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India's Evolving Climate Discourse

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Abbreviations

UNFCCC- United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change

NAPCC- National Action Plan on Climate Change

INDC- Intended Nationally Determined Contributions

NDC- Nationally Determined Contributions

PIB- Press Information Bureau, Government of India

CDM- Clean Development Mechanism

COP- Conference of Parties

CBDR- Common But Differentiated Responsibilities

ISA- International Solar Alliance

SCP- Singh Convergence Principle

Abstract

India's transformation from being a participant in environmental discussions to assuming environmental responsibilities on the global stage has been remarkable. Since endorsing the Paris Agreement, India has exhibited substantial progress in aligning global policies with domestic initiatives. The objective of this thesis is to grasp the determinants behind changes in India's discourse on climate change through an examination of Indian climate politics and textual analysis across different time periods. The research builds on compliance theory and contributes to the study of compliance in climate change discourse in India since the Kyoto Protocol of 1997. The case study presented in this research demonstrates how a shift to a pragmatic diplomatic approach and India's aspiration to become a globally responsible leader may alter a nation's behaviour in international environmental negotiations.

Introduction

Climate change presents a pressing and alarming situation that demands immediate action. With rampant environmental degradation, including rising temperatures, extreme weather events, and biodiversity loss, the urgency to combat climate change is undeniable. International efforts have been made to address this crisis, with significant steps taken to mitigate its effects. India, too, has recognized the importance of prioritizing environmental concerns. Over time, there has been a noticeable shift in India's approach, moving from mere contestation in climate negotiations to active engagement. The global community has acknowledged India's commendable efforts towards achieving net-zero emissions by 2070 (PIB, 2023), although opinions vary. Some critics argue that India falls short of its targets, while others assert that as a developing nation, India successfully balances economic development and environmental protection. India has transformed its role from a protesting participant on the outskirts of global environmental policy to one that actively shapes global environmental efforts (Michaelowa & Michaelowa, 2012). Therefore this thesis explores the question as to what factors led to the shift in India's climate change negotiations?

While the existing literature extensively engages in climate narratives in India and the changes in its negotiating stance, there is a shortage of analysis concerning the motivations behind this transition. Two pivotal reasons underscore the significance of this exploration. Firstly, India's ascent as an economic powerhouse, coupled with its substantial involvement in climate negotiations, has elevated its influence not just within Asia but on a global scale. Secondly, India holds the position of being the world's second-largest emitter, trailing only behind China and the United States (IEA, 2021). The contribution of this theoretical research is twofold. Firstly, it enhances comprehension of why states adhere to or deviate from international agreements. Secondly, it investigates the factors influencing state behaviour in adhering to or disregarding international rules.

This thesis aims to examine India's role in global environmental governance through an analysis of its engagement spanning more than two decades of global climate politics. The structure of the paper unfolds as follows: initially, it elucidates and substantiates the significance of the research puzzle by reviewing existing relevant literature on the subject and solidifying its relevance by correlating it with compliance theory. Subsequently, the methods employed for data collection and analysis are expounded upon in the subsequent section.

Finally, the last section entails the analysis of the research question and the testing of hypotheses utilizing the available sources.

Literature review

In the historical context, India's approach to climate change policy was initially grounded in principles of equity, highlighting the historical accountability of developed nations for climate change and supporting differentiated responsibilities for developed and developing countries. As time progressed, India's climate policy underwent a transformation to encompass practical considerations, placing a growing emphasis on establishing norms within the global framework of climate governance. The shift in India's climate policy towards pragmatism and norm-setting does not signify a complete abandonment of equity considerations. Rather, India has aimed to find a middle ground by balancing equity concerns, adopting practical strategies to address its developmental requirements, and actively engaging in the shaping of global norms. This well-balanced climate policy signifies a strategic adjustment to evolving global dynamics, wherein India endeavors to affirm its interests, actively contribute to worldwide solutions, and influence the standards that guide international climate initiatives (Mohan 2017). Additionally, noteworthy alterations have been observed in India subsequent to the Paris Agreement, particularly in the context of addressing climate change concerns with a specific emphasis on leveraging renewable energy sources such as solar and wind energy (Bantu & Adapa, 2017). The government of India has proactively undertaken initiatives aimed at sustainable development and carbon emissions reduction. These efforts encompass the encouragement of electric vehicles, the enforcement of emission standards for vehicles, and the implementation of initiatives such as afforestation to sequester carbon dioxide.

Several scholars (Thaker & Leiserowitz, 2014) have contended that Indian government climate change discourses are evolving, notably acknowledging the "co-benefits" of aligning development with climate change goals and demonstrating growing "flexibility" regarding mitigation targets. India's stance in United Nations Conference on Climate Change negotiations is rooted in principles of "equity," "historical responsibility," and the "polluter pays" agenda, until a transition occurs towards voluntary carbon emission reductions (Zhang, Zou & Muhkia, 2022). Meanwhile, Narzary (2021) observes improvements in Indian environmental compliance despite insufficiencies in formal monitoring and enforcement

capacities, attributing this progress to the steady development of the country's institutional environmental management framework since the 1970s.

Narlikar (2017) underscores substantial shifts in India's discourse and approach to global governance, transitioning from an ideological and inflexible negotiating stance to a more proactive and nuanced strategy under Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership. The current government not only displays a readiness to engage more actively and assume increased responsibility on the global stage but also strategically incorporates Indian traditions to align with a growth and development agenda, presenting a more nuanced and culturally rooted approach to international relations. Despite these efforts, Narlikar acknowledges the formidable challenge of balancing a cultural approach in global climate governance. The author also critiques India's negotiation behaviour, citing concerns about its perceived 'arrogant,' 'moralistic,' and 'confrontational' stance by both developing and industrialized nations, indicating a need for enhancement in negotiating skills.

