States) and the BRICS. Jim O´Neill stated that these two countries present the same factors that the other five countries in the list, so they are potential candidates to join (Tett, 2010).

However, in 2005 Goldman Sachs published a paper that explained that Mexico and South Korea had not been included in the list because they were already more developed. O´Neill has even stated that "Mexico, the four BRIC countries and South Korea should not be really thought of as emerging markets in the classical sense" (O´Neill, 2007, p. 5), because they are crucial to current globalized economy.

4.2   WILL INDIA BECOME THE NEXT GLOBAL SUPERPOWER?

"A substantial bridgehead of effervescent liberty on the Asian continent"

Sunil Khilnani

In summer 1948, the Indian nation was newly born and it had to faces many struggles. The nation had to fight for its survival and tensions between left Communists and right Hindu extremists were constant (Indian Government, n.d.). Another issue was all humanitarian problems that arise in the country after independence. As a result, almost eight million people had to be resettled and individuals had to be provided homes, employment and citizenship, as they had nothing left (Indian Government, n.d.).

By the 70s, it became clear that the country and its government were not willing to take more risks and responsibilities. This decade is seen as a lost decade for India, in both political and economic terms. Individuals started to go on strikes to protest for the procedures of democratic liberalization and restrictive policies taken by the government towards businesses. During the next decade, the government started to create more businesses and in the 90s, the government started to focus more on the market. The aim was to stabilize society, independence and government in the country and, afterwards, to focus on external relations with other countries. (Chancel, 2019).

It can be asserted that scholars at that specific time in history asked themselves if India could survive as a nation. After many years, the growth and development that the country has experienced raised the question of whether the country will become a global superpower.

Still, India started breaking boundaries by creating a nation based on different languages, religions, inclusiveness, plurality, and non-adversarial model of nationalism. This concept was completely new and has experiences some problems to this date (Indian Government, n.d.). Nowadays, experts see India as a clear example that prior

colonized countries of Africa and Asia can move forward and become important international actors.

The main issue in India is the difference between two sectors of society. There are around 100 million Indians that belong to the middle and they have good living standards but the rest, roughly 300 million people live in poverty. There are two different nations within India that live together and, as Amartya Sen stated, "the first India lives a lot like California, the second (and most populous) India a lot like sub-Saharan Africa" (Tramballi & Missaglia, 2018, p, 66).

People belonging to the first group have access to higher education and they have greater mobility, they can move across India or even go abroad and live in another country. People with these characteristics tend to go to the most developed regions in the country. This has already generated a substantial gap between "Bangalore and rural Karnataka, south India and eastern India, city-dwellers and country-folk" (Tramballi & Missaglia, 2018). And these differences are expected to be even higher in the upcoming future. Furthermore, these differences are also seen in other sectors, such as health care. These inequalities between classes and regions represent one of the factors that prevents India from becoming a big superpower in the long-term, as differences between individuals within a country are a hindrance. In order for a country to become a superpower, its society needs to grow in the same way and everyone must be at the same level of development. If a country wants to function properly and provide equality for everyone, life chances of all Indians, whether men or women, middle or low caste, Hindus or Muslims, northerners or southerners must be the same (Tramballi & Missaglia, 2018).

Another aspect that prevents India from becoming a global superpower is the environmental constraint. India is mirroring the West and it is creating a consumption society that is barely concerned about environmental issues. India is contributing with its industrialization process to climate change and the accumulation of greenhouse gases. Moreover, these actions have also environmental and social costs in the region. India is one of the countries with higher air and water pollution; this leads to an increase of illnesses, biodiversity loss, destructions of forests, decrease of life expectancy and many other social and environmental challenges (Tramballi & Missaglia, 2018). This means that other countries will not take India as an example of

effective and environmentally friendly country. At this time, India has not enough economic resources to face this issue and so it must obtain more incomes to clean the country.

4.3 UNITED NATIONS SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

Sustainable Development Goals

Source: United Nations Department of Global Communications, 2019.

According to the UN, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) represent:

"a call for action by all countries – poor, rich and middle-income – to promote prosperity while protecting the planet. They recognize that ending poverty must go hand-in-hand with strategies that build economic growth and address a range of social needs including education, health, social protection, and job opportunities, while tackling climate change and environmental protection" (United Nations, 2015).

