***GLOBAL CLIMATE CHANGE POLITICS: CAN INDIA BECOME A MAJOR PLAYER?***

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The perspective on global climate change politics brings forth the debate on climate change which is inherently a political issue taking into consideration the interrelationship between power-politics and conflict of interests .As this is a worldwide phenomenon, the actions carried out by state actors mirror the contested approach to certain challenges associated with global climate change politics. It is essential to recognize that the climate change debate, much like nearly all environmental issues, fundamentally revolves around cultural differences, worldviews, and ideological perspectives (Hoffman, 2012: 32). In this chapter, we center our attention on India's journey from being a vocal protestor on the outskirts of global climate policy discussions to an active participant in shaping international initiatives aimed at addressing climate change. India's shifts in climate change negotiations are just one facet of its broader adjustments in foreign policy, emphasizing a greater commitment to managing global resources responsibly. Through emerging and bolstered soft power diplomacy, India has secured a stronger negotiating position and, simultaneously, taken on a more demanding role in the global climate action agenda. The question therefore arises, in the present scenario is India in a better position to negotiate and carve a place for itself globally in climate policy debates?

***Key words: climate change; climate policy; climate politics; foreign policy; India***

***Theoretical expositions on global climate change politics***

The theoretical framework concerning climate change politics is a subject of debate. Numerous conceptual analyses, theoretical endeavors, and perceptual interpretations have been put forth to address the climate change problem. The fundamental inequity inherent in this arrangement poses a significant challenge. Within the context of climate change, the matter of justice can be examined from various perspectives, including the equitable distribution of emission reductions, the fair allocation of financial responsibilities among nations, the unequal distribution of adverse consequences affecting countries and populations, considerations for future generations, and imbalances in the power dynamics inherent in the negotiation process for the establishment of the global climate change framework.

The systematic examination of global environmental politics commenced in the late 1970s, coinciding with G. Hardin's influential work, 'The Tragedy of the Commons,' which established the connection between environmental politics and economics. This laid the foundation for climate change politics, which came to the forefront in the late 1980s. The emergence of global environmental politics as a distinct field of study within International Relations is a relatively recent development when compared to traditional core topics such as warfare, peace, and the global economic order. Academic interest in environmental concerns, particularly climate change, gained prominence in the late 1980s. Analyzing global climate politics using theoretical frameworks from International Relations theory, it can be viewed as a complex interplay of conflict and cooperation. Notably, realism/neorealism, liberalism/neoliberalism, and constructivism offer valuable insights into understanding the dynamics of climate politics.

Addressing the global climate change challenge essentially involves navigating the realms of conflict and cooperation. These theoretical frameworks have been employed to elucidate the intricacies of climate politics. This approach has, to a certain degree, facilitated the identification of the nature and methods through which cooperation can be achieved and the types of objectives pursued by global political actors. In the context of climate change politics, these theories seek to ascertain the potential for both conflict and cooperation and the benefits sought by various stakeholders. The perspectives embraced by these actors within the field of International Relations significantly influence their approach to climate change negotiations. The overarching objective is to maximize the benefits for each participating actor engaged in the realm of global environmental governance.

Top of Form

Standing at the current juncture the political discourse around climate change is no longer about carbon emissions and differential responsibilities, but about values, culture, worldviews and ideology. Without addressing the question of political and social perspective of each of the participants in global governance there will be greater defiance to bring compliance among all the stakeholders on global warming. Andrew J. Hoffman’s critical assessment of the issue has put forward a rather intriguing inquiry regarding “climate science as culture wars” – To quote “without attending to the values that climate change threatens -the greater resistance there will be to a social consensus on global warming”.

***Interplay of scientific-political-social dimensions of climate change***

Exploring the interaction between the scientific understanding of climate change and its counterpart, the political and social context of global climate change, along with the involvement of global environmental governance for the global commons, is a fascinating endeavor. Over time, scientific insights into climate change have become increasingly precise, with a substantial body of research pinpointing anthropogenic factors as the driving force behind climate change. Consequently, although there isn't yet irrefutable scientific proof in the strictest sense, the prevailing scientific investigation overwhelmingly affirms both the existence of climate change and its attribution to human activities. Scholars have raised questions about the paradox arising from the wealth of scientific knowledge in climate science not translating into influential actions within the realm of global environmental governance. Is it the knowledge about the “historical burden” that is the central bone of contention between the developed and developing group of nations or is it the social – political perceptions, ethics and value systemof the people associated with climate change that is creating setbacks to bring consensus on climate change.