Sonkar (2023) argues that India has actively engaged in addressing climate change through a combination of national and state-level initiatives and highlights the change in focus of India's climate change policies from mitigation to adaptation. Nayak (2017) further advocates that mitigation and adaptation strategies are crucial at all levels of administration to address the varying severity and nature of climate impacts across regions in India. India has made significant progress in reducing the intensity of its greenhouse gas emissions relative to its GDP, with a 21% decrease observed from 2010 to 2020. This reduction is attributed to various initiatives and programs aimed at improving energy efficiency and reducing carbon emissions. Both Sonkar, (2023) and Nayak (2017) advocate that the National Action Plan on Climate Change (NAPCC) in 2008 is the first ever systematic and serious attempt to address the issues of climate at the national level has been taken by India. Both the literatures focuses primarily on the National Action Plan on Climate Change and its implications for India, without delving into broader global perspectives on climate change or comparing India's efforts with those of other countries.

Raghunandan (2020) provides a critical perspective on India's remarkable engagement and adaptation in climate change negotiations, contending that India's involvement in domestic actions is primarily a response to international commitments rather than a proactive stance as a problem solver. Additionally, he emphasizes that the ambitious commitments outlined in India's Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) at the UNFCCC are modest and

attainable. These commitments are constrained by a narrow focus on select sectors, lack cross-sectoral programs, and predominantly involve a top-down approach with limited consultation with stakeholders at various administrative levels. Narzary (2021) concurs that while the Indian environmental institutions face shortcomings in their formal monitoring and enforcement capacity, there has been notable progress in environmental compliance. Despite these inadequacies, there has been a consistent enhancement and expansion of the institutional framework for environmental management in India, a process that commenced systematically in the early 1970s in preparation for the 1972 Stockholm Conference on Human Development.

Theory chapter

Definition(s)

Scholars differentiate between two interpretations of the term compliance. Firstly, it can denote conformity driven by instrumental motives, such as the desire to evade punishment (Raustiala & Slaughter 2002; Von Stein 2010). Alternatively, compliance can be viewed as obedience stemming from the internationalization of norms and ideas (Koh 1996; Mitchell 2014). Von Stein (2010) provides a broad and minimalist definition of compliance, characterizing it as 'conformity to rules', a concept that faces minimal criticism from fellow scholars. Mitchell (2014) offers an alternative perspective, defining compliance as the alignment of behaviour with the prescriptions of a rule or norm. While the concept of compliance is commonly employed to examine the connection between treaties and compliance, Mitchell argues that compliance with international treaties is influenced by various factors, including implicit rules such as norms and principles, as well as the design of the treaties themselves.

Despite the tendency of some scholars to combine the study of compliance and effectiveness, Mitchell does not advocate for the simultaneous use of both concepts. Compliance is generally perceived as positive in the realm of international politics; however, adherence to international agreements may prove ineffective in achieving the objectives of the agreement under certain circumstances. Young (2013) proposed the notion that "Compliance can be said to occur when the actual behaviour of a given subject conforms to prescribed behaviour, and non-compliance or violation occurs when actual behaviour departs significantly from prescribed behaviour". This definition draws a clear separation between compliance

behaviour and the effectiveness and implementation of treaties. The difficulty in this context does not primarily revolve around reaching a consensus on a definition but rather centres on pinpointing the sources of enforcement, if they exist. Given the absence of a comprehensive authority to uphold international law, some argue that it lacks the essential characteristics of genuine law. Conversely, others argue that the mechanisms of enforcement are situated in alternative avenues such as domestic institutions, reputation, reciprocity, and so forth. Enforcement, in this context, is characterized by the presence of sanctions or tangible consequences in case of noncompliance.

Scholars in the fields of international law and relations have long grappled with the complexities surrounding compliance. The question of why states choose to comply or not with international regulations has been a persistent puzzle. When states engage in international agreements, their behaviours, relationships, and expectations often undergo changes over time in alignment with the agreement's provisions. Understanding the factors contributing to these shifts in the approaches and behaviours of states and citizens towards compliance with international agreements is crucial. It raises questions about the efficacy and utility of international law. This chapter explores these questions and associated topics, delving into the relevant aspects of compliance theory for the thesis. It primarily draws insights from political science literature but also incorporates perspectives from international law, economics, and political philosophy scholarship.

Compliance theory: foundational ideas

Before delving into current dialogues regarding compliance and enforcement in politics, it is crucial to scrutinize foundational works that establish the framework for these discussions. Scholars such as Von Stein (2010) and Lutmar & Carneiro (2018) underscore the importance of historical works, including those authored by Machiavelli (1532) and Hobbes (1651). These seminal works not only lay the groundwork for understanding compliance but also serve as guiding tools for present-day scholars. Machiavelli's perspective on political commitments, as articulated in 1532, emphasizes the pragmatic notion that rulers should not feel obligated to uphold promises when doing so becomes detrimental to their interests. This principle, rooted in the understanding that circumstances can change, has endured through subsequent literary works and continues to influence contemporary international legal concepts like *rebus sic stantibus*. Machiavelli underscores the importance of assessing the prevailing conditions and adjusting commitments accordingly, suggesting that adherence to

promises should be contingent on the ongoing relevance of the underlying reasons that prompted those commitments.

Additionally, Hobbes' concepts concerning sovereignty, the state of nature, and mutual contracts significantly contribute to the study of compliance. According to Hobbes, the state of nature is characterized by a life that is solitary, impoverished, and brutal, marked by uncertainties. In this condition, the only means of obtaining protection is by surrendering to the Sovereign, represented by the Leviathan, and relinquishing all powers to them. Hobbes' theory of the state of nature have direct implications in the contemporary anarchical state system and modern international law. The surrender of powers by citizens to the sovereign, as proposed by Hobbes, forms the foundation for interstate relations and ensures peace (Lutmar & Carneiro, 2018).

