

**CASE-Berkeley Field Project
Field Report**

Debates On Modernization Theories, Modernity And Development¹

This report outlines the core ideas that form the basis for a course on the “Debates On Modernization Theories, Modernity And Development.” As there are innumerable dimensions of modernization from economic, political, social viewpoints, the proposed course will focus mostly on political and economic modernization phenomena and less on social, cultural aspects.

Introduction: Modernization as a concept appeared long before it was elaborated into a cohesive theory. Questions on modernization, modernity and development experienced comprehensive studies in all fields of social science and humanities. As a very big and complex notion, various theories of modernization elaborated different aspects and developed different perspectives on the problem. Scholars have written thousands of pages trying to categorize and classify the development of humankind, the stages of modernization and make projections for the future. The concept of modernization has been debated for a long time, especially since the end of the Second World War. There were periods when these debates were extremely acute and popular, alternating with periods of practical stillness and neglect. Many scholars have used and are using the concepts of modernity and modernization, sometimes evolved and transformed significantly, as a paradigm to look at the contemporary changes, to make comparative analysis and study historical evolution of the societies.

On the one hand, social scientists and philosophers are still in search of some applicable characteristics of modernity, post-modernity or no-modernity as generalized definitions of historical processes and their consequences. On the other hand, they have departed from the perception of modernity and modernization as something universal, irrefutably desirable and certainly positive toward more complex and varied relativistic ideas of different paths to modernization and widely-discussed conception of multiple modernities and specificity of prerequisites and outcomes.

It is interesting to note that in Soviet historical and social sciences the concept of modernization was disproved as an incompatible and untenable, a hypothesis born from the methodology of bourgeois social sciences. After the end of communist ideology and Marxist dialectics from leading ideological position the concept of modernization was given great attention by Russian historians, social and political scientists. In recent years, we witness another process in Russia: modernization theory is being mainly disregarded, apart from the sporadic revival of the popular notion of modernity in regional and international conferences. It can be assumed that new and more interesting theories and methodological tools explaining local and global processes are being constructed. It may be that the current world financial crisis will contribute to this development. It may influence both the ideas of development and their interpretations as crisis is a time to re-evaluate what it really means to be modern.

Many excellent accounts on history of modernization ideas exist. *Global Modernization. Rethinking the Project of Modernity* by Alberto Martinelly (SAGE Publications, 2005) is one of them. Starting with considering the most significant modernization theories and its critiques, Martinelly continues with synthesizing the most valid arguments of modernization theories that are applicable to analyzing the contemporary world. Other outstanding accounts includes ones of

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many American scholars, Gershenkron, Huntington, Przeworski and others, who having criticized the modernization theories by others, proposed their own theory at the same time. As it is accurately observed by Nils Gilman, the line between primary and secondary sources on modernization theory is not clear-cut. Many who have written about the theory in a historical mode have themselves been development theorists (Gilman, 2004: 313). There are some Russian researchers of modernization as Zarubina, Poberejnikov, Ziborov, Krasilschikov who made significant contribution of bringing these theories into Russian scholar discourse.

Definitions: Collins dictionary defines modernity as the quality or state of being modern. Modernization has multiple definitions: *dichotomic* (modernization as transformation from one state of society to another – from traditional to industrial), historical (description of processes through which modernization is occurred: transformation, revolution), instrumental (modernization as transformation of tools and ways of development and control over the environment), mental (the specific state of mind which is characterized by belief in progress, inclination toward economic growth, readiness to adapt changes), civilizational (modernization as spread of modernity) (Poberejnikov, 2001:163).

In social and political science it is often considered a process with no end that implies idea of permanent innovation, of continual creation of the new (Martinelly, 2005:7). It might have different dimensions: normative, how things should be, and actual, how things really are. Observing the contemporary world, we may notice that modernity is not universal. And it may or may not be desirable. For example, modernization may not be what offers us relief and calm and an escape from “Nature.”

