



Bandaranaike Centre
for
International Studies



BCIS Emerging Scholars' Symposium
'Empowering thinkers of Tomorrow'

International Relations in an Age of Climate Crisis

Emerging Scholars' Symposium 2026

September 03, 2026
Colombo, Sri Lanka

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Message from the Executive Director



Once again, for the 9th consecutive year, young researchers under the age of 35 from Sri Lanka and across South Asia rose to the challenge of looking at international relations from a different, contemporary perspective. Maybe the incentive to research and write about this year's Emerging Scholars' Symposium theme "International Relations in an age of Climate Crisis" was rooted in the memory of Cyclone Ditwah that devastated large areas of Sri Lanka at the end of 2025 and made many people, especially in the hill country, homeless. Or maybe it was the recognition that the geopolitics underpinning Gaza, Venezuela, Cuba, the Ukraine-Russia war, the US-Iran conflict around the Straits of Hormuz, the use of Lethal Autonomous Weapons were distracting from state commitments to climate action.

Whatever the inspiration, we are really pleased that initially over one hundred young people from Sri Lanka and across the South Asian region submitted abstracts to the BCIS. Congratulations to them all! Not all the abstracts made it to the final round of full paper submission and slightly fewer were accepted for presentation at the Symposium on September 03, 2026. However, it is important to commend every single researcher who made the effort to reflect on the issue. Ultimately 38 papers will be presented at the Symposium.

The BCIS research team organises the Symposium and, as in previous years, they have worked tirelessly to mentor young scholars at each stage of the paper-writing process. The focus on climate change reflects a key theme of the BCIS Research Agenda 2026-2029 that recognises that environmental challenges are no longer isolated scientific issues but core drivers of global governance, power dynamics, economy and security, that require approaches and joint solutions that transcend borders.

The Symposium is privileged this year to have Muditha Katuwawela, Executive Director of Pearl Protectors as the keynote speaker, sharing knowledge from his activism on environmental issues, ocean protection and governance. It is also encouraging to have been able to mobilise so much academic interest in the issue of international relations and climate change and we welcome the different academics who will act as reviewers of the emerging scholars' work.

On behalf of Team BCIS, the Board of Academic Affairs, and the Council of Management of the BCIS, I extend my best wishes to everyone for the success of the 2026 Emerging Scholars' Symposium.

Priyanthi Fernando

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MORNING SESSION

ENVIRONMENTAL GOVERNANCE (I)

Climate-Resilient Supply Chains in Sri Lanka: A Strategic Imperative for Small State Adaptation

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Structural inequalities within global governance increasingly determine which states can build climate-resilient supply chains, leaving Small Island Developing States (SIDS) such as Sri Lanka disproportionately exposed to climate-driven disruption. As a maritime hub reliant on coastal infrastructure and global trade, Sri Lanka faces acute risks from extreme weather, sea-level rise, and supply shocks. Existing scholarship on supply chain vulnerability and climate adaptation has given limited attention to how uneven governance capacity constrains developing countries' adaptive response, a gap that is particularly acute for Sri Lanka. This matters because the country's economic development, trade competitiveness, and food security depend on supply chain resilience under accelerating climate risk. This study therefore asks: how can Sri Lanka strengthen supply chain resilience amid climate risk and structural inequality in global governance? The study has four objectives: to assess the climate risks facing Sri Lankan supply chains, evaluate their adaptive capacity, examine how global governance structures shape that capacity, and propose strategies for strengthening resilience. The study is grounded in International Relations, examining how international institutions, climate finance mechanisms, and technology-transfer regimes enable or constrain adaptation, including obligations arising from the 2024 International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea (ITLOS) Advisory Opinion on Climate Change. Within this framework, Resilience Theory is used as an analytical tool: combining a social-ecological typology of persistence, absorption, recovery, adaptation, and transformation with engineering recovery metrics, it identifies the conditions that sustain supply chain function and the thresholds at which systems fail. Methodologically, the study adopts a qualitative narrative-integrative review of secondary data from peer-reviewed literature, policy documents, and reports by international bodies and Sri Lankan government agencies. The review suggests that Sri Lankan supply chain resilience cannot be assessed in isolation from global governance. Climate risks propagate through maritime network topology: indirect losses from port disruption can substantially exceed direct damage, as illustrated by the 2023–2025 Red Sea disruption's diversion of transshipment pressure onto the Port of Colombo. This is compounded by the Indian Ocean basin's evolving competitive configuration around India's Vizhinjam International Seaport, and by a domestic fuel-logistics nexus rooted in road-dominated hinterland transport. Together, these dynamics indicate that while climate risks are transnational, response resources remain unevenly distributed, and existing climate finance and technology-transfer mechanisms often fail to meet the operational needs of vulnerable small states. Enhancing Sri Lanka's supply chain resilience therefore requires a dual response. Nationally, this means targeted investment in climate-smart port infrastructure, renewable energy integration, digitalized logistics, and stronger institutional coordination. Internationally, it requires reforming global governance frameworks so that climate finance and technology transfer are accessible, predictable, and tailored to SIDS needs. Together, these measures can support a more robust and adaptive supply chain capable of withstanding future disruption.

Keywords: Climate change, Supply chain resilience, Sri Lanka

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From Commitments to Compliance: Rethinking Environmental Governance in Sri Lanka within Global Climate Regime

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Climate change has emerged as a pivotal global challenge, addressed through international frameworks such as the Paris Agreement. These agreements compel states to transform their commitments into effective domestic actions, highlighting the desperate need for cohesive and protective measures to combat climate change at all levels. To convert such commitments to measurable outcomes, the role of environmental governance is undeniably significant. As a climate – vulnerable developing state, Sri Lanka has demonstrated a strong commitment through national policies and international obligations. Nevertheless, a persistent gap between policy commitments and realistic implementation remains regardless of the extensive frameworks. This disparity raises significant concerns regarding the effectiveness and ability of contemporary governance structures in ensuring adherence to the broader context of global climate regimes. This study evaluates the relationship between global climate commitments and domestic environmental governance in Sri Lanka. This study further investigates to which extend Sri Lanka has converted international climate obligation to domestic actions. Accordingly, the study identifies major institutional and governance challenges, affecting implementation, and assesses the global climate governance influences that shape Sri Lanka's compliance with climate commitments. A qualitative research approach is adopted, based on document analysis of international climate agreements such as United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), the Kyoto Protocol, and the Paris Agreement, which require States to translate international commitments into effective domestic action, Sri Lanka's environmental policy framework relevant legislations and institutional frameworks. The data are analysed using a critical interpretive approach to identify implementation gaps and governance constraints within Sri Lanka's climate governance system. The analysis demonstrates that compliance with the climate change framework in Sri Lanka is limited due to fragmented institutional coordination, poor enforcement mechanisms, and insufficient private sector engagement, though the policy commitment remains strong. Many developed countries including United Kingdom, Germany and New Zealand have recognized the importance of enforceable legal structures, economic incentives, and private public sector collaboration. On the contrary, Sri Lanka is yet to develop such an enforceable mechanism or a legally binding framework, which hinders the translation of commitments into practice. Moreover, it has been observed that the ability of local authorities to implement context – specific climate actions has been limited by the centralized climate governance models adhered by Sri Lanka. Such challenges highlight the barriers for multi-level governance mechanisms, limitations of policy-driven approaches in the absence of accountability and institutional capacity. In conclusion, rethinking environmental governance in Sri Lanka fundamentally requires bridging the gap between commitments and compliance through a much more integrated and multi-actor approach. Cooperation with the regional and global context regarding climate finance, sharing knowledge, technology transfer, and capacity - building initiatives are essential to address the barriers in implementation. Moreover, delegating authority to local governments, strengthening private sector contributions, and enhancing institutional coordination are essential in bridging gaps between commitment and compliance. Findings emphasize the requirement in aligning domestic governance mechanism with global climate mechanisms in order to ensure sustainable and effective climate action.

Keywords: Environmental governance, Global climate regimes, Sri Lanka

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Beyond Compliance: Sri Lanka's NDC 2.0 to NDC 3.0 Transition as Soft Diplomacy in Multilateral Climate Governance

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Climate change poses an existential threat to small and vulnerable states, and Sri Lanka stands at the frontlines confronting rising sea levels, battling extreme weather events and disruptions to agriculture and livelihoods that threaten both human security and national development. Despite contributing minimally to global greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, Sri Lanka consistently ranks among the world's most climate-vulnerable nations, placing the country in a paradoxical position within global climate politics. Within this context, Sri Lanka's Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) (national climate commitments submitted under the Paris Agreement -2015) have emerged as critical instruments through which the country signals its climate ambition internationally. NDC 2.0 (2021) and NDC 3.0 (2025) represent successive iterations of these commitments, reflecting evolving priorities across mitigation, adaptation, financial needs, and international engagement. The growing strategic depth of these documents raises an important question about whether Sri Lanka's escalating climate ambition serves purposes beyond domestic environmental planning. This study examines how Sri Lanka's evolution from NDC 2.0 to NDC 3.0 reflects a deliberate exercise of soft diplomacy in multilateral climate governance. It asks: in what ways does Sri Lanka's NDC progression constitute soft diplomacy, and how does this evolution position Sri Lanka within international climate negotiations? The study draws on three theoretical pillars with Nye's soft power theory, climate diplomacy and small state agency theory and employs qualitative comparative document analysis of both NDCs across four dimensions: mitigation ambition, financial articulation, social inclusion and strategic framing. NDC 3.0 demonstrates soft diplomacy through three interconnected arguments. First, it raises Sri Lanka's emissions reduction target from 14.5% to 20.09%; a quantifiable signal of heightened ambition directed at the international community. Second, it explicitly quantifies 11.98% of that target as conditional on international finance, transforming climate conditionality into a deliberate negotiating position within the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) process. Third, NDC 3.0 comprehensively mainstreams Gender Equity and Social Inclusion (GESI) and just transition principles across all sectors, aligning Sri Lanka's commitments with the normative priorities of major international climate financiers enhancing credibility and access to climate finance mechanisms. The study concludes that Sri Lanka's progression from NDC 2.0 to NDC 3.0 is not merely technical revision but a strategic reorientation of climate documents into instruments of soft power. For a low-emitting, fiscally constrained and climate-vulnerable state, ambitious NDC design offers a rare pathway to diplomatic agency enabling normative influence in global climate governance disproportionate to its size. Future NDC cycles should deepen implementation specificity, strengthen domestic-international policy coherence and explicitly frame climate ambition as diplomatic strategy, maximizing Sri Lanka's leverage within multilateral climate negotiations.

Keywords: Climate governance, Nationally Determined Contributions, Sri Lanka

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Climate Mobility and State Fragility: Evidence from Bangladesh

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Climate change is no longer a distant environmental concern; it is a lived reality shaping how and where people survive, particularly in vulnerable regions of the Global South. This study examines the relationship between climate-induced mobility and state fragility through the case of Bangladesh, a country widely recognized as one of the most climate-exposed in the world, by drawing on the “threat multiplier” concept. This study asks: How does climate-induced mobility contribute to state fragility in Bangladesh, to what extent does climate mobility expose gaps in Bangladesh's urban governance capacity and how effectively do Bangladesh's current policy frameworks address climate-induced displacement. Moreover, this study aims to understand the relationship between climate-induced mobility and state fragility using the threat multiplier concept, to evaluate how climate mobility acts as a stress test for state capacity, producing localized and sectoral fragility, particularly in urban governance institutions, and to identify critical gaps in Bangladesh's legal and policy frameworks concerning climate-displaced populations and to recommend governance improvements for managed migration. The findings highlight the fact that most climate-induced migration in Bangladesh occurs internally, with large numbers of displaced individuals relocating to urban centres, particularly Dhaka. This rapid rural-to-urban influx places immense pressure on already strained urban systems. Migrants often settle in informal settlements where access to basic services is severely limited. In these environments, climate vulnerability is not resolved but rather reproduced in new forms. From a governance perspective, climate mobility acts as a stress test for state capacity. Bangladesh does not exhibit outright state failure; instead, it experiences localized and sectoral fragility, especially in urban governance. Municipal institutions struggle to provide adequate infrastructure. This creates governance gaps that weaken state legitimacy and limit its ability to respond effectively to the needs of both migrants and host communities. Policy responses in Bangladesh demonstrate a degree of progress, particularly in climate adaptation planning. However, significant gaps remain in the governance of mobility itself. Migration is often treated as a secondary issue rather than a central component of climate resilience strategies. The absence of legal recognition for climate-displaced populations and the lack of coordinated relocation and urban integration policies limit effectiveness. Bangladesh exemplifies the complex interplay between climate-induced displacement and state fragility. Internal migration, driven by sea-level rise, coastal erosion, and recurring flood events, is not merely an environmental phenomenon but a structural challenge that progressively strains governance capacity at municipal and national levels. As displaced populations converge upon urban centres ill-equipped to absorb them, vulnerabilities are not resolved but redistributed and deepened. The persistence of policy gaps — particularly the absence of legal frameworks recognizing climate-displaced persons — undermines long-term resilience. Sustainable governance of climate mobility must therefore be repositioned as a component in Bangladesh's broader national development plan and a policy adaptation at the national strategy level.

