

Chapter Five : Major Contemporary Global Issues

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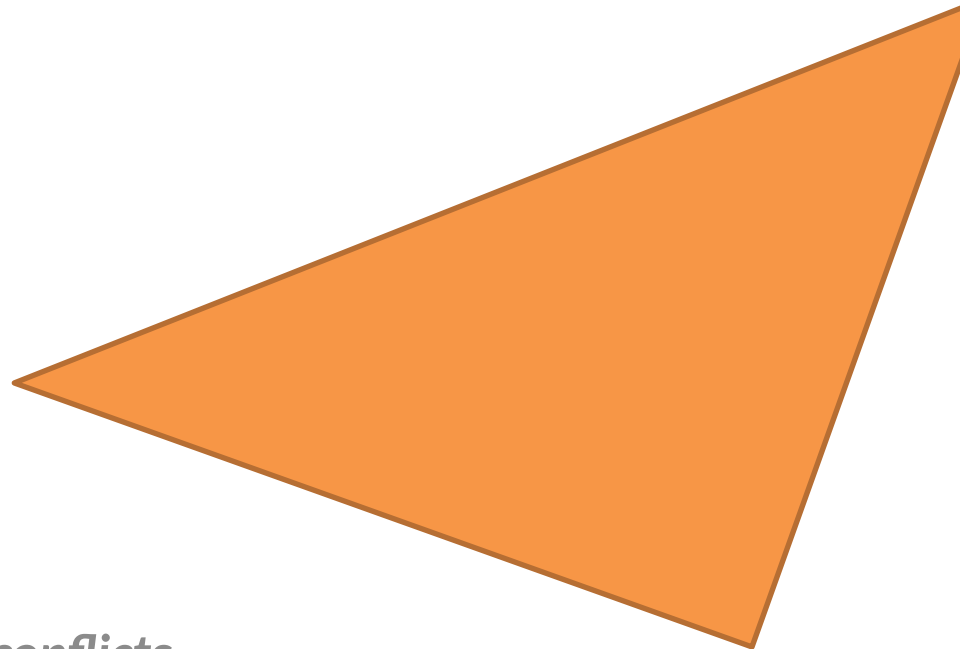
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Chapter Objectives

After successfully completing this chapter students should be able to:

- Identify the major global issues and challenges facing humanity in the 21st century
- Identify the factors/reasons for the various contemporary global problems of our world
- Discuss the role global citizens should play in offsetting such global challenges

Brainstorming Exercise

- Where in the world map do you think are such problems as terrorism, proliferation of WMD, inequality, poverty, climate change and warming and cultural conflicts so rampant? Why? And who would you blame for this?

5.1. Survey of Major Contemporary Global Issues

- The distinctiveness of the post-Cold War period rests upon the predominance of new issues.
- preoccupied with other issues such as the search for a 'New World Order', the impact of terrorism, the disparities in wealth between developed and developing countries, environmental issues and so on
- **What makes an issue a global issue?**
 - the extent or scope of an issue
 - the urgency or intensity of the issue
 - the salience or visibility of a given issue
 - the centrality or location of an issue

Based on these criteria, Major issues such as Global security, Environmental, Economic and Cultural issues selected here.

5.1.1. Global Security Issues

1. *Global Terrorism*

- 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.
 - **Four types of** terrorist organizations:
 - left wing terrorists,
 - right wing terrorists,
 - ethno-nationalists/separatist terrorists and
 - religious terrorists
 - **Factors Conducive to Terrorism**
 - **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)

Cont...

- **political cause**

*(legitimate grievances and the failure of governments to adequately address these problems often foment terrorism)

- **psychological cause**

*(humiliation is another factor conducive to the use of terrorism).

- **Types of Terrorism**

- **Domestic terrorism:**

*is associated with extremist groups

- **Nationalist terrorism**

*struggles for political autonomy and independence

- **Religious terrorism:** believe that God is on their side and that their violence is divinely inspired and approved.

Cont...

- **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.

2. *Nuclear Weapons and Their Proliferations*

- the end of the cold war has not diminished the significance attached to nuclear weapons
- the incentives for states to acquire nuclear weapons would appear to have increased in the post-cold war period

*assumption that nuclear weapons play some positive role in providing security

*lose of the guarantee of extended deterrence (offered by others earlier)

*Feeling of vulnerability due to regional dynamism

*the contrasting experiences of Iraq and North Korea suggest strong incentives

Four events have increased fears about horizontal nuclear proliferation since the end of the cold war

- UN Weapons Inspection Teams discovered alarming evidence of the extent of the Iraqi nuclear program after 1991 Gulf war
- the possibility of state sponsored or non-state terrorist groups obtaining nuclear weapons and holding the world to ransom (pay)
- a nuclear arms race began in South Asia (b/n India and Pakistan over Kashmir)
- In 2003, an International Atomic energy agency (IAEA) uncovered that Iran had an illicit nuclear weapons program

Cont...

Reasons for the Proliferation of Weapons

- Super-power Rivalry during the Cold War (NATO Vs WARSAW Pact)
- Military Burden Sharing
- Regional Balance of Power
- Political, Military, and Economic Influence/Access
- Economies of Scale: selling weapons to get resources for dev't and production of more advanced weapons
- Self-Reliance: to preserve or enhance their independence.
- Economic Factors, Ethnic Conflicts, Authoritarian Regimes

5.1.2. Global Environmental Issues

- Env'tal problems becoming one of the most pressing issues of twenty-first century
- National policy measures may not be enough without others'
- Increasing number of agreements, but ineffective

Climate change and Global warming

- Biodiversity loss
- Ever-increasing temperature
- Env'tal pollution
- Thinning of Ozone layer
- Massive desertification
- Shortage/excessiveness of rainfall etc

5.1.3. Global Socio-economic Issues

Global Inequality and Poverty

Does Inequality matter? Yes the ramifications extend beyond economic issues to problems such as terrorism, the environment, and the spread of infectious diseases.

- a widening gap between rich and poor and the proliferation of millionaires and billionaires characterizes the last 2 decades
- During the global economic recession, the wealthy lost money, but the poor lost their jobs, houses, and health insurance
- 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
 - 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

Cont...

Migration and refugee problems

Why migration, refugees and internally displaced are increasing and impacting int'l affairs today?

- Increasing number of states
- Rapid growth of world population
- the revolution in communications and transportation has made people aware
- the turmoil and uncertainty of the turbulent and unstable world
- migrants and refugees to most advanced countries are becoming the target of animosity from right-wing groups
- States are no longer able to exert control over their own destinies

5.1.4. Global Cultural Issues

Cultural Imperialism

- Cultural imperialism is the result of cultural globalization
- **This** is fueled 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
- ‘[McDonaldization](#)’; “Indigenization” **is there**
- In this view, globalization is linked to homogenization as cultural diversity are destroyed in a world in which we all watch the same television programs, buy the same commodities, eat the same food, support the same sports stars and etc.

Cultural (civilizational) clash and identity conflict

- Culture and nationalism have generally been closely intertwined,
- Leaders manipulate cultural d/ces to promote political interests
- all societies, directly or indirectly, promote their values as positive and desirable while, simultaneously, devaluing those of other societies
- S. Huntington, in 'clash-of-civilizations thesis' explains contemporary global conflicts in terms of cultural differences
- 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.
- The clash prevails b/n & among Western, Confucian, Japanese, Islamic, Hindu, Slavic-Orthodox, Latin American, and African
- there exists and will continue to exist conflict instead of cooperation among civilizations.

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