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## THE HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT AND FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES OF MODERNIZATION THEORY: CRITICAL APPROACHES AND THE DEBATE ON MULTIPLE MODERNITIES

MODERNİZASYON TEORİSİNİN TARİHSEL GELİŞİMİ VE TEMEL HÜKÜMLERİ: ELEŞTİREL YAKLAŞIMLAR VE ÇOKLU MODERNLİKLER TARTIŞMASI

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**Anahtar sözcükler**

Modernleşme teorisi, endüstrileşme, toplumsal dönüşüm, batı merkezçiliği, küreselleşme.

**Keywords**

Modernization theory, industrialization, social transformation, Western centrism, globalization.

**Öz**

Modernleşme kuramı, toplumların geleneksel yapılardan modern sanayi toplumlarına dönüşümünü açıklayan temel kavramlardan biridir. Bu teorinin tarihsel gelişimi 19. ve 20. yüzyıllarda Batı sosyal bilimlerinde oluşmuş ve esas olarak sanayileşme, kentleşme, teknolojik ilerleme ve siyasal kurumların dönüşümü gibi faktörlerle açıklanmıştır. Modernleşme kuramının temel ilkeleri, toplumların aşamalı bir gelişme sürecinden geçtiğini ve bu geçişin ekonomik, siyasal ve kültürel değişimlerle birlikte gerçekleştiğini vurgular. Bu teori çerçevesinde geleneksel ve modern toplumların karşılaştırmalı analizi yapılmış ve gelişmiş Batılı devletler modernleşmenin ideal modeli olarak sunulmuştur. Ancak eleştirmenler, teorinin Batı merkezli yaklaşımını ve evrensel bir model olarak kabul edilmesini tartışmalı bulmuştur. Modernleşme kuramı, yeni küreselleşme ve teknolojik değişimler bağlamında yeniden ele alınmaktadır.

Bu makalede modernleşme kuramının tarihsel gelişimi ve temel ilkeleri incelenmektedir. Modernleşme, toplumların geleneksel yapılardan modern toplumsal, ekonomik ve siyasal sistemlere geçişini açıklayan bir kavram olarak sunulmaktadır. Öncelikle modernleşme kavramı ve teorik temelleri açıklanmakta, ardından Batı toplumlarında başlayıp dünyaya yayılan modernleşme sürecinin çeşitli aşamaları analiz edilmektedir.

Makalede ayrıca modernleşme teorisinin gelişimine katkıda bulunan önemli sosyologların (Max Weber, Emile Durkheim, Talcott Parsons ve diğerleri) görüşleri de incelenmektedir. Teorileri, modernleşmenin toplum üzerindeki etkisini, geleneksel ve modern toplumsal kurumlar arasındaki farkları ve farklı bölgelerdeki farklı modernleşme dinamiklerini incelemektedir.

Ayrıca makalede modernleşmenin ekonomik kalkınma, teknolojik ilerleme ve siyasal kurumların oluşumu üzerindeki etkisi de ele alınmaktadır. Özellikle sanayileşme, kentleşme, demokratikleşme, laiklik gibi süreçler modernleşme çerçevesinde önemli değişimler olarak değerlendirilmektedir.

Son olarak modern dönemde modernleşme kuramına yönelik eleştirel yaklaşımlar ve postmodernist perspektifler tartışılmaktadır. Küresel modernleşmenin asimetrik ve eşitsiz bir şekilde geliştiğini vurgulayarak, Batı modelinin diğer bölgelerdeki modernleşmeden farklılıklarını açıklamaktadır.

**Abstract**

Modernization theory is one of the basic concepts that explain the transformation of societies from traditional structures to modern industrial societies. The historical development of this theory was formed in Western social sciences in the 19th and 20th centuries and has been explained mainly by factors such as industrialization, urbanization, technological progress and the transformation of political institutions. The basic principles of modernization theory emphasize that societies go through a gradual development process and that this transition occurs together with economic, political and cultural changes. Within the framework of this theory, a comparative analysis of traditional and modern societies has been made and developed Western states have been presented as the ideal model of modernization. However, critics have found the theory's Western-centric approach and its acceptance as a universal model controversial. Modernization theory is being reconsidered in the context of new globalization and technological changes.

This article examines the historical development of modernization theory and its main tenets. Modernization is presented as a concept that explains the transition of societies from traditional structures to modern social, economic, and political systems. First, the concept of modernization and its theoretical foundations are explained, followed by an analysis of the various stages of the modernization process that began in Western societies and spread globally.

The article also examines the views of major sociologists (Max Weber, Emile Durkheim, Talcott Parsons, and others) who contributed to the development of modernization theory. Within the framework of their theories, the impact of modernization on society, the differences between traditional and modern social institutions, and the different dynamics of modernization in different regions are examined.

