

Assessing EU leadership on climate change: the limits of diffusion in EU relations with China and India

Torney, Diarmuid

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The Limits of Diffusion in EU Relations with China
and India

Diarmuid Torney

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Freie Universität Berlin
Kolleg-Forschergruppe
“The Transformative Power of Europe:
The European Union and the Diffusion of Ideas”
Innestr. 26
14195 Berlin
Germany
Phone: +49 (0)30- 838 57033
Fax: +49 (0)30- 838 57096
transform-europe@fu-berlin.de
www.transformeurope.eu



ASSESSING EU LEADERSHIP ON CLIMATE CHANGE

THE LIMITS OF DIFFUSION IN EU RELATIONS WITH CHINA AND INDIA

Diarmuid Torney

Abstract

The EU has for a long time claimed the title of “leader” in the international politics of climate change. However, existing research has generally failed to specify whether the EU’s purported leadership has induced the “followership” of other states. This working paper seeks to shed light on this somewhat neglected topic by examining the attempted diffusion of climate change norms, policies, and institutions by the EU to China and India. The paper makes two principal arguments. First, the development of Chinese and Indian climate change policy should be understood as primarily domestic developments. Nonetheless, there was limited evidence of diffusion from the EU, but there was significant variation between the Chinese and Indian responses to the EU’s diffusion attempts. The Chinese response was one increasing accommodation; the Indian response was a more straightforward case of resistance. Second, domestic factors help to explain the variation in the Chinese and Indian responses to EU attempts at diffusion and, related, the observed pattern of diffusion from the EU to China and India. Particularly important is the degree to which new external ideas and concepts resonate with pre-existing domestic ideas and concepts. The paper thus paints a picture of limited EU leadership, but also suggests that the EU attempts to secure “followership” could be enhanced by paying greater attention to the domestic politics and preferences of third countries.

The Author



Diarmuid Torney is a postdoctoral fellow at the Kolleg-Forschergruppe “The Transformative Power of Europe”, Freie Universität Berlin. From October 2012, he will be a TAPIR Transatlantic Fellow at Chatham House, London. His DPhil (PhD), from the University of Oxford, focused on EU relations with China and India in the area of climate change policy. His research interests include EU-Asia relations, transatlantic relations, and global environmental politics.

contact: diarmuidtorney@gmail.com

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1. Introduction¹

The EU has for a long time claimed the title of “leader” in the international politics of climate change. A substantial literature has developed seeking to analyze and assess the domestic sources of EU leadership in this area.² However, very little attention has been paid to the “followership” of other states and actors in this arena. While a small number of studies have been published which seek to assess EU claims to leadership by examining the *perceptions* of others, these generally fail to specify whether perceptions of leadership will lead to followership of other actors (Gupta/van der Grijp 1999; Karlsson et al. 2011; Kilian 2009; Kilian/Elgström 2010). This is surprising, given the inherently relational nature of leadership. Furthermore, it is clear that the EU has in fact sought to lead other states by trying to persuade other states to accept binding international commitments and to adopt domestic policies to limit greenhouse gas emissions.

Recent scholarship on the global governance of climate change has painted a mixed picture regarding the role of the EU. Many have pointed to the lack of success the EU had in shaping the outcome of the now (in)famous Copenhagen climate change conference in December 2009, where the final outcome reflected strikingly the interests and preferences of other actors, in particular the United States and the so-called BASIC grouping of China, India, Brazil, and South Africa. The Cancun (November–December 2010) and particularly the Durban (November–December 2011) UN climate change conferences saw the EU play a more prominent—and arguably more successful—role, but the Copenhagen experience has arguably cast doubt over the influence of the EU in the global politics of climate change.

A small number of scholars have also sought to examine the influence of the EU in its bilateral relations on climate change, particularly with China. Asking similar questions, these studies have reached strikingly different conclusions. Carrapatoso concludes that there has been substantial diffusion of climate change policies from the EU to China through “interregional dialogue”, while De Cock argues that the EU has acted as a “bilateral norm leader” vis-à-vis China on climate change, suggesting that the EU has “helped to overcome the traditional understanding in China of the environment and the economy as competing concerns” (Carrapatoso 2011; De Cock 2011: 89). Fox and Godement, in their “power audit” of EU–China relations, conclude that the EU has “helped to transform China’s domestic policy” on the issue of climate change, comparing the area of climate change policy favorably with other policy areas on which EU influence has, in their view, been more limited (Fox/Godement 2009: 10). By contrast, other scholars have concluded that “[d]espite some friendly public statements directed toward Europe, the Chinese refuse to recognise the EU’s leading role” (Holslag 2010).

1 This research would not have been possible without the financial and institutional support from the Kolleg-Forschergruppe (KFG) “The Transformative Power of Europe”. The author is particularly grateful to Tanja Börzel and Thomas Risse for their support and helpful feedback, as well as to Miranda Schreurs, Jörg Balsiger, Sebastian Oberthür and Hartmut Mayer who also provided very useful comments on earlier versions of this paper and the research that underpins it. The working paper has benefited from interviews with many policymakers and representatives of business, NGOs, and academia in the EU, China, and India in the period 2010–11. The author is grateful to all of those who helped with the preparation of this research, but since anonymity was promised in most cases, their help cannot be acknowledged individually.

2 Gupta/Grubb (2000); Oberthür/Roche Kelly (2008); Schreurs/Tiberghien (2007); Wurzel/Connelly (2010).

Against this background, how should we understand the role and influence of the EU in the global politics of climate change? This working paper seeks to shed light on this topic by examining the attempted diffusion of climate change norms, policies, and institutions by the EU to China and India. The paper argues that the Chinese and Indian Governments responded in significantly different ways to the EU's attempts at diffusion of its climate change policies. The Chinese response was one increasing accommodation; the Indian response was a more straightforward case of resistance. The paper seeks to explain this variation in response. It also accounts for the degree of change in the climate change policies and institutions of China and India in recent years, and asks whether and to what extent these changes can be understood as instances of diffusion from the EU.

The paper makes two principal arguments. First, the development of Chinese and Indian climate change policy should be understood as primarily domestic developments. Nonetheless, there was limited evidence of diffusion from the EU. There was evidence of limited strategic emulation in response to specific socialization attempts by EU leaders in both cases. Moreover, in certain cases, the Chinese Government in particular sought to draw lessons from the EU experience of developing specific policies related to climate change mitigation. This lesson-drawing was not significantly evident in the EU-India case. Second, domestic factors help to explain the variation in the Chinese and Indian responses to EU attempts at diffusion and, related, the observed pattern of diffusion from the EU to China and India. Particularly important is the degree to which new external ideas and concepts resonate with pre-existing domestic ideas and concepts. This confirms the findings of other recent research on the diffusion of climate change policies from the EU to other states (Biedenkopf 2012).

By drawing on recent theoretical and empirical research on diffusion of norms, policies, and ideas, the working paper shifts the focus to consider more explicitly and carefully the domestic context of climate change politics in the purported targets of EU diffusion efforts. By doing so, it seeks to provide a more sophisticated and nuanced understanding of the nature and extent of the role and influence of the EU in global climate change politics, challenging both the literature on external diffusion of EU climate change policies which attributes a large degree of influence to the EU, as well as the literature which attributes little or no influence to the EU (Carrapatoso 2011; De Cock 2011; Fox/Godement 2009; Holslag 2010).