Keywords: Migration, Threat multiplier, Climate mobility

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CLIMATE ECONOMY

Climate Finance as a Tool of Geopolitical Influence: Implications for Small-State Autonomy in the Global South

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Considering the climate crisis that is elevating day by day has elevated climate financing to the centre of the discussion of global governance, particularly related to supporting, mitigation and adaptation of climate efforts in the South Asia, namely Sri Lanka and Maldives. While climate action is a collective global problem burden of climate protection often falls onto developing states and climate financing acts as a form of strategic capital, enabling donor states and institutions to expand geopolitical interests under the normative framework of climate action. However, beyond its developmental and environmental objectives, climate financing has increasingly embedded with broader geopolitical dynamics given the great power efforts of influence and the small state vulnerability. While multinational institutions such as world bank and Green Climate Fund are designed to promote equitable access to funding for all states, the different governance structures and funding models often reflects the differences of priorities and dominant contributors. At the same time, bilateral climate financing initiatives, that are often presented as infrastructure development, energy transition and technological transfers can strengthen the asymmetric dependencies from influencing financial flows to policy decision making. This paper examines how climate financing is used as not only as a neutral mechanism of international cooperation but as a strategic instrument of power and influence to shape political and economic and trajectory of vulnerable states. The primary objective of this study is to investigate how structural disparities in international climate finance models alter the policy autonomy of recipient small states. Grounded in dependency and strategic autonomy theoretical frameworks, this study methodologically adopts a qualitative, comparative approach. It draws on secondary data, policy reports, and selected case illustrations from the Global South to compare major multilateral financing frameworks specifically the Green Climate Fund (GCF) and the World Bank's Climate Investment Funds (CIF) against the bilateral financing models of major donor states such as United States, China and India. The findings and discussion reveal that while climate finance provides critical resources to address vulnerabilities, it simultaneously constrains the strategic autonomy of recipient states. Dependence on external funding limits policy flexibility, alters development priorities, and influences foreign policy directions, especially in economically vulnerable small states that lack bargaining power to negotiate favourable terms. Consequently, climate finance risks reproducing existing hierarchies within the international system. The paper concludes that mitigating these geopolitical risks requires a shift toward transparent, equitable, and recipient-driven financing mechanisms, alongside enhanced negotiating capacity and diversified funding sources for the Global South to ensure both environmental sustainability and a just international order.

Key Words: Climate finance, Small-state, Strategic autonomy

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Geopolitical Barriers to Climate Justice: Evaluating International Funding Mechanisms in Sri Lanka

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Island nations like Sri Lanka stand at the frontline of the accelerating climate crisis. Currently navigating a severe economic crisis and complex debt restructuring, Sri Lanka faces compounding environmental vulnerabilities, with marginalized agrarian and plantation communities experiencing intensifying droughts, landslides, and erratic weather patterns. Despite this urgency, the distribution of international climate finance is increasingly fragmented by geopolitical rivalries among major powers. Specifically, targeted financial mechanisms under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the Paris Agreement strictly focusing on the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and the Green Climate Fund (GCF) often fail to translate into tangible protection for the most vulnerable local populations. This study addresses the central research question: How do structural power asymmetries within international climate governance and geopolitical donor competition impede the delivery of local climate justice for Sri Lanka's most vulnerable populations? Aligned with this question, the primary objectives are twofold: to evaluate the operational efficacy and accessibility of the GEF and GCF in safeguarding localized climate resilience in Sri Lanka, and to interrogate the disconnect between international climate finance conditionalities and the immediate human security needs of rural and plantation workers. The research employs a qualitative, desk-based thematic analysis. The analytical corpus comprises UNFCCC and Paris Agreement declarations, official Sri Lankan national climate policy frameworks, and multilateral project appraisal reports from the GEF and GCF. Data is evaluated through structured thematic coding focusing on "financial access equity," "donor conditionalities," and "local stakeholder empowerment." To transcend a purely technical evaluation of climate finance, the study deeply integrates a Critical Institutionalist framework drawn from International Relations theory. Critical Institutionalism posits that multilateral institutions are not neutral arbiters; rather, they embed and reproduce historical power asymmetries between hegemonic state and non-state actors. Fused with this theoretical lens, the analysis demonstrates that the governance architecture of the GEF and GCF is heavily compromised by the strategic, donor-driven agendas of dominant powers specifically the United States, the European Union, China, and India. In Sri Lanka's current debt-distressed context, these structural asymmetries manifest through stringent financial conditionalities that prioritize macroeconomic stabilization over localized environmental resilience. Consequently, bureaucratic fragmentation and the absence of transparent, direct-access funding models systematically prevent adaptation funds and green technologies from reaching grassroots actors, perpetuating a structural cycle of climate injustice. The findings reveal that existing international funding mechanisms, constrained by hegemonic interests, fail to protect Sri Lanka's vulnerable communities from climate induced socio-political instability. In accordance with Critical Institutionalist insights, the study concludes that achieving true climate justice requires decolonizing and decentralizing multilateral climate governance. It recommends restructuring international climate diplomacy to insulate adaptation funds from superpower competition, establishing direct access financial pipelines that respect Global South sovereignty, and prioritizing rights-based, grassroots resilience over geopolitical donor interests.

Keywords: Climate finance, Geopolitics, Sri Lanka

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Climate Change and Energy Security in Sri Lanka: The Economic Potential of Renewable Energy Transition

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Sri Lanka's structural dependence on imported fossil fuels has repeatedly converted global energy market shocks into national economic crises. The 2022 sovereign debt default when foreign exchange reserves collapsed to approximately USD 1.7 billion, forcing Sri Lanka to default on its sovereign debt for the first time in its history, demonstrate that this is not a transient policy failure, but a structural vulnerability rooted in the near-total absence of domestic fossil fuel reserves. Simultaneously, climate change is eroding the reliability of Sri Lanka's most established domestic energy source hydropower through increasingly unpredictable rainfall and recurrent drought, intensifying the urgency of transitioning to a diversified renewable energy base. This study asks to what extent can strategic investment in renewable energy reduce Sri Lanka's structural energy insecurity and what economic and institutional conditions determine whether that potential is realized in practice? The study employs a mixed-methods research design combining qualitative comparative case study analysis with secondary quantitative data analysis. Three purposively selected case study regions are examined Mannar (wind energy), Hambantota (solar energy) and the Central Highlands (hydropower). These sites were selected to represent distinct renewable technologies, contrasting financing models and different implementation challenges, enabling systematic cross-case comparison. Secondary quantitative data, drawn from the Sri Lanka Sustainable Energy Authority, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the Central Bank of Sri Lanka, are used to assess the measurable economic impacts of existing and planned renewable installations. The theoretical analysis is grounded in two frameworks. The energy security "Four A's" model which evaluates energy systems across the dimensions of availability (generation capacity), affordability (cost and foreign exchange impact), accessibility (grid integration) and acceptability (social and political reception) is applied as a diagnostic tool across all three case studies. Newell's (2021) political economy of energy transitions framework is applied to explain why technically feasible transitions stall, specifically examining how incumbent interests within the Ceylon Electricity Board, fiscal constraints imposed by Sri Lanka's post-default debt burden and fragmented regulatory governance have produced persistent delays despite formal government commitment to the 70 percent renewable target. The study's findings are organized around two prioritized analytical dimensions. On the enabling side, foreign exchange savings and foreign direct investment attraction emerge as the most economically significant and empirically documentable benefits of transition. The Sri Lanka Sustainable Energy Authority (SLSEA)'s Hambantota facility provides an empirical unit benchmark of approximately USD 0.33 million in foreign exchange savings per gigawatt-hour of solar generation displacing diesel. On the constraining side, institutional fragmentation across five overlapping regulatory agencies and political resistance from incumbent energy interests are identified as the binding system-level barriers, not grid infrastructure alone, which is a solvable technical problem but the political economy conditions that prevent the institutional coordination and contractual stability that private renewable investment requires. The study concludes that renewable energy transition is a fundamental national economic security priority for Sri Lanka and recommends integrated policy frameworks, blended finance mechanisms anchored by multilateral guaranteed instruments and debt for climate swap arrangements linking IMF-supervised debt restructuring to verified renewable energy capacity additions.

Keywords: Climate change, Renewable energy, Sri Lanka

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CLIMATE COOPERATION IN THE GLOBAL SOUTH

Critical Minerals and Value-Chain Dependency in the Green-Energy Transition: A Global South Perspective

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The global shift to low-carbon energy is seen by many as a method to reduce the geopolitical risks associated with oil and gas; however, the green-energy transition is increasingly dependent on the supply of critical minerals for batteries, electric vehicles, renewable energy technologies, and modern power systems. As demand for lithium, cobalt, nickel, graphite, copper, and the rare earth elements is rapidly increasing, the benefits of the transition are not distributed evenly. Most mineral-rich countries of the Global South are not yet benefiting from their mineral endowment as they are mainly supplying raw materials while higher value-adding activities such as processing, manufacturing and technology are being captured by other actors. This paper examines how the critical-minerals-centred green-energy transition reproduces and restructures resource dependency in mineral-rich countries of the Global South. It analyses how the position of selected mineral-producing countries within critical mineral value chains affects their policy autonomy, value capture, and ability to benefit from the green-energy transition. The research carries out a qualitative study of four mineral producing countries of the Global South. The Democratic Republic of Congo, Indonesia, Chile, and Zambia. Secondary data has been used as the basis of this study. The materials analysed through qualitative content analysis stem from reports, policies and studies of international organizations, governments and regional institutions, as well as from academic literature. The findings suggest that critical minerals have recently become a new arena for geopolitical and geo-economic rivalry. Cobalt, copper in the Democratic Republic of Congo and Zambia, and nickel in Indonesia are of strategic interest. Their processing into more valuable manufacturing materials in countries other than the extracting countries is, however, creating new forms of inequality and is challenging mineral-rich countries in their fight for more influence. This is also true for Chile, a mineral-rich country that is trying to increase the value that it is adding to its raw materials and wants to have a greater say in the policies regarding the extraction and use of these minerals. Strategic power is no longer only determined by the amount of minerals a country has and controls. Increasingly, it also depends on the extent to which a country is able and allowed to transform its mineral resources into industrially useful materials and products by means of refining and processing. As a summary, the green energy transition will not bring an end to the geopolitics of resources. But the focus will shift to the processing of critical minerals and control of value chains. Mineral-rich countries of the Global South will have to develop industries, acquire technology, and increase value addition to benefit from the transition. Therefore, a fair green energy transition, stronger industrial capacity, economic diversification and stable international value change arrangements for producing countries.

