

Chapter Five

Major Contemporary Global Issues

Survey of Major Contemporary Global Issues

- What makes an issue a global issue?
- The answer to this question is found in addressing the following four interlinked questions. These are:
 - i. What is the extent or scope of an issue? Does it affect large parts of the global arena or it is confined and contained to a narrow scope? How far are they likely to spill over into the broader arena, and thus become of concern to a wide variety of actors?
 - ii. What is the urgency or intensity of the issue? This, of course, is a rather subjective question, since it relates to the general question of significant to whom? For instance, on the issue of global environmental change, it is quite clear that such an issue has different levels of urgency for different political actors, who will as a result give it different degrees of priority, attention and resources,
 - iii. What is the salience or visibility of a given issue? This question relates to the roles of the media or other actors who confer urgency or intensity, and
 - iv. What is the centrality or location of an issue? This is partly an objective issue of geography, implying that the closer the issue is to important actors the greater the attention and significance it will acquire.
- The subsequent discussion is thus about different issues that fall in a cluster of four major contemporary global issues selected based these criteria.

Global Security Issues

- In the security arena, there are two main issues and challenges facing the emerging new world order.
 - ✓ These are: terrorism and nuclear proliferation.
- **Global Terrorism**
 - ✓ The question: who gets to define terrorism and why? often complicates the task of defining terrorism
 - ✓ Indeed, the saying 'some one's terrorist is another's freedom fighter' is often presented as a justification for the general acceptance of war as a legitimate instrument of even governments
 - ✓ This does not, however, prevented scholars from attempting to provide operational/working definition for the term
 - ✓ Terrorism is defined by many as a global security problem characterized by the use of violence in the form of hostage taking, bombing, hijacking and other indiscriminate attacks on civilian targets

Global Security Issues

- In this sense, the world is thus today experiencing four different types of terrorist organizations namely: left wing terrorists, right wing terrorists, ethno-nationalists/separatist terrorists and religious terrorists
- Global communication and transport physical technologies helped the terrorists develop capacity to conduct attacks across the globe
- However, terrorists have not yet acquired and used radiological, biological or chemical weapons so far
- Experts believe that the reason for this is probably that the terrorists understand such weapons would lead to the likelihood that a state or the international community would focus its efforts on hunting them down, and eradicate them
- In any case, terrorism continues to pose a major challenge to our globe in the 21st century

Factors Conducive to Terrorism:

- Terrorism might have many causes. Yet, the followings are among the most widely perceived ones:
 - ✓ Socio-economic cause (poverty in the sense of economic and political isolation, feelings of hopelessness, violations of human rights, and the lack of democracy provides a fertile breeding ground for terrorism);
 - ✓ Political cause (legitimate grievances and the failure of governments to adequately address these problems often foment terrorism
 - ✓ Moreover, the lack of democracy, and widespread and systematic violations of human rights contributes to the rise of terrorism) and psychological cause (humiliation is another factor conducive to the use of terrorism)

Types of Terrorism

- Although the types of terrorism tend to overlap, they vary in their implications and the different ways they affect us.
 - ✓ For example, the indiscriminate nature of global terrorism contrasts sharply with domestic terrorism which usually aims at specific groups or governments
- Put broadly, however, the following five are the most commonly observed types of terrorism.
- **Domestic terrorism:** Occurs within the borders of a particular country and is associated with extremist groups.
- **Nationalist terrorism:** is closely associated with struggles for political autonomy and independence.
- **Religious terrorism:** grows out of extreme fundamentalist religious groups that believe that God is on their side and that their violence is divinely inspired and approved.
- **State terrorism:** is a cold, calculated, efficient, and extremely destructive form of terrorism, partly because of the overwhelming power at the disposal of governments.
- **Global terrorism:** is partly an outgrowth of the forces of globalization, which enable the different kinds of terrorism to spread worldwide.