The cases of China and India represent hard cases for diffusion of norms, policies, and institutions from the EU. Both China and India are at very different stages of economic development compared to the EU, and according to standard assumptions could be expected to attach lower priority to issues of environmental protection. Related to this, there was little prior mobilization of domestic interest groups in either country with respect to climate change policy. Furthermore, the EU-China and EU-India relationships are characterized by broadly symmetrical power relationships and significant geographical distance. Despite these seeming challenges, the EU has proactively sought to develop institutionalized engagement on climate change policies, and there has been at least some degree of policy and institutional change in China and India with respect to climate change policy-making. However, the two cases also differ in important respects. First, China and India are at different stages of economic development, with China's GDP and emissions levels significantly higher than those of India.³ Second, and related, this has generated differentiated conceptions

³ See Sections 4 and 5 below for discussion of these differences.

of interest and—to some extent—normative framings of climate change policy across the two cases. This variation in domestic factors allows the paper to explore the importance of the domestic context for diffusion processes.

The analysis in this working paper is based on fieldwork conducted in Europe, China, and India in 2010, as well as analysis of primary and secondary sources. The paper is structured as follows. The next section draws on recent theoretical work on diffusion as well as longer-standing research on the domestic impact of international norms. Section 3 identifies the causal and normative ideas which the EU has sought to promote in its relations with China and India. Sections 4 and 5 analyze the two case studies in order to identify to what extent we can understand the development of climate change policies, norms, and institutions in China and India as instances of diffusion of European policies.

2. Diffusion and Domestic Politics

This working paper uses some of the recent literature on the diffusion of ideas, policies, and institutions to structure the empirical analysis in this working paper (Börzel/Risse 2009, 2012a). In their framework for analyzing diffusion, Börzel and Risse make a distinction between direct and indirect mechanisms. In the case of direct mechanisms, the diffusion process is initiated and driven by the sender side of the relationship. In the case of indirect mechanisms, by contrast, the diffusion process is initiated by the recipient side of the relationship. While it may be more difficult to distinguish clearly between these different types of mechanisms empirically, the conceptual move “from Europeanization to diffusion” is useful in shifting the focus from purported sender to purported recipient.

With respect to direct mechanisms, Börzel and Risse identify four possible types. The first is physical or legal coercion, but as they note this is strictly speaking only relevant within the internal politics of the EU, since the EU does not have recourse to legally coercive mechanisms in international politics. The second is the manipulation of utility calculations. This can occur through either policies of conditionality, in which the one actor seeks to manipulate the cost-benefit calculations of another actor, or through capacity-building activities such as the provision of technical and financial assistance, in which one actor seeks to alter the capacity of another actor to make strategic choices. The third is socialization, which can result in complex learning through which actors redefine their identities and interests. Successful socialization involves actors changing their behavior as a result of wanting to be seen as members of society “in good standing”. The final direct mechanism is persuasion, according to which actors try to persuade each other about the validity claims inherent in any causal or normative statement.

Börzel and Risse also identify three mechanisms of indirect diffusion, through which actors seek to emulate others. The first is competition, which involves unilateral adjustment of behavior toward best practices. The second is lesson-drawing, in which actors look to others for policies and rules that effectively solved similar problems elsewhere and are transferable into their domestic context. Both of these mechanisms employ a consequentialist logic, according to which actors are assumed to act rationally in order to maximize utility according to some pre-defined set of interests. The third indirect mechanism of diffusion is

normative emulation. This views actors as motivated by a logic of appropriateness who may seek to be members of an international community “in good standing” and who therefore seek to emulate the norms, policies, or institutions of a respected actor in order to “do the right thing”. Normative emulation can, in a pure form, involve a somewhat automatic “downloading” of institutional “software” simply because this is what everybody does in a given community.

Which of these mechanisms are likely to come into play in diffusion—if it exists—of ideas, policies, and institutions related to climate change from the EU to China and India? Coercion is, as discussed above, not applicable in this case. The EU-China and EU-India relationships are characterized by broadly symmetrical power relations (at least when compared with the EU’s relations with accession or neighborhood countries, for example). This constrains the EU’s ability to employ negative conditionality measures which would seek to manipulate utility calculations of the Chinese and Indian governments. However, utility manipulation through more positive incentives such as capacity building may be a possible instrument if the sender has something to offer which is of use to the recipient. Notwithstanding that possibility, Börzel and Risse argue in general that “the further we move away from Europe, the fewer incentives the EU has on to offer to promote its policies and institutions and the more it has to rely on mechanisms of persuasion and of communication to make its case” (Börzel/Risse 2012a: 8). Indirect mechanisms, particularly lesson-drawing and normative emulation, are also potentially relevant. However, distinguishing between these mechanisms in practice—particularly between lesson-drawing and normative emulation—presents analytical challenges (Lenz 2012). Jetschke and Murray argue that lesson-drawing should involve a systematic search for the most effective solution, whereas normative emulation is driven by desire to belong to a symbolic community. Normative emulation can be distinguished from lesson-drawing by lack of clear functional demand (Jetschke/Murray 2012).

With respect to the mechanisms most likely to play a role in the cases discussed in this working paper, we can expect that diffusion will be heavily dependent on domestic factors in the recipient states. A necessary condition for either “softer” direct diffusion mechanisms (socialization and persuasion) or indirect, demand-driven diffusion mechanisms (lesson-drawing and normative emulation) is that politically-significant domestic actors should be supportive of incorporation of new norms, policies, or institutions, or should at least be open to such an outcome (Börzel/Risse 2012a: 11). This can, in turn, be driven by functional demand for new policies as a result of crisis, policy failure, uncertainty, new understandings of existing circumstances, or a desire for domestic or external legitimacy on the part of domestic political actors (Lenz 2012).

The support of domestic actors is, in turn, likely to be dependent on the degree to which new norms, policies, and institutions resonate with pre-existing domestic normative frames and conceptions of interest. This links to earlier research on the domestic impact of international norms, which sought to explain variation in the impact of international norms across both norms and countries by drawing attention to factors that mediate between international norms and domestic impact (Checkel 2005; Cortell/Davis 2000; Legro 1997; Risse-Kappen 1994). An important conclusion of this literature concerns the compatibility of international norms with pre-existing domestic normative frames held by relevant actors. In order to resonate domestically, international norms should be “compatible with the worldviews embedded in the political culture or held by those powerful enough to build winning coalitions” (Risse-Kappen 1994: 212). Relevant

actors must be open in principle to incorporating new ideas. If they are not, new ideas are unlikely to gain traction domestically.

International norms are also more likely to become salient among relevant domestic actors if they are perceived to support important domestic material interests (Cortell/Davis 2000). Perceptions of material interests can change over time, but the point is that international norms are more likely to gain traction domestically if they are perceived to support existing perceptions of the material interests of relevant domestic actors, and do not contradict these perceived interests. Furthermore, there also needs to be some degree of cultural match between the new norm and pre-existing domestic norms (Cortell/Davis 2000). In this respect, domestic norms shaping the preferences of actors should offer a guide to the degree to which international norms will resonate at the domestic level (Checkel 2005). International norms that conflict significantly with pre-existing domestic norms are unlikely to have domestic impact.