For the purpose of class discussion and as a general working definition we consider modernization as a path toward modernity. Thus, modernization refers then to a process, or better, an ensemble of well-defined processes, and implies modernity. Nonetheless it is distinguished from modernity, which refers to the specific modalities of social life and culture that assert themselves in the course of such process. (Martinelly, 2005:8). Modernization tends to penetrate all aspects of life, bringing occupational specialization, urbanization, rising educational levels, rising life expectancy, and rapid economic growth (Inglehart, Welzel, Foreign Affairs, Volume 88 No.2).

History of the idea of modernization: Although the notion of modernity was born during the time of the Roman Empire from the Latin word 'modo' that meant 'the latest', 'just now' and it was used to make a distinction between the pagan past and the Christian times, the current understanding of modernity and modernization is connected with more recent time. As one of the scholars accurately observed, modernization is a process that tends to be global in two senses: it affects all aspects of the involved societies, and it progressively extends to the rest of the world from its birthplace in Western Europe (Martinelly, 2005:8). That is why modernization for many years was understood as Westernization.

An initial understanding of the process of modernization came to us, first of all, from the classical writers Marx, Weber and Durkheim. Marx talked about modernization without mentioning this exact term, considering it the main impetus of economy and economic forces, and the accumulation of capital, or, put briefly, we can say that Marx argued that through the abolition of private property people achieve a better life. Marx's theory of capitalism can indeed be considered the most influential nineteenth-century theory of modernization. It is also a bridge between the first explicit variants of modernization theories (those of the Scottish Enlightenment historians such as Ferguson and Millar) and the early twentieth-century contributions of the sociological classics, first of all, Weber and Durkheim. (Martinelly, 2005:12).

Weber attached greater importance to social transformations. He suggested that certain traditional societies brought forth the seed of modernity. He held that the development of commerce, the emergence of politically autonomous urban centers in the late medieval world, and above all the Protestant Reformation laid the foundation for modernization in the West. Weber further suggested that the value system of Calvinism contained the [mental ability] that made modern entrepreneurship possible. (Weiner, 1966:5).

In the US, Weberian ideas were developed by Seymour Lipset, a professor at the University of California in Berkeley, and Barrington Moore. Lipset stated that Max Weber was right when he suggested that modern democracy in its clearest forms can only occur under the unique conditions of capitalist industrialization (Lipset, 1959: 73). Lipset argued that among the conditions that can lead to democracy are wealth, a certain level of income, and a degree of industrialization, urbanization and literacy. And the second main condition is the effectiveness and legitimacy of the political system. The higher these indices the more chances for a country to become a democracy.

Lipset should be credited as the initiator of the discourse on modernization at the end of 1950-s. At the same time, his work raised a set of controversial questions. For example, he put education on the highest priority of prerequisites for democracy and focused on the impact of the level of education on country's regime. However, it is widely-known that in the USSR the rate of literacy was high. However, this fact did not affect the communist regime toward its democratization. The collapse of the Soviet Union did not happen because people were educated enough to concisely chose another political system as democracy that would serve better their interests. Communist party ceased its power due to some external (e.g. decrease of oil prices) and internal (e.g. actions of political elites) circumstances.

The initial formulation of the modernization literature coincided with a number of events after the Second World War. National liberation movements, the collapse of colonial empires and emergence of newly independent states, the ideological confrontation of the United States with the Soviet Union were all basic impulses that triggered the discourse on modernization. These events forced Western social scholars to propose alternatives to the ideas underlying communist society and development. Naturally, American scholars were the first to respond to the challenges of the time.

While Lipset concentrated on social prerequisites external to the person, Inkeles, another modernization theorist, paid more attention to social psychological internal requisites, such as state of mind, a psychological disposition (Inkeles, 1966). Very similar ideas we can find in David Lerner works, for whom modernization was a mental shift that characterized in the belief in progress, inclination to the economic growth (Lerner, 1958).

