

# Modernization Theory And Its Critiques

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# Outline

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- ❖ Theoretical Background
- ❖ Modernization Theory Approaches
- ❖ Group Work
- ❖ Critique
- ❖ Modernization Theory after 1990
- ❖ Summary
- ❖ Quiz

# The School of Modernization

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## Post World War II Era

- New Superpower USA
- United Communist Movement
- Rising Third World Nations

## School of Modernization

- Study of Third World Nations (publications, social movements, political culture etc.)
- Avoid losing Third World Nations to Communist Power

# Theoretical Foundation [1]

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**Goal: Explain modernization in Third World Countries**

## **Evolutionary Theory**

- Revolution helps to advance society
  - Industrial Revolution = technological advance
  - French Revolution = political advance
- Three features
  - Unidirectional: Society moves in one direction, from primitive to advanced
  - Value judgment (move forward): last phase of revolution is good, as it brings progress
  - Slow evolution: Societal development takes centuries

# Theoretical Foundation [2]

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**Goal: Explain modernization in Third World Countries**

## **Functionalist Theory**

- Talcott Parsons as main figure (biologist)
- Society is like a biological organism "Homeostatic Equilibrium"
- Four critical functions of a society (AGIL)
  - Adaptation to the environment (economy)
  - Goal Attainment (government)
  - Integration (institutions)
  - Latency (family and education)

# Theoretical Foundation [3]

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**Goal: Explain modernization in Third World Countries**

## **Functionalist Theory**

- Pattern Variables – Distinguishing traditional and modern societies
  - Affective vs. affective-neutral relationships
  - Particularistic vs. universalistic relationships
  - Collective vs. self-orientation
  - Ascription vs. achievement
  - Functionally diffused vs. functionally specific

# The Sociological Approach [1]

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## Goal: Explain modernization and why it occurs

- Levy (1967)
- Modernization = degree to which tools and inanimate sources of power are utilized
- Modernized and non-modernized countries on a continuum
  - Modernized: USA, Japan, UK
  - Non-modernized: China, India
- Modernization occurs after contact of non-modernized with modernized countries

# The Sociological Approach [1]

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## Goal: Characteristics of modernized and non modernized societies

- Characteristics (see table 2.1 in So 1990, page 25)
  - specialization of organization
  - interdependence of organization
  - Relationship emphasis
  - Etc.
- Advantages for latecomers to modernization
  - Profit from expertise, knowing what to expect
- Disadvantages for latecomers to modernization
  - Problems of scale, resource conversion, disappointment



# The Sociological Approach [2]

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## **Goal: Explain integration and social disturbances in Third World Countries**

- Smelser (1964)
- Modernization involves structural differentiation
- Institution family is divided into education, employer, government
- Coordination of new institutions leads to integration problems
- Clash of values and uneven development of institutions may lead to political unrest, revolution and violence
- Communism may offer attractive alternative for these countries

# The Economic Approach

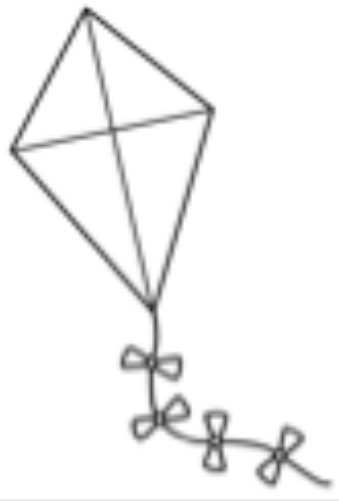
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## Goal: Explain self-sustained growth of modernized societies

- Rostow (1964): The Take-Off into Self-Sustained Growth (airplane metaphor)
- From traditional to high mass consumption society (five stages)
  1. Traditional society
  2. New industries, expansion of markets (precondition for takeoff)
  3. Take-off
  4. Invest national income into economy (drive to maturity)
  5. Growth of employment, increase of national income etc. (high mass consumption)

# The Economic Approach

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## Phase 1

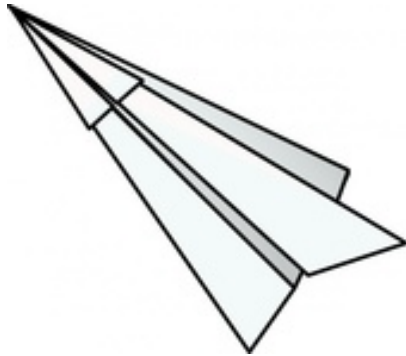
### Traditional society

- Strong ties within the community
- Limited material wealth
- Strong ties to the past (worship of ancestors)

