

Does the
modernization
theories mean
westernization politics
essay



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The battle between the east and the west still continues as each try to preserve its culture and assert its powers. Just as the fight to be superpowers continues, the west and east continue to outdo each other in other aspects. The concept of modernization means an evolution from traditional society practices to modern social status[1]. Modernization has brought about transformation of societies which has been experienced since time in history. The term modernization however, has been mistakably been taken to mean the adoption of policies that favor other societies. The changes have been witnessed in the political, economic production and social systems. In addition, it has also been reflected in the way of thinking and behavior of the people[2].

In the twentieth century many transformations continues to change especially the most controversial issue of culture. Societies have remained attached to their practices and beliefs and any attempt to change them. This has remained a contentious issue when the east is approached to adopt policies from the west[3]. They view this as colonization from the west which is blocked in every possible way. This paper tackles the question: Does modernization mean Westernization? It seeks to find out whether there are ways of becoming modern that are informed by different civilization logic. In answering this question it visits the issue of modernization in China in the twentieth century.

Civilization brings about modernization; and civilization has historic start in Europe. The different civilizations such as the one rising from Tigris-Euphrates and Nile river valleys contributed a lot to the modern man[4]. The Middle East in the 4000 B. C. E. also experienced civilization revolutions

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through agrarian revolutions[5]. Technological innovations also characterized this period which contributed to better economic, political and social development. Consequently the changes contributed to the present day modernization.

The Chinese Situation

In China, modernization came into light during the new culture movement. In this period other terms were associated with modernization; they include westernization, electrification, mechanization, fashionable, and modern[6]. Nevertheless, it was until the 1950s and 60s that the concept of modernization became accepted and used. During this period two western centric ideas were accepted which were; the impact “ response approach and the tradition “ modernity approach that contributed to the Chinese transformation. The tradition “ modernity approach had a direct influence to the modernization which was more known in the American society[7].

Modernization had two practical purposes in the 1950s and 60s; they include to analyse the academic program so as to bring to an end to communism and secondly to give third world nations with a plan to achieve development of a stable, free and content world through the use of science, rationality, enlightenment, capitalist democracy and capitalistic free market[8].

The modernization was characterized in the 1950s and 60s by the split in the development in the modern and tradition period. The traditional period was described as stagnant and static while the modern period was described as rational, fast moving and dynamic. For that reason, modernization was

viewed as the elimination of tradition[9]. In those who supported <https://assignbuster.com/does-the-modernization-theories-mean-westernization-politics-essay/>

modernization they saw China as incapable of transforming itself to be modern; it required an external shock which should be strong enough to initiate a modern revolution; the west had the chance to provide the enlightenment required for the transformation; and the effects of modernization in China would be to copy the west which was regarded as modern[10].

Modernization

Modernization can be traced to the historical development in Europe, since the fourteenth and eighteenth centuries there were major transformational changes. They included renaissance, scientific revolution, the age of great discovery, agrarian and industrial revolution, and enlightenment. In order to be modernized there are two preconditions involved; they are secularization and innovation[11].

In secularization, man is required to have human value that means the satisfaction of practical needs and not accepting idealistic ideas. In adopting secularization man has stronger sense of reality, rationality, and active in social matters. Innovation on the other hand, requires casting away traditional ideologies[12]. In real meaning, modernization moves man from a spiritual or god centered society to a man centered one[13]. It turns out to be rational and scientific.

Modernization also brings the issue of enlightenment which brings about a political and social rearrangement that is based on rationality, science and development. For example, the capitalistic system, a liberal democratic system and sovereignty need to be involved.

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Modernization means industrialization that is built on science and technological revolutions. Science makes man understand the world while technology gives the tools to have a better world. This means that the quality of life is improved contributing to a modern society[14].

Western form of modernization is measured with mechanization regarding to production modes, urbanization, mass participation in public issues, affirmative action, education popularization, expansion of infrastructure i. e. transport and communication, bureaucracy and international relationships enhancement[15]. In this view modernization is gauged with the amenities and provisions in the country.

For modern transformation the country must therefore undergo economic, political, and cultural transformation. Economically, the country needs to transform from traditional agriculture practices to modern industrial practices[16]. Politically, the country must move from dictatorial and feudal autocratic practices to free and fair democratic society. Culturally, the society needs to move from uncivilized groups into conscious individualism so as to have independence.

The democratic view of modernization is the ability to restrict power by use of law, having multi-party rule, having security forces to protect the state, democratic elections, accountability of the government, decentralizing the functions and having participants of the people[17].

The traditional Chinese culture had entrenched three bonds which were (between ruler and subject, father and son, husband and wife), and five relationships between ruler and subject, father and son, husband and wife, <https://assignbuster.com/does-the-modernization-theories-mean-westernization-politics-essay/>

older brother and younger brother, and friends[18]. The society had focus on family, male domination, patriarchy, agriculture and household industry. Changing this would need great and strong force of modernization.

