Understanding Global Social Movements and Global Resistances
THINGS COVERED IN THIS LECTURE

- Carrying forward from the link between Global Civil Society and GSMs: conceptual concerns
  - What are Social Movements and what is “global” about them?
  - What are Global Social Movements?
  - What do they essentially do?
    - Contest global governance
- Impacts of GSM on multilateral Economic Institutions (relationship between them)
- Global resistances: nuances and details
  - What do they resist?
  - What are the differences in kind and direction they take?
- Role of NGOs
Links between Global Civil Society and Global Social Movements

Two interesting counters to the understanding discussed in Halperin and Laxer:

1. O’Brien Et al. (Contesting Global Governance):
   - The conceptual confusion arises out of the expectation that transition of civil society from domestic to international sphere will carry forward identical characteristics. Once understood that it entails a qualitative shift, there is less of a problem
     - The ‘global’ in social movements and civil society implies more differentiation, more diversity.
   - Rather than viewing global civil society as a normative social structure to be achieved, it is more accurate to see it as an arena for conflict that interacts with both interstate system and the global economy
     - A space of formal and informal networks of transnational business and their allies as well as networks of resistances to them.
2. Regarding effective level of resistance:
   - G. Ritzer highlights the severe limitations of local resistances in terms of their power of impact.
   - The forces they seek to counter are global in scope.
   - Local groups/communities acting in isolation reduces their chances of bringing a change.
   - Ritzer highlights this with the example of the protest in Papua, Indonesia against Freeport McMoRan Copper and Gold (mining company).
     - The protest involved a small local community against the displacement and environmental damage caused by the company.
     - Managed to secure some concessions but overall did not successfully influence the company to change its activities destructive of the local community.
     - Most important players: Government of Indonesia, USA as well as the company remained largely unresponsive to local needs.
WHAT ARE SOCIAL MOVEMENTS? WHAT MAKES THEM GLOBAL?

- Different scholars have different description terms:
  - Transnational social movement organisations; world civic society, global civil society, international societies and so on depending on the question of research
    - Corresponding to differences about centrality of state, assumptions and methods of research
  - Social movements - subset of numerous actors operating in civil society
    - Groups of people with common interest who band together to pursue a far reaching transformation of society.
    - Different from state elites: don’t utilise coercive power of state
    - Power lies in popular mobilisation to influence political economic authority
    - Different from interest groups: SMs have broader vision
**WHAT ARE SOCIAL MOVEMENTS? WHAT MAKES THEM GLOBAL**

- **Characteristic features of social movements:**
  - Emerging identity
  - Involved in conflictual issues
  - Use unconventional forms of participation usually
  - Loose network of formal and informal organisations and groups
  - Anti-systemic: seek to bring an overall change in the system
  - By definition they are fluid and large. They evolve, transform and usually lack a *permanent* institutional structure. There is no single core as such but broad tendencies
    - For example, one can talk about environmentalism broadly but there is no single core one can look at to study environmental movement
SO, WHAT MAKES THEM GLOBAL?

- Global social movements are the ones that operate in a global *as well as* local, national and international space.
- ‘Global’ here refers to that area of interaction which is less bounded by barriers of time and space as compared to local or national.
  - Beyond the interstate relations.
  - Transnational connections of people and places that were formerly distant or seen as separate.
- GSM refers to groups of people around the world working on the trans-world plane pursuing far reaching *social change*.
- Identifying features of GSM.
  - They are less cohesive than their national counterparts yet they share a sense of common identity and the need for coordinated action.
IDENTIFYING FEATURES OF GSM

- Despite sharing a broad commitment to an issue, different strands within a GSM may differ over policy issues, programmes and means of achieving the set goal
  - For example, the conservationists like Sierra Club and rejectionists like Deep Ecology activists share a commitment to environment but differ on means of achieving their goals.
    - Sierra club seeks to conserve the environment within the present system but Deep Ecology activists reject the existing industrial structure of human existence

- People involved in a GSM may consciously identify themselves as part of the process critical of globalization and see themselves as global citizens

- May develop a global organisational structure, especially through use of technology (more details later)

- Defining conflicts as global in scope

- Could be categorised as ‘old’ and ‘new’
  - Old: class based. New: issue based, cutting across other categories
CONTESTING GLOBAL GOVERNANCE

- An important consequence of global social movements is that they contest ‘global governance’.
- Global governance especially in the context of international economic and political institutions raise questions of legitimacy, accountability, transparency and democracy in the functioning of international institutions.
- Broadens the scope of issues to be included in the purview of international institutions.
  - For example, the broadening of concerns evident in a shift from North-North relations to North-South relations as well as South-South relations in terms of international monetary institutions (T. Cohn).
IMPACTS OF GSMs ON MULTILATERAL ECONOMIC INSTITUTIONS

