

Research Article

Integrated Development Equilibrium Theory: A Framework for Understanding, Measuring, and Achieving Sustainable Development

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Abstract

Conventional Development Assessment Often Examines Economic Production, Human Development, Institutions, Social Conditions, or Environmental Sustainability Through Partially Separate Lenses. Integrated Development Equilibrium Theory (IDET) Proposes a Unified Framework in Which Development Is Understood as the Interaction of Five Foundational Dimensions: Economic Vitality, Institutional Integrity, Human Capability, Household Welfare and Social Inclusion, and Environmental Sustainability and Resilience. The Theory Distinguishes Four Analytical Levels That Are Frequently Conflated: Developmental Capacity, Developmental Equilibrium, Conversion Effectiveness, and Developmental Comfort. Developmental Capacity Refers to the Resources, Capabilities, Institutional Conditions, Social Foundations, and Environmental Assets Available to a Society. Developmental Equilibrium Concerns the Degree to Which These Dimensions Remain Sufficiently Compatible and Mutually Supportive. Conversion Effectiveness, Represented Conceptually by the Developmental Conversion Efficiency Factor (Ω), Concerns How Effectively Capacity Is Translated Into Realized Human Outcomes. Developmental Comfort Is the Human-facing Outcome: the Extent to Which Development Is Experienced Through Security, Accessibility, Predictability, Dignity, Opportunity, Agency, and Sustainable Living Conditions. IDET Therefore Does Not Claim That Its Individual Dimensions Are Novel, Its Contribution Lies in Theorizing Their Interaction Through an Explicit Capacity - Equilibrium - Conversion - Outcome Architecture, Including a Weakest-link Mechanism and a Proposed Developmental Equilibrium Index (DEI). The Paper Develops the Philosophical and Theoretical Foundations of IDET, Reviews Relevant Development Traditions, Formalizes Its Core Relationships, Proposes a Preliminary Measurement Architecture and Empirical Strategy, and Uses Bangladesh Only as an Illustrative Application. The Study Is Theory-building Rather Than Empirical and Makes No Claim That Ω , DEI, or Developmental Comfort Has Yet Been Validated. The Paper Concludes with Falsifiable Propositions and a Research Agenda for Testing Whether Equilibrium and Conversion Effectiveness Explain Variation in Human Outcomes Beyond Conventional Development Indicators.

Keywords

Integrated Development Equilibrium Theory, Developmental Equilibrium, Developmental Capacity, Conversion Effectiveness, Developmental Conversion Efficiency Factor, Developmental Equilibrium Index, Developmental Comfort, Sustainable Development

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1. Introduction

Development has produced substantial gains in production, income, technology, infrastructure, health, education, and access to services, yet these gains are unevenly distributed and can be accompanied by institutional weakness, exclusion, environmental stress, insecurity, or declining confidence in public systems. Many conventional assessments begin with how much a society produces, accumulates, or achieves. Such measures are important, but they do not by themselves explain why comparable resources can generate different human outcomes, why gains in one area may fail to reinforce gains elsewhere, or how present achievements affect future developmental capacity.

The central problem addressed by this paper is therefore not multidimensionality alone. Contemporary development scholarship already recognizes that development is economic, institutional, human, social, and environmental. The unresolved theoretical question is how these dimensions interact: whether they remain sufficiently compatible to sustain progress, how effectively their combined potential is converted into outcomes, and how those outcomes are experienced by people.

IDET addresses this problem through an integrated architecture. Its five dimensions are analytically distinct but functionally interdependent. Economic Vitality (E) concerns productive and material capacity; Institutional Integrity (I) concerns the quality and reliability of rules and implementation; Human Capability (H) concerns people's ability to use opportunities; Household Welfare and Social Inclusion (S) concerns access, distribution, security, and participation; and Environmental Sustainability and Resilience (R) concerns ecological conditions and the capacity to withstand shocks. These dimensions form the developmental-capacity base of the theory.

IDET makes four distinctions. First, developmental capacity is not the same as realized development: resources and capabilities are means, not outcomes. Second, developmental equilibrium is not the same as performance in individual dimensions: a society can improve in several areas while becoming systemically vulnerable because one critical dimension deteriorates. Third, equilibrium is not numerical equality: the dimensions need not have identical levels or rates of change; equilibrium means sufficient compatibility, mutual support, and adaptability. Fourth, equilibrium is not conversion effectiveness: a balanced system may still convert capacity poorly, while an effective conversion process may generate strong outcomes from more limited capacity.

The human-facing consequence of this architecture is Developmental Comfort. The concept refers neither to material luxury nor to subjective happiness alone. It denotes the lived expression of developmental success through security, accessibility, predictability, dignity, opportunity, agency, reliable services, and confidence that present improvements can be sustained. Developmental Comfort is therefore an outcome of

the five dimensions and their conversion, not a sixth dimension.

Resources → Access → Capability → Utilization → Well-being → Developmental Comfort

The objectives of the article are to review major development traditions; identify the theoretical gap concerning interaction, equilibrium, and conversion; develop the philosophical and conceptual foundations of IDET; formalize its principal relationships; distinguish Ω from DEI; and derive propositions and hypotheses for future empirical testing. The paper is explicitly theory-building. Bangladesh is used only to illustrate how the framework can organize evidence; it is not presented as an empirical test of the theory.

The human-centred significance of this equilibrium is captured by Developmental Comfort. It does not denote luxury or material affluence. It refers to the extent to which individuals and households are able to translate societal resources, institutional arrangements, capabilities, and opportunities into secure, dignified, accessible, predictable, and sustainable living conditions.

Resources → Access → Capability → Utilization → Well-being → Developmental Comfort

The objectives of the article are to review the evolution of development theory, identify the conceptual gap concerning interaction and equilibrium, develop the philosophical and theoretical foundations of IDET, formalize developmental conversion and equilibrium, and derive propositions and hypotheses for future empirical research. The study is theory-building rather than empirical and does not claim to validate the proposed coefficient or index through cross-national data.

2. Theoretical Framework and Methodology

IDET is founded on the premise that development is integrated, dynamic, adaptive, and human-centered. It treats development as a complex social system in which economic, institutional, human, social, and environmental conditions interact rather than as a collection of independent sectoral achievements.

