

Globalization: Theoretical Perspectives
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Lecture 46
Globalization and Environment

Welcome back to the class. We are beginning the tenth week of these lectures and three more weeks to go, including this tenth week. So, I have kind of with the previous class, especially with the last week, I have concluded the discussions on the theoretical aspects of globalization. I especially hope you remember that we looked at many anti-globalization movements and imaginations about alternative globalizations in the previous week, starting with the discussion on the Empire by Hart and Negri.

Then we also discussed Joseph Stiglitz's work on discontents on globalisation. Then we had the two general classes or two sessions, talking about the world justice movement, anti-hegemonic globalization, or the other mobilisations from below to fight against the corporate leadership neoliberal forms of globalization. So, we have concluded a significant section of discussions on this particular course on globalization with what we have covered. For the remaining three weeks, what I have planned as per the syllabus is a more pointed discussion on specific substantive themes.

So, at the beginning of the course itself, it was clear that globalization is such a broad topic that there is hardly anything we can point out that is not affected by globalization. So, in the given social science literature, especially sociology literature, there has been an enormous amount of literature that touches upon the influence of globalisation on different substantive themes like, say, education or leisure or terrorism or corruption or, you name it, any required fields in the society.

So, in this week, as well as in the next week and maybe a couple of more sessions in the last week, I will discuss several of the essential specific themes substantive themes related to globalization. So, for example, I will discuss globalization and the environment in this class, and in the next lesson, I will discuss media and (culture) global culture. Later I will discuss

globalization and sexuality, globalization and religion, globalization and several other related themes.

So, I hope that these discussions will help you have a broad understanding of the kind of literature the kind of theoretical orientation that this discipline has developed over these years. At the same time, nobody can cover any substantive discussions on each of these themes in a given period in time, in a very, very short period that we have at our disposal.

So please consider these as an inclusive road and a general discussion on each theme. I would encourage you to read more and develop your interest in the substantive articles because all of them are pretty fascinating. So, if you want to build your good and expertise in specific areas, you need to read more. In this session, we are discussing globalization and the environment. I depend upon the essay written by the same name by Steve Yarligh from the book globalization reader, one of our leading textbooks edited by George Ritzer.

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- The environment always has been global
- Initial writing in the late 1980s and 1990s, tended to overlook the environment as an area of globalization
- By the middle 1990s it was apparent that, outside of sociology texts, the environmental movement had made solid progress in appropriating the imagery and language of the globe for itself.
- During the 1990s – in the wake of the 'Earth Summit' of 1992 in Rio de Janeiro – there emerged the language of 'global environmental problems'.



So, he begins his discussion by observing that the environment has always been global. It is an interesting argument that the domain is not confined to any particular society, nation, or even state in the (colonial) even in the modern or pre-modern era. When discussing the atmosphere and the forests, rivers, or oceans, they hardly obey any natural, nation, or state boundaries. Of course, through negotiations with these geographical or physical barriers, nation-state boundaries have come into existence.

But otherwise, the environment is global by nature. So that itself put forward fascinating discussion, fascinating points of view about the relationship between globalisation and

environment as something that always has been global from the very beginning. So, we will not elaborate on when environmental consciousness began to develop.

Because that becomes too much a difficult task because many of you can say that many of your ancient scriptures ancient writings have glimpses of this environmental consciousness, people being conscious about the environment, but we are not going into that kind of analysis because that is not what is our main agenda. But Yarligh argues that the initial writings in the late 1980s and 1990s tended to overlook the environment as an area of globalization.

Mainly this is within sociology because sociology did not or it was, sociology took a lot more time to recognise the environment as a highly specialised or substantive theme for exploration in comparison with a sociological preoccupation with marriage or family, your religion or caste or conflict or education or other things because these are more kind of considered to be examples of social interaction where people interact with each other, but environment was seen as a non-human, another non-human participant, which was not brought under the kind of sociological specialisation.


But I also must say that now, environmental sociology is a highly developed discipline with several scholars and many journals. So, the interaction between human beings and the environment has been explored thoroughly, and it is a fascinating area of study. So, by the middle of middle 1990s, it was apparent that outside of sociology texts, the environmental movements had made solid progress in appropriating the imaginary and language of the global for itself because, by the 1990s, we have seen quite a lot of activities, environmental movements across the globe.

In India itself, we had the Chipko movement, and then we had the campaign against constructing a dam in Silent Valley in Kerala during the 80s. So, sociologists were for a rude shock to realise that environment has become a kind of a critical point of discussion among people, and people have started mobilising themselves, raising an exciting set of demands and slogans, which we are not kind of familiar with and that it requires a sociological analysis.

