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Q7(b)

## Critically examine the contribution of dependency theories in understanding the present global scenario.

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2021 · Sociology GS 1 · 15 marks · Social Change in Modern Society

Social Change in Modern Society: Sociological theories of social change; Development and dependency; Agents of social change; Education and social change; Science, technology and social change.

### Core demand of the question

- Examine the relevance of dependency theories in the present global scenario
- Keep the examination within a 20-mark length

### Revision summary

- **Dependency:** underdevelopment is made by core drain, not by late take-off.

Wallerstein's world-system and Frank's satellites still read GVCs and informal cheap labour.

COVID IP and vaccine nationalism fit core control of science.

China and NICs require a semi-periphery update, as Cardoso suggested.

Relevant as hierarchy; not as destiny.

### Introduction

Dependency theories, from Andre Gunder Frank and the Latin American school, argued that underdevelopment is produced by the core's surplus drain, not by missing modernity. Immanuel Wallerstein's world-system scaled the same insight. The present globe of chains, finance, and pandemic still shows hierarchy. It also shows new centres that the first texts did not fully name.

### Body

#### The classical claim

- **Satellite development of underdevelopment:** export of primary goods, import of manufactures, local elites allied to the core.
- Unequal exchange and a lumpen bourgeoisie replace the hopeful modernisation of Parsons and Rostow.
- Historical capitalism is a world, not a club of separate national take-offs.

#### Present global scenario that still fits

- Global value chains place assembly and cheap labour in the semi-periphery while brands, patents, and finance sit in the core.
- Informal Indian labour, including migrants who walked in 2020, is a cheap node in domestic and export production.
- Vaccine nationalism, intellectual property, and platform rents in COVID-19 replay core control of science and data.

- Ecological dump of risk onto poorer regions fits a dependency reading of who bears the cost of rich consumption.

### What has changed

- East Asian and Chinese industrial rise, and some South-South capital, complicate a frozen core-periphery map.
- Fernando Henrique **Cardoso**'s associated-dependent development already allowed growth with subordination. That is closer to today's "rising India" inside chains.
- A transnational capitalist class and gig platforms add actors that a 1960s nation-state satellite model underplayed.

### Critical use

- Do not treat dependency as destiny. States, movements, and South cooperation can bargain, as world-system theory itself allows semi-peripheral mobility.
- Do not treat GDP growth as proof that **Frank** was wrong. Growth can be dependent, informal, and unequal.
- Gendered care and unpaid work, missing in early dependency, now belong in any global labour map.

### Flow diagram

Core patents finance brands -> Surplus drain  
 Periphery cheap labour resources -> Surplus drain  
 Global value chains -> Surplus drain  
 China NICs -> Semi-periphery mobility  
 IP vaccines platforms -> Core patents finance brands

### Conclusion

Dependency theories remain relevant as a map of surplus drain, chain hierarchy, and pandemic inequality. They must be updated for China, associated-dependent growth, and platforms. **Frank** and **Wallerstein** still beat a fairy tale of even global modernisation. They do not excuse a fatalism that ignores semi-peripheral agency.

### Facts & figures

#### Frank

Development of underdevelopment: satellite economies shaped by metropolitan surplus extraction.

#### Wallerstein

World-system: core, semi-periphery, periphery in a single historical capitalism.

#### Cardoso

Associated-dependent development: growth possible under subordination to external capital.

**Global value chain**

Production split across countries with value captured at design, brand, and finance nodes.

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