Green Theory in International Relations

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Green theorists argue that environmental issues are not just side concerns but are central to international security. Resource scarcity and environmental degradation can lead to conflicts and destabilisation. For example, water shortages in one country could lead to tensions with neighbouring states.

The Importance of Multilateral Cooperation

Green Theory emphasises how environmental concerns, such as climate change, biodiversity loss, and resource depletion, shape the behaviour of all actors in the global system. It also considers how global environmental

issues often transcend national borders, making cooperation necessary for solving problems like pollution and resource scarcity.

Green theorists explore how international organisations, like the United Nations and the World Trade Organization, address global environmental challenges. They analyse existing treaties and agreements, such as the Paris Agreement on climate change, and advocate for stronger, more effective global cooperation.

Environmental Security vs. Neoliberalism

Green Theory connects sustainability with the notion of development. It calls for incorporating environmental protection into economic growth policies, arguing that long-term development cannot occur without considering ecological limits. As environmental issues can lead to conflicts over resources, these conflicts may be exacerbated by climate change and environmental stress, thus raising the issue of environmental security.

This is why proponents of Green Theory criticise neoliberal economic policies for prioritising profit over environmental sustainability. They argue that the global capitalist system often exacerbates ecological harm and creates inequality in access to environmental goods. Ultimately, the Green Theory of IR also reflects on the concepts of ecocentrism versus anthropocentrism, with ecocentrism stressing that nature and the environment have intrinsic value, regardless of their utility to humans. Anthropocentrism, which is linked to neoliberalism, focuses on human needs and interests when addressing environmental concerns.

Sustainability and Security

Green Theorists like Andrew Hurrell and Robyn Eckersley have been calling for the inclusion of environmental concerns in global governance. In particular, Hurrell focused on how environmental degradation impacts international security and the broader structure of global governance. He has long criticised traditional IR theories for neglecting the environment, yet environmental issues are strictly related to international security.

An Evolving Area of Inquiry

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