

International Climate Policy Perspectives for CO₂ Management Technologies

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Sometimes I wonder whether the world is being run by smart people who are putting us on or by imbeciles who really mean it.

Laurence J. Peter, *The Peter Principle*

The Politics of Climate Impacts

“Last year alone, there were 11 different weather and climate disaster events with estimated losses exceeding \$1 billion each across the United States. Taken together, these 11 events resulted in over \$110 billion in estimated damages, which would make it the second-costliest year on record.”

Obama Climate Action Plan, June 2013

The Science of Climate Impacts

“Attribution of changes in individual weather and climate events to anthropogenic forcing is complicated because any such event might have occurred by chance in an unmodified climate as a result of natural climate variability.”

IPCC Special Report on Managing the Risks of Extreme Events and Disasters (SREX), March 2012

The Science of Climate Impacts

“Increasing exposure of people and economic assets has been the major cause of long-term increases in economic losses from weather- and climate-related disasters. ... Some authors suggest that a (natural or anthropogenic) climate change signal can be found in the records of disaster losses, but their work is in the nature of reviews and commentary rather than empirical research.”

IPCC, SREX

It ain't what you don't know that gets you into trouble. It's what you know for sure that just ain't so.

Mark Twain

The Post-Copenhagen Shift

- The perceived failure of Copenhagen in 2009 provoked a shift in climate policy from reducing emissions to eliminating fossil fuels
 - CO₂ became ‘carbon pollution’
 - Divestment campaigns launched, now at \$2.6 trillion
 - Government funding for fossil energy projects, particularly coal, constrained or shut off
 - G-7 pledged to eliminate fossil fuels by 2100

Legacy of Copenhagen (2009)

- Copenhagen is frequently misunderstood
 - Fell short of expectations, but expectations unrealistic
- Bali Roadmap intended to be incremental
 - Copenhagen became an endpoint, not a way station
- But Copenhagen Accord did yield ~80 targets and formalized a 2° C warming limit objective
 - Targets drove demand for financial & technical assistance
- This demand was met with national-level regulation and new int'l institutions
 - UNFCCC aspiring to be a global climate agency

Cancun Agreements (2010)

- Cancun sidestepped the Kyoto model
 - Unable to cut GHGs, donor countries to provide support
- Yet donor countries lack adequate resources
 - Public coffers cannot cover all climate-related exposures or finance global-scale low carbon conversions
- Cancun institutions require private capital
 - Financial Mechanism (\$100b annually by 2020)
 - Technology Mechanism (development & transfer)
 - Adaptation Framework (resilience & rebuilding)
 - New market mechanisms (pricing carbon)

Durban Results (2011)

- COP 17 outcome was concrete
 - New agreement sought by the end of 2015
 - Kyoto extension signaled transition, not rebirth
 - The ‘fire wall’ was breaking down – or was it?
- Key differences from pre-Copenhagen period
 - New treaty to cover *all* major emitters
 - Single track negotiations will concentrate the process
 - New institutions for finance, technology, adaptation, and markets offer broader opportunities for engagement
 - But progress hinges on demonstrating technology leadership and leveraging private capital

Warsaw & Lima Progress (2013-2014)

- COPs 19-20 dominated by Paris in 2015
 - New negotiating texts took form
 - INDCs submitted Oct 2015, but transparency still limited
 - Green Climate Fund raked in +\$12 billion in pledges
 - Adaptation emerging as a priority, but uncertainty over measurement and uneasiness over “loss and damage”
- Legally-binding or norm-setting?
 - Sub-national actions abound and drive progress
 - National-level regulatory regimes reflect domestic circumstances more than international priorities

What Does ‘Legally Binding’ Mean?

