

Climate Change and International Politics: Cooperation or Conflict

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Abstract

Climate change has become one of the biggest global challenges of this century, triggering significant impacts across multiple sectors, including economics, politics and the environment. This research aims to analyze the dynamics of international politics in responding to climate change, focusing on the potential for cooperation and conflict between countries. Using a qualitative approach based on literature review, this research explores the role of developed and developing countries in the framework of the Paris Agreement, and identifies obstacles and opportunities in the implementation of global climate policies. The results show that while there are opportunities for international cooperation through climate agreements, there are still tensions between developed and developing countries over emissions reduction responsibilities and financing. This conflict of interest is an obstacle to effective implementation, especially in meeting international commitments. The research suggests that increased commitments from major countries, enforcement of international rules and a more inclusive and equitable approach to diplomacy are necessary to achieve sustainable climate solutions. Thus, international cooperation remains necessary to address this global challenge.

Keywords: Climate Change, International Politics, Paris Agreement, Conflict Of Interest

Introduction

Climate change is a major political challenge that significantly affects international relations and cooperation. The UNFCCC and the Kyoto Protocol are important multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs) aimed at addressing this crisis; however, they have often failed to deliver effective results amidst the increasing climate threats (Lila Prasad Sharma, 2024). The political dimensions of climate change shape negotiations, leading to conflicts over resources and responsibilities, particularly affecting developing countries that face higher vulnerabilities (Jürgen Orasche, 2024). These countries need to shift towards sustainable development pathways that prioritize renewable energy and conservation efforts to reduce their risks (Govinda Prasad Guragain , 2024).

As climate change becomes more urgent, traditional national interests are becoming less relevant, underscoring the need for global cooperation to effectively address the impacts of climate change (Reza Hafezi , 2024). The interaction between international climate policy and multilateral negotiations is critical to foster collaboration and address the multiple challenges posed by climate change, including food security, public health, and migration. Understanding

these political dynamics is critical to developing solutions that go beyond mere agreement, ultimately leading to real environmental benefits.

The international political landscape around climate change is characterized by both collaborative efforts and significant tensions. The Paris Agreement exemplifies a global commitment in which countries have pledged to reduce carbon emissions and limit global warming, highlighting a collective approach to combating climate change (Govinda Prasad Guragain, 2024). However, this cooperation is complicated by stark inequalities in climate change contributions and impacts. Developing countries, despite their minimal share of global emissions, are disproportionately affected by climate change, raising ethical concerns about climate justice (Francesco Gaeta, 2024). These countries need substantial support, including access to climate finance and international climate funding, to effectively mitigate and adapt to climate impacts (Oluwatoni Honour AFINJUOMO, 2024).

Differences in responsibility and vulnerability can fuel tensions, as developed countries are often seen as historically responsible for the majority of emissions, while developing countries bear the brunt of the consequences (Yulia Yamineva, 2024). Thus, while there is a framework for cooperation, the challenge remains in ensuring equitable solutions that meet the needs of the most vulnerable populations, ultimately determining whether global collaboration can prevail over national interests and conflicts. International cooperation on climate change is critical because it is inherently transboundary, requiring collective solutions that transcend national boundaries (Claudio Forner, 2024). However, this cooperation is often hampered by differences in national interests and economic policies, especially between developed and developing countries. Developed countries, which have historically benefited from industrialization, have often shown reluctance to adopt measures that could hinder their economic growth (Claudio Forner , 2024). In contrast, developing countries have argued for a more equitable approach, advocating the principle of Common but Differentiated Responsibility (CBDR), which recognizes their need for economic development while imposing lower obligations on them regarding emission reductions (Massimo Ferrari Minesso, 2024). In addition, financial mechanisms such as the Green Climate Fund (GCF) are critical to supporting developing countries in their climate initiatives, but these funds often fall short of meeting the actual needs for adaptation and mitigation efforts (Oluwatoni Honour AFINJUOMO,2024). The Global Environment Facility (GEF) also plays a critical role in facilitating developing countries' participation in climate initiatives, emphasizing the importance of international cooperation in addressing this challenge (Sylvain Lehmann,2024).

Thus, addressing these inequalities and fostering collaboration is critical for effective climate action.

Literature Review

International Relations Theory in the Context of Climate Change

a. Neorealism Theory

This theory emphasizes that countries as the main actors in international politics will always prioritize their national interests and security. In the context of climate change, neorealists argue that global uncertainty and differences in interests between developed and developing countries can trigger tensions. Research conducted by Falkner (2016) shows that geopolitical competition and the struggle for resources due to climate change, such as access to water and energy, can exacerbate conflicts between countries.

b. Institutional Neoliberalism

This theory focuses on the importance of international cooperation and the role of global institutions in addressing common problems, including climate change. A study by Keohane and Victor (2011) states that climate change requires multilateral cooperation because of its cross-border nature, and international institutions such as the UN, through the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), play an important role in regulating collective action to reduce the impacts of climate change.

c. International Regime Theory

This approach highlights the importance of the formation of international regimes in creating common rules and norms that can guide the behavior of countries. Research by Bodansky (2015) examines the role of international climate regimes, such as the Kyoto Protocol and the Paris Agreement, in fostering global cooperation. However, Bodansky notes that the success of these regimes often depends on the commitment of major countries and how effectively compliance mechanisms are implemented.

