**QUESTION:**

[International Relations scholars appear to disagree on the causes of economic underdevelopment, and unequal distribution of wealth among states. Neo-Marxist scholars explain these inequalities through a systemic theory, focusing on a world system that benefits some states disproportionally. Others argue that the causes of economic underdevelopment are to be found in unit-level attributes. Which of these two examples do you find most compelling? Why? 3 to 4 pages](https://writerbasesolutions.com/awarded)

**INTRODUCTION:**

International Relations (IR) experts have vigorously debated the factors that contribute to economic underdevelopment and the unequal distribution of income among governments. The systemic theory advanced by neo-Marxist researchers and the unit-level attribute defenses advanced by others will be contrasted and discussed in this answer. Which example is more convincing in illustrating economic inequality will be determined by analyzing the main reasons from each viewpoint.

1. **Neo-Marxist Perspective:**

Neo-Marxist academics offer a systemic theory to account for the disparities in income distribution between governments and economic underdevelopment. They believe that these differences are caused by a global system that favors some governments more than others. This theory has its roots in the larger Marxist framework, which emphasizes the influence of capitalism and class conflict on societal processes.

They contend that the world economic order, often known as capitalism or global capitalism, produces a hierarchical framework where certain governments hold a dominant position and others are relegated to a subordinate position. In this system, advanced capitalist nations exploit the resources and labor of less developed nations due to unequal power relations. Neo-Marxists contend that resource exploitation, the use of cheap labor, and unfair trading practices with weaker governments all contribute to the concentration of wealth and capital in the hands of a small number of powerful states.

Immanuel Wallerstein is a well-known proponent of Neo-Marxism. According to his global-systems theory, the world is split into a core, periphery, and semi-periphery. The core nations, usually Western industrialized ones, control the world's economy and draw resources and wealth from the periphery and semi-periphery. This uneven relationship feeds a cycle of dependency and the continued economic underdevelopment of the periphery.

According to Wallenstein, the global capitalist system is intrinsically exploitative and keeps disparities alive through practices like unfair trade, foreign investment, and debt obligations. Instead of attributing economic underdevelopment primarily to internal issues inside particular states, this systemic perspective highlights the structural forces that perpetuate it.

Another viewpoint within the Neo-Marxist paradigm is dependency theory, which is concerned with the economic ties between industrialized and developing nations. Dependence on the core states, according to academics like Andre Gunder Frank, is the cause of the underdevelopment in the periphery. Numerous factors, including as unfair trade practices, heavy debt loads, and the movement of surplus value from the peripheral to the core, contribute to this dependence. These fundamental dynamics support the continued income disparity and obstruct the growth of the peripheral economies.

Cardoso and Faletto's work on dependency theory supports the neo-Marxist viewpoint by offering factual proof of how outside factors, including multinational businesses and global economic policy, contribute to the underdevelopment of some governments. They examine the historical background of Latin American nations in their book "Dependency and Development in Latin America," which also emphasizes the influence of outside factors on the region's economic development. This piece shows how the capitalism system in the globe upholds inequality and impedes the development of poor countries.

1. **Unit-level attribute perspective**

Some academics contend that unit-level characteristics, such as domestic politics, government, and policies adopted by specific states, are the main contributors to economic underdevelopment. These theories center on a nation's internal dynamics and blame corruption, poor management, weak institutions, or bad economic policies for economic inequality.

Unit-level attribute explanations emphasize the importance of state-controllable factors and make the case that domestic policies and governance decisions can significantly affect economic development. This viewpoint places a strong emphasis on governmental agency and their capacity to implement policies that support economic growth and development.

The modernization theory, which contends that archaic and outmoded social structures and practices are to blame for underdevelopment, is one significant supporter of the unit-level attribute approach. According to this theory's proponents, developing nations can overcome economic underdevelopment by implementing cutting-edge techniques, technology, and institutions that have been proven effective in more industrialized nations.

1. **Assessment and Evaluation:**

It is crucial to take each perspective's advantages and disadvantages into account while comparing the two viewpoints. By focusing on systemic elements, the neo-Marxist viewpoint offers an extensive examination of economic inequality. It reveals the effects of the global economic order on underdevelopment by shedding light on past patterns of exploitation and reliance. However, by putting less focus on internal variables and the agency of particular states, it could oversimplify the intricate dynamics of economic disparities.

The unit-level attribute view recognizes the agency and autonomy of states while emphasizing the importance of domestic factors in economic development. It acknowledges the significance of institutions, governance, and human capital as propellants of economic development. This viewpoint, however, might minimize the structural limitations and systemic impediments that some states experience as a result of historical legacies and global power dynamics.

**Conclusion:**

The Neo-Marxist approach that emphasizes a systemic theory, in my opinion, is more convincing. It acknowledges the structural limitations and power disparities that influence the structure of the world economy. This viewpoint provides a thorough grasp of the underlying reasons for economic underdevelopment and the unequal distribution of wealth among nations by emphasizing the historical and continuing exploitation of weaker states by more powerful ones.

**References:**

ANDREW GUNDER FRANK. (1969). Reviews: ANDREW GUNDER FRANK. Capitalism and Underdevelopment in Latin America: Historical Studies of Chile and Brazil. New York, N.Y., Monthly Press Review, 1967. Pp. xx+298. Price $ 7.50. *International Studies*, *11*(2), 252–253. https://doi.org/10.1177/002088176901100215

Cardoso, F. H., & Faletto, E. (1979). Dependency and development in Latin America. University of California Press.

Immanuel Maurice Wallerstein. (2011). *The modern world-system. 1: Capitalist agriculture and the origins of the European world-economy in the sixteenth century*. University Of California Press. (Original work published 1974)