



# Critique of the Modernization Theory's Conceptions of Underdevelopment: A Theoretical Approach

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## Abstract

The conceptualization and understanding of underdevelopment remained a fundamental issue in any discourse of development studies. The modernization theory conceived underdevelopment as either systemic in the Third World's culture or even a natural phenomenon. This paper aimed to critique the position of the modernization theory's conceptions that underdevelopment is a natural phenomenon, and intended to advance other reasons for underdevelopment. To achieve this, an attempt has been made to analyse and critique some dominant modernization theories. The paper adopted the underdevelopment and dependency theory developed by Andre Gunder Frank as a theoretical framework. The methodology adopted for this paper was purely documentary where existing works on the subject matter have been consulted and analysed critically. The study revealed among others that underdevelopment is never a 'natural phenomenon' as the modernization theorists wanted us to believe, rather it is a product of historical antecedents and continues economic, political and social relationship by the Third World Countries with the so-called developed countries. The present underdeveloped countries were developed at the same level as the so-called developed countries before their contact with the West. The study further, confirmed the position of Andre Gunder Frank, that until the ties between the two blocs are weakened or completely halted, underdevelopment will perpetuate itself in the Third World Countries.

## Keywords

Colonialism, Dependency, Development, Imperialism Modernization, Slavery, Underdevelopment.

## Introduction

Modernisation theory has presented underdevelopment as either systemic in the Third World Countries' culture as captured in the theory of dualism, limiting factor theory and the vicious circle of poverty forwarded by the classical liberal economic scholars of the West (Josef 1997, in Thomas, 2009) or as presented by W. W. Rostow as a natural process of growth which every country has to follow. As far as

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modernisation theory is concerned, underdevelopment is simply a question of knowledge and technological transfer and the existing social and cultural arrangements in developing countries. Modernisation theorists maintain that modernisation is a progressive process that in the long run is not only inevitable but desirable. According to Coleman, (n.d) modernised political systems have a higher capacity to deal with the function of national identity, legitimacy penetration, participation, and distribution than traditional political systems. Modernisation is a lengthy process. It is an evolutionary change, not a revolutionary one. It will take generations or even centuries to complete, and its profound impact will be felt only through time. All these assumptions are derived from European and American evolutionary theory (Coleman, cited in Reyes, 2001)

The evolution of modernisation theory can be traced to the aftermath of the World War II when the two superpower countries; the United States of America and the Union of the Soviet Socialist Republic each competed to sell their development ideology to the newly independent countries of Africa, Asia and Latin America. Modernisation emerged as anti-communist political agenda (Islam, 2018). Early modernisation theories were greatly affected by the political climate between the United States and the Soviet Union. During the cold war, two versions of modernisation theory were prominent. According to Grosfoguel (2017), modernisation theory emerged after World War II, when the US was facing the challenge of providing a model of development that would somehow compete with the Soviet model. As the Soviet Union was accusing the US of being imperialist, the response of the US and the Truman administration, in particular, was to say that they were not imperialist. They aimed to assist the poor underdeveloped countries to become developed and that, what they want to provide was “technical assistance” as well as a “scientific theory of development”.

The culturalist version of modernisation theory said that the reason why people around the world are living in poverty was that they were stuck in traditional culture and that they needed to become modern. What they meant by modern is to become assimilated to Western values, and that if you did not; you would be living in poverty for the rest of your life. The other version of modernisation theory was the Rostow version, the famous anti Communist Manifesto from 1960 where Rostow claims that the problem of underdevelopment in the third world countries was the problem of policies at the level of the nation-state. What is shared by both theories is that they both ground the explanation of wealth or poverty inside the boundaries of the nation-state. They do not consider global structures of inequality or anything similar or long-term historical structures. They wanted a tabula rasa, overlooking the questions of colonialism and imperialism (Grosfoguel, 2017).

The explanations offered by the modernisation theory have failed to account for the phenomenon that caused underdevelopment in the Third World Countries of Africa, Asia and Latin America. The Marxist scholars perceived underdevelopment in terms of operations and dialectical consequences of international capitalism, with its exploitative mechanism and internal contradiction (Gilpin, 1987, Jinghan 2004, Bhatia 2003, Nkrumah 1975, Onimode 1982 in Thomas 2009). The Marxist perception of underdevelopment has been advanced by the scholars of the dependency theory who explained underdevelopment as a conditioning situation in which the economies of one group of countries are conditioned by the development and expansion of others (Thomas 2009 & Hayatudden 2011).

Accordingly, So, (1990) noted that three main historical elements were favourable to the inception of the modernisation theory of development after the Second World War. First, there was the rise of the United

States as a superpower. While other Western nations, such as Great Britain, France, and Germany, were weakened by World War II, the United States emerged from the war strengthened, and became a world leader with the implementation of the Marshall Plan to reconstruct war-torn Western Europe (Reyes, 2001).