Compliance theory: Current Debates

Contemporary research in political science and international law predominantly revolves around two main themes. The first area of study explores the connection between compliance and enforcement while the second area examines the correlation between treaties and the behaviour of states. Von Stein (2013) further categorizes the reasons why states follow international agreements into two main approaches: instrumentalist and normative. The instrumentalist approach sees compliance as motivated by self-interest and the practical consequences of not complying. In contrast, the normative approach focuses on values, principles, fairness, and legitimacy and standards of appropriate behaviour suggesting that states have a strong moral obligation to comply (Von Stein 2013; Simmons 1998). One faction of scholars underscores the importance of enforcement mechanisms in promoting compliance with international treaties. In contrast, another group challenges this perspective, advocating for the consideration of additional factors influencing states' adherence to international agreements.

In his work, Von Stein (2010) outlines several principal enforcement mechanisms, including coercion, reputation, reciprocity, and domestic institutions. According to scholars such as Morgenthau (1948) and Goldsmith & Posner (2005), the enforcement of international law typically takes place through coercion, which can manifest in both positive and negative forms. Von Stein (2013) adds that the enforcement of compliance can manifest in various ways. On one side, it may involve penalties such as a reduction in foreign aid, the imposition of sanctions, or even the use of force, including military intervention (either on a full scale or

solely to remove a leader). On the other side, enforcement can also involve positive incentives or rewards, such as an increase in foreign aid as acknowledgment for agreeing to a specific agreement.

Compliance with international agreements is significantly influenced by reputation, which can yield tangible benefits and facilitate future collaboration with diverse state and non-state actors in the international arena. However, the use of reputation as a mechanism has a downside – if commitments are not fulfilled, it may result in a reputation for untrustworthiness, potentially impeding future interactions. Reciprocity is defined as the exchange of roughly equivalent values, where the actions of each party depend on the prior actions of others, resulting in good for good and bad for bad (Keohane 1984). According to Guzman (2002), when both parties benefit from mutual compliance over mutual noncompliance, and the threat of returning to a non-agreement status quo prevents initial renegeing, parties are likely to reciprocate noncompliance.

Lutmar & Carneiro (2018) consider domestic institutions as conduits for norm diffusion and facilitators of policy change. Various sources of domestic enforcement include elections, courts, and interest groups. Additionally, Von Stein (2013) highlights how the legal system in a liberal nation promotes adherence by offering citizens a platform to defend their rights and contest government actions. Concentrating solely on literature that examines the potential for enforcement to improve compliance presents an incomplete perspective. The normative standpoint highlights the potential drawbacks of enforcement, as it might dissuade states from engaging in international treaties they anticipate struggling to adhere to.

Chayes and Chayes (1991; 1993) assert that states generally have an inclination to comply, and rules to which governments commit are typically in their best interest. Additionally, they challenge the notion that enforcement is the driving force behind states adhering to international rules. This perspective further faces criticism from the managerial standpoint, which emphasizes that compliance may not necessarily result from a deliberate decision to abide by an agreement.

In his work, Mitchell (2014) does not negate the significance of enforcement in international law but advocates for a clear differentiation between compliance and enforcement. Another body of research underscores the crucial impact of norms and identity on the choices states make, often driven by the 'logic of appropriateness' and the 'logic of consequences,' as highlighted by Von Stein (2010). Koh (1996) argues that repeated interactions at the

international level lead to changes in behavioural norms, gradually integrating them into domestic legal systems. When a legal framework is legitimate to those it concerns and follows the appropriate process, it exerts a 'compliance pull' that may influence state behaviour (Von Stein 2010).

Behavioral compliance theory acknowledges that states' perceptions of their own identity and reputation can influence their compliance behavior (Peat, 2021). States are aware that their actions and adherence to international treaties are observed by other states, international organizations, and the global community. Maintaining a positive reputation enhances their credibility and trustworthiness. Compliance with international norms and treaties demonstrates a state's commitment to shared values, reinforcing its identity as a responsible global actor. By adhering to these norms, states can strategically project a desired image or role, thereby shaping perceptions and strengthening their position in global governance structures (Keohane, 1984; Guzman, 2008; Lutmar & Carneiro, 2018).

Self-interest and compliance are closely linked in international relations, with states evaluating their interests when deciding whether to adhere to treaties. Behavioral compliance theory suggests that states act rationally to maximize self-interest, typically complying when benefits outweigh costs (Peat, 2021). Compliance decisions weigh potential costs such as reputational damage or economic sanctions against benefits like market access, security guarantees, and diplomatic support. Long-term security, cooperative relationships, and economic incentives, such as trade and investment opportunities, motivate compliance. By adhering to treaties, states enhance their power and influence in global governance, shaping international norms and decision-making processes. Mitchell (1984) posits that adherence to agreements grants international legitimacy, which enhances domestic political support and enables governments to implement policies that might otherwise be difficult to achieve.

According to Mitchell (2014), state compliance serves as a means to advance their national interests and avoid legal obligations that could be detrimental. Additionally, the willingness of a state to comply with a treaty depends on the extent of behavioural change it necessitates. Mitchell underscores the significance of compliance arising from interactive and interdependent decision-making, where states consider the potential impact of their adherence on others. Furthermore, Mitchell acknowledges that states may opt not to comply with agreements when doing so is not advantageous in a particular circumstance. For example, he

argues that sanctions for non-compliance may not be sufficiently deterrent to compel states to adhere to the rules.

Howse & Teitel (2010) challenges the increasing focus on compliance within scholarly discourse, arguing that it inadequately captures the normative impacts of international law. He contends that compliance overlooks the critical aspect of interpretation, which heavily influences the application of legal rules. Howse suggests that compliance studies assume a stable and universally agreed-upon interpretation of rules, neglecting the complexities of their real-world application.

