

Cambridge AS & A Level · Sociology 9699 · Notes

Perspectives on globalisation A2

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What you need to know

By the end of this topic you should be able to:

1. **Define the key terms and explain why globalisation is hard to define.** Know what sociologists mean by **globalisation**, **glocalisation** and **global culture**, and why there is no agreed definition: people disagree about whether it is new, how far it has gone, whether it is one process or several, and how to measure it.
2. **Describe the main dimensions of globalisation:** **economic** (trade, transnational corporations, global finance), **political** (international organisations and the changing power of nation-states) and **cultural** (media, consumer goods, ideas and identities moving across borders).
3. **Explain and compare the perspectives on who benefits from globalisation:** **Marxist**, **feminist**, **postmodernist**, **globalist**, **sceptic** and **transformationalist**.

Every exam question tagged to this topic so far has asked the "who benefits" question in its sharpest form: **why are some countries rich and others poor, and does the global economy help poor countries or keep them poor?** So you also need the three theories that answer it: **modernisation theory** (the optimistic, globalist-friendly answer), and **dependency theory** and **world systems theory** (the Marxist answers), and to judge which explains global inequality best.

Understand it

What globalisation means

Globalisation is the process by which the world's societies become more closely linked, so that events, decisions and products in one place quickly affect people far away. **Giddens** stresses that social relations are "stretched" across the globe: a factory closure in one country can be decided in a boardroom on another continent. **Harvey** calls this **time-space compression**: jet travel, container ships and the internet make distance matter less, so the world feels smaller and faster.

Three related terms:

- **Global culture**: tastes, products, media and ideas that are shared across many countries, such as football leagues watched worldwide, global brands, streaming services, social media platforms and English as a common language of business.

- **Glocalisation (Robertson):** global products and ideas are adapted to fit local cultures, and local people reshape what arrives. A fast-food chain that sells a vegetarian menu in India, or a global talent show remade with local music, are examples. The global and the local mix rather than the global simply replacing the local.
- **Hybridity:** new cultural forms made by blending elements from different places, such as fusion food or music that mixes local and global styles.

Problems with defining globalisation

Sociologists cannot agree on one definition, for five reasons.

1. **Is it new?** Trade, empires, migration and the spread of religions linked distant places for centuries. Sceptics argue that the world economy was about as open before 1914 as it is now. Others reply that the speed and scale of links today, especially digital ones, are new.
2. **Is it one thing?** Economic, political and cultural globalisation move at different speeds. Money moves around the world in seconds, but most people cannot cross borders freely, and many cultures change slowly.
3. **Is it really global?** Links are dense between North America, Europe and East Asia, and much thinner for poor rural areas. Many people have never used the internet. Some writers say "internationalisation" or "regionalisation" is the more accurate word.
4. **Process or outcome?** Some use the word for a process still going on; others for an end state (a single world society) that may never arrive.
5. **Hard to measure and value-laden.** Trade figures, internet use or the number of foreign brands each tell a different story. And the word carries a view: supporters link it to progress and freedom, critics to Westernisation and exploitation. Choosing a definition already leans towards one side of the debate.

Three dimensions

Dimension	What it involves	Examples
Economic	Global trade, transnational corporations (TNCs) producing and selling in many countries, global financial markets, a new international division of labour (design in rich countries, assembly where labour is cheap)	A phone designed in one country, assembled in another, sold everywhere; global supply chains; financial crises spreading between countries
Political	International bodies and agreements, such as the United Nations , the World Trade Organization (WTO) , the International Monetary Fund (IMF) , the World Bank and regional blocs such as the European Union; debate over whether nation-states are losing power	Global climate agreements; trade rules set by the WTO; loans with conditions attached

Dimension	What it involves	Examples
Cultural	Global media and consumer culture, migration and tourism carrying ideas and lifestyles, cultural convergence (cultures becoming more alike) against cultural divergence (cultures staying distinct or becoming more mixed)	Global brands and films; local music scenes reaching world audiences online; diaspora communities

The dimensions feed each other: TNCs (economic) spread brands and advertising (cultural) and lobby international bodies (political).

Who benefits? The three "big picture" positions

Held and his colleagues sorted writers on globalisation into three camps. These answer "how far has globalisation gone?", which shapes their answer to "who benefits?".

Globalists (hyperglobalists). Globalisation is real, far-reaching and new. **Ohmae** argued that we are moving towards a **borderless world**, where the nation-state matters less than global markets and TNCs. Most globalists are **optimistic** and **neoliberal**: free trade and open markets let each country specialise in what it does best, investment flows to where labour is cheap, jobs and incomes rise, and wealth "trickles down". On this view everyone benefits in the long run, including poor countries, and the falling share of the world's people in extreme poverty since 1990 is taken as proof. A minority of globalists are **pessimistic**: they agree globalisation is sweeping but see it as Americanisation and a loss of local control.