So, in general, the environment was not an area that sociologists were fond of, but later, they were forced to make sense of that. So, during the 90s, in the wake of this Earth Summit of 1992, the language of global environmental problems emerged in Rio de Janeiro.

So, maybe, if you were to look at one specific incident or one specific instance that as a given to a kind of impetus to this whole globalisation movement on the environment, we can, we can confidently say that it was this Earth Summit in 1992, held in Rio de Janeiro in Brazil, where this whole global environmental problem was a forefront it because ecological issues are no longer confined to any particular nation-state instead it has to be seen as a kind of a global one.

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- The environmental movement and environmental policy prescriptions which had hitherto typically focused on national or regional needs were now re-thought as specifically global.
 - Discussions on ozone depletion and global climate change during the 90s and the global nature of these problems
 - global liberalization of trade, and global institutions such as the WTO, IMF and meetings of the G7 and G8, were seen as inimical to environmental protection.



So, the environmental movements and policy prescriptions, which had hitherto typically focused on national or regional needs, were now considered global. This is the most critical point that we need to come to account, come to take into account.

For example, environmental issues, pollution, industrial pollution has been an issue for the past several decades, the kind of affluence. The type of chemical pollutants coming out of the big factories, how the municipalities of the towns are handling solid waste disposal, and the actual cost of the rivers' pollution is all nothing new.

They are not something invented during the 1990s or later. They were all issues that were all seen as the headaches of nation-states. They were all seen as national problems, and rulers of each country are supposed to find a solution to that, and that is why have you had, you have had examples of this national-level policy formulation is about waste disposal or urban planning or drainage system or sewage system, all these things have a much, much longer history.

But what we are seeing is an exciting scenario where there is an important argument which is made out that many of these environmental issues are no longer national problems, but they have become global problems. They have become global problems, and they require attention from everybody globally and require more collaborative effort at the international level to meet those challenges. So, this whole idea of environmental issues as national or regional, regional needs was very significantly rethought during this particular time and one of them, two of the most critical issues that the other highlights which provides so much of impetus for this discussion, is one is this ozone layer depletion. The second one is this global climate change.

So, I do not think we need to discuss these two issues more. One is this ozone depletion because the ozone is considered a very inert gas, which does not react with each other; it was this not poisonous. It is an inert one. It does not get into reaction with others. So, we have been, we know ozone, for a long time.

Only much later that we realise that a host of chemicals that we use in our industrial areas could fly up and then destroy the ozone layer. That destruction has already caused so much depletion of the ozone layer in that atmosphere. As a result, very harmful rays can directly enter Earth's atmosphere with many disastrous effects.


So, this whole idea about ozone depletion came as a rude shock for scientists and activists and immediately they identified that some of the chemicals like chlorofluorocarbons, CFC, which is most often used as a refrigerant, which was considered to be a safe chemical, is one of the significant sources of this ozone depletion. So, there were very frantic efforts to use alternatives for a CFC, but we know that it is not something you can stop all of a sudden because tons of such kinds of chemicals are already released into the atmosphere.

And also, there are illegal trades of these chemicals, which continue to get released into the atmosphere. A second one is global climate change. Still, we understand it as this greenhouse effect, with the more and more amount of carbon dioxide that is released into the air through all kinds of burnings of various types of fuels and that increases the amount of carbon dioxide within the atmosphere and that increases the temperature and that leads to quite a lot of unpredictable changes, extreme weather conditions, rising of sea level as a result of the melting of snow in the polar region.

So, these significant global events that can threaten the very existence of human life, or of life, in general on the planet, attracted much attention during the 1990s. At the same time, the kind of increase that people observed in terms of the trade and the variety of (interest) increased industries activities. These were considered the primary source, the main reasons behind this significant threat to environmental standards.

So, global liberalisation of trade and international institutions such as WTO, IMF and meetings of G7 and G8 was seen as damaging to environmental protection. In the previous classes, we discussed how ecological issues or ecological problems had been one of the most important rallying points for activists and then the grassroots level, people, organisations across the globe. They started targeting these organisations and began having rallies, assemblies, and conjugations in front of G7 and G8 meets.

