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Q5(d)

Critique A.G. Frank's 'development of underdevelopment'

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2019 · Sociology GS 1 · 10 marks · Sociology

Sociology - The Discipline: Modernity and social changes in Europe and emergence of sociology; Scope of the subject and comparison with other social sciences; Sociology and common sense.

Core demand of the question

- Critique A. G. Frank's 'development of underdevelopment'
- Keep the critique within a 10-mark length

Revision summary

- **Frank:** underdevelopment is produced by metropolitan linkage, not delayed take-off.

This wrecks Rostow's stages and names drain.

Wallerstein generalised the insight.

East Asian states and internal class limit a frozen satellite.

- **Critique:** keep linkage; reject one-fate delinking.

Introduction

Andre Gunder Frank argued that satellite economies are made poor by their ties to metropolitan capitalism. Underdevelopment is produced, not a waiting room before take-off. The thesis hit modernisation theory. It also over-smoothed history.

Body**The claim**

- Surplus is drained through colonial and neo-colonial trade. The core develops; the periphery is underdeveloped.
- Latin American cases were his field. Immanuel Wallerstein later widened this to a world-system.

What the critique gets right

- W. W. Rostow's stages ignored empire. Frank made dependency a structure, not a culture of laziness.
- Indian deindustrialisation debates and later unequal terms of trade sit in this neighbourhood.

Limits

- Bill Warren and some Marxists said capitalism can still industrialise the periphery. East Asian developmental states challenge a frozen satellite.
- The thesis underplays internal class, caste, and the state, which Fernando Henrique Cardoso's dependent development partly restored.
- Agency of peasants, unions, and postcolonial planning vanishes if only the metropole acts.

- Culture and gender are thin in the drain model.

Verdict

- Keep the production of poverty through linkage.
- Drop the implication that delinking is the only door and that all peripheries share one fate.

Flow diagram

Metropolis -> Surplus drain
Surplus drain -> Underdevelopment
East Asian paths -> Limits of freeze
Internal class state -> Limits of freeze

Conclusion

Frank's development of underdevelopment correctly attacked staged modernisation. Drain through the world market is real. East Asia, internal class, and postcolonial states show that satellites are not doomed copies. Use Frank as a warning, not as a complete map.

Facts & figures

Frank

Development of underdevelopment: satellite poverty as a result of capitalist ties.

Rostow

Stages of growth that Frank treated as ideology of the core.

Wallerstein

World-system: core, semi-periphery, periphery in a single division of labour.

Cardoso

Dependent development: some industrialisation inside dependency, not only drain.