IDET is founded on the premise that development is integrated, dynamic, adaptive, and human-centered. It rejects reductionist interpretations that define development exclusively through economic growth, income, institutional performance, human capability, or environmental sustainability. Development is treated as a complex social system whose principal dimensions continuously interact, reinforce, and constrain one another.

The framework draws selectively on systems thinking, institutional economics, human development, sustainable development, and complexity perspectives. It does not seek to replace these traditions. Its theoretical contribution is to specify

how their complementary insights can be organized around four linked questions: what capacity exists, how compatible are its dimensions, how effectively is it converted, and what do people experience?

Development is neither static nor necessarily linear. Societies adapt to technological change, demographic shifts, economic shocks, institutional reform, environmental pressures, globalization, and changing expectations. Resources, infrastructure, institutions, capabilities, and environmental assets matter because of what they enable people and societies to achieve and sustain.

2.1. Ontological Foundation

IDET understands development as an emergent property of an interconnected social system. Economic Vitality creates productive and material capacity; Institutional Integrity affects allocation, implementation, accountability, and reliability; Human Capability determines people's ability to use opportunities; Household Welfare and Social Inclusion shape distribution and access; and Environmental Sustainability and Resilience determine whether gains can persist under ecological and other shocks.

Development is therefore conceptualized as a dynamic condition in which these dimensions remain sufficiently compatible and mutually reinforcing to support sustained human outcomes. This definition does not require equal scores across dimensions and does not imply that every dimension must improve at the same rate.

The ontological position rests on four propositions: development is multidimensional; its dimensions are interdependent; developmental processes are dynamic and adaptive; and the ultimate significance of developmental performance lies in its consequences for lived human conditions.

2.2. From Resources to Developmental Comfort

Resources may include income, capital, natural resources, infrastructure, technology, public revenue, institutional capacity, and human skills. Yet possession does not guarantee effective use. Between capacity and human outcomes stand access, capabilities, distributional arrangements, public services, institutions, implementation, and environmental conditions.

IDET distinguishes six connected elements in the conversion process: resource availability, access, capability, utilization, well-being, and Developmental Comfort. Resource availability concerns assets available to society; access concerns whether people can obtain and use them; capability concerns the conditions required to turn access into meaningful opportunities; utilization concerns effective use; well-being concerns achieved conditions; and Developmental Comfort captures the lived expression of those achievements.

Developmental Comfort includes security, accessibility, predictability, dignity, opportunity, agency, and freedom from

avoidable material or institutional burdens. It is not synonymous with subjective happiness, life satisfaction, quality of life, or the Human Development Index. Rather, it is a theory-specific outcome concept intended to capture the lived security, access, dignity, agency, and predictability generated through successful conversion of multidimensional developmental capacity.

This extends Sen's [24, 25] insight that people differ in their ability to convert resources into valued functioning and freedom. IDET places that conversion within a wider system in which institutions, economic vitality, household welfare, social inclusion, and environmental conditions affect whether capabilities can be exercised and sustained. *Developmental Comfort is consequently an outcome concept, not a sixth dimension.*

2.3. Epistemological Foundation

IDET adopts a critical-realist and analytically pluralist orientation. Developmental outcomes are observable, but the mechanisms producing them are complex, reciprocal, and context-dependent. Economics illuminates production and allocation; political science and public policy illuminate institutions; sociology examines social relations and inclusion; human development theory emphasizes capabilities and freedoms; and environmental scholarship addresses ecological limits and resilience.

The framework integrates these perspectives through a theory of dynamic equilibrium and conversion. The methodological orientation is conceptually pluralist, combining theoretical synthesis, comparative analysis, systems reasoning, empirical observation, and mathematical representation. The present study remains primarily conceptual.

2.4. Research Design and Theory-Building Method

The study uses a theory-building design. It reviews major development traditions, identifies the unresolved problem of interdimensional interaction, synthesizes complementary insights, and formalizes the resulting framework through definitions, assumptions, relationships, propositions, hypotheses, and a preliminary measurement architecture.

The Developmental Conversion Efficiency Factor (Ω), Developmental Equilibrium Index (DEI), and Developmental Comfort are proposed constructs. Their measurement properties, causal status, and empirical validity remain open questions for subsequent research.

2.5. Scope and Contribution

IDET does not claim that its five dimensions are individually new. Economic production, institutions, capabilities, welfare, inclusion, and sustainability are well established in the

development literature. The contribution is theoretical architecture: (1) treating the five dimensions as a connected developmental-capacity system; (2) distinguishing capacity from equilibrium; (3) distinguishing equilibrium from conversion effectiveness through separate DEI and Ω constructs; (4) identifying a weakest-link mechanism through which severe and persistent weakness may constrain returns from stronger dimensions; and (5) connecting these processes to a human-facing outcome, Developmental Comfort, under rights, dignity, and intertemporal sustainability constraints.

The central question therefore changes from “How much has a society accumulated?” to “How effectively does a society convert its multidimensional capacity into balanced, resilient, and sustained improvements in people's lives?” This is a relational contribution rather than a claim that IDET replaces established development theories.

3. Literature Review

3.1. Classical Foundations

Classical political economy established the importance of production, specialization, capital formation, trade, distribution, and productivity. Smith [26] emphasized specialization and capital accumulation; Ricardo [21] examined comparative advantage and distribution; Marx [14] emphasized productive systems, ownership, class, and inequality; Schumpeter [23] focused on innovation and entrepreneurship; and Solow [27] formalized the roles of capital, labor, and technological progress in long-run growth.

3.2. Structural Perspectives

Modernization theory interpreted development as structural transformation through industrialization, urbanization, education, technology, and institutional change [13, 20, 22]. Dependency theory challenged the assumption of a universal path and emphasized unequal international relationships and historical structures [7, 8]. World-Systems Theory further located national trajectories within a hierarchical global economy [33].

These approaches demonstrate that development cannot be explained solely through domestic economic growth. Historical structures, external relationships, and global power matter. IDET treats such conditions as important contextual influences while focusing on how domestic institutions, capabilities, welfare, inclusion, and environmental conditions interact with them.

