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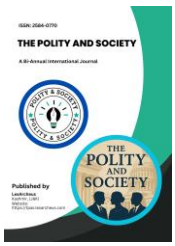

Climate Politics and Emerging Economies: Rebalancing Responsibility in a Post-Paris World

Irshaad Ahmad Reshi

[1] Lecturer, Govt. Degree College, Majalta, J&K.

*** Corresponding Author:**

Irshaad Ahmad Reshi
irshaadhasti@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

The present study explores the evolving dynamics of international climate politics with a specific focus on the critical role of emerging economies in shaping global climate governance. As climate change becomes an increasingly urgent global challenge, cooperation among nations has become indispensable—yet the responsibilities remain unevenly distributed. Emerging economies such as China, India, Brazil, and South Africa face the dual challenge of sustaining economic growth while transitioning to low-carbon, climate-resilient development pathways. Drawing on the principles of "common but differentiated responsibilities" (CBDR) and the framework of the Paris Agreement, this study examines how these nations navigate international expectations, development imperatives, and environmental commitments. The paper discusses the implications of voluntary Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), the persistent gap in climate finance, and the strategic importance of technology transfer and capacity-building support. Through a critical review of existing literature and analysis of policy trends, it emphasizes that equitable climate cooperation requires developed countries to honor financial and technical support commitments. The success of global climate action depends on inclusive frameworks that balance differentiated responsibilities with shared goals.

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INTRODUCTION

With far-reaching effects on ecosystems, businesses, and communities all throughout the world, climate change is among the most critical and complicated issues facing the contemporary society. The requirement of global collaboration shapes the political environment of climate change as no one country can solve the problem by itself. Although traditionally rich nations have been the biggest producers to greenhouse gas emissions, emerging economies—defined as fast industrialising nations with great potential for expansion – play a progressively crucial part in world climate policy. These countries—which range from China to India, Brazil, South Africa—have the double difficulty of tackling climate change and promoting economic development and progress. The politics of climate change complicate attempts to find workable solutions as many parties with different interests, obligations, and resources interact in them. As the main historical polluters, developed countries are often expected to lead in emissions reduction and provide financial and technical help to other nations, particularly newly rising economies. These developing countries, on the other hand, advocate for a more adaptable strategy, stressing their right to grow and the need of help to migrate to greener, sustainable energy sources. Key international accords, most famously the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the Paris Agreement, which underline the notion of "common but differentiated responsibilities," capture this conflict. This concept recognises that while every nation has to help with climate action, their degree of responsibility and capacity vary depending on past contributions and present situation. Forging fair, inclusive, and successful international collaboration depends on an awareness of the role rising economies play in the global climate framework. The success of climate policies in the next decades will depend on the capacity to match the developmental aspirations of developing economies with the pressing need for worldwide climate action, so promoting alliances and mechanisms allowing both economic growth and environmental sustainability to coexist. Climate change has emerged as one of the most defining challenges of the 21st century, marked by its far-reaching implications on ecological systems, economic structures, social institutions, and the geopolitical landscape. Unlike localized environmental problems of the past, climate change is global in scope, cumulative in impact, and long-term in consequence. Rising global temperatures, sea-level rise, extreme weather events, loss of biodiversity, and disruption to food and water systems exemplify the breadth and depth of the crisis. The scale and complexity of the problem underscore the urgent need for coordinated and sustained international action. No single country, regardless of its economic or technological prowess, can combat climate change in isolation. It is inherently a collective action problem that demands international cooperation, equitable burden-sharing, and multi-level governance mechanisms that are inclusive and just.

Historically, industrialized nations, particularly in the Global North, have been the predominant contributors to greenhouse gas emissions due to over a century of fossil fuel-driven industrial growth. Countries such as the United States, the United Kingdom, Germany, and Japan have historically enjoyed the benefits of industrialization while externalizing many of its environmental costs. As a result, these countries bear a significant share of historical responsibility for the current levels of atmospheric carbon dioxide and associated climatic disruptions. In contrast, many emerging economies in the Global South—such as China, India, Brazil, and South Africa—have only relatively recently begun to industrialize and expand their economic bases. While their current emissions are growing rapidly due to urbanization, industrial expansion, and rising energy demand, their cumulative historical emissions remain comparatively lower.