Sceptics. Hirst and Thompson argue that globalisation has been exaggerated. Most trade and investment flows between three rich regions (North America, Europe and East Asia), so the world economy is **international** rather than truly global, and much of Africa is left out. Nation-states still control borders, taxes, laws and armies, as shown when governments closed borders in the COVID-19 pandemic or rescued banks in 2008. The pre-1914 world was already highly open. On "who benefits", sceptics say the gains mostly stay inside the rich trading blocs, and that the idea of unstoppable globalisation is used by governments as an excuse for cutting welfare or wages.

Transformationalists. Writers such as **Held** and **Giddens** take a middle position: globalisation is real and new in its speed and scope, but it is **uneven** and its effects are not fixed. Nation-states are not dying; they are changing, pooling power in bodies such as the EU and sharing it with international organisations. Cultures are not simply swamped; they mix, producing glocalisation and hybridity. On "who benefits", the answer is **mixed**: some countries, groups and individuals gain and others lose, and the outcome depends on how states and people respond.

Who benefits? Marxist, feminist and postmodernist views

Marxist view: the capitalist class benefits. Globalisation is the spread of capitalism across the whole world in search of profit.

- **Sklair** describes a **transnational capitalist class** (owners and executives of TNCs, allied politicians and professionals) whose interests are global rather than national, and a **culture-ideology of consumerism** that persuades people everywhere that happiness comes from buying things.
- TNCs move production to wherever wages, taxes and safety rules are lowest, producing a **race to the bottom**. Workers in export factories may earn very low wages in unsafe conditions; the 2013 collapse of a garment-factory building in Bangladesh, which killed more than a thousand workers, is often used as an example.
- International bodies such as the IMF and World Bank, in this view, promote free-market rules that suit rich countries and their companies.
- Dependency theory and world systems theory (below) are the Marxist explanations of global inequality.

Criticism: many poor workers say factory jobs pay more than the farm work they replaced, and some countries (South Korea, China) have used global trade to grow rich.

Feminist view: women gain some things and lose others, and patriarchy shapes the result.

- **Elson and Pearson** studied export factories and found that employers preferred young women, whom they stereotyped as having "nimble fingers" and being docile, so they could be paid less than men. Globalisation draws women into paid work on unequal terms (the **feminisation of the labour force**).
- **Hochschild** describes **global care chains**: women from poorer countries migrate to care for the children and elderly relatives of richer families, leaving their own children with relatives at home. Care is drawn from poor countries to rich ones.
- Women are the main victims of global **sex trafficking**, which grows with easier travel and the internet.
- **Mies** argued that global capitalism treats women's work everywhere as cheap or unpaid "housework", whether in the home or on the factory line.
- On the other side, **Kabeer** found that Bangladeshi women garment workers valued their wages, which gave them more say at home and more choice over marriage. Global women's movements and UN agreements on women's rights spread ideas of gender equality.

Postmodernist view: individuals benefit from more choice and mixing. Globalisation breaks down fixed national and traditional identities. People can draw on music, food, fashion, beliefs and lifestyles from all over the world to build their own identity, a "pick and mix" approach. **Nederveen Pieterse** describes the result as a **global mélange**, a mixing of cultures rather than a single Western culture. Globalisation and hybridity mean local cultures are enriched, not erased. Media and the internet let marginal groups find a voice and an audience.

Criticism: Marxists reply that the choice is mostly open to the affluent; for the world's poor, globalisation means low wages, not lifestyle shopping. Much of the "choice" is also supplied by a small number of Western media and tech companies.

Explaining global inequality: modernisation theory

Global inequality is the gap in income, wealth, health and life chances between richer countries (often called the **developed** world or Global North) and poorer, **developing** countries (Global South). The big question is why the gap exists. Modernisation theory answers: **because poor countries lack the culture and institutions that made the West rich.**

The argument.