Keywords: Green energy transition, Critical mineral processing, Global South dependency

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Navigating Climate Diplomacy: The Role of Foreign Policy in Advancing Climate Action in the Global South – A Case Study of Sri Lanka (2015–Present)

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Climate change has emerged as one of the most significant challenges confronting the Global South, with Small Island Developing States (SIDS) such as Sri Lanka experiencing severe environmental, economic, and social consequences despite contributing minimally to global greenhouse gas emissions. While climate diplomacy has become an important component of international relations, limited scholarly attention has been given to how it shapes the foreign policy strategies of small developing states. This study addresses this gap by examining the role of climate diplomacy in shaping Sri Lanka's foreign policy and its contribution to advancing climate action between 2015 and the present. The study aims to analyse how Sri Lanka has incorporated climate change into its foreign policy framework, assess the influence of international climate agreements, particularly the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the Paris Agreement on national climate decision-making, identify the diplomatic challenges faced by developing countries in global climate negotiations, and propose strategies to strengthen the role of small states in global climate governance. A qualitative case study approach is employed, using constructivist International Relations theory as the analytical framework. The study relies on thematic analysis of official foreign policy documents, Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), UNFCCC submissions, policy reports, diplomatic statements, and relevant academic literature published from 2015 onwards. This approach enables an examination of how international climate norms and diplomatic engagements have influenced Sri Lanka's foreign policy priorities and climate-related actions. The study argues that climate diplomacy has become an increasingly important foreign policy instrument for Sri Lanka by enabling the country to advocate for climate justice, mobilize international partnerships, and align domestic climate policies with global commitments. However, the effectiveness of these efforts is constrained by limited financial resources, debt burdens, unequal negotiating power within international climate forums, and competing national development priorities. The findings are expected to demonstrate that while international agreements provide important normative and institutional frameworks for climate action, stronger regional cooperation, enhanced diplomatic capacity, and greater access to climate finance are essential for small developing states to achieve meaningful influence in global climate governance. The study contributes to the growing literature on climate diplomacy by highlighting the intersection of foreign policy, climate governance, and the experiences of small states in the Global South, with reference to Sri Lanka.

Keywords: Climate diplomacy, Foreign policy, Sri Lanka

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Shared Waters: Environmental Cooperation in India's Bilateral Relations with Pakistan and Bangladesh

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Environmental peacebuilding has received growing attention in international relations scholarship. However, limited research has been done with regards to how environmental cooperation contributes to peacebuilding in South Asia, a region that is both highly vulnerable to climate change and characterised by long-standing political tensions. While existing studies often focus on climate change as a source of conflict, less attention has been given to the potential of shared environmental challenges to promote cooperation among rival states. This paper addresses this gap by examining whether and how cooperation over shared water resources strengthens institutional dialogue and conflict management between India and its neighbours, Pakistan and Bangladesh. The study argues that although climate change can intensify security challenges, it can also encourage dialogue, institutional cooperation and confidence-building through the shared management of environmental resources. The analysis is grounded in liberal institutionalism to explain the conditions under which environmental cooperation emerges. Insights from political ecology are used to critically assess how power relations and competing interests influence the implementation and outcomes of water cooperation. The paper adopts a qualitative comparative case study approach, examining the Indus Waters Treaty between India and Pakistan and water-sharing cooperation between India and Bangladesh. The two cases are compared using three analytical dimensions: the continuity of institutional engagement, the extent to which water cooperation facilitates diplomatic communication and confidence-building, and its effectiveness in managing bilateral tensions during periods of political strain. This comparative framework enables an assessment of how environmental cooperation influences bilateral relations under different political contexts. The findings suggest that environmental cooperation can function as a confidence-building mechanism by sustaining institutional dialogue and creating opportunities for practical collaboration. However, its contribution to peacebuilding varies across the two cases and remains constrained by power asymmetries, competing national interests and unresolved political disputes. This study contributes to the literature on environmental peacebuilding by providing a region-specific analysis of South Asia and demonstrating that environmental cooperation can support confidence-building and conflict management but cannot by itself produce sustainable peace. Environmental cooperation should therefore be understood as a complementary approach to peacebuilding, the success of which depends on wider political commitment and effective regional institutions

Keywords: Environmental-peacebuilding, Liberal-institutionalism, Political-ecology.

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The Role of Cinema in Shaping Climate Discourse: An Analysis of the *Before the Flood* Documentary

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Climate change has become one of the most urgent global challenges, requiring collective awareness and international action. In this context, cinema has emerged as a powerful medium for communicating environmental issues to global audiences. Documentary films, in particular, play an important role in shaping public understanding and influencing climate discourse through visual storytelling. Although many studies have examined climate communication through news media and political platforms, limited attention has been given to the role of cinema in constructing climate discourse within the field of International Relations. This study focuses on the documentary *Before the Flood* (2016), directed by Fisher Stevens and produced by National Geographic, featuring environmental activist and actor Leonardo DiCaprio. The documentary was selected because of its global popularity, environmental focus, and international influence. In addition, it has gained millions of views on digital platforms such as YouTube, demonstrating its wide audience reach and contribution to public awareness regarding climate change. The main objective of this study is to explore how cinematic representation and visual storytelling contribute to shaping climate discourse. The research further examines how the documentary presents climate change as a global issue connected to responsibility, environmental justice, and international politics. This study adopts a qualitative research methodology based on textual and semiotic analysis. Constructivism is applied as the theoretical framework to examine how cinema socially constructs the idea of the climate crisis and contributes to the securitization of environmental issues. The analysis focuses on cinematic elements such as imagery, symbolism, framing, and narrative structure. Scenes portraying environmental destruction, including deforestation, pollution, and melting ice caps, are analysed to understand how the documentary communicates the urgency of climate action and influences audience perception. This study argues that *Before the Flood* not only documents environmental realities but also actively shapes climate discourse by presenting climate change as a shared global concern. Through emotional and informative storytelling, the documentary encourages audiences to reflect on environmental responsibility, sustainability, and policy action. The inclusion of scientists, global leaders, and affected communities strengthens the connection between local environmental experiences and international climate politics. Furthermore, the documentary contributes to constructing environmental narratives that influence public understanding and support the global discussion on climate change. By combining visual representation with political and scientific perspectives, the film positions cinema as an influential tool in climate communication and international environmental discourse. In conclusion, this study demonstrates that cinema plays a significant role in shaping climate discourse by transforming complex environmental issues into accessible and compelling narratives. The findings suggest that documentary films such as *Before the Flood* can contribute to raising awareness, influencing public perception, and encouraging engagement with global climate challenges. This research highlights the importance of integrating film analysis into climate communication and International Relations studies while emphasizing the growing influence of visual media in addressing the climate crisis.

Keywords: Climate discourse, Visual storytelling, Constructivism

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PEACE, SECURITY, DISASTERS AND CONFLICT

Climate as a Force Multiplier: Logistical Lessons from the Late Roman Empire for Modern Security Planning

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In strategic studies, climate change is increasingly recognized not just merely as an environmental concern, but as a “force multiplier”- a condition that exponentially worsens existing political inability, economic weakness, and logistical strain within a state. Despite this, modern defence doctrines frequently isolate environmental stress from traditional security planning. To address this gap, this study addresses the research question: How did climate induced logistical failures contribute to the fragmentation of the Late Roman Empire, and what specific strategic lessons can be extracted for modern defence planning in fragile states? Focusing on the 4th and 5th centuries CE, this paper analyses how severe Eurasian droughts triggered mass nomadic migrations (such as Huns), which ultimately overwhelmed the Roman *limes* (border defences). The primary objective is to isolate the exact mechanisms of Roman military overstretch, specifically the starvation of agricultural supply lines and the structural inability to absorb climate refugees. The theoretical foundation is anchored in the “threat multiplier” concept derived from environmental security literature. The methodology of the study consists of a comparative historical approach based on the qualitative analysis of historical records and palaeoclimatological data. The core argument posits that environmental shifts do not independently trigger state collapse, but rather they break the logistical backbone required to maintain security and order. Crucially, linking this historical reality to modern defence planning reveals that contemporary militaries operate on similar vulnerabilities: current operational doctrines often erroneously assume static supply lines and stable border demographics. The discussion juxtaposes the above mentioned historical overstretch against modern fragile states of the Global South, demonstrating that modern militaries face similar compound threats, where climate-induced resource scarcity and migration overwhelm national defence capacities and border infrastructure. In conclusion the study finds that military doctrine and established border laws cannot overcome the logistical starvation caused by severe environmental shocks. Taking lessons from the historical precedent, this paper recommends that the defence establishment transition from reactive border militarisation to proactive climate resilience. Traditional strategic wargames and defence planning must be urgently adjusted to explicitly integrate environmental forecasting and resource conservation directly into military supply chain management.

Keywords: Climate change, Late Roman Empire, Security planning

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Hydro Politics in South Asia: Climate Change and Interstate Water Conflicts Between India, Pakistan & Bangladesh (2015-2025)

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Hydro politics in South Asia has become increasingly significant in the context of climate change and its impact on interstate relations between India, Pakistan and Bangladesh from 2015 to 2025. The region depends heavily on transboundary river systems such as the Indus and the Ganges, Brahmaputra Meghna basin, which sustain agriculture, livelihoods and energy production. However, climate change manifested through glacial melting in the Himalayas, erratic monsoon patterns, floods and prolonged droughts has intensified water stress and uncertainty. These environmental pressures intersect with longstanding political tensions, transforming water from a developmental resource into a strategic and security concern. As upstream, downstream asymmetries persist, particularly with India's geographical advantage, disputes over water allocation and control have gained renewed urgency making hydro politics central to regional stability and conflict dynamics. This study examines how climate change has intensified interstate water conflicts among India, Pakistan and Bangladesh, between 2015 and 2025. It focuses on Indus, Ganges and Teesta River systems and investigate how glacial melting, irregular monsoons, floods and droughts have increased water insecurity and political tensions. The study aims to analyse the impact of climate change on India, Pakistan water relations under the Indus water treaty, assess disputes between India and Bangladesh over shared rivers and evaluate the effectiveness of existing water governance mechanisms. Grounded in hydro politics and securitization theory, the study adopts a qualitative research design using secondary data from treaty documents, reports by India ministry of Jal shakti, Pakistan water/power reports and academic literature. A comparative case study approach and discourse analysis are employed to examine policy responses, political narratives, and diplomatic interactions, providing insights into the relationship between climate change and regional water security challenges. The study argues that climate change has significantly intensified existing water disputes by increasing variability and reducing predictability. In India and Pakistan case changing river flows and hydropower developments have heightened suspicious and strained the durability of the Indus Waters Treaty despite its historical resilience. In India and Bangladesh context disputes over equitable water sharing particularly concerning Teesta River have created socio economic vulnerabilities in downstream regions, affecting agriculture and food security. The research highlights the role of hydro hegemony where India's upstream position provides leverage over its neighbours, contributing to power asymmetries and perceptions of injustice. Additionally, weak institutional frameworks, lack of transparent data sharing and politicization of water issues further limit cooperation. Climate change exacerbates these challenges by intensifying competition over diminishing and uncertain water resources. In conclusion, the findings indicate that while climate change amplifies interstate water conflicts in South Asia, it also presents an opportunity for fostering cooperation through adaptive and inclusive water governance. Strengthening regional institutions, enhancing transparency in hydrological data, and integrating climate adaptation measures into existing treaties are essential steps toward conflict mitigation. The study recommends confidence building measures, third party facilitation where necessary and the promotion of basin wide management approaches. Ultimately transforming hydro political tensions into collaborative frameworks is crucial for ensuring sustainable water security and long-term peace in the region.

Keywords: Climate geopolitics, Hydro politics, South Asia

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From Climate Stress to Conflict: Livelihood Deterioration and Institutional Failure in Nigeria and Burkina Faso

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Climate-induced disasters increasingly accompany conflict across West Africa, yet the connecting mechanism remains contested. Much existing research treats climate stress as a direct trigger of violence or generalises across the Sahel without explaining why states with similar climate exposure diverge in their conflict outcomes. This paper narrows that gap by tracing a single pathway, the decline of climate-sensitive livelihoods and the resulting competition over land, water and mobility, through two paired cases: Nigeria, a larger and institutionally complex state, and Burkina Faso, a fragile, post-coup state. The cases share a climate belt but differ sharply in governance capacity, which allows governance quality, rather than climate exposure, to be examined as the variable determining whether climate-linked pressure turns violent. The paper asks through what livelihood-related mechanisms climate shocks escalate into conflict, and how land tenure, mediation and early warning shape that escalation. The paper builds on Homer-Dixon's environmental scarcity thesis and the human security perspective developed by the United Nations Development Programme, then adopts the position taken by Raleigh and by van Baalen and Mobjork, who treat livelihood loss, migration and resource competition as the connecting steps between climate stress and violence. The method is a structured secondary literature review and conflict documentation analysis, covering academic, policy and humanitarian sources published mainly between 2008 and 2026. Process tracing follows a single pathway in each case, climate shock, livelihood deterioration, competition over land, water and mobility, and conflict, and reads both against three conditions: land tenure ambiguity, the presence or absence of local mediation, and whether early warning reaches subnational governance. In Nigeria, reduced and less predictable rainfall has pushed herding communities into new and more prolonged contact with farming communities, and violence concentrates where customary land arrangements have eroded, and local mediation is slow, under-resourced or distrusted. Burkina Faso follows a different sequence: local governance and security structures weakened sharply after the 2022 coups, and armed groups have occupied the resulting gap rather than merely exploiting existing insecurity. In both countries, climate stress amplifies existing vulnerabilities instead of generating new grievances on its own. Escalation is most consistent where three conditions coincide: contested land tenure, absent or bypassed mediation, and early warning that stops at the national level. Mediation and early warning integration offer the most realistic openings for reducing escalation, while land tenure reform remains slower and more contested. The evidence reviewed does not support a direct link between climate stress and violence in either country. What differs between the two cases is institutional: Nigeria's disputes escalate where mediation is weak or distrusted even though the state retains some capacity to intervene, while Burkina Faso's escalation follows the collapse of local authority itself. This carries a policy implication: climate and security ministries should build climate risk assessment into conflict prevention planning, and donors and regional bodies such as Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) should fund local mediation and connect early warning to subnational decision-makers.