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- The ozone issue as a global concern with the realization that there is very little correlation between pollution and its effects. CFC doesn't know national boundaries.
 - Global warming, greenhouse effect and the emission of carbon dioxide. Global reasons, global repercussions
 - How far the epithet 'global' is useful in understanding environmental issues?
 - Issues of contamination of the air with noxious chemicals including acid emissions, the fouling of rivers and lakes, pollution of the marine environment, loss of natural species, deforestation and the depletion of fish stocks etc



So, one of the critical aspects about this ozone or other things is that the ozone issue is a global concern with the realisation that there is very little correlation between the pollution and its effects. So, the ozone problem came as a significant rude shock to most of the policy people, it came as a rude shock to most scientists and ordinary people because it, in this case, it is become tough to establish a direct correlation between a particular chemical, a pollutant and its effects.

Because for decades, we never knew that CFCs could create so much ozone depletion, we never realised that and knew that CFC does not know national boundaries. So, for example, Australia was one of the countries that had severe issues with this ozone depletion, but it is

not because Australia produces so many CFCs. So, it does not matter who pays, which country grows more and more CFCs and who will; there is no connection between who produces and who gets the impact or who gets to suffer as a result of that.

And this is something you can do when we discuss Ulrich Beck; I hope we discussed these points because, for example, a nuclear explosion, a leak in a nuclear reactor, the classic case of being Chernobyl atomic reaction and nuclear pollution it reached too far and wide. So, we realised that the problems are not manageable at the local level; even we will not be able to make any correlation between any cause and connection between a particular pollutant and its impact somewhere.

So, global warming, greenhouse effects and carbon dioxide emission; global reasons, global repercussions. So, the reasons why again, if you take the case of global warming the increased emission of carbon dioxide; who is responsible for that? And the increasing amount of carbon dioxide results in so many different kinds of consequences, the rising sea level.

So, rising sea level itself, how different countries can cope with that, it is very, very difficult for example, the Netherlands, a country which has, so, saved centuries of hundreds of years of experience to deal with rising sea level, because the Netherlands is always is already under below the sea level, they have all the technological know-how and then experienced to deal with it.

But other countries like Bangladesh, Mali, or the Maldives cannot deal with the whole issue of rising sea levels. So, it emerged that these issues are global in scale, and they also require international coordination, basically to deal with them. At the same time, there is also a fascinating discussion about how far this epithet global helps understand environmental issues.

Does it also mean that it also indicates that everything has to be seen at the global level, or does everything work worldwide? Does everything work internationally? Does everything have to be seen at the international level? So, what about the worldwide sub-levels of scales, the nation, the regional, the local, so do they become insignificant?

No, a host of issues like issues contamination of the air with toxic chemicals, including acid emissions, the fouling of rivers and lakes, pollution of the marine environment, loss of natural species, deforestation and the depletion of fish stocks, all these things also have a particular regional and locus implication. They have local sources, they many times happen in pollution

of rivers and lakes, the breakdown of some significant rivers in India. That is a problem specifically in India and has its repercussions for Indians.

So, we do not, we cannot blame anybody else for that or, similarly, the pollution of lakes across our major metropolitan cities. So, they have, they are kind of local in its, in their manifestation and their causes are need to be identified in the regional and the local level, and their implications are also are kind of has to be like we felt in the similar type of regions.

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- Even though the problem is everyone's, is everybody equally culpable?
- Responsibility and accountability of wealthy and industrialised countries for pollution in the past.
- Role of the US and disagreement over Kyoto protocol.
- Just because an issue is global, that does not mean that it is viewed as urgent or significant everywhere. Thus it does not take much scrutiny before these global issues come to appear less universal than much environmental and scientific discourse would imply.
- The explicit goals of environmental policies maybe swamped by the impacts of trade and industrial policies, especially in a globalized market. Hazardous industries are now in the global South.



So even though the problem is everyone's, is everybody equally culpable? We are moving to another set of discussions. So one is that it is, of course, global, but then we realise that this epithet of global problems is insufficient. We also need sub-global (scaler) scaling yardsticks.

We need to look at the local; we need to look at the regional and the whole question, even if it is a problem for everyone like ozone depletion, greenhouse effect, or nuclear thing. Now, how do we fix accountability? How do we fix responsibility for this kind of mess that comes into the picture? Is every country equally responsible for that?

And this is a fascinating debate, especially a discussion, debates and then controversies, a lot of legal complications, especially in WTO negotiations, different countries claiming different things. It is a very messy scenario, but this whole question is essential. Who must pay the price for that?

Now, most developed countries in Europe and America may not be emitting so many poisonous gases or pollutants into the air; they must have moved into cleaner forms of

energy, windmill or nuclear or other things. Still, they had a history, they have had a history of being some of the essential polluters of the world, where rest of the world was, were reeling under so much underdevelopment and poverty and similarly, now, everybody turns against China because China is seen as a significant pollutant.