Source: <http://www.bigactivities.com/coloring/spring/kites/images/kite.png>

# The Economic Approach

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## Phase 2

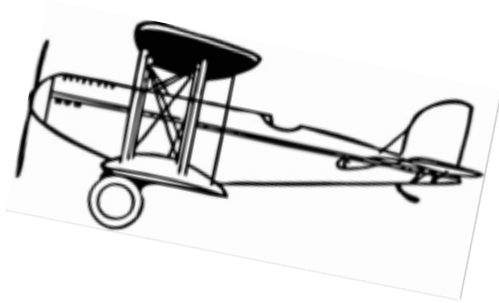
### **Transitional Society – preconditions for take-off**

- Cultural shift begins
- Individualism
- Market economy
- Want of material wealth

[http://images.clipartlogo.com/files/images/18/183077/paper-plane\\_p](http://images.clipartlogo.com/files/images/18/183077/paper-plane_p)

# The Economic Approach

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## Phase 3

### Take-off

- Individualism
- Market economy
- Entrepreneurship
- Want of material wealth
- Growth becomes a norm

Source: [http://images.all-free-download.com/images/graphicthumb/plane\\_outline\\_clip\\_art\\_18691.jpg](http://images.all-free-download.com/images/graphicthumb/plane_outline_clip_art_18691.jpg)

# The Economic Approach

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## Phase 4

### Technological Maturity

- Weakened community ties
- Diversified economy
- Urbanization
- Specialization in workforce
- Public education

# The Economic Approach

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## Phase 5

### High mass consumption

- Growing national income
- Consumer society
- Welfare systems
- Developed trade

Source: <https://thenounproject.com/term/rocket/635905/>

# The Political Approach

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## Goal: Measure modernization of political system

- Coleman (1968) (similar to Smelser)
  - Differentiation of political structure
  - Secularization of political culture
  - Enhance the capacity of a society's political system
- Modernization of political system is measured by the extent to which it has successfully developed the capacities to cope with generic-system-development problems, for example:
  - National identity
  - Political legitimacy
  - Participation



# Summary [1]

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## Evolutionary Theory

1. Modernization is a **phased** process
2. Modernization is a **homogenizing** process
3. Modernization is a **Europeanization** (Americanization)
4. Modernization is an **irreversible** process
5. Modernization is a **progressive** process
6. Modernization is a **lengthy** process

# Summary [2]

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## Functionalist Theory

1. Modernization is a **systematic** process
2. Modernization is a **transformative** process
3. Modernization is an **immanent** process

# Critique

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- Ethnocentric bias toward development in Western countries, especially European ones
  - The European model cannot be the ideal model for every country
- Modernization as a progressive one way street is not in accordance with reality
- Measuring modernization only in terms of economic prosperity
- External factors of influence not considered (e.g. Colonialism), see also Dependency Theory (e.g. Wallerstein, Frank)

# Group Work on Critique

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## Task

You have read and heard about Modernization Theory. Please briefly discuss, what you see critical about the theory. Write your results on the whiteboard (at least 2 points you find critical).

# Group 1

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- Eurocentric/US-centric
- Irreversible process (Coca Cola example)
- Critique on Parson: assumption that all societies are striving for harmony, stability and an equilibrium
- idea of "development" as being desirable - ignores/denies painful and destructive experiences of colonization
- exploitation of non-industrialized countries
- captitalism and democracy as only possible/desirable outcomes
- intergation of different institutions, establishment of new institutions to take over roles

# Group 2

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Evolutionary theory

mass consumption

in our view mass consumption / economic development does not lead to a better developed society

e.g. Bhutan uses happiness index instead of GDP

# Group 3

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## Critiques on the theory

- linear theory
- uniforming human society
- modernization is not irreversible

note: Naomi Klein's "Shock Doctrine" : "modernization" via violence / shocks

# Group 4

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approach is based on European/ American Values

too general: even within theory inconsistencies (e.g., Japan has collectivist culture)

end stage may not be good, can it be reached? (indirect critique of unidirectionality)

focusses on capitalism

Modernization Theory

Everybody is working towards the same goal? 68er  
"counter revolution"