The UN launched this initiative in order to continue with the Millennium Development Goals (MDG). This comprehensive agenda in composed of 17 Goals and 169 targets to face climate change, economic inequality, innovation, sustainable consumption, peace, and justice. On the 25th September 2015, the 193 UN Member States signed in New York in the General Assembly "Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development" (United Nations, 2015). This Agenda entered into force on the 1st January 2016 and its 17 Goals are:

1. "End poverty in all its forms and everywhere;

2. End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture;

3. Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages;

4. Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all;

5. Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls;

6. Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all;

7. Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all;

8. Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all;

9. Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation;

10. Reduce inequality within and among countries;

11. Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable;

12. Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns;

13. Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts;

14. Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development;

15. Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss;

16. Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels; and

17. Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development" (United Nations, 2015).

In September 2019, Heads of State and Government will meet in New Yorks to carry out a comprehensive review on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. This event represents the first meeting on the SDGs since the adoption of the 2030 Agenda in 2015.

4.4 HUMAN DEVELOPMENT INDEX

"The Human Development Index (HDI) was created to emphasize the fact that people and their capacities to move forward should be the ultimate criteria for assessing development" (United Nations, 2010). The HDI is a summary measure of achievements and improvements in "a long and healthy life, being knowledgeable and have a decent standard of living. The HDI is the geometric mean of normalized indices for each of the three dimensions" (United Nations, 2010).

Nevertheless, the HDI portrays only a part of what human development entails. The HDI does not consider inequality, poverty, human security, empowerment and many other aspects of development. So, in order to understand the current situation in India, it will also be taken into account the Oxfam inequality Index.

Regarding India, the country's HDI value for 2017, which is the last year with available data, was 0.640. This means that the country is ranked in the position 130 out of 189 countries and territories. Since 1990, in India life expectancy at birth has increased by 10.9 years, years of schooling have also increased by 3.4 years and GNI per capita has increased by about 26.6%. Nonetheless, HDI in India is still below the average 0.645 of countries in the medium HDI group and above the average of 0.638 for countries in South Asia (United Nations Development Program, 2018).

4.5 OXFAM INEQUALITY INDEX

According to the World Inequality Report of 2018, "inequality has increased in nearly all world regions in recent decades, but at different speeds" (Chancel, 2018). Inequality levels tend to be very different among nations, even in countries with similar development speeds. This shows how important national policies and international institutions are in shaping the world and promoting equality among individuals.

Besides, the World Inequality Report highlights the fact that the "top 1% earners has captured twice as much of that growth as the 50% poorest individuals"

(Chancel, 2018) and the global middle class has been widely reduced. Moreover, the WIR shows that Brazil, sub-Saharan Africa, Middle East and India are the most persistent areas of inequality in the world; this regions are located at the world´s high-inequality frontier (Chancel, 2018).

In India, inequality has rapidly risen since 1990. Nowadays, inequality has reached the highest rates in the country and it is ranked at the same level of inequality as Brazil and Sub-Saharan Africa, despite the fact of being of the strongest economies in the world (see Annex II).

In 2018, Oxfam also released a worldwide index on the commitment of nations to reduce inequalities. According to this index, called the Commitment to Reducing Inequality Index (CRI), India ranks at the bottom of the list. India is located the 147th out of 157 countries in this index. Scholars believe that this situations is quite alarming, given that 1.3 million billion people live under extreme poverty in India. Furthermore, the report shows that India fares poorly on labor rights and respect for women in the workplace. Much of the labor force is allocated in the agricultural and informal sectors. And this leads to a lack of union organizations in the country and a lack of enforcement of gender rights (Oxfam, 2018).

3.5 INDIA´S DEMOGRAPHICS

India is a large nation comprising of 28 states and 7 union territories. Likewise, states and union territories are divided into districts and sub-districts. The lowest administrative bodies in India are villages in rural areas and town in urban areas. This villages and towns may have different sizes and characteristics, depending on their population, availability of land, access to food and water, and many other elements. In the country, when towns grow to achieve an extensive area, this towns are then know as Urban Agglomerations (UAs), which "comprise core town(s) and its outgrowths meeting the urban characteristics" (Indian Government, n.d.) Moreover, all these town and villages are usually part of a sub-district, which can be fully rural or fully urban areas.

