**Modernisation Theory (Development and Underdevelopment)**

[**Modernisation Theory**](https://revisesociology.com/2017/09/19/modernization-theory/)

**Historical Context (1940s and 50s)**

By the end of WW2, it had become clear that despite exposure to Capitalism many of the countries of the South had failed to develop. In this context, in the late 1940s, Modernisation Theory was developed. Modernisation theory had two major aims

* It attempted to explain why poorer countries have failed to develop, focussing on what cultural and economic conditions might act as **‘barriers’ to development**
* It aimed to provide a **non-communist** solution to poverty in the developing world by suggesting that economic change (in the form of Capitalism) and the introduction of western values and culture could play a key role in bringing about modernisation.

**Why countries are underdeveloped: Cultural and economic barriers to development**

Modernisation theorists argue that there are a number of cultural and economic barriers that prevent traditional societies from developing.

**Cultural barriers** are seen as internal to the country – it is essentially their fault for being backward. Western culture, on the other hand, is seen as having a superior culture that has allowed for it to develop.

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| **Traditional Values** –prevent economic growth and change | **Modern Values** – inspire change and economic growth. |
| Simple division of labour, less specialised job roles, individuals rely on a few dozen people in their local communities for basic needs to be met. | Complex division of labour, individuals tend to have very specialised jobs and rely on thousands of others for basic needs to be met |
| Religious beliefs and tradition influence day to to day life (resistance to change) | Rational decision making (cost benefit analysis and efficiency) are more important. |
| Stronger community and family bonds and collectivism | Weaker community and family bonds means more individual freedom. |
| Affective relationships | Meritocracy –people are more motivated to innovate and change society for the better. |
| Patriarchy | Gender equality |

**Economic barriers to development**

These are barriers which may make developing countries unattractive to investors.

* Lack of infrastructure
* Lack of technology
* Lack of skills in the work force
* Political instability
* Lack of capital in the country

See the next sheet for details of modernisation theory

**Modernisation Theory 2: How countries should develop**

Rostow believed that an initial injection of aid from the west in the form of training, education, economic investment etc. would be enough to jolt a society into economic growth overcoming these cultural barriers.

Rostow suggested that development should be seen as an evolutionary process in which countries progress up 5 stages of a development ladder

**Rostow’s five stage model of development**

**Stage 1 –**Traditional societies whose economies are dominated by subsistence farming. Such societies have little wealth to invest and have limited access to modern industry and technology. Rostow argued that at this stage there are cultural barriers to development.

**Stage 2 – The preconditions for take off –**the stage in which western aid packages brings western values, practises and expertise into the society. This can take the form of:

* Science and technology – to improve agriculture
* Infrastructure – improving roads and cities communications
* Industry – western companies establishing factories

These provide the conditions for investment, attracting more companies into the country.

**Stage 3 – Take off stage –**The society experiences economic growth as new modern practices become the norm. Profits are reinvested in infrastructure etc. and a new entrepreneurial class emerges and urbanised that is willing to invest further and take risks. The country now moves beyond subsistence economy and starts exporting goods to other countries

This generates more wealth which then trickles down to the population as a whole who are then able to become consumers of new products produced by new industries there and from abroad.

**Stage 4- the drive to maturity.**

More economic growth and investment in education, media and birth control. The population start to realise new opportunities opening up and strive to make the most of their lives.

**Stage 5 The age of high mass consumption**. This is where economic growth and production are at Western levels.

**Variations on Rostow’s 5 stage model**

Different theorists stress the importance of different types of assistance or interventions that could jolt countries out their traditional ways and bring about change.

* **Hoselitz** – education is most important as it should speed up the introduction of Western values such as universalism, individualism, competition and achievement measured by examinations. This was seen as a way of breaking the link between family and children.
* **Inkeles** – media – Important to diffuse ideas non-traditional such as family planning and democracy
* **Hoselitz** – urbanisation. The theory here is that if populations are packed more closely together new ideas are more likely to spread than amongst diffuse rural populations

**Criticisms of Modernisation Theory**

1. The Asian Tiger economies combined elements of traditional culture with Western Capitalism to experience some of the most rapid economic growth of the past 2 decades.
2. Ignores the ‘crisis of modernism’ in both the developed and developing worlds. Many developed countries have huge inequalities and the greater the level of inequality the greater the degree of other problems: High crime rates, suicide rates, health problems, drug abuse.
3. Ethnocentric interpretations tend to exclude contributions from thinkers in the developing world. This is a one size fits all model, and is not culture specific.
4. The model assumes that countries need the help of outside forces. The central role is on experts and money coming in from the outside, parachuted in, and this downgrades the role of local knowledge and initiatives. This approach can be seen as demeaning and dehumanising for local populations. Galeano (1992) argues that minds become colonised with the idea that they are dependent on outside forces. They train you to be paralysed and then sell you crutches. There are alternative models of development: See sheet no…
5. Corruption (Kleptocracy) prevents aid of any kind doing good, Much aid is siphoned off by corrupt elites and government officials rather than getting to the projects it was earmarked for. This means that aid creates more inequality and enables elites to maintain power
6. There are ecological limits to growth. Many modernisation projects such mining and forestry have lead to the destruction of environment.
7. Social damage – Some development projects such as dams have lead to local populations being removed forcibly from their home lands with little or no compensation being paid.
8. Some Marxist theorists argue that aid and development is not really about helping the developing world at all. It is really about changing societies just enough so they are easier to exploit, making western companies and countries richer, opening them up to exploit cheap natural resources and cheap labour. Joseph Stiglitz notes that those countries that followed alternative models of development ignoring western advice are now competing with the west, China and India are two examples.