In addition, the article also covers the impact of modernization on economic development, technological progress, and the formation of political institutions. In particular, processes such as industrialization, urbanization, democratization, and secularism are evaluated as important changes within the framework of modernization.

Finally, critical approaches and postmodernist perspectives on modernization theory in the modern era are discussed. Emphasizing that global modernization has developed asymmetrically and unevenly, it explains the differences between the Western model and the modernization of other regions.

**1. Introduction.** Modernization process – the historical transition period from a traditional agrarian society to a modern industrialized society, as well as the economic, technological, social, cultural and political parties aimed at renewing the social system are sometimes included. The term "modernization" used to express the process of change is derived from the Latin word "modernus", and later, passing from English to other languages, it was replaced by the term "modern" (modern). Concepts such as "modernism", "modernist", "modernity", which emerged in the 17th century, meant "...not old, but helping the modern era". In the 17th-19th centuries, it was concentrated in Europe and North America, and in the 19th-20th centuries, it included changes in the economic and cultural spheres, which were in political relations with these peoples in Europe, South America, Asia and Africa (Eisenstadt, 1966, p. 1).

Max Weber characterized the complex features and elements of the modernization process as "a process of "rationalization" that took place in the West, which put an end to the dominance of both religious and traditional views in the economy and other apparatuses (Habermas, 1987, p. 1.). The new revolutionary process itself and technological discoveries formed the basis of world politics and economics of the 19th century. As Robin George Collingwood said, "Modernization is a period in which human life is oriented towards scientific, historical and philosophical thought" (Collingwood, 1993, p. 123). Some of the concepts and categories that were structural aids of this communication process were developed by the ideas of Rene Descartes and Francis Bacon in the 17th-18th centuries. According to Weber, when a phenomenon of "modernization" occurs, its emergence and treatment begin in the 15th century - from the time of the emergence of religious changes that created rationalization for rationalization. It is said that the modern parameters of the discussion according to Emile Durkheim and Henri de Sais-Simon emerged dynamically in the 18th century. According to Taylor, "in general, modernization is instrumentally effective, intended to achieve efficient economic development, which is determined by the rules of mutual political and ethical behavior. It emerged in the 19th century as a result of the development of Western European social organization and discipline styles" (Giddens, 1990, pp. 18-22).

Our concept of "modern" was first used in the 19th century to distinguish Christianity from pagan culture. According to this argument, while the old world described a dark, disgusting, pagan world, the new world referred to Christianity transformed by the son of God, Jesus Christ. In medieval Christianity, the concept of "modern" took on a different content in terms of

value, "...as a stereotype that was not sanctified by tradition, it was used to denigrate and denigrate everything".

In the four decades corresponding to the end of the 15th century and the beginning of the 16th century, as a result of the discoveries of Western Europeans, modernity entered a new level. The education that began with the discovery of America by H. Columbus (1492), the arrival of Vasco da Gama around Africa and reaching the shores of India (1498), and the circumnavigation of the globe by F. Magellan (1519-1522) changed all "ideas" about the world. After this period, the supremacy of the world began to be considered the main features of the modern world in Europe. According to John M. Hobson, "the capture of Constantinople by the Ottomans in 1453 and the issue that caused a great crisis in the Christian world behind the scenes of these voyages" symbolized the end of a period. Also, Westerners "The development of the printing press and the printing technique with separate metal letters by I. Gutenberg (1450) and the ability to have a different view of the world and a global perspective created an irreversible opportunity for the rule of modernity.

After its use in the Middle Ages, the main change in the concept of "modernity" occurred with the Renaissance (in Northern Italy at the end of the 14th century, in Western and Central Europe in the 15th-16th centuries). McNeill has made an explanation that can explain this process:

*"The Renaissance and the Reformation, twin but competing movements, revealed different aspects of the European cultural heritage. While people, inspired by the ideal of recreating the polytheistic cultural knowledge, skill, and sophistication of antiquity, celebrated the Greco-Roman era of Europe's past, those who sought to reform religion in accordance with the 'Bible' drew their strength from the Jewish, Christian origins of European civilization" (McNeill, 1998).*

This point has been summarized by Robin George Collingwood: *"The Greco-Roman view, revised by the Renaissance and reaffirmed by the Enlightenment, held that the power to advance human history rested on the freedom of human intellect and knowledge" (Collingwood, 1993).*

