

Ecopolitics in the Film Break Prison and Geopolitics: Connecting Social Injustice, Environmental Exploitation, and Political Dynamics Between Countries

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This study analyzes Break Prison from the perspectives of ecopolitics and geopolitics, focusing on the interconnections between social injustice, environmental exploitation, and international political dynamics. The background of this research is rooted in global phenomena where social inequality, unfair resource management, and the power struggle of stronger states over weaker countries or communities often trigger social and environmental conflicts. The study employs a qualitative approach using critical discourse analysis, identifying narrative elements, symbols, and character interactions in the series to understand how the film represents social, ecological, and geopolitical issues simultaneously. The findings reveal that Break Prison portrays social injustice through the marginalized conditions of prisoners, resource exploitation through strict surveillance and system manipulation, and geopolitical dynamics reflected in struggles for control and power dominance. The film illustrates how local issues can symbolize global conflicts, emphasizing the importance of strategy, solidarity, and ingenuity among marginalized groups in confronting oppressive systems. In conclusion, Break Prison functions not only as entertainment but also as a reflective medium linking ecopolitics and geopolitics, providing critical insights into the relationship between society, power, and resource management.

Keywords: Ecopolitics, Geopolitics, Social Injustice, Environmental Exploitation.

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1. Introduction

Over the past few decades, the world has faced a series of interconnected global challenges, including social injustice, resource exploitation, and political conflicts among nations. United nation states that more than 30% of the world's population lives in vulnerable conditions due to social inequality, extreme poverty, and unequal distribution of resources [1]. These phenomena not only affect the daily lives of communities but also weaken political and economic stability, particularly in developing regions. Uncontrolled human activities such as massive industrialization, deforestation, and exploitative economic practices have caused environmental degradation while reinforcing social inequalities, highlighting the complex relationship between social, environmental, and political issues on a global scale.

The exploitation of natural resources conducted without considering social and ecological impacts has resulted in widespread harm. Ecosystem damage, water and soil pollution, and the destruction of habitats not only affect nature but also the human populations that depend on these resources. Inequalities in access to basic rights, education, and employment emerge as direct consequences of these exploitative practices, creating a cycle of injustice that is difficult to break. This phenomenon underscores the urgency of analyzing the relationship between social inequality, environmental exploitation, and political decisions that affect community life [2].

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As the planet faces ecological collapse, social inequality becomes exacerbated. Those at the bottom of the socioeconomic ladder are most vulnerable to the ravages of environmental damage. It is these communities that often have the least access to healthcare, education, and resources, making it harder for them to adapt to the changing world around them. The unequal distribution of resources leads to a cycle of poverty and disenfranchisement, creating a stark contrast between the wealthy and the impoverished. This growing divide between the elite and the marginalized is not just a social issue but a political one, as those in power often perpetuate these inequalities for their own benefit.

Inequalities in access to basic rights such as healthcare, education, and employment are direct consequences of these exploitative practices. This interconnected system of injustice creates a vicious cycle that is hard to break. Political decisions often favor economic growth and profit over the well-being of people, leading to further environmental exploitation and worsening social inequalities. The urgent need to address the relationship between social inequality, environmental degradation, and political decision-making has never been clearer.

The TV series *Prison Break*, which serves as the focus of this study, presents a fictional yet relevant narrative for understanding dynamics of power and social injustice. The story centers on Michael Scofield, a brilliant engineer who designs an elaborate escape plan to save his brother, Lincoln Burrows, from execution after being framed in a high-level political conspiracy orchestrated by a secret organization known as "The Company." This context illustrates how political interests and power can directly impact the lives of individuals, particularly those in vulnerable positions [3].

One way to understand the dynamics of power, social injustice, and environmental exploitation is through popular culture, specifically TV series like *Prison Break*. While the series is fictional, it offers a compelling narrative that mirrors the real-world struggles of individuals caught in the web of systemic injustice. The story centers on Michael Scofield, a brilliant engineer who designs an elaborate escape plan to save his brother, Lincoln Burrows, from execution after being framed for a crime he did not commit. The conspiracy behind Lincoln's conviction, orchestrated by a secret organization known as "The Company," reveals the deep ties between political interests, power, and human lives.

At its core, *Prison Break* is a story of systemic injustice. Michael faces a corrupt legal system, abusive prison wardens, and fellow inmates with their own hidden agendas. These dynamics are reflective of real-world conditions where power structures often leave vulnerable individuals exposed to oppression and discrimination. The prison in the series serves as a metaphor for broader societal injustices, where marginalized communities are forced to develop strategies for survival. These individuals must form alliances and navigate a web of complex power dynamics to secure their freedom and dignity.

