

Abstract

Modernization theory, despite its critiques and limited predictive capacities, continues to exert a lasting influence on contemporary societies and developmental policies. This is evident in France's historical efforts to modernize its Overseas Territories, which serve as a fruitful area of research for modernization theory. With direct executive power over the territories and their distinct historical and cultural backgrounds, France's relationship with its Overseas Territories highlights the dichotomy between the "modernizer" and the "modernized." This dynamic is shaped by the legacy of colonialism, as these territories were formally colonized by France less than a century ago. The historical culpability of France is reflected in policies of "reparation," the persistence of a "colonial frame," and the conceptualization of the territories as "laboratories of modernity." This paper explores the geopolitical, economic, and social dependencies of the Overseas Territories on France, and the complexities of power dynamics and historical legacies that shape their development policies. The case of France and its Overseas Territories underscores the enduring impact of modernization theory and its relevance in understanding contemporary developmental challenges and strategies.