Second, there was the spread of a united world communist movement. The Former Soviet Union extended its influence not only to Eastern Europe but also to China and Korea. Third, there was the disintegration of European colonial empires in Asia, Africa and Latin America, giving birth to too many new nation-states in the Third World. These nascent nation-states were in search of a model of development to promote their economy and enhance their political independence.

The major assumptions of the modernization theory of development is that modernisation is a phased process; for example, Rostow has five phases/stages according to his theory of economic development for underdeveloped societies. Modernisation is a homogenizing process, in this sense, we can say that modernisation produces tendencies toward convergence among societies, for example, Levy (1967) maintains that 'as time goes on, they and we will increasingly resemble one another' because the patterns of modernisation are such that the more highly modernised societies become, the more they resemble one another. Modernisation is nothing but Europeanisation or Americanisation process; in the modernisation literature, there is an attitude of complacency toward Western Europe and the United States. These nations are viewed as having unmatched economic prosperity and democratic stability (Tipps, 1976). This paper set out to critique the position of modernisation theory's conceptions that underdevelopment is a natural phenomenon and to advance other reasons for the underdevelopment of third world countries. Specifically, it aims at achieving the following objectives:

- i. To critique the position of the Modernisation Theory's conception of development and underdevelopment.
- ii. To advance other reasons why underdevelopment is not only a natural phenomenon.

## 2.1 Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

The conception and understanding of *development* are not susceptible or lend themselves to single or unanimous understanding. The conceptualization of development has been dynamic as the development indicators and indices change with time, knowledge, cross-cultural contact and ideological perspectives (Thomas, 2009). The modernization scholars viewed development as the capacity of the national economy whose initial economic condition has been more or less static for a long period, to generate and sustain an annual increase in its gross national product (GNP) at rates perhaps 5% to 7% or more (Todaro and Smith, 2004). This was the dominant conception of development propagated by Western Liberal development theorists, vendors, and indeed marabouts in the early decades of development. Despite achieving such growth in the Gross National Products in such 'developing' countries the condition of living of people remained unchanged. This reality constrained radical development scholars to project that development must represents the entire gamut of change by which an entire social system moves away from the condition of life perceived as unsatisfactory towards a situation or condition of life regarded as materially, psychologically and even spiritually better (Thomas, 2009). Specifically, Rodney (1972) defines development as an overall social process that has to do with the ability of man to use his best to deal with his environment. In human society, Rodney perceived development as a many-sided

process that entails qualitative and quantitative change. At the level of the individual, development implies increased skill and capacity, creativity, responsibility, self-discipline, greater freedom and material well-being. Some of these according to Rodney are virtually moral categories and are difficult to evaluate, depending on one's age, on which one lives, one's class of origin, and one's code of what is right or wrong. Development at the level of "political" entails the ability to evolve a political structure to guard the material well-being and independence of the society. Rodney's further categorization of development is at the level of "economy". At this level, development according to him has to do with the capacity of society in dealing with and changing the environment. To Rodney what determines this development is the society's understanding of the "law of nature" (science) and "devising tools" (technology) and the extent to which work is organized (Rodney, 1972). Ake (1996) defines development as the increased capacity of an individual or group to annex, organize and coordinate resources the way they like without interference. Accordingly, Ake posits that underdevelopment is the other side of the same coin of development, it is perhaps the incapacitation of society to restructure its socioeconomic comparison of a different and material condition of life between countries (Ake, 1996). Amartya Sen is often described as perhaps the leading thinker on the meaning of contemporary development, he perceived that development has to be more concerned with enhancing the lives we lead and the freedoms we enjoy. He buttressed further, to make any sense of the concept of human well-being in general and poverty in particular, we need to think beyond the availability of commodities and consider their use and freedom to use, what he referred to as 'functioning' and 'capabilities' (Todaro & Smith, 2004). In the contemporary sustainable development goals issued by World Bank, development may be conceptualized as total elimination of hunger and poverty, access to education for all, increased women empowerment and gender equality, the wise use of environment and eradication of infant and maternal mortality and promotion of global link or working together for development. From the above definitions, we can deduce that development is multi-dimensional which must be seen beyond a quantitative increase in gross national product, per capita income, gross domestic product or even national income of the country.

