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4 Developing Countries in Global Environmental Politics

Chapter Outline

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Most of the world's population lives in states classified by the United Nations as developing, and developing states outnumber the states in the developed world by a large margin. The relationship of these states with global environmental politics has been complicated and occasionally contentious. This chapter examines the role of developing states as they approach global environmental politics. Although these states are varied in their history and concerns, there are some common experiences they share and some concerns and tactics that differentiate them from the industrialized states that have dominated much of the discussion of global environmental politics.

There are some reasons to assume that developing countries will be less interested than industrialized states in addressing global environmental issues. Though their current behavior may contribute to existing global environmental problems, they have not been the primary contributors to many of the types of environmental problems discussed in this volume, most of which result from the industrialization processes of richer states in a previous century. Developing countries fear interference in their domestic decisions about their process of development, and are especially concerned that they will be denied the use of

proven technology that enabled the earlier industrialization of other states, or denied sources of income on which they would otherwise rely. While developing states face environmental problems that come from poverty or population growth, these are often not the environmental issues that garner international concern, especially if they are experienced locally. International environmental cooperation may therefore not focus on issues developing states care most about.

There are other reasons to expect strong developing country concern about global environmental problems, however. Many developing countries are particularly vulnerable to global environmental problems, such as climate change. Moreover, states that rely heavily on natural resources and agriculture may be more attuned to environmental conditions and concerned about maintaining a healthy environment. Paul Steinberg demonstrates that levels of domestic environmental concern in developing states as measured by polls often eclipse those in industrialized states.¹ A lack of enthusiasm about the process of governance on these issues should not necessarily be taken as a lack of concern about global environmental problems generally, and presenting a lack of concern may be a strategic negotiating position, in international bargaining situations in which developing countries have become used to their lack of power.

But although developing countries have typically had little ability to influence the process or outcome of international negotiations broadly, their degree of power in some aspects of global environmental governance has been significant. What explains the level and variation of international influence developing states have had in addressing issues of the global environment? This chapter examines how developing states interact with international efforts to protect the global environment, and what that suggests more broadly about the issue of development in conjunction with international environmental issues. The structure of many global environmental problems, combined with high levels of concern about these problems by developed states unable to address the problems without developing country participation, has allowed developing states to demand concessions and receive financial assistance for taking action to mitigate problems of the global environment.

Terms and Concepts

Before examining the role of developing countries in global environmental politics, some terminological discussions are helpful. There are many different names to apply to the category of countries referred to here as “developing,” and complex associations

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with most of the terms. These states are sometimes called the Third World,² to distinguish them, especially in the Cold War era, from the First (industrialized, capitalist) and Second (socialist, Soviet bloc) Worlds; even in the post–Cold War era this terminology is used to emphasize the solidarity of this group of states and the global structure within which they find themselves. They are occasionally known as “less developed countries.” Sometimes the distinction is made between industrializing and industrialized states. Another common distinction is between the global South and North, even though not all developing states are south of all industrialized ones. The classification of poor and rich states is also used. The Marxist-derived world systems theory framework refers to the periphery, as distinct from the core.³ Timothy Doyle is a proponent of the concept of majority world (to refer to developing states) as distinct from the minority (developed) world, used to emphasize the numerical superiority of developing states.⁴

Passionate defenders of each terminological choice denigrate the others as providing problematic value judgments, and none is ideal. In almost all of these options these states are referred to (either explicitly or implicitly) by their distinction from the set of states characterized as developed or industrialized. In some of them assumptions are made about what these states aspire to or should aspire to (development or industrialization) that may or may not be accurate. Although none of these terms is ideal for labeling this diffuse collection of states, if one wants to speak of them collectively, some term must be chosen. This chapter uses the description “developing” most frequently, while recognizing its conceptual shortcomings.