This dichotomy between historical responsibility and current emissions has fueled longstanding debates in climate diplomacy, particularly around issues of fairness, justice, and differentiated responsibilities. The principle of "Common But Differentiated Responsibilities and Respective Capabilities" (CBDR-RC), enshrined in key climate agreements such as the 1992 United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and reiterated in the 2015 Paris Agreement, seeks to balance these conflicting realities. It recognizes that while all countries share a common obligation to address climate change, they do not all bear equal responsibility or possess equal capacity to act. Emerging economies, situated at the intersection of development imperatives and environmental responsibilities, argue for a more equitable climate regime that allows them the policy

space to pursue poverty eradication, infrastructure development, and economic modernization.

The emergence of these economies as influential actors on the global stage marks a fundamental shift in the politics of climate change. Countries like China and India are now among the world's top emitters in absolute terms, even though their per capita emissions remain below those of many developed nations. Their participation is therefore indispensable in any effective global climate agreement. Yet, their economic structures, energy portfolios, and developmental needs present significant challenges to rapid decarbonization. Many of these countries still rely heavily on coal and other fossil fuels for electricity generation and industrial activity. At the same time, millions of their citizens continue to live in poverty and lack access to basic services such as electricity, clean water, and sanitation. Thus, these countries face the complex task of advancing socio-economic development while reducing their environmental footprint—a dual challenge that requires both domestic innovation and international support.

Within this context, climate finance and technology transfer emerge as critical issues. The Paris Agreement commits developed countries to mobilize at least $100 billion per year to support mitigation and adaptation efforts in developing nations. However, the actual disbursement of these funds has been inconsistent and often falls short of the promised targets. Emerging economies have repeatedly called for greater clarity, transparency, and accessibility in climate finance mechanisms. They argue that without adequate financial and technological support, it is neither fair nor feasible to expect them to adopt low-carbon development pathways that are more expensive and technologically demanding than conventional growth models. This concern is particularly acute in regions where infrastructure is underdeveloped, institutional capacity is weak, and vulnerability to climate impacts is high.

Moreover, the energy transition in emerging economies is complicated by geopolitical considerations, domestic political constraints, and socio-economic disparities. For instance, the coal sector in countries like India is not only a major source of energy but also a significant employer and contributor to regional economies. Any abrupt shift away from coal must therefore be managed carefully to avoid social dislocation and political backlash. Similarly, renewable energy investments require stable policy environments, access to international capital markets, and robust grid infrastructure—conditions that are not uniformly present across emerging economies. Nonetheless, some progress is evident. China has become a global leader in solar and wind energy production, while India has launched ambitious initiatives such as the International Solar Alliance (ISA) to promote clean energy collaboration among tropical countries. Brazil's ethanol program and South Africa's Renewable Energy Independent Power Producer Procurement Program (REIPPPP) also illustrate how emerging economies can lead on climate solutions within their unique national contexts.

Beyond mitigation, adaptation remains a key concern for emerging economies. These countries are disproportionately vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, such as sea-level rise, desertification, glacier retreat, and extreme weather events. Yet, adaptation finance accounts for a relatively small share of global climate funding, and adaptation efforts often suffer from fragmented planning, inadequate data, and limited local capacity. The need to build resilient infrastructure, strengthen disaster preparedness, and support climate-resilient livelihoods is urgent, particularly for marginalized populations who are least equipped to cope with environmental stressors. Addressing these adaptation challenges requires not only financial resources but also participatory governance, cross-sectoral coordination, and integration of traditional knowledge systems.

Another layer of complexity is added by the global trade and investment regimes, which can both facilitate and hinder climate action in emerging economies. For example, trade disputes over green technology subsidies, carbon border adjustments, and intellectual property rights may affect the ability of developing countries to access and deploy clean technologies. Additionally, international financial institutions and development banks play a crucial role in shaping the climate investment landscape through lending policies, risk-sharing instruments, and capacity-building initiatives. The alignment of these institutions with global climate goals is therefore essential for enabling a just and inclusive energy transition in the Global South.

At the diplomatic level, emerging economies have increasingly formed coalitions to advocate for their shared interests in climate negotiations. The BASIC group (Brazil, South

Africa, India, and China), the G77 and China, and the Like-Minded Developing Countries (LMDCs) have been instrumental in shaping the discourse on equity, historical responsibility, and the need for balanced treatment of mitigation and adaptation. These groupings reflect a growing recognition that solidarity among developing nations can enhance their bargaining power and ensure that their voices are not marginalized in multilateral forums dominated by the Global North. However, the internal diversity among emerging economies also poses challenges for collective action. Differences in income levels, resource endowments, political systems, and strategic priorities can complicate consensus-building and coordination.