International Cooperation in Climate Change

Several studies have discussed the importance of international cooperation in addressing climate change. According to research by Ostrom (2010), the challenge of climate change cannot be solved by one country alone, so effective global coordination is needed. However, Ostrom also notes that although climate change is a global problem, its solutions must involve local and regional actions that are tailored to the context of each country. In addition, Victor (2011) states that international climate cooperation is often hampered by differences in interests between developed and developing countries. Developed countries, which are the largest

emitters in history, are often faced with a moral and political responsibility to lead mitigation efforts. However, developing countries that are still in the economic growth stage tend to be reluctant to limit the use of fossil fuels that are considered vital to their development.

Conflict and Inequality in Responding to Climate Change

On the other hand, there is an argument that climate change can trigger international conflict. According to Homer-Dixon (1999), climate change can increase the scarcity of natural resources, such as water and land, which in turn can exacerbate tensions between countries. More recent studies have also confirmed the relationship between climate change and conflict, especially in vulnerable regions such as Sub-Saharan Africa and the Middle East, where the impact of climate change on resource scarcity triggers political instability (Burke, Hsiang, & Miguel, 2015).

In addition to conflicts over natural resources, inequality in the distribution of climate change impacts is also a source of tension. Developing countries, which are often most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, such as sea level rise, natural disasters, and changing weather patterns, feel that they have to bear a disproportionate burden compared to their contribution to global emissions. This has given rise to debates about climate justice and common but differentiated responsibilities as formulated in the Kyoto Protocol and the Paris Agreement (Okereke & Coventry, 2016).

The Role of International Institutions and Civil Society

International institutions such as the United Nations (UN) and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) play an important role in facilitating dialogue and cooperation between countries in addressing climate change. According to research by Betsill and Corell (2008), NGOs have become key actors in international negotiation processes, putting pressure on governments to take more ambitious actions to reduce carbon emissions and adapt to the impacts of climate change. They also play a role in raising public awareness and supporting policy implementation at the local and national levels.

International financial institutions such as the World Bank and the Green Climate Fund also provide financial support to developing countries to finance climate mitigation and adaptation projects. However, the distribution of these funds is often a source of dispute, with developing countries complaining about slow disbursement of funds and uncertain access to financial assistance (Pickering, Jotzo, & Wood, 2015).

Challenges and Future Prospects

Despite progress in global efforts to address climate change, major challenges remain. Research by Hale, Held, and Young (2013) shows that the success of international cooperation on climate change depends on increasing transparency, accountability, and cross-sector coordination. Meanwhile, countries must find a balance between economic growth and environmental commitments, and strengthen institutional capacity in dealing with this issue.

In the future outlook, a study by Matthews and Caldeira (2008) emphasized that without more ambitious actions, increasing global warming could worsen global instability, trigger more conflicts, and increase pressure on the international political system. Therefore, a more inclusive, fair, and collaborative approach is urgently needed to prevent the negative impacts of climate change on global peace and security.

Methods

This study uses a qualitative approach that aims to understand the dynamics of international politics in responding to climate change, with a focus on aspects of cooperation and conflict. This study is descriptive-analytical using a case study method. Case studies are chosen because they allow for in-depth analysis of political interactions between countries in the context of climate change.

Results and Discussion

International Political Dynamics in Responding to Climate Change

This study found that the issue of climate change has become one of the central topics in international diplomacy, with two main dynamics visible: growing global cooperation but accompanied by tensions and conflicts of interest between developed and developing countries. Analysis of documents such as the Paris Agreement and negotiations at the Conference of the Parties (COP) shows that there is an agreement among most countries to reduce carbon emissions globally. However, the implementation of the agreement has encountered many obstacles, especially related to the differences in responsibility and capacity between rich and poor countries.

- a. Global Cooperation through the Paris Agreement: One of the important results of this study is the recognition that the Paris Agreement is a crucial platform for cooperation in efforts to mitigate climate change. Most countries agree that mitigating and adapting to climate change requires collective efforts. In this agreement, there is a global commitment to keep the increase in the earth's temperature below 2 degrees Celsius, with maximum efforts to limit it to 1.5 degrees Celsius. This agreement shows that climate change is no longer just an

environmental issue, but also a global political and economic issue that involves the interests of various countries.