Like the concept of development, the conceptualization of *underdevelopment* has over the years changed concerning the understanding of development with the operational development indicators. It is important to know, underdevelopment is not the absence of development. It is rather conceptualized as a means of comparing levels of development (Thomas, 2009 & Chidozie and Eniayekan, 2017). Underdevelopment is seen by the classical liberal scholars, the founders and propagators of modernization theory as the stagnation of the national economy over time and lack of growth or growth rate of less than 5% or any declared percentage per annum (Todaro and Smith, 2004). Accordingly, these scholars perceived underdevelopment as continued traditional and cultural practices of the third world countries. Underdevelopment to these scholars is synonymous with Africanization, Asianization or even Latinization while development is simply westernization, Europeanization or even Americanization. This conception of underdevelopment by the modernization theory has failed to explain what underdevelopment is all about in that, it shamelessly ignored the historical antecedence and continues exploitation of hitherto colonized societies. In line with this assertion, Rodney (1972) observed that all the countries named as underdeveloped are exploited by others and the underdevelopment with which the world is now preoccupied is a product of capitalist, imperialist and colonialist exploitation. Development and underdevelopment here are seen comparatively as well as having a dialectical relationship. By this, it means the interaction of both produced each other. For instance, the interaction between Europe and Africa where master/servant interaction was maintained, has created great imbalance

and disequilibrium between the two societies which remains the cause for the underdevelopment of the latter (Chidozie and Eniayekan, 2017). Charles Anderson (1976 in Offiong, 1981) explained the meaning of underdevelopment more comprehensively thus;

*'The condition of underdevelopment simply deepens the longer a country remains as a backward cog in the world capitalist system. The elite-mass cleavage widens. Rural-urban inequalities increase. City slums grow. Unemployment increases. Illiteracy bounds. Agricultural production stagnates. Malnutrition spreads. Disease debilitate millions. The birth rate remains high. The death rate begins to rise in some areas. Imported luxuries drain foreign exchange. Foreign debt and balance of payment deficits mount. Inflation runs rampant. Military spending for the army and police repression increases. Foreign corporations drain a huge amount of raw materials and profits from the country. Such are some of the hallmarks of an underdeveloped society. Economic growth which neglects the most urgent social needs of the people while catering to the consumption whims of the national bourgeoisie and the tax and profit concern of foreign investors.'* (Charles, 1976 in Offiong, 1981).

In the contemporary praxis of sustainable development goals, underdevelopment means the inability of the country to eliminate poverty and hunger, failure to provide access to education for all, gender inequality, the persistence of maternal and child mortality and diseases, non-prudent use of resources and environment and non-partnership in global development. It becomes apparent regardless of the initial roots, the impetus behind underdevelopment is the growth drive of developed economies, their systemic pursuit for cheap economic gains through control of raw materials, perpetual exploitation through cheap labour, export markets through the importation of capital equipment and finished goods, tax concessions, prices, continues epistemological dependence and a variety of financial gains, hence resulting in miserable condition under which Third World countries live.

## 2.2 Theoretical Framework

Andre Gunder Frank theory of underdevelopment came as a critical reaction to the conventional approaches to economic development that emerged in the aftermath of World War II. In reaction to the modernisation theory, Frank proposes a model of "metropolis-satellite" to demonstrate the mechanism of underdevelopment in Third World countries. Frank (1967), in his analysis of the post-colonial state, has argued that classical development theories such as modernisation are misleading in that they fail to articulate the true relationship between the developed world and the poor regions of the world. For Frank, modernisation theory distorts the truth about the motive of the developed countries on their former colonies (Mahuntu, 2011). In his works Frank argues that the underdevelopment of the Third World cannot be fully explained and understood within the framework of feudalism or traditionalism; rather, it requires to take into account the historical experiences of colonialism, unequal trade and the political-economic relationship between the First World and the Third World countries (Frank, 1966, 1967, 1971 in Islam, 2018). Frank demonstrated that India and China were advanced civilizations along with economic potentials before encountering colonialism in the eighteenth century. It was colonialism, foreign domination and the extraction of resources from the colonized countries that restricted their economic development. By recognizing such devastating force of colonialism, Frank (1966) formulates the idea of 'development of underdevelopment to refer to the fact that 'underdevelopment is not a natural

condition but an artifact created by the long history of colonial domination in the Third World countries' (So, 1990 in Islam, 2018). André Gunder Frank was particularly critical about the modernization school. He argues that most development theories have originated from the European and North American historical experiences, which grossly failed to explain poverty and underdevelopment facing the Third World countries (Islam 2018, Romanluke, 2017, Ikechukwu, 2012 & Mahuntu 2011).

### 3. Methodology of the Study

The methodology adopted for this paper is purely documentary and exploratory research where already existing works on development and underdevelopment have been consulted and critically explored. Specifically, the research utilized secondary data from books, scholarly articles from journals and internet resources for both conceptual and theoretical review.