In this regard, the Paris Agreement's shift from legally binding emission targets to nationally determined contributions (NDCs) represents both an opportunity and a challenge. On one hand, the flexibility of NDCs allows countries to tailor their climate actions to national circumstances and capacities, thereby promoting broader participation. On the other hand, the absence of enforcement mechanisms and the reliance on voluntary commitments raise concerns about ambition, accountability, and the overall effectiveness of the global climate regime. The challenge for emerging economies is to demonstrate credible climate leadership while maintaining the developmental trajectory required to meet domestic socio-economic goals.

Furthermore, the discourse around climate justice and equity is gaining traction in academic, policy, and activist circles. Climate change disproportionately affects those who have contributed least to its causes—namely, poor communities, indigenous peoples, women, and children in developing countries. Addressing these disparities requires a rethinking of the ethical foundations of climate policy and a commitment to procedural, distributive, and recognitional justice. Emerging economies have a critical role to play in advancing this agenda, not only as recipients of support but also as advocates for a more inclusive and democratic global governance architecture. Integrating gender perspectives, human rights, and intergenerational equity into national climate strategies can enhance both the legitimacy and effectiveness of climate action.

The COVID-19 pandemic has further highlighted the interconnectedness of global systems and the importance of resilience in the face of systemic shocks. For emerging economies, the pandemic has exacerbated fiscal constraints, disrupted supply chains, and heightened social vulnerabilities—all of which have implications for climate policy. However, the recovery phase also presents an opportunity to align economic stimulus packages with green growth objectives. Investing in renewable energy, sustainable infrastructure, public health systems, and ecological restoration can generate jobs, reduce emissions, and enhance adaptive capacity. The notion of a "green recovery" has gained momentum in policy circles, but its implementation remains uneven and contested, particularly in countries grappling with urgent socio-economic priorities.

Review of Literature

1. **Stern, N. (2007).** In this groundbreaking report, Stern argues that climate change poses a serious and urgent threat to global prosperity and calls for immediate action to mitigate its impacts. He emphasizes that the costs of inaction will be far higher than the costs of taking preventative measures. Stern suggests that emerging economies must be central to the global response to climate change due to their rapidly increasing emissions and economic growth. The paper argues that developed nations must take the lead in reducing emissions, but emerging economies will need to play a significant role in limiting future emissions and adopting sustainable growth models. Stern underscores the need for international cooperation, including financial transfers and technological support to assist emerging economies in making the transition to green technologies.

2. **Keohane, R. O., & Oppenheimer, M. (2016*).*** Keohane and Oppenheimer explore the political dynamics of international climate negotiations, focusing on the tension between developed and developing countries. They analyze the historical emissions responsibility of industrialized nations and the argument put forth by emerging economies that they should not bear the same burden for global climate action. The paper discusses how climate change has become a major global governance challenge and stresses the need for innovative approaches, including flexible commitments and climate finance, to ensure emerging economies can contribute to the global effort. The authors advocate for more inclusive frameworks that allow for diverse contributions while maintaining the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities**.**

3. Duan, L., & Li, Y. (2020). Duan and Li examine the role of emerging economies in the global climate change governance framework, with a focus on their participation in international treaties such as the Paris Agreement. The study argues that while emerging economies have made progress in committing to climate goals, their positions remain fluid and influenced by their development priorities. The paper highlights that while these nations are increasingly aware of the climate crisis, they often resist binding commitments due to concerns over economic competitiveness and development needs. The authors stress that climate governance will require a comprehensive approach, integrating both mitigation and adaptation efforts, with emerging economies receiving substantial support for their transition to sustainable development.

4. Patel, P., & Joshi, S. (2018). Patel and Joshi focus on the critical issue of climate finance in the context of emerging economies. They analyze the financial commitments made under the Paris Agreement and the challenges these countries face in accessing the necessary funds for climate adaptation and mitigation. The paper highlights that while developed nations have pledged financial support, emerging economies often encounter barriers related to the disbursement of these funds and their capacity to implement climate projects. The authors argue that for climate finance to be effective, there must be greater transparency and mechanisms for ensuring that funds reach the most vulnerable nations. Furthermore, they advocate for the creation of climate finance mechanisms that are tailored to the unique needs and circumstances of emerging economies.

