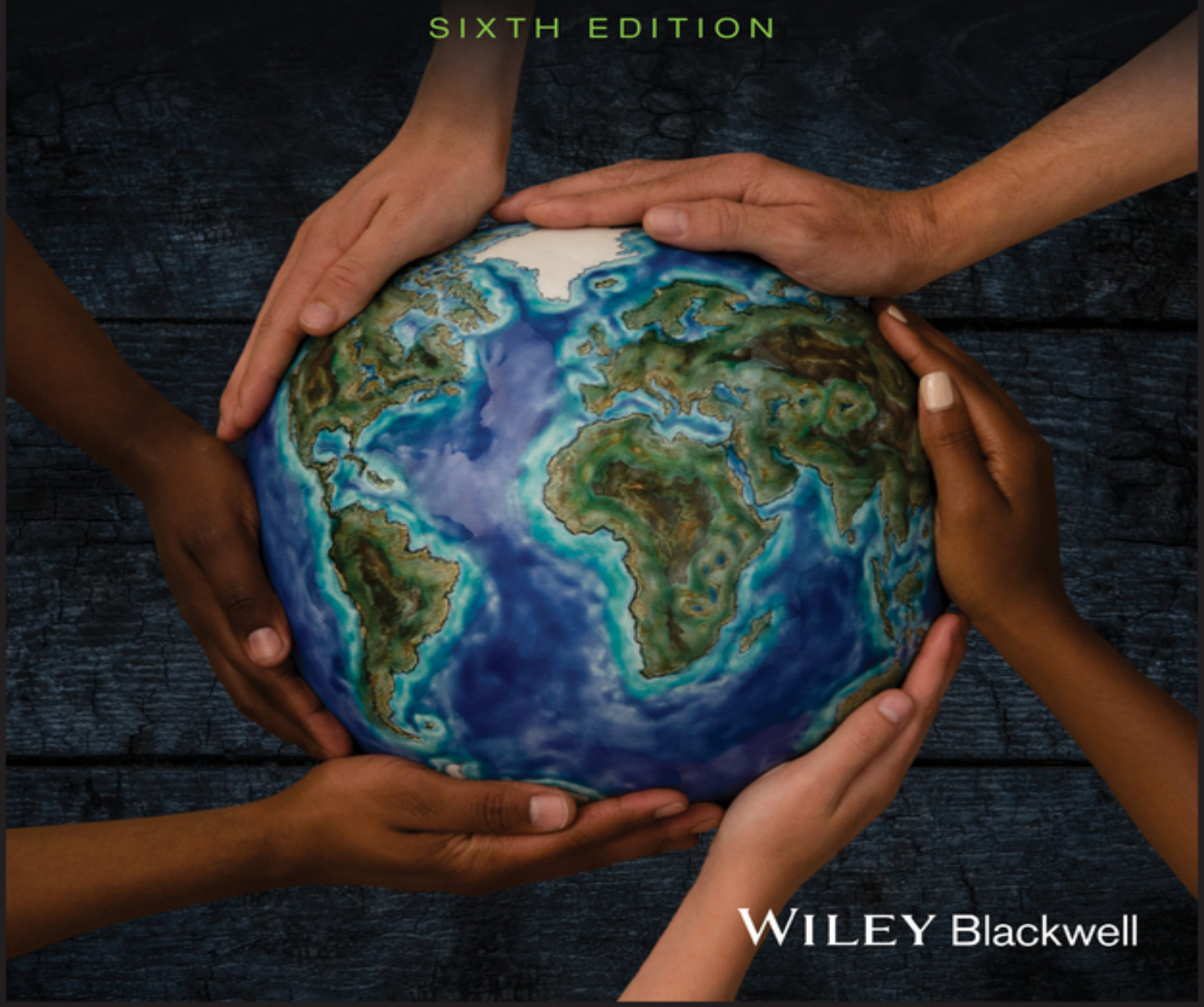


KRISTEN A. HITE | JOHN L. SEITZ

GLOBAL ISSUES

AN INTRODUCTION

SIXTH EDITION



WILEY Blackwell

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Please find a Facebook page for *Global Issues*, which features updates on many of the subjects discussed in this book. Please feel welcome to visit, like, comment, and share: <https://www.facebook.com/GlobalIssuesHiteSeitz>

Global Issues

An Introduction

SIXTH EDITION

Kristen A. Hite and John L. Seitz

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*To those who serve the needs of others – humans, animals,
and plants, all essential parts of our lovely but endangered
planet*

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Introduction

The Creation of Global Issues

What causes an issue to become a “global issue”? Are “global issues” the same as international affairs – the interactions that governments, private organizations, and peoples from different countries have with each other? Or is something new happening in the world? Are there now concerns and issues that are increasingly being recognized as global in nature? It is the thesis of this book that something new is indeed happening in the world as nations become more interdependent. While their well-being is still largely dependent upon how they run their internal affairs, increasingly nations are facing issues that they alone cannot solve, issues that are so important that the failure to solve them will adversely affect the lives of many people on this planet. In fact, some of these issues are so important that they can affect how suitable this planet will be in the future for supporting life.

The issues dramatize our increasing interdependence. The communications and transportation revolutions that we are experiencing are giving people knowledge of many new parts of the globe. We see that what is happening in far-off places can affect, or is affecting, our lives. For example, instability in the oil-rich Middle East affects the price of oil around the world, and since many countries are dependent on oil as their main source of energy, the politics of oil becomes a global concern.

