

Analyze the modernization theory essay

[Science](#)



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Like individual “ choices,” modernization or the lack of modernization rarely just happens; they are usually products of powerful social forces. Hence, I oppose to the statement that “ the effects of international factors and positive effects of traditional culture have no bearing on the lack of modernization.” So, what are my justifications for this decision?

Two competing views of the causes of modernization justify my view. First, modernization theory claims that in the past the entire world was poor and that technological change, especially the Industrial Revolution, has enhanced human productivity and raised living standards. From this point of view, the solution to the lack of modernization lies in encouraging technological development in backward areas.

For these reasons, however, global modernization may be difficult. Recall that David Riesman portrayed preindustrial people as tradition-directed and likely to resist change. So some modernization theorists advocate that the world’s rich societies deliberately intervene in poor societies to encourage productive innovation. First-World nations can speed development by exporting technology to the Third World, welcoming students from abroad, and providing foreign aid to stimulate economic growth (Hall, 1993).

Further, modernization theory suggests that the success of these policies has been limited.

Even where the greatest efforts have been made, resistance to change has compromised the results. Traditional people have gained wealth by selling their natural resources on world markets, but only at the cost of being drawn into the “ global village” where concern for money superseded traditional

values. In some societies including Iran and Ethiopia, rapid modernization has set off a powerful backlash from groups that want to restore traditional culture (Parsons, 1986).

Modernization theory thus leaves unresolved contemporary dilemma: modernity may bring higher living standards but, in the process, it sweeps a society into the global mass culture of Western popmusic, trendy clothes, and fast food. For example, one Brazilian anthropologist expressed uncertainty about the future of the Kaiapo (native people who inhabit Brazil's Amazon region): " At least they quickly understood the consequences of watching television... Now [they] can make a choice" (Simons, 1989: 37).

But not everyone agrees that modernization is even a choice. According to a second view, the dependency theory, today's poor societies have little ability to modernize, even if they want to. From this point of view, the major barrier to economic development is not traditionalism but the global domination by rich, capitalist societies.

In effect, dependency theory asserts, rich societies achieved their modernization at least partly at the expense of poor nations, which provided valuable natural resources and human labor. Even today, the Third World remains locked in a disadvantageous economic relationship with the First World, dependent on rich societies with whatever manufactured goods they can afford. Continuing ties with rich societies appear likely to perpetuate current patterns of global inequality Parsons, T. (1986).

Dependency theory implies that modernization or the lack of it occurs outside the control of individual societies. On the contrary, the fate and

<https://assignbuster.com/analyze-the-modernization-theory-essay/>

fortune of individual nations world-wide is tied to their position in the global economy. Thus, change to improve the plight of people in the Third World will involve corresponding changes in First-World societies. Whichever approach one finds more convincing, we can no longer study the United States in isolation from the rest of the world.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, a majority of people in even the richest societies lived in relatively small settlements with limited awareness of others. Now, at the threshold of the twenty-first century, people everywhere are playing out a far larger human drama. The world seems smaller because the lives of its entire people are increasingly linked. Hence, modernization or the lack of modernization is brought about by a number of factors including international factors and positive effects of traditional culture.

References

Berger, P. 1987. *The Homeless Mind: Modernization and Consciousness*,
Vintage Books, New

York

Hall, J. R. & Neitz, M. (1993). *Culture: Sociological Perspectives*. Prentice-Hall, Englewood

Cliffs, NJ.

Parsons, T. (1986), *Societies: Evolutionary and comparative*, Prentice-Hall, Englewood Cliffs, NJ.

Simons, M. (1989). “ The Amazon’s Savvy Indians.” The New York Times Magazine (February

26, 1990); 36-37, 48-52. Copyright 1989 by the New York Times Company.