Hypothesis and Justification

Drawing on this theoretical background provides a sophisticated understanding of the theoretical principles and plausible answers to my research question about what prompted India's evolving stance and conduct in climate change negotiations over time. The shift from contestation to engagement and subsequent active involvement in global environmental governance is explained by the enforcement mechanisms, behavioural change, considerations of national interest, and other factors outlined by scholars. Consequently, relying on this theoretical foundation, I have identified two sets of factors driving the transformation in India's behaviour towards climate change negotiations: 1) India's shift in climate change negotiations was driven by a pragmatic turn in climate change diplomacy, both domestically and internationally, and 2) India's aspiration to be recognized as a responsible global leader motivated its proactive stance in climate change negotiations.

Method chapter

This research employs a single case study analysis, focusing on the case of India, to investigate the rationale behind states complying to the international agreements. The research employs a primary methodological approach, namely discourse analysis, to identify causal links that elucidate the development of India's position and discourse from the Kyoto Protocol in 1997 to the Paris Agreement and the present day. The single case study design is chosen for its ability to provide an in-depth understanding of the complexities within the Indian context, allowing for a detailed examination of the causal mechanisms driving changes in the negotiation behaviour.

Discourse analysis is a qualitative research method that examines how language is used in texts and contexts to construct meaning, influence social interactions, and reflect power relations. It focuses on the use of language in various forms, such as spoken, written, and visual texts, and considers the context, including social, cultural, political, and historical settings, in which language is used (Fairclough, 1995). This method explores how language reflects, reinforces, or challenges power dynamics within society, examining who has the authority to speak, what is said, and what is left unsaid (Foucault, 1972). Additionally, discourse analysis investigates how language contributes to the construction of identities and social roles, and it examines the connections between different texts and their broader discourse (Gee, 2014; van Dijk, 1993). Many discourse analysts adopt a critical perspective to uncover hidden assumptions, biases, and ideologies within texts, making it a valuable tool for understanding the complex relationships between language, society, and power (Fairclough, 1995; van Dijk, 1993).

While the single case study design with discourse tracing is a valuable methodological approach, it is essential to acknowledge certain limitations associated with these methods. The primary limitation of a single case study is its limited generalizability as it restricts its ability to facilitate cross-case comparison. Findings derived from the Indian context may not be directly applicable to other nations, regions, or contexts. Also, establishing causality in a single case study can be challenging (Van Evera, 1997). While discourse analysis helps in depth analysis, establishing a clear cause-and-effect relationship is complex. The absence of a counterfactual (an alternative scenario that did not occur) makes it difficult to definitively attribute observed changes to specific factors. (Van Evera, 1997)

Data Collection

The research utilizes a diverse set of data sources, including reports, speeches, media reports, scholarly works, and other relevant documents. These sources will be accessed from various ministry websites, government think tanks (such as Niti Ayog), private domestic and international think tanks (such as PIB), international organizations' websites (UNFCCC, IPCC, etc) and media outlets. All data used in this study is available in the English language, ensuring accessibility and uniformity in the analysis. The data is sourced from various sources to capture a comprehensive view of India's climate change discourse. Government

websites, reports, and publications serve as primary repositories, supplemented by media and other publicly available documents.

Operationalisation

The exploration of India's compliance with international agreements in the realm of climate change negotiations constitutes a pivotal aspect of the research puzzle. The investigation delves into the motivations and determinants that influence India's commitment to and adherence to global environmental accords, focusing on the trajectory from the Kyoto Protocol in 1997 to the Paris Agreement and beyond by doing discourse analysis.

Understanding why India commits to international agreements requires a nuanced analysis of its national interests, strategic considerations, and evolving environmental priorities. The study aims to identify whether India's compliance is primarily motivated by economic incentives, geopolitical considerations, environmental consciousness, or a combination of these factors. Examining the drivers behind India's commitment to international climate agreements contributes to a deeper understanding of the country's role in the global effort to combat climate change.

India's Climate Stand: Negotiating on the World Stage

Before delving into the empirical analysis, providing a historical overview of India's climate change negotiation journey is crucial as it lays the groundwork for a more comprehensive examination of the factors driving its compliance. This overview identifies the foundational context and highlights key milestones and shifts in India's climate negotiation stance, such as the transition from contestation to active engagement. Consequently, this section offers a summary of India's approach to international climate change negotiations, alongside significant strategic developments at the domestic level. The initial phase of India's policy was characterized by a traditional ideological approach, encompassing elements such as 'common but differentiated responsibility,' 'per capita emission,' 'equity,' and 'environmental justice' (Saryal, 2018; Jha, 2022).

From the release of the Brundtland Report in 1987 to the 1992 UN Earth Summit, India's stance and negotiation journey on climate change evolved significantly. The Brundtland Report, officially titled "Our Common Future," highlighted the concept of sustainable

development and laid the groundwork for international discussions on environmental issues. India, along with other developing nations, initially approached environmental negotiations with skepticism, concerned that such efforts could hinder their economic growth.

Building on this evolving context, in 1990, Anil Agarwal and Sunita Narain published the influential report "Global Warming in an Unequal World," which emphasized the disproportionate impact of climate change on developing countries. This report became a cornerstone of India's negotiation strategy, providing evidence to support its argument for differentiated responsibilities between developed and developing nations in addressing climate change. India used this report to advocate for its traditional ideological approach, emphasizing the principle of "common but differentiated responsibilities" in international climate negotiations.

These foundational developments culminated at the 1992 UN Earth Summit, also known as the Rio Summit, marked a turning point in global environmental governance with the establishment of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). India played a crucial role in shaping the UNFCCC negotiations, pushing for provisions that recognized the historical responsibility of developed nations for climate change while safeguarding the development needs of developing countries like India.