For other modernizers, such as Walt Rostow and Carl Deutsch, modernization was essentially regarded as the process of economic growth and industrialization. Appearing in the highest period of the Cold War these works emphasized their non-Marxist view of modernization. Rostow defined five stages of growth: traditional society (per-Newtonian world), the preconditions of take-off (transition, modern science began to be translated into new production functions in both agriculture and industry, expansion of world markets and the international competition for them; effective centralized national state, nationalism), the take-off (new industries, high rate of effective investments), the drive to maturity (sustained progress), the age of high mass-consumption (Rostow, 1962).

These theories had great impact on US foreign policy, beginning during the Kennedy presidency. For US foreign policy makers modernization theories predicted that if a country achieved certain levels of economic growth, certain social conditions would be preserved. The country would follow the democratic way of the United State and would not be influenced by the world communism. The main implications of this theory in foreign policy were the provision of foreign aid, economic and technical assistance to developing countries. However, these theories were challenged by some other empirical studies.

Theories of modernization became under attack of severe criticism. For example, Rostow's works was the most explicit formulation of modernization theory that was optimistically centered on the inevitability of the development of so-called traditional countries with mechanisms and processes analogous to those already tested by Western societies (Martinely, 2005: 53). As the classical theorists of modernization, he constructed a series of models that can be identified as Weberian 'archetypes', some universal variants of modernization. Critics were more interested in identifying differences of modernizing processes.

Alexander Gerschenkron, an economic historian, opposed the Weberian position by these modernization theorists. He warned against converting historical facts (the role of Calvinism is one example among many) into logical prerequisites, which implies the untenable concept of historical necessity (Weiner, 1966:6). Generally speaking, he denied the requirement of any prerequisites and preconditions as necessary for modernization and economic development. He also criticized the Soviet political economists working within the Marxist tradition, who were "still busy trying to find the "original accumulation of capital" in every country that ever went through the process of industrialization" (Gerschenkron, 1966:251). Moreover, being a specialist in the Soviet studies, he suggested that Bolshevik Communism was simply Russia's path to industrialization and mass consumption (Akturk, 2008:5).

A further significant criticism came from Samuel Huntington in the *Political Order in Changing Societies*, where he argued that it is necessary to make a distinction between economic modernization and political development, which is relatively independent process (Huntington, 1968). In other words, Huntington agreed that undoubtedly economic growth leads to significant changes, but these changes might not be necessarily progressive and democratic.

Another challenge of modernization theory came from neo-Marxist advocates, dependency theorists. Emphasizing the expansive nature of capitalism and its pursuit of new markets, Prebisch, Cardoso and Valenza, O'Donnell and Frank stated that the development of capitalism led to the formation of a colonial system, or, more precisely into the division of the world on core and periphery. They argued that for underdeveloped societies, entering the modern world did not only mean overcoming "traditional norms and structures, opening the way for social, economic, and political transformation". It was not only a "matter of adoptions of new ideas, techniques, values, and organizations" (Valenzuela, Valenzuela, 1978: 538). The dependency perspectives rejected the assumption that the unit of analysis in studying underdevelopment is the national society. The development of a national unit could only be understood in connection with its historical insertion into the worldwide political-economic system which emerged with the wave of European colonizations of the world. (Valenzuela, Valenzuela,1978: 544). Thus, industrialized countries were developed at the expense of poorer nations, and they were not interested in providing equal opportunities for development of their counterparts. These theories were very influential in Latin American countries, and marked the beginning of the period of import-substitution.

Although dependency theorists failed to explain a recent occurrence of phenomenal success of the East Asian "Tiger" economies, other advocates of neo-Marxist approach tried to explain it. Alternative perspectives to social analysis and social change were proposed by World Systems theorists, specifically by Immanuel Wallerstein. This theory has gained influence since its appearance in the second half of the 1970s.