Keywords: Climate stress, Intrastate conflict, West Africa

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Food Insecurity After Climate-Induced Floods and Its Role in Social Unrest: A Case Study of Sri Lanka

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Climate-induced disasters have become an increasingly significant challenge to human security and sustainable development, particularly in developing countries that are highly vulnerable to environmental change. In Sri Lanka, recurrent floods have disrupted agricultural production, food supply chains, and local livelihoods, resulting in growing food insecurity. While previous studies have examined the impacts of floods on agriculture and food security, limited attention has been given to how food insecurity functions as a pathway linking climate-induced disasters to social unrest. Addressing this gap, this study examines how food insecurity resulting from climate-induced floods contributes to social unrest in Sri Lanka during the period 2020–2025. This study seeks to answer the following research question: How does food insecurity resulting from climate-induced floods contribute to social unrest in Sri Lanka? The study is informed by the United Nations Development Program's (UNDP) Human Security Framework (1994) and Thomas Homer-Dixon's Environmental Scarcity Theory, which explains how environmental stress undermines human well-being and contributes to socio-political instability. A qualitative case study approach is employed, focusing on three major flood events that occurred in Sri Lanka between 2020 and 2025. Data is collected from secondary sources, including government reports, disaster assessment reports, policy documents, and credible news publications. The analysis focuses on three key dimensions: agricultural production losses, food price fluctuations, and community responses following flood events to examine how food insecurity contributes to social unrest. The findings indicate that climate-induced floods significantly reduce agricultural production and interrupt local food availability, contributing to higher food prices and reduced access to affordable food, particularly among vulnerable communities. These conditions intensify economic hardship and public dissatisfaction, especially where disaster response and food assistance mechanisms are inadequate. The analysis suggests that food insecurity operates as an intermediary mechanism through which climate-induced floods contribute to social tensions and increase pressure on state institutions. The study concludes that strengthening emergency food distribution systems in flood-affected areas, introducing temporary food price stabilization measures following major flood events, and improving targeted food assistance programmes for vulnerable households are essential to reducing the risk of food insecurity and its contribution to social unrest. By identifying food insecurity as a critical mechanism linking climate-induced floods and socio-political instability, this research contributes to the growing literature on climate security and provides policy insights for strengthening climate adaptation and disaster risk reduction strategies in Sri Lanka.

Keywords: Environmental security, Social unrest, Sri Lanka

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HUMAN RIGHTS AND THE ENVIRONMENT

The Right to a Healthy Environment: Regional Enforcement Failures and the Global South Accountability Gap

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The recognition of the right to a healthy environment as a human right has emerged as one of the most consequential developments in contemporary international law. In July 2022, the United Nations General Assembly adopted Resolution 76/300 by a vote of 161 in favour and zero against, formally recognizing, for the first time, the right to a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment as a universal human right. Yet, the resolution is explicitly non-binding, and several voting states underscored at the time that it created no new legal obligations under international law. This raises a fundamental question that sits at the intersection of international relations and human rights law: if a right is universally proclaimed but inconsistently enforced, does it function as a right at all? This tension is most acutely felt in the Global South, where environmental degradation and climate vulnerability are most severe, yet institutional protection remains weakest; this enforcement gap is at the centre of this paper. This paper employs a comparative doctrinal methodology to examine why the right to a healthy environment remains structurally under-enforced in Global South contexts, using the African human rights framework as its primary site of analysis and the Inter-American and European systems as comparative benchmarks. The theoretical foundation draws on the distinction between soft law norm emergence and hard law enforcement obligations, engaging with scholarship from the American Journal of International Law, the Sabin Centre for Climate Change Law, and the Universal Rights Group's analysis of global implementation of the right to a healthy environment, alongside a broader range of sources to ensure methodological rigor and avoid analytical bias. Three landmark cases anchor the comparative analysis. In *Social and Economic Rights Action Centre (SERAC) and Centre for Economic and Social Rights (CESR) v. Nigeria* (2001), the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights recognized the right to a satisfactory environment under Article 24 of the African Charter, yet enforcement remained elusive. The Ogoni people continue to demand implementation over two decades later, exposing the African system's critical and persistent compliance gap. This is contrasted against the Inter-American Court of Human Rights, which, through Advisory Opinion OC-23/17 (2017) and its landmark climate opinion OC-32/25 (2025), has progressively developed the most expansive jurisprudence on the right to a healthy environment, recognizing it as autonomous and affirming state responsibility for transboundary climate harm. The European Court of Human Rights (ECHR), in *Verein KlimaSeniorinnen Schweiz v. Switzerland* (2024), delivered the first binding international judgment holding a state in violation of human rights for inadequate climate action under Article 8 of the ECHR, a ruling that carries direct obligations for all 46 Council of Europe member states. The comparative analysis reveals a widening and structurally embedded enforcement disparity. The systems best equipped to enforce the right to a healthy environment serve predominantly Global North constituencies, while the framework governing the most climate-vulnerable states, the African system, suffers from chronic compliance deficits rooted in institutional design rather than normative ambiguity. This paper argues that Resolution 76/300 is not a redundant political gesture. It functions as a norm-catalyst, but its transformative potential depends entirely on whether regional monitoring and compliance mechanisms, particularly those governing Global South states, are reformed to match its ambition. Without that, universal recognition remains declaratory. This paper, therefore, calls for international relations scholarship to shift its focus from norm recognition to enforcement architecture, and advocates for stronger institutional linkages between the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) accountability framework and regional human rights bodies as a concrete and necessary pathway to climate justice for those most vulnerable to its consequences.

Keywords: Resolution 76/300, Global South, Regional enforcement

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The Missing Chapter of the UDHR: Critique of the Protection Gap for Climate-Displaced Persons in Post-Ditwah Sri Lanka

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The 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) provides the normative foundation for the contemporary rules-based international order. However, the institutional framework remains structurally static, creating an operational disconnect as the international system undergoes a profound transformation driven by global climate change. Consequently, a traditional, mid-twentieth-century human rights paradigm is increasingly misaligned with the complex geopolitical and human security realities of twenty-first-century environmental crises. This study addresses a fundamental puzzle: why a universal human rights framework produces systemic exclusion in climate-induced displacement. The UDHR's structural silence on environmental stability creates an operational contradiction between universal dignity and vulnerability. To investigate this, the study explores how the UDHR manifests an institutional protection gap for internally displaced persons distinguished from cross-border refugees and how this omission impacts Small Island Developing States (SIDS) like Sri Lanka. The 2025 devastation of Cyclone Ditwah proves Article 3's "Right to Life" is hollow without a secure climate. Methodologically, this qualitative Third World Approaches to International Law (TWAIL)-based case study analyses Sri Lanka's 2025–2026 recovery using National Building Research Organisation's (NBRO) assessments, civil society reports, and bilateral climate agreements. The central argument posits that non-binding "soft laws" like the Sendai Framework lack the enforceability required to protect vulnerable populations. This study seeks to fill a specific research gap: existing scholarship relies on broad normative assertions, it overlooks how the UDHR's omission of environmental stability allows multilateral forums to depoliticize human rights crises as mere charitable anomalies. Cyclone Ditwah provides an ideal empirical baseline because this specific acute disaster intersected with structural vulnerabilities in SIDS, exposing the failure of passive rights mechanisms. Consequently, institutional fragmentation leaves resource-constrained states like Sri Lanka with restricted capacity, forcing them into precarious, asymmetric diplomacy while high-emitting nations evade legal liability for cross-border climate damages. Empirical findings demonstrate that the Article 3 "Right to Life" remains a functionally hollow defence against climate displacement without a legally binding "Green Protocol" amendment to the UDHR. To bridge this protection gap, the study identifies two concrete institutional pathways for Sri Lankan diplomatic agency over passive appeals: first, spearheading a regional coalition to formalize a "Global South Charter on Environmental Rights," and second, strategically utilizing multilateral climate platforms to enforce a structural redistribution of international funding and pivoting away from voluntary post-disaster charity toward mandatory, rights-based climate reparations. In conclusion, this research advances international legal scholarship by offering a rigorous, TWAIL-driven diagnostic of human rights frameworks under ecological stress, demonstrating how structural holes in mid-twentieth-century texts perpetuate climate injustices. The study concludes that the operational survival of the rules-based international order depends entirely on its capacity to dynamically modernize its foundational texts. Allowing climate-driven harms to persist within a legal enforcement vacuum fundamentally undermines the universal premise of human dignity. In an era of intensifying ecological crisis and geopolitical fragmentation, robust small-state institutional experimentation and aggressive diplomatic agency remain the primary structural avenues to compel a transition from selective global philanthropy to mandatory, globally enforceable climate justice.

Keywords – Climate justice, Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Cyclone Ditwah

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Pads vs. Underwear: Gendered Blind Spots in Climate Disaster Relief

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Climate change is a critical challenge in contemporary International Relations. Despite appearing neutral, disaster responses frequently ignore the practical, gender-specific needs of women and girls. This study uncovers these hidden inequalities. In many emergencies, sanitary pads may be distributed, yet underwear, necessary to use them properly, is often excluded. Similarly, relief items may be distributed without considering age, such as providing menstrual products to elderly women. These examples reflect limited awareness within disaster governance systems. Addressing this gap, this study asks a central research question: how do standardized humanitarian relief models reproduce gender-blind assumptions during climate crises, and to what extent does the exclusion of practical dignity items compromise women's human security? The objectives of this research are to examine how climate disaster relief reflects gender-blind assumptions in humanitarian governance, to explore why some women's needs are ignored, and to assess how human security approaches can better include dignity-based needs. Grounding this analysis, the study focuses on the case of Cyclone Ditwah (2025) in Sri Lanka, an event that triggered massive displacement and demonstrated these logistical oversights. Guided by Feminist International Relations and the Human Security approach, the study explains how institutions that appear neutral can reproduce structural inequality. Methodologically, it uses a qualitative design based on thematic and document analysis of academic literature, humanitarian situation reports, and policy frameworks related to Cyclone Ditwah, gender, and disaster response. The study argues that many humanitarian systems operate through simplified aid models prioritizing speed, standardization, and visible survival needs such as food, water, and shelter. In contrast, intimate essential needs linked to hygiene, dignity, mobility, and bodily comfort are treated as secondary. Based on the relief response to Cyclone Ditwah, the research utilizes the concept of the "underwear gap" to describe this invisible policy failure. In overcrowded welfare centres, if pads are given without underwear, or items are distributed without considering age, relief becomes symbolic rather than practical. The discussion suggests that climate governance can unintentionally reproduce inequality when measurable outputs are valued more than human dignity. The findings indicate that current human security frameworks remain incomplete if dignity is excluded from disaster response. Security should mean not only physical survival, but also bodily integrity, psychological dignity, mobility, and agency. The study recommends redesigning relief systems to include practical, context-sensitive dignity items, improving gender-disaggregated needs assessments, and training humanitarian actors in gender-sensitive logistics. A shift from charity-based relief to rights-based humanitarian governance is necessary to build inclusive and equitable climate disaster responses.

Keywords: Climate disasters, Gender-blind humanitarianism, Cyclone Ditwah.