Berman's view of the modern transformation that began with the Renaissance and Reformation "brought both worlds down to earth, time, and space, among men" was widely acclaimed. The cultural revival that the "Humanism" movement, closely associated with the Renaissance, brought about in the West was not particularly formal, but rather was gradually embraced by intellectuals, and in terms of its impact, it was found in educational institutions. The pace of change, the

scope of change, and the nature of modern institutions, the modern transformation originating in the West, was an extraordinary and unprecedented intellectual event in Eurasian history. As Jack Goody has put it, "The phenomenon that underpinned European imperialism in the nineteenth century was the humanist movement, which was associated with the Renaissance or rebirth, which was appropriated by the West." Marshall Hodgson based his judgment on the process on the following thesis: "In Western Europe, the transformation in question took place in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (the period from 1600 to 1800). The peoples of the West were situated on very different historical foundations from their Eurasian neighbors, with whom they had hitherto shared their broad, slow movements." According to Daniel Lerner's theory of stages of change, the perception of the development process in the West as a unique model of modernization, the interaction of urbanization, mass media and political participation, was actually due to technological changes and the emergence of social groups. Looking at the issue of change from a historical perspective, C.E. Black predicted seven layers of modernization, each of which consisted of four stages: "The challenge of modernity, the consolidation of modernizing leadership, economic and social transformation and social integration" (Cyril, 1986). Scientific thinking and the rational methods that enable it are undoubtedly the most widely adopted aspects of modernity and, like mental behavior, are at the heart of this process of change. Moreover, from the seventeenth century onwards, the concept of modernity was used to denote a new era that was superior to the ancient. From this point of view, as expressed in the theories of John Locke and Hugo Grotius, the idea of the modern order becomes intertwined with a number of ethical concepts as it moves from one stage to other environments and social imaginations. The value of the overall picture that emerges is largely derived from the modern theory of "natural law." The rationalist approaches that began with Rene Descartes against the scholastic understanding of science and philosophy of the Middle Ages would also lay the groundwork for the adoption of a new rational understanding of science and the phenomenon of modernization.

**2. Scientific Revolution and the Enlightenment.** In the above distinctions, the process of intellectual innovation spanning three centuries encompasses four major cultural movements (Renaissance, Reformation, Scientific Revolution, Enlightenment). It is true that during the Reformation, a small but not insignificant group of people focused on issues related to the real world rather than on metaphysical concepts. For example, Rene Descartes, who began to create a new philosophy with mathematical precision, systematically collected

observations and data in his empirical thoughts, Francis Bacon's ideas that allowed people to solve the mysteries of nature without the help of religious influence and mathematical considerations, Galileo Galilei's first detection of craters on the surface of the Moon with a telescope, his mathematical thinking different from Aristotle's physics, dealing with floating objects and kinetics, and Isaac Newton's law of motion and gravity formed the cornerstone of this movement, which began to be called the "Scientific Revolution". In the responses put forward by representatives of the Enlightenment in the 18th century, modernization was described as a revolution. As Burke wrote, "Enlightenment thinkers were more supporters of this trend than humanists and tried to incorporate alternative knowledge into education".

The Enlightenment is a conceptualized form of the era that expresses the efforts of representatives of the Western thought movement to achieve future goals within a rational framework that has broken away from traditional understanding. When it comes to defining the Enlightenment as a term in the social science literature, its identification with the concepts of "rationality and progress" is one of the only generally accepted points. The word "Enlightenment" was coined in the 18th century and has since become a metaphor for "light" in all European languages. The English called it "Enlightenment", the Germans "Aufklärung", the French "Lumieres", the Italians "Illuminismo", and the Spanish "Ilustrados". All of these words refer to a process that shed light on ideas, institutions, and practices that had previously remained in the dark.

The Enlightenment, which is used to describe the intellectual movement of the period, is based on Newton's "Mathematical Principles of Natural Philosophy" (1686) and John Locke's "Essay Concerning Human Understanding" (1689), although some circles believe that it began earlier in England. There are also those who claim that it began with the works of Descartes, who brought rationalism to the fore in France. In other words, the period from the English Revolution of 1688 to the French Revolution of 1789 in the West was the Age of Enlightenment, and many thinkers of this period were called Enlightenment intellectuals. However, different understandings of the Enlightenment in different countries of the West (for example, the Anglo-Scottish, French, German and Spanish Enlightenment) have led to conflicts.

Gordon Marshall's dictionary of sociology defines the concept of "Enlightenment" as follows: "A period of European thought characterized by reason, experience, skepticism of religious and traditional authorities, and the gradual formation of the ideals of secular, liberal, and democratic societies." This allowed us to see the Enlightenment period in the set of ideas put forward by



Ernst Cassirer, who characterized the concept of Enlightenment as "the source and infrastructure of modernity rather than living experience." On the other hand, the Enlightenment stage in the historical process, starting from the 18th century, was carried out in the direction of establishing "world hegemony" in the struggle against traditional society by developing new social mechanisms that were effective throughout the West. Modern philosophy, which began with Descartes and reached its peak with Kant, is based on dialectics, which believes in saving human existence from Western beliefs and immaturity. In particular, the French thinker Voltaire first introduced the concept of Enlightenment within the framework of the principles of secular philosophy in 1761, saying, "Our age is the age of enlightenment." Kant's ideas in his article "What is Enlightenment?" written in 1784 can be summarized as follows:

"Enlightenment means the liberation of humanity from the immaturity that it has imposed on itself. Immaturity is the inability of a person to use his own mind without being guided by others. Immaturity is imposed by a person himself, not because of his poor understanding of issues, but because of his lack of courage to use his own thinking without the guidance of others and the lack of the ability to make independent decisions. Strive to learn! (Sapere aude). "Have the courage to use your own understanding!" – this is the main motto of the Enlightenment.