The political machinations in *Prison Break* highlight how decisions made by those in power can have profound and often harmful effects on the lives of everyday people. The series critiques a political system that prioritizes the interests of the powerful over the rights and welfare of individuals. This is not just a fictional problem; it's a pattern seen throughout history, where short-term economic gains and political control come at the expense of marginalized populations.

Systemic injustice becomes a central issue in the series. Michael faces a corrupt legal system, prison wardens who abuse their authority, and fellow inmates with their own agendas. These dynamics reflect real-world conditions, where imbalanced power structures leave vulnerable individuals exposed to oppression, discrimination, and inequality. The conflicts within the prison symbolize broader societal injustices, where communities must develop strategies, alliances, and survival tactics to withstand the pressures of an unfair system.

From an ecopolitical perspective, *Prison Break* provides analytical space to understand the relationship between politics, power, and social impact. Authorities in the series often make decisions that prioritize organizational interests and political gain over the well-being of individuals. This pattern mirrors exploitative practices in the real world, where short-term economic interests frequently override local communities and contribute to social injustice. Thus, the series can be read as a dramatic representation of how political decisions affect human lives and society [4].

Prison Break provides a lens through which we can understand the relationship between politics, power, and social impact. In the series, those in power often make decisions that benefit the elite while sacrificing the well-being of the common people. This mirrors the exploitative practices that occur in the real world, where political decisions are made based on economic interests and political gain rather than the welfare of the population.

While the series does not explicitly deal with environmental issues, it offers a subtle critique of the broader patterns of exploitation—whether it's the exploitation of people or natural resources. The power struggles and political interests depicted in *Prison Break* echo real-world struggles over resource control, state-level political strategies, and the ecological damage caused by unchecked industrialization. These dynamics are intertwined, with political interests often driving the exploitation of both humans and natural resources.

The geopolitical dynamics in *Prison Break* also serve as an allegory for real-world political interactions between powerful institutions and countries. Although the conflicts within the series appear to be local, such as Michael's attempt to free Lincoln, they have broader geopolitical implications. The influence of powerful organizations and political strategies extends beyond national borders, affecting global policies and the lives of millions. *Prison Break* demonstrates how the intersection of power struggles, resource control, and political decision-making shapes the lives of individuals and communities.

Although the series does not explicitly present environmental issues, its patterns of power domination and disregard for human welfare can be analyzed alongside the exploitation of natural resources. The struggle for power and political interests depicted in the series emphasizes how exploitation whether of humans or resources can lead to social and ecological harm. This reinforces the interconnectedness of social injustice, environmental exploitation, and unsustainable political policies. Geopolitical dynamics are also reflected through interactions between powerful institutions and cross-border interventions. Conflicts that appear local, such as Michael's effort to free Lincoln, carry broader implications, illustrating how political and economic interests influence interstate policies. The series offers an allegory of real-world situations where power struggles, resource control, and state-level political strategies intersect, affecting the lives of both small and large communities [5].

The series is rich with depictions of marginalized characters who lose access to basic rights and face imbalanced power structures. Michael and his fellow inmates must navigate an unfair system, building alliances and developing strategies for survival. These interactions are not just a reflection of individual resilience but a broader commentary on the systemic injustices that permeate society.

Social injustice in *Prison Break* is not limited to the prison system but extends to the wider society. The characters' struggles highlight how structural inequalities—whether in the criminal justice system, political arenas, or society at large—affect individuals' chances for success and survival. The series underscores that combating injustice requires not only individual capability and intelligence but also solidarity and a deep understanding of the existing power structures.

Through Michael's journey, we see the importance of strategy, loyalty, and intelligence in resisting oppressive systems. His relationships with other inmates and prison staff highlight the complexity of social

dynamics and the risks associated with every decision in an unjust system. *Prison Break* asserts that fighting injustice is a collective effort, one that requires both individual action and broader societal change.

Social injustice in the series is illustrated through the treatment of marginalized characters who lose access to basic rights and face imbalanced power structures. Michael and other characters must navigate an unfair system, build alliances, and develop strategies for survival. These interactions affirm that structural injustice affects not only individuals but also generates broader social tensions, including internal conflicts, competition, and moral dilemmas among the characters. As the protagonist, Michael Scofield shows how strategy, intelligence, and loyalty become tools to resist injustice. His relationships with other inmates and prison staff highlight the complexity of social dynamics, where each decision carries risks and consequences. The series asserts that fighting injustice requires a combination of individual capability, solidarity, and deep understanding of existing power systems.