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AFTERNOON SESSION

**SUSTAINABLE SOLUTIONS,
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Technopolitics of the Green Transition: Critical Materials, Strategic Technologies, and Limits of Climate Cooperation

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The global transition toward low-carbon energy systems is widely framed as a cooperative response to climate change based on shared environmental vulnerability and international coordination. However, the practical evolution of the green transition presents a significant puzzle. While states increasingly commit to climate action through multilateral frameworks, they simultaneously intensify competition over the technologies and production systems required to achieve decarbonization. This contradiction leads to the important question of how technological asymmetries shape state behaviour and limit international climate cooperation in the green transition. Current climate governance literature is primarily concerned with emissions mitigation and institutional coordination and has paid less attention to how technological capabilities influence cooperation and competition. The research aims to examine how technological asymmetries in advanced technology sectors facilitate the relationship between resource ownership and geopolitical influence, create asymmetric dependencies, and how these dependencies shape state behaviour and constrain international climate cooperation in the green transition. Critical minerals such as lithium, cobalt, and rare earth elements are necessary for renewable energy systems and battery technologies. However, access to these resources does not necessarily translate into strategic influence. The edge will go increasingly to states that master downstream technological capabilities such as semiconductor manufacturing, battery production, advanced industrial systems, and innovation infrastructure. These capabilities create asymmetric dependencies that states can exploit for economic and geopolitical benefit. This research is founded on the International Relations theory of Structural Realism. Applying a qualitative methodology, the study adopts a comparative case-study analytical approach to analyse the main units of analysis - the critical mineral supply chains and the semiconductor production networks. The study compares the supply chains for lithium and rare earths, along with the semiconductor supply chain, to explore how technological capability mediates the relationship between resource ownership and geopolitical influence. While the analysis of the paper discusses how industrial policies, export controls, and supply-chain restructuring are all manifestations of strategic competition in the green economy, the findings indicate that climate cooperation is not absent but structurally constrained by technopolitical competition. The green transition is likely to produce a fragmented global system characterized by competing industrial blocs, uneven technology access, and persistent inequalities, particularly affecting resource-rich developing regions. The results of this research study show that the green transition is characterized by a constant tension between interdependence and rivalry. The concentration of mineral processing, semiconductor fabrication, and advanced technological capabilities create asymmetric dependencies that underpin a logic of relative gains among states. Climate cooperation is rather seen as constrained by competition over the technologies that enable decarbonization. Existing climate governance frameworks are inadequate to address these dynamics, as they focus primarily on emissions reduction and insufficiently consider the technological asymmetries that influence state behaviour. This paper concludes that both contemporary climate geopolitics and technology possess a significant strategic aspect, meaning that understanding these technological asymmetries is important for our understanding of how to achieve sustained, meaningful cooperation on climate change.

Keywords: Technopolitics, Climate cooperation, Critical materials

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The Politics of the AI Carbon Paradox: Energy Intensification and Climate Mitigation Potential

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Artificial intelligence (AI) is increasingly promoted as a transformative solution to the climate crisis, with the capability to optimize energy grids, improve climate modelling, and predict extreme weather events. Over 11,000 data centres account for a significant and growing share of global electricity consumption, many still heavily dependent on fossil fuels. Meanwhile, AI has evolved into a strategically significant technology with growing implications for international governance. The AI carbon paradox refers to the contradiction whereby AI can contribute to climate mitigation through improved modelling, prediction, and efficiency while simultaneously generating environmental pressures through increasing energy consumption, water use, and carbon emissions. This fundamental contradiction is mostly unaddressed by international policymakers. While existing scholarship has examined AI's energy consumption and its applications for climate mitigation separately, limited attention has been given to the political and institutional challenges of governing AI's environmental footprint within international climate governance frameworks. The objective of this research is to examine how international institutions can govern the AI carbon paradox by addressing the research questions of how AI infrastructure expansion shapes the AI carbon paradox, to what extent existing international governance frameworks govern AI's environmental footprint, and what institutional mechanisms promote sustainable AI governance. The research is anchored in Liberal Institutionalism, a theory well-suited to examine how multilateral institutions manage shared global challenges that states cannot resolve alone. As the research evaluates existing international governance frameworks and identifies politically feasible measures for sustainable AI governance, Liberal Institutionalism can assess the effectiveness of international institutions in coordinating collective responses to the AI carbon paradox. The qualitative methodology analyses key international instruments: the 2024 Global Digital Compact, United Nations Environment Assembly resolutions, and the Council of Europe AI Convention, complemented by a systematic literature review on AI energy consumption and climate governance. The environmental costs of AI infrastructure reveal that a single large AI model's electricity consumption is equivalent to the annual usage of several hundred American homes. The expanding data centres place increasing demands on natural resources, highlighting environmental pressures that existing international governance frameworks have yet to address adequately. However, AI offers considerable climate mitigation potential, with applications such as Google DeepMind's AI-driven cooling systems, reducing energy use by roughly 40%, and AI models improving the prediction of extreme weather events. Together, these contrasting developments show that AI should neither be viewed solely as a climate liability nor uncritically promoted as a climate solution, but as a governance challenge requiring coordinated international institutional responses. The research finds an accountability gap between the global marketing of AI as a climate solution and the inadequate binding regulation governing its own emissions. The Council of Europe AI Convention, significantly the first legally binding AI treaty, fails to adequately address environmental harm. This research recommends stronger AI governance through mandatory environmental reporting, integration of AI sustainability standards into climate frameworks, and enhanced cooperation on green AI infrastructure. Addressing the AI carbon paradox requires institutional accountability and collective action, aligned with Liberal Institutionalism, rather than reliance on technological optimism alone.

Keywords: Artificial intelligence, Carbon paradox, Global climate governance

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Silicon Diplomacy: Microchip Geopolitics and the Digital Climate Nexus in Sri Lanka

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The global transition towards climate-smart technologies is gaining momentum, revealing an important yet often overlooked challenge: the reliance of renewable energy infrastructure on semiconductor components. This reliance is increasingly influenced by geopolitical tensions rather than market or humanitarian concerns. Technologies such as solar inverters, smart grid systems, battery management units, and electric vehicle infrastructure depend on specialized microchips. However, the flow of these essential components has been significantly disrupted by export control measures like the United States's (U.S.) Creating Helpful Incentives to Produce Semiconductors (CHIPS) Act and the European Union (EU) Chips Act. For small island developing states, which are already facing the brunt of climate change, this situation presents a tricky paradox: the very technologies designed to combat climate change are becoming ensnared in geopolitical conflicts. This paper examines this paradox through a case study of Sri Lanka from 2020 to 2025, questioning whether current international climate frameworks offer small developing states any effective or meaningful recourse, given that climate smart infrastructure is hardware dependent and increasingly subject to geopolitical hurdles. This inquiry is not simply about technicalities; it sits at a crucial intersection of international relations and computing infrastructure. The objective of this study is to assess whether small states can secure stable, preferential access to semiconductor dependent climate technologies, and to evaluate whether existing international climate governance mechanisms adequately address this upstream hardware dependency. Two concepts anchor the analysis: "Silicon Diplomacy," the strategies small states use to secure preferential access to semiconductor dependent technologies, and "Digital Sovereignty," a state's ability to procure the hardware needed to meet its Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) under the Paris Agreement, extending beyond data governance or cyber autonomy. Dependency theory frames Sri Lanka's position in the global semiconductor supply chain as a form of technological dependency, where a peripheral state's climate commitments hinge on decisions made by core producing and regulating powers such as the U.S., the EU, and Taiwan. This framework, combined with literature on small states in international relations, informs a qualitative case study drawing on NDC implementation data, renewable energy procurement records from 2020-2025, the CHIPS Act and EU Chips Act's effects on Global South access, and the adequacy of the Paris Agreement and Sendai Framework. Data sources include policy documents, parliamentary records, trade and customs statistics, and publicly available industry commentary from Sri Lankan energy and technology sector professionals. Findings reveal that international climate frameworks rest on a "technology neutral" premise that overlooks the geopolitical dynamics shaping hardware access, disadvantaged small states whose climate commitments depend on the semiconductor policies of larger powers. The paper proposes that small states pursue coalitional diplomacy within United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) platforms to reframe semiconductor access as a climate justice issue and calls for dedicated hardware equity provisions in future climate agreements.

Keywords: Semiconductor geopolitics, Climate governance frameworks, Digital sovereignty

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The Impact of AI Infrastructure on World Water Bankruptcy

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Artificial Intelligence (AI) is touted as a key technology in combating climate change by improving efficiency, predictions, and managing resources. But the physical infrastructure needed to run AI systems, especially large-scale data centres rely on freshwater resources for cooling. Meanwhile, groundwater is becoming increasingly stressed in many parts of the world as drawing it down for human use is higher than the ability of water to recharge. Debates on climate governance tend to concentrate on the action needed to cut carbon emissions, while water use in digital infrastructure has not received a similar degree of study. This paper addresses that gap by examining impacts of increased water usage by AI data centres on the environment and resource deprivation, with a focus on water-stressed areas under the framework of global resource governance and environmental justice. The objectives of the study are to examine how the growth of AI-driven centres is affecting already water stressed regions, and to compare different measures taken, then to evaluate whether cooperate sustainability reports adequacy capture these impacts, and finally to propose conceptual tools that better capture the mismatch. The methodological approach is a qualitative comparative case study approach of the United States and India, two water-stressed regions; where ground water depletion exceeds its natural recharge with a significant rate of expansion of data centre infrastructure. Selection of these cases was done because they could provide for an analysis of the trade-offs between water outcomes in local settings and the institutional capacity of their respective environments (as a high-regulation developed setting in the United States and as a lower-regulation developing setting in India). The data draws from sustainability reports, policies, and publicly available data on satellite images and the environment from 2025-2026. The paper argues that current discussions on sustainable AI mainly follow the same approach used for carbon governance, carbon emissions can be offset because carbon spreads evenly through the atmosphere, meaning reducing emission in one country can help balance emissions produced elsewhere. However, water behaves differently, depletion of water in one place cannot be compensated by saving water in a different location, the paper therefore, terms this mismatch as “Hydro-spatial disparity”, It also introduces the concept of “water return on investment” which describes the gap between efficiency gains in water use vs the actual scale of water consumed by AI infrastructure. The analysis finds that efficiency gains and water saving using AI have not matched with the growth of the sector’s water demand and reveal that local groundwater availabilities measurably are depleted and made the surrounding area more vulnerable to climate issues such as droughts, global warming and scarcity. Building on these findings, the paper asserts that today’s corporate sustainability reporting obscures harmful effects at the local level since water use is disclosed at the overall company level. Instead, the findings suggest that there is a clear policy learning: water governance approaches for enabling water infrastructure for AI should be local and should establish water specific transparency standards, rather than the aggregated, company-wide disclosure inherited from carbon governance.

Keywords: Artificial intelligence, Climate change, Water scarcity

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Climate Data Dependency: AI, Power, and Inequality in Global Climate Governance - A Comparative Study of Sri Lanka, India, and Germany

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The increasing integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) into climate governance is transforming the dynamics of international relations by reshaping how data, knowledge, and authority are distributed across the global system. While AI is frequently presented as a neutral technological solution to climate change through tools such as predictive modelling, emissions tracking, and environmental monitoring, its underlying infrastructures remain concentrated within technologically advanced states, raising critical concerns about power asymmetries. This paper addresses a key gap in international relations scholarship by examining the emergence of climate data dependency, defined as the structural reliance of developing states on externally produced climate intelligence for policymaking and international negotiation. Accordingly, this paper explores how the unequal distribution of AI-driven climate data reshapes power, sovereignty, and bargaining capacity in global climate governance. Grounded in a critical international political economy framework, the study draws on dependency theory and concepts of epistemic inequality to analyse how technological asymmetries influence global climate politics. The research adopts a qualitative comparative case study approach, focusing on Germany, India, and Sri Lanka, thereby capturing Global North technological dominance, emerging power dynamics within the Global South, and small-state dependency. The methodology combines comparative analysis with discourse analysis of international and national policy frameworks, including the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), the Paris Agreement, and national climate and digital strategies, with particular attention to AI-driven systems such as satellite-based climate data, emissions monitoring platforms, and predictive climate models. The paper argues that AI functions not merely as a technical tool but as a form of structural and epistemic power in international relations, contributing to the emergence of a hierarchical system of data-driven climate governance in which control over climate intelligence determines political authority. Advanced states such as Germany retain disproportionate influence through their control over data infrastructures and innovation systems, while countries like Sri Lanka remain dependent on externally generated data, limiting policy autonomy and weakening negotiation leverage in international forums. India occupies an intermediate position, revealing internal stratifications within the Global South. This dynamic reinforces constraints on data sovereignty and contributes to a widening green digital divide, where technological advancements risk reproducing existing inequalities. In conclusion, although AI offers significant potential to enhance climate governance, its unequal distribution poses fundamental challenges to justice and equity in the international system, and without deliberate efforts to democratise access to climate data, strengthen technological capacity in developing states, and promote inclusive digital governance, AI will continue to reinforce global hierarchies rather than enabling equitable and effective collective climate action.