#### 4.1 Rostow's Stages of Growth

Modernisation is generally referred to as the appearance of a socioeconomic system that emerged in Europe and subsequently greatly influenced the world (Giddens, 1991). Although it is very difficult to credit a single modernization theory, main ideas and postulations can be gleaned from Walt Whitman Rostow's (1960) *Stages of Economic Growth: A Non-Communist Manifesto*, which is considered to be the pioneer in modernization theory. His main argument lies in different stages of development which he believes if followed would move the country from the state of underdevelopment to the state of development. Following European economic success, he envisaged that development can be achieved through five different stages as follows Traditional society, Pre-take-off, Take-off, Drive to maturity and High mass consumption (Islam, 2018 & Mahuntu, 2011).

By **Traditional society**, Rostow refers to those societies that are characterized by limited production facilities, mostly agrarian but lack science, technology and innovative systems and a pre-Newtonian attitude towards the natural and physical world. In the traditional society's stage, the economy is characterized by various fluctuations in output, population, and real income. The society at this level is characterized by subsistence farming (Islam, 2017, Todaro & Smith, 2012).

By the **pre-take-off** stage, Rostow refers to those preconditions and processes that 'transform a traditional society in the ways necessary for it to exploit the fruits of modern science, to fend off diminishing returns, and thus to enjoy the blessings and choices opened up by the march of compound interest (Rostow, 1960). At this stage, the idea of economic progress emerges and economic growth is believed to be the most necessary prerequisite for national progress and the overall welfare of the society. This stage is characterized by a high investment in banks, communication and industrial infrastructure which strengthens the overall economic condition of the country. There is a rise in technical education that promotes technical human resources. In the political arena, there has been a drive towards a centralized and strong national state (Islam, 2018, Todaro & Smith, 2012)

**Take-off** is the third stage in which 'the old blocks and resistances to steady growth are finally overcome. The forces making for economic progress expand and come to dominate the society. Growth becomes its normal condition' (Rostow, 1960 in Islam, 2018). In all, the traditional ideas, practices and activities are replaced by modern scientific and technological innovations. Economic growth becomes a normal phenomenon at this stage. Commercial and industrial classes gain political power in the course of this transformation. Innovative technologies and large scale financial investments in productive facilities

become routine. Britain experienced this stage between 1780-1800, France and the USA in 1830-60, Russia 1890-1915, whereas India and China in the 1950s-60s (Islam, 2018, Todaro & Smith, 2012)

The **Drive to Maturity** is expected in about 40 to 60 years after the take-off period, provided that sustained economic progress is maintained. The economy becomes diversified and at least 10% of profits are reinvested into the production facilities that help subsequent continuation of economic progress and maturity. This is the period when society has effectively applied the range of (then) modern technology to the bulk of its resources. During the drive to maturity period, the industrial process is differentiated, with the new leading sector gathering momentum to supplant the older leading of the take-off of the third quarter of the Nineteen Century. (Islam, 2018, Todaro & Smith, 2012).

The **Age of High Mass consumption** is the fifth stage when a shift occurs from industrialization towards a more service sector provision characterized by consumer goods and services. At this stage, per-head income rises to a point when individuals gain control over their consumption by transcending basic food, shelter and clothing. The number of middle-class urban population increases who are mostly skilled and work in the offices or factories. Aside from these economic progressions, a greater amount of material surplus is allocated to the welfare activities in society. The assembly line of Henry Ford in 1913-14 is considered to be a turning point for the USA to enter into this stage. Western Europe and Japan fully entered this stage in the 1950s. In the age of high mass consumption, a higher proportion of investment becomes indigenous, rather than exogenous, when the latter term is used to embrace investment stimulated by new technological possibilities (Islam, 2017, Todaro and Smith, 2012)

According to modernization theory, development and Westernization are considered synonymous. Development is believed to follow a unilineal path through which all societies must pass to become developed i.e. from traditional to modern. The Western developed countries and the ways they achieved economic progress are prescribed as footprints for the underdeveloped countries to be followed. Modernization theory has been vehemently criticized and almost abandoned by many social scientists (Islam, 2018, Mahuntu 2011).

#### 4.1.1 Critique of Rostow's Stages of Growth

One of the major limitations of Rostow's growth theory is that it blames less developed countries to be poor because of their internal processes and constraints that hinder development. Rostow's growth fails to take into account the role of history and the expansion of global capitalism in producing uneven development. As argued by the neo-Marxist school, the contemporary underdevelopment in the Third World is because of uneven mercantile trade and imperialism where the so-called 'Third World' is the suppliers of raw materials and the 'First World' is the producers and consumers of goods (Foster-Carter, 1973; Barrow, 1993; Skocpol, 1980 cited in Islam, 2018). Rather than taking the exploitative global capitalist relationship into account, modernization theory blames the internal constraints of the Third World countries as the main obstacles of underdevelopment. Modernization theory is believed to be a 'one-size fits all formula that insists on the universal application of Western development (Matunhu, 2011; Tipps, 1973 & Islam, 2018). Thus, the modernization project, which was once believed to be the prescription for economic growth in the Third World, had resulted in a mechanism of creating high inequality by increasing the gap between the rich and poor. The theory further presents development process in a linear and sequential fashion that a country must follow in order to achieve sustained growth in GNP. Although there are countries such as Singapore that attained considerable growth using such