3.3. Human-Centered Development

IDET retains this human-centered insight but extends it systematically. Human capability is exercised within economic, institutional, household, social, and environmental contexts. Ca-

pabilities may remain underused where employment is inadequate, institutions are ineffective, exclusion is extensive, or environmental conditions deteriorate.

This leads to the distinction between resource possession and lived developmental outcomes. Developmental Comfort captures the extent to which people experience secure, dignified, accessible, predictable, and sustainable conditions. It therefore answers a question that aggregate resource measures cannot answer: what does development mean in everyday life?

3.4. Institutional and Governance Perspectives

Institutional economics demonstrates that rules, incentives, property rights, public administration, state capacity, and institutional reliability shape economic and social outcomes [1, 15, 19]. Fukuyama [9, 10] emphasizes state capacity and political order, while governance literature highlights accountability, participation, transparency, responsiveness, effectiveness, equity, and the rule of law.

From an IDET perspective, Institutional Integrity is not merely an external determinant of growth. Institutions interact reciprocally with economic conditions, human capability, social cohesion, household welfare, and environmental pressures. Effective institutions improve resource allocation and service delivery; persistent inequality and insecurity can, in turn, weaken legitimacy and institutional performance.

3.5. Sustainable, Inclusive, and Resilient Development

The Brundtland Commission defined sustainable development in terms of meeting present needs without compromising future generations [36]. The Sustainable Development Goals further integrated poverty reduction, health, education, gender equality, decent work, inequality, environmental protection, institutions, peace, and partnership [29]. Stiglitz et al. [28] argued for measurement systems extending beyond production toward quality of life, distribution, and sustainability [31, 32].

3.6. From Multidimensional Development to Developmental Equilibrium

The literature has progressively broadened development: classical economics established productive foundations; structural approaches highlighted historical and global relationships; capability theory placed human freedom at the center; institutional approaches emphasized rules and state capacity; and sustainable, inclusive, and well-being approaches expanded attention to environment, distribution, and lived conditions.

Yet multidimensionality does not by itself explain interaction. A framework may document improvements in income, education, health, governance, or environmental quality without specifying whether those improvements reinforce one another, remain compatible over time, or create vulnerabilities

elsewhere.

Multidimensionality asks what dimensions matter. IDET adds three relational questions: how compatible are those dimensions, how effectively is their combined capacity converted into outcomes, and how are those outcomes experienced by people?

This relational transition, from dimensions to interaction, equilibrium, conversion, and lived outcomes, motivates IDET.

3.7. Research Gap and Emergence of IDET

The literature provides strong foundations for a multidimensional understanding of development, but the mechanisms connecting economic, institutional, human, social, and environmental conditions are often distributed across separate theoretical traditions. The gap addressed here is therefore one of integration and relational specification rather than the absence of multidimensional development concepts.

A society may experience rapid economic growth while institutional reliability deteriorates; expand education without generating productive opportunities; improve household income while environmental security worsens; or accumulate infrastructure while access and service quality remain weak. These configurations cannot be understood adequately by inspecting any single dimension.

IDET responds through four linked contributions: a five-dimensional developmental-capacity system; a distinct concept of dynamic equilibrium; a separate conversion-effectiveness construct (Ω) rather than embedding conversion in the equilibrium measure; and *Developmental Comfort as a human-facing outcome*. The weakest-link proposition then specifies a testable mechanism through which severe and persistent weakness in a critical dimension may constrain the returns to stronger dimensions.

The central proposition is that sustainable development is not simply multidimensional achievement. It is the capacity to maintain sufficient compatibility among interdependent developmental dimensions and to convert that capacity into sustained human outcomes, while preserving rights, dignity, and future developmental capacity.

4. The IDET Framework: Definition, Assumptions, and Core Principles

IDET begins from the proposition that development cannot be adequately understood through accumulation, output, or sectoral growth in isolation. The meaningful analytical task is to distinguish what a society possesses from how its dimensions interact, how effectively capacity is converted, and what people ultimately experience.

The framework therefore distinguishes inputs, system conditions, conversion processes, and outcomes. The five dimensions constitute developmental capacity. Developmental equilibrium describes their compatibility and mutual support. Ω represents conversion effectiveness. Developmental Comfort

captures the lived human consequences. Rights and dignity form a normative boundary condition, while intertemporal sustainability qualifies whether present gains preserve future capacity.

4.1. Developmental Equilibrium

Equilibrium in IDET does not imply a static, uniform, or numerically equal condition. It means a dynamic configuration in which the principal dimensions remain sufficiently compatible, mutually supportive, and adaptable to sustain improvements over time.

Economic expansion accompanied by institutional deterioration may create short-term gains while weakening long-term foundations. Technological progress without human capability or social inclusion may increase productive capacity without proportionate improvements in lived conditions. Environmental degradation may generate present gains while reducing future capacity.

The weakest-link principle follows from this reasoning. Severe and persistent weakness in a foundational dimension can disproportionately reduce the benefits generated by stronger dimensions. The principle is not a literal minimum-score rule; its empirical form, threshold, duration, and interaction effects remain to be tested.

4.2. Core Assumptions

IDET rests on nine assumptions: resources are necessary but insufficient; conversion matters alongside possession; development is multidimensional; access and capability mediate outcomes; distribution matters because aggregate gains may coexist with deprivation; development is dynamic; human dignity is intrinsic to development; sustainability requires compatibility among dimensions; and developmental outcomes are emergent rather than fully inferable from individual dimensions in isolation.

These assumptions distinguish IDET from a simple additive model. Strong performance in one dimension may support weaker dimensions, but there is no theoretical basis for assuming unlimited substitutability when another critical dimension becomes severely and persistently weak.

4.3. Five Core Dimensions

The five principal dimensions are:

- 1) *Economic Vitality (E)*: productive and material capacity, including production, income, employment, productivity, investment, infrastructure, technology, and economic security.
- 2) *Institutional Integrity (I)*: the quality and reliability of rules and implementation, including governance, accountability, rule of law, administrative capacity, transparency, policy effectiveness, institutional reliability, and public trust.
- 3) *Human Capability (H)*: people's substantive ability to

use opportunities, including education, health, skills, knowledge, agency, freedoms, and relevant enabling conditions.

