

# **Globalisation and Hazardous Waste Trade**

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# International Trade

1. The principle of free trade suggests that there should be few legal constraints on international trade and commerce.
2. Goods and services should be allowed to pass freely across national boundaries.
3. Globalisation is a force for Prosperity and Progress.
4. Neo-liberal capitalist principles can bring benefits to all peoples of the world.

# Critics

1. Triumph of free trade appears somewhat misleading.
2. The major economic powers have achieved economic success by explicitly violating the market principles they often seek to impose on the developing world.
3. Unregulated free trade policies exacerbate disparities of wealth internally and between the rich and poor worlds.
4. Market self-regulation is in the interest of developed world.

# Impact on Environment

1. The current form of globalisation is increasing environmental degradation.
2. The current use and degradation of the earth's resources is unsustainable and closely connected at times to the process of globalisation.
3. Overproduction and consumption with up gradation of electronic devices at a breath-taking pace has created unmanageable piles of e-wastes and toxic waste.
4. The disposal and dumping of waste especially toxic waste is a global problem and requires global solution.

# **The International Waste Trade**

- 1. Globally, about 400 million tons of hazardous waste is produced annually.**
- 2. 98 per cent of which comes from OECD .**
- 3. UN estimate worldwide annual waste production at more than 1 billion tons, and some estimates go as high as 1.3 billion.**
- 4. The United States leads the world in the production of waste, followed by other leading industrial nations.**

# The United States

- 1. The U.S. produces a quarter of the world's waste despite the fact that its population of 300 million is less than 5% of the world's population, according to 2005 estimates.**
- 2. Each year, almost 7 million tons of high-tech electronics become obsolete.**
- 3. About 80 per cent of the electronic waste in the United State is exported, mostly to Third World.**



**Many computers discarded in the United States end up at dumpsites like this one in Ghana.**

# Trade with South

1. As environment regulations in the North become more stringent, corporations move to the South for dumping wastes.
2. Corporations look for countries with weak laws and without the capacity or will to enforce any national or international laws aimed at regulating the waste disposal market.
3. Asia and Africa were these two regions where spent material was welcomed by local capitalists.



# Asia and Africa

1. China is the world's biggest Importer of waste and secondary materials, importing more than 4 billion tons of plastic, 12 billion tons of waste paper and over 10 billion tons of scrap iron and steel in 2004.
2. Alang city in India is known as the world's largest ship-scraping yard. A ship is made of 95% recyclable material and rest of the material is toxic.
3. Environmentalists throughout South Asia are calling for the region to follow the lead of so many others and declare itself off limits to international waste imports and to Make South Asia a waste trade free zone.
4. International concerns about exports of hazardous wastes to developing countries led to the negotiation of the 1989 international regulations

# Who gets the trash?

Sources: Basel Action Network, Silicon Valley Toxics Coalition, Toxics Link India, SCOPE (Pakistan), Greenpeace China, 2002.  
NB: the arrows' thicknesses are not proportional to the traffic.



# International regulations

1. Neo-liberal institutionalists believe that we can establish regimes or governing arrangements to manage trade in toxic waste and prevent illegal dumping.
2. Despite the existence of international, regional, and bilateral agreements the illegal trade in hazardous waste remains a significant problem throughout the world.
3. A2006 report by the Interpol Pollution Crimes Working Group concluded that a link exists between pollution crimes and organised crime.
4. Realists argue that neo-liberal institutionalists ignore the importance of power when examining regimes.

# 1989 Basel Convention

1. International concerns about exports of hazardous wastes to developing countries led to the negotiation of the 1989 Basel Convention.
2. At the Basel convention in 1989, the global South wanted an absolute ban on all toxic waste trade and the global North lobbied for a much weaker treaty.
3. According to the Basel Convention, there is at least 8 million tons of hazardous waste imported and exported every year.
4. United States has not yet become a party to the Convention.
5. Ivory Coast case shows how difficult it is to manage the process of globalisation and to regulate structures of global trade.

# Toxic waste dumping in Ivory Coast

1. The *Probo Koala*, chartered by the Dutch-based oil and commodity shipping company Trafigura, offloaded toxic waste at the Ivorian port of Abidjan.
2. The waste was then dumped by a local contractor at as many as 12 sites in and around the city of Abidjan in August 2006.
3. The incident was responsible for killing at least 17 people and forced thousands to flee from their homes.
4. The number of people seeking medical care overwhelmed the health care system in this region and demonstration against the government led to arrest and resignation of key political officials.





A Greenpeace activist looks at the Probo Koala, the tanker accused of delivering a slick, highly toxic cocktail of petrochemical waste and caustic soda to Abidjan.



Candace Feit for The New York Times

Candace Feit for The New York Times

A worker helping to clean up toxic sludge last week in Abidjan, Ivory Coast. The sludge, dumped from a tanker, has been blamed for eight deaths.





Candace Feit for The New York Times

Six-month-old Salam Oudrawogol of Abidjan, Ivory Coast, has been covered with sores since he was exposed to toxic waste in August.





Red Cross workers say they have seen between 150 and 200 patients per day complaining of symptoms resulting from exposure to toxic waste.

# Trafigura

1. Trafiguara, the global trading firm, planned on properly disposing the chemical wastes in Amsterdam.
2. An early analysis of the wastes showed concentrations of chemicals that could paralyse a person's nervous system and could kill.
3. When company raised its price for proper disposal, Probo Koala was allowed to tack back its waste.
4. Both company officials and government of the Ivory Coast were well aware that there were no facilities in Abidjan for properly disposing this waste.
5. The Ivorian company, Tommy, hired tanker trucks that were loaded with the toxic wastes from the Probo Koala and during the night dumped their loads in so many areas.

# Suggestions

1. There should be Complete ban on hazardous waste trade.
2. Efforts should be made to strengthen the global regime like Basel Convention to govern the movement of toxic wastes.
3. There is also a need to adopt a binding global agreement governing the environmental practices of transnational cooperation.
4. State must enact tighter regulations on firms regarding emissions controls and waste management.
5. State should endeavour to promote policies to encourage clean production technology adoption.
6. Cooperation between the countries of the South is also inevitable.

# Conclusion

1. The waste trade in hazardous materials is an increasingly serious and widespread problem.
2. There are many obstacles to an effective international cooperation, as realists claim that states are ever concerned about relative gains they get in every cooperative arrangement.
3. Developed countries support control mechanism while less industrialised countries support complete ban on hazardous waste trade.
4. Collaboration on all levels, from international to regional to national is needed to deal with the problem.
5. It is ethical imperative to actively promote the implementation of stronger global hazardous waste legislation to establish environmental justice.



**Thank you**