development prescriptions, it is misleading to contend that a country must follow such a linear stages before it would developed. It's necessary to note that even among the current developed countries there are countries that not followed such a western "development" path for development. We can argue further that Rostow's growth theory is a top-down development paradigm that emphasizes a trickle down modernization effect from urban industry and western influence to a develop country as whole (Jacobs, 2015). The emphasis of development in contemporary sustainable development goals, is a bottom-up development paradigm in which a country become self-sufficient through local efforts. One of the faulty assumption of this theory is that development in the United States and Europe can be copied somewhere. This, is totally incorrect looking at the several factors that distinguish the U. S. and Europe with so many countries in Africa and Asia. To this theory, development is one size fits all or even a tabula rasa of a thing.

## **4.2 Vicious Circle Poverty Theory**

This theory perceives development in terms of increased Gross National Product per capita (GNP capital) stimulated by favourable net savings and investment, which would result in technological progress. It maintains that a high-level national income results in a high level of savings and investment and consequently, a rapid rate of economic growth. Underdeveloped countries, in general, have such low incomes that any substantial volume of savings and investment is extremely difficult. The theory maintains that to a large degree the problem of economic growth is the problem of getting 'over the hump' to the point where the levels of per capita incomes are high enough to permit sufficient savings and investment to guarantee expansion (Jinghan, 2004). A cyclic pattern is adopted to explain the development process. The major thrust of this theory as per underdevelopment is that lack of sufficient savings by the Third World Countries is the reason for their underdevelopment.

### **4.2.1 Critique of Vicious Circle of Poverty Theory**

The vicious circle of poverty theory has failed to account for the long term appropriation and transfer of surplus value by the Western European enslavers, and colonial intruders who had through slavery and colonization appropriated and transfer a large economic surplus of the present-day underdeveloped countries. It is noted that Baran (1957) contends that imperialism has destroyed the self/sufficiency of the third world countries of Africa, Asia and Latin America. He maintained that, prior to the contact with the colonizers, the third world countries were self-sufficient and self-autonomous. With the appropriation and transfer of surplus value by the imperialists, these countries became dependent on the so-called developed countries. Furthermore, Baran stressed that, due to long time appropriation and transfer of surplus value by the imperialists, the economy of the enslaved and colonized countries became very unproductive. He maintained that the economic surplus generated were used to develop the capitalist economies. Example can be cited of how Britain stole the manufacturing technology of India (Rodney, 1972). The economic relation and other relations maintained during the post-colonial state had further explained the veritable meaning of underdevelopment today. Perpetual exploitation of resources through unequal exchange between the centre and periphery has been the real cause of underdevelopment, not the so-called natural phenomenon.

## **4.3 Theory of Dualism**

The theory of dualism is one of the early modernization theories developed to explain the causes of underdevelopment in underdeveloped countries of the world. According to this theory, there are two

dichotomized societies or sectors in the world, each having its features or attributes (Todaro & Smith, 2012). The theory maintains that societies or countries in the world are categorized into 'traditional' 'backward' or 'underdeveloped' on one hand, and 'modern' 'industrial' or 'developed' on the other hand. Dualism theory stressed that the underdeveloped societies' culture is not suitable for socioeconomic and political development. The theory stresses that certain cultural practices hinder or imprison third world countries from becoming developed societies. The so-called dichotomized societies have been given attributes by Talcott Parsons in 1951 in his book 'The Structure of Social Action' in an attempt to study the 'traditional and 'modern' societies. According to Parsons the pattern variables first emerged as a conceptual scheme for classifying types of roles in social systems, starting with the distinction between professional and business roles (Parsons, 1960).

Pattern variables are five dichotomies, developed to draw out the contrasting values to which individuals orient themselves in social interaction. One side of the dichotomies reflects the value patterns dominant in traditional society (Gemeinschaft), the other reflects the dominant values of modern society (Gesellschaft). This work was earlier done by Ferdinand Tonnies (<https://sociologyindex.com/patternsvariables.html>). Below are the pattern variable developed by Talcott parsons to study the character of 'traditional and 'modern' societies.

**Affectivity versus Affective Neutrality:** Affective neutrality may refer to self-discipline and the deferment of gratification. In contrast, affectivity may be associated with expressing emotions. Affective neutrality is associated with ego control. This pattern was used to juxtapose the behaviours of people living in traditional society and those living in modern society. Here according to this pattern, people in traditional society behave in an 'affective' manner. They are very emotive in the public domain, unlike people in modern societies whose behaviour is 'affective neutral. They pursue the goals for the general common good not only personal ego.