- 4) *Household Welfare and Social Inclusion (S)*: the distribution and accessibility of developmental gains, including household conditions, income security, equality of opportunity, social cohesion, participation, inclusion, and social protection.
- 5) *Environmental Sustainability and Resilience (R)*: ecological conditions and the capacity to preserve resources, adapt to shocks, and sustain livelihoods across time.

These dimensions are analytically distinct but functionally interconnected. Their consequences may overlap, for example, institutional quality can affect household welfare, but conceptual overlap in outcomes does not make the constructs identical. E concerns productive/material capacity; I concerns rules and implementation; H concerns people's capabilities; S concerns distribution, access, and social inclusion; and R concerns ecological sustainability and resilience.

4.4. Developmental Conversion and Ω

IDET distinguishes developmental capacity, developmental equilibrium, and conversion effectiveness. Developmental capacity is represented by the five dimensions. Developmental equilibrium concerns their compatibility. Conversion effectiveness concerns how efficiently that capacity becomes realized human outcomes.

Conceptually:

$$\text{Developmental Outcomes} = \Omega \times F(E, I, H, S, R)$$

The Developmental Conversion Efficiency Factor (Ω) represents the effectiveness of the mechanisms through which developmental capacity is translated into human outcomes. It is not a well-being score and is not assumed to be a universal fixed coefficient. It is a latent or estimable property of a conversion process that may vary across societies, groups, sectors, and time.

A society may have strong and relatively balanced capacity but weak conversion because of administrative inefficiency, barriers to access, exclusion, poor implementation, or contextual constraints. Conversely, more limited capacity may generate meaningful outcomes where institutions, capabilities, access, and utilization function effectively.

4.5. Developmental Equilibrium Index

The Developmental Equilibrium Index (DEI) is proposed as an analytical measure of interdimensional equilibrium:

$$\text{DEI} = f(E, I, H, S, R)$$

DEI is deliberately separated from Ω . DEI concerns the configuration and compatibility of the five foundational di-

mensions; Ω concerns the effectiveness of converting that capacity into outcomes. A society can therefore have relatively high equilibrium but low conversion effectiveness, or relatively effective conversion alongside a less balanced capacity structure. The empirical relationship between DEI and outcomes is a proposition to be tested, not an established finding.

5. Formalizing IDET

Let the vector of developmental capacity be:

$$C = (E, I, H, S, R)$$

where E, I, H, S, and R represent the five dimensions.

Realized development can be expressed conceptually as:

$$D = \Omega \cdot F(E, I, H, S, R)$$

where D represents realized developmental performance, F represents the interaction among the five dimensions, and Ω represents conversion effectiveness. The expression is intentionally general: the theory specifies the relational structure but does not impose a single functional form before empirical testing.

5.1. Conversion Function

Conceptually:

$$\Omega = f(A, Ch, U, G, X)$$

where A is accessibility of resources and services; Ch is human capability; U is effective utilization; G is governance and institutional effectiveness; and X represents contextual economic, social, technological, and environmental conditions. These components are mechanisms through which capacity may be translated into outcomes, not additional dimensions of IDET.

The function explains why resource abundance and developmental achievement may diverge. A country may have substantial financial resources but weak institutions, extensive infrastructure but unequal access, an educated population but insufficient employment, or rapid growth accompanied by environmental insecurity. Conversely, modest resources may generate strong outcomes when conversion mechanisms function effectively.

Ω should therefore be estimated empirically rather than treated as a predetermined universal coefficient. The present paper does not estimate it.

5.2. Developmental Comfort

The ultimate human-facing outcome is Developmental Comfort (DC), conceptually represented as:

$$DC = g(D, M, Q, Sf, Dg)$$

where D is realized development; M is material and livelihood security; Q is the quality and accessibility of essential services; Sf is social and personal security; and Dg represents dignity, agency, and confidence in institutions. The equation is conceptual rather than a validated measurement model.

Developmental Comfort captures the practical experience of development. It includes security, access, opportunity, reliable services, environmental safety, dignity, agency, and confidence in the future. It is not a sixth foundational dimension and should not be treated as synonymous with happiness, life satisfaction, quality of life, or Human Development Index.

5.3. Weakest-Link Principle

A conceptual weakest-link expression is:

$$D \approx \Omega \cdot \min(E, I, H, S, R)$$

This expression is a heuristic representation, not a literal measurement equation. The theory does not claim that the lowest numerical score mechanically determines development. Rather, it predicts that severe and persistent weakness in a critical foundational dimension can reduce the marginal developmental return of stronger dimensions. Alternative nonlinear or threshold specifications should therefore be tested empirically.

The principle cautions against simple additive aggregation. Developmental equilibrium is not equality; the concern is whether a critical weakness becomes sufficiently severe, persistent, or interconnected to constrain the wider system.

5.4. Dynamic Equilibrium

Development changes as societies experience demographic shifts, technological innovation, institutional reform, environmental pressures, political change, and external shocks. Equilibrium is therefore a trajectory rather than a fixed point.

Conceptually:

Rather than imposing the condition $dDC/dt > 0$ at every moment, IDET proposes that sustainable development should exhibit improvement or durable maintenance over time, allowing temporary setbacks caused by shocks while requiring preservation of future developmental capacity.

This introduces intertemporal sustainability. Rapid gains achieved by exhausting environmental resources, weakening institutions, increasing exclusion, or reducing human capability may undermine future development even when short-term outcomes improve.

This introduces intertemporal sustainability. Rapid gains achieved by exhausting environmental resources, weakening institutions, increasing exclusion, or reducing human capability may undermine future development.

5.5. Rights and Dignity Constraint

IDET incorporates a normative boundary: aggregate gains should not be interpreted as full developmental success where they depend upon systematic erosion of fundamental dignity, rights, security, or agency.

Conceptually:

$$D^* = D, \text{ subject to } RD \geq RD_{\min}$$

where RD represents rights and dignity and $RD_{\min}$ represents a minimum normative condition. The expression is not intended to reduce rights to a single number. Rights and dignity are not an additional developmental dimension; they are a normative boundary condition within which developmental gains are interpreted.

5.6. Central Proposition

Development occurs when a society effectively converts its economic, institutional, human, social, and environmental capacities into sustained improvements in human well-being while maintaining sufficient equilibrium among these dimensions to preserve present and future developmental capacity, subject to rights and dignity.