Nuclear Weapons and Their Proliferations

- Fear of nuclear war dominated security planning during the cold war, and enhanced security was sought through arms control agreement between the two super powers
- The end of the cold war has led to a decrease in concern about the dangers of nuclear war between the super powers
- This is paradoxical because the majority of nuclear weapons that were perceived to cause the problem still exist
- Because of the benign relationship between the US and Russia there is less inclination to invest in destroying their nuclear arsenals.
- The new arms control' treaty is seen by US policy makers as having largely solved the problem
- This means that those interested in arms control and disarmament are having a hard time convincing governments and publics that the existing nuclear arsenals are an issue that need to be tackled

Nuclear Weapons... Cont'd

- The end of the cold war has not diminished the significance attached to nuclear weapons, as many had hoped.
- Indeed, the incentives for states to acquire nuclear weapons would appear to have increased in the post-cold war period.
- Four comments are relevant here.
 1. The fact that nuclear weapons states have substantially maintained their nuclear arsenals shows that they consider that nuclear weapons play some positive role in providing security.
 2. There are now greater incentives to acquire nuclear weapons for those non-nuclear states who have lost the guarantee of extended deterrence previously provided by super powers.
 3. The combination of the loss of extended deterrence with regional dynamics appears to have increased the incentives to proliferate. For example, Pakistan now perceives itself to be vulnerable to attacks from India because the United States has scaled back its support for.
 4. Fourth, the contrasting experiences of Iraq and North Korea suggest strong incentives to proliferate fast and establish deterrence. The 2003 US-led invasion of Iraq was explicitly justified in terms of Iraqi nuclear, chemical and biological weapons capabilities

Reasons for the Proliferation of Weapons

- There are strategic, economic, and political motivations for weapons proliferation. These include:
- **Super-power Rivalry during the Cold War:** Geopolitical considerations influenced the United States and the Soviet Union to transfer weapons to their respective allies.
 - ✓ For example, both the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the Warsaw Pact justified the proliferation of weapons in terms of collective self-defense
- **Military Burden Sharing:** Reluctant to engage in direct military confrontation, both superpowers provided weapons, technical assistance, and arms production technologies to their allies so that they could defend themselves
 - ✓ An example of this was the Nixon Doctrine, which supported weapons transfers to Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, and other Asian countries.
- **Regional Balance of Power:** Arms sales are often defended on the grounds that such transfers contribute to regional stability and diminish the likelihood of war.

Reasons for ... Cont'd

- **Political, Military, and Economic Influence:** Given the dependence of the United States on petroleum supplies from the Middle East in general and Saudi Arabia in particular, arms transfers are instrumental not only in bolstering these countries' security but also in enabling the United States to gain and maintain access to these countries' political, military, and economic elites
- **Economies of Scale:** Many countries export weapons to obtain resources to finance the development and production of more advanced weapons.
- **Self-Reliance:** Many countries develop their own weapons to preserve or enhance their independence.
- **Economic Factors:** Much of the global weapons trade is motivated by financial considerations.
- **Ethnic Conflicts:** Ethnic conflicts generate demand for weapons transfers. **Authoritarian Regimes:** Governments that rule without the consent of the people generally rely on military force to exercise control.

Global Environmental Issues

- The environment is gradually becoming one of the most pressing issues of twenty-first century
- It has been recognized that many, if not all, problems of environmental degradation are trans boundary in nature and therefore need an international solution
- National policy measures essentially cannot cope with international environmental problems because the source of pollution or the impact of pollution may not be within a particular state's jurisdiction.
- Traditionally, international environmental problems have been addressed at international environmental conferences where treaties are designed that commit the signatories to controlling the problem in question

Global Environmental Issues

- Since the 1970s the number of international environmental agreements (IEAs) has risen to reach record numbers
- There is a loose assumption that this is a good thing and that this rise has resulted in a commensurable improvement in environmental protection
- But is this actually the case? In fact, many would argue that there is little positive correlation at all
- Within such context, the subsequent section discusses one of the most pressing contemporary global issue related to the environment, i.e., climate change and global warming.

