

## Environmental Concerns in Global Politics and the Emergence of Global Environmental Governance

### 1. Expansion of the Meaning of World Politics

- Earlier understanding of world politics centred on **wars, treaties, state power, and intergovernmental relations**.
- Later expansion incorporated **poverty, epidemics, and governance responsibilities**.
- Environmental degradation now compels inclusion within world politics because:
  - Many problems **transcend national boundaries**.
  - **No single government** can solve them independently.
  - Questions of **causation, responsibility, and resource distribution** are inherently political.

### 2. Global Environmental Crisis: Nature, Scale, and Consequences

- Declining cultivable land fertility, overgrazed grasslands, depleted fisheries, polluted water bodies.
- Massive deprivation:
  - **663 million without safe water**.
  - **2.4 billion without sanitation**, causing millions of child deaths annually.
- Deforestation leading to **climate instability, biodiversity loss, and displacement**.
- **Ozone layer depletion** threatening ecosystems and human health.
- Rising **coastal pollution** due to land-based human activity.  
→ Demonstrates that environmental issues are **systemic, global, and political**.

### 3. Rise of Environmentalism in International Politics

- Awareness intensified from the **1960s onward** with concern over consequences of economic growth.
- **Limits to Growth (1972)** highlighted resource depletion linked to population growth.
- International institutional response:
  - Creation of **UNEP** and global environmental conferences.
- Culmination at **Rio Earth Summit (1992)**:
  - Participation of **170 states, NGOs, and multinational corporations**.

- Influenced by **Brundtland Report (1987)** warning of unsustainable growth.  
→ Marked the **consolidation of the environment as a central issue in global politics**.

### 4. North–South Divide in Environmental Politics

- **Global North** priorities: Ozone depletion, global warming, ecological conservation.
- **Global South** priorities: Relationship between **development and environmental management**.
- Rio outcomes: Climate change, biodiversity, forestry conventions. **Agenda 21** promoting sustainable development.
- Continuing disagreement on **how to balance growth with ecology**.

## Global Commons, Differentiated Responsibilities, and India's Environmental Position

### 1. Concept of Global Commons

- Resources **outside sovereign jurisdiction** requiring collective governance: Atmosphere, Antarctica, ocean floor, outer space.
- Governance challenges: Difficulty achieving **scientific consensus and political agreement**.
- Key agreements: **Antarctic Treaty (1959), Montreal Protocol (1987), Antarctic Environmental Protocol (1991)**.
- North–South inequality shapes **access, technology, and benefits** from commons exploitation.

### 2. Principle of Common but Differentiated Responsibilities (CBDR)

- Core conflict: North seeks **equal responsibility for conservation**. South argues **historical responsibility of industrialised countries**.
- Rio Declaration recognition: States share responsibility, but **developed countries bear greater burden** due to:
  - Historical emissions.
  - Greater technological and financial capacity.

- Institutionalisation in: **UNFCCC., Kyoto Protocol (1997)** imposing emission targets mainly on industrialised states.

- Demand for: **Financial resources and clean technology transfer** from developed countries.



### Environmental Movements, Resource Geopolitics, Water Conflicts, and Indigenous Rights

#### 1. Environmental Movements as Political Forces

- Often driven by **civil society** rather than **governments**.
- Among the **most vibrant global social movements** generating new political visions.
- Major strands:
  - **Forest movements** in the Global South resisting deforestation.
  - **Anti-mining struggles** against displacement, pollution, and MNC activity.
  - **Anti-dam and pro-river movements** (e.g., non-violent struggles in India).  
→ Demonstrate **grassroots environmental politics**.

#### 3. Common Property Resources and Community Traditions

- Defined by **shared rights and duties within communities**.
- Decline caused by: Privatisation, agricultural intensification, population growth, ecosystem degradation.
- Example: **Sacred groves in India** as community-based conservation rooted in spiritual reverence.  
→ Illustrates **local ecological governance traditions**.

#### 4. India's Stand in Global Environmental Negotiations

- Ratified **Kyoto Protocol (2002)**; exempt due to **low historical emissions**.
- Emphasises: **Per capita emissions inequality**.
  - **Historical responsibility of developed nations**.
  - Priority of **economic and social development**.
- Domestic initiatives: Clean fuel policy, **Energy Conservation Act (2001)**, **Electricity Act (2003)**, renewable energy expansion, **Paris Agreement ratification (2016)**.

#### 2. Resource Geopolitics

- Concerned with **who gets what, when, where, and how**.
- Historically linked to:
  - **European expansion, trade, war, and sea power**.
  - Strategic importance of **oil and minerals**.
- Oil as central geopolitical resource:
  - Gulf region holds **majority of global reserves**.
  - Generates **conflict, intervention, and strategic rivalry**.
- Water emerging as **future conflict driver**:
  - Disputes over **shared rivers, dams, pollution, and diversion**.
  - Examples of **military tensions over river systems**.

#### 3. Indigenous Peoples in World Politics

- Defined as descendants of **original inhabitants prior to external domination**.
- Share:
  - Cultural continuity.
  - Close relationship with **land and ecological systems**.

- Major concerns:
  - **Loss of land and displacement**, especially due to development projects.
  - Marginalisation despite **constitutional or political recognition**.
- Political mobilisation since **1970s international networking** and UN engagement.  
→ Integrates **environment, rights, and global justice**.