- b. **Conflict Between Developed and Developing Countries:** Despite cooperation, the study also found that there is a conflict of interest between developed and developing countries regarding responsibility in addressing climate change. Developing countries such as India and Indonesia argue that they still need time and opportunity to develop their economies before fully adopting stringent emission reduction measures. On the other hand, developed countries such as the United States and the European Union are concerned that without a firm commitment from developing countries, the global target to reduce global warming will not be achieved.

The Role of Geopolitics in Climate Change

The study also found that geopolitics plays an important role in formulating international climate change policies. Major countries such as the United States, China, and the European Union have significant influence on the direction of global policies related to climate change. However, differences in geopolitical interests often trigger conflicts that impact the negotiation process.

Global Leadership of China and the United States: The United States and China, as the world's two largest emitters, have strategic positions in climate change negotiations. When the Paris Agreement was agreed, both countries showed their willingness to play a leading role in global efforts to address climate change. However, the United States' decision to withdraw from the Paris Agreement during the Donald Trump administration has sparked international tensions, affecting the credibility and effectiveness of the agreement. On the other hand, China continues to expand its role in climate change diplomacy, while remaining focused on its own economic growth.

b. The European Union as a Climate Leader: The European Union has emerged as one of the most consistent global actors in pushing for progressive environmental policies. The study found that the EU acts as a bridge between developed and developing countries, especially in terms of providing funds for climate adaptation and technology transfer. However, the EU's political power is still limited if it is not supported by other major countries, such as the United States and China.

Challenges and Barriers to International Cooperation

Despite the global agreement, the study shows that there are various challenges facing the implementation of international climate change policies. One of the biggest challenges is the economic inequality between rich and developing countries.

- a. **Financing and Technology Transfer Issues:** Developing countries have argued that they need financial and technological assistance from developed countries to switch to cleaner energy and adapt to the impacts of climate change. The Green Climate Fund, which was established to help developing countries, is still struggling to meet its funding targets. Data from the study shows that the \$100 billion per year promised to be disbursed since 2020 has not been fully fulfilled, causing tension in international forums.
- b. **Lack of Compliance with Emissions Commitments:** Most countries, especially developing countries, are struggling to meet their emission reduction targets. Several countries such as Brazil and Indonesia, which have extensive tropical forests, are faced with the dilemma of maintaining economic growth and protecting the environment. The ongoing deforestation in these countries exacerbates the impact of global climate change and has become a point of conflict in international negotiations.

Opportunities to Enhance Global Cooperation

Despite the conflict of interest, this study also found opportunities to enhance international cooperation in addressing climate change. Some steps that can be taken to strengthen global cooperation include:

- a. **Strengthening Climate Diplomacy**
Countries need to strengthen climate diplomacy efforts by placing more emphasis on multilateral approaches. Forums such as the COP should remain the main platform for negotiations, but they need to be accompanied by more intensive dialogue outside of these formal forums. Large countries should lead these efforts by prioritizing global interests rather than purely domestic interests.
- a. **Emphasis on Climate Justice**
One increasingly popular concept in climate diplomacy is climate justice, which emphasizes that developed countries that contribute greatly to global warming have a greater responsibility to fund mitigation and adaptation efforts in developing countries. If this concept is better integrated into international negotiations, the chances of reaching a more equitable and sustainable consensus may increase.

Research Implications

The results of this study have several important implications in the context of international relations and climate policy:

- a. **The Need for a Flexible Approach in Negotiations:** Climate negotiations must take into account the different economic and political conditions in each country. One-size-fits-all

policies cannot be applied, and negotiations must be more inclusive and flexible, providing space for developing countries to grow economically while still contributing to reducing emissions.

- b. The Role of Non-State Actors: This study also found that non-state actors, such as non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and private companies, play an important role in accelerating climate mitigation efforts. In many cases, these actors are quicker to adapt to green policies and even influence national policies.

Conclusion

This study examines the dynamics of international politics in responding to climate change, highlighting both opportunities for global cooperation and potential conflicts between countries. From the analysis, it can be concluded that although climate change has become an important issue in international diplomacy, the implementation of global policies faces various challenges. Developed and developing countries are still caught in a conflict of interest, especially regarding the responsibility for reducing emissions and financial assistance. Developed countries demand stronger commitments from developing countries, while developing countries argue that they need financial and technological support to transition to a green economy.

However, despite the tensions, the Paris Agreement is one of the prominent examples of global cooperation, showing that with the right commitments, international cooperation in dealing with climate change can still be realized. Leadership from major countries such as the United States, China, and the European Union is very influential in shaping global climate change policy. On the other hand, non-compliance with emission commitments and lack of funding for developing countries are significant obstacles.

To strengthen international cooperation in dealing with climate change, this study recommends increasing funding from developed countries, enforcing a stronger international legal framework, and a more inclusive and flexible diplomatic approach. Thus, although major challenges remain, the opportunity to reach a more just and effective global consensus remains open if international actors are willing to collaborate more closely and in the spirit of climate justice.

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