



Centre for Air Power Studies (CAPS)

Forum for National Security Studies (FNSS)

COP 21: THE CHANGED CLIMATE FOR INDO-US COOPERATION

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Leaders of more than 190 nations gathered in Paris to come to a possible agreement on climate change particularly aimed at reducing the green house emissions. COP 21 (Conference of Parties-21)—which is the common reference to the summit on climate change in Paris—had an agenda for some meaningful action related to green house gas emissions both by the developed as well as the developing countries. Along with many other considerations for the deal, the emphasis this time was on developing a “grand” action plan to curb the green house gas emissions, before and after 2020 along with the giant task of headhunting for the availability of finance by the developing countries to continue with their growth along with low carbon emissions. The aim of the conference was also to agree on a legally binding agreement with the purpose of reducing the greenhouse gas emissions in order to hold the global average temperatures below the 2oC of the preindustrial levels. COP 21 is also important for various pre-

requisites it achieved which the previous climate change summits have failed to deliver. The historic climate change agreement agreed upon in Paris Climate Summit 2015 on December 12, 2015 has an ambitious goal of limiting the target to 1.5 degrees Celsius. This definitely gave an impression of an “aspirational” goal to many poor countries and island nations. The text of the climate change agreement in Paris clearly indicates that determined wooing by the top three emitters i.e. US, China and India, seems to have worked to a degree. A number of provisions in the agreement are in India’s favour, namely strong language surrounding a commitment by developed countries to send more than \$100 billion a year to the developing world for efforts aimed at addressing climate change.

The summit mainly negotiated with the top three greenhouse gas emitters—US, China and India to extract a commitment on curbing their emissions by signing the agreement. This is something, which was not achieved in the past.

Furthermore, it was argued that the success of the summit for the developing countries would depend on the affirmation by the west on financial aid in order for them to make a transition to low carbon emission without hampering their respective growth. Global security experts, through the issue of climate change are warning of increased conflicts, humanitarian crises and refugee movement. Many defence experts have been linking this issue with the blood bath, which Paris witnessed two weeks before the summit. Many specialists in the Pentagon have also been arguing in strong voices in favour of the agreements at the conference claiming that climate change can act as a “threat multiplier” which aggravates poverty leading to political instability and social tensions.

Paris Climate Agreement invites an Inter governmental panel on Climate Change, which operates under the UN auspices to provide a special report in 2018 of the impact of such goals. The nations themselves will set the goals. Each country sets its own targets. The targets neither have the strict timelines nor are they binding under the international law. While the targets are not binding, the nations still need to submit to the outside monitoring of their progress—generally referred to as *transparency* by the climate change negotiators. While at one point US has successfully argued for a single framework, at the same time developing countries like India and China have been successful in making sure that they will not need

to meet the same requirements. As according to the wishes of India, the developed countries have pledged to pay developing or poor countries \$100 billion per year and would also be increasing the amount of contributions in the future.¹ The agreement also commits all nations to cooperating to address a number of ways to which poor and developing nations deal with the effects of climate change—and idea called “loss and damage.”

Though, unlike China and the US, India has been hesitant in committing to a peak year for emissions in the past, based on the facts that it needs economic growth to alleviate poverty.² It is high time that India trumpets its plans for rapid expansion of renewable energy, and for the same reason it needs US technology and investments in the energy sector. The US will also gain from a strong, growing and stable India, which in turn could lead to a stable political and diplomatic environment in Asia and the Indian Ocean region.

India, at the same time also wants to put in some constructive efforts towards climate change, which should have multi-dimensional approach. India is definitely open to adopting a more energy efficient form of industrialisation and urbanisation given that India gets cooperation from the developed countries specifically the US. It is in this context that the US can play a supporting role by giving a helping hand to India and moving it towards the goal of efficient industrialisation by creating a win-win situation for the US in term of climate change,

stable international order and the extension of its foreign policy.³ For example, Indo-US Civil Nuclear Deal (2015) is a step towards this partnership for both the nations to move towards effective and efficient industrialisation and enable the cementing of ties between the two nations. The proposed project in South India has significant role to play in India's quest towards achieving 175 GW of renewable energy by 2022.⁴

From the perspective of a stable international order, this could be a big deal since it seems to be the only realistic way forward.⁵ It is for sure that India's responses, positions and negotiations with regard to climate change cannot be driven by its foreign policy vis-à-vis the developed nations and neither can they be based on the perceptions of the influence they can have on India's relations with the rest of the world especially the foreign trade. Since India has taken a stance on the equitable climate agreements as purposed, its negotiating stance and related diplomacy had a very different direction and consideration.⁶ However, India needs to counter this Catch-22 situation of drafting a working climate change policy compatible with the large poverty and underdevelopment burden at home. In addition, India needs to make significant socio-economic, technological and industrial advancements along with the significant steps in alleviating greenhouse gas emissions and climate change.

Nevertheless, India should also commit to cut the emissions with a precondition on the levels based on equity between the three largest emitters. With the new climate change agreement India is clearly in the process of placing itself as a global leader on combining climate action without making any compromises on its economic growth. India's position has made it a key player in the efforts to come to a successful agreement, considering its position to be the third largest emitter in the world. The US in particular has lobbied very hard insisting on "any words about loss and damage should not suggest liability or compensation or open any possibility of legal action against US companies."⁷

(Disclaimer: The views and opinions expressed in this article are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the position of the Centre for Air Power Studies [CAPS])

Notes

¹ William Yardley. "Here's What the Climate Change Agreement Will Do—and what it won't" December 12, 2015. <http://www.latimes.com/world/la-na-sej-climate-agreement-points-20151212-story.html> accessed on December 13, 2015.

² Samir Saran, "India Needs its Own Share of Carbon Space to Grow", December 4, 2015. <http://www.dw.com/en/india-needs-its-own-share-of-carbon-space-to-grow/a-18890917> accessed on December 7, 2015.

³ Anisha Laming, "India US Join Hands to Combat Climate Change" <http://www.theclimategroup.org/what-we-do/news-and-blogs/india-us-join-hands-to-combat-climate-change/> accessed on December 4, 2015.

⁴ Ankit Panda, "9 Takeaways on US-India Ties after Obama's India Visit" available at: <http://thediplomat.com/2015/01/9-takeaways-on-us-india-ties-after-obamas-india-visit/> accessed on December 6, 2015.

⁵ “The United States and India: A Relationship on the Move” Remarks by Ambassador Richard Verma at IIT-Madras. <http://newdelhi.usembassy.gov/sr071315.html> accessed on December 6, 2015.

⁶ Saran, Samir & Bruce Jones. “An Indian “exception” and Indo-US Partnership on Climate Change” ORF Issue Brief, January 2015, http://orfonline.org/cms/export/orfonline/modules/issuebrief/attachments/ORF_Issue_brief_85_1421127922603.pdf accessed on December 7, 2015.

⁷ “Rethinking India’s Climate Policy and the Global negotiations” Oxfam India, August 2013. <https://www.oxfamindia.org/sites/default/files/Raghu's%20paper.pdf> accessed on December 7, 2015.

⁸ Lenore Taylor. “Paris Climate Change Deal: New Draft Cuts Through Key Sticking Points” December 11, 2015. <http://www.theguardian.com/environment/2015/dec/11/new-draft-text-of-paris-climate-change-deal-cuts-through-many-sticking-points> accessed on December 11, 2015.