- All three institutions (IMF, WB, WTO) have developed mechanisms to increase their engagement with movements
- Providing more information to informal channels of communication
- Creation of new departments to deal with social movement concerns
  - The example of Seattle protests against WTO in 1999
- GSMs provide sustained challenge to the underlying neo-liberal philosophy of these institutions
  - Can pose challenges in practical terms to the projects initiated by them. for example: Narmada Bachao Andolan
- Sometimes a GSM can provide better information about ground realities and knowledge unavailable to the staff of the institution
- May influence many key governmental actors which control the fate of these institutions
GLOBAL RESISTANCES: NUANCES AND DETAILS

What is being resisted?

- Ritzer notes that just like there is no one understanding of globalization and no homogenous experience of globalisation across different countries, cultures and regions, there is NO single homogenous resistance to it.
- Not all aspects are opposed but only a few, especially dealing with exploitation of labour by MNCs, environmental degradation, global capital, threat to indigenous cultures.
- Resistance itself is globalized! It is highly diversified, complex, ambiguous. Global social movements themselves makes use of the technology available as part of globalization to counter effects of globalization.

Another way to make better sense of global resistances is to understand them as ‘globalization from below’ as opposed to ‘globalization from above’.
GLOBAL RESISTANCES: NUANCES AND DETAILS

Why globalization from above and below?

- Globalization from above includes attempts to globalize by MNCs as well as institutions like IMF, WB because the flow of power is top down.

- In contrast, as seen earlier, global social movements or resistances aim to raise questions of accountability and democratisation of decision making processes as well as posing a challenge to the flow of power from above. In response, GSMs develop their own flow of power, that from below. Plus, resistance itself is globalized. Therefore, GSMs are better understood as attempts to globalize from below.

- Global resistances in that sense seek Justice in globalization: a more just and fair process.

- Supporters of global resistances may come from classes that drive globalization from above but seek to represent the interests of those adversely affected by it.
GLOBAL RESISTANCES: NUANCES AND DETAILS

Different kinds and directions of global resistances
- Resistance can range from radically progressive (World Social Forum) to reactionary and conservative (neo-fascism, isolationism, ultra-nationalism etc)
- For example, left-wing transnational labour movement versus isolationists or religious fundamentalists like the Taliban in Afghanistan
- Resistance can also be understood as informal and loosely organised versus relatively more formally organised.
  - Ritzer explains in detail the history of the labour movement beginning from 19th century Europe
  - Response to industrialisation: formation of unions, cooperatives as well as labour oriented left political parties
  - International Workingmen’s Association or the First International (1864-72) and subsequent Second (1889-1915) and Third International (1917-1943)
  - Third International was led by USSR. In response, a more western, anti-communist International Labour Organization (ILO) was formed in 1920
GLOBAL RESISTANCES: NUANCES AND DETAILS

- ILO conventions related to: safety and health at work, working hours, holidays with pay, minimum wage, social security etc.

- Resistance can also be understood as taking place in a physical space or a virtual space
  - Cyberactivism or use of internet for the purpose of resistance
  - Seattle protests of 1999 as well as formation of the World Social Forum (WSF) partially a result of cyberactivism
  - Focus was largely on lack of democracy in global economic and political affairs
  - The WSF is also an example of informal loosely organised space for interaction between different civil society members
    - Arena for like minded people to exchange ideas on global issues. Kind of like a huge social network.
ROLE OF NGOs IN GSMs

- NGOs are the key organisational node in global social movements
  - The main unit of organisation having a formal structure with the capacity to commit resources towards goals
  - Through NGOs social movements can seek to influence policy decisions
- Active in building global civil society and successful in influencing global governance by creating networks and lobbies
- International Non-Governmental Organisations (INGOs) facilitate interstate cooperation and enhance public participation
  - For example, United Nations Charter art. 71 provides ECOSOC to consult with NGOs. Also embodies certain principles to define an acceptable NGO (Baylis Et al. 2014: 367)
**Role of NGOs in GSMs**

- NGOs are important actors in the globalization process
  - **Access to internet:** NGOs initiated the process of public access to internet by connecting diverse separate networks to each other and establishing servers. UN and WB first went on internet using NGO servers

- According to Heywood, NGOs can be seen as institutionalised and professionalized ‘insiders’. As opposed to global social movements which are ‘outsiders’ and seek to influence policy decisions through protests and demonstrations (a distance from power-taking centre), NGOs have more direct access to means of influencing policy decisions
  - For example, NGO pressurising during earth summit in Rio in 1992 led to a treaty to control the emissions of greenhouse gases