

## Study Questions

### *The Global Economy: Connecting the Roots of a Holistic System*

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## Chapter 6: The Impact of Economic Globalization

### Section 6.1 Evaluating the Impact of Economic Globalization

Terms to Consider:

economic globalization

Questions to Consider:

#### 1. Introduction

a. Explain the introductory quote: "Socialism collapsed because it did not allow the market to tell the economic truth. Capitalism may collapse because it does not allow the market to tell the ecological truth."

### Section 6.2 The Environment

Terms to Consider:

commodity

sink

external nature

desertification

deforestation

slash-and-burn agriculture

tropics

carbon dioxide

greenhouse effect

carbon sequestering

livestock

fresh water

irrigation

drip irrigation

aquifers

Ogallala Aquifer

ethanol production

climate change

global warming

greenhouse gases

methane

chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs)

sea levels

polar ice caps

ozone shield

Greenland ice sheet

soil depletion

erosion

commercial agriculture

Vincente Guerrero  
 carrying capacity  
 overshoot  
 ecological footprint  
 delay in feedback  
 collapse  
 Green Revolution  
 biodiversity  
 species extinction  
 sixth extinction  
 habitat loss  
 Earth Day in 1970  
 Rio Environmental Conference in 1992  
 Kyoto Treaty in 2001  
 ecologists  
 Gross Domestic Product (GDP)  
 Genuine Progress Indicator (GPI)  
 Redefining Progress

Questions to Consider:

#### 1. Introduction

- a. Explain the quote: "The Western world is ambivalent about our relationship with the earth; it is treated in contradictory ways."
- b. What are the earth's free ecosystem services?
- c. In what 3 ways is the earth regarded?
- d. What is your reaction to the story "The Earth is an Island?"
- e. Do you think economic globalization is directly or indirectly the cause of our environmental problems?

#### 2. Desertification

- a. What are the causes of desertification
- b. What are the consequences of desertification?
- c. Describe conditions in China.
- d. Describe conditions in North Africa.
- e. Describe conditions in Mexico.
- f. Is desertification happening in your region or country? If so, describe what is happening.

#### 3. Deforestation

- a. What are the causes of deforestation?
- b. Why is deforestation such an environmental problem?
- c. What is particularly troublesome about the deforestation being done today?
- d. Why have the tropics suffered most from deforestation?
- e. Why do subsistence farmers abandon agricultural sites and move to another location to start the process once again?
- f. Describe the rain cycle in tropical areas.
- g. Explain why once the forest is cleared, the soils become a source of carbon emissions instead of carbon sequestering.
- h. What is the single biggest direct cause of tropical deforestation? What are other causes?

#### 4. Fresh Water

- a. Why is fresh water such an important environmental and global issue?
- b. Why is the world quickly running out of fresh water?
- c. Where does fresh water come from?
- d. What is happening to fresh water sources today?
- e. Where is fresh water being used?
- f. In what ways has greater water usage accompanied rising standards of living?
- g. Why is the use of fresh water rapidly increasing?
- h. What does it mean that water shortages have historically been local, but are not global?
- i. Why is water usage for irrigation often wasteful? Are there less wasteful ways to irrigate?
- j. Are you aware of water issues in your community, state, regions, or country?
- k. Are there ways we can reduce water usage? Explain.
- l. How are climate change and pollution making it difficult for developing countries to provide food for themselves?

#### 5. Climate Change

- a. What is climate change?
- b. What causes climate change?
- c. When does climate change take place?
- d. Describe the process of how climate change has become such a destructive phenomenon to the planet.
- e. What is the difference between climate change and global warming?
- f. How do greenhouse gases work to balance the Earth's temperature?
- g. What happened around 1800 to alter the balance of greenhouse gases?
- h. What is a major human contribution to the increase in greenhouse gases?
- i. What are the causes of increases in methane?
- j. What scientific evidence supports the fact that global warming is mostly caused by humans?
- k. Why is global warming an imprecise term to describe climate change?
- l. In what ways does the U.S. contribute to climate change?
- m. Do you think climate change has had an impact on your life so far?
- n. How do you think people can best prepare for the changes in climate we face in the future or for those facing the changes now?