But China's argument is this; we want industrial growth. We do not give so much of our priority is industrial and economic growth and not environmental issues because they would; China would accuse the west of being hypocritical because they have had this face of a high amount of pollution. Still, they have moved beyond that, and now they are preaching to others.

So, this whole question of responsibility and accountability of wealthy and industrialised countries for pollution in the past and how do we account for that? And how do we account for their claim or their push? They are in a systematic campaign to use clean energy sources. Their systematic campaign to stop operating fossil fuels like diesel or coal, for example, coal is one of the most important pollutants.

Now, how do an underdeveloped country or a developing country like India has to deal with that? Can we say that we will no longer use coal? Because of this environmental concern, coal, energy from coal or power from the hydroelectric projects will be imperative for meeting our basic needs where a substantial portion of the population is reeling under poverty.

So, these kinds of concerns and pressures, countervailing pressures, are very, very present in this whole argument and role of the US and the disagreement over the Kyoto protocol. So, this significant controversy about how the US was reluctant to become a party to that and then finally, they were forced to join, but still, there are quite a lot of complications with that.

Now, just because an issue is global, that does not mean that it is viewed as urgent or significant everywhere. Thus, it does not take much scrutiny before these global issues appear less universal than much environmental and scientific discourse would imply. So, even if something is seen as globally significant, how far has the rest of the world come to agree with that?

And you can look into a number of other fields, for example, there are quite a lot of discussions and debates about various forms of fishing, what kind of nets are being used? So, when a particular country uses a specific type of fishing net, what kind of collateral damage

does it do to other species? For example, some very endangered species get trapped, while some particular fishing nets are used. Those fishing nets are banned in some of the developed countries.

But then, can these countries also ban the fish products that are procured from by other countries using similar kinds of fishing nets? How do you make somebody accountable for that? So, these are all some of the fascinating questions. You can get hundreds of examples of very real-time conventions and real-time negotiations, especially in WTO cases and a host of other legal issues about how to, how far you will be able to do this or the case of the example of the use of pesticides, to what extent somebody can use pesticides and others.

So, these explicit goals of environmental policies may be swamped by the impacts of trade and industrial policies, especially in a globalised market. Hazardous industries are now in the global south. So, again this whole question of increasing trade, increasing competition for profit maximisation, the tendency of outsourcing work, and many of these hazardous industries are now moving to the global south and especially to China and a host of other less developed countries.

Because you cannot have this many hazardous and poisonous industries in the north, they will not allow that. So, you see a substantive shift of hazardous industries being relocated into regions of the global south. One of the classic examples is this ship breaking yards in India and Bangladesh, in Alang or other places.

India and Bangladesh are the two most important locations of breaking the ships. None of the Western countries will allow that because, if a large vessel has to be broken down, it becomes a dangerous job, it creates quite a lot of tremendous amounts of waste material, including asbestos and others and (chem) and toxic chemicals and they seem and to deal with it properly, to process it properly, without causing any damage to the environment is a hugely expensive affair with the Western world does not have the money or patience to do with that.

It is such a costly affair for the workers' protection. That is why these vast vessels are brought to India and Bangladesh, and then here, people with the least amount of protection, most minor concern for the environment engaging in these things. So, you see, even while considered a global problem, these environmental issues have a particular dimension concerning our questions of relative development, questions of developed nations and developing nations, and others.

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GLOBAL FREE TRADE AND THE CONCEPTUALIZATION OF ENVIRONMENTAL INTERESTS



- Establishment of GATT, the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade, in 1947 and its later transition into WTO in 1995.
- Environmentalists saw that many environmental regulations would be subject to review and legally binding judgment by an organization that was constitutionally committed to free trade and not to environmental protection per se.
- Preoccupation of WTO with free trade and higher economic growth and environmental regulations as less important



So, another meaningful connection is to look at how this kind of global institutions, especially global trade institutions, the global free trade and the reconceptualisation of environmental issues, to what extent is international business has been sensitive to these environmental concerns because global work is one of the most important sites of pollution, whether it is through ships or the aeroplane or production, through distribution.

So, how they have been channelised into this whole discourse on environmental protection? So, first is the GATT, General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade in 1947. Later, it was transitioned into World Trade Organization in 1995. This was seen as an international body to take care of the whole questions of tariffs and then another kind of taxes so that there is some level playing field. No country's internal economies are significantly challenged with the import from others.

At the same time, we ensure sufficient movement of goods and services across the globe. Now, so the environment is so that many environmental regulations would be subject to review and legally binding judgments by an organisation that was constitutionally committed to free trade and not ecological protection per se.