The proposition yields several testable expectations: resource abundance need not produce proportionate outcomes when conversion is weak; institutional quality should condition the relationship between resources and outcomes; access and capability should increase developmental returns; severe weakness in a critical dimension should reduce the returns to stronger dimensions; Developmental Comfort should capture lived-development information not fully explained by conventional economic indicators; and equilibrium should be associated with more durable developmental trajectories.

6. Measurement Architecture

The measurement architecture is preliminary: it translates the theory into constructs that can be refined and tested rather than presenting a validated index. The purpose is to distinguish four questions, capacity, equilibrium, conversion effectiveness, and lived outcomes, without implying that any single aggregation method is definitive.

6.1. Five-Dimensional Architecture

For dimension j , a composite score may be constructed as:

$$X_j = \sum w_{i,j} Z_{i,j}$$

where $Z_{i,j}$ is a normalized indicator and $w_{i,j}$ its weight, with weights within each dimension summing to one.

Economic Vitality may include income, employment, productivity, investment, infrastructure, financial inclusion,

economic stability, and productive opportunities. Institutional Integrity may include governance effectiveness, rule of law, accountability, transparency, administrative capacity, institutional reliability, and service delivery. Human Capability may include education, health, life expectancy, learning outcomes, skills, and access to knowledge. Household Welfare and Social Inclusion may include poverty, inequality, social protection, gender equality, participation, household security, and access to opportunity. Environmental Sustainability and Resilience may include environmental quality, climate exposure, adaptive capacity, resource sustainability, disaster preparedness, and ecological security.

Indicator selection should prioritize construct validity, data availability, comparability, temporal consistency, and limited conceptual overlap. The boundaries among dimensions should be defined by their primary function rather than by excluding all shared consequences.

6.2. Normalization

Because indicators use different units, normalization is required. A standard transformation for positively oriented indicators is:

$$Z_{i,j} = (X_{i,j} - X_{i,\min}) / (X_{i,\max} - X_{i,\min})$$

For negatively oriented indicators:

$$Z_{i,j} = (X_{i,\max} - X_{i,j}) / (X_{i,\max} - X_{i,\min})$$

The resulting values range from zero to one. Empirical applications should transparently specify reference periods, normalization boundaries, treatment of outliers, and indicator direction.

6.3. Developmental Equilibrium Index

An arithmetic formulation is:

$$DEIA = \sum W_j X_j$$

with $\sum W_j = 1$.

Its advantage is simplicity, but it permits mathematical compensation across dimensions. A geometric formulation may better reflect interdependence:

$$DEIG = \prod X_j^{W_j}$$

with $\sum W_j = 1$.

Neither form should be treated as definitive. The theory predicts that DEI should be informative about interdimensional compatibility, but alternative aggregation rules, thresholds, and nonlinear specifications require sensitivity analysis. DEI measures equilibrium; it does not measure Developmental Comfort or Ω .

6.4. Measuring Ω

Conceptually, conversion effectiveness may be related to outcomes relative to available capacity:

$$\Omega \propto O/C$$

where O represents observed human-development outcomes and C developmental capacity. This is a conceptual relationship, not a recommended universal ratio, because scale differences, endogeneity, time lags, omitted variables, contextual effects, and reverse causality can distort a simple quotient.

A more appropriate empirical approach may estimate:

$$O = \alpha + \beta_1 E + \beta_2 I + \beta_3 H + \beta_4 S + \beta_5 R + \gamma X + \varepsilon$$

The difference between observed and expected outcomes, conditional on developmental capacity and context, can provide information about relative conversion effectiveness. Stochastic-frontier models, efficiency estimation, structural equation modelling, longitudinal models, or other appropriate approaches may be used depending on the research question.

6.5. Measuring Developmental Comfort

Developmental Comfort should capture experienced consequences rather than reproduce the same capacity indicators. Potential measures include household economic security; affordability and accessibility of essential services; reliability of public services; employment security; personal and social security; environmental safety; institutional confidence; dignity and agency; and confidence in future living conditions. Subjective well-being measures may complement, but should not define, the construct.

A composite measure may be expressed as:

$$DC = \sum v_k Y_k$$

where Y_k are normalized outcome indicators and v_k their weights. This is a proposed measurement architecture, not a validated scale.

6.6. Integrated Relationship

The conceptual structure is:

$$C = (E, I, H, S, R)$$

↓

$$DEI + \Omega$$

↓

Realized Human Outcomes



Developmental Comfort

More generally:

$$DC = G(C, DEI, \Omega, T, X)$$

where T represents temporal dynamics and X contextual conditions. The framework therefore separates the descriptive question of capacity from the relational questions of equilibrium and conversion and the consequential question of lived outcomes.

This framework identifies four broad analytical questions: how much capacity exists, how balanced that capacity is, how effectively it is converted, and what people ultimately experience.

6.7. Weighting and Robustness

IDET permits equal, expert-based, statistically derived, or theoretically justified weighting. Sensitivity analysis should examine alternative weighting schemes, normalization procedures, indicator combinations, arithmetic versus geometric aggregation, alternative specifications of Ω , and alternative definitions of Developmental Comfort. No ranking should be treated as robust unless conclusions persist across reasonable specifications.

6.8. What IDET Adds

IDET adds four linked analytical questions to existing development measurement: What capacity does a society possess? How compatible are its five dimensions? How effectively is that capacity converted into outcomes? What do people ultimately experience? The novelty lies in the architecture connecting these questions, not in claiming that the underlying dimensions or individual indicators are themselves new.

What does a society possess? - developmental capacity.

How compatible are its developmental dimensions? - developmental equilibrium.

How effectively are those capacities converted? - conversion effectiveness.

What do people ultimately experience? - Developmental Comfort.

7. Proposed Empirical Strategy and Operationalization

The empirical strategy follows the theory's conversion logic and distinguishes capacity, equilibrium, conversion effectiveness, and human outcomes. It is proposed for future testing; no empirical validation is claimed in this paper.

7.1. Empirical Logic

Three relationships are central. First, developmental capacity should be associated with human outcomes. Second, access, capability, institutional quality, and social inclusion should condition conversion effectiveness. Third, greater equilibrium among the five dimensions should be associated with stronger and more durable Developmental Comfort, subject to contextual and temporal effects.