Keywords: Artificial intelligence, Climate governance, Global inequality

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GEOPOLITICS OF CLIMATE CHANGE

The Dual Reality of Arctic Geopolitics: Cooperation and Militarization in the Northern Sea Route Among Russia, USA, and China Since 2018

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The Arctic Region is undergoing a striking transformation which is driven by the accelerating impacts of climate change, positioning it at the centre of emerging geopolitical rivalries towards new maritime routes such as the Northern Sea Route. This study focuses on the geopolitical dynamics of the Northern Sea Route since 2018, examining how climate-induced environmental changes have transformed the Arctic from a traditionally cooperative region into a strategically contested space among Russia, the United States (U.S.), and China, with particular emphasis on the interplay between Arctic governance mechanisms and increasing military expansions. This study addresses a significant research gap by examining the “dual reality” of Arctic geopolitics, where cooperation in governance structures exists alongside intensifying military competition. The central research problem examines the extent to which Arctic governance frameworks maintain regional stability in the Northern Sea Route under conditions of increasing military competition among Russia, the United States, and China since 2018. The study is guided by three key objectives: to analyse the impact of climate change on the geopolitical and strategic importance of the Northern Sea Route since 2018; to analyse the patterns and drivers of military activities undertaken by Russia, the U.S., and China in the Northern Sea Route; to evaluate the effectiveness of Arctic governance mechanisms in managing the coexistence of cooperation and strategic competition in the region. Climate change has increased accessibility to the Arctic and enhanced its economic and strategic value, thereby intensifying geopolitical competition among major powers. Methodologically, the research adopts a mixed-method approach, combining quantitative analysis of climate trends and military expenditure patterns with qualitative analysis of policy documents, strategic reports, and institutional frameworks. Preliminary findings suggest that while Arctic governance mechanisms have demonstrated resilience, they remain structurally limited in addressing new security challenges. The study conceptualizes Arctic geopolitics as a "dual reality," characterized by the simultaneous coexistence of institutional cooperation through governance frameworks and strategic competition through military expansion. Overall, the Arctic is unlikely to experience overt conflict in the near term. Nevertheless, increasing military activities driven by resource competition and strategic positioning are reinforcing security dilemma dynamics. As a result, governance-based cooperation continues to coexist with intensifying strategic rivalry among major powers.

Keywords: Arctic geopolitics, Great-power rivalry, Militarization

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Climate Change and U.S. Strategic Interests in Greenland's Critical Minerals

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Climate change is fundamentally reshaping the geopolitical landscape of the Arctic by accelerating the melting of Greenland's ice sheet and exposing previously inaccessible deposits of critical minerals. Modern defence systems, advanced manufacturing, digital industries, and renewable energy technologies all rely on these minerals, especially rare earth elements. As the demand for these resources increases worldwide, Greenland has become a strategically important area in modern international affairs. China's dominance of the global rare earth supply chain has led to increased strategic involvement by the United States (U.S.) in Greenland, raising concerns about resource dependence and supply chain resilience. As a result, climate change has evolved beyond an environmental concern to become an important factor in geopolitical competition and resource security. The research issue addressed in this study is the limited understanding of how climate change-driven resource accessibility in Greenland impacts U.S. strategic efforts to reduce dependence on China while reshaping geopolitical competition in the Arctic. As climate change, Arctic geopolitics, and critical mineral security have been the focus of separate studies, the interconnected relationship between environmental transformation, critical mineral accessibility, and strategic competition among major powers has received limited attention. This gap limits the ability of policymakers to design successful measures that simultaneously address environmental sustainability, resource security, and geopolitical stability. The objectives of this study are to examine how climate change-induced ice melt is increasing access to Greenland's critical mineral resources, to analyse the strategic importance of these minerals for U.S. economic and defence security, and to assess how China's dominance in rare earth supply chains influences U.S. strategic policy and engagement in Greenland. The study uses a qualitative research design based on secondary data analysis. Data was collected from peer-reviewed academic papers, government publications, policy documents, and reports released by international bodies. Thematic analysis was applied to discover repeating patterns related to climate change, critical mineral accessibility, and geopolitical competitiveness. Geopolitical theory and resource security theory provided the foundation for the study, which offers a thorough framework for understanding how environmental change impacts strategic decision-making in international relations. The findings reveal that climate change is significantly transforming Greenland into a strategically valuable geopolitical space by increasing access to critical mineral resources that were previously inaccessible. The U.S. and China are currently involved in stronger competitiveness as a result of this environmental instability, as both countries aim to secure dependable supply chains for minerals that are essential to national defence, economic expansion, and technological advancement. By connecting environmental change with resource security and great-power competition, the study indicates how climate change has impacted Arctic geopolitics. These results highlight the need for balanced policies that incorporate sustainable resource development, environmental sustainability, international collaboration, and long-term strategic resilience within the Arctic area. They also add to the expanding body of literature on climate-security interconnections.

Keywords: Geopolitics, Greenland, Critical minerals

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The Scramble for the Arctic: Climate Change, Great Power Competition, and the Geopolitics of the Melting Frontier

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Accelerating Arctic ice loss, driven by unprecedented global warming, is transforming the region from an isolated frontier into a highly securitized geopolitical, economic, and ecological theatre where climate dynamics directly reshape state behaviour and global power distribution within the international system, leading to great-power competition. While existing literature often divides Arctic climate change and great-power geopolitics as distinct issues, a critical gap remains in understanding how ecological shifts act as direct structural catalysts for state behaviour under offensive realism. The research aims to examine how Arctic climate change reshapes the regional strategic environment and coerces competition between the United States and Russia for relative power advantage. The principal research question examines how Arctic climate change increases competition between the United States and Russia for relative power advantage under offensive realism. This research employs a qualitative comparative case study approach grounded in offensive realism, analysing government strategies, policy reports, and scholarly literature to trace patterns of strategic positioning and resource competition. Offensive realism is adopted as the theoretical framework because it explains how the anarchic international system creates structural incentives that force states to maximize power and secure relative gains by exploiting evolving strategic advantages. Within this framework, climate-induced Arctic ice melt is interpreted as a structural transformation that increases the geopolitical value of emerging maritime corridors and natural resources. The findings reveal that both Russia and the United States respond rationally to these changing structural conditions through different strategies of power maximization, consistent with the predictions of Offensive Realism. Rather than encouraging cooperation, climate-induced environmental change reinforces the structural logic of anarchy by increasing the strategic value of Arctic space and intensifying competition for relative gains. Russia pursues internal power maximization by expanding military capabilities, investing in Arctic infrastructure, and asserting sovereign control over the Northern Sea Route to consolidate regional dominance. In contrast, the United States seeks to maximize its relative power through external balancing, strengthening North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and strategic partnerships to prevent Russia from achieving regional hegemony. These contrasting strategies demonstrate that environmental change does not alter the fundamental logic of state behaviour; rather, it reinforces the Offensive Realist expectation that states compete for relative gains whenever shifts in the strategic environment create new opportunities for power. To ensure regional stability, this research recommends strengthening the Arctic Council, establishing formal transparency mechanisms, and reinforcing multilateral governance frameworks to foster climate adaptation strategies and enhance cooperation. Ultimately, by framing the Arctic region as an ecological and strategic location, this research emphasizes the intersection between environmental change and resource security, showing how climate dynamics fundamentally reshape twenty-first-century global power structures.

Keywords: Arctic geopolitics, Climate change, Great-power competition

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Reframing Vulnerability: Climate Change as a Vector of Geopolitical Competition in Sri Lanka

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Vulnerable states in the Indian Ocean region are facing climate change as a serious struggle. Sri Lanka, as a small island developing state, is increasingly vulnerable to climate change risks, and these obstacles have fostered a greater degree of collaboration internationally on climate change, but simultaneously, geopolitical competition is shaping climate engagement, and regional powers employ climate diplomacy as a mechanism to pursue their strategic interests. However, despite the increasing research literature on climate governance and regional geopolitics, there is not much work done on the reframing of climate vulnerability as a geopolitical space in Sri Lanka. This study addresses the following questions: how has the issue of climate vulnerability become a geopolitical issue in Sri Lanka, what are the functional aspects of climate diplomacy in China and India's interest in Sri Lanka and how climate geopolitics affects Sri Lanka's strategic autonomy & foreign policy. The overall aim of this study is to examine the re-framing of climate vulnerability as a space of geopolitical competition in Sri Lanka. This study examines the climate diplomacy efforts of China and India, the strategic agendas underlying climate cooperation, and the implications of climate geopolitics for Sri Lanka's strategic autonomy and foreign policy. The study takes a qualitative approach based on the analysis of government policy documents, reports by international organizations, climate investment data, and relevant academic literature as a case study. The analysis uses a theoretical framework of climate geopolitics and small state theory, which has informed the analysis, and thematic analysis is utilized to identify patterns of climate engagement, strategic interests, and geopolitical influence. It contends that the study's centrality is twofold: Sri Lanka's climate cooperation tools not only tackle environmental vulnerabilities but can also be tools for geopolitical competition. Through climate finance, technological support, infrastructure building, and capacity building, China and India can build their presence and influence in the Indian Ocean region. These initiatives are not just about environmental governance but also about projecting power and influencing the regional landscape through climate geopolitics. Sri Lanka, as a passive recipient of external assistance, is also shown to have strategic agency to pursue a balance of competing external interests through diversified partnerships and calibrated foreign policy choices, as small state theory shows. The findings indicate that climate geopolitics is an emerging and relevant aspect of Sri Lanka's foreign policy and strategic planning. Cooperation on the climate change front does hold a lot of potential for sustainable development but also brings with it geopolitical stressors that may influence national policy decisions and foreign policy. Thus, it is recommended that Sri Lanka should have a climate-informed foreign policy that would not only be attuned to the needs of its partners in the outside world but also remain vigilant in maintaining its strategic autonomy. In the changing geopolitical landscape of the Indian Ocean, this calls for diversifying climate partnerships, expanding institutional capacity, and enhancing transparency in climate-related cooperation for long-term national development.

Keywords: Climate change, Strategic autonomy, Sri Lanka

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From Shorelines to Storylines: Media, Geopolitics, and the Global Politics of Sea-Level Rise

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Sea-level rise is one of the most visible and irreversible consequences of global climate change, posing serious threats to coastal regions and small island states. Beyond the environmental implications, sea-level rise raises urgent geopolitical concerns about territory, sovereignty, human security, and long-term survival. Despite the scientifically established severity of the issue, international media do not present it in a uniform or politically neutral manner. Some outlets frame sea-level rise as an urgent existential and geopolitical threat, while others portray it as a manageable, technical, or less pressing concern. These competing media representations shape how climate threats, vulnerabilities, and responsibilities are understood, and influence the positioning of climate-vulnerable regions within global discourse. This research examines how the opposing media framings of international media outlets frame sea-level rise, and how these representations shape the understanding of political attention, urgency, responsibility, and legitimacy in global climate governance. The research is grounded in the theoretical framework of critical geopolitics, which treats media discourse as constitutive of global politics by constructing geopolitical hierarchies, allocating responsibility, and reproducing asymmetries between the Global North and Global South. Through selective framing, international media reflects global power asymmetries, constructing a hierarchy of vulnerability that privileges the interests of dominant states while marginalizing small islands and developing nations. Adopting a qualitative comparative approach, using framing and discourse analysis to examine selected reporting chosen to reflect variation in geographical coverage, institutional style, and broader ideological orientation, from *The Guardian*, *Al Jazeera*, *BBC* and *Deutsche Welle (DW)*, the study examines how the climate crisis is narrated across media contexts. The analysis focuses on coverage published within a defined recent period and identifies recurring frames related to urgency, climate justice, adaptation, governance, and political contestation. The paper reveals that media coverage of sea-level rise is structured through competing narrative logics that either intensify or moderate the perception of climate threat. Certain outlets foreground existential risks, emphasizing displacement, territorial loss, and the vulnerability of small island developing states, while others adopt framings that are more technocratic, emphasizing adaptation, infrastructure, and governance responses. Media representations also differ in how they explain sea-level rise. Some focus on its unfair impact on vulnerable communities, while others present it as a technical issue that can be managed through policy and planning. Sea-level rise is framed either as an immediate crisis or as a distant long-term challenge. The study concludes that media framing plays a significant role in shaping how sea-level rise is perceived, prioritized, and politicized within global climate discourse. By constructing divergent narratives of urgency, vulnerability, and responsibility, international media influence how the crisis is made visible and meaningful to wider audiences, and in the construction of a hierarchical geopolitical imagination that privileges certain regions, while marginalizing others. Media framings change the perceptions of vulnerability, urgency, and responsibility, impacting political attention, responses to sea-level rise, and international policymaking. The study contributes to critical geopolitical scholarship by demonstrating that sea-level rise is not only an environmental threat but also a media-mediated global issue shaped through competing representations, where media discourse's significant role shapes politics of climate change and climate governance.