So, quite a lot of cases appeared in front of WTO, since the 1990s with really challenged many of these agreements based on environmental concern and many of these examples that I mentioned about fishing, for example, the kind of consequences of deforestation in different types of countries or the use of certain pesticides, use of certain chemicals and if you take

into the other realm about the environment of child labourers, the questions of wage labourers, the kind of wage that is paid to these people.

All these issues are not the core issues for a trade organisation. So many times, the rulings given by WTO are often less sensitive to the environmental concern because WTO, by definition, is an organisation established to facilitate free trade. So, environmentalists are waging a fight against that.

Now preoccupation of WTO with free trade and higher economic growth and environmental regulation is less critical because WTO is not an organisation established to take care of the environmental issues. By definition, the prime principle of its establishment is to facilitate trade. So, you cannot expect that to foreground ecological issues at the cost of its core interest.

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- Though not an environmental organization, the WTO has far-reaching implications for the environment worldwide. Though not 'anti-environmental' in the way its more extreme critics paint it, the WTO and associated organizations strongly influence the global environment because the WTO's decisions are legally binding and because many of those decisions impact the environment while not being based primarily on environmental considerations.



So, they are not an environmental organisation. The WTO has far-reaching implications for the environment worldwide. Though not anti-environmental in the way it is more extreme critic paints it, WTO and associated organisations strongly influenced the global climate because WTO decisions are legally binding. Many of these decisions impact the environment while being passed primarily on environmental conservation. So, this is a critical section where we realise the role of such institutional setups in deciding ecological policies, laws, and regulations.

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- There is also argument that Commercial globalization led to environmental improvement, not deterioration. In specific ways, commercial development and rising environmental standards go hand-in-hand.
- Technological development, industrial policy and environmental improvement can pull in the same direction.
- The key is to understand what globalization is: it is not just the free market and economic liberalism. Rather, it is a growth in the number and complexity of links between people and the introduction of novel limitations on the nation state.



So, there is also another argument while the typical environmentalist view is that this increasing trade is unfavourable, inimical to environmental protection or increasing

capitalistic advancement or bringing more countries together. It is damaging to ecological protection. There is a counter-argument which says that there is also the argument that commercial globalisation led to environmental improvement and not deterioration in specific ways, commercial developments and rising environment standards go hand in hand, and this is a fascinating argument that this argument is something like, it goes like this.

Earlier, there were hardly any regulations, nation-states were not bothered, and every country was free to implement its own rules and regulations about pollution and chemicals and other stuff; still, now more and more standardised laws are being brought into the picture is good for the environment.

So, an increasing global capitalistic network is necessarily not against the interest of the environment. That means more and more global conventions and regulations about the domain are now forced upon different countries; As a result, there will be a general improvement of safety standards and environmental protection schemes across the globe, which would not have been possible if globalisation did not occur.

And that is an important argument, which we will have to look at more carefully. Now, because of technological development, industrial policy and environmental improvement can pull in the same direction, you do not need to see them as antithetical that because industrial production goes it need not necessarily lead to the downfall of or downgrading of environment and if you use adequate technology, clean energy both these things can go together.

We will have to see a fascinating argument, but what are the other kinds of things associated with that at what cost? How several different things; the key is to understand what globalization is? It is not just the free market and economic liberalism; instead, it is a growth in the number of and complexity of links between people and the introduction of novel limitations on the nation-state.

So, this is a fundamental point; I hope we have been discussing this point ever since the beginning of this course. So, it is not simply free market or other thing but what is happening is the introduction of novel limitations on the nation-state, and nation-states are increasingly forced to adhere to certain international conventions and international treaties and thereby accept more conditionality on themselves for the protection and well-being of the environment.

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- Environmental globalization reveals something much more complex than a 'race to the bottom'; it shows also the rise of new opportunities and resources for myriad non-state actors.



So environmental globalisation reveals something much more complex than a race to the bottom; it also shows the rise of new opportunities and resources for myriad non-state actors. The author of this paper is against a very gloomy picture, that environment and globalisation will not go hand in hand. It is a race to the bottom; we are losing everything we have entirely, poisoning the earth.

So, he is far more optimistic and says that there is a rise of new opportunities and resources for myriad non-state actors, and technology and science will come in handy for restoring the environment or to make it a better place, a more liveable place. So, this is a kind of broad summary of this essay, and please read it. It is one of the essays of Ritzer's Book of globalisation reader. So, we will stop here now, and meet for the next class. Thank you.