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Capitalism in the West

Rodney Stark, a world-renowned sociologist, presents a major argument relating the factor that contributed to the fast rate of advancement in western countries compared to other parts of the world. He argues that capitalist elements in the West contributed towards creating a platform for a great number of technological and economic advancements in those countries, which propelled the high rate of progress. In addition, medieval monasteries and the rule of law protecting private property from the governmental infringement were the factors that he outlines and argues that they also contributed towards ensuring a rapid rate of development and advancement. A review of the factor he identified indicates that the West was well equipped to ensure that countries in this area achieved their set objectives. In addition, Rodney Stark's argument also indicates that the West respected and protected the rights and freedoms of every individual regardless of his or her social status, which created an opportunity for unity and development. Although countries in other parts of the world intended to ensure advancements and development, the measures implemented did not reflect the views and intentions of people living in these areas. People suffered from high rates of oppression and discrimination, which affected the advancement process towards the future.

Before presenting his case, Stark focuses on defining several notable terms that can be of importance in understanding advancements in the West. An example of a definition he provides

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relates to vital aspects of modernity, which he describes as a perfect combination of other aspects towards achieving the intended purpose of economic superiority. In addition, he also argues that modernity relates to the political freedom and scientific knowledge offered to individuals within a society with the aim of liberating them and promoting social advancements (Stark 106). He asserts that aspects of modernity played an essential part in ensuring that countries in the West achieved their set objectives. Stark points out the need for individuals to understand the old Western Civilization courses that sparked the high rate of development. These courses discreetly ignored the fundamental aspect of religion in western countries and tended to lean on developments achieved in terms of technology and banking. The technology and banking sectors were the main foundations of advancements in Western countries due to their positive effects in ensuring the economic stability. A review of the current economic standings indicates that countries that represent the West have stable economic standings in comparison with the countries in other parts of the world, which is Stark's main argument.

Stark emphasizes that the capitalist elements in the culture of the West contributed towards ensuring effective advancements. In his argument, the author mentions that western governments controlled all trade activities in the sixteenth century before implementing policies that support capitalism (Stark 178). Capitalism refers to the privatization of trade and industries in a given country with the aim of promoting expansion. In addition, capitalism also refers to the development of competitive markets where privately owned companies have the ability of marketing their products and services to consumers without any interference from governments. Stark argues that the West believed in capitalism as an essential ideological component of their plan towards augmenting the economic stability. Western countries privatized most industries and ensured that individuals operating in those industries achieved profits. The move towards

privatization contributed to pulling investors towards Western countries with governments assuring them of profits. Governments in the West also created platforms of uncontrolled labor markets that would ensure that investors had sufficient labor for their ventures. The implementation of such measures helped improve investor confidence both local and foreign thereby leading to an economic boom in the consumer markets in the West. Consequently, countries in the West attained economic stability at a higher rate when compared to other parts of the world, which contributed towards ensuring advancements.

When supporting his argument on capitalism, Stark refers to capitalism as the seed of modernity itself. It was the most important element when understanding the rate of advancements achieved in the West. In addition, he argues that it is possible to compare capitalism with Christianity because of its emphasis on the need for reason and free will in any given society, as this may help it achieve its intended purpose. Governments in the West provided individuals with the free will of participating in any industry of their choice without any interference, which sparked an economic upsurge. Consequently, advancements in the West were possible due to western governments' provision of free will as one of the major aspects of capitalism. Stark also outlines some of the great empires around the world that were not in a position to achieve the advancements achieved in the West. These included Egyptian, Roman, Ottoman, and Chinese among other famous empires around the world (Stark 252). He argues that all these empires had greedy leaders who did not have the interest of their people at heart. In addition, the leaders also contributed to reducing the motivation that their citizens had towards success by applying confiscatory taxes and performing lawless seizures. Such acts infringed the rights of these citizens and contributed towards reduced economic performance, which paved way and advancement in the west countries (Stark 258).