Many nations in the world are now dependent on other nations to buy their products and supply the natural resources and goods they need to purchase in order to

maintain a certain standard of living. An economic downturn in any part of the world that affects the supply and demand for products will affect the economic status of many other nations. This is an important part of globalization that will be discussed in [Chapter 2](#).

Even a global issue such as world hunger illustrates our increasing interdependence. A person might say that starving or malnourished people in Africa don't affect people in the rich countries, but even here there is a dependency. Our very nature and character depend on how we respond to human suffering. Some rich nations such as the Scandinavian nations in northern Europe give a significantly higher portion of their national wealth to poor nations for development purposes than do other rich nations such as the United States and Japan.

Global issues are often seen as being interrelated. One issue affects other issues. For example, climate change (an environmental issue) is related to an energy issue (our reliance on fossil fuels), the population issue (more people produce more greenhouse gases), the wealth and poverty issue (wealthy countries produce the most gases that cause climate change), the technology issue (technology can help us create alternative energy sources that produce less or no greenhouse gases), and the future issue (will the changes we are making in the Earth's climate seriously harm life on this planet?). As we recognize these interrelationships, we realize that usually there are no simple solutions.

Interdisciplinary knowledge is required to successfully deal with the issues. The student or adult learner reading this book will be receiving information from multiple disciplines such as biology, economics, political science, environmental science, chemistry, and others. Neither the social sciences nor the physical sciences have the answers on their own.

Feel good about yourself, reader, because you are engaged in the noble task of trying to understand how the world really works. Complicated? Yes, of course. Impossible to discover? Certainly not. Just read seriously and carefully. It takes effort and you can keep learning throughout your life.

Perhaps, global issues were born on the day, several decades ago, when the Earth, for the first time, had its picture taken. The first photograph of Earth, which was transmitted by a spacecraft, showed our planet surrounded by a sea of blackness. Many people seeing that photograph realized that the blackness was a hostile environment, devoid of life, and that life on Earth was vulnerable and precious. No national boundaries could be seen from space. That photograph showed us our home – one world – and called for us to have a global perspective in addition to our natural, and desirable, more local and national perspectives.

This book discusses *some* of the main current global issues of our time. The reader can probably identify others. During the reader's lifetime, humanity will have to face new global issues that will continue to surface. It is a characteristic of the world in which we live. Maybe our growing ability to identify such issues, and our increasing knowledge of how to deal with them, will enable us to handle the new issues better than we are doing with the present ones.

Chapter 1

What is Development?

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Developing Toward What?

When we talk about global issues, “development” can be a confusing term. Development, as used in this book, is the ways in which economies progress through their societies to improve well-being. This requires us to consider how to measure progress as a society at the global level. Cultures across the world have very different ideas of how to define progress. Many define it by material wealth. But not all, by any means. Bhutan, for example, has a national happiness indicator in addition to measuring national wealth by the more conventional means of domestic production (gross domestic product – GDP).

This inevitably causes us to wonder *what we are developing toward?* In other words, what is the end goal? More stuff? Longer lives? Better health? Smarter people? Better relationships? Greater happiness? That answer is not an easy one: embedded in it are many different assumptions that vary based on different cultures and values.

The United Nations defines human development as the enlarging of human capabilities and choices; in a yearly publication it ranks nations on a human development index, which tries to measure national differences of income, educational attainment, and life expectancy.¹ The United Nations has suggested the purpose of development to be the creation of an environment in which people can lead long, healthy, and creative lives. But for most of the last century, most of development was geared towards increasing national incomes, on the assumption that developing towards wealth could lead to other benefits. Let's explore further what twentieth-century development looked like, and then consider what it means for an increasingly interdependent world with finite resources.

Twentieth-Century Approach: Development as Economic Growth

For roughly the past century, “development” has been viewed primarily through the lens of economic growth plus the social changes caused by or accompanying that economic growth.² Economists have traditionally used gross national product (GNP) or a country's average per capita income as the measures of economic development. Some organizations, such as the World Bank, also divide countries according to their level of income, and consider low- and middle-income countries to be “developing” and high-income countries to be “developed.” High-income

countries were early adopters of intensive manufacturing. They amassed large amounts of wealth that lifted many of their citizens out of poverty; economists referred to these “industrialized” nations as “developed” nations. Most of them are located in the northern hemisphere, so they are also sometimes called “the North.”

If we accept the vision of development as building wealth, it makes sense that the overwhelming priority is to transition from economies of subsistence (prioritizing getting households the basic resources on which to live) to economies of consumption (prioritizing getting households greater incomes to rapidly increase consumption and further stimulate the economy). This approach typically leads first to a transition towards industrialized economies, and then, as machines replace workers, to a second transition towards economies based on goods and services.

In the 1950s and 1960s, it was common to think of development only in economic terms. It was, of course, economic growth with the agricultural and industrial revolutions that created the increased food and higher standards of living that permitted more human beings to inhabit the planet. The development that took place in Europe and the United States as they industrialized led to an increase in the average family’s income, and this meant more money to buy goods, including food.

In the second half of the twentieth century, nations generally took one of two approaches to development. The first approach was to develop government policies focused on creating jobs and providing social services to meet basic needs.³ The other approach, encouraged by international development institutions like the World Bank, re-evaluated the role of government in economic development and focused on minimizing government influence on market prices by gearing public policies away from regulation,