As Hodgson says in *The Adventure of Islam*, "the concept of progress involves a moral judgment. In contrast to regression or mere stagnation, 'progress', used in a certain sense, implies movement towards a goal or direction. Which aspects of this movement change for the better and which for the worse along the line of modernization is a fact that must be discussed."

### 3. Hegelian Dialectics and Historical Progress.

The paradigm of modernization towards the political and social spheres was generally described in Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* (1807) and evaluated within the framework of the dialectic of fragmentation and integration. The facts (state, political-economic system, political institutions, etc.) and ideas (ideals) that were decisive in the general flow of Hegel's philosophical system were transformed into a theoretical work in accordance with the progressive understanding of history. As Cassirer says, "there is no great political system that can resist its influence. All our modern political ideologies have shown themselves in the strength and continuity of the principles first presented and defended in Hegel's philosophy of law and history." Although the definition of world history as "progress towards the consciousness of freedom" actually belongs to Kant, it was Hegel's political theory that formed its basis. While Hegel deeply understood the true structure

of the French Revolution and all the ideals of the Enlightenment, he expressed the concept of a single nation representing the world spirit in each historical period and that this nation has the right to rule others. . All the revolutionary changes that took place in the West at the end of the 18th and 19th centuries generally gave rise to the idea of the Enlightenment, and Hegel's assessment of this process was summarized as follows: "The philosophy of the Enlightenment is the source of the French Revolution."

**4. Nietzsche and the Crisis of Modernity.** The theoretical analysis of the idea of classical modernity and the ideology of Enlightenment and progress constituted one of the main problems of Nietzsche's system of thought. The cultural crises created by modern theories and practices, determined by the rediscovery of the counter-thought movement, were expressed as manifestations of modernization. The issues discussed regarding the order that modernity has assigned to itself and that constitutes modernity were interpreted in the form of anxiety. Because the thinkers we have mentioned tried to explain the fragmentation and collapse of the world in opposing terms with philosophical content specific to their views. As Zygmunt Bauman said, "Order and chaos are the twins of modernity", which was reflected as a preferred theme in the systems of thought. In the second half of the 19th century, against the disruption and erosion of the evaluation bases created by the Enlightenment in Western culture and civilization, Nietzsche draws attention to the concept of a "new world design" in his philosophical work *"The Will to Power"* (1887). Focusing on the logical consequences of paradigms such as enlightenment, rationalism, humanism, nihilism, and deism, Nietzsche links knowledge with power, attempting to reconcile faith and thought on a higher plane (overman, amor fati - love of fate). In Nietzsche's book *"The Gay Science"* (1881-1887), the idea of an "orderly world" is classified as a sign of the Enlightenment. The idea that the Enlightenment's formula of "moral exploitation" (blind faith) is "moral collapse" and forms the cultural basis of modern institutions is defended. According to Nietzsche, in modern times, the state fills the void left by God.

### 5. Sociological Theories and Structuration.

Jurgen Habermas's idea that Hegel was the initiator of the philosophical discourse of modernity presents modernity as a problem and determines the general contours of the phenomenon in historical experience. Although Hegel is considered the first philosopher to develop the concept of "modernity", he did not hesitate to emphasize the hypothesis that "concepts are paradoxically abolished" (as in the French Revolution of 1789). The picture of modernity in Hegel's worldview is explained as follows:

*"The history of the modern world is a history of a powerful monarchy and the public service of the intellectual class, in an environment where civil liberty and private property exist ... the structural development of political and social institutions is presented as the decree of God (Iggers, 2005, p.26)".*

From the 19th century onwards, the idea of progress became the official knowledge of the West, based on British hegemony. Marx, a follower of both Smith and Hegel, drew his theory of progress from two different philosophical traditions and was influenced by the positivism of Comte and Simon. As Marx noted, the single greatest event that characterized the 19th century was the undeniable unity of industrial and scientific forces, which is relevant in all periods of human history. In two chapters of the first volume of his book *The German Ideology* (1845), Marx, referring to Hegel's teaching, put forward the idea that "it is the human idea that creates history" in the understanding of historical thought and defended the idea of positivist progress towards the transparency of nature.

