

Chapter 2 – The Changing Global Context

The Changing World

- Essential foundation for human geography is an ability to understand places and regions as components of a constantly changing global system
- Best understand changes and consequences through thinking of the world as an evolving, competitive, political-economic system we can call the world-system
- **World-System** – an interdependent system of countries linked by economic and political competition
 - Basically, it means that the world is linked together thanks to our closely tied systems
- The term “world system” was created by historian Immanuel Wallerstein in the 1970s, and is meant to emphasize the interdependence of places and regions around the world
- Modern world-system has its origins in parts of fifteenth-century Europe, where colonization and exploration was a major trend
- By the sixteenth century, new techniques of ship building and navigation had begun to bind more and more places and regions together through trade and political competition
- Decline of feudalism and its replacement by mercantile capitalism also profoundly changed Europe's economy during this period
- **RESULT = MORE PEOPLE AROUND THE WORLD BECAME EXPOSED TO ONE ANOTHER'S TECHNOLOGIES AND IDEAS**
- Different resources, social structures, and cultural systems resulted in quite different pathways of development
- Some societies adapted to the European standards; others didn't.
- **External Arena** – regions of the world not yet absorbed into the modern world-system
- Since the seventeenth century, the world-system has been consolidated with stronger economic ties among countries
 - There has been resistance though, with some countries choosing to go a different political route than the norm
 - Examples: Cuba, China, Tanzania
- Relationship between places and regions can be divided into:
 - **Core Regions** – regions that dominate trade, control the most advanced technologies, and have high levels of productivity within diversified economies
 - They enjoy relatively high per capita incomes
 - First core regions were Holland and England; then later joined by manufacturing regions of Western Europe, North America, Japan and the Pacific Rim
 - Success depends on their dominance and exploitation of other regions
 - Dominance depends on the participation of these other regions within the world system
 - **Colonialism** – the establishment and maintenance of political and legal domination by a state over a separate and alien society
 - Always results in economic exploitation by the colonizing state
 - **Semiperipheral Regions** – regions that are able to exploit peripheral regions but are themselves exploited and dominated by core regions

- Consists of countries that were once peripheral
- Category underlines the fact that neither peripheral status nor core status is necessarily permanent
- Countries such as Canada, the US and Japan became core status after once being peripheral status
- Countries such as Brazil, South Korea, India, Mexico, and Taiwan have become semiperipheral after first being incorporated into the periphery of the world system and then developing a successful manufacturing sector that moved them out of semiperipheral status
- **Peripheral Regions** – regions with dependent and disadvantageous trading relationships, obsolete technologies and undeveloped or narrowly specialized economies with low levels of productivity
 - Characterized by dependent and disadvantageous trading relationships, obsolete technologies, and undeveloped or narrowly specialized economies with low levels of productivity
- Same types of economic, political, social and cultural process that have created and that sustain core regions at a global level also operate at regional and local scales
- The “global core” is made up of regional cores, semiperipheries and peripheries
 - Example: Canada, with a gross national product that is ranked within the G8 group of nations is part of the global core.
 - Not all of Canada's provinces and territories share uniformly in this prosperity
 - Canada could be divided into the “heartland” and “hinterlands” as many Canadian geographers have come to call the regional core and its peripheries
- Regional cores are made up of local cores and peripheries
- The world-system is not made up of a few homogeneous regions. It is much more geographically varied.
- It is made up of a nested set of cores, semiperipheries, and peripheries at different scales of analysis
- In certain cases, a region can be simultaneously part of the global core and semiperiphery
- Canada has a GNP and average per capita standard of living that places it in the global core
- Though Canada acts as part of the global core, characteristics of its semiperiphery show that parts of Canada's economy is owned by the US.
- The World System Model:
 - States that the world can be divided into a series of cores, semiperipheries, and peripheries
 - Dividing up the world in this way, we use a relative concept of space, based on a socioeconomic measure of distance
 - The global core maintains its dominance through the exercise of the economic, political, military, and cultural forces at its disposal
 - Core maintains its dominance through environmental and ecological means.
 - Global periphery is maintained in a dependent position by the global core
 - The global core and periphery have changed their locations over time
 - The world-system is made up of a nested series of cores and peripheries. Local

developments are transmitted to the regional and global levels, and the forces of globalization manifest themselves at the local level