Climate change and Global warming

- Climate change poses numerous and harsh challenges for sustainable development and its effects are felt in all regions of the globe, although the intensity of exposure varies
 - ✓ Degree of vulnerability varies even more with developing countries and the poor which have contributed the least to global warming but are suffering the most.
 - ✓ This being the case, however, as the eighteenth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change held in Doha in November and December 2012 also illustrated, global climate change mitigation efforts are insufficient.
 - ✓ In Doha, countries agreed and launched the second commitment period for the Kyoto Protocol that was commenced from 1 January 2013 and will end on 31 December 2020.
 - ✓ However, several countries that had ratified the Kyoto Protocol for its first commitment period withdrew from it and decided not to join the second commitment period. The remaining states parties to the protocol with obligations to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Climate change and Global warming

- The greenhouse gas reduction goals set out in the Kyoto Protocol remain largely unachieved
- If the economies in transition are not taken into account, most of the developed countries have failed to achieve their reduction targets.
- Countries that apparently have achieved their targets have often done so mainly through off shoring greenhouse gas-intensive production operations to developing countries
- Meanwhile, since production technologies in developing countries are generally more green-house gas-intensive, off shoring has led to an increase rather than a decrease in the total (global) volume of emissions, thus frustrating the very purpose of the Protocol.
- Although countries agreed to continue the Kyoto Protocol via the second commitment period through 2020, the post-2020 comprehensive regime, which is to be universal and applicable to all countries, is yet to be negotiated and its result yet to be seen.

Global Socio-economic Issues

Global Inequality and Poverty

- Persistent inequality and enduring poverty challenge beliefs in the equality of opportunity and the possibility of upward mobility
- Eventually, the legitimacy of the economic system and political and social institutions are challenged.
- The legitimacy of the global economic system is likely to be strengthened if a larger number of countries and individuals are benefiting from it
- Extreme inequality perpetuates poverty and the concentration of economic and political power and reduces economic efficiency.
- It strengthens inequality-perpetuating institutions in three ways:
 - ✓ Inequality discourages the political participation of poor people, which, in turn, diminishes their access to education, health care, and other services that contribute to economic growth and development
 - ✓ Inequality often prevents the building and proper functioning of impartial institutions and observance of the rule of law
 - ✓ Inequality enables the wealthy to refuse to compromise politically or economically, which further weakens poor societies in a global society that requires relatively fast responses to economic developments.

Global Socio-economic ...Cont'd

- These consequences of inequality combine to ensure that poor societies will remain poor and unequal, trapping most of their inhabitants in a destructive cycle of poverty
- Growing inequality among as well as within nations has direct and indirect implications for globalization
- Inequality could undermine globalization by influencing countries to adopt protectionist policies and disengage, to the extent possible, from the global economy
- But the ramifications extend beyond economic issues to problems such as terrorism, the environment, and the spread of infectious diseases

Migration and refugee problems

- International migration and refugee (including asylum seekers and Internally Displace Peoples) have become more prominent on the international agenda in recent years both because of their increasing scale and growing impact on international affairs
- Several factors account for these developments
 1. The number of states in the international system has steadily increased since the end of the First World War which results in increase in the volume of international migrants and refugee
 2. There has also been a rapid increase in the world's population, and it continues to grow which has led to over exploitation of regional resources, leading on occasions to catastrophic famine and population movement
 3. The revolution in communications and transportation has made people aware of conditions and opportunities in other parts of the world, as well as making travel to those areas easier
 4. The turmoil and uncertainty of the turbulent and unstable world place an important role in motivating people to search abroad for a better life