#### 6. Sea Levels

- a. Why are sea levels rising?
- b. Why are polar ice caps melting?
- c. What are the effects of melting ice caps?

#### 7. Soil Depletion

- a. What is soil depletion?
- b. Why has soil depletion occurred?
- c. What is the connection between an increase in grain production and soil depletion?
- d. Is there enough food for all of us? What variables need to be taken into consideration when answering this question?
- e. What are some methods to conserve and enhance worn out soils? Are they working?

#### 8. Carrying Capacity

- a. What is carrying capacity?
- b. What does it mean that we are in overshoot?
- c. What is the ecological footprint?
  1. How is your ecological footprint calculated?

- d. What is the carrying capacity of our Earth?
  - 1. What variables need to be considered when answering this question?
- e. What if all the people in the world consumed at the rate of people in the U.S.? In India?
- f. Why haven't we dramatically felt the effects of overshooting the carrying capacity of our planet?
- g. What are some of the signals that we are in overshoot?
- h. What is a delay in feedback? Give examples of delays in feedback?
- i. Does a period of overshoot lead to collapse?
  - 1. What are other options besides collapse?
- j. Can people around the world reverse overshoot? How?
- k. What can you personally do to reverse overshoot?

#### 9. Human Population

- a. Make a population chart to show human population growth over the millennia.
- b. What has happened to human population numbers recently?
- c. What impact did the Green Revolution have on food production? Do you think the effect was positive or negative?
- d. What countries have the highest population numbers? What cities?
- e. Why have the number of humans increased so dramatically?

#### 10. Natural Populations

- a. What is the sixth extinction? Do you think we are in the midst of this extinction? Why?
- b. What does it mean there is ongoing loss of biodiversity through species extinction?
- c. Why is this extinction sometimes called the sixth extinction?
- d. What are current extinction rates? Why are they so high?
- e. Do you care that so many species are facing extinction? Explain.
- f. Do you think we care about species extinction?

#### 11. The Environment and Growth

- a. Do you think that the principle of economic growth has been the chief force driving our global society past its ecological limits? Why or why not?
- b. Why is the capacity of the earth to absorb wastes important?
- c. How will our ecological footprint be reduced? Do humans have a choice in the matter?

#### 12. Insights: The Environment

- a. What does the author mean when she states that one's particular worldview contributes to how these ominous environmental problems are addressed? Give examples.
- b. Do you feel depression and hopelessness or a sense of hopefulness and urgency about the state of the environment?
  - 1. Do you think these environmental problems are overblown by scientists?
  - 2. If so, what evidence do you use to support your conclusions?
- c. What was your country's reaction to the Kyoto Treaty in 2001? Do you agree with their decision?
- d. What is the Gross Domestic Product (GDP)?
  - 1. How is it different than the Genuine Progress Indicator (GPI)? Explain.
  - 2. Which measure of the economy do you prefer? Explain.
- e. What is your reaction to the statement: "A growing number of ecologists see the Earth as an interconnected organism that can reawaken our sacred relationship with nature and in a positive sense support our psychic well-being." Explain your reaction.
- f. Some commentators say that there is no (or little) connection between consumerism and environmental problems. What do you think?

g. What can you do individually to help support the health and livability of the Earth? What can we do collectively?

### Section 6.3 The Growing Socioeconomic Gap Between Rich and Poor

Terms to Consider:

socioeconomic gap

social gap

economic gap

inequality

world's elite

world's middle class

middle class way of life

world's poor

poverty

slums

Questions to Consider

#### 1. Introduction

a. What environmental problems or other issues arise when trying to increase the standard of living for everyone on the planet?

1. Is it possible to raise the standard of living of everyone on the planet without environmental repercussions?

b. What is a socioeconomic gap?

c. What is a social gap?

d. What is an economic gap?