It is an established fact that not every government has embraced the Paris Agreement wholeheartedly; some have not even signed it, and others are contemplating withdrawal. However, the burden and responsibility in the battle against climate change are not equally distributed among all countries. The Paris climate agreement, which took effect in 2017, garnered signatures from 194 countries, including the European Union, with 123 countries ratifying it. While the agreement stipulates that it becomes legally binding for signatory nations, only a few have initiated plans to ensure that global temperatures do not exceed a 2°C increase. The principles of equity, as outlined in the agreement's provisions, play a pivotal role in shaping the obligations of the treaty. These principles revolve around climate change being an issue of justice arising from the unequal distribution of its adverse impacts on countries and generations, varying contributions to greenhouse gas emissions, and differing capacities to cope with the consequences. Another aspect of equity emerges from our understanding of climate science and how it will affect future generations and societies with their inherent value systems.

Given that the looming threat of climate change has primarily resulted from emissions by early industrializing nations such as the UK, Germany, and the US, these nations should take on the responsibility of addressing the consequences of a shifting climate and bear the majority of the load in mitigating emissions. Studies indicate that the wealthiest 20 percent of the global population have historically been responsible for as much as 80 percent of cumulative emissions. When assessing those actors frequently regarded as the originators of this burden, namely, the highly industrialized nations across the globe, it becomes crucial to consider historically established notions of equity, justice, and responsibility. While on the other hand there are developing countries, emerging economies, the Group of 77 and China whose shared identity have organized themselves to reject the primary responsibility for climate change mitigations. The main contention or possible conflict is between the prospects of development and climate change prevention and mitigation.

A growing global consensus acknowledges that climate change is imposing substantial pressure on the development path of nations worldwide, leading to evident economic, social, and environmental consequences. The World Economic Forum's Global Risks Report 2020 highlights that, in terms of likelihood, the top five risks over the next decade are all climate-related. These encompass human-made environmental disasters, climate action failure, natural disasters, biodiversity loss, and extreme weather events. The existing mitigation regime faces challenges due to disputes surrounding the cost and distribution of responsibilities among parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). The UNFCCC mandates that all parties accept mitigation responsibilities. Additionally, disagreements persist over the allocation of climate funds for mitigation purposes, with no overarching consensus on which group—developed, developing, or emerging economies—should benefit more.

***LocatingIndiain climate change politics debate***

India's journey in the realm of environmental politics and climate policy has been substantial, beginning with its participation in the 1972 United Nations Conference on the Human Environment in Stockholm, which marked the inception of global discussions on the nexus between economic growth, environmental concerns, and human well-being. Over the past thirty years, India has evolved into a key international player in climate policy negotiations and debates on climate politics. The country has played a pivotal role in these negotiations, transitioning from a position of protest on the periphery of global climate policy discussions to actively shaping international efforts to address climate change. Over time, India's approach has matured, moving from rigid negotiation stances to a more flexible, liberal, and accommodating stance on climate-related matters. As an emerging economy, India is now cognizant of the need to monitor its carbon emissions. While its historical contributions to emissions have been relatively low, it recognizes the potential for increased emissions in the future, which could significantly impact its carbon footprint.

Changes in India's approach to climate change negotiations have been intertwined with its broader adjustments in foreign policy, reflecting a growing commitment to taking on increased responsibility in managing global shared resources. India's climate policy is intricately linked to its overarching foreign policy priorities and objectives. On the global stage, India has been instrumental in shaping important concepts and ideas during the initial phases and has subsequently adopted a more adaptable approach to climate governance. Over time, India has progressively integrated climate concerns into its domestic policies, with the aim of incorporating climate considerations into its development agenda. This internal approach is then mirrored in India's international stance on climate change negotiations.

India's approach to climate change negotiations is anchored in a delicate balance between the principles of equity and co-benefits, which plays a pivotal role in elucidating many of India's actions in the realm of global climate governance. To comprehend the evolution of India's climate policy, one must consider it within the broader context of its foreign policy strategy. This perspective posits that India's involvement in international climate politics can be best understood by situating its climate policy as a subset of its foreign policy agenda. As we move forward, closely monitoring Indian foreign policy objectives will offer valuable insights into India's role in global climate action.

The principle of "common but differentiated responsibilities," integral to the UNFCCC for negotiation, was initially proposed by India. It aimed to establish common ground amid the contrasting stances of countries in the global North and South regarding emissions reduction obligations. India has effectively emerged as a significant player in climate change politics, successfully bridging diverse groups of nations in international forums, notably bringing the G77 and China to the negotiating table with the developed countries of the North. India's climate negotiators have embraced the historical responsibility of the North and per capita carbon emissions, underpinning India's foundational stance in the initial climate change negotiations.