Global Cultural Issues

Cultural Imperialism

- Cultural imperialism is the result of cultural globalization - a process whereby information, commodities and images that have been produced in one part of the world enter into a global flow that tends to 'flatten out' cultural differences between nations, regions and individuals
- This has sometimes been portrayed as a process of 'McDonaldization'.
 - ✓ McDonaldization is the process whereby global commodities and commercial and marketing practices associated with the fast-food industry have come to dominate more and more economic sectors
- Cultural globalization is fuelled by the so-called information revolution, the spread of satellite communication, telecommunications networks, information technology and internet and global media corporations
- The popular image of globalization is that it is a top-down process, the establishment of a single global system that imprints itself on all parts of the world

Global Cultural Issues ... Cont'd

- In this view, globalization is linked to homogenization as cultural diversity are destroyed in a world in which we all watch the same television programmes, buy the same commodities, eat the same food, support the same sports stars and etc
- Globalization has in some ways fashioned more complex patterns of social and cultural diversity in developing and developed states alike
- In developing states western consumer goods and images have been absorbed into more traditional cultural practices through a process of indigenization
- Indigenization is the process through which alien goods and practices are absorbed by being adapted to local needs and circumstances

Cultural (civilizational) clash and identity conflicts

- Culture and nationalism have generally been closely intertwined
- By understanding this, leaders usually draw upon cultural similarities to diminish tensions and, conversely, upon cultural differences and hatreds to promote conflict
- And, given that all societies, directly or indirectly, promote their values as positive and desirable while, simultaneously, devaluing those of other societies, ethnocentrism as a behavior is likely to develop
- That is to say that each society may view itself as the center of the world and perceive and interpret other societies within its peculiar frame of reference, and invariably judges them to be inferior
- The more culturally distinct the other society is perceived to be, the more inferior it is often deemed to be and thus suitable for negative treatment.

Cultural (civilizational) ... Cont'd

- This perception is at the heart of ethnic conflicts and international wars
- In line with this logic, the famous political scientist S.P. Huntington has also developed what he calls ‘clash-of-civilizations thesis’ which explains contemporary global conflicts in terms of cultural differences
- For Huntington, civilizations will be the dividing lines in future global politics and it is the clash of these civilizations that would primarily define the feature of 21st century global order
- Huntington argues that there are eight major civilizations in this game namely: Western, Confucian, Japanese, Islamic, Hindu, Slavic-Orthodox, Latin American, and African
- The clash-of-civilizations theory thus stresses that there exists and will continue to exist conflict instead of cooperation among civilizations

Globalization and Regionalism

Defining Globalization

- Globalization can be defined as a multidimensional process characterized by:
 - 1) The stretching of social and political activities across state frontiers
 - ✓ For instance wars and conflicts in developing countries would increase the flow of asylum seekers and illegal migrants in to the developed countries;
 - 2) The intensification or the growing magnitude of interconnectedness in almost every aspect of social existence from the economic to the ecological, the spread of HIV-AIDS, from the intensification of world trade to the spread of different weapons;
 - 3) The accelerating pace of global interactions and process as the evolution of worldwide systems of transport and communication increases the rapidity of ideas, news, goods, information, capital and technology move around the world;

The Globalization Debates

- Globalization is a contentious issue in international relations.
- There has been intense debate as to the direction, nature and effect of globalization on states.
- In this regard, there are three perspectives:
 - A. The hyper-globalists,
 - B. The skeptics, and
 - C. Transformationalists

The Globalization ... Cont'd

A. The Hyper-globalists

- ✓ Nation states become obsolete to regulate their economy and boundary
- ✓ This view of globalization privileges the economic over the political, the market over the state, and suggests the decline of states
- ✓ The authority and legitimacy of states is undermined as the national governments become increasingly unable to control the Trans boundary movements and flows of goods, services, ideas and different socio-economic activities inside their borders
- ✓ Economic globalization is generating a new pattern of losers as well as winners in the international economy