- Poor countries are held back by **traditional values**: loyalty to family and clan, fatalism (accepting fate rather than planning), status given by birth rather than earned (**Parsons** contrasted **ascription** with **achievement**), and religious or customary rules that discourage risk-taking.
- Rich countries got rich because they adopted **modern values**: individualism, achievement, enterprise, rational planning, and institutions such as democracy, private property and the rule of law. **McClelland** argued that societies grow when many people have a strong **need for achievement**. Historical work in the tradition of **Weber**, who linked the Protestant work ethic to the rise of capitalism, suggests culture mattered when the West industrialised.
- **Rostow** set out **five stages of growth** that every country can pass through: **traditional society**; **preconditions for take-off** (investment, infrastructure, an entrepreneurial class); **take-off** (rapid industrial growth); **drive to maturity** (growth spreads across the economy); **age of high mass consumption**. The West is further along the same road.
- Rich countries can help poor ones along the road with **aid**, investment by **TNCs**, education and the spread of Western ideas through the media. **Neo-modernisation** and **neoliberal** writers today, and bodies such as the IMF and World Bank, add free markets, open trade and less state control. **Sachs** argued that targeted aid could lift the poorest countries onto the "first rung of the ladder".

Evidence the theory points to.

- The **Asian Tigers** (South Korea, Taiwan, Singapore and Hong Kong) went from poverty to wealth in two generations through education, saving, exports and openness to world markets. The United Arab Emirates used oil wealth plus foreign expertise to modernise fast.
- **China** combined market reforms and foreign investment with its own traditions and a strong state, and hundreds of millions of people left extreme poverty. Supporters say this shows a modernising culture matters, even if it is not purely Western.
- Global measures of extreme poverty, child deaths and literacy have improved in many countries since 1990, partly with help from aid projects, TNC investment and international bodies.

Criticisms.

- **It ignores history and power.** It treats poor countries as if they started at Rostow's first stage, when many were colonised, had resources taken and economies reshaped to serve Europe. Their poverty may be the result of contact with the West, not a lack of it.
- **It is ethnocentric.** It assumes the Western path is the only and best route and that non-Western cultures are a problem. Critics call this **Westernisation** dressed up as development.

- **It blames the poor.** By locating the cause in poor countries' values, it shifts attention away from unfair trade rules, debt and TNC profits. Marxists see it as an ideology that justifies Western capitalism.
- **Its remedies have often failed.** Hayter argued that aid often serves donors' political and business interests, with conditions that tie poor countries to donor companies. The IMF's **structural adjustment programmes** of the 1980s and 1990s made countries cut health and education spending in return for loans, and poverty in parts of Africa deepened.
- **It cannot explain blockages.** Even when a country wants to modernise, it may be held back by corrupt or military elites who gain from the status quo, by civil war, drought or climate change, or by having nothing to sell but a single crop.
- **It is unilinear.** Development does not follow one fixed sequence; the Tigers did not copy Britain's path, and states played a big role in their growth, unlike the free-market model.

Explaining global inequality: dependency theory

Dependency theory, developed by the Marxist **Andre Gunder Frank** from Latin American experience, answers: **poor countries are poor because rich capitalist countries made them poor and keep them that way.** Frank called this the **development of underdevelopment.**

The argument.

- The world capitalist system is divided into **metropolis** countries (the rich core) and **satellite** countries (the poor periphery). Wealth flows from satellites to the metropolis, and within satellites from the countryside to a small urban elite linked to foreign interests.
- **The roots are in the colonial era.** Think of three things empires did. They made farmers grow **cash crops** such as cotton, cocoa or sugar for European markets, so many countries still depend on one or two exports and import food. They drew **borders** to suit themselves, joining rival groups and splitting others, which fuels later conflict. And they removed competition: India's hand-woven cloth, once sold worldwide, lost out to British factory textiles that entered India tax-free. Behind all this lay the Atlantic slave trade, which took millions of workers from Africa.
- After independence, **neo-colonialism** keeps poor countries dependent without direct rule:
 - **Unequal terms of trade:** poor countries sell raw materials and crops whose prices are low and unstable, and buy back expensive manufactured goods and technology.
 - **TNCs** take profits home, pay low wages and use their size to win tax breaks.
 - **Debt and aid with conditions:** loans must be repaid with interest, and conditions open markets to Western firms.
 - **Local elites** (a "comprador" class) grow rich as partners of foreign capital and have no interest in change.
- Frank pointed out that some Latin American economies grew faster when their links with the West were weakest, such as during the world wars and the 1930s depression.
- The way out is to break the ties: cut links with the West, build home industries behind trade barriers (**import substitution**), or overthrow capitalism through socialist revolution. **Cuba** after 1959 is often cited: despite a long US trade embargo, it achieved high literacy and life expectancy.

Strengths.

- It brings in **history and power**, which modernisation leaves out.
- It explains why many former colonies still depend on one or two exports, and why Western aid and trade have not closed the gap.
- It fits the evidence that TNCs gain large profits from cheap labour, resources and new markets in poorer countries.