Of course, the issue of resonance between international norms and domestic norms, identities, and interests should not be viewed in static terms. Interests, identities, and norms can and do change, and indeed an influential strand of the literature on norm diffusion has focused on the ways in which norm entrepreneurs seek to construct cognitive frames for new norms that resonate with broader public understandings (Finnemore/Sikkink 1998; Payne 2001). Others have emphasized the agency of local actors in the target state, according to which norm-takers can seek to “localize” international norms by building congruence between existing domestic norms and new international norms (Acharya 2004). Focusing on conscious attempts to frame new norms and ideas in ways which facilitate diffusion links to the question of whether and to what extent the EU sought actively to frame its external engagement on climate change in terms that would resonate with relevant domestic actors in China and India. A further relevant question concerns how the EU responds to contestation of its norms and ideas (Börzel/Risse 2009: 11).

In short, diffusion can take place through a number of different mechanisms, which can be driven by either the sending or the receiving side. Under conditions of strong interdependence and broadly symmetrical power relations, coercion and negative conditionality are unlikely to be effective—or even available to actors seeking to diffuse particular policies, ideas, and institutions. Under such conditions, positive incentives such as capacity-building, softer mechanisms such as socialization and persuasion, and demand-driven mechanisms of lesson-drawing and emulation are likely to be more relevant. These mechanisms, however, are highly contingent on domestic politics in the purported recipients of diffusion.

3. European and Global Ideas Concerning Climate Change Mitigation

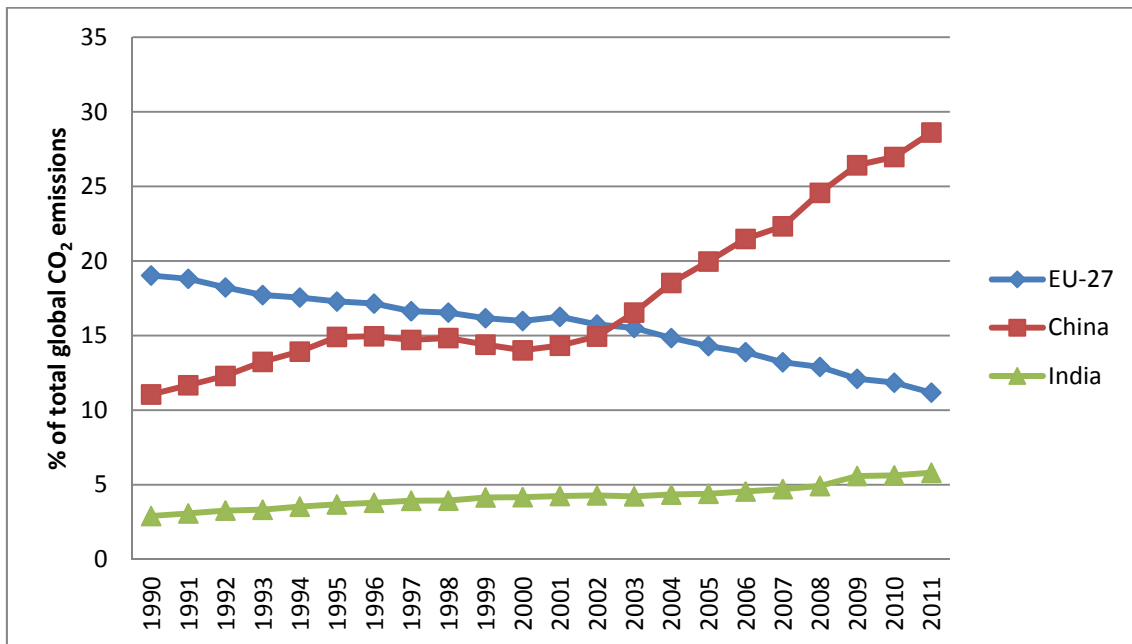
Since the early 1990s, the EU has sought to play a prominent role in the international politics of climate change, and has promoted a number of norms and ideas with respect to national and global climate change policy-making. First, the EU has increasingly argued that policies to reduce greenhouse gas emissions are consistent with self-interest. One version of this argument is that taking action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions is consistent with other policy goals, such as increasing energy security or reducing other forms of environmental pollution. Another version is that taking action to reduce emissions involves some costs,

but the costs of inaction are significantly higher, a view promoted by the influential UK Government sponsored *Stern Review* (Stern 2006). Second, the EU has also argued that states, especially those with large and rapidly-growing greenhouse gas emissions such as China and India, should develop and implement domestic policies to limit the growth of their greenhouse gas emissions. Third and related, the EU has also argued that all so-called “major emitters”, including China and India, should accept binding emissions limitation targets as part of a global climate change regime which would include “ambitious” targets and robust compliance and enforcement mechanisms.

Of course, none of these are uniquely European ideas. A significant epistemic community of climate scientists and environmentalists has been active in pushing states to take action to mitigate their greenhouse gas emissions, and indeed was instrumental in placing the issue of climate change on the agenda of governments and the international community from the late 1980s onwards (Haas 1992). Indeed, one of the tasks in the case studies below will be to identify to what extent the development of Chinese and Indian climate change policies can be understood as diffusion of European ideas, policies, and institutions as opposed to purely domestic phenomena or part of broader global trends. Other actors, including other states, have certainly also played significant roles in the development of global climate change policies. Nonetheless, the EU has been at the forefront of the development of domestic and global climate change policies and has, moreover, often sought to diffuse particular causal and normative understandings of climate change. Specifically, the EU has strongly promoted a particular model of global cooperation to combat climate change, namely legally-binding global agreement with robust compliance and enforcement mechanisms, as well as distinctive domestic-level climate change policies, most notably emissions trading.

The EU has not always pushed for large developing countries with fast-growing greenhouse gas emissions trajectories to take action on climate change in the short term. While the long-standing position of the EU has been that such countries should eventually be required to assume binding international emission limitation commitments, and correspondingly to implement domestic policies to limit the growth of greenhouse gas emissions, for a long time this was not a priority issue for the EU. In the earlier years of the development of the climate regime, the EU was principally concerned with securing the participation of other industrialized countries in the climate regime—most prominently the United States, but also Canada, Russia, and Japan. This changed in the period from 2004-05 onwards, as a result of two principal factors. First, in accordance with the provisions of the Kyoto Protocol, negotiations on national emission reduction or limitation commitments for the period beyond 2012 were launched in late 2005. In anticipation of this, in early 2005 the EU began considering actively its approach to these forthcoming negotiations.

Figure 1: Trends in GHG Emissions of the EU, China, and India, 1990–2011



Source: Olivier et al. 2012: 28.

Second, and combined with this institutional dynamic, international attention was beginning to focus more and more on the projected contribution of the developing world to future emissions growth. For example, the International Energy Agency's (IEA) flagship publication, the World Energy Outlook, projected in 2004 that two-thirds of the growth in global energy demand would come from developing countries and would mostly be met from fossil-fuel energy sources, and drew particular attention to the projected future contribution of China and India (International Energy Agency 2004). Figure 1 illustrates longer-term trends in the respective contributions of the EU, China, and India, to total greenhouse gas emissions over the period since 1990.