**Collectivity versus Self:** This pattern views that where people pursue a collective form of action, then the interests of the collectivity may take precedence over that of the individual. Various forms of action such as altruism, charity, self-sacrifice also fit this variable. In modern societies, individual success and instrumental activity often become dominant in social action, especially in economic action. The latter variable assumes that individuals and people in traditional society are egoistic or self-centered. This model is encumbered with hysteria in that, it is the people in the so-called traditional society are known to be communal societies until the coming of deadly capitalism which abrogated people's culture of communalism and replaced it with individualism through colonial education.

**Particularism versus Universalism:** This pattern refers to two dichotomized people that individuals consider when involved in social action. The issue here is whether to react 'based on a general norm or based on someone's particular relationship to you'. A particular relation is a relationship of a social actor with a specific individual. According to this pattern, traditional societies are particularistic in public business. In contrast, people in 'modernized' societies are characterized by universal forms of relationships, where everyone is to be treated impartially and according to the same procedures or rules. In such parts of modern society, the idea is that there is no particularism or favouritism to be extended to anyone, even to a close friend or family member. This pattern is misleading because the so-called developed countries are well known for racism in treating people other than their countrymen.

**Diffusiveness versus Specificity:** Diffusiveness and specificity deal with the range of obligations involved in dealing with people in two different societies. In extension, diffusiveness and specificity refer to the nature of social contacts and how extensive or how narrow are the obligations in any interaction. For example, in modern societies, social relationships are very specific, where we meet with or contact someone for some very particular reason associated with their status and position. In contrast, in traditional society, social relationships are not specific or in fact, the roles of people in a social system are not clearly defined. This pattern has failed to recognize the specificity instituted in the Third World Countries' traditional institutions even before the coming of colonial masters.

**Ascription versus Achievement:** This pattern explains the process by which individuals acquired power and authority in society. Ascription refers to qualities of individuals, often in-born qualities such as sex, ethnicity, race, age, family status, or characteristics of the household of origin. In traditional society, these often governed an individual's life course or life chances. Achievement refers to the performance of an individual and emphasizes what that individual achieves in life. In modern society, people acquire power and authority through achievement. Here it means merit system governed the appointment and recruitment. This pattern is very selfish in that it fails recognized the presence of traditional institutions even in places like Britain (<http://uregina.ca/~gingrich/319j1806.htm>).

#### 4.3.1 Critique of Dualism Theory

Dualism theory is one of the dominant modernization theories that seek to address the problem of underdevelopment by a simple comparison of two 'different' societies of the world. Dualism theory's position hinges on the notion that there are two sectors or societies in the world which are dichotomized by their ways of doing things. Under this theory 'pattern variables' are used to compare these societies. These patterns are in themselves misleading and racist in the limited sense that they placed all the negative attributes to the Third World Countries and placed all the good and positive attributes to the First World Countries. For instance, the theory claims that people in the Third Countries are 'affective' while people in the First World are 'affective neutral', again the theory claims that people in the traditional societies behaviours are underdevelopment oriented while people in the 'modern' sector or societies' attitudes are development-oriented. To them, the inability of people in the third countries or underdeveloped countries to change and embrace the culture of 'modern' societies remains the reason for underdevelopment. This is very myopic reasoning in that, certain traditional practices are embedded in the ways of living of the so-called modern people. The theory fails in its attempt to explain underdevelopment, to account for colonialism, imperialism and even the so-called globalization as the causes of underdevelopment in the third countries.

#### 4.4 Limiting Factor Theories

This is another popular theory of underdevelopment propagated by the Modernization Scholars of the West. This theory maintains that factors such as backwardness, lack of skilled manpower/capital, unfavourable natural endowment, lack of education etc as factors limiting development. According to these theories, the condition for breaking this cycle (i.e ending these factors) is by a massive influx of capital and foreign skilled personnel. By this they strengthened the view that Third World countries are incapable of internal reasoning for any development and this reason, they must rely on the so-called developed capitalist countries for their progress. By this, they mean the West diffuses knowledge, skills, organization, values, technologies, and capital to the poor nations (Moru, Cited in Thomas, 2009).

#### **4.4.1 Critique of Limiting Factors Theories**

The assumptions of Limiting Factor Theories have been very incorrect it marries serious inadequacies, deficiencies and outright lies. If natural endowment are to be the indicators or indices of underdevelopment, Britain and America would have been the centre of global underdevelopment. And of course, Africa would have been the centre of global development. Again, the so-called underdeveloped countries are not in short of ideas and technological advancement. For instance, before the contact with Britain, India had very strong technology in the area of textile, which was later stolen by Britain and claimed the so-called industrial revolution. Also, Egypt had strong technology in the area of construction and medicine. It is mischievous and misleading to say the least, the conception of underdevelopment by limiting factor theory. In essence, these theories have failed to offer a genuine explanation of development and underdevelopment.

