

Unequal Skies, Shared Destiny: Bridging the Political and Financial Rift in Global Climate Governance

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Abstract

In an era marked by profound and rapid transformation, the international climate governance architecture remains plagued by structural defects that exacerbate inequality and hinder effective action. This paper addresses the systemic disconnect between the geography of emissions generation and the geography of climate impact, a phenomenon conceptualized herein as the “Financial Rift”, by analyzing global carbon emissions data and examining the divergence in political perspectives across regions. Additionally, this paper examines why current governance frameworks fail to reconcile historical responsibility with the disproportionate climate vulnerability faced by developing nations. The analysis shows that “fragmentation trap” and discourse power deficiency of developing countries have made the global climate policy a geopolitical battlefield, not a cooperative effort. To break through this impasse, this paper puts forward a “Global Climate Policy Coordination Framework,” based on the establishment of a Climate Policy Coordination Alliance (CPCA). The framework seeks to establish equitable mechanisms through mandatory financing structures and more South-South aid, seeking to integrate the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) into global public policy, with a focus on bridging inequalities and advancing climate action.

Keywords: Global Climate Governance; Climate Justice; Financial Rift; South-South Cooperation; Discourse Power; Distributive Justice; Fragmentation Trap

1. Introduction

The contemporary international order stands at an unprecedented juncture where cross-border dynamics in security, technology, and development are reshaping the global landscape. This transformation is most acute in global climate governance, where environmental disasters intersect with deeply entrenched global inequalities [12]. Despite decades of multilateral conversations and the creation of successive frameworks—from the UNFCCC to the Paris Agreement—global climate governance continues to suffer from structural deficiencies that consistently overlook developing countries while favoring affluent ones. The existing regime, characterized by voluntary commitments and inadequate financing mechanisms, has failed to address the asymmetrical distribution of both climate responsibilities and climate impacts, treating the atmosphere as a global public good but failing to protect it collectively [7].

Developed countries, which carry the vast majority of historical responsibility for accumulated greenhouse gases, are relatively less vulnerable to direct climate impacts. Conversely, developing nations lack both the financial and technical means to adapt

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to these impacts. This paper contends that the current impasse stems fundamentally from the failure to align policy frameworks with principles of distributive justice. This misalignment manifests as a "Financial Rift": a structural divide in which global economic hubs drive carbon emissions while shifting the resulting environmental and financial burdens onto the global periphery, mirroring the classic "Tragedy of the Commons" [6]. Furthermore, this divide transcends economic disparity; it reflects a systemic political failure exacerbated by a "fragmentation trap," characterized by overlapping institutions and conflicting policy agendas rather than unified action. By analyzing these economic and political dimensions, this paper argues for the establishment of a comprehensive Global Climate Policy Coordination Framework designed to move the international community from a paradigm of charity to one of structural justice.

2. The Anatomy of Inequality: Emissions, Economics, and the "Blue Banana"

The global distribution of emissions exposes a deep-seated asymmetry, forcing a re-evaluation of traditional concepts of collective duty in climate governance. Comprehensive analysis of global carbon inequality reveals that the top ten percent of global emitters are accountable for around 48% of total emissions, whereas the bottom 50%—amounting to half of humanity—generate just 11.5% [4]. As shown in Chart 1, this stark contrast underscores the fact that global emissions are disproportionately driven by the most affluent demographics, while low-income groups remain marginal contributors. This visual evidence substantiates the need for equitable policy instruments, specifically wealth and carbon taxation, to mandate proportionate contributions from high-emission groups and foster equitable climate finance.

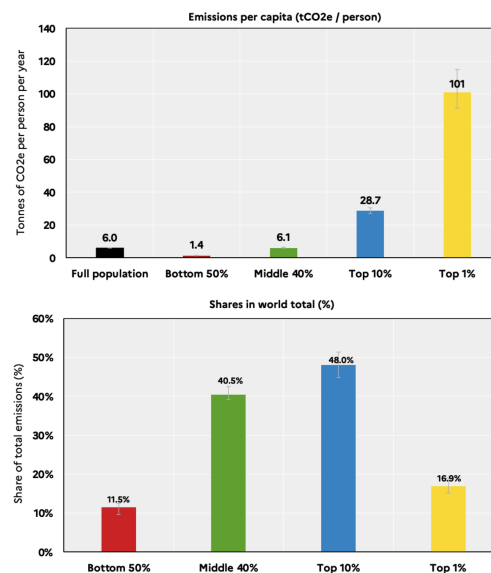


Chart 1. Emissions by global emitter group and shares in the world total, 2019 [4].