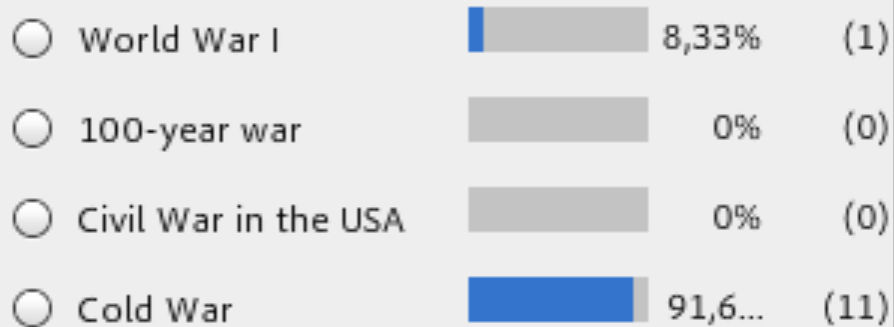
Devaluation of other society values



# Quiz and results

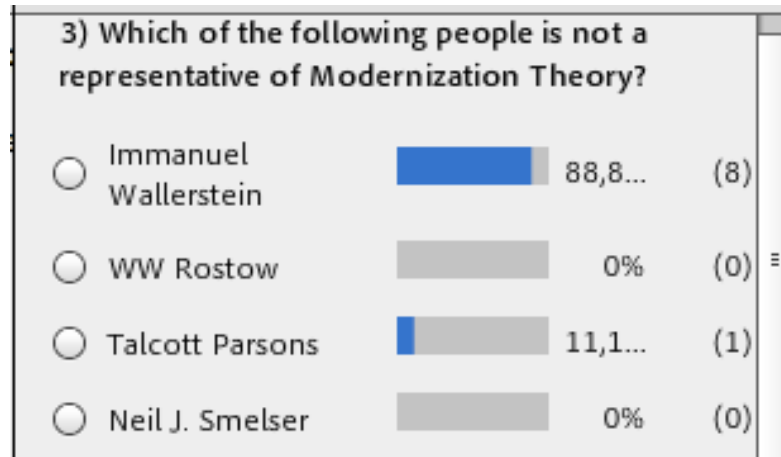
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1) Which war had an impact to the ideology of modernization theorists?



# Quiz and results

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# Quiz and results

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2) Which of the following statements on Modernization Theory is correct?

The theory assumes that only selected countries can modernize (10%)

There is not one theory, but many theories (26,4%)

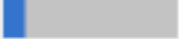

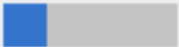
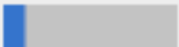
The theory originated in Europe and looks at the modernization of European countries (27,2%)

Modernization Theory assumes that social ties get weaker as societies develop (36,4%)

# Quiz and results

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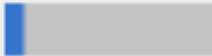
4) Which of the following is not a critique of Modernization Theory?

- |  |   |         |     |
|--|---|---------|-----|
| <input type="radio"/> Ethnocentricity  |  | 12,5... | (1) |
| <input type="radio"/> Trade is not encouraged                                    |  | 50%     | (4) |
| <input type="radio"/> Countries can only develop linear                          |  | 25%     | (2) |
| <input type="radio"/> Colonialism is not considered as a factor in modernization |  | 12,5... | (1) |

# Quiz and results

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5) Which of the following phases does not exist in Rostow's model?

- |   |   |         |     |
|---|---|---------|-----|
| <input type="radio"/> Take-off                  |  | 9,09%   | (1) |
| <input type="radio"/> High mass consumption     |  | 9,09%   | (1) |
| <input type="radio"/> Traditional society       |  | 45,4... | (5) |
| <input type="radio"/> Technological development |  | 36,3... | (4) |

# Summary

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- Modernization Theory has its foundation in the post World War II era in the US
- Approaches trying to explain underlying reasons from traditional to modernized society; predicting development in Third World countries (e.g. Parsons, Smelser, Rostow)
- Theory loses stance after Third World countries do not follow expected patterns
- Modernization is reintroduced after break down of Soviet Union to explain new world order (e.g. Inglehart)
- Modernization Theory is still applied today in connection to databases like the World Value Survey
- Theory has a bias toward Western world, only considers linear development and misses additional factors of influence

# References

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- Hurtienne, T., & Kaufmann, G. (2011). Methodological biases. *Journal of Human Subjectivity*. Vol. 9. No. 2. 41-70
- Inglehart, Ronald & Welzel, Christian (2005). *Modernization, Cultural Change and Democracy: The Human Development Sequence*, New York: Cambridge University Press.
- So, Alvin Y. (1990). Social change and development: Modernization, dependency and world-system theories (No. 178). Sage. 17-37