Keywords: Climate change, Climate governance, Critical geopolitics

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From Oil Wealth to Water Power: Climate Change and the Reshaping of Resource Geopolitics in Global South

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Climate change is reshaping how natural resources generate geopolitical power. In the twentieth century, petroleum enabled oil-producing states in West Asia to build economic wealth and expand political influence. Today, freshwater scarcity is rising, and transboundary river systems are becoming strategically vital. While petroleum geopolitics and hydro-politics have been studied extensively, they remain largely separate fields. It remains unclear whether existing literature adequately explains freshwater's emerging geopolitical role compared to petroleum's historical influence. This study addresses that puzzle by asking: How does climate change alter the strategic value of freshwater, and to what extent does this create geopolitical parallels with the historical rise of oil-producing states in West Asia? Freshwater is not replacing petroleum as the world's dominant strategic resource. Rather, climate change is restructuring how resource-based geopolitical power operates. Petroleum generated influence through export-based wealth and energy dependence. Freshwater generates it through control of transboundary rivers, food and water security, hydropower development, and downstream dependence. Though the mechanisms differ, both enable states to strengthen regional influence and advance national interests. This study adopts Resource Geopolitics as its primary framework. It draws on Hydro-Hegemony Theory to explain how strategic control over transboundary freshwater systems creates political leverage. It further incorporates the concepts of Water Nationalism and Transboundary Water Governance to analyse how climate-induced scarcity is prompting governments to redefine interests and adapt governance for shared resources. Together, these perspectives support an analysis of how that freshwater geopolitics extends beyond the traditional upstream-downstream paradigm, providing a basis for analysing how Global South governments will redesign geopolitical strategies and adapt conflict-management mechanisms as competition over transboundary water resources intensifies with the climate change. The study employs a qualitative comparative case study based on desk research and document analysis. It compares Saudi Arabia's geopolitical rise through crude oil exports with the evolving geopolitics of the Ganges-Brahmaputra transboundary river system under climate change. The comparison does not treat petroleum and freshwater as equivalent commodities. Instead, it examines the shared geopolitical logic through which control over a strategic resource is converted into regional influence. Saudi Arabia converted petroleum reserves into economic power and geopolitical weight through energy exports, strengthening its position among resource-dependent states. Climate change is similarly increasing the geopolitical significance of upstream states in the Ganges-Brahmaputra Basin, where downstream dependence creates new strategic vulnerabilities. As scarcity intensifies, downstream dependence increasingly shapes governance responses and regional relations. The study finds that both cases reveal a shared mechanism of resource-based power conversion, whereby strategic control over a critical natural resource is leveraged to generate regional influence. Despite differing pathways, the underlying geopolitical logic of converting resource control into strategic advantage remains comparable across contexts. This finding contributes a resource geopolitics perspective on climate-driven change, suggesting that as freshwater scarcity deepens, states may pursue power conversion strategies analogous to, though distinct from, those historically employed by petroleum-rich states.

Keywords: Climate change, Hydro-hegemony, Resource geopolitics

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ENVIRONMENTAL GOVERNANCE (II)

Sri Lanka's State Responsibility in Climate Governance: Analysis of the Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice

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Sri Lanka, as a small island developing state, is particularly vulnerable to tropical climate change impacts which threaten human life, livelihoods, infrastructure, and ecological integrity. However, the severity of these impacts cannot be attributed solely to the natural hazard itself. Rather, they underscore significant shortcomings in climate governance in Sri Lanka. The research problem of this study seeks to examine whether Sri Lanka's climate governance framework enables the State to fulfil its international responsibilities related to climate change as articulated in the 2025 Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice (ICJ) on the obligations of states in respect of climate change. The research objectives are to identify the legal, policy gaps in Sri Lanka's climate governance addressing climate change and recommend measures to strengthen compliance with the ICJ Advisory Opinion. The study is theoretically grounded in Norm Dynamics Theory, which explains how international legal norms emerge, gain acceptance, and become internalized within domestic legal systems incorporated into Sri Lanka's domestic climate governance framework. The research methodology used in this research is the black letter approach of research based on the international conventions such as United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), Ramsar Convention and Advisory Opinion as primary sources and journal articles, books, web articles, case laws as secondary sources. The Advisory Opinion emphasized that climate change is an existential threat and affirmed that States are under binding legal obligations to protect the climate system and to prevent significant environmental harm. Although Sri Lanka maintains a broad environmental legal framework through statutes such as the National Environmental Act, the Fauna and Flora Protection Ordinance, the Forest Ordinance, and the Soil Conservation Act, these legislative instruments were not enacted specifically to regulate climate change. Consequently, Sri Lanka does not possess a comprehensive and dedicated Climate Change Act that establishes legally binding obligations, institutional responsibilities, implementation mechanisms, and accountability measures for climate change governance. Furthermore, the domestic legal framework does not prescribe legally enforceable national climate change mitigation and adaptation targets, nor does it provide statutory recognition and legal enforceability to Sri Lanka's Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) under the Paris Agreement. As a result, climate related commitments largely remain policy objectives rather than legally binding domestic obligations capable of ensuring regulatory compliance and institutional accountability. This study recommends the enactment of a dedicated Climate Change Act that incorporates Sri Lanka's international climate obligations into domestic law by establishing legally enforceable climate change adaptation targets, providing statutory recognition to NDCs, and defining institutional responsibilities for climate governance. These reforms would strengthen Sri Lanka's legal framework, enhance compliance with the obligations reaffirmed in the Advisory Opinion, and improve the State's capacity to fulfil its international responsibilities relating to climate change.

Keywords: State responsibility, Advisory opinion, Climate governance

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Environmental Disruption and Climate-Induced Forced Migration: Addressing Gaps in the International Legal Framework through the Case Study of Bangladesh

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Climate-induced migration and displacement have become pressing global concerns, reflecting the growing impact of environmental changes on human mobility. Rising sea levels, extreme weather events, droughts, desertification, and resource scarcity are increasingly forcing populations to relocate, particularly in vulnerable regions of the Global South. Despite the magnitude of this issue, existing international legal frameworks remain inadequate in addressing the protection needs of those displaced by climate-related factors. The absence of a clear legal definition for “climate migrants” and the limited scope of refugee law have created significant protection gaps, making this issue highly relevant in contemporary legal and policy discourse. This study aims to examine the legal and institutional challenges surrounding climate-induced migration while exploring the need for a comprehensive protection framework. It seeks to analyse the shortcomings of existing international legal instruments, and to discuss why international legal and policy reforms are necessary to address this issue. The research adopts a qualitative doctrinal analysis of international instruments, especially the 1951 Refugee Convention, the Paris Convention, and the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM). Additionally, this study explores climate change-induced migration through an in-depth analysis of Bangladesh as a case study, with particular attention to the ways in which environmental changes influence patterns of displacement and mobility. The theoretical foundation of this study is mainly grounded in principles of human rights law and migration law. The study further argues that the current international legal regime is inadequately equipped to address the complexities of climate-induced displacement. Existing refugee law fails to extend protection to individuals displaced solely by environmental factors, thereby excluding a significant category of affected persons. The analysis emphasizes the importance of integrating climate considerations into migration governance and adopting a rights-based approach to ensure adequate protection for displaced individuals. It further proposes possible policy initiatives aimed at addressing these legal and institutional gaps collectively. In conclusion, the study finds that there is an urgent need for a coherent and inclusive legal framework to address climate-induced migration and displacement. It recommends recognizing climate migrants under international law and developing binding global instruments as the primary means of addressing this issue, given that climate-induced displacement necessitates a coordinated international response grounded in human dignity, equity, and sustainability.

Keywords: Climate-induced migration, Human rights, Bangladesh

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Climate Induced Disasters, Displacement, and Conflict: International Legal Frameworks through Cyclone Ditwah 2025

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Climate induced disasters have become increasingly frequent and severe due to global climate change, causing significant socio-economic disruption, large-scale internal displacement, and heightened competition over scarce resources, which may escalate into conflict. Although international legal instruments addressing to provide partial responses. They remain fragmented and insufficient to address the complex legal challenges arising from climate-induced displacement and humanitarian protection. The absence of formal recognition of climate refugees under international law further exacerbates these protection gaps. Against this background, Cyclone Ditwah 2025 illustrates the need to urgently assess whether the existing international regime is capable of effectively responding to climate-induced disasters, displacement and conflict in an increasingly climate vulnerable world. This study examines the legal implications of Ditwah to evaluate the adequacy of global legal frameworks governing climate induced disasters, displacement, and conflict. It aims to assess the effectiveness in addressing climate induced displacement, humanitarian protection, and related governance challenges while identifying existing legal and institutional gaps. This research adopts a doctrinal and analytical legal methodology, examining international treaties, conventions, soft law instruments, case law, policy documents, and scholarly literature. The analysis is grounded into evaluating the coherence and effectiveness of existing legal frameworks. The findings indicate that existing legal instruments remain fragmented, inadequately equipped to address the interconnected challenges of climate induced disasters, displacement, and conflict. While international climate change, disaster risk reduction, refugee, and human rights instruments provide important normative guidance, they lack an integrated and binding legal mechanism capable of ensuring comprehensive protection for affected populations. The Cyclone Ditwah case shows how legal fragmentation, weak coordination among institutions, and the lack of clear legal recognition for climate induced displacement hurt effective humanitarian responses and disaster management. These issues create major accountability gaps for both state and non-state actors. They also hinder fair resource distribution, resilience building efforts, and long-term recovery programs. In addition, the absence of binding international obligations weakens global climate governance. It limits the ability of current institutions to respond properly to cross-border risks of displacement and conflict. Hence the study recommends enhancing international cooperation and establishing a consistent legal framework. The study concludes that current international and domestic legal frameworks are insufficient to address the multidimensional challenges of climate-induced disasters, displacement and conflict. It finds that fragmented legal regimes and weak institutional coordination hinder effective humanitarian protection, accountability, and resilience building. Accordingly, the study recommends the development of a coherent and binding international legal framework. That strengthens cooperation among states, integrates climate adaptation with disaster governance and human rights protection, and establishes clearer legal safeguards for persons displaced by climate induced disasters.

Keywords: Cyclone Ditwah, Climate induced disasters, Internal displacement.

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Climate Refugees, No Refuge: Why International Law Fails and the Case for a New Protection Regime

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The status of climate refugees is precarious under international law, with projections indicating up to 200 million such people by 2050. However, the 1951 Refugee Convention does not provide adequate solutions to the issue, as the definition of a refugee does not include climate displacement, since it only recognizes persecution based on race, religion, or political opinion. This research provides answers to the normative and legal problem of the incapacity of international law to protect climate refugees through the identification of the obstacles to the development of appropriate protection system. The analysis in this article relies on two main theories to conceptualise its research framework: the English School of International Relations, which emphasises the conflict between the concept of state sovereignty and the idea of international society, and postcolonial theories that demonstrate the significance of historical power differentials inherent in Western-centred legal concepts. By employing qualitative legal research methods, the study discusses three relevant examples that represent distinct displacement situations: the *Ioane Teitiota v. New Zealand* legal case (an individual claim), internal displacement in the Bangal delta (IDPs), and Tuvalu-related bilateral resettlement politics. These examples illustrate how different legal systems, social mechanisms, and diplomatic practices create, as well as fail to acknowledge, the implications of climate-induced migration. The analysis shows that this deficiency is not simply technical, but structural. Global North nations, such as Australia, New Zealand, and the United States of America (U.S.A) regularly oppose the adoption of binding agreements for fear of jeopardizing their sovereignty and being liable for past emissions. The path dependency of the 1951 Refugee Convention enshrines this exclusionary paradigm, and non-binding agreements, such as the Global Compact on Migration and the Nansen Initiative, are still limited. The conclusion of the research is that the failure of the law emanates from the favouritism that the state holds towards its own prerogative over the rights of the individual. Although it is often suggested that a specific protocol similar to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) could be of help, this absence points towards the not-so-significant political will. In the end, meaningful reforms could be achieved only by approaching climate change through the lens of the social injustice it reflects, rather than through the mere technical compliance with international law.