And it is precisely the variety of these states and their goals and approaches that make them difficult to classify. Within this group of states are “least developed” states (which account for more than 40 per cent of developing states by some measures), states with more moderate economic situations, and even those, such as exporters of oil or other high-end commodities, considered to be fairly wealthy.⁵ They do not always experience environmental problems in the same way, nor always share the same concerns about global environmental governance. Climate change, for instance, divides developing countries: some are particularly geographically vulnerable (low-lying or island states); the primary income for others comes from exporting fossil fuels. In between are those states with large reserves of fossil fuels available for domestic energy needs (such as coal in China) or other characteristics that make them more or less concerned about climate change or about the changes required to prevent it.

Nevertheless, many argue that the way these countries approach global environmental politics has sufficient similarities, and that these countries have

acted in concert frequently enough in international environmental negotiations, to make a distinction between developed and developing countries an analytically useful category. Marc Williams, for instance, argues that the “third world” is a relevant identity, as distinct from an objective description.⁶ If states are behaving in a way based on their membership in this group, examining these states as a collective makes sense. Moreover, the history of global environmental negotiations includes much evidence of these states forming coalitions to act collectively.⁷

The Group of 77 (G-77), now containing far more than the original seventy-seven members involved at its 1964 creation in the context of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, has played an active role in coordinating the positions of developing countries in global environmental negotiations. Adil Najam argues that the G-77 is unified not by the supposed poverty of its membership but rather by a shared distrust of the prevailing process of global governance.⁸ It is a fairly stable negotiating coalition that clearly goes beyond the narrow self-interest of its members. In negotiations where some (especially large, rapidly industrializing) developing states might have the opportunity to gain more by striking individual deals than by working collectively, the coalition has tended to hold together regardless.⁹

A second conceptual issue is what is meant by *global* environmental politics. While that question is relevant to this book in its entirety, it is especially relevant in this chapter, since one of the arguments frequently made is that developing countries are not concerned about global environmental issues, largely because their local concerns, relating to environment or development, take precedence. As preceding chapters suggest, global or international environmental problems cross borders in some physical way – when activity in one location causes environmental harm in another – or come from causes (such as international trade or finance) that are themselves international. But that definition leaves room for interpretation, especially to the extent that global forces such as colonialism influenced the economic and infrastructural situation of developing states in ways that affect their local environmental issues. Critics contend that the North/South division itself influences what is considered to be a global environmental issue, with those issues of concern to wealthy states defined as global, and those of concern to the poor defined as simply local.¹⁰

Nevertheless, this chapter considers primarily environmental issues that reach the level of international environmental negotiation, and examines the experiences of developing countries within that context. It cannot hope to adequately address the voluminous literature on the relationship among poverty, population, and development, or tackle the important local environmental issues that concern developing countries. Examining the role that developing countries play in the

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process of addressing international environmental problems serves as a window into the concerns of these states, a useful corrective to the perception that international negotiations primarily involve industrialized states, and an indication of aspects of environmental problems that have different implications than other international issues for developing states.

Environmental Preferences of Developing Countries

It has long been assumed that developing countries are less concerned about environmental issues, and certainly about issues of the global environment, than are wealthier states. Uday Desai suggests that “questions of environmental quality are unlikely to receive careful hearing amid the overwhelming problems of poverty,”¹¹ and further suggests that “in a choice between economic growth and environmental protection, the environment always loses.”¹²

Others disagree. Steinberg points to polls that show that people in developing states not only support environmental protection, but particularly express a willingness to pay higher taxes or volunteer their time to protect the environment, especially when compared to their developed country counterparts.¹³ It is also the case that it is the residents of developing countries who are the most harmed by environmental damage. Deaths from water and air pollution occur disproportionately in developing countries, and poverty is associated with poor environmental conditions.¹⁴ Unsustainable resource use, prompted by dire necessity, may perpetuate a cycle in which poor use of agricultural lands leads to erosion and desertification that decreases food supply and makes the need to work marginal lands more pressing. Three-quarters of developing states make at least half of their export income from natural resource exports and are therefore acutely aware of the importance of these resources.¹⁵ Even some environmental problems considered to be international are particularly harmful to those in developing countries. Countries that rely on agriculture are likely to be especially vulnerable to the effects of climate change, and may be particularly harmed by chemical pesticides banned in the developed world but sold or given to developing countries.