7.2. Unit of Analysis and Comparative Design

The basic unit may be represented as Country i x Year t , allowing longitudinal and cross-country analysis. Regional, sectoral, and household applications are also possible where sufficiently comparable data exist. Panel designs are particularly relevant because equilibrium is dynamic and conversion may involve time lags.

7.3. Indicator Selection

Economic Vitality may use output per capita, employment, labor-force participation, productivity, investment, infrastructure access, financial inclusion, and household economic security. Institutional Integrity may include government effectiveness, rule of law, accountability, regulatory quality, administrative effectiveness, institutional reliability, and trust. Human Capability may include life expectancy, education, school completion, health access, learning outcomes, skills, and essential services. Household Welfare and Social Inclusion may include poverty, income distribution, social protection, gender equality, participation, household security, and access to opportunity. Environmental Sustainability and Resilience may include environmental quality, climate exposure, adaptive capacity, resource sustainability, disaster preparedness, and ecological security.

7.4. Data Sources

Potential data sources include national statistical systems, household surveys, administrative records, international development databases, labor statistics, environmental databases, governance datasets, and well-being surveys. Selection should prioritize conceptual validity, temporal comparability, measurement quality, and transparent documentation. Relevant sources include international labor, macroeconomic, development, and Bangladesh-specific datasets [11, 12, 17]

7.5. Hypotheses

H1: Multidimensional developmental capacity is positively associated with human well-being, conditional on relevant contextual factors.

H2: Institutional quality strengthens the relationship between economic capacity and human outcomes.

H3: Conversion effectiveness varies across societies with

comparable levels of developmental capacity.

H4: Greater developmental equilibrium is associated with higher Developmental Comfort.

H5: Developmental Comfort captures dimensions of lived development not fully explained by conventional economic indicators such as income or output per capita.

H6: Severe and persistent weakness in a foundational dimension reduces the developmental return generated by stronger dimensions, consistent with the weakest-link proposition.

7.6. Econometric Specification

A baseline panel model may be expressed as:

$$DC_{it} = \alpha + \beta_1 DEI_{it} + \beta_2 \Omega_{it} + \gamma X_{it} + \mu_i + \lambda_t + \varepsilon_{it}$$

where DC is Developmental Comfort, DEI is the equilibrium index, Ω is estimated conversion effectiveness, X represents controls, μ_i country-specific effects, λ_t year effects, and ε the error term. Because Ω may itself be estimated, appropriate uncertainty and identification procedures are required.

Interaction models may test whether institutional quality conditions the relationship between economic capacity and outcomes:

$$DC_{it} = \alpha + \beta_1 E_{it} + \beta_2 I_{it} + \beta_3 (E_{it} \times I_{it}) + \gamma X_{it} + \mu_i + \lambda_t + \varepsilon_{it}$$

Causal interpretation should remain cautious because capacity, institutions, and well-being may influence one another. Identification strategies should be matched to specific hypotheses rather than inferred from association alone.

7.7. Testing Conversion Effectiveness

Consider two societies with approximately similar capacity:

$$CA \approx CB$$

but different outcomes:

$$OA > OB.$$

The comparison may identify four analytical configurations: high capacity - high outcome, high capacity - low outcome, lower capacity - higher outcome, and low capacity - low outcome. These are configurations for explanation, not rankings of countries.

7.8. Bangladesh as an Illustrative Application

Bangladesh provides an illustrative setting because its development experience combines substantial gains in income, infrastructure, exports, remittances, education, health, and so-

cial indicators with continuing challenges involving institutional effectiveness, service quality, inequality, environmental vulnerability, urban pressures, and household security. The purpose is to demonstrate application of the framework, not to confirm the theory.

The illustrative questions are: Has developmental capacity increased? Have the five dimensions developed in a sufficiently compatible configuration? Has conversion effectiveness changed alongside resource accumulation? Have aggregate gains translated into improved household welfare and lived conditions?

7.9. Robustness and Limitations

Empirical application must address indicator quality, missing data, measurement error, endogeneity, weighting, aggregation, cross-country comparability, and time lags. Alternative specifications and sensitivity analysis are essential, especially for DEI, Ω , the weakest-link proposition, and Developmental Comfort.

7.10. From Measurement to Developmental Interpretation: The Bridge to Empirical Application

The proposed strategy returns IDET to its central proposition: the significance of development lies not merely in what a society possesses or achieves, but in how capacity is configured, how effectively it is converted, and what those processes enable people to experience and sustain.

Empirical analysis should therefore examine the relationships among developmental capacity, equilibrium, conversion effectiveness, and human outcomes rather than relying on any single indicator. DEI concerns the compatibility of the five foundational dimensions; Ω concerns conversion effectiveness; Developmental Comfort concerns lived consequences.

Comparable levels of developmental capacity may be associated with different outcomes where institutions, access, capabilities, inclusion, or implementation differ. Conversely, more limited capacity may generate meaningful outcomes where conversion mechanisms function effectively. These are hypotheses for testing, not conclusions established by the present paper.

Longitudinal analysis can examine whether improvements are sustained, whether disequilibrium emerges, whether shocks alter conversion effectiveness, and whether deterioration in one foundational dimension constrains the benefits generated by others.

The Bangladesh application that follows is therefore illustrative rather than confirmatory. It demonstrates how IDET can organize evidence and generate testable questions without claiming that the theory has already been empirically validated.

8. Illustrative Application: Development Beyond Resource Accumulation

8.1. Bangladesh: From Resource Constraint to Developmental Transformation

Bangladesh's development experience illustrates the distinction between resource accumulation and developmental conversion. The country has expanded productive capacity, infrastructure, human development, and international economic integration, while continuing to face institutional, poverty, service-quality, and resilience challenges. [2-4] Recent World Bank evidence shows both substantial poverty reduction over 2010 - 2022 and a subsequent deterioration in the pace of poverty reduction, underscoring the importance of the quality and distribution of growth [34, 35].

8.2. The Conversion Problem

The central IDET question is not whether Bangladesh has developed. It is how effectively different forms of developmental capacity have been converted into human outcomes and whether progress across dimensions has remained sufficiently compatible.