This staggering ratio reveals that climate responsibility is fundamentally concentrated within the global wealthy. Their "luxury emissions" represent a misuse of environmental privilege. Inequality is further exacerbated since the economic impacts of climate change are inversely distributed. Long-term econometric models suggest that the climate crisis will cause severe divergence in global GDP trajectories, fundamentally reshaping the world's economic map by 2100 [3]. These projected economic divergences are explicitly quantified in Figure 1 and Figure 2. The charts show the imbalance in responsibility for global climate governance, which means that the affluent countries with a high emission might bear the

bigger responsibility and extend more financial and technical assistance so that the less developed poor countries can meet the more serious climate problem easily.

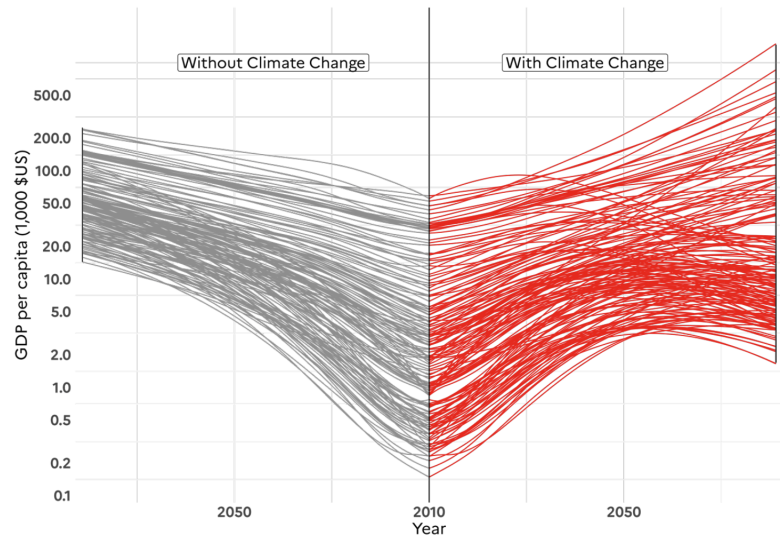


Figure 1. GDP projections by 2100 across the world with and without climate change [3].

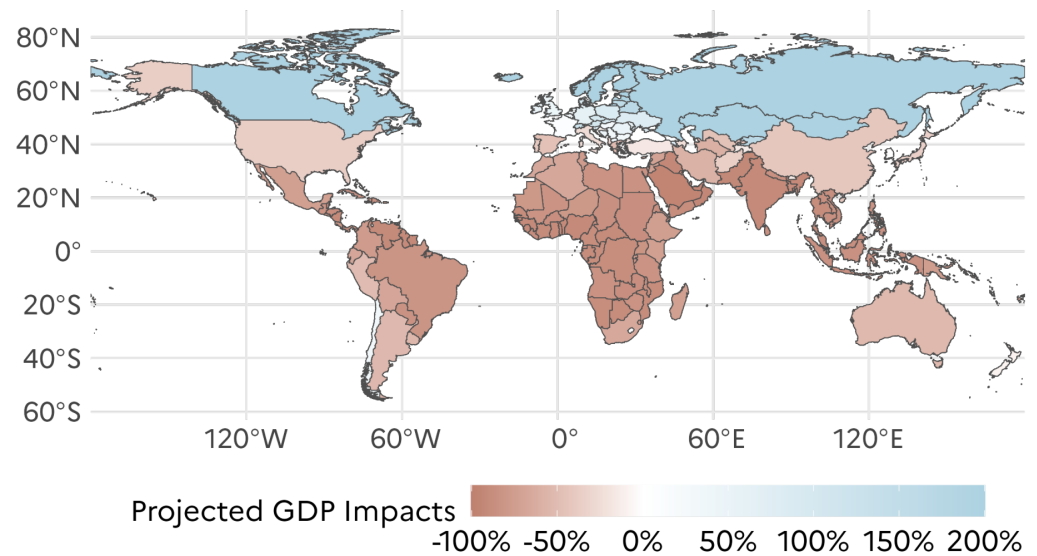


Figure 2. Change in GDP per capita by 2100 attributable to climate change [3].

Low-income countries, largely concentrated in tropical and subtropical regions, face severe GDP contractions, while wealthy temperate nations remain relatively insulated or may even experience modest economic gains. This creates a vicious cycle where the nations least at fault for the crisis have nearly no economic capacity to address it. The intersection of emissions and economic realities aligns with the "Blue Banana" metaphor [2]. Originally used to describe the corridor of economic concentration in Europe (see Figure 3), this concept illustrates how global wealth, innovation, and productive capacity cluster in specific spatial belts. While this economic belt represents immense economic vitality, mapping it geographically exposes the structural economic imbalances and fragmentation within the region.

