# Chapter Five
# Major Contemporary Global Issues

Objectives

➢ 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**

1. **Global Security Issues**

These include Global Terrorism and nuclear proliferation

**Global Terrorism**

The first thing about terrorism is its definition. '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.**

Terrorism is defined 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 communication and transport physical technologies helped the terrorists develop capacity **to** attack their targets.

Terrorism continues to pose a major challenge for global security.
There are four different types of terrorist organizations
➢ **left wing terrorists,**
➢ **Right wing terrorists,**
➢ **ethno-nationalists/separatist terrorists and**
➢ **religious terrorists**

**Factors Conducive to Terrorism**

**1. socio-economic cause**

**Eg.** Economic and political isolation, feelings of hopelessness, violations of human rights, and the lack of democracy provides a fertile breeding ground for terrorism);

2. **political cause**

eg. Legitimate grievances and the failure of governments to adequately address problems, lack of democracy, and widespread and systematic violations of human rignts often foment terrorism.

3. **psychological cause**

Eg. 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
- **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

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.
the end of the cold war has not diminished the significance attached to nuclear weapons
i.e., states desire to acquire nuclear weapons have increased.
**Reasons for the spread of nuclear weapons**

➢ For nuclear states, nuclear weapons play some positive role in providing security.
➢ non-nuclear states who have lost the guarantee of **extended deterrence** or security protection by nuclear states, demanded to have their own nuclear arsenals.
 eg. Japan's desire to have nuclear weapons should the US stops its nuclear protection.

➢ the combination of the loss of extended deterrence with regional dynamics
  Eg. Pakistan felt vulnerable to attacks from India because the United States has scaled back its support for.
India, lost the backing of the Soviet Union, in turn feels vulnerable to both **Pakistan** and **China.** In 1998 both India and Pakistan became nuclear states.

➢ the contrasting experiences of Iraq and North Korea suggest strong incentives to proliferate fast and establish deterrence.

**Global Environmental Issues**

problems of environmental degradation are transboundary in nature and therefore need an international solution.

Global Environmental Issues include 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.

Degree of vulnerability varies with developing countries and the poor which have contributed the least to global warming but are suffering the most

## Global Inequality and Poverty

Economic inequality refers between the **economic gap** between the riches and the poors. economic disparities remained a serious problem in developing countries,

Various factors contributed for economic inequality in developing countries.

For instance, **incompetent leadership**, **wrong economic policies**, **mal administration**, **corruption**, **poor state-society relations** , **law work ethics, conflcit, war or civil war** etc.

The  forces of globalization created conditions that helped widen the gap between rich and poor in industrialized societies.

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 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 .**

Inequality among as well as within nations has direct and indirect implications for globalization. Countries  may adopt protectionist policies and disengage, from the global economy. It also cause terrorism, the environment, and the spread of infectious diseases.

**Migration and refugee problems**

International migration and refugee have become more prominent on the international agenda because of their increasing scale and growing impact on international affairs.

Several factors account for global migration and refugee problems
➢ the number of states increased since the end of the First World War
➢ a rapid increase in the world's population which led for over exploitation of regional resources, leading on occasions to catastrophic famine and population movement.
➢ the revolution in communications and transportation has made people aware of conditions and opportunities in other parts of the world.
➢ the turmoil and uncertainty and unstable world place motivating people to search abroad for a better life.

Migration and refugee are now seen as central political issues by most governments in the world.
migrants and refugees to most advanced countries are becoming the target of animosity from **right-wing** groups who regard migrants and refugees as causing high level of unemployment and decline in general living standard.
e.g. anti migrants and refugees movement in Europe.

**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 **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.

Globalization is linked to homogenization as cultural diversity are declining in a world.

Globalization has in some ways fashioned more complex patterns of social and cultural diversity in both developing and developed states.
In developing states western consumer goods and images have been absorbed into more traditional cultural practices through a process of indigenization.

**Cultural (civilizational) clash and identity conflicts**

➢ Culture and nationalism have generally been closely intertwined.
➢ Leaders usually draw upon cultural similarities to diminish tensions and, conversely, upon cultural differences and hatreds to promote conflict.
➢ all societies, directly or indirectly, promote their values as positive and desirable while, simultaneously, devaluing those of other societies
➢ Ethnocentrism (thinking and valuing only your own) as a behavior is likely to develop (being developing).
➢ 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.
➢ In line with this logic, the famous political scientist S.P. Huntington has also developed what he calls '**clash-of-civilizations'** 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 21$^{st}$ century global order.
➢ Huntington argues that there are eight major civilizations in the world
 **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.