Geographic Expansion, Integration, and Change

- World-system evolved in successive stages of geographic expansion and integration
- Evolution has affected the roles of individual places and the nature of the interdependence among places
- Explains why places and regions have become distinctive and how this distinctiveness is the basis of geographic variability
- **Mini Systems**
 - **Mini-system** – a society with a single cultural base and a reciprocal social economy
 - Each individual specializes in particular tasks, freely giving any excess product to others who reciprocate by giving up the surplus product of their own specialization
 - Also known as trade
 - Mini-systems were based on hunting and gathering societies adapting to their local environments
 - After the first agricultural revolution between 9000 and 7000 BC, mini-systems were both more extensive and more stable
 - Qualities eventually contributed to new forms of spatial organization
 - Food-producing mini-systems allowed much higher population densities and encouraged the proliferation of settled villages
 - Brought about a change in social organization, from loose communal systems to systems that were more highly organized on the basis of kinship
 - Allowed some specialization in nonagricultural crafts, such as pottery, woven textiles, jewellery and weaponry
 - Karl Polanyi (1886-1964) explored how ancient economies may have begun and evolved over time
 - Most mini-systems have vanished; tribal systems are being eliminated in favour of urbanization
- **The Growth of Early Empires**
 - **World Empire** – mini-systems that have been absorbed into a common political system while retaining their fundamental cultural differences
 - Basically, small societies which have kept their culture but have changed their political system to match that of the global norm
 - Social economy of world-empires can be characterized as redistributive-tributary
 - Wealth is appropriated from producer classes by an elite class in the form of taxes or tribute
 - Redistribution of wealth is most often achieved through military force, religious persuasion or a combination of the two
 - World-empires introduced two new elements to the evolution of the world's geography
 - Urbanization created towns and cities which became centres of administration.
 - Gave rise to capital cities and to a whole series of secondary settlements which

acted as immediate centres

- Colonization helped to establish dominant/subordinate spatial relationships between original areas of settlement within world-empires and colonies
- Also important in establishing hierarchies of settlements and creating improved transportation networks
- **Law of diminishing returns** – the tendency for productivity to decline, after a certain point, with the continued application of capital or labour or both to a given resource base
 - Because of the law, world empires could support growing populations only if overall levels of productivity could be increased
 - Because of the continual additions of workers, colonizing nearby land was necessary to keep the gain in production per worker higher
- Military underpinnings of colonization also meant that new towns and cities now came to be carefully sited for strategic and defensive reasons
- Some world-empires were exceptional in that they were based on a particularly strong central state, with totalitarian rulers who were able to organize large-scale communal land improvement schemes using forced labour
- Dependency of large-scale land improvement schemes (irrigation and drainage schemes) led to those empires being known as hydraulic societies
- **The Geography of the Pre-Modern World**
 - Harsher environments in continental interiors were still peopled by isolated, subsistence-level, kin-ordered hunting and gathering mini-systems.
 - Dry belt of steppes and desert margins stretching across the Old World from western Sahara to Mongolia was a continuous zone of kin-ordered, pastoral mini-systems
 - The dominant centres of global civilization were China, northern India, and the Ottoman Empire of the eastern Mediterranean
 - Important world empires were based in Southeast Asia, in Muslim city states of coastal North Africa, the grasslands of West Africa, around the gold and copper mines of East Africa and in the feudal kingdoms and merchant towns of Europe
 - More-developed realms were interconnected through trade, which meant that several emerging centres of capitalism existed
 - Port cities were hubs for early trade
 - **Hinterland** – the sphere of economic influence of a town or city
 - By the fifteenth century, several regions of emerging capitalism existed: northern Italy, Flanders, southern England, the Baltic, the Nile Valley, Malabar, eastern coastal India (Coromandel), Bengal, northern Java and southeast coastal China

Mapping a New World Geography

- Though capitalism was being grown in several regions in the East and China had advancements in science and technology, it was European merchant capitalism that reshaped the world
- It was fueled by several factors:
 - A high density population and a limited amount of cultivable land meant that there was a

- continuous struggle to provide enough food
 - Competition by other countries and desperate explorers looking to gain land of their own
 - Factors of innovations in shipbuilding, navigation and journey
 - The need to gain land for economic growth
 - Motivation to gain quicker access into the Far East, where trading was rarely done
- **Plantations** – large landholding that usually specialize in the production of one particular crop for market
- **Import Substitution** – the process by which domestic producers provide goods or services that formerly were bought from foreign producers
- Innovations in business and finance helped increase savings, investment and commercial activity
- Result was the emergence of Western Europe as the core region of a world-system that had penetrated and incorporated significant portions of the rest of the world
- Overseas expansion stimulated improvements in technology for Europe
 - Included new developments in mapmaking, naval artillery, shipbuilding, and the use of sails
 - Experience of overseas expansion also provided experience for entrepreneurship and investment
 - Self-propelling growth of merchant capitalism was intensified and consolidated
- Overseas expansion led to dependency
 - Whalers from Spain exploited the St. Lawrence for whale oil
 - French, Portuguese and Basque fishing ships took increasingly large quantities of cod from the Grand Banks off Newfoundland and Labrador
 - Overfishing off the coast of Newfoundland became an annual tradition for fishers of the French and British; also included overwintering
 - Occasional exchanges of goods between sailors and Aboriginal groups led to the beginnings of the fur trade
 - Subsequent development of European market for furs led to further exploration farther up the St. Lawrence and into the Great Lakes by the late seventeenth century
 - All part of scheme to exploit the animal resources of in that area
 - Real profits of the fur trade was seen in Europe where furs were made into hats and garments
 - The Hudson's Bay Company was headquartered in London, where political and financial control over its Canadian resources was exercised.
- Montreal saw the elite invest resources into it to profit from the encouragement of local trade and agriculture
- Between 1450 and 1750, the principal spheres of European influence was Mediterranean North Africa, Portuguese and Spanish colonies in the Americas, Indian ports and trading colonies, the East Indies, African and Chinese ports, the Greater Caribbean, and North America
- Sir Walter Raleigh (1608) - "Whoso commands the sea commands the trade of the world; whoso commands the trade of the world commands the riches of the world."
- **Industrialization and Geographic Change**
 - New production and transportation technologies of the Industrial Revolution began the