Top of Form

India's firm position on climate change was resolutely established during the 1972 United Nations Conference on the Human Environment. The then-Indian Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi, initiated an intellectual tradition in Indian climate policy discourse. India's standpoint emphasized that it would not compromise socio-economic development for the sake of environmental protection. Additionally, it accused the developed countries in the North of being responsible for global environmental problems. Indira Gandhi's address at the conference mirrored the ideological and ethical standpoint of the "Voices from the South." This standpoint was unflinching in confronting the Western world and refused to shoulder the historical burdens of the North.

Another influential report that solidified India's ideological stance on climate policy was published by the Centre for Science and Environment (CSE) titled 'Global Warming in an Unequal World.' This report accused developed countries of "carbon colonialism" and contended that they should bear the historical responsibility for carbon emissions. The report further argued that the per capita allocation of emissions should serve as the metric for apportioning responsibility for climate mitigation. This principle was accepted during the Rio Summit and has been acknowledged in Article 3 (Common But Differentiated Responsibilities) of the UNFCCC Convention in 1992.

The first Conference of Parties (COP1) on climate change took place in Berlin in 1995. India effectively broke the deadlock surrounding emission reduction targets for the year 2000 during this conference. India rallied G77 countries to unite and set apart OPEC nations, ultimately securing a target of a 20% reduction in emissions for industrialized countries by 2000 compared to their 1990 levels. This landmark achievement is widely recognized as the Berlin Mandate.

India aligned itself with the Group of 77, a coalition of developing nations that called upon developed countries to address climate change issues. India argued that developing nations might consider taking voluntary commitments contingent on receiving financial assistance and technology transfers from industrialized nations. Subsequent to the Rio Summit, India remained actively engaged in global climate negotiations, with its contributions being instrumental in the successful formulation of the Berlin mandate in 1995. This mandate served as a guiding framework for two years of negotiations to create a legal instrument focused on mitigation actions by developed countries.

The negotiations eventually led to the formation of the Kyoto Protocol in 1997, which mandated Annex I parties of the UNFCCC (i.e., developed countries) to commit to "quantified emission limitation and reduction objectives," while exempting developing nations from legally binding commitments (UNFCCC 1997).

In the subsequent COPs, where emissions trading and carbon markets became significant points of contention, India adopted a more defensive stance. It even went so far as to slow down negotiations needed to bring the Kyoto Protocol to the center stage of discussions. This position was shared by many of the G77 countries. However, after COP8, which took place in New Delhi in 2002, India altered its position on the clean development mechanism (CDM) outlined in the Kyoto Protocol. This change eventually led to the establishment of the National CDM Authority in 2003. It marked a positive development, signifying India's recognition of the necessity to incorporate climate policy into its domestic agenda.

The Bali Action Plan (COP13), which concluded in Copenhagen in 2009, resulted in the establishment of a legally binding agreement after two years of deliberation. The Bali Roadmap introduced the key principle of "nationally appropriate mitigation actions," reflecting India's evolving stance in climate negotiations. While it continued to emphasize common but differentiated responsibilities, India was now open to self-imposed targets that would prevent its per capita emissions from surpassing those of developed countries in the long term. This represented a more cooperative approach to emissions targets compared to India's traditionally defensive posture in previous decades. The launch of the National Action Plan on Climate Change in 2008 embodied this new commitment to nationally determined targets. This process reached its climax in 2009 when India pledged at the Copenhagen meeting to reduce emissions in relation to per unit GDP by 20% to 25% below 2005 levels by 2020.

From 2010 (COP16) to 2015 (COP21), the developed countries, particularly led by the USA, primarily focused on formulating a new global climate agreement. They advocated for replacing the Kyoto Protocol, which was "legally binding" and strictly "differentiated," with a new framework that was "more voluntary," "less differentiated," and followed a "bottom-up," "pledge and review" approach. Additionally, they aimed to encourage developing countries to voluntarily establish their emissions reduction targets.

During the COP21 negotiations in Paris, both the North and South divisions exhibited a willingness to participate in the Paris climate agreement. This was because the agreement offered flexibility and space for them to determine and decide the extent to which they were willing and capable of contributing to the common goal of collective climate action.