India has experienced a high urbanization process since the beginning of the

20th century. In 2011, the level of urbanization in the country reached 31.2% but it still is a rural dominated country and this data is much lower compared to other developing nations, like China, South Africa and Russia, where urbanization exceeds almost 50% (United Nations, n.d.).

In order to understand India, it is also important to mention also religion. India is home of all religions. The main five religions in India are: Hindu, Buddhism, Jainism, Sikhism, Islam and Christianity. These five groups represent more than 99% of Indian population (United Nations, n.d.). Population in India has been almost constant "except a decline in Hindus share and increase in Muslims share" (Indian Government, n.d.).

India is also divided by a caste system. The caste system is a method used in India to differentiate people in the country. This system came into force with the 1901 census in the country and it is believed to have its origin on the Varna system, which is a system that has five categories:

- ➢ Brahman: priests, scholars and teachers;
- ➢ Kshatriya: rules, warriors and administrators;
- ➢ Vaishya: agriculturists and merchants;
- ➢ Shudra: workers, small farmers and service providers:
- ➢ Untouchables (Indian Government, n.d.)

Nonetheless, today society associates more with caste "[…], which are thousands in numbers and vary regionally" (Srinivas, 1957). Moreover, caste division is well accepted by society in India. In the country, caste acts as an identity and beyond that it provides some of the benefits that the welfare state provides (Srinivas, 1957).

In addition, this system makes competition less frequent in India, as position is determined by birth and difficult to change. Many scholars believe that this system is unfair and promotes inequality, given that top citizens will always control power in the system. Thus, they assert that India will be unequal as long as Brahmin (5%) and Kshatriya (7%) remain at the top of society and maintain control over the rest of the population (Srinivas, 1957).

This debate over caste in India has been present in the country for decades. Mahatma Gandhi, father of the Indian nation, believed that this system was and still is discriminatory and unnatural. Nonetheless, he was not completely against the caste

system, given that he believed this system was suitable for the division of labor and these types of division was inevitable. But, he believed that apart from this, the cast system could not prevent people from entering a higher class in society and improving their living standards (Srinivas, 1957).

Caste also influences demographics and it is very important to determine it, as higher castes and sectors of Indian society live in urban areas, while lower castes and sectors live in confined rural areas, where they have little access to education, health, transportation, food and many other elements that conform daily life. Besides, they live in the most remote area of India and they have low decision-making power and they are not able to influence decision-making process and governmental policies, because their voices are not heard.

5. HYPOTHESIS

The hypothesis of this dissertation is that India is not equally applying the SDGs in all areas. In order to validate this hypothesis, it will be studied how development and growth have been in two areas of India: Kerala and Bihar since the year 2016, when the SDGs officially came into force.

5.1 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. How has the division of castes affected the way in which India applies the SDGs? Are they being equally applied in all its territory in order to promote equal development of all its citizens and areas?

2. What are the main differences that can be found between the territories of Bihar and Kerala? Are these territories today at the same stage of economic, social and political development?

3. What are the suitable possible scenarios in these two regions after the meeting that will be held in September in order to revise the SDGs?

6. STRUCTURE AND SOURCES OF THE DISSERTATION

We will first define what Kerala and Bihar are and their importance within the Indian territory, using geopolitics as the main framework. Then, we will review the process of implementation of the SDGs in these two areas. Following this, we will explore the impact of the implementation of the SDGs in Kerala and Bihar and how they have contributed, or not, to development. Finally, we will assess if the SDGs are being implemented equally in the whole country of India and future scenarios. Sources used in this dissertation will be mostly secondary, written by leading experts in the field and academic articles, books, and the official websites of the Indian government.

7. ANALYSIS

7.1 KERALA

Kerala is one of the most prosperous states in India. It is located on the Southwest of the country. The current state was formed in 1956, after the passing of the States Reorganization Act, which tried to organized Indian territories along linguistic lines. It is the twenty-second largest state of India and it has over 33,387,677 million citizens. Its capital city is Trivandrum and Malayalam is the most spoken language in the state (Government of Kerala, n.d.).

