



An Overview of **Climate Policies** through the Prism of **State Sovereignty**

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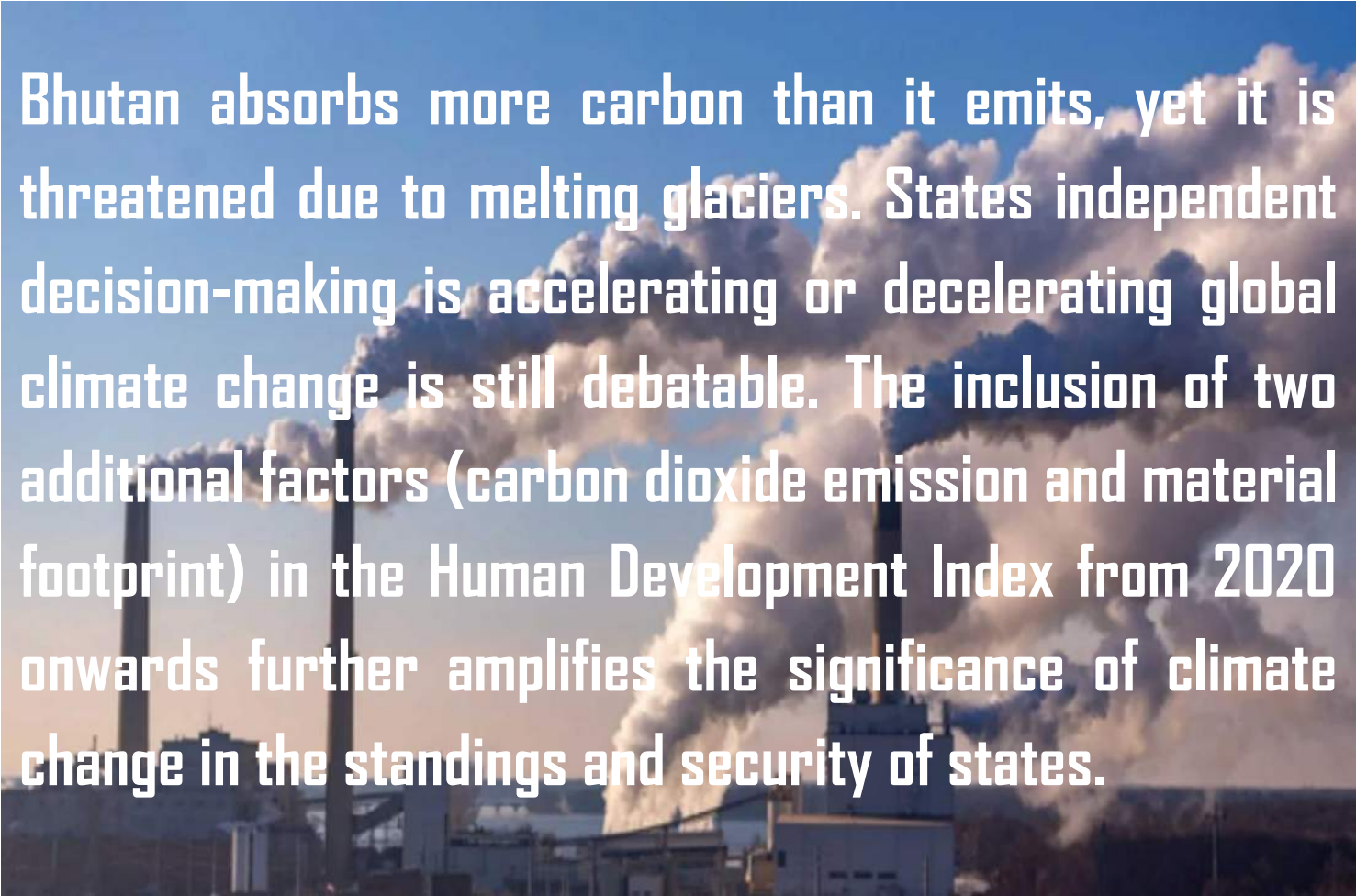
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Climate change is a reality recognized universally. Although global efforts to confront this challenge are accelerating, there are fears in the underdeveloped world regarding the erosion of their sovereignty through climate action.

Developing states have apprehensions regarding the overreach of developed states in Climate Policies, as seen in the Global South and North divide. Climate Policies do have geopolitical implications while the climate initiatives have been heavily politicized.

The concept of sovereign states evolved in [Treaty of Westphalia, 1648](#). However, it has undergone many extemporizations with climate action being the most contemporary. The right of a country to govern itself is the essence of sovereignty. But what if this right starts compromising the rights of its neighboring countries and the world at large?

Environmental issues and corresponding policy formulation are bigger and beyond the confines of international boundaries. They pose numerous challenges for a state's sovereignty.



Bhutan absorbs more carbon than it emits, yet it is threatened due to melting glaciers. States independent decision-making is accelerating or decelerating global climate change is still debatable. The inclusion of two additional factors (carbon dioxide emission and material footprint) in the Human Development Index from 2020 onwards further amplifies the significance of climate change in the standings and security of states.