Criticisms.

- **The success stories.** The Asian Tigers, and later China, grew rich by **joining** the world capitalist economy, not by cutting themselves off. Dependency theory cannot explain why some poor countries rise and others do not.
- **Breaking away has had mixed results.** Countries that tried to cut ties or follow a socialist path, such as Tanzania under Nyerere, often stayed poor; Cuba's gains in health and education came alongside low incomes and heavy dependence on the Soviet Union instead of the USA.
- **Colonialism was not wholly negative.** Goldthorpe argued that some colonies gained roads, railways, ports, schools and hospitals. And countries never or barely colonised, such as Ethiopia and Afghanistan, are still among the poorest, so colonialism cannot be the whole story.
- **Internal causes are ignored.** War, ethnic conflict, corruption, drought, disease and climate change keep countries poor whatever their trade links.
- **Economic reductionism.** It reduces everything to capitalism and gives culture no role, so it cannot explain why countries in similar positions develop differently.
- **Hard to test.** "Dependency" is vague and hard to measure: every poor country is said to be poor because of dependency, and any growth is called "dependent development", so the theory can never be proved wrong.

Explaining global inequality: world systems theory

Wallerstein developed a Marxist theory that keeps dependency theory's focus on capitalism but fixes some of its weaknesses.

- There is one **capitalist world economy**, and countries must be studied as parts of it, not one by one.
- It has three zones: the **core** (rich countries with high-skill, high-wage, high-technology industry and strong states); the **periphery** (poor countries that supply raw materials and cheap, low-skill labour); and the **semi-periphery** (countries in between, such as Brazil, India, Mexico or South Africa, which exploit the periphery while being exploited by the core).
- The world's work is split by an **international division of labour**: the core keeps the most profitable activities and pushes the least profitable ones outwards.
- Countries **can move** between zones. A country can rise from periphery to semi-periphery (the Tigers, China) or fall (some core countries declined after their industries moved abroad). But the system as a whole always needs a periphery, so someone must stay poor.

Strengths: it explains movement up and down that dependency theory cannot, and treats the world as one connected system, which fits a globalised economy. **Criticisms:** it still focuses on economics and pays little attention to culture, politics or the choices people make inside countries; "semi-periphery" is a loose category that can be stretched to cover any awkward case.

Putting the theories side by side

	Modernisation	Dependency	World systems
Main cause of poverty	Internal: traditional values and institutions	External: exploitation by rich capitalist countries	The structure of one capitalist world economy
Role of contact with the West	Helps (aid, TNCs, ideas)	Harms (colonialism, neo-colonialism)	Places each country in a zone; can help or harm
Who benefits from globalisation	Everyone, eventually	The rich core and its capitalist class	The core most, the semi-periphery partly
Route out of poverty	Adopt modern values, open markets	Break ties, revolution, home industry	Move up a zone; only a change of system ends inequality
Linked perspective	Globalist, neoliberal	Marxist	Marxist, partly transformationalist
Explains the Asian Tigers?	Yes, as proof of modern values	Struggles	Yes, as a move to the semi-periphery

Key facts and formulas

There is no formula list in Sociology. "Learn it" means you must remember it.

Key term	Status
Globalisation: societies becoming more closely linked so distant events affect each other (Giddens); time-space compression (Harvey)	Learn it
Glocalisation (Robertson): global products and ideas adapted to local culture; hybridity; global culture	Learn it
Problems defining globalisation: is it new, one process or several, truly global, process or outcome, measurable and value-free?	Learn it
Dimensions: economic (TNCs, trade, finance, new international division of labour), political (UN, WTO, IMF, World Bank, nation-state power), cultural (media, consumerism, convergence and divergence)	Learn it
Globalists (Ohmae, borderless world, neoliberal optimism); sceptics (Hirst and Thompson, internationalisation, the three rich regions); transformationalists (Held, Giddens, uneven change)	Learn it

Key term	Status
Marxist: Sklair (transnational capitalist class, culture-ideology of consumerism), race to the bottom	Learn it
Feminist: Elson and Pearson (nimble fingers), Hochschild (global care chains), Mies, Kabeer, trafficking	Learn it
Postmodernist: pick-and-mix identities, Nederveen Pieterse (global mélange), hybridity	Learn it
Modernisation: Rostow's five stages, Parsons (ascription and achievement), McClelland (need for achievement), Weber, Sachs; Asian Tigers, UAE, China	Learn it
Critics of modernisation: ethnocentrism, Westernisation, Hayter (aid), structural adjustment programmes	Learn it
Dependency: Frank (metropolis and satellite, development of underdevelopment), colonialism, neo-colonialism, terms of trade, Cuba, Tanzania, Goldthorpe	Learn it
World systems: Wallerstein (core, semi-periphery, periphery, international division of labour)	Learn it
Paper 4: two essays from different sections, each 35 marks: AO1 9, AO2 11, AO3 15, so $9 + 11 + 15 = 35$	Learn it

How to do it

We have tagged 7 questions for this topic (2021–2025, all from Paper 4), 6 different (the November 2021 Paper 41 repeated the Paper 43 question). Every one is a 35-mark "Evaluate this view" essay on a theory of global inequality. None mix two types.