As states by the Indian Constitution, Kerala Government has three states. These three states are the Legislature, the Executive and the Judiciary. Each one of them performs different functions (Government of Kerala, n.d.). The mists of tradition mark the history of Kerala. The most traditional legend tells:

> "The State was raised from the depths of the ocean. Parasurama, the Brahmin avatar (incarnation) of Lord Vishnu, had waged an epic series of vengeful wars on the Kshatriyas. Came a moment when Parasurama was struck by remorse at the wanton annihilation he had wrought. He offered severe penance atop the mountain heights. In a mood of profound atonement, the sage heaved his mighty axes into the midst of the distant ocean. The waves foamed and frothed as a prawn-shaped land extending from Gokarnam to Kanyakumari surfaced from the depths of the sea to form the State and hence the sobriquet 'Gods Own Country' (Government of Kerala, n.d.)."

Last year, Kerala was affected by the worst floods and landslides of its history. The productive sectors of the economy including agriculture, industry, and tourism suffered substantial losses. Nevertheless, the State of Kerala demonstrated its capability to face this issue and undertook immediate works of relief (Government of Kerala, n.d.).

Moreover, it can be seen that Kerala is a very prosperous states in India. Its GDP grew at 7.18% between 2017 and 2018 (Government of Kerala, n.d.). This means that growth last year was higher than the previous year, which experienced a growth of 6.22%. Besides, during last year, the contribution from primary, secondary, and tertiary sectors was 10.85%, 27.40% and 61.75% respectively (Government of Kerala, n.d.).

Thanks to this extensive growth, the state of Kerala is being able to end poverty in all its forms and achieve food security for its citizens, especially after the great evolution that the agricultural sector experienced during last year. Further, growth is being sustainable in the state, and despite the fact that last year was difficult for the Kerala due to the floods; it was able to recover itself. Also, it needs to be taken into account the fact that Kerala is the Indian state with higher Human Development Index and lowest poverty rate (Suryanarayana, Agrawal & Prabhu, 2011, p. 16).

The State of Kerala is also very wealthy thanks to tourism, which is an important activity for the area. It is one "of the most sought after tourist destinations in the world" (Government of Kerala, n.d.). They have even created a brand of *responsible tourism* that is based on the concern of the State about development and environment. With these types of initiatives, the government is trying to tackle global warning and comply with the SDGs. Moreover, Kerala is the most advanced state in India and the one with less confrontations and criminality (Government of Kerala, n.d.). All these factors promote development in this area.

7.2 BIHAR

Bihar is one of the 29 states that conform the Republic of India and it is located in the East of India. This state is land-locked, as it has no access to the see. Moreover, Bihar is located between West Bengal, which is a very humid area of India, and Uttar Pradesh. The most populous country of the state is Patna, the capital city, and it is the third most populated state of the country with 104,100,00 citizens (Government of Bihar, n.d.).

Bihar has always been a very symbolic place for Indian citizens, given that it was here where Mahatma Gandhi initiated his civil-disobedience movement against the British rule that led India to its independence. For this reason, many citizens from Bihar became an important part of the struggle for independence and they fought side to side with Gandhi (Government of Bihar, n.d.).

One of the main factors that determine standard of living and people´s survival capacity in this particular state is rain. Rainfall determines the nature of vegetation and Bihar can be described as a "fertile alluvial plain occupying the Gangetic Valley." (Government of Bihar, n.d.). Crops are crucial for individuals living in this area and they live from major crops (wheat, lentils, sugarcane) and fruits (mangoes, bananas, litchis). It is because of this that water is key for individuals, animals, agriculture, industries, transportation, and production of electricity. Thank to rainfall and rivers in the region, individuals are able to obtain water for irrigation and produce energy for the entire state.

Further, the state of Bihar is also known for its mineral production, especially steatite, pyrites, quartzite, crude mica and limestone. In short, it can be asserted that Bihar has a great geographical location, even if it has no sea around, natural beauty and historical importance in India (Government of Bihar, n.d.).

Regarding people´s development and knowledge in Bihar, it can be seen that the total number of literate people in the state is around 3 million citizens (Government of Bihar, n.d.). This means that most part of the population in Bihar is able neither to write nor to read. Besides, it is important to remark that men tend to have a higher literacy rate (60%) than women (33%) (Government of Bihar, n.d.). Thus, it can be said that gender inequality is still persistent in this area. This data seems to be really worrying for the Indian government and, even if data has improved, Bihar has one of the lowest literacy rates in the country.