Stark argues that the West was in a position to achieve that level of advancement due to the property rights offered to people living in these areas. Governments in the West implemented policies that reduced the level of state interference in private property with the aim of providing individuals with their property rights. He argues that lack of property laws governed by any government contributes towards reduced rate of development, as people only hide and hoard, which is not healthy for the economy. Countries in the West passed and implemented the rule of law protecting private land from being arbitrarily seized by monarchs providing every individual with an opportunity to own land regardless of their social status. In such cases, individuals were in a better position to produce and market their products without any interference from governments or monarchs. Such opportunities helped in alleviating poverty among citizens in the West, as the private farms offered adequate employment opportunities. Most governments in other parts of the world were highly controlling about property, which created fear among citizens. In addition, the control from governments and monarchs also affected motivation towards owning large pieces of land, which promoted the poverty levels significantly. Governments' control of property reduced satisfaction levels for both local and foreign investors, which reduced the economic standing for these countries and monarchs.

The ability of western countries to adopt new technologies also contributed towards the high rate of advancements compared to other parts of the world. For example, Stark outlines that Europe was in the forefront in the adoption of technologies that included gunpowder, windmills, and watermills. However, he also argues that countries in other parts of the world also adopted the same technologies, but their level of application was lower. Stark argues that the culture of adoption of new technologies in the West was defined by the Christian religion, which was the most widespread religion in all western countries. Christianity promoted the spirit of capitalism,

which is identified as one of the main factors that contributed towards the high rate of development achieved in the West. After the adoption of a great number of new technologies, governments in the West ensured that they were used effectively. Using these new technologies created a platform to experienced advancements attributed to the technologies and were in a position to sustain their own economies, which indicated that these countries were both financially and politically stable. Stark argues that countries in the west experienced the Dark Age, which was a period when religion governed all major activities. Consequently, the aspects of this period spread towards ensuring development and advancement in the West.

A review of the arguments presented by Stark shows that he conducted an in-depth study of western countries before coming up with the conclusions. In addition, the arguments indicate that Stark was open-minded when comparing western countries to countries in other parts of the world in terms of advancements. I agree with Stark's point of view relating to the West because of several notable reasons. First, I support Stark's point of view, because the author provides a comparison of the economic situations in the West with those of other world empires. From the comparison provided, it is evident that western countries achieved a higher rate of advancement attributed to the economic stability. In addition, the economic status of those countries provided by Stark indicates that they were in a better position to utilize various new technologies to promote advancements. Secondly, I agree with Stark, because he argues that capitalism is one of the major factors that contributed towards the high rate of development. Countries of the West implemented policies on capitalism earlier than the countries in other parts, which created an opportunity for them to advance at the rate experienced. Thirdly, the implementation of policies relating to individual rights to property ownership is a factor that contributes to my agreement with Stark's argument. Stark provides an in-depth analysis of the policies implemented in

western countries with regard to property rights and indicates how these policies differ from those implemented by other countries around the world. In any society, it is important to provide individuals with their rights and freedoms, as this will motivate them towards increasing their performance. In addition, the provision of rights and freedoms may also help ensuring that a society achieves its set goal of economic stability. Providing individuals with rights to property may also help in propelling social development, as this increases the rate of employment, which is one of the aspects that Stark identifies within his point of view. Lastly, I support the arguments of Stark, because he relates the advancements to other aspects of social life including religion. Stark argues that the culture of adoption for new technologies was influenced by the Christian religion. Although western countries were in a position to advance through technology, it was important to incorporate other aspects with the aim of gaining the confidence of individuals in these areas. The adoption of ideals taught within Christianity promoted confidence, which ensured further success for the countries.

Conclusion

Rodney Stark presented several arguments relating to the high rate of advancement experienced in the West. In his argument, the author clearly explains how the adoption of policies favoring capitalism contributed towards advancements in western countries. He defines capitalism as an ideology supporting the idea of reduced control from governments in trade, which created an opportunity for both local and foreign investors intending to invest in those countries. As a result, the high rate of investment promoted economic stability, which was an important aspect contributing to the advancements experienced. Stark also argues that the advancements in western countries came about due to the implementation of policies that favored ownership of property without interference from governments or monarchs. Property

rights are important in creating employment opportunities for other individuals in these areas, which created room for the economic stability. Alternatively, Stark also points out that the adoption of new technologies by western countries also contributed towards the high rate of advancements experienced by those countries. However, he also admits that other countries around the world also adopted the same technologies, but their rate of use was low, which paved the way for western countries to advance. After the analysis of the arguments he presents, it is clear that they represent the factors that did contribute to advancements in the West.

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Works Cited

Stark, Rodney. *How the West Won: The Neglected Story of the Triumph of Modernity*. New York, NY: Intercollegiate Studies Institute, 2014. Print.