In January 2005, the European Commission proposed the broad parameters of an EU strategy for the forthcoming post-2012 negotiations, which was adopted later that year by the Council and the European Council. The Commission flagged "broadening international participation" as a key EU goal for the forthcoming negotiations. While this was partly aimed at the United States, the document noted specifically that developing countries' share of global emissions would rise to more than 50 percent in the coming decades (European Commission 2005: 4). The EU also made its post-2012 domestic emission reduction commitment, agreed by the March 2007 European Council, conditional on the participation of large developing countries. This committed EU member states to reduce EU emissions by 20 percent by 2020 relative to 1990 levels, which would be increased to 30 percent in the context of a global agreement in which "other developed countries commit themselves to comparable emission reductions and economically more advanced developing countries to contributing adequately according to their responsibilities and respective

capabilities” (European Council 2007: 12).⁴ In October 2008, the Environment Council elaborated this general principle by calling for a reduction in industrialized countries’ emissions of 25 to 40 percent below 1990 levels by 2020, and for developing countries, “in particular the most advanced among them”, to “reduce their emissions by 15 to 30% below business as usual, respecting the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities” (Council of the European Union 2008: 6).

In short, the EU has pushed increasingly for large developing countries with rapidly-growing emissions trajectories to both formulate and implement domestic climate change policies and to assume commitments as part of a global climate change agreement, including through the development of institutionalized bilateral dialogue on climate change policy. Since 2007 in particular, both China and India have devoted increasing political attention to climate change with respect to domestic and external policy-making. The question addressed in the following two sections is whether and to what extent these policy developments in China and India can be understood as an instance of diffusion from the EU.

4. Limited Socialization and Lesson-Drawing: The Development of Chinese Climate Change Policy

Over the period since 2007, climate change policy in China has developed considerably. In June 2007, the Chinese Government published its first National Climate Change Programme, which laid out the principles that would guide the Chinese approach to addressing climate change and set out objectives with respect to controlling greenhouse gas emissions, enhancing capacity for adaptation, enhancing research and development, and raising public awareness and improving management of climate change policy (NDRC 2007a). At the same time, the State Council established a National Leading Group for Climate Change which is chaired by the serving Premier. However, the National Climate Change Programme did not contain any new targets, but rather reiterated previously-announced targets and specified more clearly how they would be achieved.⁵

In November 2009, one month before the Copenhagen climate change summit, the State Council announced a target of reducing carbon intensity—that is, emissions per unit of economic output—by 40 to 45 percent by 2020 relative to 2005 levels (Xinhua 2009).⁶ This was followed in early 2011 by the publication of China’s 12th Five Year Plan, which was the first such plan to include a compulsory carbon intensity target: Carbon intensity of GDP is to be reduced by 17 percent by 2015 relative to 2010 levels (Li/Wang 2012). The central government has also introduced experimentation at provincial and city level, introducing low-carbon pilot programs in five provinces and eight cities in 2010 (People’s Daily Online 2010). In

4 The other goals were (i) an increase in the share of renewable energy sources in energy supply to 20 percent in 2020 including a binding minimum target of 10 percent for the share of biofuels in transport by 2020; and (ii) a 20 percent saving on the EU’s energy consumption by 2020.

5 Interview with NGO representative, Beijing, 15 October 2010.

6 Other goals announced include a target to increase the share of non-fossil fuel in primary energy consumption to around 15 percent by 2020, and to increase forest coverage by 40 million hectares and forest stock volume by 1.3 billion cubic meters by 2020 from 2005 levels.

another sign of experimentation, the central government approved in late 2011 the establishment of pilot emissions trading schemes in seven provinces (Xinhua 2011).

This shift in the trajectory of Chinese climate change policy-making was driven to a significant extent by domestic factors in China. In this respect, the coming to power of the so-called “Fourth Generation” of Chinese leaders in 2003—President Hu Jintao and Premier Wen Jiabao—provided such an opening. The Hu-Wen leadership initiated a process of reorienting China’s economic development model away from a pure focus on economic growth at any cost. Based on an ideology of scientific development, their stated aim has been to attach greater priority to the sustainability of economic development. This was reflected later in 2003 in the publication by the leadership of a new vision of sustainable development, outlined in China’s Sustainable Development Action Plan for the Early 21st Century. This called for a transition from an economy characterized by high energy consumption, high levels of pollution, and low efficiency, towards one characterized by low energy consumption, low pollution, and high efficiency (Dai/Diao 2010: 255). While it would be unwise to take these pronouncements as unproblematic statements of fact, they point to at least an increasing awareness of the need for China to take steps to modify its model of economic development, and a window of opportunity for external actors seeking to promote ideas and policies that would help to address these challenges.

This shift in the orientation of the Chinese Government was driven by changing perceptions of China’s material interests, which was driven by three principal factors. The first of these was the dramatic shift in patterns of energy use that took place in the early years of the 21st Century. From 1990 to 2002, China’s energy intensity—the average energy use per unit of GDP on an economy—had dropped by 54 percent (Heggelund/Buan 2009: 303). However, this trend was reversed during the period 2002 to 2006, during which China’s total commercial energy consumption grew by more than 50 percent, increasing more rapidly than GDP. This growth in energy intensity was driven by a combination of central government policies at the time which favored construction and heavy industry, and a surge in trade and investment arising from China’s accession to the World Trade Organization in December 2001 (Meidan et al. 2009: 608). As a result, power blackouts were common across China in the period 2002–04, which brought the issue of energy security to the forefront of the government agenda (Godement 2007: 392). In response, the central government announced in 2004 that sustainable use of energy would be a key priority for the whole country. A report from the influential Development Research Centre of the State Council recommended greater emphasis on energy conservation and energy efficiency, integration of environmental priorities into energy policy, a decrease in coal use and an increase in non-fossil fuels, and the development of alternative transport fuels (Meidan et al. 2009: 610).

Second, there was a growing awareness of China’s ecological vulnerability and ever-worsening local environmental pollution. Air pollution in China is significantly affected by energy policy, since China is heavily reliant on coal for energy generation. In 2006, coal constituted 69.4 percent of overall energy consumption, and nearly 90 percent of all new power generation was coal (Heggelund 2007: 162). China’s rapid economic growth, particularly the more recent, energy intensive phase, has resulted in extensive environmental degradation across a range of indicators. In 2007, China had 16 of the world’s top 20 polluted cities. 90 percent of Chinese water is polluted, some of it almost completely, while the pace of desertification has doubled since the 1970s (Brown 2007: 36). What is particularly significant is not just the objective deterioration of

China's natural environment, but the fact that over the past decade the Chinese leadership has increasingly recognized and acknowledged this fact. In an unusually frank interview with *Der Spiegel* in 2005, Pan Yue, Chinese deputy minister for the environment, suggested that China was losing between 8 and 15 percent of GDP per annum due to air and water pollution, and admitted:

"We are using too many raw materials to sustain this growth [...]. This miracle will end soon because the environment can no longer keep pace. Acid rain is falling on one third of the Chinese territory, half of the water in our seven largest rivers is completely useless, while one fourth of our citizens does not have access to clean drinking water. One third of the urban population is breathing polluted air, and less than 20 percent of the trash in cities is treated and processed in an environmentally sustainable manner."
(*Der Spiegel* 2005)

