**India & the World Systems Theory**

**Background:

GEOGRAPHY**
India is part of the continent of Asia. Most of India forms a peninsula, which means it is surrounded by water on three sides. The world's highest mountain range, the Himalaya, rises in the north. The southeast is bordered by the Bay of Bengal, and the southwest is bordered by the Arabian Sea.

India's terrain varies widely, from the Thar Desert in the west to jungles in the northeast. A fertile area called the Ganges Plain covers much of northern India. This formation was created from soil that was deposited by rivers running from the Himalaya. In some places, this layer of silt is over 25,000 feet (7,620 meters) deep.

**GOVERNMENT & ECONOMY**

India's parliamentary government was inherited from the British. After independence in 1947, one party, the Congress Party, and one family, the Nehru family, dominated politics in India for decades. Now, however, many parties compete for elected positions.

India's economy is growing so fast that experts predict it will soon become one of the world's leading markets. Indians are hard workers. And though many are poorly educated, there are many others who are highly trained college graduates.

**PEOPLE & CULTURE**
Society throughout India is divided into social ranks, called castes. Caste is determined by birth and there is almost no way to change it. High castes include priests, landowners, and soldiers. So-called Untouchables have no caste and do the most menial jobs.

India is a very spiritual country. It has no official religion, but more than 80 percent of Indians are Hindu. About 13 percent are Muslim. Other religions include Buddhism, Sikhism, and Jainism, which all began in India.

**Assignment
DIRECTIONS:** read the articles below and watch the video to answer the questions that follow.

**Video:** Watch this Ted Talk: <http://www.ted.com/talks/nirmalya_kumar_india_s_invisible_entrepreneurs?language=en>
 **article 1: WORLD SYSTEMS THEORY**
**Abstract:** *The United*[*States*](https://www.boundless.com/definition/state/)*is an example of a core country -- it has vast amounts of capital and labor is relatively well-compensated. India is an example of a semi-peripheral country -- it is largely dependent on foreign investors for capital, but has a growing technology industry and emerging middle*[*class*](https://www.boundless.com/definition/class/)*consumer market. Cape Verde is a peripheral country -- foreign investors allow for the extraction of raw materials and the*[*production*](https://www.boundless.com/definition/production/)*of cash crops, but all are for export to wealthier consumer markets.*

World Systems Theory, like dependency theory, suggests that wealthy countries benefit from other countries and exploit those countries' citizens. In contrast to dependency theory, however, this model recognizes the minimal benefits that are enjoyed by low [status](https://www.boundless.com/definition/status/) countries in the world system. The theory originated with [sociologist](https://www.boundless.com/definition/sociologist/) Immanuel Wallerstein, who suggests that the way a country is integrated into the capitalist world system determines how [economic development](https://www.boundless.com/definition/economic-development/) takes place in that country.

According to Wallerstein, the world economic system is divided into a hierarchy of three types of countries: core, semiperipheral, and peripheral. Core countries (e.g., U.S., Japan, Germany) are dominant, capitalist countries characterized by high levels of [industrialization](https://www.boundless.com/definition/industrialization/) and [urbanization](https://www.boundless.com/definition/urbanization/). Core countries are capital intensive, have high wages and high technology production patterns and lower amounts of labor exploitation and [coercion](https://www.boundless.com/definition/coercion/). Peripheral countries (e.g., most African countries and low [income](https://www.boundless.com/definition/income/) countries in South America) are dependent on core countries for capital and are less industrialized and urbanized. Peripheral countries are usually agrarian, have low literacy rates and lack consistent Internet access. Semiperipheral countries (e.g., South Korea, Taiwan, Mexico, Brazil, India, Nigeria, South Africa) are less developed than core nations but [more](https://www.boundless.com/definition/more/) developed than peripheral nations. They are the weaker members of "advanced" regions or the leading members of former colonial ones.

Core countries own most of the world's capital and technology and have great [control](https://www.boundless.com/definition/control/) over world trade and economic agreements. They are also the cultural centers which attract artists and intellecutals. Peripheral countries generally provide labor and materials to core countries. Semiperipheral countries exploit peripheral countries, just as core countries exploit both semiperipheral and peripheral countries. Core countries extract raw materials with little cost. They can also set the prices for the agricultural products that peripheral countries export regardless of market prices, forcing small farmers to abandon their fields because they can't afford to pay for labor and fertilizer. The wealthy in peripheral countries benefit from the labor of poor workers and from their own economic relations with core country capitalists.

# article 2 Core and Periphery

## The Countries of the World Can be Divided into a Core and a Periphery

The countries of the world can be divided into two major world regions - the 'core' and the 'periphery.' The core includes major world powers and the countries that contain much of the wealth of the planet. The periphery are those countries that are not reaping the benefits of global wealth and [globalization](http://geography.about.com/od/globalproblemsandissues/a/globalization.htm).

**The Theory of Core and Periphery**

The basic principle of the 'Core-Periphery' theory is that as general prosperity grows worldwide, the majority of that growth is enjoyed by a 'core' region of wealthy countries despite being severely outnumbered in population by those in a 'periphery' that are ignored.