Seeking advisory opinion of **International Court of Justice (ICJ)** by United Nations on legal consequences for states in case of noncompliance to climate commitments is a precursor.

Sovereignty of a state is upholding the independence of a country to determine the matters they give importance to and their choice to form policies in response to those matters and strategies to address the **environmental changes** within their boundary. Consequently, sovereignty may also imply the right a country has to protect, the natural environment within their territory.

Intriguingly, it is assessed that developed countries are the biggest emitters of carbon due to their industries and responsible for climate crisis.



Unfortunately, underdeveloped countries (nations of Africa and Asia) are bearing the brunt of the carbon emissions. Additionally, the new structures being put in practice to counter the adverse effects of climate such as green technology and taxes to decarbonize are again benefiting the ones responsible.

At present, there are numerous well-documented risks to the current world order. Such as **nuclear proliferation**, economic stability, terrorism, misuse of artificial intelligence. However, a largely underexplored stressor is the impact of climate change on the sovereignty of global sovereign nation-states.

Some nations feel that the aims and objectives of climate response go far beyond and are an infringement of their national ambitions. Climate change has implications for the internal dimensions of the states. States being subjects of international law are independent in decision making within their territory as per their national laws.

However, the climate protocols are binding on nations and, at times, tangent with the national aspirations. Australia, for instance, is the world's largest exporter of coal.



Boutros Ghali, the former UN Secretary General dilates that time of complete and exclusive sovereignty has faded away. Additionally, he remarks that theory was never matched with reality in this aspect.



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In accordance with the climate protocols of Paris Agreement, the coal era is gradually coming to an end. If coal extraction is blocked, it may result in thousands of jobs cut in the country.

Mining policy can still decide elections in Australia, and the conservative government was resolute to do the bare minimum on climate change.

Brazil is home to the Amazon forests. Amazon forests act as the lungs of the world and sink Carbon dioxide.



However, they also provide a livelihood to the inhabitants, wherein timbering is a major source, areas are being cultivated and brought under settlements.

Now, both conflict with each other; if Brazil goes for the greater good of the world.

By following the climate protocols and policies, it affects its local population adversely. Implementing climate policies at times are perceived to be detrimental to national interests and are considered as interference in internal matters.

The erstwhile Brazilian administration was disparaged for lacking action on Amazon forests and converting the carbon sink to carbon sources. They saw the environmental regulation as hindrance to the economic growth of the nation.

The contemporary concept of state sovereignty is based on four cardinals comprising authority, territory, population, and recognition.

In 2017, Prime Minister Scott Morrison held up a hunk of coal in Parliament, declaring, “Don’t be scared”. For the individuals associated with mining, transporting it to ports and shipping to major coal importers such as China, India, Japan, and South Korea, it is a death blow. Resultantly, we see protests by people declaring climate change policies as an intervention in domestic affairs.

Regulations prescribed and likely to be executed through global climate action in the next few decades are conventionally seen to have reduced the status of state sovereignty in the above domains.

In accordance with sovereignty, any country is entitled to the right to international personality (the quality of a subject of international law); the right of the state of being respected the national integrity and the right to self-defense; the state's right to ascertain its political and social system freely and to use it.

The state is an obstinate and arbitrary reference point in a lively Earth structure. Countries are social edifices imperceptible in a natural realm that is indivisible in terms of state sovereignty.

This brings to light an intrinsic challenging situation to the normative structure upon which sovereignty is grounded. In the case of climate change, this will entail a solitary reorientation of neighboring countries' perceptions of one another and an innovative, thoughtful understanding of the place of social order as a wholly owned subsidiary of the natural world.

A world map with text overlaid on it. The text is white and reads: "State sovereignty is being directly challenged by the global climate laws. Both realist and liberal explanations of state behavior and the prospects of international cooperation are based on the notion of interest. In the backdrop of campaigns of climate skepticism, national economic interests coupled with human security issues continue to dominate perceptions of global vulnerability." The map shows various countries and cities, with a focus on the Mediterranean region.

State sovereignty is being directly challenged by the global climate laws. Both realist and liberal explanations of state behavior and the prospects of international cooperation are based on the notion of interest. In the backdrop of campaigns of climate skepticism, national economic interests coupled with human security issues continue to dominate perceptions of global vulnerability.

Nations still complacent about global climate change need to articulate their policies to comprehend why climate challenge is enormous, complex, and vivacious to human survival – yet solvable only if all the nations forgoing their independent interests pay collective attention and collaborate. Thus, it is not only a point of state but human security.

In this socio-political context, where we do have Fridays as protest days for climate action in developed nations, we have demonstrations by the people of underdeveloped countries as it threatens their livelihoods.

The mill workers, oil drillers, and carbon-emitting factory workers think very strongly that the environmental policies will be counterproductive.

However, thinking beyond parochial elucidations, climate action at the global level with all the protocols is the requirement to save a **better future** for the next generations. States need to think ahead and beyond myopic interests to combat this critical challenge to humanity.

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