

Chapter 2

From Kyoto to Paris: An Analysis of the Politics of Multilateralism on Climate Change

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ABSTRACT

The Earth Summit of 1992 held in Rio de Janeiro awakened the consciousness of the world to the danger of climate change. The establishment of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change provided the platform for parties to negotiate on ways of moving forward. The global acknowledgement of the weightiness of the climate change and the future of the planet galvanized international agreements to this regard. Consequently, a landmark agreement was brokered in 1992 at Kyoto, Japan and 2015 in Paris, France. However, the strong issues of national interest tend to bedevil the implementation that would take the world forward on climate change. The chapter therefore examined multilateralism from the platform of climate change conferences and analyzed the political undertone behind disappointing outcomes even when most of the negotiators realized that the only way to salvage the impending doom is a multilateral binding agreement when nation-state can subsume their narrow interest.

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INTRODUCTION

Climate change instigated by anthropogenic greenhouse gases has arisen as one of the most significant environmental concerns confronting the international community. For example, greenhouse gases—especially fossil fuel-based carbon dioxide emissions—gather in the atmosphere as an outcome of human activities. These progressive intensifications in greenhouse gas concentrations cause various changes in the climates such as a rise in the world's average temperature (Bohringer, 2003). Since the end of the last century and the beginning of the 21st century, its impacts on weather and other natural environmental heritages have become increasingly felt.

As such, climate change is now globally acknowledged as one of the most important challenges facing the world. Its impacts on the society and environment are unprecedented and better imagined than real. Nonetheless, scholars of climate change have recommended that global greenhouse gas emissions must reduce swiftly to mitigate the impending consequences resulting from an increase in temperature. This, in the actual sense, is the scientific underpinning of this political problem (Shanahan, 2009).

Therefore, the dire need for humanity to find solutions to these problems has created an awareness amongst nations of the world to embrace a collective mechanism or multilateral approach through a platform called the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) established under the auspices of the United Nations.

The paper therefore examined multilateralism from the platform of climate change conferences and analyzed the political undertone behind disappointing outcomes even when most of the negotiators realized that the only way to salvage the impending doom is a multilateral binding agreement.

METHODOLOGY

The paper relied heavily on secondary sources, especially commentaries and reports arising from the UNFCCC Conference of the Parties (COP) conferences. Books, newspaper reports, conference materials, and materials sourced from the internet were most useful. Data sourced through these were analyzed through the employment of qualitative descriptive analysis with the backdrop of theory of multilateralism.

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