Previous studies have often examined ecopolitics or geopolitics separately. Highlight the environmental impacts of political decisions but pay limited attention to social contexts. Soepandji [6] focuses on media representations of social issues but does not emphasize interactions with environmental and geopolitical dimensions. Kozák [7] examines environmental and geopolitical issues, yet gives minimal attention to social injustice. These gaps indicate the need for a more integrative analysis to understand the complex relationships among politics, power, and social impacts.

Previous studies on ecopolitics or geopolitics have often treated these issues in isolation, focusing on environmental impacts or social issues separately. However, *Prison Break* highlights the need for an integrative analysis that examines the complex relationships among power, politics, and social injustice. This is especially true in the context of global issues like climate change, resource exploitation, and political corruption, where the intersections between social, environmental, and political dynamics are critical to understanding the full scope of the problem.

The gaps in existing research are evident. Scholars like have examined the environmental impacts of political decisions but have not adequately considered the social dimensions. Similarly, Soepandji [6] focuses on media representations of social issues but does not explore the environmental and geopolitical contexts. These gaps indicate the need for a more comprehensive approach to understanding how global issues interact with each other and shape the world we live in.

Given these gaps in research and the lessons offered by *Prison Break*, this study aims to analyze how the series represents ecopolitics and connects it with geopolitical dynamics and social injustice. The goal is to provide a comprehensive understanding of the interactions between politics, power, and social impact and to highlight the relevance of fictional narratives in depicting complex global phenomena.

By exploring the intersections of social injustice, environmental exploitation, and political decisions, this research hopes to contribute to ecopolitical and geopolitical literature. More importantly, it aims to inform policymakers, activists, and communities about the interconnectedness of global challenges and the importance of addressing them in a holistic manner. The fight for social justice, environmental sustainability, and political accountability is a global effort, and *Prison Break* serves as a powerful reminder of the need for solidarity and strategic action to achieve meaningful change.

Given these gaps, *Prison Break* emerges as a relevant object of study because it is able to represent the complex interactions among social injustice, power dynamics, and strategic conflicts at both individual and systemic levels. Analyzing this series enables a more holistic understanding of how global issues can be reflected in popular media narratives, and offers a way to examine sociopolitical phenomena through stories that are accessible to the wider public.

Therefore, this study aims to analyze the representation of ecopolitics in *Prison Break* and connect it with geopolitical dynamics and social injustice. The main objective is to provide a comprehensive understanding of the interactions among power, politics, and social impact, as well as the relevance of fictional narratives in depicting complex global phenomena. This research is expected to contribute academically and practically to ecopolitical and geopolitical literature, as well as inform policymakers and communities concerned with social justice and sustainable resource management.

2. Literature Review And Problem Statement

Media Ecology Theory Shapes Social Reality

The media ecology theory proposed by Marshall McLuhan emphasizes that media possess the power to shape how humans think, feel, and understand the world. In the context of *Break Prison*, the series is not merely a form of entertainment but also a medium that shapes viewers' perceptions of social injustice and ecological issues [8]. McLuhan argues that media serve as an extension of human senses, meaning that media significantly influence how we interpret social and political environments. Through its narrative and symbolism, the series encourages viewers to understand not only the injustices inside the prison but also the broader realities reflected in international relations.

For example, the conditions of inmates who live with restrictions and deprivation can be interpreted as a representation of marginalized communities in the real world. These groups are often forced to live with limited resources and face environmental degradation that threatens their well-being. In this regard, *Break Prison* functions as a medium that conveys messages not only about prison life but also about the broader social and political structures that regulate, restrict, and exploit individuals, communities, and natural resources [9].

Geopolitics: Connecting Geography and Power

Geopolitics examines the relationship between geographic and political factors, and how elements such as location, natural resources, and topographical conditions influence a country's foreign policy and military strategy. Nations rich in natural resources or possessing strategic locations tend to have greater political power in international relations. With this advantage, these nations may exploit smaller or marginalized states, using their geographic superiority to control resources and strengthen their dominance on the global stage [10].