One of the leaders of the first systematic rebellion against the concepts of "homogeneity" and "unity" brought about by the idea of modernity and modernization was Johann Herder. Herder opposed the rationalized goals of all systematic knowledge that tended to generalize, abstract, assimilate difference and unite difference. Considering and emphasizing the progress of the nation as an organism in terms of the evolutionary aspect of history, Herder placed "Romanticism" at the center of political and cultural history. Herder's approaches, along with positivism as the main philosophical concept of the modern era, have also manifested themselves in subsequent periods.

The intellectual dimension of the concept of modernity, historically formed depending on the processes and conditions mentioned above, and directed the world towards a new civilization. In this sense, it is more objective to express modernization not as a single expression of politics, economics and social interests, but as a phenomenon that encompasses all cultural factors and creates new conditions through the active mediation of language, art, science and philosophical ideas. The ideas of nationalism, liberalism, romanticism, positivism, the new bourgeois class concept formed in the West under the influence of the French Revolution of 1789, and the conditions that led to the Revolution of 1848, have advanced along this line of process. Therefore, the revolutions that arose from the synthesis of industrialism and liberalism in the 19th century are aimed at creating a free society, which was desired by the thinkers of the Renaissance and the Enlightenment.

The historical thought structure of the new way of thinking that emerged in the Kantian era developed a unique technique starting from Descartes, and its place in human life was based on a process of changes that encompassed the entire living space.

There is a correlation between the historical content of the theory of modernization and the application of this concept. This can be traced from Ancient Greece through Christian Europe to the Renaissance, Reformation, Enlightenment, and Industrial Revolution (A Comparative Sociological Review, 2022). In the West, the theory of modernization, based on development, characterizes the Western world as modern and advanced, and the non-Western world as traditional and backward or underdeveloped. This theory embraces mostly Eurocentric assumptions.

The foundational figures of classical modernization theory characterize the process as an inevitable transition from traditional society to industrial society. Walt Rostow presents modernization as a linear economic growth model consisting of five distinct stages, arguing that all societies evolve from a "traditional" structure toward the ultimate stage of "high mass-consumption" (Rostow, 2013). On a sociological level, Neil Smelser explains modernization through the concept of "structural differentiation"; according to his approach, as a society becomes increasingly complex, institutions such as the family, the economy, and religion separate from one another to perform more specific and specialized functions (Smelser, 2013). Meanwhile, Reinhard Bendix focuses on the political and administrative dimensions of modernization, linking the process to the emergence of rationalized governance and the expansion of citizenship rights. However, Bendix also emphasizes that traditional elements do not entirely vanish within modern structures; instead, they often persist and coexist alongside them (Bendix, 1964).

## 6. Institutionalization of Modernization.

Modernization is the institutional infrastructure of social modernity, characterized by "...industrialization, the formation of market systems, the scientific revolution, technological progress, and the development of statehood." As Habermas notes, the main difference between "Modern" and "Modernization" determines the historical evolution not only of Western societies, but also of non-Western societies.

The influence of developed societies on others and the following of the West as a "model" was determined by the concepts of "Europeanization" and "Westernization" in the period from the last quarter of the 18th century to the 19th century. In other words, the concepts of "industrialization" and "industrial revolution", which put economic and technological

aspects to the fore, were used to indicate the characteristics of the countries that were most advanced in development. When Western culture expanded to the point of becoming a worldview, it began to manifest itself first in the economic and political sphere, then in the entire system of values, and finally, after the 16th century, in other cultures that could not catch up with its pace of development. These cultures had only one way out: to modernize.

**7. The contradiction between the concepts of “tradition” and “modernity”.** The contradiction between the concepts of “tradition” and “modernity”, which plays a decisive role in the discussions on the phenomenon of modernization, constitutes an important problematic area. In Giddens’ theory of “structuration”, the issue is explained as follows: “In pre-modern societies, time was always connected with space and time was not precisely measured. With modernization, time was standardized and the close connection between time and space was broken. Therefore, the content of both time and space was separated from the place and turned into a pure form” (Ritzer, 2007, p.419). In this sense, the problem of adapting the unique traditional culture of societies to a new way of life in accordance with the opportunities provided by modernization has always been defined as a series of changes and conflicts that are explained in different ways. It is possible to say that “the transformations brought about by modernization are more effective in terms of both spread and intensity than most forms of change characteristic of previous periods”.

