

DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE
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CORE COURSE-7, MODULE-I, TOPIC-2(c)

WORLD SYSTEM THEORY

The most successful IR theory derived directly from Marxism is Immanuel Wallerstein's World System Theory. According to Wallerstein, the 'First World' and the 'Third World' are merely components of a larger world system, which originated in 16th century European Colonialism.

Instead, these states actually make up the 'Core' and 'Periphery' of the World System- respectively, the central wealthy states which own and chiefly benefit from the mechanism of production and the impoverished 'Developing' countries, which supply most of the human labour and natural resources exploited by the rich. States, which do not fit either class, but lie somewhere in the middle of the model, are referred to as 'Semi-peripheral'.

In fact, the core-periphery thesis of World System Theory is based upon another body of work, 'Dependency Theory', propounded by Andre Gunder Frank, which argues that the basis of international politics is the transfer of natural resources from peripheral developing countries to core wealthy states, mostly the Western Industrialized Democracies. The poor countries of the world, like the poor classes of the world, are said to provide inexpensive human and natural capital, while the wealthy countries' foreign policies are devoted to creating and maintaining this system of inequality. International economic law (such as the WTO) and other such systems are seen as means by which is done.

To counter this system of inequality, traditional Marxists and dependency theorists have argued that poor countries should adopt economic control policies that can break them out of the prison of international economic controls, such as import substitution (government assistance to domestic producers and barriers to wealthy international corporations attempting to flood the market with mass produced imports) rather than the export based models usually favoured by international economic organisations such as The World Bank and International Monetary Fund.