GLOBALIZATION'S BEGINNINGS ARE located in the theories of modernization and dependency from the 1950s and 1960s. The notion of globalization implies the internationalization of the world's communities in economic, cultural, environmental, and financial ways. Globalization can be understood as a series of processes. One of these processes is the way in which social, economic, political, and economic activities occur across national boundaries. The decisions that affect people in one part of the planet, will affect societies in other areas of the globe. Globalization is also the process of consolidation of all the networks between societies linked by global systems such as the global economy, digital technology, and culture. Global interactions are enhanced by global telecommunications systems, especially through satellite technology. Finally, globalization can be understood as a magnification of the impact of events. For example, if a hurricane hits the United States or a tsunami hits Asia, the whole world becomes aware of this crisis and its importance is amplified.

There are also many theories of globalization. One of these is the notion of hyper-globalization. Proponents of this theory believe that globalization is a political development that has emerged due to the fact that describing the world in terms of nation-states is no longer appropriate.

As all nations are subject to the vagaries of the global market, the idea of boundaries becomes defunct. Globalization has de-nationalized economies, and has made all nations participants in a global world. Hyper-globalizers believe the shift to globalization represents a fundamental divide from previous social, political, and social arrangements.

Others argue that globalization is not a new development, and that nation states still have an important role to play in international politics. They argue that nations have always been economically interdependent, and that global world trade therefore simply serves to intensify individual connections. Proponents of this perspective of globalization ultimately argue the idea of globalization as a Western construction designed to embed Western supremacy and economic dominance. Others take a transformative position and view globalization as a powerful influence, transforming modern society economically and politically. A new world order is emerging, in which
state sovereignty has to adapt to new world conditions and where global institutions such as the United Nations, European Union, or the World Trade Organisation need to be incorporated into national decision-making processes.

At a cultural level, globalization has led to what some term the homogenization of culture, that is, a diminishing of cultural diversity due to global trends being set and transmitted through technology, art, fashion, and film making. The global influence of stations such as CNN have led to a merging of many different cultures into one that is predominantly influenced and shaped by the Western world. Economically, the production of goods has become more globalized. For example, car parts are manufactured in different countries, and items such as cars and fridges are becoming transnational goods, which all societies can access with money.

While this has advantages, it also can create conditions of global uncertainty and impacts across the world if one market or another fails or stumbles. For example, if there is a housing and interest rate crisis in the United States, this will have impacts on economies in other countries such as Britain, Australia, and New Zealand. Some argue that the world is also moving towards a global political order, based on liberal democracy and with a mutual commitment to market capitalism and individual rights. Global institutions such as the United Nations already rule on many international issues, such as human rights and the environment.

Globalization and the Environment

The impact of globalization has put added pressure on the environment. For example, World Bank figures show that deforestation for cropping accounts for up to 20 percent of the world's global carbon emissions. Increasing trade has also encouraged fishing, destruction of forestland, and the spread of pollution to previously unrecorded levels. There are serious equity issues embedded in the treatment of the impact of these environmental issues, and the distribution of the impact.

Detractors of globalization further argue that the free trade system that is a characteristic of globalization has particular impact on the environment, because it creates a demand for and a monopoly around genetically modified products. Moreover,
the trend of globalization to patent and appropriate intellectual property rights within market mechanisms causes loss of species diversity, and imposes a monoculture on the world and its environment.

Climate change is an issue that affects all societies on the planet. Global warming is a result of global agricultural and industrial processes, all of which serve to meet the needs of the global marketplace. The consequences are also global, with all regions of the world predicted to experience some form of change as a result of global warming. One of the characteristics of projected climate impacts is that the effects will not be evenly distributed. For example, many developing countries such as Bangladesh that do not proportionally contribute largely to the global emissions will sustain critical problems as a result of flooding from sea level rise. Global warming has the potential to cause economic and social disruption around the globe, but the main burden of negative impacts will fall on poor developing tropical countries, while more affluent and developed countries in temperate zones will experience fewer or less severe negative impacts. Some reformers advocate a global climate agenda that ensures that global equity issues are addressed.

Additional Environmental Problems

Other examples of global environmental problems include acid rain, the dumping of wastes in international waters, and the depletion of climatic ozone. The loss of species, biodiversity, and resources will continue to have global implications. Global institutions are working to resolve environmental problems. Many of these institutions have emerged within the umbrella of the United Nations (UN) and include agencies such as the International Union for the Conservation of Nature, the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation, and the UN Environment Program.

Some examples of joint commitments made in the interests of the global community include the Kyoto Protocol for Climate Change, the Montreal Convention (which dealt with ozone issues), The UN Law of the Sea (1972), and the Basel Convention (1989) that binds countries to agreements relating to the transport and disposal of hazardous wastes.
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SEE ALSO:

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