Keywords: Climate displacement, International law, Refugees

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Climate Migration as Reparative Justice: Rethinking Historical Responsibility in the South Asian Context

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Climate migration is often framed as a border-management crisis, where states are expected to control population movement and respond to humanitarian pressure. However, this framing overlooks a deeper injustice; climate-induced displacement is closely connected to historical patterns of global inequality, uneven development, and unequal responsibility for greenhouse gas emissions. This paper argues that climate migration should not be understood only as a governance challenge, but also as a question of reparative justice. Focusing on climate-vulnerable communities in South Asia, the paper examines how populations that have contributed least to climate change are increasingly exposed to displacement caused by rising sea levels, floods, droughts, and livelihood insecurity. The study applies postcolonial international relations theory and climate justice scholarship to analyse how historical responsibility, unequal power relations, and global economic structures shape present-day climate vulnerability. This theoretical approach helps explain why existing international responses often treat affected communities as recipients of assistance rather than as rights-bearing groups entitled to justice. Methodologically, the paper adopts a qualitative doctrinal and conceptual research approach. It reviews relevant international legal instruments, climate governance frameworks, climate finance mechanisms, and scholarly literature on climate migration, climate justice, and reparations. The analysis shows that current frameworks, including adaptation finance and humanitarian support, remain limited because they are largely based on voluntary assistance rather than binding responsibility. The paper argues that recognising climate migration as reparative justice could strengthen global responsibility by promoting fairer migration pathways, planned relocation schemes, resettlement support, loss-and-damage financing, and equitable burden-sharing. Such an approach does not provide an immediate solution to climate displacement, but it shifts the debate from charity to obligation. By linking climate migration with historical responsibility and structural inequality, the paper contributes to a more justice-oriented understanding of international cooperation in the climate crisis.

Keywords: Climate migration, Reparative justice, South Asia

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MULTILATERAL AND REGIONAL FRAMEWORKS ON CLIMATE CHANGE

Can Regionalism Fill the Protection Gap for Climate-Induced Displacement in South-East Asia? Lessons From the Kampala Convention in Practice

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South-East Asia is among the world's most disaster-prone regions, with climate-induced displacement increasingly threatening the rights and security of millions. The vast majority of such displacement occurs within national borders, yet the region lacks a binding legal framework to protect Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs). Against this backdrop, this article asks: what lessons can South-East Asia draw from the Kampala Convention, and how can these lessons inform the development of a regional protection framework for climate-induced displacement? This article pursues two principal objectives. First, to evaluate the Kampala Convention as a normative model for addressing climate-induced displacement and identify lessons applicable to South-East Asia. Second, to propose a tailored regional IDP framework for Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) grounded in the Convention's core protection principles. To this end, the research employs a doctrinal and comparative legal methodology. It first establishes the normative imperative for IDP protection in South-East Asia, situating the analysis within international human rights and humanitarian law. It then evaluates the Kampala Convention (the African Union's 2009 treaty and the only binding regional instrument addressing internal displacement globally) as a normative model. The study specifically examines the Convention's legally binding character, its explicit recognition of climate change and environmental degradation as drivers of displacement, and its comprehensive protection architecture spanning prevention, assistance, and durable solutions. The paper then applies these lessons to ASEAN's institutional context, critically assessing how its foundational principles, particularly non-interference and consensus-based decision-making, influence the feasibility of a comparable regional framework. The paper argues that protecting climate-displaced persons in South-East Asia is a legal and humanitarian imperative, essential to regional stability, sustainable development, and the realization of fundamental human rights. The Kampala Convention demonstrates that regional instruments can address internal displacement effectively by establishing clear state obligations, integrating climate and environmental causes of displacement, and embedding protection within a human rights framework, which are features conspicuously absent from existing ASEAN instruments. The paper concludes that while ASEAN's structural constraints pose real challenges, they do not preclude regional action. Drawing on the Kampala Convention as a normative model, this paper proposes that ASEAN develop a tailored framework that formally recognizes climate-induced displacement, codifies state obligations toward IDPs, and integrates disaster risk reduction with human rights protections. Such a framework would enhance legal certainty, strengthen inter-state cooperation, and position ASEAN as a proactive actor in addressing one of the defining humanitarian challenges of the climate era.

Keywords: Climate-induced displacement, Regionalism, ASEAN

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Green Realism and Climate Governance in ASEAN and the African Union

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Climate change is among the defining structural challenges of the contemporary international order, demanding coordinated action across national, regional, and international levels. Within the Global South, regional organizations occupy a strategically important but under examined position, their member states face heightened climatic vulnerability, compounded by limited financial, technological, and institutional capacity. The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the African Union (AU) are the primary institutional platforms through which their members coordinate environmental policy, negotiate on the global stage and shape regional development agendas. Yet despite consistent high level rhetorical commitment to sustainability, the climate policy instruments both organizations adopt remain largely voluntary, non-binding, and unevenly implemented across sub-regions. This raises a central question this study seeks to answer, why do regional organizations in the Global South and ASEAN and the AU in particular struggle to convert ambitious climate policy aspirations into binding collective action? Existing scholarship dominated by liberal institutionalist accounts of cooperation offers only a partial explanation for this pattern. To answer this, the study draws on Green Realism, a framework that extends classical realist assumptions of anarchic state survival, Westphalian sovereignty, relative gains and security contestation into the domain of ecological politics. Rather than treating regional climate governance as a response to shared ecological necessity, Green Realism explains it as the outcome of dominant member states calculated material interests, their consistent preference for domestic regime stability, economic development, energy security and continued access to international climate financing over supranational ecological obligation. The study adopts a comparative qualitative case study design, treating ASEAN and the AU as cases that are institutionally similar yet critically divergent. This pairing is justified on three grounds, both are the most institutionally developed regional bodies within their respective continents, their memberships share broadly comparable exposure to climate vulnerability and their founding treaty principles, decision making norms and institutional architecture differ enough to sustain a controlled comparison. Analysis proceeds along four criteria the legal bindingness of policy instruments, institutional enforcement capacity, compliance and monitoring mechanisms and external financial and technical dependency. The empirical material consists of ministerial declarations, framework conventions and policy documents issued between 2015 and 2024, a period chosen to capture the formal operationalization of climate commitments following the Paris Agreement. The findings show that regional climate cooperation is driven chiefly by the strategic calculations of dominant states rather than by ecological motivation. Binding environmental mandates is difficult to secure wherever entrenched norms of consensus and non-interference prevail collective action becomes considerably more feasible, however once climate initiatives are folded into existing regional trade, development and energy frameworks that deliver immediate, tangible benefits. The study concludes that effective institutional design in the Global South should move away from idealized supranational enforcement models and instead pursue pragmatic, incentive-based frameworks that tie climate mitigation directly to national socioeconomic survival. In doing so, the study contributes a materially grounded account of why ambition so often outpaces implementation in Global South regionalism.

Keywords: Green realism, Regional governance, Climate cooperation

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Climate Change, Ocean Dynamics, and Structural Inequality in Sri Lanka's Blue Economy Transition

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Sri Lanka's transition towards a blue economy is increasingly shaped by climate change, changing ocean conditions, and persistent inequalities in global climate governance. As a small island developing state with an Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) of nearly 517,000 km², the country depends heavily on marine resources for fisheries, tourism, shipping, food security, and coastal livelihoods. However, rising sea levels, increasing sea surface temperatures, ocean acidification, and marine heatwaves are placing growing pressure on marine ecosystems and coastal communities. Scientific evidence indicates that sea levels are rising by approximately 3.7 mm annually, while recurrent coral bleaching has reduced marine biodiversity and altered fish populations. This study examines how climate change and changing ocean conditions affect the sustainability of Sri Lanka's blue economy and analyses how structural inequalities in global climate governance shape the country's capacity to achieve equitable and climate-resilient blue economic development. This study aims to examine the impacts of climate change and changing ocean conditions on the sustainability of Sri Lanka's blue economy and to analyses how structural inequalities in global climate governance shape the country's capacity to achieve equitable and climate-resilient blue economic development. The study analyses Sri Lanka's National Adaptation Plan (2016–2025), Nationally Determined Contributions (2021), and national Blue Economy policy initiatives alongside the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), the Paris Agreement, the Green Climate Fund, and Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change assessment reports. The findings indicate that changing ocean conditions have significant ecological and economic consequences for Sri Lanka's blue economy. Coral bleaching has caused the loss of approximately 44% of coral cover in some reef systems, reducing biodiversity, fisheries productivity, and coastal livelihoods. The study further argues that unequal access to climate finance, technology, and institutional capacity constrains effective adaptation despite international climate commitments. It concludes that strengthening ecosystem-based adaptation, marine spatial planning, climate risk management, institutional capacity, technological cooperation, and climate finance is essential for building a sustainable and equitable blue economy in Sri Lanka.

Keywords: Climate change, Blue economy, Sri Lanka

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Climate Debt and Unequal Recovery: Sri Lanka, Cyclone Ditwah, and the Global Climate Order

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Cyclone Ditwah, which made landfall on Sri Lanka on 28th November 2025, exposed profound inequities in the global climate order. Causing over 640 deaths, approximately 1,200 landslides, and flooding nearly 20% of Sri Lanka's landmass, it stands as one of the worst natural disasters since the 2004 Tsunami. The World Bank estimated direct physical damage at approximately US\$4.1 billion, roughly 4% of gross domestic product, severely affecting nearly two million people. Despite contributing less than 0.1% of global carbon emissions, Sri Lanka bore the full consequences of a climate-intensified disaster with minimal access to international climate finance, underscoring the need to evaluate whether the Loss and Damage Fund can deliver meaningful climate justice in practice. This study investigates how the operational architecture of the Loss and Damage Fund impacts vulnerable, debt-burdened states facing acute disasters. Using Sri Lanka's experience with Cyclone Ditwah as a critical case, the paper evaluates the structural adequacy of the mechanism in delivering climate justice and proposes institutional reforms to fulfil its mandate. The Fund is selected because it is the only international mechanism designed to address irreversible climate harm in vulnerable states. Using a qualitative case study methodology, the study draws on secondary sources including the World Bank's Global Rapid Post-Disaster Damage Estimation report, the United Nations Humanitarian Priorities Plan for Sri Lanka, and assessments from the Manohar Parrikar Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses and the Institute of Policy Studies of Sri Lanka. The theoretical foundation integrates the principle of Common But Differentiated Responsibilities (CBDR) under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) with the climate justice conceptual framework, applied through its four dimensions of distributive, procedural, corrective, and recognition justice, to assess whether international responses reflect equitable burden-sharing or reproduce structural disadvantage. The paper argues that Ditwah's consequences were compounded by Sri Lanka's 2022 economic crisis, imposing a "double burden" on a government managing International Monetary Fund (IMF)-mandated austerity alongside large-scale disaster response. Through the climate justice framework, this exemplifies corrective and distributive injustice: Sri Lanka, bearing minimal responsibility for global emissions, was denied the fiscal space that CBDR normatively requires. The international response mobilised approximately US\$120 million from World Bank portfolios, representing less than 3% of the total damage, while the Loss and Damage Fund triggered no disbursement due to the absence of an automatic activation mechanism. The findings demonstrate that the Loss and Damage Fund is operationally inadequate: slow-disbursing, application-dependent, and misaligned with acute climate emergencies. Sri Lanka's experience reveals that the Fund reproduces rather than remedies the injustices identified by climate justice scholarship. The paper proposes three reforms: automatic trigger financing upon verified damage thresholds; debt-service suspension clauses for climate-vulnerable states undergoing debt restructuring; and integrated climate-health-disaster governance platforms. Without such reforms, the Loss and Damage Fund will remain a symbolic gesture rather than a binding climate obligation.

Keywords: Climate justice, Climate debt, Cyclone Ditwah

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