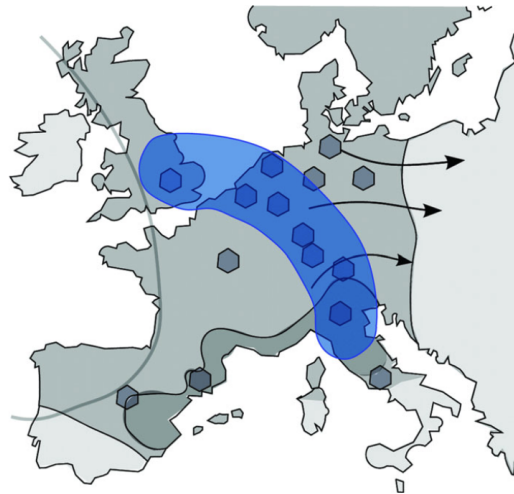


Figure 3. The original "Blue Banana" spatial concept in Europe [2].

These centers of economic vitality are simultaneously the centers of historical emissions, effectively externalizing their environmental costs onto the periphery. The result is a profound injustice where the geography of benefit diverges radically from the geography of harm, creating a crisis that voluntary governance regimes have failed to address.

3. The Political Roots of Dysfunction: Fragmentation and Discourse Power

The Financial Rift continues due to profound political dysfunction inside the global administration system. The main problem with this is the "fragmentation trap"[10]: reforms designed to make international organizations better actually create new veto players and overlapping power centers [9]. On the climate front, this "policy hedging" results in major powers adopting conflicting strategic positions, a move that directly erodes the foundations of collective global action. A prominent example is the European Union's implementation of the Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM) to avoid carbon leakage, such unilateral actions by the EU are viewed by developing economic powerhouses such as China and India as green trade barriers and they have even implemented trade countermeasures. Similar policy conflicts have shifted from conceptual contention to real trade confrontation, which is fiercer internationally and slower on the green transformation process.

In addition to this is the instability created by the volatility of powers like the US which sees its relationship with international agreements exhibiting profound inconsistency. The pattern of withdrawal and re-entry—exemplified by the U.S. stance on the Paris Agreement and UNESCO—demonstrates a utilitarian logic of 'use it or discard it' that erodes the foundations of multilateralism. When a hegemon expands fossil fuel extraction while simultaneously engaging in climate diplomacy, it creates a policy vacuum that weakens the credibility of global commitments.

Furthermore, the global climate governance structure suffers from a severe deficiency in discourse power for developing nations [5]. The Global South is usually in the position of "policy followers" rather than "rule-makers". Developing countries have only a few key positions in main international financial organization such as IMF and World Bank, and their specific needs are effectively excluded from the agenda-setting dominated by the West. Without this voice, there are global narratives that tell the story of climate financed as "aid" or "charity" when it is really a responsibility that stems from the historical use of the atmospheric commons. As a result, the global rules which ranging from financing criteria

to trade standards, are systemically weighted against those with the least capacity to adapt, further entrenching the North-South divide.

4. Results

To overcome these systemic bottlenecks, the world has to go past fragmented efforts and set up a strong *Global Climate Policy Coordination Framework* [8]. At the heart of this proposal is the Climate Policy Coordination Alliance (CPCA), a body designed to institutionalize equity and ensure that rhetorical responsibility is matched by tangible action. Unlike existing institutions that often function as debating forums, the CPCA would serve as a mechanism for harmonizing national policies and enforcing binding financial commitments, thereby aligning global efforts with the UN Sustainable Development Goals. To bring the CPCA to life, this paper puts forth the all-encompassing structure mechanism displayed in Chart 2. This flowchart demonstrates the route from spotting problems to developing policy frameworks backed by economics and more power in discourse.