8.3. Economic Growth as Developmental Capacity

The pathway can be expressed as:

Growth → Income → Access → Capability → Well-being

Growth creates resources, but its developmental return depends on employment, distribution, public services, institutions, access, and household utilization. High growth can therefore coexist with insecurity or weak service quality when conversion mechanisms are ineffective.

8.4. Institutional Quality as a Conversion Mechanism

The relationship may be summarized as:

Economic Capacity x Institutional Quality → Developmental Return

Institutions affect allocation, implementation, accountability, service delivery, predictability, and public trust. Institutional weakness can reduce the human return from otherwise substantial economic resources. Conversely, social and economic outcomes can influence institutional legitimacy and capacity.

8.5. Human Capability

Education and health create capabilities through which individuals use opportunities. Capability requires an enabling

economic and institutional environment: skills may remain underused where productive employment, mobility, access, or inclusion are inadequate.

8.6. Social Inclusion

Developmental gains must reach households and social groups broadly enough to sustain opportunity and social legitimacy. Inclusion can also increase efficiency by widening participation and capability utilization.

Inclusive Access → Greater Capability Utilization → Higher Developmental Return

8.7. Resilience and Sustainability

Environmental and resilience conditions add a temporal dimension. Development that raises present income while reducing environmental security or shock resilience may undermine future capacity. Sustainability is therefore part of developmental equilibrium rather than an external addition.

8.8. Developmental Equilibrium in Practice

The five dimensions interact reciprocally:

$$E \leftrightarrow I \leftrightarrow H \leftrightarrow S \leftrightarrow R$$

The five dimensions interact reciprocally: $E \leftrightarrow I \leftrightarrow H \leftrightarrow S \leftrightarrow R$. Economic capacity can finance human development; human capability can raise productivity; institutions can improve allocation; inclusion can widen participation; and environmental resilience can protect livelihoods and future capacity. The relationships are reciprocal rather than a fixed causal sequence.

8.9. Four Developmental Configurations

IDET identifies four broad analytical configurations: high capacity with effective conversion; high capacity with weak conversion; lower capacity with relatively effective conversion; and low capacity with structural constraints. These configurations help distinguish resource shortages from failures of conversion without ranking societies.

8.10. Developmental Comfort as the Final Test

IDET ultimately evaluates development through its human consequences. Economic growth, infrastructure, investment, exports, digital services, and educational expansion become developmentally meaningful insofar as people can access and use them to improve everyday conditions.

Developmental Comfort is therefore the human-facing endpoint of IDET: lived security, accessibility, predictability, dignity, opportunity, agency, and sustainable living conditions. It is not material luxury, subjective happiness alone, or a sixth

dimension. It captures the extent to which the five foundational dimensions are successfully converted into better and more secure lives, while allowing aggregate achievement to be distinguished from lived experience.

Developmental Comfort consequently serves as the human-centered endpoint of IDET. It does not replace the five foundational dimensions and does not constitute a sixth dimension. It asks whether improvements in Economic Vitality, Institutional Integrity, Human Capability, Household Welfare and Social Inclusion, and Environmental Sustainability and Resilience have translated into better, more secure, dignified, accessible, and sustainable lives.

9. IDET in Relation to Existing Development Approaches

9.1. Economic Growth Theory

Growth theory explains production, capital, labor, productivity, and technological progress. IDET accepts growth as a major source of developmental capacity but distinguishes growth from realized human outcomes: Economic Growth → Developmental Capacity → Human Outcomes.

Economic Growth → Developmental Capacity → Human Outcomes

Growth is therefore necessary in many contexts but not sufficient as a definition of development.

9.2. Capability Approach

The capability approach asks what people are substantively able to be and do [16, 25]. IDET builds on this human-centered insight but places capability within a wider system of economic conditions, institutions, household welfare, social inclusion, and environmental resilience, while adding an explicit conversion-and-equilibrium architecture.

9.3. Human Development

Human development broadened assessment beyond income through health, education, and living standards [30, 31]. IDET extends this concern by asking how multidimensional capacity is converted into sustained outcomes and whether the underlying dimensions remain sufficiently compatible.

9.4. Sustainable Development

Sustainable development integrates economic, social, environmental, and intergenerational concerns [29, 36]. IDET shares this multidimensional orientation but specifies equilibrium and conversion as relational mechanisms through which

sustainability may affect developmental outcomes.

9.5. Institutional Approaches

Institutional approaches explain how rules, governance, state capacity, and incentives shape outcomes [1, 15, 19]. IDET treats Institutional Integrity as both a foundational dimension and a conversion mechanism, while allowing reciprocal effects from social and economic conditions back to institutions.

Institutional Quality → Conversion Effectiveness → Developmental Outcomes

The relationship also runs in reverse because social and economic conditions influence institutional legitimacy and capacity.

9.6. Multidimensional Poverty

Multidimensional poverty approaches identify overlapping forms of deprivation [5, 6]. IDET is compatible with this perspective but addresses the broader systemic question of how economic, institutional, human, social, and environmental capacities interact to reduce deprivation and generate sustainable well-being.

9.7. Quality of Life

Quality-of-life approaches focus on experienced conditions and subjective assessments [18, 28]. IDET incorporates this concern through Developmental Comfort but does not equate development with subjective satisfaction. It combines objective developmental conditions with lived consequences.

9.8. Integrated Nature of Development

IDET emphasizes feedback rather than one-way causality. Economic capacity can strengthen capability, which can raise productivity; institutions can improve allocation and outcomes, which can affect legitimacy; inclusion can widen participation; and environmental resilience can protect future capacity.

9.9. From “More” to “Better”

The resulting sequence is: Resources → Capacity → Equilibrium → Conversion → Outcomes → Developmental Comfort, subject to Rights and Dignity and Intertemporal Sustainability. IDET's distinctive contribution is the explicit linkage among these analytical levels rather than a claim to supersede established development approaches.

10. Integrated Model, Policy Implications, Limitations, and Conclusion

10.1. Integrated Proposition

IDET proposes that sustainable development occurs when multidimensional developmental capacity is effectively converted into human outcomes, the five foundational dimensions remain sufficiently compatible and mutually supportive, and present gains preserve or enhance future capacity. Developmental Comfort is the principal human expression of these processes, not an additional dimension.