Break Prison reflects a metaphor for these international dynamics. The prison in the series can be understood as a symbol for smaller or marginalized states that, despite having resource potential, are trapped in injustices created by more powerful actors. The characters striving for freedom represent states or communities seeking equitable access to resources but who are often controlled or restricted by dominant forces. The series thus illustrates how local conflicts can mirror broader geopolitical tensions.

Critical Discourse Analysis: Revealing Power through Language and Symbols

Critical discourse analysis is employed to examine how the series uses language, symbols, and narratives to construct social and political realities that influence audiences. *Break Prison* portrays injustices within the prison system and connects them to broader inequalities occurring at the global level, including relations between states.

The dialogues and storyline do not merely depict physical violence or oppression against inmates but also highlight the formation of power and the ways it maintains the status quo by restricting access to basic rights such as freedom, justice, and a healthy environment. Through the discourse constructed within the prison—where power suppresses—the audience can understand symbolic conflicts that reflect wider

geopolitical dynamics, showing how local injustices often mirror patterns of inequality at the global level [11].

3. Method

This study employs a qualitative approach using critical discourse analysis to understand how *Break Prison* represents social injustice, environmental exploitation, and geopolitical dynamics. The qualitative method is chosen because it allows the researcher to explore meanings, symbols, and narratives embedded in the film in depth, while also connecting them to broader social and political contexts. The film was selected due to its complex narrative addressing issues of social inequality, resource competition, and power domination—topics that are highly relevant to ecopolitical and geopolitical studies.

The initial stage of the research involves selecting the film text, specifically identifying scenes, dialogues, characters, and symbols related to social injustice and environmental exploitation. The researcher watched the entire *Break Prison* series carefully, noting important moments that depict social conflict, inequality, and environmental impacts caused by authoritative or corporate actions. This step ensures that the analysis focuses on elements most relevant to the research theme [12].

Next, the analysis of discursive practices is conducted to examine how the film constructs narratives and symbols that portray social injustice and ecopolitics. The researcher analyzes character interactions, emerging conflicts, and the use of visual symbols or dialogues that highlight power hierarchies and inequality. This analysis enables an understanding of how local experiences inside the prison represent global issues such as resource distribution, environmental protection, and broader social disparities [13].

The subsequent stage involves connecting the representation of injustice in the film with real-world geopolitical dynamics. The researcher interprets the prison setting and marginalized characters as metaphors for weak states or communities in the international arena, where strategic positions, power, and access to resources determine the opportunities and limitations experienced by weaker actors. The validity of the findings is strengthened through data triangulation using relevant literature and reports. The final analysis is organized into key themes linking social injustice, environmental exploitation, and geopolitical dynamics, providing a comprehensive understanding of the ecopolitics presented in *Break Prison*.

4. Results And Discussion

Research analysis shows that *Break Prison* is not merely a thriller series about escaping from prison, but presents a complex narrative about social injustice, environmental exploitation, and geopolitical dynamics. The film intertwines individual conflicts with structural ones, illustrating how unequal systems and oppressive power shape the lives of inmates while reflecting broader inequalities that occur within society and between nations. Through its central characters, Michael Scofield and Lincoln Burrows, the audience is invited to understand that the struggle against injustice is not only about physical liberation, but also about confronting broader social and political structures, including resource competition, power control, and ecological impacts that are often overlooked. This narrative approach enables the film to serve as a reflective medium that connects local experiences with global issues, thus offering ecopolitical and geopolitical perspectives that resonate with real-world conditions.

Social Injustice

Break Prison explicitly depicts social injustice through the lives of prisoners trapped under an oppressive and corrupt prison system. For example, in Episode 1 of Season 1, Michael Scofield enters Fox River Penitentiary with a calculated plan to free his brother, Lincoln Burrows, who has been sentenced to death

for a murder he did not commit. This scene demonstrates how legal institutions and law enforcement can be manipulated by political power and larger institutions, creating structural injustice. The author emphasizes that this experience mirrors the real world, where marginalized groups often lose access to education, employment, and essential resources due to the interests of those in power [11].

Power inequality is further illustrated through interactions between inmates and corrupt guards, such as in Episode 3 of Season 1, where prisoners receive extra punishment for minor violations, while those with “connections” evade sanctions. This scene is presented as a metaphor for social inequality and the uneven distribution of power in society. Weaker inmates must rely on strategy, intelligence, and solidarity to survive, symbolizing resistance from marginalized groups against oppressive structures.

