

POL325: Contemporary Latin American Politics

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1 Development and its Alternatives

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1.1.1 Modernization Theory

Historical Context: Emerged in the North (1950s-1960s) during the Cold War. Arose post-WWII as decolonization accelerated.

Core Idea: Development is a transition from a 'traditional' to a 'modern' society. It posits that underdeveloped countries can 'catch up' by replicating the experience of Western, developed countries.

- Change is seen as determined by internal factors

Dualistic Typology:

- **Traditional Societies:** Simple, rural subsistence economy, family labour, primitive technology, low productivity. Characterized by particularism, ascription, and collective orientation. 'Traditionalism' itself is seen as a barrier due to fatalistic outlook.
- **Modern Societies:** Complex, industrial, market-oriented, wage labour, scientific technology, high productivity. Characterized by universalism, achievement orientation, self-orientation, upward social mobility, and rule of law.

Key Theorists and Concepts:

- **Walt W. Rostow (1960):** Proposed five universal stages of economic growth:
 1. The traditional society;
 2. The preconditions for take-off;
 3. **Take-off (the key turning point);**
 4. The drive to maturity;
 5. The age of mass-consumption.
- **Samuel Huntington (1968):** Prioritized **political order and stability** above other modernization goals, concerned that rapid social change could overwhelm political institutions. Critiqued mainstream MT for being too static, arguing all societies combine traditional and modern elements.
- **Other theorists focused on:** Value changes (Moore), personality transformation (Lerner), psychological factors like the desire to achieve (McClelland), and entrepreneurial spirit (Hagen).

Modernization Theory in Latin America:

- Largely absorbed uncritically by Latin American social scientists and policymakers.
- **Gino Germani (1981):** A notable exception who adapted MT. He argued that transition processes create conflicts and 'asynchronies' as different social spheres change at different speeds. However, his work was criticized from a Marxist perspective for failing to address class and ethnic conflicts.

Critique of Modernization Theory (by Andre Gunder Frank):

- Empirically faulty and theoretically weak.
- **Main flaw:** Assumes underdevelopment is an original state and ignores how development and underdevelopment are part of a single process in the formation of the world capitalist system since the 15th century.
- Fails to account for the impact of colonialism and imperialism.