Williams suggests that developing states face global environmental negotiations with “shared interests, common ideas, and minimal joint decision-making and policy formulation.”¹⁶ Scholars identify a number of these shared interests, including the linking of environment with development and confirmation of

the sovereign ability of states to exploit their own resources; the demand for financial assistance in the form of economic aid, technology transfer, and assistance with capacity building; a preference for the creation of new institutions rather than the use of previously existing (and usually North-dominated) ones; a longer time frame within which to take on new rules to protect the environment; and the call for acknowledgment that the states of the industrialized world are most responsible for the creation of global environmental problems, and therefore should be the first to take action to mitigate these problems.

The linking of environment and development is often part of an effort by developing states to ensure that the “right” to develop is not lost in the effort to promote environmental protection. This right has been repeatedly reaffirmed in international environmental conferences, such as the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in Rio in 1992, whose Rio Declaration noted that “the right to development must be fulfilled so as to equitably meet developmental and environmental needs of present and future generations.”¹⁷ One of the most influential concepts in discussing the relationship between environment and development is the idea of “sustainable development.” This term, most popularly defined by the World Commission on Environment and Development as development that meets “the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs,”¹⁸ is obviously not only relevant to developing countries. But it is in that context that it has generally been used. The concept, however, provides little guidance on how to actually balance the potentially competing needs of environmental protection and economic development.¹⁹

A similar concern that developing countries have is their rights to control of their own resources, a standard part of sovereignty. This issue has become particularly important in addressing issues of natural resources that are seen as valuable globally (such as biodiversity). Particularly after the economic, social, and environmental legacy of a history of resource-driven colonialism, developing states are quick to assert the legal right to control their own resources. Though states occasionally lack physical control over their own borders, the legal rights afforded by sovereignty are clear, and developing states have succeeded in reaffirming these rights in international environmental negotiations.

The demand for environmental aid, technology transfer, and other forms of capacity-building by developing states is also pervasive, and increasingly successful. A general concern about the ability of developing countries to participate in global environmental governance comes from the potential imbalance internationally of certain types of resources, be they economic or infrastructural. Apart from general

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economic development, often seen within the framework of “capacity,” the types of environmental capacities developing countries are seen to be lacking include the ability to assess and monitor environmental conditions, and the bureaucratic or institutional capacities within ministries to oversee implementation of international environmental efforts.²⁰ One of the major approaches to involving developing countries in addressing global environmental problems therefore revolves around the idea of capacity development. This approach is not without controversy. Ambuj Sagar and Stacy VanDeveer suggest that one of the major downsides of existing capacity-building efforts toward developing countries is that they are essentially efforts to make developing states implement “Northern driven” policy objectives.²¹

One aspect of this involves scientific expertise. So much of the discussion of global environmental issues involves scientific understanding and the efforts to resolve uncertainty (see chapter 3) that states without sufficient numbers of trained scientists in relevant fields can be at a disadvantage. The participation of developing-country scientists in international scientific advisory bodies is low.²² Scientific advisory bodies (such as the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change or scientific commissions within treaty governance processes) often attempt to include geographic diversity in their members – though not all do – but the limited number of qualified specialists with the ability to attend international meetings makes this practice imperfect. Sylvia Karlsson argues that this international scientific imbalance has further implications for developing countries in that there is simply less scientific attention paid to the environmental concerns they may have, leading to a decreased likelihood that these problems will reach the international agenda. Similarly, the actual research even on collective problems is likely to be done in developed country conditions rather than those that might be most relevant to developing countries.²³

Developing states seek, and frequently receive within international environmental agreements, funding to implement obligations of the agreements, access to technology to do so, and general capacity-building funding to assist with other infrastructure and bureaucratic needs. Longer-term capacity needs, like scientific training, may take longer to implement, however. One of the reasons that developing states frequently push for the creation of new institutions to address environmental problems (and especially the capacity-building funding processes within them) is to avoid using existing, northern-dominated processes. In particular they hope to avoid funding institutions created for development assistance, in which the donor states have a disproportionate influence on how the funding is distributed.