The Globalization ... Cont'd

B. The Skeptics

- ✓ Rejects the view of super- globalist as a myth, flawed and politically naïve since it fundamentally underestimate the enormous power of national governments to regulate international economic activities
- ✓ **States are central actors and agents of globalization** playing central role in shaping and regulating the economic activities including the Trans-boundary flows of ideas, goods and peoples
- ✓ Undermine the view that the world is interconnected and moving into a village where by there exists a free flow of goods and services, investment and circulation of money from one corner of the world in to another

The Globalization ... Cont'd

- ✓ For that matter, Skeptics argues that there is no free flow of goods, resources, technology and finance at the global level; instead we have regional based globalization
- ✓ In this regard, it has become evident that the Western region is more intergraded and globalized than the other part of the world such as Africa and Asia.
- ✓ The Skeptics thus do not believe that globalization would help to narrow the economic and technological gap that is still prevailing between the Global North (developed Countries) and The Global South (Developing countries).

The Globalization ... Cont'd

C. The Transformationalist

- ✓ They reject both the hyper globalist view of the end of the sovereign state as well as the Skeptics claim that nothing much has changed.
- ✓ Instead they assert that a new sovereignty regime is displacing traditional conception of state power as an absolute, indivisible, territorially exclusive power.
- ✓ Under globalization, there are non-state actors such as MNCs, transnational social movements, international regulatory agencies.
- ✓ In this sense world order can no longer be conceived as purely State-Centric or even primarily state managed as authority has become increasingly diffused amongst public and private agencies at the local, national, regional and at global levels
- ✓ This does not mean that the power of national government is necessarily diminished but on the contrary it is being **redefined, reconstituted and restructured** in response to the growing complexity of process of governance in a more interconnected world.

The Globalization ... Cont'd

- ✓ In sum, globalization seems to be leading to the homogenization of the world, with the United States as the model and the standard by which all other countries are to be judged
- ✓ In the case of Africa, its position in the international system has been considerably weakened by the fact that it has been losing the race for economic development in general, and human development in particular, to other regions.
- ✓ This poor performance by African countries accounts in part for the political and social instability and the rise of authoritarian regimes that have characterized much of postcolonial Africa further weakening the ability of African countries to deal effectively with globalization

The Globalization ... Cont'd

- ✓ Specific impacts of globalization on Africa can be identified.
- ✓ In the political sphere, the most important consequence is the erosion of sovereignty, especially on economic and financial matters, as a result of the imposition of models, strategies and policies of development on African countries by the IMF, the WB and the WTO.
- ✓ African governments are unable to determine and control events in their countries, and thus their accountability and responsiveness to their people, given the fact that the context, institutions and processes by which these decisions are taken are far from democratic.

The Globalization ... Cont'd

- ✓ One major positive impact of globalization on Africa is that it has made available information on how other countries are governed and the freedoms and rights their people enjoy
- ✓ Economically, globalization has reinforced the economic marginalization of African economies and their dependence on a few primary goods for which demand and prices are externally determined
- ✓ This has, in turn, brought out poverty and economic inequality
- ✓ Economic and social stagnation has also triggered a substantial brain-drain from Africa,
- ✓ As a result of the cultural domination from outside that goes with globalization, African countries are rapidly losing their cultural identity and therefore their ability to interact with other cultures on an equal and autonomous basis

Pros and Cons of Globalization

Merits of Globalization

- The expansion of democratic culture, human right and the protection of historically minority and subaltern groups
- Innovation in science, medicine, and technology and information communication has enabled the improvement of quality of life
- Agricultural technological expansion resulted in the lifting out of millions of people out of poverty
- The technological and social revolution significantly contributed to advancement of human security and safety
- Moreover, the free movement of good, service, people, ideas, skill, knowledge and technology across national borders strengthened international interdependence

Pros and Cons ... Cont'd

Demerits of globalization

- Global capital and international financial institutions like WB and IMF made free inroads into countries of the south influencing the economic and political dynamics negatively
- With technological advancement, climatic, environmental and technological risks have multiplied
- Globalization, in the sense of connectivity to the global economic and cultural life, threatening the continuity of non-Western traditions, way of life and cultural values
- Besides, the globalization has made the globalization of risks, threats and vulnerabilities like global terrorism, religious fundamentalism, proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALWs), arms and human trafficking