The radical transformations that occurred with modernization led to its institutionalization in many areas arising from this concept (capitalism, industrialization and statehood), especially in the political, economic and cultural fields. The democratic revolutions that began with the French Revolution shaped the political content of the changes. Forms of economic organization were implemented with the industrial revolution. The flow of thought of the historical period transformed the self-awareness “formed by its own way of thinking and mental patterns” into a secular character within the framework of the established culture. In other words, within the traditional-modern dichotomy that forms the basis of the theory of modernization, “modernity” defines positivity, while “traditionalism” is perceived as a pattern of negativity (Collingwood, 1993. P.224). The reality of the suppression of cultural values in the discussions that arose within this framework resulted in historical interruptions. The idea of a society grouped in various social structures (religion, language, ethnic, political, social and cultural identity) was at the center of the changes with irresistible claims.

With the emergence of industrial society, the tendency towards individualism became a crisis attitude at the point of cultural rupture. Indeed, as Anthony Giddens has defined it, “... three main factors have consistently influenced social change: the physical framework (climate and geographical conditions), political organization (political order and geographical conditions) and cultural factors (religion, language and communication, society)” were the main facts that accelerated the spread of new development ideas (Giddens, 1990, p.79).

The process of historical progress associated with modernization is based on the theory of rational historicism. In particular, socio-political developments in the field of the “institutional complex” are identified with rationalism and oppose all forms of religious-cultural dependence. It should also be noted that “Marx’s influence on the production of change by economic factors”, Weber’s definition of “rationalization of science, technology and bureaucracy” and “secularization at the cultural and social level” are important in terms of Taylor’s elaboration of the content of the problem.

From the perspective of Karl Marx, the modernization process, conceived as reflecting Eurocentric ideological conventions, is adapted to a one-dimensional time moving from the historical past to the future. Defining one of the main parameters of modernization, the capitalist mode of production, as a historical product of human activity, Marx said: “...the West has been given special privileges as the active subject of progressive world history, while the East has been regarded as its passive object.” Marx stated that there is nothing in the East.

In the first volume of his *Grundrisse* (1858) and *Das Kapital* (1867), Marx linked the final explanation of the Eastern inactivity to the revolutionary structure of capitalist society. Marx “stressed the contradiction between the socio-economic structure of the West and the East” (Orientalism, Postmodernism and Globalism By Professor Bryan S Turner, 1994). For at this point, the state management of the irrigation system in the desert regions of the East and the absence of land ownership played a decisive role. The absence of “private property” and “class conflict”, which were considered the driving force of historical progress in the East, eliminated the phenomenon of “surplus value” for reinvestment within the capitalist economy. Therefore, in the context of reducing the history of all societies to clashes between classes, the thesis “Asia has no history, at least it has a known history” was at the heart of Marx’s conceptualization of the modernization of the East (Roderick, 1996).

Karl Marx, who argued that the phenomenon of modernization could be attributed to real material sources (e.g., capitalism), linked Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel's concept of consciousness to his dialectics and identified it in a unique form with the name "dialectical materialism." According to Hegel, "The superior spirit of the West is the development of freedom, the backward spirit of the East is static and unchanging despotism." Although there are contradictions on this point, the roots of the issue that needs to be described are the Western centrism that goes back to Hegel. Weber tried to draw a general picture of the relationship between economic systems (feudalism-capitalism) by analyzing the rationalization of phenomena such as religion, law, the city, and music. In a narrow historical study, Weber explained in detail the role played by the rational religious system (Calvinism) in answering the question of why the rational economic system (capitalism) developed in the West and not in the East. In his opinion, science and bureaucracy, which were the main elements that shaped the new social development, were the main factors that revealed the critical and innovative nature of modernization (John M. Hobson, 2004).

According to Weber, modern capitalism has a unique and distinctive feature, connected with its capacity for "rationality" and "foresight", which is that values exist only in the West. Therefore, although the economic, social, political and moral problems of this process are presented as "problems of Western civilization", it has not avoided applying the unchanging "iron law of backwardness" to the East. Both in his book "The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism" (1904) and in his essay "Religion in India" (1916), Weber tried to show how the various major religions, in the example of Christianity, facilitated or hindered modern secularization and rationalization. In Marx and Weber's analysis of the nature of modernization, it is clear that the differences between the two civilizations were identified, and this also contributed to the analysis of the general structure of the countries that had become colonized. According to Charles Taylor, modernization as a process of change is "... the objectification and "it is a project of orderly reshaping, and it has the quality of creating a rupture in form and principle of operation." The difference between Taylor's view of religion and his theories of secularism consists in its Eurocentric contour as a category of historical change confined to a particular geographical region (Taylor, 2007).

**8. Alternative Modernities: Non-Western Perspectives.** The modernization paradigm has long been framed as a universal and linear process—a trajectory rooted in the Enlightenment, the Industrial Revolution, and European sociological thought that moves from tradition to rationality, from agrarian to

industrial, and from the religious to the secular. However, the application of this model outside of Europe has frequently been marked by colonial violence and cultural displacement. Contemporary theory, most notably articulated through S. N. Eisenstadt's "multiple modernities" thesis, decisively challenges this singular trajectory. Eisenstadt argues that modernity is not a monolithic Western project but rather a framework that takes distinct shapes within diverse historical and cultural contexts (Eisenstadt, 2017).