The analysis further reveals that the film connects social injustice with ecopolitical issues. In Episode 5 of Season 1, Michael and his peers struggle with minimal facilities, poor sanitation, and lack of basic needs. This situation parallels marginalized communities in the real world who must endure resource exploitation by more powerful actors. The film underscores that social injustice is not merely a local problem; it is tied to resource distribution, power control, and unfair environmental conditions, thus carrying global implications. Beyond individual struggle, the film highlights the importance of collective solidarity and strategic planning. In Episode 10 of Season 1, Michael collaborates with several other inmates to execute the escape plan, showing that marginalized groups can use creativity, cooperation, and strategic thinking to challenge oppressive systems. This becomes a metaphor for real-world states or communities that must unite and optimize limited resources to fight dominance from more powerful actors. Thus, *Break Prison* offers a critical view of social injustice while emphasizing the interconnectedness of power structures, resource distribution, and broader social dynamics [7].

Environmental Exploitation

In addition to highlighting social injustice, *Break Prison* also presents the theme of resource exploitation as part of a wider conflict. Several scenes show characters in power manipulating the prison system for personal gain, such as easier access to facilities and special privileges. These scenes serve as a metaphor for real-world environmental exploitation carried out by corporations or powerful nations, where weaker groups suffer the most. This exploitation is not only physical but also social, as it reinforces inequality and restricts access to basic rights and essential resources [4].

The ecological consequences depicted—although framed within a prison context—mirror global environmental issues. The prison’s poor conditions, inadequate sanitation, and limited facilities symbolize environmental degradation and the loss of access to vital natural resources. The film encourages viewers to understand that unjust resource management not only harms ecosystems but also exacerbates social inequality, as vulnerable groups are always the most severely affected.

The film emphasizes that environmental exploitation and social injustice are deeply interconnected. The struggle of inmates to obtain basic rights, including adequate living space, food, and freedom of movement, parallels the struggles of communities fighting to protect natural resources from more dominant actors. The analysis highlights the reciprocal relationship between resource control and social inequality: environmental destruction reinforces social injustice, while social injustice enables further resource exploitation.

Thus, the film illustrates how unjust resource management is often enforced through oppressive systems and structures. Scenes depicting competition for control, strict surveillance, and manipulation within the prison symbolize how unchecked power can damage the lives of individuals and communities. The analysis concludes that *Break Prison* effectively conveys ecopolitical messages by linking social injustice with

environmental exploitation and demonstrating how local issues can have broader national and global consequences.

Geopolitical Dynamics

From a geopolitical perspective, Fox River Prison can be interpreted as a symbolic representation of marginalized nations or regions in the international arena. In Episode 1 of Season 1, when Michael Scofield intentionally robs a bank to enter prison and free his brother who is framed by a political conspiracy orchestrated by “The Company” the scene illustrates how institutions meant to uphold justice are instead used as instruments of domination. This reflects real-world situations in which small or weak nations become victims of political intrigue and resource competition by more powerful states. Thus, the conflicts inside the prison become a metaphor for global power struggles over control of resources [7].

The film also demonstrates how local issues, such as social injustice and resource exploitation, can escalate into geopolitical tension. In Episode 5 of Season 1, when Michael faces pressure from corrupt guards and influential inmates, control over access and privileges becomes the focal point of conflict. This mirrors real-world geopolitical mechanisms, where power imbalances between strong and weak nations often lead to resource struggles, political interventions, and economic domination.

Michael and his group represent small nations or marginalized communities that must use strategic planning to defend their rights. In Episode 10 of Season 1, their complex escape plan requires cooperation, ingenuity, and exploitation of systemic weaknesses. This symbolizes how smaller states use strategy, diplomacy, and solidarity to challenge global dominance.

Furthermore, Episode 12 of Season 1 shows the group confronting internal and external obstacles, illustrating how unjust systems can generate prolonged conflicts that threaten community stability. The analysis concludes that *Break Prison* presents ecopolitical and geopolitical issues simultaneously, showing how social injustice, resource exploitation, and power struggles are interlinked.

Symbolism and Media Representation

The analysis highlights how *Break Prison* uses symbols, dialogue, and narrative structure to convey ecopolitical messages. Fox River Prison—portrayed with strict surveillance, oppressive regulations, and hierarchical systems—functions as a symbol of power structures that privilege a select few. Scenes where characters like Michael and Lincoln are heavily monitored or deprived of their rights serve as metaphors for global inequalities, where access to resources and basic rights determines the status of a group or nation.

