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POLITICS OF CLIMATE CHANGE IN SOUTH ASIA: CONFLICT AND COOPERATION



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June 2021

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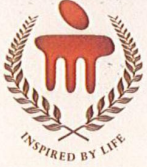
**POLITICS OF CLIMATE CHANGE IN
SOUTH ASIA: CONFLICT AND
COOPERATION**

**A Dissertation Submitted to the Department of Geopolitics and
International Relations in Partial Fulfilment for Master's Degree
in Geopolitics and International Relations**

Supervisor
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By
GAURICA SETHI

June 2021



MANIPAL
ACADEMY of HIGHER EDUCATION
(Deemed to be University under Section 3 of the UGC Act, 1956)

Date: 29.06.2021

DECLARATION

I declare that the dissertation entitled “**Politics of Climate Change in South Asia: Conflict and Cooperation**” submitted by me for the award of the degree of Master of Arts in Geopolitics and International Relations of Manipal Academy of Higher Education is my own work. The dissertation has not been submitted for any other degree of this University or any other University.

(Gaurica Sethi)

CERTIFICATE

I recommend that this dissertation be placed before the examiners for evaluation.

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ABBREVIATIONS

ACCSAP	Afghanistan Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan
ANREP	Afghanistan National Renewable Energy Policy
AIPA	Apex Committee for Implementation of Paris Agreement
ADPC	Asia Disaster Preparedness Centre
ARRCC	Asia Regional Resilience to a Changing Climate
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
BCCSAP	Bangladesh Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan
BIMSTEC	Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation
CANSA	Climate Action Network South Asia
CARE	Climate Adaptation and Resilience for South Asia
CSI	Climate Services Initiative
CZMP	Coastal Zone Management Plan
COP	Conference of Parties
EM-DAT	Emergency Events Database
ERDA	Energy for Rural Development
EU	European Union
GLOF	Glacial Lake Outburst Flood
GHG	Greenhouse Gases
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
HKH	Hindu- Kush Himalayan Region
IORA	Indian Ocean Rim Association
INDC	Intended Nationally Determined Contributions
IPCC	Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
ICIMOD	International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development
MoEFCC	Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change
NAPCC	National Action Plan on Climate Change
NAPCLD	National Action Programme for Combating the Land Degradation of Sri Lanka

NAP	National Adaptation Plan
NAPA`	National Adaptation Programme of Action
NABARD	National Bank for Agriculture Bank and Rural Development
NEAP	National Environment Action Plan
NPP	National Physical Plan 2011-2030
NRC	National Register of Citizens
NRREP	National Rural and Renewable Energy Programme
NSC	National Steering Committee
NDC	Nationally Determined Contributions
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
PARCC	Program for Asia Resilience to Climate Change
SDRMC	SAARC Disaster Risk Management Centre
SEC	SAARC Energy Centre
SWFP	Severe Weather Forecasting Programme
SARCAR	South Asia Region Climate Adaptation and Resilience Program
SAARC	South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation
SANDEE	South Asian Network for Development and Environment Economics
SLCDM	Sri Lanka Comprehensive Disaster Management Programme
SNAPDRR	Strategic National Action Plan for Disaster Risk Reduction
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nation
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
UNISDR	United Nations International Strategy on Disaster Reduction
WMO	World Meteorological Organisation

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ABSTRACT

The study on the theme “Politics of Climate Change in South Asia: Conflict and Cooperation” analyses how remarkably serious impressions of climate change have become in the South Asian region, and the ways in which the countries of the region are engaging in the politics of conflict and coordination related to the concerns of climate change. Climate change is increasingly being seen as an emergency not just in the rest of the world, but also within the nations of South Asia. The effects of climate change, ranging from the rising global temperatures and sea level rise to the negative ramifications on the availability of natural resources and livelihoods (among other problems) have generated a great response from the regions in terms of dealing with it both nationally and regionally. The study has thus taken some of the major regional and international governmental organizations for assessing the various policies, initiatives and strategies undertaken by the countries to combat climate change. However, despite similar challenges faced by countries, regional cooperation has not been effective because of differing perceptions, vulnerabilities, needs and challenges. Therefore, the paper assesses a profound insight to the challenges faced by regional cooperation in South Asia.

The climate change is mulling drastic effects on the developing countries of South Asia, especially when the region is estimated to be one of the hardest hit regions in the world making it important for the countries to come up with mitigation and adaptation policies to combat the challenge at all levels of governance. The consequences of climate changes conferring to droughts, floods, rising sea level, glacier retreat, cyclones, etc. extensively effects the various sectors such as agriculture. Effects on the agricultural activities of the region lead to major socio-economic disruptions, as agriculture constitutes as a major source of income in these countries, apart from being central to food security concerns. Likewise, various sectors including forestry, tourism, infrastructure, and human health shadow under the risk of rising sea levels, saltwater intrusion, drought, and drastic weather conditions.

In contrast, the past few decades have seen several policies and programmes on the climate change, forged on national level, like comprehensive frameworks on climate action and curtailing the stake of disasters, but they are also constrained by the lack of financial and institutional capacities. This study provides an overview of these policies (such as India’s National Action Plan on Climate Change prioritizing on areas like sustainable agriculture,

smart cities, solar mission, sustaining the Himalayan ecosystem and human health, Bangladesh's Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan emphasizes on food security, disaster management, social protection and infrastructure among others whereas Nepal's National Adaptation Plan focuses on urban settlements and infrastructure, forests and biodiversity, public health and the calamities proffered by climate like glacier lake outburst flood (GLOF) and disaster risk reduction etc.) that have been instituted to tackle the problem of climate change at the national level. Alterations in the climate are highlighted and brought to notice by all the countries in the region, the past decades have been policy and institutional changes to integrate it into policy and decision-making. On the other hand, common problems associated with climate change have brought the South Asian countries together to undertake collective action against the looming threat, although the level of cooperation is still contestable, as various challenges impede effective coordination on climate action – both mitigation and adaptation. Thus regional organisations like South Asia Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC), Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA), International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development(ICIMOD)have played a pivotal role in the region by in advancing climate cooperation, yet conflicts still persist. For instance, SAARC introduced policies and established institutions on climate change such as SAARC Disaster Management Centre, SAARC Coastal Zone Management Centre and SAARC Meteorological Research Centre. Nonetheless, these efforts were not capitalized to facilitate climate cooperation among the South Asian countries.

The major outcome findings from the research cleared that the changes in climate are significantly affecting the South Asia at core levels (at socio-economic, political levels etc.), provided no timely action is incorporated. While changes associated with climatic transitions impeded through the boundaries, many impacts are seen common to the most of the countries in the region. Yet, the fact that these climate vulnerabilities are perceived differently by the countries and their notions of climate action differ, there are more divergences and convergences when it comes to regional climate cooperation. Many obstacles, including the lack of knowledge, trust, institutional capacity, and efficacy of regional organizations, as well as geopolitical rivalries, make cooperation harder in the region. South Asia should thus develop strategies integrating the key vulnerabilities of each country in the region.