rise of capitalism

- New production technologies, based on more concentrated forms of energy, such as coal, helped raise levels of productivity and create new and better products that stimulated demand, increased profits, and created a pool of capital for further investment
- New transportation technologies triggered successive phases of geographic expansion, allowing for internal development as well as external colonization and imperialism
- **Leadership cycles** – periods of international power established by individual states through economic, political and military competition
- Success in the world-system depends on economic strength and competitiveness, which brings political influence and pays for military strength
- Combinations of economic, political and military power, individual states can dominate the world-system, setting the terms for many economic and cultural practices
 - This also included imposing their own particular ideologies
- **Hegemony** – domination over the world economy exercised by one national state in a particular historical epoch through a combination of economic, military, financial and cultural means
- Industrialization led in a major shift in human geography of the original European core and also in the US and Japan cores.
 - **Europe**
 - Three distinctive waves of industrialization occurred – first between 1790 and 1850
 - It was based on the initial cluster of industrial technologies (steam engines, cotton textiles and ironworking) and was very localized
 - Second wave (1850-1870) involved the diffusion of industrialization to most of the rest of Britain and to parts of northwest Europe, particularly the coalfield areas of northern France, Belgium and Germany
 - Railroads and steamships made more places accessible bringing their resources and their markets into the sphere of industrialization
 - New materials and new technologies (such as steel and machine tools) created opportunities to manufacture and market new products
 - Third wave of industrialization (1870-1914) saw a further reorganization as further technological innovations created different needs and created new opportunities
 - **US**
 - By end of nineteenth century, core of the world-system had extended to include the US and Japan
 - The US managed to move from the periphery to the core because of its vast natural resources which allowed the creation of new industries
 - Immigration provided a large and expanded market as well as a cheap labour force
 - Cultural and trading links with Europe provided business contacts, technological know-how and access to capital for investment in infrastructure
 - America's industrial strength was established at the beginning of the twentieth century with the development of a new cluster of technologies that included the internal combustion engine, oil and plastics, electrical engineering, and telecommunications.

- **Canada**
 - Canada had remained dependent on the global core, but it was more integrated into the world-system
 - Once Canada became a country in 1867, Canada became in charge of its own affairs
 - This led to a shift in their economy, with a shift becoming dependent on the US regional core
 - In 1900, US capital represented 15 percent of all foreign investment in Canada
 - By 1920, US capital represented 50 percent of all foreign investment
 - Canada's National Policy of 1879 promoted the completion of a transcontinental link to tie the country together, encouraged immigration to the Prairies and introduced tariffs to protect Canadian industry from cheaper American manufacturers
 - Industrialization became a growing factor after the policy; by 1900, small manufacturing belts were created between Niagara and Toronto, in Montreal region and around the Cape Breton coalfields of NS
 - 19th century saw the growth of the Canadian timber industry on top of the fish and fur industry
 - Canada was heavily dependent on the exploitation of its natural resources
 - **Staples trap** – an over-reliance on the export of staples makes an economy vulnerable to fluctuations in world prices and without alternatives when resource depletion occurs
 - **Staples thesis** – a proposition arguing that the export of Canada's natural resources, or staples, had a pervasive impact on Canada, one consequence being that Canada became locked into dependency as a resource hinterland for more advanced economies.
 - Canada's overreliance on the export of staples to generate income limited Canada on what it could produce
 - Finance capital was limited in Canada; locally produced products would be more expensive than were British or American imports
 - Staples thesis explains why many local economic activities in Canada have not produced sustained growth in other sectors of the local economy
- **Internal Development of the Core Regions**
 - Canals were the first method used for internal geographic expansion and regional integration
 - Canada used canals to improve or protect navigation along the St. Lawrence-Great Lakes corridor
 - Rideau Canal was designed to enable canal traffic to avoid possible American attacks on the St. Lawrence itself.
 - Welland Canal was build to enable vessels to climb 100m from Lake Ontario to Lake Erie
 - Scale of North America was such that a network of canals was a viable proposition only in the more densely settled areas
 - Colonization of the interior could not take place until the develop of steam-powered transportation