Question type	Questions
Evaluate modernisation theory as the best explanation of global inequality (essay)	4
Evaluate dependency theory as the explanation of global poverty (essay)	3

Paper 4 lasts 1 hour 45 minutes for two essays, so allow about 50 minutes for each, including 5 minutes to plan.

The essay plan that works for every question here.

- 1. Introduction** (3–4 sentences): define global inequality (or poverty) and the theory named; say what the theory claims is the cause; name the rival theories you will test it against.
- 2. Explain the named theory** in detail (AO1): its key thinkers, concepts and claimed causes, with an example country. Spend about a third of the essay here.
- 3. Test it** (AO3): run the theory through the five tests below. In each paragraph give the evidence or rival theory, then say clearly what it shows about **the view in the question**.

4. **Conclusion:** a judgement that answers the exact words ("best", "most convincing", "due to"). Avoid "both have strengths and weaknesses" with no verdict.

Five tests for any theory of global inequality. These are your own way to organise evaluation; each works for or against whichever theory the question names.

- **The success test:** can it explain countries that escaped poverty (the Tigers, China, the UAE)?
- **The history test:** does it account for slavery, colonialism and the way poor countries were drawn into the world economy?
- **The variety test:** can it explain why poor countries differ (why some grew and others stayed poor)?
- **The inside test:** does it allow for causes inside countries (war, corruption, elites, disasters, climate)?
- **The evidence test:** can its key ideas be measured, and does real policy based on it (aid, structural adjustment, breaking ties) work?

1. Evaluate modernisation theory as the best explanation of global inequality (essay) (4 questions)

Asked as: modernisation theory offers the best explanation for global inequality (2, one a repeat); modernisation theory provides the best explanation of global inequality (1); modernisation theory provides the best explanation of why some countries remain poor (1).

Building the case for the view (AO1/AO2). Start with what the theory says, then show where it seems to work.

- **Culture matters.** Explain Parsons's achievement and ascription, McClelland's need for achievement and Rostow's five stages. Point out that Marxist theories give culture almost no part, which is a gap modernisation fills.
- **It fits the success stories** (the success test). Singapore, South Korea and the UAE grew rich after investing in education, welcoming foreign firms and rewarding enterprise. China mixed market reforms with its own traditions, which suggests that changing values helps even when the result is not a copy of the West.
- **It explains differences between poor countries** (the variety test), which Frank's theory struggles to do: countries that changed institutions and attitudes grew; others did not.
- **History supports it.** Weber's work suggests values helped the West industrialise, so values could help other countries now.
- **Contact with the West has brought gains.** Aid-funded vaccination and schooling, TNC jobs, and World Bank infrastructure loans have improved living standards in many countries, so optimism is not baseless.

Building the case against the view (AO3). Organise the criticisms by the tests, and bring in dependency and world systems theory as rivals rather than as separate descriptions.

- **It fails the history test.** Frank shows that colonialism and slavery underdeveloped many countries; today's poverty is linked to past exploitation, not just "traditional" values. Neo-colonialism through trade, debt and TNCs continues it.

- **It fails the inside test.** It tells countries what to change but not how, when power is held by elites who gain from things as they are, or when war, drought or disaster wreck institutions.
- **Its remedies fail the evidence test.** Hayter on aid as a tool of donors; structural adjustment cutting health and schooling.
- **It is ethnocentric and ideological.** It treats Western capitalism as the goal and blames the poor, which Marxists see as an ideology that justifies exploitation.
- **A rival explains the success stories too.** Wallerstein can account for the Tigers as countries that moved into the semi-periphery, while showing the system still needs a poor periphery; so success for a few does not prove modernisation explains inequality as a whole.

Judgement. A strong conclusion might say: modernisation is right that internal factors and culture matter (the Tigers, China), but it ignores the power structures of the world economy; no single theory is "best", and a combination of internal and external factors explains global inequality more fully.

