

Chapter Five

Major Contemporary Global Issues

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

Survey of Major Contemporary Global Issues

A. Global Security Issues

Global Terrorism

- Terrorism Definition: very complicated.....the saying **‘some one’s terrorist is another’s freedom fighter’**
- 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.

Factors Conducive to Terrorism

- Terrorism might have many causes:
 - i. **socio-economic cause**..... Poverty, isolation
 - ii. **political cause** lack of democracy, and widespread and systematic violations of human rights
 - iii. **psychological cause**.....humiliation

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.

B. 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.
- **Arms Control Treaty**
- In the post-cold war period there is greater concern about **nuclear proliferation** – that is, the spread of nuclear weapons themselves and the technology and knowledge required to build them.
- **nuclear weapons states**

Nuclear Weapons and Their Proliferations

- **Reasons for the Proliferation of Weapons**
- **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 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.

Nuclear Weapons and Their Proliferations

- **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.
- **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.

Nuclear Weapons and Their Proliferations

- **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.

C. Global Environmental Issues

What environmental problems is our globe currently suffering from?

Global environment problem.....

- □ The environment is gradually becoming one of the most pressing issues of 21st C.
- Global environment problems.....needs international solution
- *Some examples of global environment problems:*
 - *Climate change*
 - *Global warming*
 - *Ozone layer depletion*
 - *Draught*
 - *Overflooding*
 - *Emissions (gas and liquids).....etc*

D. Global Socio-economic Issues

i. Global Inequality and Poverty

ii. 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

E. Global Cultural Issues

i. Cultural Imperialism

ii. Cultural (civilizational) clash and identity conflicts

- **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.

- **Indigenization** is the process through which alien goods and practices are absorbed by and being adapted to local needs and circumstances.
- 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.

- 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.
- **The clash-of-civilizations theory** thus stresses that there exists and will continue to exist conflict instead of cooperation among civilizations.
- **the clash of these civilizations that would primarily define the feature of 21st century global order.**