Scholars believe that Bihar has fallen behind other Indian states since the late 1970s, in terms of social and economic development (Government of Bihar, n.d.). They assert that this is due to some central government policies that have benefited other areas in India. Currently, the state government is trying to improve the situation by increasing infrastructures, building health care facilities, improving children´s access to education and combating crime and corruption. The current Prime Minister of Bihar,

Nitish Kumar, made a manifesto in 2017 based on economic development, crime and corruption and social inequality (Economic Times, 2017).

7.3 SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

As it can be inferred from descriptions of both states of India provided above, India mirrors the developing world. There many areas of India that are urban and developed areas where Indian citizens have access to education, health, food and energy supply, but there are other areas of the country where citizens still live below poverty line.

In order to achieve Goal 1 of the SDG, India must pursue three main objectives: tackle "chronic poverty, stopping impoverishment, and sustaining poverty escapes" (Chronic Poverty Advisory Network, 2014, p. 31). The Indian central government is not implementing the necessary economic growth models in the whole country to achieve inclusive economic growth. It is focused on the most urban and touristic areas, but there are many other rural areas in the country, such as Bihar, with high population density that the government has to take care of too.

In regard to Goal 2, the Indian government decided to implement in 2017 the National Food Security Act (NFSA), which is intended to enlarge India´s food distribution programs and to provide more states with quality food. As of today, this program has been implemented in some Indian states, such as Kerala, but many others still aside this program´s implementation, as for example Bihar (Puri, 2017).

Regarding Goal 3, Bihar is one of the poorest states in India in terms of healthcare system too. According to Nayar and Kumar (2005), there is only one doctor for every 33,347 citizens in the region, whereas the ration in Kerala is 1 doctor to every 1,855 citizens. Besides, the lack of good infrastructures and communications makes it very difficult for people to access health centers and good health systems in Bihar (Nayar & Kumar, 2005).

It is also important to highlight Goal 5 of the SDGs. Regarding this Goal, it can be said that Bihar is one of the weakest and poorest states of India in terms of women empowerment, as it ranks 32nd in the list of the Women Empowerment Index within

India (United Nations, 2005). On the other hand, Kerala is ranked 6th in the Women Empowerment Index (United Nations, 2005). This means that Kerala is actually taking action and promoting women empowerment in order to achieve this Goal (see Annex III).

Furthermore, Kerala has emerged as one of the frontrunners in the race to achieve sustainable development, which is connected to Goal 8 of the SDGs; whereas Bihar is one of the laggards in the list of Indian states. The state of Kerala is achieving sustainable development, given that the government of the state is concerned about healthcare, gender equality, use of clean energy, peace building and creating accountable institutions. All these areas are important to take into account if the country wants to achieve sustainable development.

In addition, Kerala is trying to make its institutions more accountable and inclusive at all levels, as stated in Goal 16. According to the Public Affairs Index of 2018, Kerala is the best-governed state of India. On the other side, Bihar is ranked as one of the less accountable and most unequal states in India (Dutta, 2018). This index also takes into account the complexity to govern and implement policies in a country with many different religions, entities, ethnicities, and overpopulated states.

Finally, Bihar´s chief minister stated that the state performs much better that before and some aspects of the population have been improved. He talks very often about criminality rates in the state and highlights the fact that Bihar´s rate is lower than in many other prosperous states in India. According to data, "Bihar reports 174 cognizable offences per 100,000 population" (Bhandari, 2016), whereas Kerala reports twice as many. Nevertheless, this data should not always be taken into account because in the state of Bihar many of the offences and crimes are not reported, due to the extreme poverty that individuals go through. Besides, women in Bihar tend not to report assaults and crimes against them, due to low women education on the issue and fear of retaliation (Bhandari, 2016).