An additional way that developed states often seek to bring developing states into international environmental agreements is to promise them additional time to

meet the obligations of the agreement. The initial use of this approach, in the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer, was not especially successful at persuading developing states to join the agreement, in large part because they were concerned at the costs of meeting the obligations. Since then, however, it has become commonplace to consider additional time between when developed states are required to implement international environmental obligations and when developing states need to. The most important aspect of this approach is seen in the climate change negotiations, in which obligations for developing states in the first commitment period were not even seriously considered.

The broader principle developing states frequently seek to assert is the primary responsibility of developed states for global environmental problems. Though empirically largely true, acknowledgment of this principle has been harder to achieve than gaining financial assistance or a time lag before having to meet international obligations. Developed states are afraid that if they acknowledge this responsibility their commitments to funding all global environmental obligations could be potentially endless. They have therefore been reluctant to accept rhetorical responsibility, while simultaneously agreeing to funding obligations and time lags that tacitly acknowledge their responsibility.

Issue Structure and Developing Country Influence

How have developing states managed to gain the above concessions in international environmental negotiations? The structure of environmental issues, as discussed in chapter 2, plays an important role in determining the extent of developing country influence in negotiations on international environmental issues and its ability to gain certain types of outcomes in these negotiations. Certain characteristics of international environmental issues influence whether and what kind of power developing states will have in international negotiations. These include the extent to which the issue is subtractable or excludable, as well as the variation and intensity of concern across developing states, which comes at least in part from characteristics of the issue.²⁴ Under most forms of prevailing realist or liberal international relations theory developing countries are seen as having little chance of influence on the international scene. They tend to lack military might, and they have little economic clout. What they may have, however, is the ability to destroy or the ability to exclude. For some environmental issues, these abilities can be crucial.

Subtractability and Side-Payments

The extent to which a resource is subtractable – whether or not use of the resource by one actor diminishes that resource’s value to another actor – influences the ability of countries to demand compensation or favorable deals for their participation in an agreement, because of the power to destroy. A subtractable good, like a high-seas fishery, needs the participation of all actors that could potentially affect the resource in any cooperative efforts to address it. Those states that do not limit their destruction of the resource in question can prohibit others from successfully protecting it. The participation of reluctant participants is thus essential, and they can often extract concessions or assistance for their agreement to participate.

Developing countries can threaten to take no action to address the environmental problem in question; doing nothing to improve an environmental problem is essentially a threat to destroy the resource, even more so if the process of economic development or population growth will increase the extent of the activity causing the environmental problem. If the environmental issue is a problem with elements of subtractability, inaction by these countries can undo any good done by states that do act to protect the environment, and states that want to address the problem will need to lure the recalcitrant states into international action to protect the resource.

While the ability to destroy and the bargaining power it gives is not limited to developing countries, we do see this threat used much more frequently in that context. Concern about international environmental problems is sufficiently ingrained in the politics of developed country populations²⁵ that leaders of these states feel constrained in their ability to threaten to destroy the environment, even if only as a bargaining tool. In addition, in many issue areas the developing countries are the ones whose increasing populations and increasing industrialization are likely to give them a greater ability and need to destroy the environment over time, and therefore, absent international agreement, the growth of environmental destruction will be greater in the developing world than among industrialized states. This issue structure suggests that developing states should be most likely to receive special consideration to encourage cooperation on issues that are subtractable, to a much greater degree than on those that are not.

Indeed, developing countries have received enormous concessions for their participation in international efforts to address the most subtractable environmental problems, such as ozone depletion and climate change. As discussed in chapter 6, developing states were allowed extra time before having to phase out their use of ozone-depleting substances, and developed states agreed to contribute

to a fund that covers the “incremental costs” to developing states of this phase-out. Most importantly, developing states insisted that they be given central decision-making power in the institutional allocation of this funding, and because they wielded a sufficiently credible threat to remain outside of the agreement unless the institution was created to meet their concerns, they gained many of their primary objectives, contrary to the preferences of some of the more powerful states in the system. There are similarities to be seen in the (also subtractable) issue of climate change. There was no serious consideration to demanding emissions reduction obligations from developing states in the negotiation of the Kyoto Protocol, and the already existing Global Environment Facility was given the responsibility for funding the incremental costs incurred by developing states of meeting any obligations they had under the international agreements on climate change.