***India’s contribution to Climate Change***

* The National Action Plan on Climate Change (NAPCC), introduced in June 2008, presents a framework outlining current and prospective policies and initiatives aimed at addressing climate mitigation and adaptation. This plan delineates eight fundamental "national missions" set to continue through 2017, each focusing on distinct areas: Solar Energy, Enhanced Energy Efficiency, Sustainable Habitat, Water, Sustaining the Himalayan Ecosystem, Green India, Sustainable Agriculture, and Strategic Knowledge for Climate Change. It is important to note that a significant number of these missions prioritize adaptation efforts.
* The National Clean Energy Fund (NCEF) was established by the Government of India in 2010 with the objective of supporting and advancing clean energy projects and financing research endeavors related to clean energy within the nation. This fund's financial resources are accumulated through the imposition of a levy, initially set at INR 50 per tonne of domestically produced or imported coal, which was subsequently raised to INR 100 in 2014.
* India has set ambitious targets for its renewable energy capacity, aiming to triple it by 2022 and intends to generate 40 percent of its power from non-fossil sources by 2030. Furthermore, it aims to lower its emissions intensity of GDP by 33 to 35 percent by 2030 compared to 2005 levels. However, CAT categorizes India as 'medium.' According to CAT, these goals might not be sufficiently ambitious to limit global warming to below the 2-degree Celsius target, unless other countries also undertake more significant efforts in this regard.
* As part of the Paris Agreement, India has pledged to meet three specific commitments. First, it aims to reduce its greenhouse gas emission intensity of its GDP by 33-35% below the levels seen in 2005 by the year 2030. Simultaneously, India plans to ensure that 40% of its power generation capacity is derived from non-fossil fuel sources. Additionally, India will work towards establishing an extra 'carbon sink,' which involves absorbing 2.5 to 3 billion tonnes of CO2 equivalent through the expansion of forest and tree cover by 2030.
* The government is allocating an expenditure of approximately Rs 2,000 crore in public funds for its ambitious solar energy initiative. This move aligns with the government's commitment to achieving the goal of producing 40 percent of its power from renewable sources.
* Top of Form
* The International Solar Alliance (ISA) was initiated on November 30, 2015, during the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Paris. India and France jointly launched this initiative in the presence of former United Nations Secretary-General, Mr. Ban Ki-Moon, with the aim of promoting clean energy generation.
* Bharat Stage (BS) Emission Norms have been introduced to address the issue of vehicle emissions, a major contributor to air pollution. The journey began with the implementation of the BS 2000 (Bharat Stage 1) vehicle emission norms in April 2000, followed by the BS-II norms in 2005. In 2010, BS-III norms were adopted across the nation. However, in a move to align with global best practices, the government decided to skip BS V and leapfrog to the more stringent BS-VI norms in 2016.

***India’s current strategy on climate change***

Currently, India is employing a strategy at international climate negotiations that many have described as flexible, cooperative, and mixed. This marks a departure from its previous stance, which was more rooted in a "strictly differentiated responsibilities" approach and a reluctance to "share the historical burden of global commons." The present approach is firmly based on the nation's historical support for differentiated responsibilities but is characterized by a more adaptable perspective on emissions reduction. Over the past three decades of climate negotiations, India has assumed the role of a deal-maker during critical junctures. This is an extension of its commitment to striking a balance between economic growth and development objectives following COP21, while also fulfilling its climate change commitments on both the domestic and international fronts.

Under the guidance of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, India developed its INDC, outlining post-2020 climate actions, including: (i) achieving a 33-35 percent reduction in the 'emissions intensity' of its GDP by 2030, compared to 2005 levels, (ii) increasing the share of non-fossil fuel-based electricity to 40 percent by 2030, with support from technology transfer and low-cost international finance mechanisms like the Green Climate Fund, (iii) establishing an additional carbon sink of 2.5 to 3 billion tonnes of CO2 by 2030, and (iv) During COP26 in November 2021, India made a commitment to reach "Net Zero" emissions and set significant milestones to prioritize this goal.

India's climate policy is delineated in various policy documents, sector-specific strategies, and legislative measures, with the National Action Plan for Climate Change (NAPCC) serving as the overarching framework. Recent developments in the energy sector have introduced significant policy documents and Acts, including the National Electricity Plan 2023 (NEP2023), the National Green Hydrogen Mission (2023), and the recently amended Energy Conservation Act (2022). These documents and Acts play a pivotal role in shaping the energy sector and advancing green energy for sustainable development. While the world grapples with the challenges of climate change, developing economies like India face particular vulnerabilities. Consequently, considering climate risk as a significant aspect is essential for formulating national and economic policies, along with reorienting financial strategies, which is imperative for a growing economy like India. The potential for India to assume a crucial role in climate politics in the forthcoming decades is a promising prospect for this emerging economy.

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