A third important driver of Chinese policies in the area of renewable energy and energy efficiency technologies has been a desire to develop autonomous innovation and manufacturing capabilities in areas that the Chinese Government views as strategically important in the medium term. China has increasingly viewed the development of a domestic renewables industry as part of its industrial strategy, and not simply as a means of tackling environmental pollution. This is particularly evident in the Medium and Long Term Renewable Energy Development Plan, published in September 2007 by the National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC 2007b). As well as setting overall and sectoral targets for renewable energy, the Plan aims to make China self-dependent in terms of innovation, by bringing in foreign technology in the short term and then building up domestic innovation capacity in the longer term. The ambition of the Plan for 2020 is stated as follows:

"A relatively complete renewable energy technology and industry system will have been established, so that a domestic manufacturing capability based mainly on China's own IPRs will have been established, satisfying the needs for deploying renewable energy on a large scale in China." (NDRC 2007b: 13)

Therefore, a significant reorientation in of the Chinese leadership's perspective on energy and environmental policy was well underway before the EU began prioritizing the issue of climate change in its bilateral relations with China from 2005 onwards. This was reflected in the publication by the Chinese Government of a number of important policy documents in 2004, including the Medium and Long Term Energy Development Plan Outline 2004-2020 and the Medium and Long Term Energy Conservation Plan (NDRC 2004). The latter was noteworthy for its frank admission of the problems facing China in the energy and environment fields. In February 2005, the Chinese Government enacted its first Renewable Energy Law, which set a goal to achieve 15 percent of China's energy from renewable sources by 2020.⁷ Most significantly, the 11th Five Year Plan, announced in 2005 and covering the period 2006-2010, set a 20 percent energy intensity target to be achieved by 2010, and a less concrete 15 percent renewable energy target to be achieved by 2020.⁸

7 The Renewable Energy Law is a legislative framework within which details of implementation are contained in ministerial regulations and measures. It also provided for compulsory connection of renewable energy sources to the power grid, subsidies and incentives for renewable energy projects, and the establishment of a renewable energy development fund to support research and development activities.

8 In the Chinese system, Five Year Plans are not simply statements of intent or overall aspirations—they set specific targets against which national and local officials' performance is assessed. Officials' success or failure in achieving

It has been described as “the beginning of a new era of sustainable development in China” and as “China’s turning point for environmental protection” (Ng/Mabey 2011: 8; O’Gorman/Zhu 2007: 17).

The development of Chinese climate change policy therefore was built on a prior transformation of the Chinese Government’s conception of material interest. It was these domestic factors which laid the basis for the development of climate change policies, and indeed for the development of EU cooperation with China in this area. This developed in the framework of the EU-China Partnership on Climate Change, established at the EU-China Summit in September 2005. Institutionalized dialogue has taken place in the framework of biannual meetings of a bilateral consultation mechanism established under the Partnership on Climate Change, which has involved exchanges of views and information on each side’s domestic policies, the international climate negotiations, and areas for cooperation.

In this context, there was some evidence of a process of socialization by the EU. According to informed Chinese sources, the sustained attempt by European politicians to engage the Chinese leadership on climate change was partly responsible for an increasing attention that was paid by the Chinese leadership to climate change from 2007 onwards. One NGO observer of Chinese climate policy based in Beijing, discussing the visits of Merkel, Sarkozy, and Blair in 2007, along with the German G8 Presidency in 2007, argued:

“It definitely helped that the foreign leaders repeatedly had climate change so high up on the agenda when they met Chinese leaders [...]. In China, the system is very much centralized. So if you don’t get the attention of the very high up level [...] it will not be a national priority.”⁹

Similarly, a senior Chinese academic and former member of the Chinese delegation to the UNFCCC negotiations argued:

“Especially at high level, the leaders have a lot of visits to each other, and I remember the EU for example, the Commissioner, the Commission President, and also the member state prime minister or president, when they visit China or the Chinese leaders visit Europe, normally [...] one of the agenda items was climate change. This made a direct influence on policymakers in China, and they have a clear and strong awareness of the concern from international community, and they know now that there is some international agenda there.”¹⁰

The development of Chinese climate change policies was driven partly by the perceived need to enhance China’s international legitimacy. In a context of growing concern regarding China’s strategic ambitions, the Chinese leadership has sought to stress their peaceful intentions, and more broadly has sought acceptance as a “responsible” member of the international community. The development of a domestic climate change program can be understood as part of this broader process of seeking to demonstrate China’s “responsibility”. This was particularly true of China’s National Climate Change Programme of 2007

these targets is a significant factor in determining career progression in the Chinese bureaucracy, thus generating very strong incentives towards compliance.

9 Interview with Chinese NGO representative, Beijing, 15 October 2010.

10 Interview with Chinese academic, Beijing, 18 October 2010.

and its pre-Copenhagen carbon intensity target, which were self-consciously framed as fulfilling China's responsibilities towards the international community. However, we should be careful not to attribute too much influence to the EU. Other interviewees highlighted the domestic dimension of the transition in the Chinese approach to climate change policy-making. For example, on the issue of the commitments China made prior to Copenhagen, a representative of an NGO in Beijing stated:

“China’s Copenhagen commitments [intensity target] are basically a domestic debate. They have a lot of these think tanks that provide advice to the Government: ERI [Energy Research Institute], Renmin University, Tsinghua University, Development Research Centre. Those are the ones that are providing the technical analysis—why China should or shouldn’t take a numerical target.”¹¹

Moreover, the Chinese Government explicitly rejected European arguments regarding the appropriateness of international emission targets for emerging economies such as China. Nonetheless, EU engagement, particularly institutionalized and ad hoc dialogue involving repeated interaction between European and Chinese leaders, does seem to have played some role in focusing the attention of the Chinese Leadership on climate change. Moreover, closer examination of the National Climate Change Programme shows that it did not contain any new targets, but rather reiterated previously-announced targets and specified more clearly how they would be achieved (BBC 2007). As an NGO observer put it:

“It was simply a repackaging of all the domestic policies that China was taking anyway to tackle other problems. For example, afforestation policy was because China was suffering from sandstorms and desertification, so that was the reason China had a big afforestation programme, but that helped with climate change as well. You even had the one child policy, which was listed as the big contribution of China to tackle climate change.”¹²

In other words, the Chinese Government was able to “repackage” the policies that it was implementing for other reasons—such as those contained in the 11th Five Year Plan and the Renewable Energy Law—as “climate change” policies. In this sense, the response of the Chinese Government can perhaps best be characterized as an instance of strategic emulation: In an attempt to build international legitimacy, the Chinese Government to some extent responded to the demands of external actors to develop a national climate change program. Moreover, the Chinese response built on the prior reconceptualization of material interest identified above, and there is little evidence to suggest that the Chinese Government would have developed robust climate change policies in the absence of a belief that doing so was consistent with the need to maintain economic growth and social stability, the most important goals of the Chinese Communist Party.

While the initial development of Chinese climate change policy around the 2007–08 period can be characterized as an instance of strategic emulation, the period since then has seen a progressive deepening of Chinese climate change policy and, indeed, a commitment to climate change targets as such, as opposed to other kinds of policies that would have climate change co-benefits. This is most strikingly evident in comparing the 11th and 12th Five Year Plans. While the 11th Five Year Plan (2006–2010) contained an

¹¹ Interview with NGO representative in Beijing, 7 October 2010.