Conversely, developing countries have had a lower degree of international influence in negotiation on global issues that are less subtractable. One such issue is desertification, defined as “land degradation in arid, semi-arid and dry sub-humid areas resulting mainly from adverse human impact.”²⁶ It is caused primarily by overgrazing, deforestation and erosion that can result either from poor forestry policy or from agriculture on marginal lands. These in turn are caused by a number of economic and other factors, and magnified by climate change. Though desertification is experienced in almost every country in the world, it is of particular concern to already arid developing countries with marginal croplands. International efforts to address this issue resulted in the negotiation of the Convention to Combat Desertification in 1994. Among the contentious North–South bargaining issues in this negotiation was whether the problem should be identified as “global.” Industrialized countries feared that using a term would imply responsibility and obligations for them similar to those addressed in climate change and biodiversity; indeed this was the goal of the G-77 in pushing its use.²⁷ The industrialized countries therefore resisted the use of the term,²⁸ and were successful in this resistance.

Many developing countries, led by those in Africa, also called for the convention to address the socioeconomic causes of desertification, such as debt, exchange rate variation, and international trade regulations.²⁹ It is these types of issues, aside from climate change, that make desertification an international issue, but the industrialized countries successfully resisted this characterization. These issues are mentioned only in the preamble to the treaty.

The funding mechanism initially created by the agreement was weak as well. The “Global Mechanism” was created to “promote actions leading to the

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mobilization and channeling of substantial financial resources, including for the transfer of technology” to developing countries.³⁰ The difference between this and even the vague commitments made in other international agreements negotiated at roughly the same time to provide new and additional funding is striking. This mechanism was created largely in the hope that such financial resources would be forthcoming, which for the most part they were not. And the industrialized countries participating in the negotiations were only willing to acknowledge the need to “rationalize and strengthen existing resources.”³¹ More recently, the Global Environment Facility has taken on desertification as one of its funding areas, but the issue of adequate funding for developing countries to address desertification persists.³²

The desertification example shows the difficulties developing countries face gaining leverage on nonsubtractable issues. Developed countries that want to address the issue of desertification as it affects them will not be prevented from doing so if developing states do not participate. The participation of all states is not central to addressing the environmental problem, so rich or powerful states feel no need to make concessions to developing states to bring them in to international cooperative efforts. In desertification, developing countries have tried to work together despite the lack of subtractability of the issue – and have in fact tried to make it appear to be a global issue. But because the most proximate causes are local, and the effects are local, this solidarity has at times fallen apart, and has harmed the ability of developing countries to get even the modest assistance they might have been able to get.³³

Excludability and Solidarity

The other characteristic that can give states, including developing states, power in international environmental negotiation is excludability. Many environmental issues that are addressed on the international level are *not* excludable. In protection of the atmosphere, for example, states cannot be prevented from access to the advantages provided by the ozone layer. Ozone layer protection is a particularly good illustration of a *nonexcludable* resource, since the location of harm bears no relationship to the location of the activity that damages the ozone. But some environmental resources have a much greater degree of excludability. Species that do not migrate across borders are an example of an excludable resource, since states can deny to actors from other states access to those species.

The level of excludability changes the dynamics of the bargaining situation, by giving influence to states that can exclude others from their resources. Although it might seem that the ability to exclude other parties from benefits of resources located in your jurisdiction makes an issue a purely domestic one, excludable

resources may nevertheless have important international elements, because of externalities. The clearest example is that of forests; they are physically located in only one place and can for all practical purposes be regulated as aspects of national policy. But because trees serve as a carbon sink – taking up carbon dioxide from the atmosphere when they are growing and releasing it into the atmosphere when they are cut – what is done with them in an individual country can affect global climate change and hence have impacts on other states. Similarly, biodiversity resources are often seen as the “common heritage” of the world, since they can provide potential benefits for the people of the world, and in that sense have externalities beyond the potentially excludable places where they are located.