The Kyoto Protocol, adopted in 1997, set binding emission reduction targets for developed countries while allowing developing nations flexibility in their commitments. India initially expressed reservations about the Kyoto Protocol, arguing that it placed an unfair burden on developing countries and could impede their economic growth. However, India eventually ratified the protocol in 2002 after securing concessions, such as access to clean development mechanism (CDM) projects, which allowed developing countries to earn carbon credits by implementing emission reduction projects.

India's decision to cooperate and engage in environmental negotiations during this time was influenced by several factors, including growing awareness of the environmental challenges facing the country, pressure from the international community, and recognition of the need for global cooperation to address climate change effectively. Additionally, India's desire to assert itself as a responsible global actor and its aspiration for sustainable development also played a role in its engagement in environmental negotiations.

Building on this engagement, the Paris Agreement, adopted during the 21st Conference of the Parties (COP 21) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in 2015, is a landmark international treaty aimed at combating climate change. It represents a collective effort by nearly all countries to limit global warming to well below 2 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels, with an aspirational goal of limiting it to 1.5 degrees Celsius. The agreement also seeks to enhance the ability of countries to adapt to the adverse impacts of climate change and to provide support to developing countries in their climate actions. India played a significant role in the negotiations leading up to the Paris Agreement. As one of the largest and most rapidly developing economies in the world, India's involvement was crucial in shaping the agreement. India advocated for principles of equity and common but differentiated responsibilities (CBDR), emphasizing the historical responsibility of developed countries for climate change and the need for financial and technological support to assist developing countries in their mitigation and adaptation efforts.

During COP 21, India submitted its Intended Nationally Determined Contributions (INDCs), outlining its commitments to reducing greenhouse gas emissions and enhancing its resilience to climate change. India pledged to reduce its emissions intensity by 33-35% below 2005 levels by 2030 and to achieve 40% cumulative installed power capacity from non-fossil fuel sources by 2030. In addition to its commitments under the Paris Agreement, India has taken significant domestic actions to address climate change. For example, India launched the International Solar Alliance (ISA) to promote solar energy deployment globally and has made substantial investments in renewable energy infrastructure.

Following the Paris Agreement, there has been a noticeable shift in India's approach to climate change from ideological to pragmatic elements. While India continues to emphasize the principles of equity and CBDR, it has also recognized the need to balance environmental concerns with economic development imperatives. India's focus has shifted towards implementing practical measures to achieve its climate goals while also promoting sustainable growth and development.

As of the latest updates, India has made progress in renewable energy deployment and has been on track to achieve its targets under the Paris Agreement. However, challenges remain, particularly in sectors such as transportation and industry, where emissions continue to rise. India's continued efforts to address these challenges and implement climate actions will be crucial in achieving its long-term climate objectives.

This overview underscores the dynamic nature of compliance by illustrating India's navigation of international climate negotiations over time. Additionally, it connects the historical evolution of India's policies with the theoretical and empirical analysis of compliance behaviour.

The Pragmatic Shift

This section examines the practical shift in India's climate change discourse, showcasing an adaptive and forward-thinking approach prompted by the pressing climate crisis. This pragmatic transition highlights India's recognition of the urgent need to address climate change through realistic and effective measures. As the country continues to develop and refine its climate policies, it demonstrates a commitment to integrating sustainability into its national agenda. India's actions in this realm are not just reactive but also strategic, aiming to balance economic growth with environmental responsibility. The focus on sustainability is evident in various initiatives and efforts, reflecting an understanding that long-term prosperity is intrinsically linked to ecological health and resilience.

India's fundamental principles in global climate policy have consistently remained explicit, as outlined by scholars (Raghunandan (2012); Sengupta (2012); Michaelowa and Michaelowa, 2012). These principles argue that industrialized nations should bear binding mitigation obligations due to their greater historical emissions and economic capacity, whereas developing countries should not be held to the same stringent standards. Additionally, it is stressed that the mitigation efforts of industrialized nations should be substantial.

The creation of the Prime Minister's Council on Climate Change in 2007 marked a pragmatic approach by the Indian government to emphasize both adaptation and mitigation strategies (Thaker and Leiserowitz, 2014). This council, chaired by the Prime Minister, aimed to coordinate national action plans and policies across various sectors. By prioritizing adaptation alongside mitigation, the government acknowledged the immediate threats posed by climate change and the necessity of building resilience, particularly in vulnerable communities.

In addition, the 'Singh Convergence Principle' (SCP), articulated by Prime Minister Manmohan Singh at the G8 summit in 2007, represented another significant pragmatic step. This principle advocated for a convergence of efforts between developed and developing countries in addressing climate change. Prime Minister Singh emphasized the shared

responsibility of all nations, regardless of their level of development, in combating climate change. The SCP underscored India's willingness to engage constructively in international climate negotiations while also highlighting the need for developed countries to provide financial and technological support to developing nations in their climate actions.

Continuing this pragmatic shift, prior to the Copenhagen Summit (COP 15) in 2009, India introduced its National Action Plan on Climate Change (NAPCC) in 2008, which is regarded as a pivotal element of the country's commitment to global mitigation efforts (Jha, 2009; Dubash, 2013b). The NAPCC represents a pragmatic step by the government, emphasizing both adaptation and mitigation strategies. It outlines a national strategy aimed at enabling the country to adapt to climate change while enhancing the ecological sustainability of India's development path. This initiative stresses the importance of maintaining a high growth rate to improve living standards for the vast majority of people in India while simultaneously reducing their vulnerability to the impacts of climate change (PIB, 2021).

The national plan is seen as a linkage between energy security and climate action through the 'co-benefit approach,' reflecting a pragmatic policy shift on climate change. NAPCC aims to identify measures that align with development goals while also producing additional benefits for effectively addressing climate change (Prime Minister's Council on Climate Change, 2008). This plan encompasses eight national missions that focus on enhancing awareness of climate change, adaptation and mitigation strategies, energy efficiency, and the conservation of natural resources.