Pros and Cons ... Cont'd

- Moreover, globalization has stimulated the emergence of simultaneous but opposite process of Glocalization, which involves a process of integration to the world and differentiation to the local.
- This process has contributed to the rise of radical nationalism and ethnicity, which set the context for the emergence of the era of identity and identity conflicts
- In general, without denying the opportunities of globalization, countries of the global south have faced multidimensional economic, political, socio-cultural, security and military challenges induced by globalization

Regionalism and Regional Integration

- Region can be defined as a limited number of states linked together by a geographical relationship and by a degree of mutual interdependence (Nye, 1968).
- Regionalism consequently refers to intensifying political and/or economic processes of cooperation among states and other actors in particular geographic region
- Regionalism normally presents the sustained cooperation (either formal or informal) among governments, non-governmental organizations, or the private sectors in three or more countries for mutual gains

Regionalism ... Cont'd

- The occurrences of regionalism have expanded across all parts of the world.
- In contrast, the theories to explain these developments are limited and Eurocentric (Soderbaum 2003).
 - ✓ Most of the theories have been developed under the dominant European contexts.
 - ✓ Later, we experienced the successful regional grouping in North America
- Therefore, this section is an attempt to demonstrate theories that explain the possibilities of the formation of regional grouping as much as possible.

The Old Regionalism

- For many scholars, regionalism, as a voluntary and comprehensive process, is predominantly a post-World War II phenomenon
- It emerged in Western Europe in the late-1940s, subsequently spreading to the developing world

A. Regional Integration in Europe and Beyond

- ✓ A series of initiatives were launched, which resulted in the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) in 1951.
- ✓ The long-term goal was more ambitious, and in 1958 the European Economic Community (EEC) and the European Atomic Energy Community (EAEC) were integrated into the EC

The Old Regionalism

B. Regional Integration in Africa

- In sharp contrast to the European debate, which focused heavily on regional integration, the keywords here were development, state-promoted industrialization and nation-building, first and foremost through protectionism and import-substitution
- The rationale of regional cooperation and integration among LDCs was not to be found in marginal economic change within the existing structure, but rather, through the fostering of ‘structural transformation’ and the stimulation of productive capacities (industrialization), whereby investment and trading opportunities were being created

The Old Regionalism ... Cont'd

- The structuralism school thus shifted its focus away from economic integration as means for peace and political unification, to one of regional economic cooperation/integration as means for economic development and state-formation
- This type of regionalism resulted in the creation of the Latin American Free Trade Association (LAFTA) in Montevideo in 1960
 - ✓ LAFTA was a comprehensive and continental project and included all countries on the South American continent plus Mexico

The Old Regionalism ... Cont'd

- Regionalization in Latin America during 1960s and 1970s did not materialized because of conflict and military dictatorship
- The major purpose of regionalization in Africa was to resist colonial and post-colonial influence, protectionism and realizing import substitution
 - ✓ Among the various state led regional organizations in Africa were the CFA (Community of French Africa), East African Community (EAC), SACU (Southern African Community Union), (The Southern Africa Development Coordination SADC

New Regionalism

- The prospects of the fall of the Berlin Wall and the Single European Act resulted in a new dynamic process of European integration
- This was also the start of what has often been referred to as 'new regionalism' on a global scale
- The new regionalism referred to a number of new trends and developments, such as the spectacular increase in the number of regional trade agreements, an externally oriented and less protectionist type of regionalism, an anti-hegemonic type of regionalism which emerged from within the regions themselves instead of being controlled by the superpowers, the rise of a more multi-dimensional and pluralistic type of regionalism, which was not primarily centered around trading schemes or security cooperation and with a more varied institutional design, and the increasing importance of a range of business and civil society actors in regionalization

Thank You!