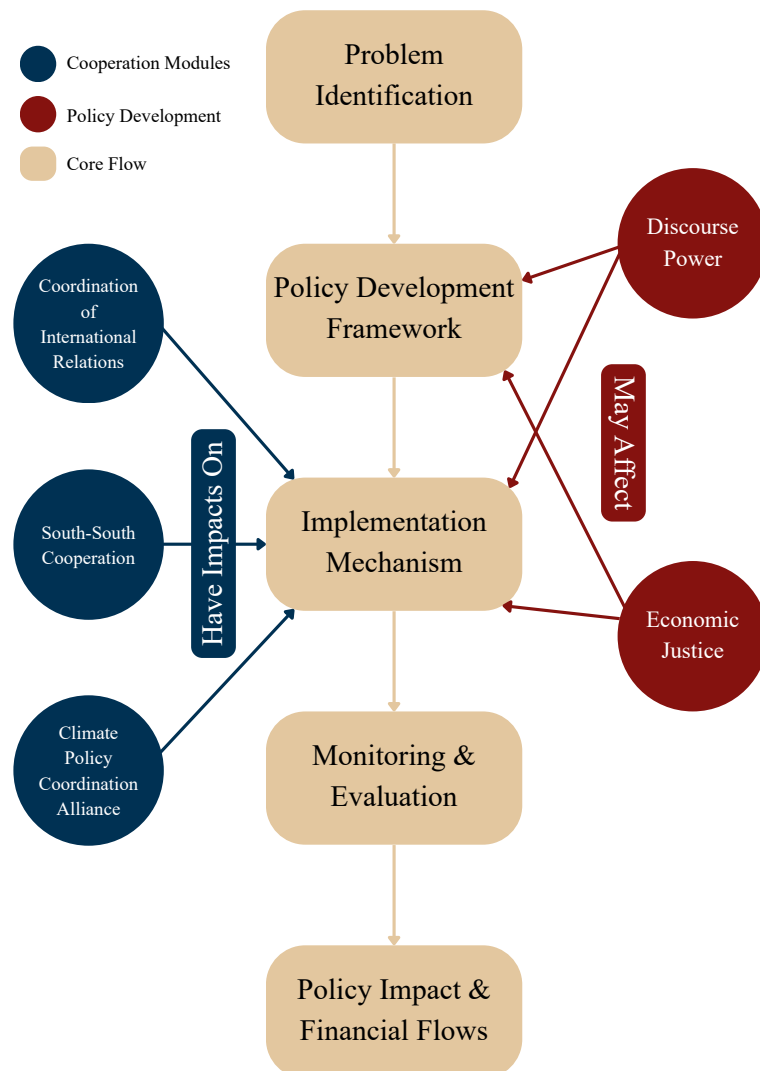


Chart 2. Framework for Promoting Global Climate Policy [8].

The first pillar of this framework is the transition from voluntary charity to mandatory responsibility through a Fair Climate Financing Mechanism. Given the failure of the \$100 billion annual commitment, this mechanism proposes mandatory levies on high-net-worth individuals and luxury emissions, directly addressing the emissions asymmetry identified

by inequality data. To target “luxury emissions” of the richest 1%, for example by taxing private jets, or taxing carbon based on wealth, drawing on contemporary models of capital redistribution [11]. So that the international community has the means sufficient to the scale of the crisis. This funding is not merely for mitigation but is essential for achieving SDG 13 (Climate Action) and preventing the collapse of progress on SDG 1 (No Poverty) and SDG 2 (Zero Hunger) [13], as climate change threatens the agricultural basis of developing economies [1].

The second pillar focuses on strengthening South-South Cooperation to reduce dependency and enhance agency. North-South transfers are necessary but the framework for sharing technologies and resources equitably must entitle developing nations power to do likewise. A proposed South-South Technology Transfer Facility would prioritize open-source technologies and knowledge sharing, allowing vulnerable nations to access adaptation tools—such as drought-resistant crops or flood management systems—without facing the prohibitive barriers of intellectual property regimes controlled by the North. The approach changed it from a conditional helping dynamic to a partnering and self-determination dynamic.

Lastly, the CPCA must include a comprehensive monitoring and evaluation system to assume responsibility. To avoid the “fragmentation trap,” this system would track financial flows and policy implementation with transparency, utilizing data to hold both contributor and recipient nations accountable. This includes paying attention to the “policy hedging” carried out by the major powers so that it does not lead to unilateral actions to disrupt global trade and partnership. By establishing a specialized climate arbitration mechanism, the alliance could provide a forum for resolving disputes related to historical responsibility and environmental damages, addressing the current failure of international dispute resolution mechanisms to enforce climate justice.

5. Conclusions

This study has examined the structural deficiencies inherent in contemporary global climate governance, conceptualizing the persistent disconnect between emissions generation and climate vulnerability as a “Financial Rift.” The analysis demonstrates that the current governance paradigm, characterized by voluntary commitments and political fragmentation, disproportionately favors historical emitters while systematically marginalizing the Global South. By externalizing the environmental costs of economic concentration, the existing framework exacerbates both economic disparities and the discourse power deficit of developing nations.

To address these systemic failures, this paper argues that incremental reforms are insufficient; rather, a fundamental restructuring of international climate relations is required. The proposed Climate Policy Coordination Alliance (CPCA) provides a viable architectural framework to transition global climate policy from a charity-based model to one grounded in distributive justice. By institutionalizing mandatory financing mechanisms that target high-emission cohorts and fostering South-South cooperation, the CPCA aims to mitigate the “fragmentation trap” and elevate the strategic agency of vulnerable nations. Ultimately, establishing an equitable governance regime is not merely a moral imperative, but a structural prerequisite for achieving long-term climate stability and fulfilling the global sustainable development agenda.

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