

17.50, Introduction to Comparative Politics (Fall 2006)
Prof. Chappell Lawson
Session 9: Modernization Theory

Last week we talked about the root of democracy

- Theoretical arguments
- Empirical data

Data lend support for modernization theory

- Richer countries more likely to be democratic
- This implies that, over time, countries are likely to become democratic as they develop
- Evidence for this impressive in some cases
- Classic case is Spain
- Korea and Mexico are thought to be prototypical cases

This uniformly benign, optimistic view of modernization, however, was challenged in the late 1960s and early 1970s...

Barrington Moore: not one path to modernization

- Even within West, there's been lots of different ways
- What determines which route you take?
- Bottom line: you get democracy when you get strong bourgeoisie and no landed class (or when landed class has been beaten into oblivion by bourgeoisie)

Another critique of modernization theory came from **Samuel Huntington:**

- Education, mass communication, and urbanization could lead people to mobilize, but not in a democratic way
- As societies modernize, social mobilization increases
- Need strong political institutions to channel or suppress demands.
- Bottom line: modernization does not necessarily lead to democracy

Another major critique of modernization comes from the **dependency school:**

- Development of Third World fundamentally deformed and constrained by the developed world
- Poorer countries face higher barriers to entry because of scale and learning curves; can't industrialize
- This also changes their class relations
- Politically, you get more or less what you'd expect
- Bottom line: modernization in Third World does not necessarily lead to democracy

Guillermo O'Donnell and bureaucratic-authoritarianism

- Drew on both Huntington and dependency theory
- Argument was that dependent development in Latin America led to sharpening class cleavages
- Finally, technocratic elite emerging as a result of state-led industrialization
- Under threat of leftist mobilization, the military, bourgeoisie, and technocratic strata make an alliance ("coup coalition")
- Exactly what happens in Brazil (1964) and Argentina (1966)
- Everything seems to confirm his argument
 - Modernization theory is widely discredited
 - Replaced by O'Donnell framework: modernization leads to increasingly repressive governments