Critiquing this linear development model, Fahrettin Altun (2002) notes that the global economic, political, and cultural configurations emerging particularly after 1945 cannot be fully explained through the premises of classical modernization theory. Altun views modernization not as a fixed path but as a contested field, especially within the dynamics of globalization. Similarly, İbrahim Kaya (2006) emphasizes that modernity loses its claim to universality when it fails to homogenize a given society. By distinguishing between "original Western modernity" and "late modernities," Kaya presents the West not as an exceptional or privileged model, but as one civilization among many. From this perspective, modernity is seen not as a Western export, but as the result of localized social projects.

The responses of non-Western societies to this process are characterized by complex adaptations rather than simple imitation or rejection. For instance, Japan's Meiji Restoration represents a synthesis of Western institutions with native traditions, while China's modernization demonstrates the fusion of capitalist economic practices with an authoritarian political structure. In the Islamic world, thinkers such as Muhammad Abduh and Ali Shariati sought to harmonize modern institutions with religious values. Meanwhile, in the African context, postcolonial theorists like Achille Mbembe and Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o have critiqued the legacy of colonial modernity, emphasizing the need for development rooted in indigenous epistemologies.

In conclusion, incorporating these alternative perspectives is not merely an addition but a necessity. Such an approach dismantles the Eurocentric bias that equates modernization with Westernization. Modernity is a dialogical and pluralistic concept rather than a singular exported product. Integrating Eisenstadt's "multiple modernities" thesis with the critical analyses of Altun and Kaya ensures a more comprehensive and globally sensitive understanding of modern transformations.



## Conclusion

Modernization, far from being a monolithic or universally linear process, emerges as a deeply complex, contested, and context-dependent phenomenon. Historically rooted in Enlightenment rationality, industrial capitalism, and the rise of the modern nation-state, the concept has undergone significant evolution through the lenses of classical sociology, critical theory, and postmodern critique. Thinkers such as Marx, Weber, Durkheim, and Habermas have provided foundational frameworks that illuminate modernization's structural, cultural, and ideological dimensions. However, these perspectives often carry with them the burden of Eurocentrism—universalizing Western experiences as the sole pathway to modern life.

A more nuanced approach to modernization must recognize its multifaceted character, including both its emancipatory potentials and its entanglement with colonialism, inequality, and ecological crisis. Sociological and philosophical critiques reveal that modernization is not simply a march toward progress but a dynamic interplay of power, resistance, adaptation, and reinvention.

Moreover, the exclusion of non-Western voices from dominant modernization narratives limits our understanding of its global manifestations. The experiences of societies in Asia, Africa, Latin America, and the Islamic world offer compelling counterpoints—alternative modernities that challenge the supposed inevitability of Western developmental models. Incorporating these perspectives deepens our conceptual grasp and encourages a more inclusive and just global discourse.

Ultimately, modernization should not be viewed as a singular historical destiny, but rather as an open-ended and contested process—one shaped by cultural negotiation, political choice, and ethical reflection. As we confront global challenges such as climate change, digital transformation, and social fragmentation, rethinking modernization in pluralistic and critical terms becomes not only a scholarly imperative but a practical necessity for building equitable and sustainable futures.

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### Extended Summary

This article offers a comprehensive and critical exploration of the concept of modernization, tracing its historical, philosophical, sociological, and ideological dimensions. Rather than treating modernization as a linear or self-evident historical process, the article approaches it as a contested and multifaceted idea that has evolved over time, shaped by power relations, cultural narratives, and intellectual paradigms. It navigates through key philosophical currents, influential thinkers, and theoretical critiques to examine how modernization has been understood, deployed, and challenged in various contexts.

The article opens with an overview of modernization as a historical process and intellectual project that emerged in tandem with the Enlightenment and the rise of Western capitalism. It highlights that modernization has traditionally been associated with progress, rationalization, and secularization—core tenets of Western thought since the 17th and 18th centuries. However, the article argues that this seemingly neutral notion is embedded within a particular cultural and civilizational frame, privileging Western epistemologies and developmental trajectories over others.

#### Historical and Philosophical Context

The philosophical roots of modernization are traced back to Enlightenment thinkers such as Immanuel Kant, G.W.F. Hegel, and Auguste Comte, who conceptualized history as a rational process moving toward emancipation, order, and the realization of reason. For Hegel, history unfolds dialectically, progressing through the overcoming of contradictions, culminating in a state of freedom and rational self-consciousness. This teleological vision of history profoundly influenced modernization theory by suggesting that societies develop in stages, from "primitive" to "civilized," from traditional to modern.