- Steamboats were used to transport people to the Fraser Valley, the Cariboo region around Barkerville and Yukon in 1898
- By 1860, the railroads became the main mode of transportation into the interior and helped develop regions close to railway stations or tracks
- 1885 – Transcontinental railroad was completed
- Construction of railway lines allowed BC's timber and agricultural products to be transported overseas and large numbers of immigrants to be moved to the frontiers of settlement
- Once the internal combustion engine was mass produced, internal development, and integration was increased
- Technological innovations helped fuel a major revolution in agriculture
- Productivity was increased, cultivable land was more available and agricultural labourers were now available for industrial work.
- This fueled the growth of small towns and villages into cities
- Development of trucks in the 1910's and 1920's allowed the trucking industry to grow; made it feasible for factories to be located in city suburbs; allowed the construction of highways and new roadways
- The Trans-Canada Highway was completed in 1962 as an effort to link the country together by road
- Integration was not simply an interconnectedness through highway systems; it also involved close economic linkages among manufacturers, suppliers, and distributors – linkages that enabled places and regions to specialize and develop economic advantages

Organizing the Periphery

- Once the Industrial Revolution had gathered momentum in the early nineteenth century, the industrial core nations, greater expansion was sought
- Demand for tropical nations to export tropical plantation products increased
- After 1870, there was a vast increase in the number of colonies and the number of people under colonial rule

The International Division of Labour

- Fundamental need for colonization was economic
 - There was a need for an extended arena for trade, an arena that could supply foodstuffs and raw materials in return for the industrial goods of the core
- Outcome was an international division of labour, driven by the needs of the core and imposed through its economic and military strength
- **Division of Labour** – the specialization of different people, regions, or countries in particular kinds of economic activities
- Colonial economies were founded on narrow specializations that were oriented to, and dependent on, the needs of core countries
- 48/55 countries in sub-Saharan Africa still depend on just three products – tea, cocoa, and coffee for more than half of their export earnings

- International division of labour brought a substantial increase in trade and a large surge in the overall size of the capitalist world economy
- By 1913, Africa and Asia provided more exports to the world economy than either North America or the British Isles.
- Asia alone was importing almost as much, by value, as North America
- Industrializing countries of the core brought increasing amounts of foodstuffs and raw materials from the periphery, financed by profits from the export of machinery and manufactured goods
- Britain used its capital to invest not just in peripheral regions but also in profitable industries in other core countries, especially the US
- Other core countries were able to export cheap manufactured goods to Britain.
- India and China developed a widening circle of exchange and dependence, with constantly switching patterns of trade and investment
- **Imperialism: Imposing New Geographies on the World**
 - Though Britain was the leader in the late nineteenth century, several other European countries as well as the US and later Japan were competing for global influence
 - Core countries engaged in pre-emptive geographical expansionism to protect their established interests and to limit the opportunities of others
 - They also wanted to secure as much of the world as possible through military control, administrative control, and economic regulations – to ensure stable and profitable environments for their traders and investors
 - Between 1870 and 1900, European countries added almost 16 million square km and 150 million people to their spheres of control
 - Within 34 years, between 1880 and 1914, exploration and colonization was responsible for bringing in large land masses as part of the geographic system
 - Africa was greatly affected, as a geography was created that consisted of a hierarchy of three kinds of space
 - One consisted of regions and localities organized by European colonial administrators and European investors to produce commodities for the world market
 - A second consisted of zones of production for local markets, where peasant farmers produced food for consumption by labourers engaged in commercial mining and agriculture
 - Third consisted of widespread regions of subsistence agriculture whose connection with the world-system was as a source of labour for the commercial regions
 - **Subaltern Theory** – a theory examining the ways in which the colonized margin is culturally dominated by the colonizing centre
 - Edward Said's "Orientalism" shows how the West created its own image of the "Orient" and then imposed that view on the Asian lands it came to dominate
 - Terms centre and margin equate with the world-system terms of core and periphery
 - **Postcolonialism** – a broad set of artistic, political, and research approaches that examine the consequences of the end of European colonialism
 - Immigration from other parts of the world have enabled a rich cultural mosaic to develop,

especially in Canada's fast growing metropolitan centres

- Colonization, though it has expanded the sphere of influence a country has, it usually assimilates the culture that was on the new land originally and forces the natives to absorb the same culture as the explorers.