#### 2. Inequality

a. What causes inequality?

b. Do you agree with the following statement: "Using a systems approach, the neoliberal economic and political policies today perpetuate inequality, contribute to population growth, and exacerbate the tendency to overshoot its limits." Explain your answer.

c. What is a "system trap?"

d. Explain the statement: "Economic globalization has resulted in a change from a class structure that was formerly nation based to one that is now globally based."

1. What impact has this had on people in core countries? In periphery countries?

e. Do you think the American middle class is being hollowed out? What does this mean?

f. What are some of the reasons for global social and economic inequality?

g. Why do you think, according to the Human Development Index (HDI), that world income and greater inequality have both risen?

#### 3. The World's Elite Class

a. Who are the top 5 richest people in the world?

b. What nation in the world is the wealthiest? Why?

c. Describe the world's wealthiest 1%?

d. What 4 nations have the wealthiest people per capita?

e. What is your reaction to the short excerpt from "The Rich Today" by Chrystia Freeland.

#### 4. The World's Middle Class

a. What are the two groups of the middle class described in your book?

1. Are you in one of these groups?
- b. What makes up a middle class way of life?
- c. How has the middle class way of life has changed since the 1980s for the core nations?
- d. In what ways do governmental policies in Europe favor the middle class?
  1. Why are these policies eroding?
- e. How did the middle class expand in Asia Pacific countries and shrink in many core and other periphery countries, such as the United States?

#### 5. The World's Poor

- a. What is the difference between inequality and poverty?
- b. Describe the life of the world's poor.
- c. Where do most poor people live?
- d. What are the reasons for rising inequality?
- e. What do supporters of economic globalization say will happen to the poor with increased economic globalization? Do you think they have a good point?
- f. Will economic growth abolish poverty in the future? Explain. Has it worked in the past?
- g. Why does it take so much global production and consumption to reduce global poverty?
- h. What are slums? Why are they growing?

#### 6. Insights: The Socioeconomic Gap

- a. Why has it been a heresy for economists or politicians to question conventional ideas of economic growth?

### Section 6.4 Well-Being

Terms to Consider:

Human Development Report

well-being

happiness

life satisfaction

Genuine Progress Indicator (GPI)

Questions to Consider:

1. Human Development Report
  - a. What is human development according to a United Nations report?
  - b. How does it differ than what we typically think of human development?
2. Well-Being
  - a. What is well-being?
  - b. What is the relationship between economic growth and well-being?
  - c. What do studies by the New Economic Foundation show about well-being?
3. Genuine Progress Indicator
  - a. What is the Genuine Progress Indicator (GPI)?

1. How does it work?
  2. Do you think it should replace the GDP as a measure of well-being?
- b. What do you consider the components of well-being should be?

### **Section 6.5 Two Nations and Economic Globalization**

Terms to Consider:

Least Developed Countries (LDC)

The Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC)

Bhutan

Gross National Happiness (GNP)

Questions to Consider:

1. Two Nations and Economic Globalization: Introduction
  - a. What are Least Developed Countries (LDCs)?
  - b. Why are they in this particular economic position?
  
2. The Tragedy of the Congo
  - a. Why has the modern history of the Democratic Republic of the Congo been a tragedy?
  - b. Have you ever heard of the African World Wars?
    1. If you never heard of them, why do you think that is the case?
  - c. What is causing the tragedy in the DRC today?
  
3. The Hope of Bhutan
  - a. Why is there hope in Bhutan?
  - b. What is Gross National Happiness (GNP)?
  - c. Do you think this is a good measurement of the well-being a country?
    1. How practical is it as a measurement device?

### **Section 6.6 Concluding Insights: The Impact of Economic Globalization**

1. Tensions
  - a. What are the four tensions that have spread throughout the world?
    1. List the tensions according to what you think are the most significant.
  - b. What are other tensions resulting from the economic globalization process?