7.4 FUTURE SCENARIOS

One possible future scenario is that the state of Kerala will continue to growth and mirror the Western developed countries. As a result, fertility rate and mortality rate will decrease and migration will be the only solution to face this situation of lack of middle-aged citizens. Besides, it will continue to be one of the most developed states in India and still a consumer state where wealth will be higher than in other Indian states. On the other hand, Bihar will continue to be one of the least developed states in India and continue to perform similar to countries in sub-Saharan Africa. Thus, differences between both states will still persist and Bihar will not be able to reach the level of growth of Kerala. Another possible scenario is that the government decides to implement SDGs equally in the country and pays the same level of attention to all areas in the country. However, due to territorial extension, high population density in India, and governmental division; the most feasible one seems to be the first scenario portrayed.

8. CONCLUSION

This research Project has been able to confirm that India is not equally implementing UN Sustainable Development Goals. This is mainly due to the fact that there are many Indias in India. Every regional government in the country has the power to implement its own measures at the level decided by the chief of the state. This is leading India to becoming one of the most unequal countries in the world.

In addition, demographic division is also making the implementation of SDGs more complex. There are some regions that are very rich in natural materials but the government is not enhancing their capabilities, given that these regions are mostly rural areas where people live from agriculture and crops. On the other hand, the costal areas and urban cities are being developed and the country is focused on that, as this will attire foreign investment in the country, tourism and many other sources of income for the nation.

Furthermore, it can be stated that India is a very traditional and religious based country. Society is divided in castes and individuals are not able to promote in society and to achieve better living standards. This is also leading to stagnation in development in certain areas, like for example Bihar. These Indian citizens are not provided with good education, health, employment, and transport policies and society is not able to growth and to have better incomes.

Scholars believe that the meeting that will be held in September in UN New York´s headquarters is crucial for India and for the implementation of SDGs in the country. India is a very prosperous country and is part of the BRICS countries, which are the new strong economies that will lead the future, but citizens in India are not being benefited from this growth. Actually, only a small group of citizens in India is improving.

To conclude, if India is not able to find balance and provide all its citizens with the same capabilities and advantages, the country will never achieve development and it is impossible for India to lead the 21st century with its current social, economic and political conditions.

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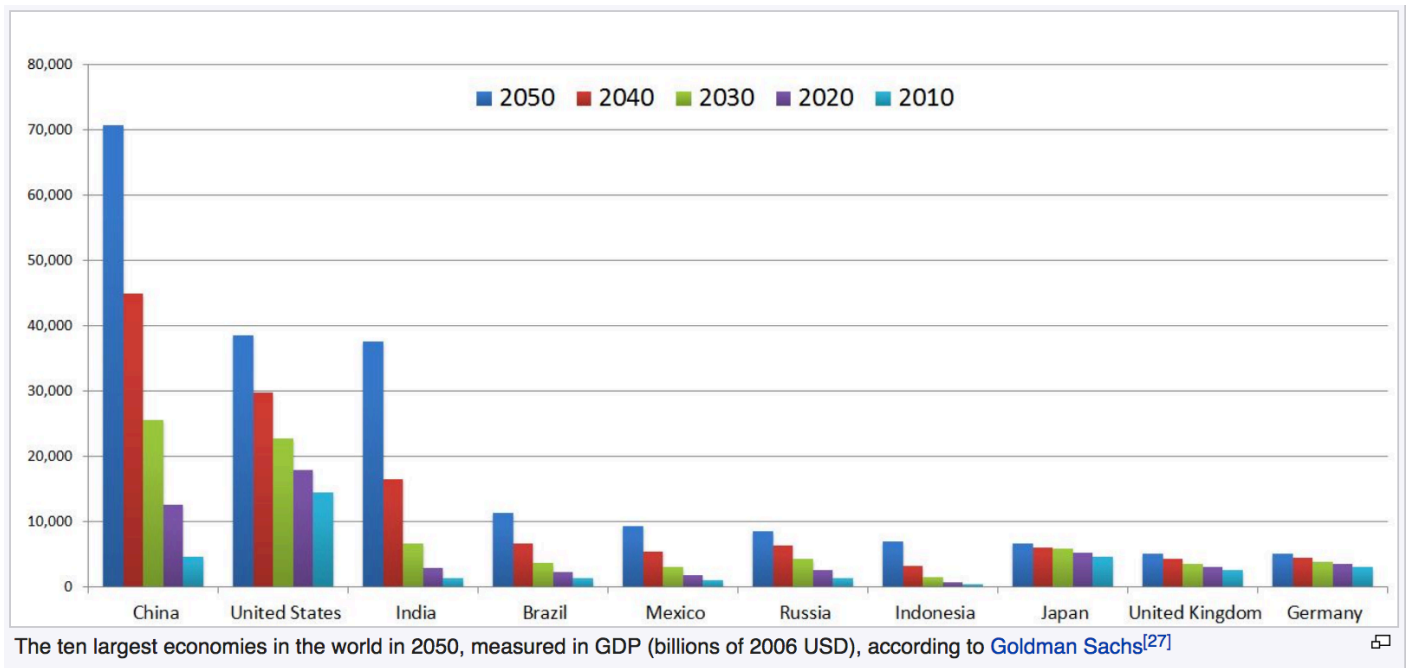https://www.ft.com/content/eeb439a0-7595-11e9-bbad-7c18c0ea0201