The pragmatic shift in India's climate change policy has been driven by several key factors: increased awareness of environmental issues, international pressure and the need for global cooperation, economic and developmental goals, and the aspiration to strengthen its global leadership in climate governance. This transition allows India to balance economic growth with environmental sustainability, obtain financial and technological support, and position itself as a proactive and responsible global actor. India embraces this pragmatic shift because it boosts its international reputation and credibility, aligns with its economic interests by promoting sustainable development and job creation, and strategically positions the country as a leader in global climate initiatives. Moreover, this shift addresses long-term security and developmental needs by mitigating the negative impacts of climate change. By adopting this approach, India effectively balances its developmental goals with environmental responsibilities, fostering a harmonious integration of economic and ecological objectives.

A significant milestone in India's pragmatic shift was the adoption of the Paris Agreement in 2015 during the 21st Conference of the Parties (COP 21) to the United Nations Framework

Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). This landmark international treaty aims to combat climate change by limiting the rise in global temperatures to well below 2 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels, with an aspirational goal of limiting it to 1.5 degrees Celsius. The agreement also seeks to enhance the ability of countries to adapt to the adverse impacts of climate change and to provide support to developing countries in their climate actions.

The Paris Agreement has played an important role in India's pragmatic shift in climate policy. Initially, India was more defensive in its approach to international climate negotiations, focusing on protecting its developmental space and ensuring that any commitments did not hinder its economic growth (Michaelowa & Michaelowa, 2012; Jha 2022). . However, under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, India began to adopt a more proactive and constructive role. The increasing domestic energy constraints and the need for sustainable development pushed India towards clean energy initiatives. Modi's emphasis on solar energy and the establishment of the ISA are examples of India's leadership in global solar energy initiatives.

For India, the Paris Agreement has been pivotal in shaping its climate policy and actions. India played a significant role in the negotiations leading up to the agreement, emphasizing the principles of CBDR, which stress that developed countries should take the lead in reducing emissions due to their historical contributions to climate change. During the Paris negotiations, India announced ambitious commitments, including achieving 175 GW of renewable energy capacity by 2022 and 40% of its energy from non-fossil fuel sources by 2030. These commitments underscored India's transition from a defensive to a proactive player in climate negotiations. (Jha, 2022). As noted by a report from the CEA (2023), at the time of the announcement of the 175 GW target, India had a renewable energy capacity of 78 GW, which increased to 174 GW as of June 2023, showing considerable progress. This achievement already accounts for 43 percent of the total installed capacity in the country, surpassing the 2016 NDC commitment of 40 percent by 2030. Despite this progress, fossil fuels still account for nearly 73 percent of total electricity generation, though down from 82 percent in 2015 (Centre on Global Energy Policy, 2023).

Building on the momentum from the Paris Agreement, at the COP 26 summit, India's Prime Minister highlighted that despite having a population of 1.25 billion, the country contributes only 5 percent to global emissions and ranks 4th in the world for renewable energy capacity. Following the Paris Agreement, India initiated several significant measures to achieve its target of net zero emissions by 2070. (MEA, 2021). Climate change poses a threat to people everywhere and presents a significant challenge to our collective development goals. In this

context, India, in its National Statement at COP26, called for a global movement known as LiFE (Lifestyle for the Environment). The movement aims to promote a paradigm shift in how the world uses natural resources, advocating a change from "mindless and destructive consumption" to "mindful and deliberate utilization."

Continuing its proactive stance, at COP 26 in Glasgow, Prime Minister Narendra Modi introduced the concept of "Panchamrit," a set of five ambitious goals aimed at addressing climate change and driving India's transition to a low-carbon economy. These commitments are a significant part of India's climate action strategy and reflect the country's dedication to sustainable development. These goals include achieving 500 GW of non-fossil energy capacity by 2030, meeting 50% of energy needs from renewable sources by 2030, reducing total projected carbon emissions by one billion tonnes by 2030, lowering the carbon intensity of the economy by over 45% by 2030, and reaching net-zero emissions by 2070. The Panchamrit goals reflect a balanced approach, combining ambitious climate action with economic development. They recognize the need for substantial emission reductions while ensuring energy access and growth, making them realistic and achievable within the given timeframe. By setting clear, actionable targets, India not only addresses its own development needs but also contributes to global climate stabilization efforts, reinforcing its commitment to responsible global citizenship.

India's efforts during its G20 Presidency further demonstrate its leadership in global climate governance. Emphasizing climate and sustainable development with the spirit of "One Earth, One Family, One Future," India promoted the use of hydrogen as an alternative fuel and launched the Global Biofuels Alliance. The G20 Presidency concluded that effective climate action requires several trillion dollars of climate finance by 2030. The New Delhi Summit marked India's true emergence as a global system shaper, transitioning from being a conscientious objector to a system shaper. The agreement on a Green Development Pact for a sustainable future was a significant achievement, as PM Modi announced LiFE mission was adopted as the G20 High-Level Principles on Lifestyle for Sustainable Development (ORF, 2023).

To further solidify its commitments, India submitted its Long-Term Low Emission Development Strategy (LT-LEDS) at the COP27 meeting held in Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt, in November 2022. This strategy outlines India's vision to achieve net-zero emissions by 2070 and details the pathways and interventions required to reach this goal. The submission was part of India's broader climate commitments and aligns with the global push for sustainable development and climate action. The LT-LEDS focuses on several key areas, including the

expansion of renewable energy capacity, the transition to green hydrogen, the promotion of electric vehicles, and the enhancement of energy efficiency in industries. Additionally, the strategy emphasizes the need for climate finance and international cooperation to support India's low-carbon development pathway (PIB, 2022). However, the LT-LEDS lacks clear policy guidance on how the government plans to achieve net-zero emissions beyond its current policies and programs. It does not outline specific emission pathways or clarify the scope of the target, such as whether it applies exclusively to CO₂ or includes all greenhouse gas emissions (Climate Action Tracker, 2023).

