PREFACE

Albert Einstein had said, "Everything in the world has changed except our thinking", this could very well apply to international relation scholars and researchers, who largely speaking are one of the most conservative groups of social scientists in the world. Any possibility of fundamental change is viewed with plenty of skepticism, if not cynicism. It is the realistic acceptance of the rather nasty nature of international politics that determines and shapes this thought process. It is indeed the basic reality of a system of states that are subject to minimal international governance and that go to any length (war at an extreme end) to release various goals that is hard for IR scholars to eliminate from their reasoning.

This thesis is governed by such reality. Professor Sushil Kumar, a rigorous international politics analyst, right from my post-graduate days stressed upon exploring the relationship and interactions of nation-states and putting politics first, as he frequently stated that there is no apolitical nature of environmental problem. The thesis has been helped by him to understand environmental problem as an outcome of political interest and struggle.

The "nation-state" is the major international actor and the state, it is thought, should be one with the people who are its nation. International politics, then, is not simply the relations between state structures but is also the relations between nations. In international politics, therefore, people, government and the state fuse into one. In the present period of rapid changes, it is argued, that nation-state power has been undermined by the demands and greater coherence of transnational issues that are crowding global agenda — environmental degradation, terrorism, drug trafficking, financial crisis, ethnic movement etc. The thesis, however, stresses on the sovereignty of states and that any undermining of it leads to friction, tension and eventually conflict. Since nation-states are endowed with sovereign power and since international system is not, hence there is no presumption of obedience. States in the environment they exist, bargain and conflict is the ultimate arbiter of conflicts of interest and as K. waltz says, "self-help the only reliable strategy for survival."

The Panglossian principle states that unless it can be demonstrated that something is wrong, it can be assumed that all is well. State politics vis-a-vis the environment, its reaction to the environmental problem and its environmental policy is based on this. David Korten, in 'Getting to the 21st century: Voluntary Action and the Global Agenda', writes about three interlocking aspects of what he calls "the crisis we face" — environmental degradation, poverty and violence. Korten states that when you have one of the three, the other two follow. Thus, violence begets poverty and a degraded environment. Poverty results in a degraded environment and violence. A degraded environment leads to poverty and violence.

As we move into the 21st century, it is becoming increasingly evident that while environmental problems are intertwined with the social and economic issues but which are, however, determined conclusively by political consideration. Commitment to checking environmental degradation(emission of carbon dioxide gases, chlorofluoro-carbons and other Green House gases
that leads to atmospheric catastrophe, e.g. ozone depletion and warming of the globe) or cooperation on scarce resources (water, oil, forest) depends on the political agenda and implementation strategy depends on the dominant political ideology.

We live in an age of risk, we are the “risk society” — a notable phrase of Ulrich Beck. Predicting and warning of environmental catastrophe, the ‘eco-doomsayers’ is a constant theme. Risks have become all prevailing. The whole scientific establishment concern themselves with the prediction of risks. The media is concerned with little else than risks. The Green Political movements in Europe and various environmental NGO’s have grown out of risk prediction and prevention. The entire population be it class, caste or group is wedded to the idea that they have a right to protection from and compensation for risk. There seems to be no escape from the culture of warning and the politics of prediction, prevention and compensation, which in a sense is what modern politics and government is for.

Therefore, if, according to Beck again, risk assessment has become a cult, then ideally, policy-making process should respond to the uncertainty of our ‘postmodern’ condition by first acknowledging the existence of ignorance and then drawing experts, policy-makers and the public into a mature debate on the issues.

What the thesis tries to draw is that the relationship between politics and ecology is not an equal one and since the development of environmental problem is linked to political process, hence it is only through political means that a solution to that problem will be devised.

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Many other have given the encouragement to complete the thesis — friends and relatives. I owe them my sincere respect. To Swati, my wife I owe special thanks. She has been a constant source of inspiration. I hope to pay her back in the same manner when she too starts writing her thesis.

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