¹² Interview with NGO representative, Beijing, 15 October 2010.

energy intensity target, which would have an impact on the trajectory of greenhouse gas emissions, it did not contain any climate change targets *as such*. However, the 12th Five Year Plan (2011–2015) contained an explicit target to reduce carbon intensity of the Chinese economy by 17 percent by 2015 relative to 2010 levels. Thus, the development of Chinese climate change policy from 2007 onwards strongly supports the contention that the Chinese Government has internalized the causal idea that taking action to mitigate climate change is, under certain conditions, consistent with existing conceptions of self-interest.

In this context, the persuasion mechanism is harder both to identify or to reject entirely. There was certainly a reconceptualization of Chinese national interest vis-à-vis climate change policy, and that change is consistent with causal arguments that were advanced by the EU. However, attributing this change specifically to the EU is difficult. Certainly, the EU and European actors played a prominent role in mainstreaming climate change in world politics in the period after 2005 in various forums including those beyond the traditional realm of climate politics such as the G8 and the United Nations Security Council. It is less easy to pinpoint the persuasive impact of the EU in particular in the transformation of the domestic politics of climate change in China.

There has also been some provision of capacity-building by the EU to China, albeit somewhat limited in extent if compared to the scale of the challenges facing China in shifting to a low-carbon trajectory, or the overall scale of policy development in China. Examples of this include an EU-China Near-Zero Emissions Coal (NZEC) initiative, which aims to demonstrate the technical feasibility of carbon capture and storage technology in China and Europe, including by building a demonstration plant in China by 2015. The EU has also run or contributed substantially to cooperation projects in China that have sought to build capacity of domestic actors in China to formulate climate change policies and measures, such as an EU-China CDM Facilitation Project and a Provincial Strategies & Actions for Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation in China project. A co-funded five-year Europe-China Clean Energy Centre was opened in April 2010, aiming to facilitate cooperation between European and Chinese actors in this area. Furthermore, the Chinese Government recently invited the European Commission to provide advice on the creation of a pilot emissions trading scheme in China. These initiatives have developed alongside a wide range of cooperation initiatives by individual EU member states with the Chinese Government.

However, these capacity-building projects were only initiated following consultation with, and approval by, the Chinese Government. For this reason, it may be equally—if not more—accurate to characterize these as instances of lesson-drawing rather than capacity-building. Moreover, there have been a number of clear instances of lesson-drawing by the Chinese Government. Particular examples include the development of the Chinese Renewable Energy Law and, more recently, the development of emissions trading in China. As part of this latter development, the Chinese Government consulted extensively with the European Commission to learn from the European experience of setting up an emissions trading scheme.

5. Resistance to Diffusion: The Development of Indian Climate Change Policy

The period from 2007 to 2011 witnessed something of a shift in the trajectory of Indian climate change policy. The first significant step, institutionally, was the establishment of the Prime Minister's Council on Climate Change on 5 June 2007 (Prime Minister of India 2007a). This signified a greater political interest and involvement in the development of Indian climate change policy, which had up to that point been left to a small number of Indian bureaucrats. At its first formal meeting in July 2007, Prime Minister Singh tasked the Council on Climate Change with formulating, by November 2007, a National Programme Document on climate change which would capture "both the efforts that we have made so far and our plans for the future" (Prime Minister of India 2007b).

In June 2008, the Indian Government published its first ever National Action Plan on Climate Change (NAPCC), the core of which is the establishment of eight National Missions for the period until 2017 covering various policy areas.¹³ The NAPCC reaffirmed some of the core principles of India's position on climate change, including "common but differentiated responsibilities" and the equity principle which was defined as each of the earth's inhabitants being granted an equal entitlement to the global atmospheric resource. In this regard, India's commitment that its per capita greenhouse gas emissions would not exceed those of developed countries was restated (Government of India 2008: 1-2). Government ministries were required to submit detailed implementation plans, strategies, timelines, and monitoring and evaluation criteria to the Prime Minister's Council on Climate Change. The Council in turn was charged with undertaking periodic reviews and reporting on progress under each mission (Fujiwara 2010: 9).

The formulation of National Missions under the NAPCC did not proceed as quickly as anticipated, but by the end of 2010 a majority of the National Missions had been formulated by the responsible ministries and approved by the Prime Minister's Council on Climate Change. Most significant in the current context are the National Solar Mission and the Energy Efficiency Mission. The Jawaharlal Nehru National Solar Mission aims "to establish India as a global leader in solar energy, by creating the policy conditions for its diffusion across the country as quickly as possible". It proposes to create a policy framework for the deployment of 20,000 Megawatts (MW) of solar power by 2022; to create favorable conditions for solar manufacturing capability; to develop 2000 MW of off-grid solar deployment by 2022; and to develop solar thermal and solar lighting systems (Ministry of New and Renewable Energy 2009). The National Mission on Enhanced Energy Efficiency, approved in June 2010 and covering facilities that account for more than 50 percent of fossil fuels used in India, set out a goal to reduce consumption by 5 percent and save about 100 million tonnes of CO₂ annually by 2015 (Fujiwara 2010: 9-10).

With respect to India's participation in the international negotiations, in December 2009 — just prior to COP-15 in Copenhagen — the Indian Government announced a commitment to reduce the emissions intensity of Indian GDP by 20 to 25 percent by 2020 in comparison to the 2005 level through domestic mitigation (India Climate Portal 2009). This represents a significant change of position for a country which

¹³ The eight National Missions are: National Solar Mission, National Mission for Enhanced Energy Efficiency, National Mission on Sustainable Habitat, National Water Mission, National Mission for Sustaining the Himalayan Ecosystem, National Mission for a Green India, National Mission for Sustainable Agriculture, National Mission on Strategic Knowledge for Climate Change.

up to then had strongly resisted any sort of target for emission limitation, either binding or voluntary. Following on from the announcement of this intensity target, the Indian Government formed an Expert Group on a Low Carbon Strategy for Inclusive Growth, chaired by Dr. Kirit Parikh, a former member of India's Planning Commission, the purpose of which was to come up with proposed measures to achieve the intensity target.¹⁴

The development and trajectory of Indian climate change policy have, like the Chinese case, been driven significantly by domestic factors. Moreover, domestic politics have strongly conditioned the Indian Government's response to the EU's attempts to develop institutionalized dialogue and cooperation on issues related to climate and energy policy. In the first instance, the issue of energy security and access to energy has been a national policy priority in India for many years. In fact, India has a surprisingly long history of pursuing development of "non-conventional" energy sources and energy efficiency measures. The current Ministry of New and Renewable Energy has its origins in the Indian response to the oil shocks of the 1970s and a resulting drive for energy self-sufficiency. A department for non-conventional energy sources was created within the Ministry of Energy in 1982, and was upgraded to ministry status in 1992 with the creation of a Ministry of Non-Conventional Energy Sources.¹⁵

Another state institution tasked with promoting the development of renewables is the Indian Renewable Energy Development Agency, established in 1987 and tasked with providing financial support to projects and schemes generating energy through new and renewable sources and conserving energy through energy efficiency (IREDA 2011). Energy efficiency and conservation is another area which has been an Indian Government priority for some time. Under the Energy Conservation Act of 2001, a Bureau of Energy Efficiency was established in March 2002, tasked with promoting energy efficiency in areas of market failure.¹⁶ In short, the Indian Government has pursued the development of new and renewable energy sources as well as energy conservation for many years already.