There are many reasons why this global structure has formed, but generally there are many barriers, physical and political, that prevent the poorer citizens of the world from participating in global relations. The disparity of wealth between core and periphery countries is staggering, with 15% of the global population enjoying 75% of the world's annual income.

### The Core

The 'core' consists of Europe (excluding Russia, Ukraine, and Belarus) , the United States, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Japan, South Korea, and Israel. Within this region is where most of the positive characteristics of globalization typically occur: transnational links, modern development (i.e. higher wages, access to healthcare, adequate food/water/shelter), scientific innovation, and increasing economic prosperity. These countries also tend to be highly industrialized and have a rapidly-growing [service (tertiary) sector](http://geography.about.com/od/urbaneconomicgeography/a/sectorseconomy.htm) .

The top twenty countries ranked by the United Nations Human Development Index are all in the core. However, of note is the slowing, stagnant, and occasionally [declining population growth](http://geography.about.com/od/populationgeography/a/zero.htm) of these countries.

The opportunities created by these advantages perpetuate a world driven by individuals in the core. People in positions of power and influence around the world are often brought up or educated in the core (nearly 90% of world "leaders" have a degree from a Western university).

### The Periphery

The 'periphery' consists of the countries in the rest of the world: Africa, South America, Asia (excluding Japan and South Korea), and Russia and many of its neighbors. Although some parts of this area exhibit positive development (especially Pacific Rim locations in China), it is generally characterized by extreme poverty and a low standard of living. Health care is non-existent in many places, there is less access to potable water than in the industrialized core, and poor infrastructure engenders slum conditions.

Population is skyrocketing in the periphery because of a number of contributing factors including a limited ability to move and the use of children as means to support a family, among others. (Learn more about [Population growth](http://geography.about.com/od/populationgeography/a/populationgrow.htm) and the [demographic transition](http://geography.about.com/od/culturalgeography/a/demotransition.htm).)

Many people living in rural areas perceive opportunities in cities and take action to migrate there, even though there are not enough jobs or housing to support them. Over one billion people now live in slum conditions, and the majority of population growth around the world is occurring in the periphery.

The rural-to-urban migration and high birth rates of the periphery are creating both[megacities](http://geography.about.com/od/worldcities/Largest_Cities_of_the_World.htm), urban areas with over 8 million people, and hypercities, urban areas with over 20 million people. These cities, such as Mexico City or Manila, have little infrastructure and feature rampant crime, massive unemployment, and a huge informal sector.

### Core-Periphery Roots in Colonialism

One idea for how this world structure came about is called the dependency theory. The basic idea behind this is that capitalist countries have exploited the periphery through colonialism and imperialism in the past few centuries. Essentially, raw materials were extracted from the periphery through slave labor, sold to core countries where they would be consumed or manufactured, and then sold back to the periphery. Advocates of this theory believe that the damage done by centuries of exploitation have left these countries so far behind that it is impossible for them to compete in the global market.

Industrialized nations also played a key role in establishing political regimes during post-war reconstruction. English and the Romance languages remain the state languages for many non-European countries long after their foreign colonists have packed up and gone home. This makes it difficult for anyone brought up speaking a local language to assert him or herself in a Eurocentric world. Also, public policy formed by Western ideas may not provide the best solutions for non-Western countries and their problems.

### Core-Periphery in Conflict

There are a number of locations that represent the physical separation between the core and periphery. Here are a few:

* The growing fence between the U.S. (core) and Mexico (periphery) to prevent the entrance of unauthorized immigrants.
* The Demilitarized Zone between North and South Korea.
* Air and naval patrols on the waters between Australia and Southeast Asia and between the [EU](http://geography.about.com/od/geographyintern/a/euoverview.htm) and North Africa to keep out unwanted immigrants.
* The UN-enforced border separating the Turkish north and Greek south of Cyprus, known as the Green Line.

The core-periphery model is not limited to a global scale, either. Stark contrasts in wages, opportunities, access to health care, etc. among a local or national population are commonplace. The United States, the quintessential beacon for equality, exhibits some of the most obvious examples. U.S. Census Bureau data estimated that the top 5% of wage earners made up roughly one-third of all US income in 2005. For a local perspective, witness the slums of Anacostia whose impoverished citizens live a stone's throw from the grand marble monuments that represent the power and affluence of the Washington D.C.'s central downtown.

While the world may be metaphorically shrinking for the minority in the core, for the majority in the periphery the world maintains a rough and limiting geography. Read more about these ideas in two comprehensive books from which this article draws much from: Harm de Blij's *The Power of Place*, and Mike Davis' *Planet of Slums.*

**Questions**Answer: Use information from the reading and the video to answer the questions below.

1. How does India’s history colonial connect to it’s status as part of the semi-periphery?
2. What is India’s invisible innovation? Why is it invisible?
3. How could this innovation help move India to the periphery?
4. Considering population issues and sustainability, how could this innovation help India in the future?