#### **4.5 Ascendancy Theory of Underdevelopment**

Another important modernization theory that seeks to explain underdevelopment is the ascendancy theory. Ascendancy theory posits that internal political contradictions contribute to underdevelopment in the Third World Countries. The theory maintains that power transfer and leadership succession in any developing country experience serious violence and instability which prevent Third World countries from attracting Foreign Direct Investment (FDI). The central argument of ascendancy theory is that political instability results in political, economic and social ills that make for underdevelopment because political stability would attract foreign direct investment thereby enhancing capital accumulation and investment to make for higher productivity leading to economic growth. The ascendancy theory, therefore, hinges its analysis on politics emphasizing its precedence over social and economic factors in the Third World Countries (Thomas, 2009). Specifically, ascendancy theory looks at the internal political contradictions that contribute to underdevelopment in the Third World Countries and enunciated the economic effects of underdevelopment to include the character of the state in terms of arbitrary delineation of states boundaries which are agreed to be as a result of the Berlin Conference in 1884-85. The "civil unrest and war" in the Third World countries especially between different ethnic groups formed part of the reasons for underdevelopment as posited by ascendancy theory. The theory perceived "crises of legitimacy" and "self-succession bid" by the Third World leaders as a cause of underdevelopment in the third world countries. Ascendancy theory furthers by looking at the abuse of power, political repression, unfavourable economic climate and government expenditure as part and parcel of underdeveloped countries. According to this theory, these features have been the bane to development (Thomas, 2009).

##### **4.5.1 Critique of Ascendancy Theory of Underdevelopment**

The ascendancy theory with its internal "matrix paradigm" is a bold step at developing a theory of development and underdevelopment in the Third World Countries. It is to the credit of this theory that its central postulation is founded on the political fulcrum as against the emphasis on the economic determinism of development and underdevelopment adopted by hitherto existing modernization theories on the phenomenon of underdevelopment. The theory is also extensively informative as it painstakingly catalogued the observable political ills, economic and social problems that characterized the Third World Countries and the extensiveness and the insensitivity of leadership class to the worsening standard of living in the Third World Countries (Thomas, 2009). However, ascendancy theory is loaded with fundamental conceptual haze, explanatory ambiguity and incongruent assumptions. The theory in its self

is a development of a linear view of underdevelopment which essentially equated underdevelopment with the absence of growth. Moreover, the theory fails to examine the historical antecedents of development and underdevelopment in third world countries. It also fails to examine the phenomenon vis-a-vis the nature of history and contemporary international political relations. The theory is fraught with inadequacies in that it advocates perpetual dependence on the so-called developed countries by waiting for Foreign Direct Investment.

### **5.1 The Real Causes of Underdevelopment**

The position of the Modernisation theory's conceptions that underdevelopment is a 'natural phenomenon' is faulty, misleading, ambiguous and deceptive in that, the theory fails to account for other reasons which are the real causes of underdevelopment of the third world countries of the world.

For instance, the argument put forward by dualism theory that the perpetual cultural practices and the inability of 'traditional' societies to embrace change are the main reasons for their underdevelopment marries with serious lies. It is seen even in the so-called 'modern' societies there is the continued application of traditional practices even in the areas of leadership. The emergence of leaders through 'ascription' is not only practised in the so-called traditional societies but also the so-called modern societies.

The claims forwarded by Limiting factor theories that underdevelopment in the third world countries is as a result of factors such as backwardness, lack of skilled manpower/capital, unfavourable natural endowment, lack of education and unfavourable climate condition is nothing but a mischievous statement, in that, in the so-called underdeveloped countries, there are far-reaching natural endowment, good climate condition devoid of the earthquake and other disasters. Again, the theory has failed to account for the massive technological theft the so-called underdeveloped countries experienced during the era of colonization.

The propositions put forward by ascendancy theory of underdevelopment that inability of Third World Countries to attract Foreign Direct Investment from the global economy as a result of 'internal contradictions' such as violence and conflicts during power transfer and leadership succession is encumbered with hypocrisy because the crises and violence taken place in the Third World countries are always engineered and sponsored by the capitalist power to steal the resources of those countries. Again the theory fails to grow beyond suggesting growth in Gross National Product over a long period as proposed by the Linear Stage Theory.

The Rostow Stages of Growth is considered to be one of the leading modernisation theories which seek not only to explain the reasons for underdevelopment in third world countries but also suggest pathways to achieving sustainable growth. The theory identified five linear stages which a country has to follow before it could attain sustainable growth. This explanation is not only myopic but misleading in that the theory constantly blames less developed countries to be poor because of their internal processes and constraints that hinder development. Rostow's Stages of growth fails to take into account the role of history and the expansion of global capitalism in producing uneven development.