Does modernization mean Westernization?

Separating modernization from westernization is the issue that lies in the mind; whichever side of the debate one is then he or she can give contradicting statements to prove a point. Many will debate on the loss of culture and the imitation of the western culture as modernization while others will base their argument on the adoption of democracy and a free society[19]. The modern societies have a great deal of common aspects however they never merge into homogeneity. Some have the assumption that the modern civilization is the same as the western civilization and consequently western civilizations is the same as modern civilization. This conversely, is not true. This is due to the fact that the western has always been even before modernization[20].

The western culture has been seen to be based on philosophy and rationalism of the Greek, the law of the Romans, natural law, the Latin language the rift between Catholics and Protestants and social pluralism[21]. The cultures of the west have not been well accepted in the east in areas like China, Russia, and the Middle East, where centralized bureaucracy and absolutism exists[22]. To the east the adoption of such culture and values would be colonization and modern day slavery. The social and political values depicted as western civilization are therefore rebelled against.

The values view as western modernization include liberty, individualism, equality, free markets, capitalism, constitutionalism, separation of the church and state, the rule of law, human rights and democracy[23]. This creates a democracy paradox; where the Islamic world and the east in general oppose westernization.

The question at hand (i. e. Does modernization mean Westernization?) will help to separate modernization from westernization. Depending on which perspective it is either west or east the argument may last forever but to draw a line and separate the real ideologies can help solve the dilemma of whether the glass is half full or half empty. Can one modernize without being western?

As the time passes on the differences between the cultures become less and less; the gap therefore closes. But in the modern society many may resist this change seeing it as colonization. Nevertheless, change is inevitable and as technological and industrial revolutions are adopted the enlightenment period get closer with people demanding their rights[24]. This means that the society will crave for change. However the adoption does not mean a complete merger of the cultures to one global culture. There will always be real and significant differences in the modernization. For example, the democracy, communism, and fascism were modern political systems and since democracy has been adopted by the west does not mean it is westernization[25]. There is therefore need to differentiate the western influence from the modernization in the west.

Though modernization may be seen by the east as aping the west; the critical part is the difference between the two areas. There are still differences even after modernization since the family values; the social obligations and the meaning of life remain different from the west. Their cultures have the various differences which are always unique to the areas and the people practicing them. This brings the cultural identity which is always maintained even after modernization.

Modernization and westernization

Societies have defied all odds to modernize despite the negative notion brought by those who oppose change. Westernizing and modernizing have already been differentiated by a clear line. While modernizing is the adoption of technology and industrial revolutions; westernization on the other hand is the adoption of the western culture and ideas. Therefore for those who modernize does not have to adopt the western cultures[26]. They just need to maintain their own culture but retain the ideologies of the modern world. The revolutionizing of people and societies is normally seen as the western culture where governments in the east want to retain the status quo and remain dictatorial[27].

For modernization to take place there must be minimum requirements which include; industrialization, urbanization, occupational social structures that are complex and diverse, rational, effective and efficient economic groups, revolutionary decisions, education of the masses, efficient communication systems, centralization and global economic participation. Above all there must be social and political will; which might incorporate western values

such as liberty, human rights, constitutionalism, secularization, democracy, equality and free markets[28].

Citizens from the oppressed nations must therefore be able to distinguish the lies from the truth. Modern day civilization is not just a matter of aping what people want and fighting freedom; it is all about adopting the values that revolutionize society and give them a chance to discover themselves[29]. The East especially the Islamic nations has particularly remained cold in adopting the western values more specifically due to the religion factor which is seen as an overtaking of the Muslim religion and culture by the Christian practices and norms[30].

For a global village to be achieved there is need for most nations to adopt modernization and play away all difference. On the other hand, it does not mean forgetting their culture but it means retaining it and preserving what is beneficial to the society. Every person needs to be given the right to decide his or her own destiny while the state controls the nation in a democratic way. The people should have the freedom to decide in fair elections and be able to exercise their democratic rights[31]. It also tends to abolish communism and assert democracy in a society that is oppressed.

Conclusion

Modernization does not mean aping the law, politics, lifestyles, language, religion, and education systems. But, it entails empowering the societies to decide what they need and want at all times. It involves making their lives easier through revolutions such as industrialization which will make them change from the traditional practices to modern concepts.

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The west has been viewed as very revolutionary and dynamic in the adoption of new ideas; the east on the other hand has been seen to oppose change. In view of the fact that modernization started in the west does not mean that the east should ape them. The clear separation of modernization from westernization is the only factor that will ensure the societies in the east are not lied to by their leaders.

The east can experience better economic, political and social benefits if only they embrace modernization. They should use modernization to ensure the cultural and social values are always preserved within the society. This is the unique character of modernization; it does not strive to change the individual but the means of the individual to live. It is also good since it allows individuals to discover themselves, their strengths and weaknesses which will contribute to better control of the system. The east does not have to worry on adopting the western culture rather what the modernization does to the economic, social and political norms.