

ENVIRONMENTAL POLITICS 2228

CONTENTS

01: ENVIRONMENTAL MOVEMENT.....	2
History of the Environmental Movement	2
Modern Environmental Movement.....	2
02: SURVIVALISM	3
Theory	3
Solutions.....	3
Criticisms	4
03: PROMETHEANISM & THE GREEN BACKLASH	4
Theory	4
Solutions.....	4
Criticisms	5
04: STATE, DEMOCRACY AND THE ENVIRONMENT	5
Advantages	5
Disadvantages	6
06: CORPORATE ENVIRONMENTALISM.....	6
Advantages	6
Disadvantages	7
07: GLOBAL ENVIRONMENTAL GOVERNANCE.....	8
Advantages	8
Disadvantages	8
08: ENVIRONMENTAL SECURITY.....	9
Advantages	9
Disadvantages	9
09: FREE MARKET ENVIRONMENTALISM	10
Advantages	10
Disadvantages	10
10: ECOLOGICAL MODERNISATION (EM)	11
Advantages	11
Disadvantages	12
11: ECO-MARXISM.....	12
Advantages	12
Disadvantages	13
12: RADICAL ENVIRONMENTALISM	13
Advantages	13
Disadvantages	14
13: ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE.....	14
Advantages	14
Disadvantages	15

01: ENVIRONMENTAL MOVEMENT

HISTORY OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL MOVEMENT

The environmental movement was born of youth activists in the 1960s-1970s. Economic prosperity of developed nations in the post-war era created a generation of wealthy, highly educated youth (the Baby Boomers). This new generation was marrying and having children later in life to complete university and enter the workforce.

Social movements were a common and successful method of protesting around the 60s. This is associated with the surge of the counterculture, generally made up of resentful and anti-authority youth activists. Famous examples of movements at this time included the civil rights movement in the United States and the feminist movement which rethought the gender order and allowed women to achieve higher education and employment. These movements were sparking law reforms and challenging the unquestioned authority of the government: the anti-war movement that protested the US government's involvement in Vietnam opened up the public's eyes to the flaws of government and political institutions and delegitimised authority.

This new vigour relating to social movements, coupled with a series of ecological disasters, including the bombing of Bikini Atoll and the Cuyahoga River Fire, as well as the publishing of Rachel Carson's Silent Spring, ignited the environmental movement.

MODERN ENVIRONMENTAL MOVEMENT

The environmental movement has lost much of its momentum and power. It is currently much weaker than it was in the 1960s and 70s. This is largely due to the green backlash by corporations and climate change denialism that undermined the legitimacy of the green movement.

Climate denialism is increasing. There is more scepticism of facts in the modern post-truth era and the media disproportionately over-represents climate denialists. One could imagine that there is a 50-50 divide in the population and in scientists' attitude towards climate change based on media: a 2016 report by Yale and George Mason University found that only 15% of Americans are aware that climate change consensus among experts is more than 90%. However, 97% of scientists agree on the existence of man-made climate change, and an even bigger proportion believe climate change in general is happening.

Another reason for the environmental movement's weakness is the persistence of neoliberal and capitalist politics that privileges the opinions of corporations and industries that benefit from environmental exploitation. For instance, the Australian government's reliance on the coal and gas industries (coal and natural gas are Australia's 2nd and 4th highest export products respectively) for economic growth means they trump the voice of the environmental movement in government.

02: SURVIVALISM

Survivalism is a pessimistic theory of environmental politics originating in the 1960s-70s which believes that humankind has already passed the tipping point and that there is no longer a way to avoid environmental disasters. Major proponents of this theory include Brown, Hardin, Ehrlich and the Club of Rome. The Club of Rome was especially important to survivalist thinking as it was the first time scientific and computer modelling was used to extrapolate the collapse of civilisation within 100 years using pollution, population and resource data.

The main benefit of the survivalist movement was that created the idea of a fragile earth. Many people stopped thinking about the Earth as full of infinite resources or as a powerful entity that humans could not damage. It also overturned the Judeo-Christian idea of the Earth as a birthright for humankind that we were entitled to exploit and destroy. This change in social consciousness provided an important first step for the creation of the environmental movement.