Wallerstein looked at the modern world as a world economy. The major driving force of the modern world for Wallerstein is the world market. He argues that the market progressively replaces the state as fundamental institution of regulation and coordination. The structure of the world economy is based on an international division of labor that differentiates between various countries, hierarchizing them into a core (a small group of major industrialized countries), a periphery (countries, providing raw materials and agricultural products) and a semi-periphery (societies, occupying intermediate positions). Contemporary examples of semi-periphery include oil-producing countries, the 'young dragon' societies of South-East Asia, South Africa, and some Latin American countries such as Brazil. Note, that the countries of the Soviet bloc have always remained ambiguous in Wallerstein' scheme. Wallerstein's study provides many valuable insights for the analysis of modernization and modernity, although Wallerstein would not accept such terms. For example, it is one of the few paradigms in social sciences that have not been 'taken by surprise' by the acceleration and deepening of the processes of globalization (Martinelly, 2005: 71-73).

Like the dependency theory, the world-system theory has been criticized on account of its unilateral negative connotation of international influences and for placing excessive emphasis

placed on economic aspects. The distinction between core, periphery and semi-periphery based upon economic criteria does not allow us to understand political or military patterns of power distribution and concentration, which do not necessarily correspond to the international economic division of labor. The analysis of the struggles for hegemony among the core countries resembles the studies of the realist school in international relations, but it differs from them because of the importance given to economic rather than political variables. This theory does not make room for the existence of multiple modernities within a global world which is economically and culturally interconnected in various ways, but not rigidly hierarchical (Martinelly, 2005: 73-74).

After the end of the Cold War, various theories of modernization have come to rely on the ideas by Lipset. Returning to the subject of prerequisites for democracy, as these theories followed Lipset in assigning primary importance to political culture, but not to economic development. Lipset had argued that democracy requires a supportive culture, and that such norms do not evolve overnight. (Lipset, 1994, *American Sociological Review*, Vol.59, No.1, p.3).

World system theory in contrast had paid scant attention to social and cultural processes that were the distinguished features of the modernization theories that appeared more recently, after the end of the Cold War. For example, in interpreting the collapse of the Soviet Union, World-Systems theorists attributed the USSR's radical transformation to external structural factors at the expense of domestic actors, elites, and political choice. It might be argued that abandoning the command administrative economy in the Soviet Union and its transformation into market capitalist system was a reaction by the Soviet elite to emerging threats to their accumulated privileges and power (Akturk, 2008:1-11).

A quantitative study by Przeworski and Limongi supported some of Lipset's initial thesis. They advocated that democracy is not a by-product of economic development. Democracy is or is not established by political actors pursuing their goals, and it can be initiated at any level of development. They agreed that once democracy is established, the more well-to-do a nation, the more likely its democracy is to survive (*World Politics*, 49/2, January 1997, p.166-177). However, they disproved Lipset's idea that democracies were more likely to be destabilized when countries grew rapidly. They stated that when democracies face a decline in incomes, they tend to collapse (p.167). Przeworski and Limongi's work in turn was criticized by Charles Boix and Susan Stokes. Boix and Stokes showed that it is not always certain that development causes democratic stability but not transition to democracy, additionally, they provided examples with Chile and Benin to show that economic development both causes democracy and sustains it (*World Politics* 55, July 2003).

In the most recent studies on modernization, Ronald Inglehart and Christian Welzel confirm Lipset's idea that democratic institutions cannot be set up easily, anywhere, at any time. These institutions are likely to emerge only when certain social and cultural conditions exist. But economic development and modernization push those conditions in the right direction by creating a self-reinforcing process that brings mass participation to politics and thus makes democracy increasingly likely (Inglehart, Welzel, *Foreign Affairs*, Volume 88/2). They state that today we have a clearer idea than ever before of why and how this process of democratization happens: economic growth does not necessarily leads to democracy, however it leads to self-expression. When such values emerge they make democracy more likely.