The Vicious Circle of Poverty Theory's assumptions that failure of the Third World Countries to expand in their saving and investment which will lead to increase in the Gross National Product per capita has been the main reason of underdevelopment in the Third World Countries. This theory equated low

savings and low investment with underdevelopment. Savings and investment cannot be enough in explaining development and underdevelopment in the country hence, there are several countries with a significant rate of savings and investment but does not trickle down to people. Underdevelopment must be seen beyond having low savings, low investment or even a high rate of Gross National Product per capita.

Underdevelopment can never be seen as a natural phenomenon as conceived by the Modernisation Theory, rather underdevelopment is a manmade phenomenon, caused phenomenon and of course another side of development. The development of First World Countries led to the underdevelopment of Third World Countries (Rodney 1972, Frank, 1966, Amin 1976) It is very unrealistic, blatant lies, very open racism and clear hatred to say the least, that underdevelopment is 'natural phenomenon'. The position taken by the Modernisation Theory on underdevelopment has failed woefully to address the historical phenomena which occurred right from the contact of the so-called Underdeveloped Countries of Africa, Asia and Latin America with the so-called Developed Countries of the hegemonic North beginning with the period of slavery, mercantilism, colonialism and even the post-colonial era. Another important reason for the underdevelopment of underdeveloped countries is seen in the current practice of globalization. Globalization is nothing but an epochal movement of imperialism (Tandon, 1998). That is why many Afrocentric scholars view contemporary globalization as a continuation of the historical and structural process of capitalist and imperialist domination on a world scale and the global diffusion or replication of its economic substructures and cultural and political superstructures.

A better explanation of the causes of underdevelopment in the third world countries can be observed in the following hypothesis and explanations developed by the underdevelopment and dependency school as follows:

1. That in contrast to the development of the core nations which is self-contained, the development of nations in the Third World necessitates subordination to the core. Examples of this situation can be seen in Latin America, especially in those countries with a high degree of industrialization, such as Sao Paulo, Brazil which Andre G. Frank uses as a case study.
2. The peripheral nations experienced their greatest economic development when their ties to the core are weakest. An example of this circumstance is the industrialization process that took root in Latin America during the 1930s when the core nations were focusing on solving the problems that resulted from the Great Depression, and the Western powers were involved in the Second World War.
3. That when the core recovers from its crisis and reestablishes trade and investments ties, it fully incorporates the peripheral nations once again into the system, and the growth of industrialization in these regions is stifled. Frank, in particular, indicates that when core countries recuperate from war or other crises which have directed their attention away from the periphery, this negatively affects the balance of payments, inflation and political stability in Third World countries.
4. The fourth aspect refers to the fact that regions that are highly underdeveloped and still operate on a traditional, feudal system are those that in the past had the closest ties to the core. Because contact between the West and the rest of the world took the form of conquest, colonization, exploitation, massacre, and forced labour (Reyes, 2001)

5. Another important cause of underdevelopment in the Third World Countries is seen in the way capitalism was established in Third World Countries by imperialist penetration and subjugation. The major objective of colonialism was to maximize the exploitation of the nations' resources wealth and people. Therefore, the economy was distorted and blocked in such a way as to serve the interest of central capitalism by creating a condition of dependence. Therefore, underdevelopment is a conditioning situation in which the economies of the Third World Countries are conditioned by the development and expansion of the economies of the First World Countries.

## **5. Conclusion and Recommendations**

This paper set out to critique the position of the Modernization Theory's conceptions that underdevelopment is a natural phenomenon and to advance other reasons for underdevelopment. From the above critical examination of some dominant modernization theories of underdevelopment, it can be deduced that underdevelopment is not a natural phenomenon as the Western Liberal Scholars want us to believe. The theories examined were W. W. Rostow's stages for growth, Vicious Circle of Poverty theory, the Limiting Factor theories, theory of Dualism and Ascendency theory of underdevelopment. The explanations forwarded by these modernization theories have failed woefully inadequate to prove their argument that underdevelopment is a 'natural phenomenon. Their position only recognises the inability of a country to either increase its saving and investment, attains specific sustainable growth in Gross National Product, or even fail to embrace a 'modern' lifestyle as the reason for underdevelopment. For a better understanding of underdevelopment, a thorough investigation of what had transpired between the Third World Countries and the First World Countries before the era of Independence must be undertaken. In a more specific term, the reasons for the underdevelopment of the Third World Countries must be seen from the historical viewpoint. The relationships between the 'Satellite' and 'Metropolis' during the period of Slavery, mercantilism, imperialism, colonialism and even the present-day globalization which perpetuates dependency are the main reasons for underdevelopment. Unless and until this unruly relationship is weakened or completely halted, underdevelopment would continue to thrive in third world countries.

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