India's adherence to international climate treaties has significantly improved, evolving from a position of contestation to active engagement. This transformation is underpinned by theoretical insights from Mitchell (1984) and Peat (2021), who argue that self-interest and reputational concerns are key drivers of compliance. By aligning with international norms, India not only boosts its global standing but also gains economic and technological advantages. Machiavelli (1532) posits that rulers need not feel bound to keep promises if circumstances change, highlighting the pragmatic nature of India's climate policy. India's adaptation to evolving global dynamics and developmental needs exemplifies Machiavellian pragmatism in modern international relations.

Mitchell asserts that compliance with international agreements serves national interests and enhances a state's legitimacy. India's proactive approach in climate negotiations reflects its strategic understanding that adherence to international agreements strengthens its domestic policies and political support. Peat's behavioral compliance theory suggests that states adhere to international norms to maintain a positive reputation and project an image of a responsible global actor. India's shift towards active participation in climate agreements aligns with this theory, aiming to enhance its global influence and credibility. This multifaceted approach, combining Machiavellian pragmatism with Mitchell's national interest theory and Peat's reputational compliance theory, not only elevates India's global standing but also secures significant economic and technological benefits, effectively balancing national interests with global environmental responsibilities.

The discussion above provides an understanding of how India's approach to global climate policy has evolved significantly over time, driven by the urgent need to address climate change while ensuring sustainable development. Historically, India emphasized principles such as per capita emissions, historical responsibility, and economic capacity, asserting that

industrialized nations should shoulder the primary burden of mitigation efforts. However, starting in 2007, India adopted a more pragmatic and proactive stance. Initiatives like the Prime Minister's Council on Climate Change and the 'Singh Convergence Principle' marked a shift towards integrating adaptation and mitigation strategies, reflecting India's commitment to global climate action. This shift was further exemplified by the National Action Plan on Climate Change (NAPCC), which linked energy security with climate action, promoting a co-benefit approach to policy.

International Aspiration

This section elucidates how India is strategically balancing its advocacy for equity with its leadership role in global climate governance. India's evolving stance in climate change negotiations, marked by significant contributions to the Paris Agreement and proactive engagement in subsequent COP meetings, showcases its commitment to sustainable development and ambition to be perceived as a responsible global power. This transformation is driven by both domestic priorities and the desire to assert greater influence on the international stage. The initiatives like the NAPCC and ambitious targets under the Paris Agreement exemplify India's dedication to reducing emissions while promoting renewable energy.

Despite contributing only 4% to the historical accumulation of greenhouse gases while accounting for 17% of the world's population (UNFCCC, 2022), India is actively pursuing low-carbon development pathways and aims to achieve net-zero emissions by 2070. Recognizing climate change as an urgent issue, India is committed to addressing this challenge by adhering to the core values of the UNFCCC, particularly equity and the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities. As a developing country with significant development needs, poverty challenges, and vulnerability to climate change, India remains dedicated to combating global warming. It upholds its responsibilities as a large nation and honors its cultural and traditional values. Consequently, India is contributing more than its fair share to the global effort against climate change.

India's evolving stance in climate change negotiations reflects a strategic balance between advocating for equity and taking a leadership role in global climate governance. This transformation is driven by both domestic priorities and a desire to assert greater influence on

the international stage. India has traditionally emphasized equity and the principle of CBDR-RC in climate negotiations. Initially, India played a defensive role, prioritizing economic growth and poverty eradication over stringent climate commitments, positioning itself as a voice for the developing world. However, by the time of the Paris Agreement in 2015, India's approach had shifted towards more proactive engagement. This change was marked by the adoption of the NAPCC and the announcement of voluntary targets to reduce emissions intensity. India aspires to be perceived as a responsible global power, which is evident through its strategic actions and initiatives on the international stage, particularly in the realm of climate change and sustainable development.

India's shift from a defensive stance to a leadership role in international climate negotiations is evident in its significant contributions to the Paris Agreement and subsequent COP meetings. At COP 21 in Paris, India played a crucial role in shaping the final agreement, emphasizing the principles of equity and common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities while also committing to ambitious climate goals. (Jha, 2022; Mohan, 2017). India's NDCs under the Paris Agreement include significant commitments to reducing emission intensity and increasing the share of renewable energy which showcases its dedication to sustainable development while balancing economic growth. Furthermore, submitted at COP 27, the LT-LEDS outlines India's approach to achieving net-zero emission by 2070. It includes strategies for increasing renewable energy capacity, promoting electric vehicles, and enhancing energy efficiency across sectors. This long-term plan highlights India's strategic vision and commitment to a sustainable future. (UNFCCC, 2022). According to Peat (2021), behavioral compliance theory suggests that states comply with international norms to maintain a positive reputation and project an image of a responsible global actor. India's active participation in climate change mitigation reflects its strategic aim to enhance its global influence and credibility.

India's active participation in multilateral institutions, such as its bid for a permanent seat in the United Nations Security Council and its roles in the G20 and BRICS, reflects its aspiration to influence global governance structures. India's leadership in these forums often emphasizes sustainable development and climate action, further solidifying its image as a responsible global power. India has forged strategic partnerships with various countries and organizations to enhance its capabilities in renewable energy, technology transfer, and climate finance. These partnerships not only help India achieve its climate goals but also reinforce its position as a responsible and influential global player. Launched by Prime

Minister Narendra Modi in collaboration with France during COP 21, the International Solar Alliance (ISA) aims to promote solar energy globally, particularly in developing countries. This initiative underscores India's commitment to renewable energy and positions it as a leader in global efforts to combat climate change through sustainable energy solutions (Jha, 2022). At the COP26 meeting in Glasgow, the Prime Minister of India stated that the ISA is a revolutionary step providing institutional solutions for global cooperation (MEA, 2021). India's commitment to climate change mitigation, evident through its ambitious targets under the Paris Agreement and leadership roles in initiatives such as the ISA, underscores its aspiration to be seen as a responsible global leader. This strategic move is deeply rooted in behavioral compliance theory, as India works on crafting its identity and reputation on the international stage. By setting and pursuing significant climate goals, India is not only addressing global environmental challenges but also shaping perceptions in global governance to project a positive and desired image.