2. Evaluate dependency theory as the explanation of global poverty (essay) (3 questions)

Asked as: dependency theory provides the best explanation of global inequality (1); dependency theory provides the most convincing explanation of global poverty (1); developing countries remain poor due to dependency on rich capitalist countries (1).

The last wording does not name the theory, so say in your introduction that the view **is** dependency theory, and name Frank.

Building the case for the view (AO1/AO2).

- **Explain the mechanism.** Frank's metropolis and satellites; the development of underdevelopment; the flow of surplus from poor to rich.
- **It passes the history test.** Take one country and trace it: Indian weavers pushed out by British factory cloth, or a Caribbean island turned over to sugar and still relying on one export. Colonial borders and single-crop economies are still visible today, which is what Frank's theory predicts.
- **Neo-colonialism keeps the pattern going.** Explain the unequal terms of trade, debt repayments, aid with conditions, and TNC profits leaving the country. Sklair's transnational capitalist class shows who gains.
- **It explains why help has done so little.** If rich countries gain from cheap raw materials and labour, their efforts to end poverty will stay half-hearted.
- **Wallerstein's world systems theory** develops the same Marxist idea for a globalised economy, so it can be used to **support** the view (the core still gains from a poor periphery) while also refining it.
- **Within-country elites** who partner with foreign capital and gain from corruption show how dependency works inside poor countries.

Building the case against the view (AO3).

- **It fails the success test.** The Tigers and China grew by joining global capitalism, not leaving it; dependency theory has no clear account of why.

- **Escaping dependency is uncertain.** Cuba gained in health and literacy but stayed poor and swapped one dependence for another; Tanzania's attempt at self-reliance did not end poverty.
- **It fails the history test from the other side.** Goldthorpe's point that some colonies gained infrastructure, and that barely colonised countries such as Ethiopia are still poor.
- **It fails the inside test.** War, ethnic conflict, disease, drought, climate change and poor natural resources matter, whatever a country's trade links.
- **It fails the evidence test.** It cannot lose: a poor country proves dependency, and a growing one is said to show "dependent development", so no evidence could count against it.
- **Modernisation as a rival.** It argues culture matters and Marxist theories are economically reductionist; countries that changed values and institutions often grew. The fall in extreme poverty since 1990, helped by trade, aid and international bodies, challenges the claim that contact with the West only harms.
- **World systems as a rival.** Wallerstein's semi-periphery explains movement up and down, which dependency theory cannot.

Judgement. For example: dependency theory is right that power and history shape global poverty and that the gains from the world economy are unequal, but "remain poor **due to** dependency" is too simple; internal factors and the rise of some countries show it is one cause among several, and world systems theory explains the overall pattern more convincingly.

Using the wider perspectives in these essays

The globalisation perspectives make good extra evaluation in either essay:

- **Globalists** back modernisation's optimism: open markets spread wealth.
- **Sceptics** add that most trade and investment stay inside the three rich regions, so much of Africa is left out of the gains, which supports dependency.
- **Transformationalists** support a mixed judgement: globalisation helps some countries and groups and harms others.
- **Feminists** point out that both theories ignore gender: modernisation counts factory jobs as progress without asking about women's low pay (Elson and Pearson), while dependency theory ignores how patriarchy within poor countries also shapes poverty.

Worked examples

Each example is a new 35-mark essay. The marks are given the way the levels mark scheme works: by assessment objective and level, not by points. In the exam, write each bullet as a full paragraph.

Example 1

'Women in developing countries gain more than they lose from globalisation.' Evaluate this view. **[35]**

Introduction. Globalisation links societies through trade, politics and culture (Giddens; Harvey's time-space compression). For women in poorer countries it has brought factory jobs, migration and new ideas about rights, but feminists and Marxists ask on whose terms. The answer depends on which women, and in which country.

For the view (AO1/AO2).

- **Wages bring some independence:** Kabeer's Bangladeshi garment workers used their pay to gain more say at home and over when and whom they married.
- **Ideas travel:** global women's movements, UN agreements on women's rights and global media spread ideas of equality and education for girls.
- **Modernisation and globalist optimism:** open economies such as South Korea and China moved millions of women from farm work into paid jobs, and girls' schooling rose with growth.
- **Postmodernists:** young urban women can build identities from a global mélange (Nederveen Pieterse) instead of following one traditional role.

Against the view (AO3).