THEORY

Lester Brown produced a landmark work in survivalist environmental thinking with his book The 29th Day. This introduced the lily-pad on a pond allegory which showed the inability of humans to conceptualise exponential growth, and hence our inability to comprehend the disastrous consequences of current population growth. A similar concern about population growth was proffered by Ehrlich's The Population Bomb, which noted that Earth and its resources were already unable to support the current population, nevertheless the projected population of 10B by 2050AD.

Hardin integrated the 'tragedy of the commons' idea to environmental politics. This assumed that people were all self-interested rational actors, and hence, the environmental commons such as natural resources and land would be exploited by everyone because they felt they could reap all the benefits of their actions but not have to bear all the consequences. From this sprung a more radical and harsh idea that developed countries should stop providing aid to developing nations: the developing world was more responsible for population growth and leaving them without aid would mean that famines and pandemics – all 'natural' processes – would cull the population.

SOLUTIONS

Survivalists propose stringent changes to the current world order to promote environmental repair. As a corollary to the 'tragedy of the commons' theory by Hardin, survivalists believe that liberal democracies are incapable of dealing with the environmental crisis. Rather, the world should be ruled by a 'scientific elite': a dictatorial group of scientists who know what is best for the environment. This would mean that environmental policy would not be blocked by partisanship and politics. Furthermore, the exploitation of the environment by the commons should be stopped by limiting personal freedom. This involves imposing changes in lifestyle, consumption and production. An example of such limitation is the 'One Child Policy' in China. Many people opposed this policy for its authoritarianism regardless of its efficacy. This raises an important consideration: are limits to personal and political freedom sacrifices that people are willing to make for ecological health?

CRITICISMS

Survivalism is criticised for its harsh solutions. Many would argue that the cure is worse than the disease.

Hardin's idea of barring aid to developing countries is also criticised as an elitist idea, especially by proponents of environmental justice. Even though it is true that population growth is higher in developing countries, developed countries are far more responsible for environmental destruction and greenhouse gases. The 'dirty' industrial practices in developing countries is also for mass consumption by people in the developed world and are the result of developed nations outsourcing their industrial or agricultural sectors. Even without considering who should bear the responsibility of environmental destruction, Hardin presents a morally and ethically abhorrent solution.

Environmental authoritarianism and limits on personal freedom are also heavily criticised and it goes against human rights and encroaches on personal privacy. Many would argue that it is not up to the state to place limits on personal consumption or reproduction. Survivalists would counter this by saying that the ecological crisis leaves no room for compromise and that policies must be harsh to have any hope of reversing environmental trends. In addition, the most fundamental human right is the right to life, and this is harmed by environmental destruction.

03: PROMETHEANISM & THE GREEN BACKLASH

Prometheans believe that innovation is the answer to the environmental challenges. This theory, developed around the 80s during the time of the green backlash, opposes the attitude of the survivalists who believe that civilisation is doomed. They point to history and say that people have the ability to deal with challenges through innovation and change. Resource scarcity has been dealt with in the past by creating substitutes: wood has been replaced with coal and is being replaced with renewable energies (Beckerman). In the same way, all of the environmental problems are within our capacity to solve.

THEORY

The major theorists of Prometheanism include Julian Simon, and Shellenberger and Nordhaus. Simon states that humans are The Ultimate Resource and we will always come up with solutions to our problems. This formed the basis of the Promethean canon. He counters the survivalist concern of the population bomb put forward by Ehrlich by saying a greater population is beneficial as it produces more ideas and innovation.

Underlying the Promethean theory is the assumption in the exceptionalism of humanity. Shellenberger and Nordhaus state that humans will always progress and move forward. The way forward here is to embrace industrialisation and growth, as it will produce creative solutions to all our problems.

SOLUTIONS

Prometheans place a strong emphasis on the potential of technology. Technologies that this theory espouses include manipulating the weather.