- In Durban, Parties to the UNFCCC agreed to negotiate a “protocol, another legal instrument, or an agreed outcome with legal force” by 2015
- U.S. submissions to UNFCCC have supported a partially “legally binding” agreement, including for emission reduction commitments
- But developing countries and environmental groups insist upon a fully legally binding deal

Int' l Agreement Trends

- Since 1900, only two major treaties strongly favored by a sitting president were not ratified:
 - Treaty of Versailles (1919)
 - Comprehensive Nuclear-Test Ban Treaty (1997)
- Since WWII, most international agreements have been congressional-executive agreements
 - Most focused on trade, reflecting broad postwar consensus on economic issues, not divisive ones like climate change

Recent Env't'l Treaty History

- Senate unanimously ratified the Montreal Protocol in 1988 and the UNFCCC in 1992
 - Both signed by Republican presidents
- Byrd-Hagel Resolution in 1997 outlined terms for further U.S. participation in a climate regime
 - Passed 97-0, five months *before* Kyoto talks
- But U.S. positions at Kyoto and the outcome directly contradicted Byrd-Hagel. Why?
 - Ratification of Kyoto Protocol *never* realistic

Outlook for Climate Treaty in 2015

- Basic contours of Byrd-Hagel still control today
 - No ratification of U.S. emission reduction commitments without comparable (and enforceable) commitments by others
- Recent history has proved Byrd-Hagel right
 - Many of the largest emitters today were not the largest emitters in 1990
- Other ideas considered, *e.g.*, loss compensation schemes, seal treaty's fate in U.S. Senate
 - 'Political' commitments and 'norms' remain powerful

Do ‘Political’ Commitments Matter?

“Effective international climate agreements serve three vital purposes. First, they supply the essential confidence countries need to assure them that if they take ambitious action, their partners and competitors will do the same. Second, they send a potent signal to other important actors – sub-national governments, the private sector, civil society, research institutions, international organizations – that the world’s leaders are committed to containing climate change. Third, they prompt countries to take aggressive climate action at home to meet their national pledges.”

– *Todd D. Stern, U.S. Special Envoy for Climate Change, October 2013*

Norms and Expectations

“... [W]e need to focus much more on the real power of creating norms and expectations as distinguished from rigid rules. There is certainly a role for rules, standards, and obligations in this agreement. But an agreement that is animated by the progressive development of norms and expectations rather than by the hard edge of law, compliance and penalty has a much better chance of working, being effective and building inclusive, real world ambition.”

– *Todd D. Stern, U.S. Special Envoy for Climate Change, October 2013*

Non-Climate ‘Norms’ and Other Priorities

“ ... [E]nergy matters profoundly to US national security and foreign policy. It matters because the availability of reliable, affordable energy is essential to our economic strength at home, which is the foundation for our leadership in the world. ... Energy shapes national interests and relations between nations. It shapes politics, development, and governance within nations. And it shapes the security of the climate and the environment. For all these reasons and many others, increasing global access to secure, affordable, and ever cleaner supplies of energy is a global public good and a national interest of the United States.”

– *Tom Donilon, National Security Advisor to the President, April 2013*

Five Truths about Climate Policy

- Access to affordable energy will always matter more than how energy is produced
- In terms of energy, more has changed in the past five years than in the past fifty
- The largest GHG emitters of today will not be the largest emitters of tomorrow
- Reducing GHG emissions does not, by itself, reduce immediate risks from extreme events
- Networks present better opportunities for realizing transformational solutions than hierarchies

Problems and Solutions

- Climate policy generally fails to find solutions
 - Exclaiming the problem and blaming fossil fuels seems to preoccupy the debate and prevent real dialogue
- No rational framework for prioritizing actions
 - Decisions about technology are driven more by politics than technical or economic feasibility, *i.e.*, CCUS mostly ignored
- The story was different with stratospheric ozone
 - Under the Montreal Protocol, industries accused of causing the problem were the ones who developed the best solutions

Industry Leadership: A Possible Path

“Although the nature of medical practice has been drastically affected by the progressive adoption of new technologies, the rate at which they have been developed and accepted has been extremely slow in comparison to other segments of society: *the engineer does not know what is needed; the physician does not know what is possible.*”

Robert F. Rushmer, *Medical Engineering: Projections for Health Care Delivery* (1972)

Industry Leadership: A Typical Barrier