- **Cheap labour on unequal terms:** Elson and Pearson show employers hire young women because they are stereotyped as dexterous and docile, then pay them less; this is the feminisation of the labour force, not equality.
- **The race to the bottom** (Marxists): Sklair's transnational capitalist class gains most, while women bear unsafe conditions, as the 2013 collapse in Bangladesh showed.
- **Care drains away:** Hochschild's global care chains move mothers from poor countries into rich homes, leaving their own children behind.
- **Mies:** global capitalism treats women's work as cheap or unpaid everywhere, so paid work is added on top of housework.
- **Trafficking:** easier travel and the internet have widened the sex trade, whose victims are mostly women.
- **Evaluation of the evidence:** gains are concentrated in East Asia and among urban women; rural women in much of Africa see few of them, so averages hide large differences.

Conclusion. Some women gain real independence, but on terms shaped by patriarchy and by capital's search for cheap labour. The transformationalist view that gains and losses are uneven fits better than the claim that women gain more than they lose overall.

How it would be marked. Feminist, Marxist, postmodernist and globalist material with named writers (AO1 7–9), each applied to "women in developing countries" and "more than they lose" (AO2 10–11), and sustained weighing ending in a justified judgement (AO3 12–15).

Example 2

'World systems theory offers the most convincing explanation of global inequality.' Evaluate this view. [35]

Introduction. Global inequality is the gap in income, wealth and life chances between richer and poorer countries. Wallerstein's world systems theory explains it through the structure of one capitalist world economy. It can be tested against modernisation and dependency theory.

For the view (AO1/AO2).

- Explain core, semi-periphery and periphery, and the international division of labour that keeps the most profitable work in the core.
- **It passes the success test:** the Tigers and China moved from periphery to semi-periphery, which dependency theory cannot explain.
- **It fits globalisation:** TNC supply chains, with design in rich countries and assembly where wages are low, match the core-periphery division.
- **It keeps the history:** the system grew out of colonial expansion, so it explains past exploitation as well as present change.
- **It treats the world as one system,** which fits the closely linked world described by globalists and transformationalists.

Against the view (AO3).

- **Modernisation:** it gives culture no role; values and institutions help explain why some countries moved up and others did not.
- **The inside test:** war, corruption, disasters and climate change are mostly left out.
- **The evidence test:** "semi-periphery" can be stretched to cover any awkward case, so the theory is hard to disprove.
- **Feminists:** like other Marxist theories, it says little about gender inequality within countries.

Conclusion. World systems theory explains both the persistence of inequality and the movement of some countries better than modernisation or dependency theory alone, but it underplays culture and internal causes. It is the most convincing single theory only if combined with attention to what happens inside countries.

How it would be marked. Detailed knowledge of Wallerstein with examples (AO1 7–9), comparisons always tied to "most convincing" (AO2 10–11), and explicit evaluation through the tests with a reasoned verdict (AO3 12–15).

Example 3

'The extent of globalisation has been exaggerated.' Evaluate this view. **[35]**

This is the hardest kind of question, because it asks about the debate itself, not about who benefits. A full answer uses all three dimensions.

Introduction. Define globalisation and the problem of defining it. Name the view as the **sceptic** position (Hirst and Thompson), against **globalists** (Ohmae) and **transformationalists** (Held, Giddens).

For the view (AO1/AO2), dimension by dimension.

- **Economic:** most trade and investment flows among North America, Europe and East Asia; much of Africa is barely connected; the world economy before 1914 was already open. This is internationalisation, not globalisation.
- **Political:** nation-states still control borders, armies, taxes and welfare, as shown by border closures in the COVID-19 pandemic and governments rescuing banks in 2008.
- **Cultural:** local cultures persist and adapt (glocalisation); religious and national revivals show resistance rather than convergence.
- **Problems of definition:** the word is used loosely, sometimes as an excuse for policies such as wage cuts.

Against the view (AO3).

- **Economic:** TNC supply chains, instant global finance and the spread of financial crises (2008) are new in speed and scale.
- **Political:** international bodies (WTO, IMF, EU) limit what states can do; global problems such as climate change need global agreements.
- **Cultural:** global media, the internet and global brands reach billions; Sklair's culture-ideology of consumerism is spreading.
- **Transformationalists:** globalisation is real but uneven; states are changing rather than disappearing. This middle view absorbs the sceptics' best evidence without accepting their conclusion.

Conclusion. The sceptics are right that globalisation is uneven and that nation-states remain powerful, but wrong to see little that is new. The transformationalist view, that globalisation is real, uneven and still changing, fits the evidence best.

How it would be marked. All three dimensions with named writers (AO1 7–9), applied to "extent" and "exaggerated" (AO2 10–11), and sustained comparison of the three camps leading to a verdict (AO3 12–15).