The central relationship is:

Developmental Capacity $\rightarrow$ Developmental Equilibrium $\rightarrow$ Conversion Effectiveness (Ω) $\rightarrow$ Developmental Outcomes $\rightarrow$ Developmental Comfort

subject to:

Rights and Dignity + Intertemporal Sustainability.

This formulation distinguishes what a society possesses from how its dimensions interact and how effectively they are converted into sustained outcomes. Similar levels of capacity may be associated with different outcomes when institutions, access, capabilities, inclusion, or implementation differ. Severe and persistent weakness in a critical dimension may constrain returns generated by stronger dimensions; the exact nonlinear form is an empirical question.

10.2. Policy Implications

The framework shifts policy attention from resource volume toward developmental return. Policy assessment should consider not only expenditure and outputs but also access, quality, utilization, distribution, lived outcomes, institutional reliability, and future capacity. The analytical sequence is: Inputs $\rightarrow$ Outputs $\rightarrow$ Outcomes $\rightarrow$ Lived Well-being.

Institutions should be treated as developmental infrastructure because administrative effectiveness, accountability, predictable regulation, coordination, service quality, and public trust influence conversion. Availability should not be equated with access or utilization; policy should examine affordability, physical accessibility, information, institutional barriers, and service quality.

Human capability is an investment multiplier. Health, education, skills, knowledge, and agency can increase returns from economic and physical resources. Inclusion is both a distributional and developmental concern because exclusion limits participation, capability utilization, social cohesion, and institutional legitimacy.

IDET recommends identifying binding constraints rather than applying identical interventions to every dimension. A weakest-link diagnosis may be represented heuristically as $\min(E, I, H, S, R)$, but the expression is not a mechanical pol-

icy rule. The relevant constraint may differ across places, sectors, and periods, and should be established through evidence.

For Bangladesh, the framework directs attention to institutional effectiveness, service quality, productive employment, education and health, household security, inclusion, environmental and climate resilience, urban conditions, public investment, and reliable service delivery. The purpose is to examine whether development gains are effectively converted, broadly accessible, and sustainable rather than to produce a new ranking.

Binding Constraint $\approx \min(E, I, H, S, R)$

The expression is diagnostic rather than mechanical. The binding constraint may differ across countries, regions, sectors, and periods. Policy should also be assessed intertemporally: present gains that weaken environmental resilience, institutional quality, human capability, or social cohesion may reduce future developmental capacity.

For Bangladesh, the framework directs attention to institutional effectiveness, service quality, education and health, productive employment, urban conditions, inclusion, environmental and climate resilience, public investment, technological capability, and reliable service delivery. The purpose is to examine whether development gains are effectively converted, broadly shared, and sustainable. For development agencies, IDET implies a shift from expenditure-centered assessment toward maximizing developmental return through stronger institutions, capability, access, implementation, inclusion, and sustainability.

10.3. Limitations and Future Research

IDET remains a theory-building framework and has not yet been empirically validated. Its principal limitations concern measurement, causal identification, aggregation, contextual variation, and the operationalization of Ω and Developmental Comfort.

The five dimensions contain heterogeneous indicators that may overlap in consequences. Future research should establish construct validity, test alternative specifications, and assess sensitivity to indicator selection and weighting. Arithmetic and geometric DEI formulations are alternatives, not settled solutions.

Conversion effectiveness is difficult to observe directly. Regression, efficiency-frontier methods, structural modelling, longitudinal designs, and other approaches may help estimate the mechanisms through which capacity becomes outcomes. Any estimate of Ω must address endogeneity, time lags, omitted variables, and contextual heterogeneity.

Developmental Comfort combines objective conditions with lived experience. Future studies should determine which indicators most reliably capture security, dignity, accessibility, agency, institutional reliability, and confidence in future living conditions, and whether these relationships differ across socioeconomic groups and places.

Causality is reciprocal: capacity can improve well-being,

while improved well-being can strengthen future capacity. Panel data, longitudinal analysis, credible quasi-experimental designs, and structural models may help address endogeneity. Cross-national studies should triangulate international datasets, national statistics, household surveys, administrative data, and qualitative evidence where appropriate.

Future applications should move beyond national averages to regional, sectoral, and household levels and test the four IDET configurations and the weakest-link proposition. Research should examine whether severe weakness in one dimension has nonlinear effects, whether conversion varies across institutional settings, and whether present gains enhance or erode future capacity.

IDET should ultimately be evaluated through falsifiable propositions rather than through the construction of another ranking alone. Its empirical value will depend on whether developmental capacity, equilibrium, and conversion effectiveness explain differences in human outcomes beyond conventional measures.

10.4. Conclusion

Integrated Development Equilibrium Theory conceptualizes development as a dynamic process through which economic, institutional, human, social, and environmental capacities are converted into sustained improvements in human well-being. Its five dimensions are analytically distinct but functionally interdependent; their significance lies in interaction, compatibility, adaptation, and sustainability.

The central relationship is:

Developmental Capacity → Developmental Equilibrium →
Conversion Effectiveness (Ω) → Developmental Outcomes
→ Developmental Comfort

conditioned by rights and dignity and intertemporal sustainability. Resources do not automatically become outcomes; institutions, access, capability, utilization, inclusion, and environmental conditions mediate that conversion.

Developmental Comfort provides the human-facing endpoint. It asks whether development is experienced through greater security, dignity, opportunity, accessibility, agency, institutional reliability, environmental safety, and confidence in the future. It is distinct from subjective happiness, life satisfaction, quality of life, and conventional output measures, while remaining compatible with evidence from those domains.

IDET is a conceptual framework requiring empirical refinement and testing. Its contribution lies in connecting multidimensional developmental capacity, equilibrium, conversion effectiveness, and lived human outcomes within one analytical system. Its validity will depend on whether future research demonstrates explanatory and practical value beyond conventional development measures.

Abbreviations

IDET	Integrated Development Equilibrium Theory
DEI	Developmental Equilibrium Index
DC	Developmental Comfort
E	Economic Vitality
I	Institutional Integrity
H	Human Capability
S	Household Welfare and Social Inclusion
R	Environmental Sustainability and Resilience
OECD	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme

Author Contributions

Zahurul Alam: Conceptualization, Data curation, Formal Analysis, Investigation, Methodology, Validation, Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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