

Modernization in thailand: a personal perspective essay sample

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Thailand is newly industrialized country and has experienced rapid economic growth since 1985. In my own life I have seen a number of advances and examples of modernization. Economic growth, modernization, globalization and Internet technology has made my lifestyle different than my parents. In many ways this has been a positive experience for Thailand, the standard of living has improved, education is better and more people have joined the middle class. However, there have also been some negative effects of this process, such as increased materialism, a loss of culture and political instability. Overall, I think modernization is a good thing; as a country Thailand cannot live in the past. Globalization is also a natural process, as travel, trade and communication bring the world together. Individuals are responsible for protecting themselves from the negative effects of globalization, and hold on to their language, religious beliefs and core values. Instead of focusing on acquiring material “stuff”, I think it is more important to be happy, have good family and friends around you, and be a good person. This theory is nothing new, it's been around in different forms of thousands of years, and in Thailand it is the central tenant of the “Philosophy of Sufficiency Economy”, by King Bhumibol Adulyadej.

The Sufficiency Economy - sometimes grouped with localism - emphasizes the middle path as the principle foundation and philosophy for people of all socioeconomic levels. Like Aristotle's Doctrine of Mean, it emphasizes moderation and not living too extravagantly or too frugally. It encourages everyone in society to live in a sustainable way, consume only what they really need, choose products carefully, and consider the environmental impact of our choices. The sufficiency economy embraces modernization but

recognizes that there are negative aspects of globalization.

Thailand had remarkable economic growth, and then a recession, political instability and corruption scandals the last few years. Politically, there was a coup last May. I think many of these problems were caused by rapid modernization. Our economy, culture and political system changed so quickly many people lost their minds. Many people in Thailand believed the economic success would last forever and became used to an unrealistic standard of living. Perpetual economic growth is not a reality. Since 2008, these have been worldwide economic problems, so Thailand is not alone.

However, I think we are uniquely prepared to deal with this adversity because most of us believe in the middle path, but we still want to see our counties economic political and education systems improve and continue to modernize. The sufficiency strategy is not about going backwards, but developing a sustainable and effective economic model that leads to prosperity and happiness for everyone. I think strictly following western ideas about economic growth would lead to more problems. Thailand is unique and needs unique solutions for these complicated problems.

The internet is a good example of both modernization and globalization.

Thailand has definitely become an information society very quickly. I recently read an article that said the average Thai under the age of twenty-four spends twenty hours a week on the internet. This is a new development. In 1996, Thailand was the third Asian country to gain internet access. At first it was only in the cities, but has spread out and can be found almost everywhere. I think it has changed life in Thailand faster than anyone could ever imagined.

Globalization has the power to raise some people out of poverty, but it can also erase a countries culture, language, customs and religion. In the future, will everyone strive to be European or American, or will we retain the things that keep us special and strong as a nation? Sharing ideas, music, movies, products and other goods and services is a good thing, but imposing economic policies or belief systems is not progressive, it is oppressive. The way many Thai people think, and the lifestyles they lead have changed, and in many ways I don't think they even realize the role globalization and multinational corporations play in their new belief systems. Mindless materialism is not an economic advantage, it is a burden on the people. As a society, the way we work, eat, shop and spend out free time has changed. The previous Thai generations did not have to deal with this rapid change. Never before has so much changed in fifteen years. For example, the education system has changed, and teachers and students have to learn new classroom strategies. In the past, the classroom focused on the teacher, who lectured and students listened and memorized. Today the classrooms are student oriented, there are discussions and group work. This kind of change is hard on both teacher and student. To create students who will be able to compete for jobs in a global economy, the entire educational system had to be modernized and adapt to new trends and methods. Education is a huge factor in being a country that can benefit from globalization, instead of being exploited by other more powerful countries. If you are not educated, particularly in information technology like networking and computers, you will not adapt to a 21st century economy.

The middle way is a good way to cope with the stress from these rapid

changed. By being moderate, and consuming only what I need, I make my own life less stressful, but I put less of a strain on the environment. I strive to live well but also be reasonable in the things I buy and the lifestyle I lead. I do not believe in every tenant of localism, and I like to use critical thinking skills when evaluation political, philosophical and economic ideas. When the economy was doing well, localism and the philosophy of economic sufficiency were not so popular, it was only after the global economic crisis that people really started thinking about things like minimalism. The philosophy of minimalism, that less is more, is intriguing to me. From architecture, to interior design, to lifestyle I think minimalism can help people focus on what is truly good and essential. I really like these ideas, I find too much stuff distracting. Many people end up buying products they do not need or even want in order to impress people they do not even know. I think that is very strange and it is a phenomenon all over the world, not just in Thailand. There are negative aspects to globalization and there are negative effects of capitalism, and I believe outrageous materialism is one of them. In popular music today, one of the major themes is money. Rappers will go on for an entire song about money, and cars, and champagne. I do not believe music that focused singularly on money has ever existed in the history of music. My generation has grown up with this focus on material wealth and I think it interferes with education, forming good relationships, setting priorities and forming good moral values.

Localism and the middle way are a good critique of the negative aspects of globalism but they do not offer much of a formal economic alternative.

Personally, it works for individuals as a society, but I do not believe it will

work as a national economic strategy. Thailand has resources, tourism and we are centrally located in Asia. In a global society I think to be competitive you may need to be materialistic. In a global capitalist system, localism is not going to be competitive. Personally, I am worried that this system may work well for modernizing developing countries and lifting people out of poverty, but it does a horrible job of protecting the environment and creating sustainable growth. If everyone is out to produce and consume as much as possible there is not much hope for nature and climate change. The world may have more people out of poverty but they will be living with an unstable climate that may ultimately kill them.

Like Aristotle thousands of years ago, I believe moderation is good for you. However, globalization and modernization are not about moderation; they are about production, consumption and spreading information as quickly as possible. I certainly do not want average internet speed, I want the fastest internet possible. This is a problem, but I think that technology may also offer us alternative and solutions to many of the problems we are creating. I also hope culturally some things change too. Everyone around the world should try to maintain as many cultural traditions and rituals as possible. Wherever I go, I see Thai restaurants, and I think this is a sign that good things can spread via globalization. Instead of just products, commercials, greed, materialism, exploitation and vice, we should focus on exporting those things that are positive for everyone. Along with living in moderation, I think we should also focus on diversity, and allowing different cultures to be unique and not try to make a one-world culture along with a one-world government.