Common mistakes

- **Writing about poverty without the theory.** Examiners report answers that list reasons countries are poor (war, disease, corruption) without naming or explaining the theory in the question. Lead with the theory; use the reasons as evaluation of it.
- **Describing the theory but not testing it.** Many middle-mark answers explain modernisation or dependency theory well, then stop or add one line of criticism. AO3 is worth 15 of the 35 marks: give the other side as much space as the first, and keep saying what each point shows about the view.
- **Listing rival theories instead of using them.** A paragraph that simply describes dependency theory in a modernisation essay is description. Turn it into evaluation: "This suggests modernisation theory is wrong to locate the cause inside poor countries, because...".
- **Relying on assertion.** Statements such as "Western countries exploit Africa" need a concept, a thinker or an example (Frank, terms of trade, a named country). Examiners repeatedly note that low-scoring answers lack studies and concepts.

- **Missing the focus of the wording.** In a globalisation question, check which dimension is asked about: answers on the economic effects of globalisation score little when the question asks about culture, and answers on inequality in general score little when the question asks about globalisation's effect on it.
- **Treating all poor countries as the same.** The strongest answers compare countries that grew (South Korea, China) with those that did not, which is where the theories differ most.
- **No real conclusion.** "Both theories have strengths and weaknesses" is not a judgement. Say which explains more, for which countries, and why.

How to get the marks

- **"Evaluate this view" (35 marks):** one long essay, marked by levels for each assessment objective.
- **AO1 knowledge and understanding (9):** the top level (7–9) needs a range of detailed points with good use of concepts and theory or research. Name thinkers (Rostow, Parsons, Frank, Wallerstein, Sklair, Hirst and Thompson) and use the key terms (underdevelopment, neo-colonialism, core and periphery, terms of trade, ethnocentrism).
- **AO2 interpretation and application (11):** the top level (10–11) needs material that is accurate and **consistently applied to the question**. Keep using the question's own words ("best explanation", "remain poor", "dependency"). Real country examples count as application.
- **AO3 analysis and evaluation (15):** the top level (12–15) needs evaluation that is **explicit, detailed and sustained**, with contrasting views showing the complexity of the issue. An outline of rival theories that is only implicitly linked to the view stays in the 4–7 band; explicit evaluation that is not kept up through the essay reaches 8–11.
- **Answer two questions from different sections** (Globalisation, Media, Religion); the paper is out of $2 \times 35 = 70$. Number each answer clearly.
- **Sociological material** for this topic: Giddens, Harvey, Robertson, Held, Ohmae, Hirst and Thompson, Sklair, Elson and Pearson, Hochschild, Mies, Kabeer, Nederveen Pieterse, Rostow, Parsons, McClelland, Weber, Sachs, Hayter, Frank, Goldthorpe, Wallerstein; concepts such as time-space compression, glocalisation, hybridity, transnational capitalist class, global care chains, underdevelopment, neo-colonialism, terms of trade, core, semi-periphery and periphery.

Quick check

1. Define glocalisation and give an example.
2. Give three reasons why globalisation is hard to define.
3. Name Rostow's five stages of growth in order.
4. What did Frank mean by the "development of underdevelopment"?
5. Which perspective is linked with each idea? (a) Most trade happens within three rich regions, so the world economy is international rather than global. (b) A transnational capitalist class benefits most. (c) Globalisation is real but uneven, and nation-states are changing rather than disappearing. (d) Women from poorer countries migrate to care for richer families' children.

Answers

1. Glocalisation (Robertson) is the adapting of global products and ideas to local cultures, so the global and the local mix. Example: a fast-food chain selling a vegetarian menu in India.
2. Any three: people disagree on whether it is new; economic, political and cultural globalisation move at different speeds; it is uneven, so it may not be truly global; it can mean a process or an end state; it is hard to measure and the word carries a positive or negative judgement.
3. Traditional society; preconditions for take-off; take-off; drive to maturity; age of high mass consumption.
4. That poor countries are not simply "not yet developed": contact with rich capitalist countries, through colonialism and then neo-colonialism, actively made them poorer by draining their wealth to the metropolis.
5. (a) Sceptics (Hirst and Thompson). (b) Marxist (Sklair). (c) Transformationalist (Held, Giddens). (d) Feminist (Hochschild).

Past questions to try

- **9699/42/O/N/24 Q2**: essay on whether dependency theory is the most convincing explanation of global poverty.
- **9699/42/M/J/23 Q2**: essay on whether modernisation theory best explains why some countries remain poor.
- **9699/43/M/J/21 Q2**: essay on whether dependency theory best explains global inequality.
- **9699/42/F/M/22 Q2**: essay on whether modernisation theory best explains global inequality.