This power to exclude is one that is not limited to developing countries, but may also be used more often by them, for two reasons. The first is that, by geographic chance, some of the most important excludable environmental resources are found in countries that happen to have a lower level of economic development than others. Tropical areas, which have a lower aggregate level of development than nontropical areas, have the most species diversity and ecosystem diversity of anywhere on earth.³⁴ The second is that the process of industrialization caused a level of environmental harm and resource extraction that decreased the extent and quality of environmental resources present in the developed world. Much of the biodiversity and forests that might have once been present in North America and Europe has been destroyed. In terms of resources like biodiversity or forestry it is the developing countries that have, and therefore can exclude others from, many of the resources in question.

The power of exclusion has been used by developing states on issues such as biodiversity conservation, as discussed in chapter 8. Developing countries have had a mixed experience with this agreement. The effort for financial assistance showed some influence but not to the extent that developed countries sought. Developing countries won the guarantee of “new and additional financial resources” that will be used to “enable developing country Parties to meet the agreed full incremental costs to them of implementing measures which fulfill the obligations of this Convention.”³⁵ They had less success on how that funding would be distributed, however, since the CBD adopted the modified GEF as its interim funding mechanism, over the objection of developing countries.³⁶

But developing states unambiguously won the semantic battle of reaffirming states’ “sovereign right to exploit their own resources pursuant to their own environmental policies.”³⁷ Developing country parties to the CBD were also able to gain a stronger pledge for technology transfer than parties to other international agreements had accomplished. Article 16 addresses a wide variety of types of access

to technology that are promised to developing countries, and indicates that transfer of technology is “essential ... for the attainment of the objectives of this Convention.” As one developing country negotiator said, “we have the biodiversity, they have the technology.”³⁸ Most importantly, the biosafety protocol to the CBD was negotiated largely at the behest of developing countries, and is based fundamentally on their right – and ability – to determine what is allowed within their borders, refusing to import living modified organisms if they so choose.

Of particular note, within the issue of biodiversity conservation, are the private mechanisms, also discussed in chapter 8, made possible by the sovereign authority (and thus ability to exclude) that developing states have over their own biodiversity resources. The excludability of biodiversity resources also creates the opportunity for private deals to be made by those states with valued biodiversity within their borders. The variety of private agreements such as debt-for-nature swaps, bioprospecting agreements, and ecotourism, provide opportunities for biodiversity-rich countries to allow access on their own terms by others to their resources in return for compensation or profit. These private deals have resulted in greater benefits for the developing countries entering into them than alternate forms of biodiversity protection might have. Countries without important biodiversity (and in the case of debt-for-nature swaps, without available discounted debt) have been unable to benefit from these types of arrangements, however.

This latter dynamic suggests that excludability can influence a different aspect of developing country negotiations internationally: the extent to which we see developing country solidarity on an issue. For those environmental issues with a high degree of excludability, we should expect little meaningful effort by developing countries to work together for cooperative outcomes that appeal to all of them. But we should expect a higher degree of developing country solidarity in negotiations to address nonexcludable resources. The cohesion with which developing countries act on a given issue, not surprisingly, can influence their ability to achieve their goals. In addressing ozone depletion, developing countries generally acted as a unified block. China and India led the negotiations for funding for developing countries, but they resisted any efforts to make side deals and insisted that any agreement be global and generalizable. In an issue area like ozone depletion this strategy works well; no developing countries were especially fearful of the consequences of ozone depletion and as a group they could make a credible threat to continue their behavior.

Nonexcludability does not guarantee solidarity, however; what the preferences of states are on a given issue also influence the extent to which they are willing to work together in pursuit of a common goal. In some nonexcludable issue areas

the preferences of developing countries are more varied. On climate change, for instance, some developing states would be particularly harmed by climate change and others would be particularly harmed by measures taken to prevent it. Developing countries have been less able to operate as a unified block, and that may harm their negotiating ability.

Where and How Expensive?