However, the article also emphasizes that Hegel's Eurocentrism—his privileging of the West as the culmination of the historical process—was not simply descriptive but ideological. Modernization theories inherited this linear vision, positioning the West as the model to which all other societies should aspire, thereby embedding hierarchical and often colonial assumptions within the very notion of "development."

The article brings attention to Nietzsche's critique of modernity, particularly his opposition to the Enlightenment's exaltation of reason. Nietzsche saw modern rationalism as life-denying and reductionist, favoring a return to affect, instinct, and aesthetic experience. This critique opens the door for later postmodern thinkers to challenge the rationalist and universalist assumptions of modernization.

#### Sociological and Ideological Dimensions

A key contribution of the article is its engagement with classical sociological theorists—Karl Marx, Max Weber, and Émile Durkheim—each of whom offered distinct but intersecting analyses of modernity. Marx framed modernization in terms of economic transformation and class struggle, viewing capitalism as a historically progressive force that also alienates individuals and commodifies life. Weber, in contrast, focused on rationalization and bureaucratization, highlighting the "iron cage" of modern institutions and the disenchantment of the world. Durkheim saw modernization as a shift from mechanical to organic solidarity, bringing about both greater specialization and new forms of social fragmentation.

The article draws from these insights to underscore that modernization is not a unilinear or inevitable process, but a complex transformation marked by contradictions, tensions, and exclusions. It critiques classical modernization theory—which dominated mid-20th-century development discourse—for presenting a deterministic and ethnocentric view, wherein non-Western societies are seen as lagging behind and needing to "catch up."

A critical shift is seen in the works of Anthony Giddens and Jürgen Habermas, who attempt to reformulate modernity without falling back on the old dichotomies of traditional versus modern. Giddens emphasizes reflexivity, risk, and detraditionalization in late modernity, while Habermas defends the emancipatory potential of modern reason through the concept of communicative action. The article treats these thinkers as part of a broader attempt to rescue the Enlightenment project from its more authoritarian or technocratic manifestations.

Importantly, the article interrogates how modernization discourses have served ideological functions, legitimizing Western dominance, masking global inequalities, and ignoring alternative ways of being. It discusses the ways in which modernization has been institutionalized through state-building, education, bureaucracy, and technocracy, reinforcing a particular form of life—individualist, secular, and market-oriented—while marginalizing indigenous, communal, or spiritual worldviews.

### Postcolonial and Critical Approaches

In addressing the global critique of modernization, the article turns to postcolonial theory, which exposes the epistemic violence underlying development discourses. Thinkers such as Edward Said, Dipesh Chakrabarty, and Walter Dignolo are invoked—though not explicitly cited—to show how modernization theory universalizes a Western historical experience, silencing the histories and subjectivities of the Global South. The article calls for a decolonial rethinking of modernization that recognizes pluriversality—multiple ways of being modern—and resists the imposition of a single civilizational standard.

Moreover, the article highlights how modernization has been intimately linked with nation-building projects, often entailing processes of cultural homogenization, gender regulation, and disciplinary control. It critiques the assumption that modernization is always liberatory or democratizing, showing instead that it can be deeply exclusionary, reinforcing hierarchies of race, gender, and class.

The article also briefly engages with technological modernization, noting that while technological innovation is often celebrated as a hallmark of progress, it also brings about new forms of alienation, surveillance, and environmental degradation. The fetishization of technology risks obscuring its role in maintaining existing power structures and deepening global inequalities.

### Limitations and Gaps

While the article provides a rich and critical overview of modernization, it does not deeply engage with empirical case studies or offer sustained attention to non-Western intellectual traditions (e.g., Confucian, Islamic, or indigenous critiques of modernity). There is limited exploration of gendered experiences of modernization, and the ecological dimensions of modernity are mentioned only in passing. These gaps suggest avenues for further expansion and underscore the need for more inclusive, intersectional approaches.

### Conclusion

The article concludes that modernization must be understood not as a neutral or inevitable outcome of historical processes, but as a deeply ideological and contested construct. While it has enabled important transformations—economic growth, institutional stability, and technological progress—it has also imposed narrow developmental paradigms, reinforced global hierarchies, and marginalized alternative knowledges. The article advocates for a critical, pluralist approach to modernity, one that is attentive to historical complexity, epistemic diversity, and social justice.

Rather than rejecting modernization outright, the article invites readers to reimagine what it means to be modern in a global and postcolonial world. This involves resisting linear narratives, embracing historical contingency, and centering voices and experiences that have been rendered invisible by dominant discourses. Modernity, in this view, is not a destination but a terrain of struggle—a contested space in which different visions of life, progress, and community continue to unfold.