The physical environment has a greater influence than political and technological processes upon global interactions.

Theo

Global interactions are considered to be the economic, social, cultural and political interactions between countries across the globe. Globalisation has existed for centuries, in purely imperialist forms where empires would travel the world in order to conquer new land, and more modern ways in which countries become more interconnected due to TNC (transnational corporations, companies that operate on a global scale) and the diffusion of culture.

The level of global interactions a country is submitted to is heavily influenced by a variety of factors. From the beginning of human civilisation, physical factors have been critical to the amount of globalisation a society exhibits. Global interactions were limited due to the amount of distance between different parts of the world, and the time it would take to travel. In the 1700s, it would take 2 years for a typical three mast frigate to circumnavigate the globe. Obviously, this would make global interactions take longer, but the physical environment would also be increasing the cost of travel, and the risk involved in these expeditions. Around 200 years later, the propellor aircraft made it possible to circumnavigate the globe in 8 days. This significant reduction in transport time made it possible for countries on opposite sides of the world to interact much more frequently. By the start of the 21st century, it was possible for a commercial airline to navigate the world in around 30 hours. This is an example of once limiting physical factors being diminished by increased technological processes, creating a shrinking world effect. Friction of distance is the term used to refer to people using a service less the greater the distance, and this can be applied to global interactions. In addition, the time-space convergence is when this distance becomes less significant as travel times decrease.

However, the physical environment has limited global interactions in more ways than just distance. LLDCs are landlocked developing countries. They suffer substantially greater economic disadvantage compared with coastal nations due to their lack of access to ocean territory. 9 of the 12 lowest ranked countries on the Human development index are LLDCs. A reason for this is their remoteness and isolation from global markets throughout history. Natural resources can also influence global interactions. TNCs in global super powers like the United states will try to take advantage of natural resources, such as oil reserves in Canada, Coal reserves in Australia or palm oil in Indonesia. Even when the friction of distance was great, global interactions were made to these places because of the value the natural resources possessed. This is one of the most significant factors in global interactions.

Political factors can also influence the levels of global interactions. Globalisation is heavily reliant on the flow of free trade between countries. Economist David Ricardo originally developed the theory of comparative advantage, which states that each country should specialise in what they produce at the lowest opportunity cost, and global output would be maximised. This theory basically leads to the idea of countries working together and interacting. Political leaders have a large influence in this regard. A trade bloc, like the EU, has the goal of lowering protectionist(anti-globalisation economic measures like Tariffs) policy amongst its members, and imposing fixed protectionist policy towards the rest of the world. In this case, it has led to an increase in global interactions amongst countries in Europe. The freedom of movement has allowed for a greater diffusion of culture to occur, as well for TNCs to expand, resulting in foreign direct investment. Politics can also negatively affect migration. Despite being physically close together, the U.S government is aiming to reduce the level of migration from Mexico entering their southern border. Security across the border has increased in recent years, and the Mexican and U.S government have both looked into fortifying Mexico’s borders to central American countries to stop the flow of migrants from there. In this example, politics are having a greater influence over global interactions than the physical environment.

In addition to political factors, technology has influenced the level of global interactions. The creation of the internet has allowed individuals from across the world to exchange services, discussion, and interact amongst each other without physically leaving. The website Facebook has more members than the biggest country in the world, China. The Digital Revolution, also known as the Third Industrial Revolution, is the shift from mechanical and analogue electronic technology to digital electronics. LEDC have become more connected due to the increased frequency of low cost mobile phones and computers. For example, 90% of adults in Kenya own a mobile phone, despite 65% of the population being below the poverty line, primarily due to the reduced cost of production, stemmed from the innovation in production technology. This has helped the country develop its communication network to other parts of the world. In addition, the general trend in economic growth has lead to more people being able to spend their free time expanding their knowledge of the rest of the world, primarily through the internet.

It is clear that the physical environment has a large influence on the level of global interactions. However, the effect of the shrinking world has shown that technology has reduced some of these factors, such as the distance between countries. In addition, trade blocs like the EU or USMCA have shown the effect of political factors. However, when global interactions are judged more from a social and cultural perspective rather than a pure economic perspective, they are less critical. But, the physical environment still plays a pivotal role in the evolution of global interactions in this day and age. In a world of finite resources, the movement and focus of the world’s biggest nations revolves around natural resources, and developments in technology will only limit this once these resources can be replaced.