Paths toward modernization: Rejecting the idea of universal model of modernization, scholars have identified several paths toward modernity. For the purposes of this course we can identify several models of modernization that can give us some clues to understanding developmental processes:²

² Berkeley-CASE workshops, Berkeley, April, 2009, contributed significantly into identifying these models

- *Model of evolutionary modernization* (the United Kingdom and the United States). These countries were the initial modernizers that went through the so-called a natural path toward modernization. This model includes the classical determinants of the modernizing processes: democratization, urbanization, secularization etc.
- *Model of East Asian modernization* (China, South Korea, Taiwan, Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand, Indonesia). This model combines the entrance into the international market and the acceptance of the rules of free trade with state authoritarian structures (Martinelly, 2005: 75). The Chinese trajectory of modernization is a key example of this model. It can be used as an example to disprove some of the ideas of dependency theorists about the growing gap between the core and the periphery as well as liberal theories that economic growth should foster political democracy;
- *Model of oil-producing countries of the Near East* (e.g., the United Arab Emirates). There we can observe many signs of modern society and modern infrastructure and total absence of the values and concepts that can be considered appropriate to the modernity. In metaphorical sense it can be referred to "the modernization on the sand" (Jason Wittenberg, 2009). We should not "confuse the symbols of modernity with the substance" as it was said by classical modernization theorists (Weiner, 1966:8).
- *The USSR and Latin American models of modernization* To make a comparative study of these two models we can assume roughly that in the beginning of the twentieth century Russia and Latin America were on the same level of development. Then they went different directions: capitalist and communist. And at the end of the twentieth century we can look and compare what they achieved and at what cost. (Comparison suggested by Ruth Collier, 2009).
- *Model of contemporary Russian modernization*. Since independence Russian modernization was defined as a catching-up modernization. However, in 2006 Vladislav Surkov invented a new term of sovereign democracy as a special type of Russian contemporary democracy that is distinguished from others by intellectual leadership, united elite, nation-oriented economy and ability to defend itself³. With heavily reliance on nationalism, presidential ideologists started to elaborate that Russian specificity should prevail over common trends. Although criticized for its ambiguity and artificiality this term still defines official Russian understanding of modernization.
- *Model of Islamist world as a rejection of modernization* (Jason Wittenberg, 2009). There are different ideas what it means 'rejection of modernity' in some of the Muslim countries. One of them is that although in general understanding "modernity" brings innovation and independence. In many Islamist states "modernity" came with colonial dependency. Even after conquering for independence real freedom was restricted in these states. During modernization Muslim countries had to borrow and copy scientific and technological advances of the West. In other words instead of independence they had dependence, instead of innovation they had imitation. If for somebody modernity was a favor and liberations, for others it was enslavement. Modernist secularism resulted in rejection in the shape of religious fundamentalism. (Naumkin, Intertrends, N1(10). 2006. p. 1).

³ For a complete definition, see Surkov V. Nationalization of the Future. Expert 43 (537), November 20, 2006. http://www.expert.ru/printissues/expert/2006/43/nacionalizaciya_budushego/

Concluding remarks: Modernity, seen as a process of permanent change and innovations is far from being accomplished. Plural modernities exist in the contemporary world. As a result there can be neither generally applicable path toward modernity nor universal prerequisites. The processes that are considered to be indispensable fundamentals of modernization process for some countries can be accountable for reversing progress in other countries. For example, in most Muslim countries secularization has run counter to democratization (the best example being the cancellation of the Algerian parliamentary elections of 1992 under the pretence that they would have been won by the Islamist). State secularism, from Algeria to Turkey and Tunisia, promotes not a critical and reformist religion, but a conservative and subservient one (Roy, 2004:3-5).

In contrast to neo-Marxist approaches of the indispensable and overwhelming influence of external economic factors, the important role of internal political developments and country's elites on the modernization processes are now well established. Even though international factors matter, they can be managed and negotiated by modernizing elites of peripheral countries. In addition, international relations can be used as opportunities for development and redefinition of the country's position in the international division of labor, not simply as constraints that condemn it to a fate of dependency and underdevelopment (Martinelly, 2005: 76).

In recent years, cultural influence gained significance in analyzing different trajectories of modernization, as it is culture that defines the specificity of modernizing processes. Culture became as important as economy and policy. We can observe, for example, the tendencies toward global culture, phenomena of multiculturalism and cosmopolitanism. Finally, the contemporary world financial crisis, undoubtedly, will affect the thinking on modernization. We might observe a time when not economic development will define political development, but vice versa when politics will define the economy. This will open new dimensions for modernization thinking.