5. **Carter, L., & Weyer, P. (2021).** Carter and Weyer explore the potential for renewable energy to play a transformative role in the sustainable development of emerging economies. They argue that renewable energy offers a unique opportunity for these nations to decouple economic growth from environmental degradation. The paper examines case studies from countries such as India and China, where renewable energy investments have led to significant progress in reducing emissions while supporting economic development. However, the authors also note that the transition to renewables presents challenges, including high upfront costs, the need for technological expertise, and infrastructure development. The study emphasizes that international cooperation, including technology transfer and financial support, will be crucial for enabling emerging economies to fully harness the potential of renewable energy.

The Political Landscape of Climate Change

A sophisticated network of agreements, international institutions, and conflicting interests spanning environmental, economic, and social spheres shapes the political terrain of climate change. Based on their past contributions to greenhouse gas emissions and their present potential to reduce and adapt to its impacts, central to these conversations is the question of climate justice—that is, the duty of various nations to confront climate change. Historically responsible for most of the emissions, developed nations have been asked to lead worldwide initiatives to lower emissions and provide financial and technical help to other nations. Rooted on the idea of "common but differentiated responsibilities" (CBDR), which underlie international climate accords such as the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), This idea recognises that while every country has to act to stop climate change, wealthy nations have more responsibility because of their past emissions and economic capacity. But as rising nations like China, India, and Brazil have grown, the global climate dynamic has changed significantly. Rising energy needs and fast industrialisation in these countries have resulted in emissions rising as well. Although their per capita emissions are still less than those of rich nations, their worldwide contribution is now very significant. Emerging nations have therefore become important participants in climate discussions as they balance the need for economic development with the drive to reduce emissions. Many times, these countries oppose legally enforceable emissions targets, claiming that such limitations would hinder their capacity to raise living conditions for their people and grow. Different political philosophies, economic interests, and national agendas add to the difficulty of global collaboration. While rising economies underline the necessity of financial and technical assistance to facilitate a transition to sustainable development, developed countries frequently push for aggressive, enforceable carbon reduction objectives. The politics of climate change therefore include negotiating these conflicting interests, with increasing focus on cooperative and fair solutions able to meet developmental objectives as well as environmental ones. Achieving significant worldwide action on climate change ultimately depends on bridging these divisions by means of

flexible international frameworks capable of meeting the various needs and obligations of various nations while guaranteeing group action to minimise the effects of climate change.

The Paris Agreement and Its Implications for Emerging Economies

Adopted in 2015, the Paris Agreement marks a turning point in global climate discussions and a historic transition towards a more inclusive and flexible framework for handling climate change. Unlike earlier climate accords, which put strict objectives on rich countries, the Paris Agreement instituted a system of voluntary, nationally determined contributions (NDCs), therefore enabling each nation to define its own climate goals depending on national circumstances, capacity, and priorities. This strategy recognises the many phases of growth and emissions obligations across countries, especially the difference between established nations and developing economies. With an aim to keep global warming far below 2°C, the Paris Agreement boasts one of its main characteristics: a promise to restrict it to 1.5°C, below pre-industrial levels. Although established nations are supposed to lead in lowering emissions, the accord acknowledges the need of rising economies—rapidly industrialising states—also helping to contribute to world climate action. Emerging nations like China, India, Brazil, and South Africa see possibilities as well as difficulties under the Paris Agreement. As their economies expand, these countries are under pressure to reduce emissions; yet, they also need major financial and technical help to move to a low-carbon future without thus impeding their development objectives. Emerging nations especially benefit from the Paris Agreement's focus on climate financing. Developed nations have promised to fund their efforts at mitigating and adapting $100 billion yearly. The real mobilisation of these monies has been a divisive topic, nevertheless, as many developing nations contend that their capacity to carry out their climate targets has been limited by incomplete fulfilment of the financial pledges made under the pact. Furthermore, even if the NDCs of the Paris Agreement provide flexibility, several rising nations worry that the absence of legally enforceable pledges might jeopardise world emissions reduction. Many of these nations already suffer the terrible consequences of climate change, like severe weather events, droughs, and rising sea levels, so they also pay great attention to the adaptation side of the climate equation. Efforts at adaptation, like creating climate-resilient infrastructure and safeguarding underprivileged areas, need for large resources and long-term planning. Thus, even if the Paris Agreement marks a progress in global climate governance, it also emphasises the need of ongoing international cooperation, especially in terms of guaranteeing that rising economies have access to the financial resources, technology, and knowledge required to meet their climate commitments. The Paris Agreement emphasises for developing nations the need of balancing their quest of sustainable development with their quest of economic expansion. Their participation in global climate initiatives is vital as their emissions keep increasing and their future paths of growth will significantly affect the accomplishment of world climate targets. In this framework, the Paris Agreement provides a forum for continuous communication, allowing developing nations to influence climate action in ways that take their particular needs, capacity, and aspirations into account while so supporting the worldwide endeavour to slow down the effects of climate change.