However, the progressive development of Indian climate change policy in the period since 2007 does not indicate a fundamental change in the principles underpinning Indian climate change policy. India has consistently defended its right to prioritize economic development as its primary policy objective. According to this position, tackling climate change—or indeed other environmental issues—cannot come at the expense of India's right to develop. India is a low-income country—even by comparison to China—and certainly when compared with any industrialized country. In 2007, India's per capita GDP (purchasing power parity

14 The group is composed of stakeholders across sectors, including industry, think tanks, research institutions, civil society, and government agencies, but does not involve representatives of government ministries—the rationale being to get voices from outside of government. The group's recommendations are supposed to become a central part of India's 12th Five Year Plan which comes into effect in 2012 (Interviews with former senior Indian Government official, New Delhi, 9 December 2010, and NGO representative, Delhi, 25 November 2010; see also Ministry of Environment and Forests 2010).

15 This was renamed the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy in 2006.

16 The Bureau of Energy Efficiency focuses on three particular forms of market failure: (i) electrical consumer appliances, where consumers were not provided with information on the energy efficiency of appliances; (ii) energy efficiency of buildings, particularly commercial buildings, which are characterized by split incentives whereby investment in efficiency measures is paid for by landlords, while the efficiency savings typically accrue to tenants; and (iii) the risk averse nature of industry to adopting new energy efficiency measures.

adjusted) was USD 2,800, compared with USD 5,400 for China (Fujiwara 2010: 1). Closely related is the issue of access to energy: more than 75 percent of rural and 22 percent of urban Indian households have no access to modern forms of energy and rely on biomass (Dadwal 2010: 1). Therefore, it is reasonable to expect strong continued growth in energy demand, and solving development challenges in India over the coming decades will lead to an unavoidable rise in energy consumption and, therefore, greenhouse gas emissions.

This view is expressed frequently in Indian Government statements of policy. For example, India's *Initial National Communication to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change* set out the core principles of India's national approach:

"The principal objective of the national development strategy is to reduce the incidence of poverty to 10 per cent by 2012 and provide gainful employment. [...] Achieving these development priorities will require a substantial increase in energy consumption [...] and consequent rise in GHG emissions."
(Government of India 2004: xiv)

A second key principle underpinning the Indian approach to climate change concerns the issue of *equity*. This has been interpreted by the Indian Government as an equal per-capita entitlement to "atmospheric space". As a pre-Copenhagen publication by the Indian Government stated:

"It is India's view that the planetary atmospheric space is a common resource of humanity and each citizen of the globe has an equal entitlement to that space. The principle of equity, therefore, implies that, over a period of time, there should be a convergence in per capita emissions." (Government of India 2009: 6)

India's support for equity as a central normative principle on which international climate policy should be based is underpinned by India's comparatively low current level of per-capita emissions, and its low cumulative level of historical emissions. Indeed, India accounted for approximately 5.8 percent of global emissions in 2011, making it the world's fourth largest emitter in aggregate terms. However, India comes a long way behind China, which accounted for 28.6 percent of global emissions in 2011 (Olivier et al. 2012: 28). Moreover, India's per capita emissions in 2009 were 1.5 metric tonnes, whereas China's per capita emissions were 5.4 tonnes (Energy Information Administration 2012).¹⁷ The Indian Government also points to the fact that industrialized countries have contributed most to the historical accumulation of greenhouse gases. India has contributed approximately 2.3 percent of total accumulated emissions, while industrialized countries collectively have contributed approximately 75 percent, and the United States alone has contributed 29 percent (Dubash 2009: 2). Based on India's low per capita emissions, measured either in current and historical terms, the Indian Government maintained for many years that it bore no obligation to reduce or limit its greenhouse gas emissions. Indeed, Indian policymakers and commentators frequently reject the label of "major emitter", and the grouping together of India and China in discussions about climate change.

¹⁷ A more dramatic comparison can be drawn by comparing Indian per capita emissions with average EU-27 per capita emissions (7.8 tonnes), or US per capita emissions (17.7 tonnes).

In short, the Indian Government has continued to frame the issue of climate change in very strong North-South terms. This has conditioned its response to the EU's attempts to develop engagement on climate change, and related, the possibilities for diffusion from the EU to India. While the EU has generally been more accepting of the principles underpinning the Indian position compared with some other industrialized countries, particularly the United States, there has nonetheless been a significant and growing "normative gap" between the respective approaches of India and the EU. For this reason, the development of EU-India relations on climate change has been characterized by strong and sustained resistance on the part of the Indian Government. An India-EU Initiative on Clean Development and Climate Change was launched at the EU-India Summit in September 2005, but while the EU side proposed the same draft text as the basis of an agreement as it had done with the Chinese Government, the final agreed text in the Indian case was significantly less substantive. This was the result of significant resistance from the Indian Government.¹⁸

Areas identified for cooperation under the India-EU Initiative on Clean Development and Climate Change included dissemination of technologies, promoting research and development, adaptation to climate change, reducing the cost of clean technologies, and strengthening implementation of the Clean Development Mechanism, including by holding experts' meetings. The two sides agreed that the Joint Working Group on Environment, which had been established by the EU-India Joint Commission in 1999 but had met infrequently, would meet on a yearly basis and that an EU-India Environment Forum and an EU-India Energy Panel would also be created. The aims of the Initiative on Clean Development and Climate Change were stated in extremely vague, general terms. Particularly noteworthy is the fact that there was no flagship cooperation project like the Near Zero Emissions Coal project in the EU-China case. In fact, the EU had proposed cooperation with India on carbon capture and storage and had offered funding for the project, but this was rejected by the Indian Government.¹⁹

Moreover, there was significant resistance from the Indian side with respect to follow-up, particularly during the period up to 2007. In the area of energy policy, EU attempts to develop cooperation with the Indian Government were only marginally more successful. Moreover, the Indian Government expressed openness to cooperating only on issues related to conventional energy sources with minimal connection to climate change mitigation. At the EU-India Summit 2008, the overall EU-India Joint Action Plan was revised following recognition that the Joint Action Plan agreed in 2005 had been too ambitious, and it was scaled back in terms of action so that it was more focused on a smaller range of issues (European Union and Government of India 2008a).²⁰ Both sides agreed to a Joint Work Programme, EU-India Co-operation on Energy, Clean Development and Climate Change (European Union and Government of India 2008b). However, this new text was largely a restatement of the priorities that had been identified under the 2005 agreement, reflecting the fact that the activities set out in 2005 had, by and large, not yet taken place. The follow-up has remained a problem, and while there has been some cooperation on other areas of environmental policy such as water, waste, and chemicals, cooperation on climate change has been minimal.²¹