India has effectively integrated its cultural values and heritage into its climate change diplomacy, using terms and concepts deeply rooted in its traditions. This approach not only highlights India's unique perspective on sustainability but also strengthens its position in international negotiations. The Mission LiFE is rooted in traditional Indian values that emphasize harmony with nature and sustainable living practices. The LiFE movement aims to inspire individuals and communities worldwide to adopt environmentally friendly practices, reflecting India's philosophical and cultural emphasis on sustainability. India has frequently used Sanskrit slogans and culturally resonant phrases to underline its commitment to environmental stewardship. For example, at the G20 summit, India promoted the slogan "Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam," meaning "The world is one family." This ancient Sanskrit phrase emphasizes global unity and collective responsibility, aligning with the summit's theme of "One Earth, One Family, One Future." Such slogans reflect India's holistic worldview and underscore its call for global cooperation in addressing climate change. India's climate policies and diplomatic initiatives often draw from its rich cultural traditions. For example, the promotion of renewable energy sources like solar power can be linked to the traditional reverence for the sun (Surya) in Indian culture. The emphasis on sustainable agriculture and organic farming practices also draws from traditional Indian agricultural practices that prioritize ecological balance and soil health.

Moreover, India's approach is increasingly characterized by collaboration and partnership, both domestically and internationally. By engaging with global climate governance structures

and participating in international climate negotiations, India seeks to influence and contribute to global climate solutions. This collaborative stance is part of a broader strategy to enhance India's role and reputation on the world stage as a proactive and responsible player in the global effort to combat climate change. Scholars like Keohane (1984), Guzman (2008), and Lutmar & Carneiro (2018) argue that reputation plays a key role in international relations. For India, building a reputation as a proactive and responsible participant in climate governance not only strengthens its diplomatic relations but also opens doors for economic and technological cooperation.

In conclusion, India's evolving climate discourse and strategic actions reflect its aspiration to be recognized as a global leader in climate change mitigation. By integrating its cultural values and heritage into its climate strategies, India not only addresses global environmental challenges but also shapes perceptions in global governance, projecting a positive and desired image on the international stage. This comprehensive approach, supported by theoretical insights from scholars like Mitchell (1984), Peat (2021), Keohane (1984), Guzman (2008), and Lutmar & Carneiro (2018), highlights the critical role of reputation and identity in India's goal of achieving global recognition as a responsible leader in climate change negotiations.

Conclusion

This thesis aimed to explore the factors behind India's evolving stance and conduct in climate change negotiations over time. The main research question addressed was: "What prompted India's shift from contestation to active engagement in climate change negotiations?" The findings confirm the hypotheses that India's shift in climate change negotiations was driven by a pragmatic turn in climate change diplomacy both domestically and internationally, and its aspiration to be recognized as a responsible global leader motivated its proactive stance in climate change negotiations.

The analysis demonstrates that India's pragmatic shift is underpinned by theoretical insights from scholars like Mitchell (1984), Peat (2021), Keohane (1984), Guzman (2008), and Lutmar & Carneiro (2018), who argue that self-interest, reputational concerns, and the desire for international legitimacy, are key drivers of compliance. By actively participating in international climate agreements and setting ambitious climate goals, India has strategically

enhanced its global standing, secured economic and technological benefits, and projected itself as a responsible global actor.

India's climate change discourse has undergone a significant transformation over the past few decades. Initially, India's stance was heavily rooted in traditional ideologies emphasizing historical responsibility, equity, and the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities (CBDR). This approach was driven by the belief that developed nations, being the primary contributors to global emissions, should bear the brunt of mitigation efforts, allowing developing countries like India to prioritize economic growth and poverty alleviation.

However, as global climate dynamics evolved, so did India's approach. The shift from a restrictive traditional ideology to a more pragmatic and active engagement in climate change diplomacy marks a crucial turning point. This transformation is largely attributed to the recognition of the complementary relationship between India's developmental needs and the imperative to address climate change. India realized that sustainable development and climate action are not mutually exclusive but rather synergistic.

India's pragmatic shift is evident in several key initiatives and policies. The pragmatic shift in India's climate change discourse began post-2007, marked significantly by the creation of the Prime Minister's Council on Climate Change. Furthermore, the establishment of the National Action Plan on Climate Change (NAPCC) in 2008 marked a significant move towards integrating climate considerations into national development strategies. The NAPCC, with its eight national missions, underscores India's commitment to sustainable growth while addressing climate vulnerabilities. Further, India's ambitious targets under the Paris Agreement, including reducing emissions intensity by 33-35% below 2005 levels by 2030 and achieving 40% cumulative installed power capacity from non-fossil fuel sources by the same year, highlight this pragmatic approach.

India's aspiration to be perceived as a responsible global leader is evident both at home and abroad. Domestically, India has made substantial progress in renewable energy deployment, significantly increasing its solar and wind capacities. The announcement of the "Panchamrit" goals at COP26, which include achieving 500 GW of non-fossil energy capacity by 2030 and reaching net-zero emissions by 2070, reflects India's long-term commitment to climate action.

Internationally, India's proactive role in climate negotiations, its leadership in the ISA, and initiatives like the Global Biofuels Alliance during its G20 Presidency underscore its dedication to global climate governance. India's emphasis on the "Lifestyle for Environment" (LiFE) movement, promoting sustainable consumption patterns globally, further cements its position as a champion of climate sustainability.

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