The discourse built through dialogue reinforces social and ecopolitical messages. For example, in Episode 3 of Season 1, conversations between Michael and other inmates reveal uneven access to facilities and preferential treatment based on political influence or power. This dialogue reflects real-world power dynamics that regulate resource distribution and opportunities.

Narrative elements emphasizing strategy, resistance, and solidarity also serve as interpretive tools for understanding social and geopolitical issues. In Episode 10, Michael’s collaborative escape plan becomes a metaphor for marginalized communities or small nations that must unite and optimize limited resources to resist global dominance.

Ultimately, *Break Prison* successfully integrates themes of social injustice, environmental exploitation, and geopolitical tension. The analysis shows that the film is not merely about escaping prison but serves as a reflective medium that interweaves social, political, and environmental issues. Control over resources, power hierarchies, and their consequences on vulnerable groups are presented comprehensively, enabling viewers to see the interconnectedness of society, power, and resources. The film underscores the potential

of popular media to serve as an effective tool for ecopolitical and geopolitical analysis while raising awareness about social injustice and the importance of equitable resource management.

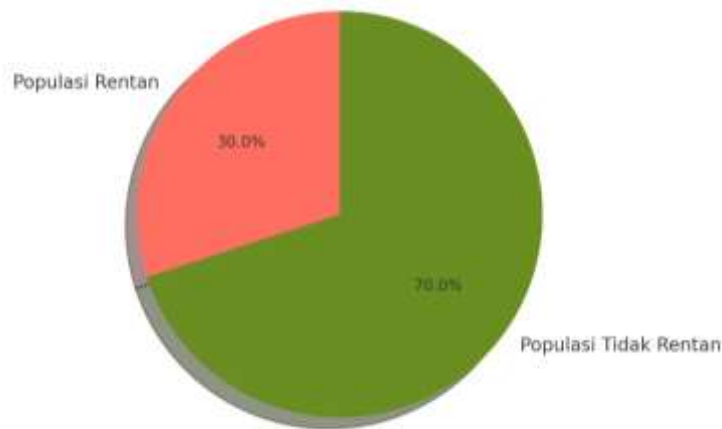


Fig 1. Percentage of Vulnerable Global Population (UN 2023)

Source: [1]

The world faces interrelated global challenges, including social injustice, resource exploitation, and political conflict between countries. United Nations, states that more than 30% of the world's population lives in vulnerable conditions due to social inequality, extreme poverty and unequal distribution of resources [1]. This phenomenon not only affects people's daily lives, but also weakens political and economic stability, especially in developing regions. Uncontrolled human activities, such as massive industrialization, deforestation, and exploitative economic practices, cause environmental degradation while strengthening social inequality, demonstrating the complex interconnection between social, environmental, and political issues at the global level.

5. Conclusion

This study has several limitations in terms of the scope of the research object, the amount of data, and the focus of analysis used. Therefore, the findings of this study cannot be generalized broadly to different contexts. Future researchers are recommended to expand the scope of the research object, increase the number of respondents or informants, and develop other relevant variables or aspects that have not been discussed in depth in this study.

By acknowledging these limitations, this study opens opportunities for further research to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the topic. Future studies are also expected to use more diverse methodological approaches so that the findings can be more relevant to social, technological, and practical developments in the future.

Based on the analysis, it can be concluded that *Break Prison* clearly represents ecopolitics by linking social injustice, resource exploitation, and political dynamics between nations. The series illustrates how imbalances of power and the unequal distribution of resources affect the lives of the prisoners, who symbolize marginalized communities in the real world. Scenes depicting strict surveillance, system manipulation, and struggles for control among characters portray how weaker groups must confront the dominance of stronger actors, both at the local level and within a global context. Through symbols, dialogue, and narrative progression, viewers are invited to understand that social inequality and environmental exploitation are interconnected factors that create conditions where geopolitical conflicts can emerge.

Furthermore, *Break Prison* emphasizes that local issues such as social injustice and environmental degradation can evolve into political dynamics between nations. The exploitation of resources and power domination depicted within the prison serves as a metaphor for real-world international relations, in which smaller nations or communities are often marginalized by the interests of more dominant actors. The series underscores that resource distribution, political control, and ecological impacts are deeply intertwined, suggesting that social, environmental, and geopolitical issues must be understood simultaneously. Therefore, the series becomes an effective reflective medium for understanding the relationship between ecopolitics and geopolitics, offering critical insight into social justice and resource management at a global level.

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