18 Interview with former senior UK diplomat, Delhi, 8 November 2010.

19 Phone interview with senior Commission official, 30 June 2011.

20 Interview with EU official, Brussels, 8 July 2010.

21 Interview with European diplomat, New Delhi, 2 December 2010.

Nonetheless, the development of Indian climate change policies in the post-2007 period was driven to some extent by a desire on the part of the Indian Government to enhance its international legitimacy by proving itself as a responsible member of the international community. In advance of the Copenhagen conference, Minister for Environment and Forests Jairam Ramesh was given clear guidance from the Prime Minister that India should be “part of the solution rather than part of the problem”.²² The more immediate reason for India’s announcement was the fact that China, as well as Brazil, South Africa, and Mexico, had announced similar targets in the preceding months, placing pressure on the Indian Government to follow suit. However, a close observer of the process at an Indian NGO suggested that little analysis underpinned the choice of target:

“I think it [the pre-Copenhagen intensity target] was just picked out of thin air—maybe some brainstorming among three or four people [...]. I honestly don’t think there was much analysis that went into it. I think the way it was done was that a figure was arrived at, and senior bureaucracy was told to prepare a paper which would justify it.”²³

This suggests a degree of strategic emulation in which policies were introduced for symbolic reasons. However, the development of Indian climate change policy also built on a growing recognition that some measures to limit the growth of Indian greenhouse gas emissions were consistent with other national priorities. As a former member of the Planning Commission of the Indian Government argued, much of the action anticipated under the NAPCC was driven by concerns related to India’s dependence on fossil fuels:

“For India, moving to a low-carbon energy strategy is required in any case because of the fact that we’re short of most forms of energy, fossil fuels, even the coal we have will run out in under 40 to 45 years, so it’s not as if we can rely on coal. So we need to develop renewables, solar, nuclear, non-carbon strategies, and that’s what we’re doing in any case.”²⁴

However, it is not clear that this strategic emulation was substantially a reaction to the EU specifically, rather than a reaction to the broader growth in global concern regarding climate change in the second half of the 2000s. Of course, a similar point can be made regarding the EU-China case discussed above, but there is less evidence here to suggest that the EU played a role, and indeed more reasons to doubt that there was a significant EU role.

For this reason, it would be largely inaccurate to characterize the development of Indian climate change policy as an instance of diffusion from the EU. The “normative gap” between India and the EU has arguably grown too wide for socialization or persuasion. The Indian Government has framed the issue of climate change in very different terms to the EU, and the respective policy priorities of India and the EU are significantly different. This was illustrated by a senior Indian Government official, who stated:

“The emphasis [of the Indian Government policy] [...] is energy access, increasing the amount of energy,

22 Interview with official at the Ministry of Environment and Forests, New Delhi, 22 November 2010.

23 Interview with representative of an Indian NGO, 25 November 2010.

24 Interview with former member of the Indian Planning Commission, New Delhi, 9 December 2010.

increasing the amount of energy efficiency. The main difference we have with the EU is that the primary goal of the EU is to reduce carbon dioxide emissions. The tools that the EU uses and the tools for our very separate goals are similar—renewables, energy efficiency, etc. But this should not blind us to the fact that the goals are different. We see climate change as a co-benefit. The EU sees enhanced access, etc., as a co-benefit, and that’s a very sharp difference in world views.”²⁵

This sharp difference of world views goes a long way towards explaining why there was little evidence of any of the direct mechanisms of diffusion identified in Section 2 above. It also helps us to understand the lack of either normative emulation or lesson-drawing on the part of the Indian Government.

6. Conclusion

This working paper has sought to analyze the development of Chinese and Indian climate change policies in recent years from a diffusion perspective, asking whether and to what extent these policy developments can be characterized as instances of diffusion from the EU. Building on recent literature on diffusion of norms, policies, and institutions, the working paper argued that the way in which Chinese and Indian climate change policy-making has developed in recent years was strongly conditioned by domestic politics and preferences, in particular normative frames and conceptions of material interest.

In the Chinese case, a change of orientation in policy-making can be traced back to the advent of the Fourth Generation leadership of Hu Jintao and Wen Jiabao and the greater priority they have attached to the sustainability of China’s economic development pathway. This, in turn, was driven by increasing concern over energy security, local environmental pollution, and a desire to develop manufacturing capacity in low-carbon technologies. In the Indian case, the Indian Government has faced some of the same concerns, over energy security in particular, as the Chinese Government, and the development of Indian climate change policy has to a significant extent resulted from a realization that, under certain conditions, climate change mitigation policies are consistent with other policy objectives. However, the Indian Government has continued to frame the issue of climate change very strongly in North-South terms. While this is also true of the approach of the Chinese Government to climate change policy-making, in practice the Chinese Government has taken a more pragmatic approach to bilateral climate change cooperation.

The development of Chinese and Indian climate change policies should therefore be understood primarily as domestic developments. Moreover, the domestic factors which have shaped the development of Chinese and Indian climate change policy—particularly the degree of resonance between European, Chinese, and Indian concepts and ideas—have also strongly enabled and constrained diffusion from the EU. The EU sought to promote a co-benefit or win-win approach to climate change in which action on climate change was shown to be consistent with other policy goals such as addressing energy security or local environmental pollution. While this frame resonated increasingly with the Chinese leadership’s perception of self-interest, it failed to resonate to anything like the same degree with the Indian Government’s position,

²⁵ Interview with senior Indian Government official, Delhi, 16 November 2010.

which rather saw economic development and energy access as primary policy goals, with any positive implications for climate change mitigation as co-benefits, if not entirely incidental.

The degree to which European concepts resonated with pre-existing concepts and ideas in China and India explains to a considerable extent the variation in patterns of diffusion between the two cases. In the Chinese case, there was some limited evidence of the direct mechanisms of diffusion outlined in Section 2, and there have been specific instances of lesson-drawing on the part of the Chinese Government, supported often by capacity-building efforts by the EU. By contrast, in the Indian case there was limited evidence of either direct or indirect diffusion mechanisms operating, since the strong North-South framing of the climate issue in India strongly curtailed the possibilities for diffusion from Europe to India, neither through direct nor indirect mechanisms.

Moreover, the EU-India case in particular illustrates that the EU sometimes failed to take account of normative frames in target countries, and to frame its engagement in ways that resonated with those pre-existing domestic frames. Furthermore, despite clear evidence of frame dissonance, the EU did not seek to alter significantly its approach to engaging the Indian Government. Thus, the EU-India case discussed here supports the claim that the EU does not sufficiently seek to frame its engagement with third countries in ways that are likely to resonate with the pre-existing normative frames employed by third country actors, even in the face of obvious resistance. This lack of reflexivity on the part of the EU has, in turn, limited its capacity to attract followers to its self-proclaimed leadership.

More broadly, the empirical analysis of this working paper suggests that, in cases characterized by conditions of broadly symmetrical power relations, it can be difficult to differentiate with any degree of certainty between direct and indirect mechanisms of diffusion. This question comes down to the origins of the diffusion process, i.e., whether the process is initiated by the sender or the receiver. However, in a roughly equal power relationship, diffusion is likely to require both favorable supply and demand conditions in order to take place. Under these conditions, distinguishing empirically between supply- and demand-driven diffusion mechanisms may be at best a formidable task, if not entirely unachievable. For this reason, the cases analyzed in this working paper call for further conceptual and empirical research to tease out the connections between direct and indirect mechanisms of diffusion.

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