Emerging Economies and the Path to Sustainable Development

Emerging countries are at a turning point in their development and must simultaneously meet the pressing need to slow down climate change and move towards a more sustainable future while preserving economic growth. Because of their major contributions to greenhouse gas emissions, which are rising as a result of industrialisation, urbanisation, and higher energy consumption, these nations—which include big and fast expanding economies like China, India, Brazil, and South Africa—are important players in the global climate scene. Emerging economies argue, however, that they should not share the same weight of responsibility for global climate change even if their emissions are rising as they still have lower per capita emissions than rich countries. Rather, they underline the need of ongoing economic growth in order to raise living standards, lower poverty, and provide their people access to energy. This development has to be carefully controlled as it calls for balancing the need of sustainable, long-term solutions that reduce climatic damage with the environmental effect of economic expansion. Emerging nations' road to sustainable growth will be one towards low-carbon, climate-resilient businesses and energy sources. Still, this change presents difficulties. For their energy requirements,

many developing nations still mostly rely on fossil fuels such coal, oil, and natural gas; this dependency makes decarbonisation attempts more difficult and expensive. These nations also often have limited financial resources, which limits their capacity to make investments in green infrastructure, renewable energy technology, and plans for climate adaptation. International support—including climate financing, technical transfer, and capacity building—is very vital in order to meet these issues. With wealthier countries pledging to mobilise $100 billion yearly to fund both mitigating and adaptation measures, the Paris Agreement has acknowledged the need of financial help for underdeveloped countries. Nonetheless, the efficient mobilisation of these resources remains a major challenge for developing nations, who often contend that financial aid has been inadequate or delayed. Apart from the need for financial resources, developing nations need access to the newest green technology and knowledge to hasten their switch to sustainable businesses and renewable energy. Although China and India have already made notable progress in renewable energy investments—especially in solar and wind power—much more is needed to drastically cut away from fossil fuels at the scale needed to satisfy global climate commitments. Addressing the effects of climate change already felt in developing nations—extreme weather events, droughs, and flooding—along with their sustainable development route calls for Many of these nations are very sensitive to climate changes, hence adaption plans ranging from strong infrastructure to catastrophe risk management are absolutely vital. Still, adaption involves both long-term planning and significant expenditures. Apart from lowering emissions, the aim is to safeguard the most vulnerable populations—often including underprivileged groups and those living in poverty. In this regard, the importance of developing nations in world climate control is very clear. Whether the world can reach sustainable development aims and fulfil climate goals will depend much on their future evolution. Emerging nations may plot a course that promotes both environmental sustainability and socioeconomic development by giving green growth top priority, investing in renewable energy, and creating resilience to climate effects top priority. To guarantee that these nations can fulfil their climate pledges and simultaneously raise their populations out of poverty and guarantee long-term prosperity, achieving this goal will need ongoing international cooperation including fair financial support, technology transfer, and capacity building. The capacity of developing nations to negotiate this challenging terrain will ultimately determine the success of global climate action; so, their efforts will be vital to create a sustainable and fair future for everyone.

CONCLUSION

Emerging nations' changing influence in the politics of climate change offers both great possibilities for world collaboration and major obstacles. These countries are at the junction of fast economic expansion and the pressing need for sustainable development, hence their participation in international climate negotiations is absolutely vital to reach world climate targets. Adopting a flexible and inclusive framework, the Paris Agreement recognises the special situation of developing nations and lets them help with world climate efforts while still aiming for growth. To move to low-carbon, climate-resilient economies, this collaboration depends on making sure developing nations have access to the required financial resources, technical advances, and capacity-building assistance, however. Ensuring a fair global response to climate change depends on the still-vibrant notion of shared but differentiated obligations. While wealthy countries lead in emissions reductions and climate financing, developing economies need help in their attempts to lessen and adapt to climate change effects. Emerging economies have a crucial role not just for global climate management but also for the more general objective of sustainable development. Thus, guaranteeing that rising economies can fulfil their climate pledges without compromising their economic growth and development goals will depend on encouraging a more inclusive, transparent, and efficient international system. In the end, tackling the climate catastrophe calls for constant global cooperation because developing nations significantly help to define a fair and sustainable future for everybody.

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