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10. ANNEXES

10.1 ANNEX I

The ten largest economies in the world in 2050, measured in GDP (billions of 2006 USD), according to Goldman Sachs[27]

Source: Shukla, V. Top 10 Largest Economies By 2050: Emerging Nations To Dominate, 2019. Retrieved April 2019, from https://www.valuewalk.com/2019/01/top-10-largest-economies-2050-china/

10.2 ANNEX II

Top 10% income shares across the world, 1980–2016: Is world inequality moving toward the high-inequality frontier?
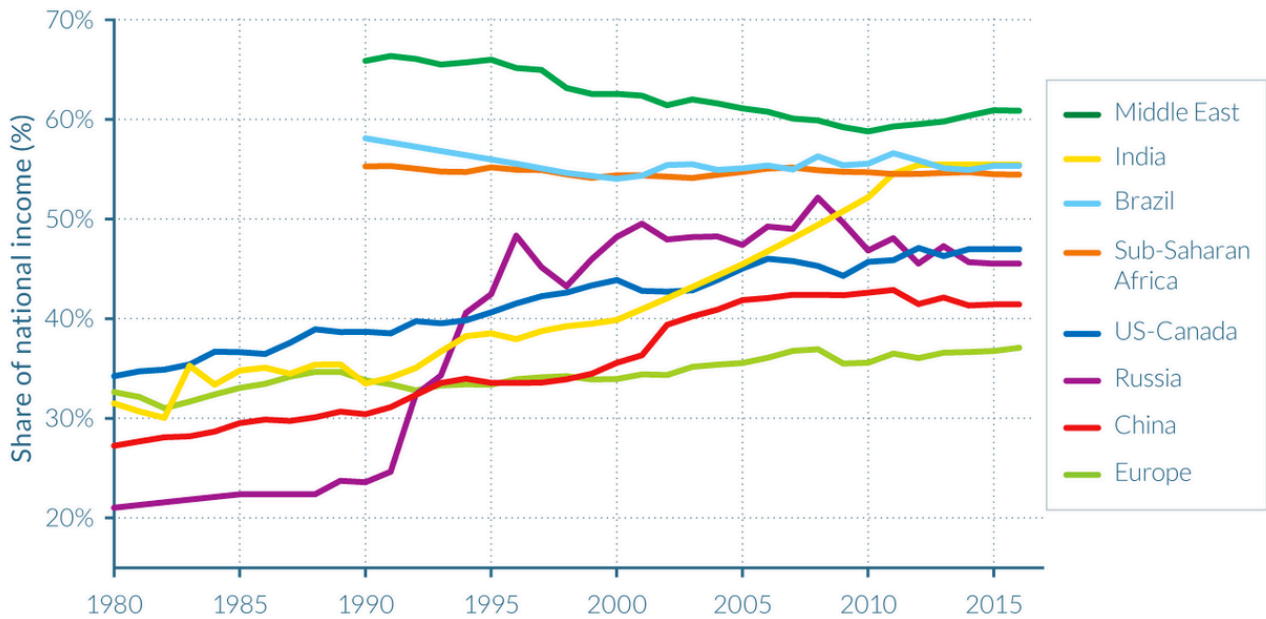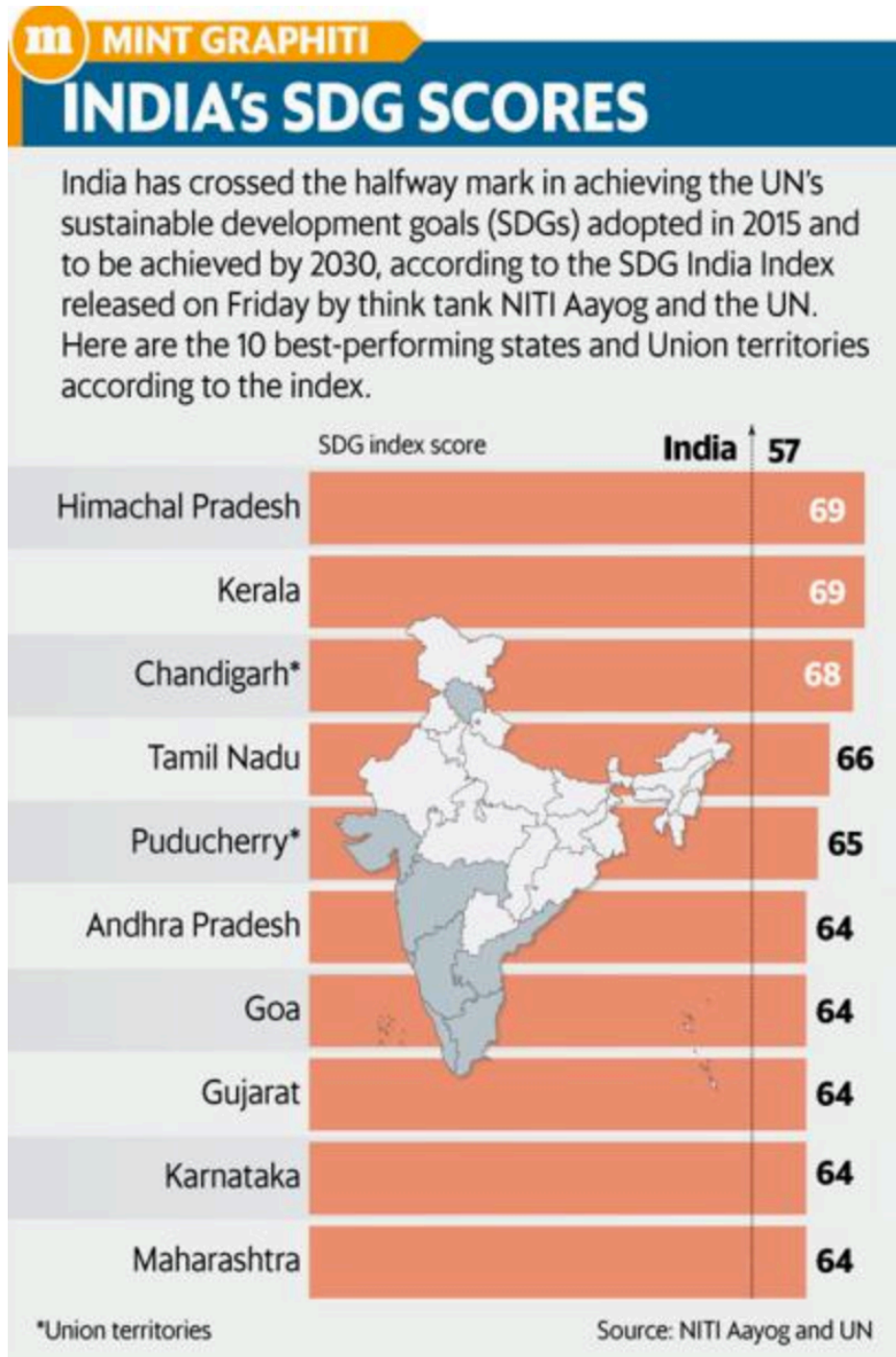

Source: WID.world (2017). See wir2018.wid.world/methodology.html for data series and notes.
In 2016, 55% of national income was received by the Top 10% earners in India, against 31% in 1980.

Source: World Inequality Database, 2017.

10.3 ANNEX III

Source: Fishman, A. India Index Report Provides Baseline for Performance across SDGs, 2019. Retrieved from https://sdg.iisd.org/news/india-index-report-provides-baseline-for-performance-across-sdgs/