Also important for determining developing country influence in negotiations over global environmental issues are the location of the causes and effects of the environmental harm in question. The more the developing world can credibly plan to ignore the problem, the greater the likelihood that developing states will be able to gain concessions for taking action. When addressing problems that are especially pressing for developing countries generally or for some countries particularly, it will be harder for these states to make a credible case of non-involvement in order to gain collective assistance. Similarly, the more concerned industrialized countries are about a given (subtractable) problem, whether from actual likelihood of harm or a mobilized domestic population, the more likely these states will be to give in to developing country demands, because they care about addressing a problem they cannot solve alone.

The costs of addressing these issues also play a role, but it is interesting that they alone do not determine the willingness of the industrialized countries to address developing country concerns. One of the reasons that climate change poses such a difficult problem for global agreement is not only that there are North–South disagreements, but that the costs that would need to be borne by developed countries to address the problem, apart from any financial aid, are likely to be so large; when funding incremental costs of changing developing country behavior are included the cost becomes almost unimaginable. But even if the cost were more modest and changing behavior more feasible, developing countries would run into greater difficulties negotiating about climate change than about ozone depletion, given that the negative effects of climate change are more widely distributed worldwide.

The desertification experience also provides evidence that cost is not the only factor preventing developing countries from realizing their goals. At the time of negotiation of the Convention to Combat Desertification, the United Nations Environment Programme determined that an effective twenty-year desertification program would cost around \$10 billion annually.³⁹ While undertaking such a dramatic program is unlikely (and addressing the costs of programs foreseen by the desertification convention would require a fraction of that), its costs are modest

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compared to those of addressing climate change and within the range of costs undertaken to address ozone depletion. Low cost alone has clearly not made addressing this issue any more feasible.

Finally, we need to examine how costly and difficult measures to address the problem are; if the cost is too high, the North will be reluctant to take on obligations at all, much less help finance action by the South.

Growing Influence of Developing Country Concerns

Despite this varied experience with the level of influence developing countries have been able to have in global environmental negotiations, there are some signs of cumulative effects of increased bargaining power, and the importance of precedent. The idea that developing countries should have a say in how the funding they are given should be allocated, and more specifically the use of double majority voting to carry that out, has become institutionalized. Even the Global Environment Facility, which originally gave less control to recipient countries than did the Montreal Protocol Multilateral Fund, was reformed as it was declared the interim funding mechanism for the FCCC and the CBD and now includes balanced representation and double majority voting.⁴⁰ It is no longer unusual to see such a funding mechanism for developing countries negotiated into international environmental agreements; in fact, its absence is now rare. Moreover, temporary experience with a funding shortfall in the Multilateral Fund⁴¹ moved developing countries to include in the UNFCCC and other agreements the caveat that the obligations of developing country parties “will depend on the effective implementation by developed country Parties of their commitments under the Convention related to financial resources and transfer of technology.”⁴² The idea of “common but differentiated responsibilities”⁴³ of developed and developing countries in approaching global environmental agreements has been widely accepted. With some variation due to the characteristics of environmental problems, developing countries have become a powerful negotiating force in international environmental politics.

Notes

- 1 Paul Steinberg, *Environmental Leadership in Developing Countries: Transnational Relations and Biodiversity Policy in Costa Rica and Bolivia* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2001).
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- 6 Marc Williams "The Third World and Global Environmental Negotiations: Interests, Institutions, and Ideas," *Global Environmental Politics* 5(3) (August 2005): 48–69.
- 7 Adil Najam et al., "From Rio to Johannesburg: Progress and Prospects," *Environment* 44(7) (2002): 221–31.
- 8 Adil Najam, "The Collective South in Multinational Environmental Politics," in Stuart Nagel, ed., *Policymaking and Prosperity: A Multinational Anthology* (Lanham, Md.: Lexington Books, 2003), 197–240.
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- 12 Uday Desai, "Poverty, Government, and the Global Environment," in Uday Desai, ed., *Ecological Policy and Politics in Developing Countries* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1998), 295.
- 13 Steinberg, 41.
- 14 UNDP, *Human Development Report 1998* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 66.
- 15 Michael Ross, *Timber Booms and Institutional Breakdown in Southeast Asia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).
- 16 Williams, 56.
- 17 Rio Declaration on Environment and Development, 1992, Principle 3.

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