

Power in a Warming World

The New Global Politics of Climate Change
and the Remaking of Environmental Inequality



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Series Foreword

Humans now influence all biological and physical systems of the planet. Almost no species, no land area and no part of the oceans has remained unaffected by the expansion of the human species. Recent scientific findings suggest that the entire earth system now operates outside the normal state exhibited over the past 500,000 years. Yet at the same time, it is apparent that the institutions, organizations, and mechanisms by which humans govern their relationship with the natural environment and global biogeochemical systems are utterly insufficient—and poorly understood. More fundamental and applied research is needed.

Yet such research is no easy undertaking. It must span the entire globe because only integrated global solutions can ensure a sustainable co-evolution of natural and socio-economic systems. But it must also draw on local experiences and insights. Research on earth system governance must be about places in all their diversity, yet seek to integrate place-based research within a global understanding of the myriad human interactions with the earth system. Eventually, the task is to develop integrated systems of governance, from the local to the global level, that ensure the sustainable development of the coupled socio-ecological system that the Earth has become.

The series *Earth System Governance* is designed to address this research challenge. Books in this series will pursue this challenge from a variety of disciplinary perspectives, at different levels of governance, and with a plurality of methods. Yet all will further one common aim: analyzing current systems of earth system governance with a view to increased understanding and possible improvements and reform. Books in this series will be of interest to the academic community but will also inform practitioners and at times contribute to policy debates.

This series is related to the long-term international research effort “Earth System Governance Project,” a core project of the International Human Dimensions Programme on Global Environmental Change.

Frank Biermann, *Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam*

Oran R. Young, *University of California, Santa Barbara*

Earth System Governance Series Editors

Preface and Acknowledgments

On the final evening of the global climate change negotiations in Copenhagen in 2009, Venezuela's lead negotiator Claudia Salerno Caldera pounded her fist on the table trying to get the attention of the Danish chair, Lars Løkke Rasmussen, before he left the podium. Having cut her hand, and with blood pouring from the wound, she exclaimed, "Even if we have to cut our hand and draw blood to make you allow us to speak, we will do so." Caldera was furious about what she and many other representatives of developing countries considered to be a highly unequal and ineffective framework for addressing climate change in the newly introduced Copenhagen Accord and a decision-making process that many considered to be a violation of United Nations procedure.

Despite the drama and conflict in Copenhagen, the negotiations have since moved forward to achieve general consensus on agreements developed since 2009. In Durban in late 2011, an emissions reduction framework with "a protocol, a legal instrument, or an agreed outcome with legal force" involving all countries was pushed back to the year 2020. What the international community has agreed to is an emissions reduction framework that, as currently configured, condemns the planet to 3.5–4.5 degrees Celsius of warming.¹ Scientists consider this temperature rise far above what will trigger catastrophic environmental events around the world. In the case of such temperature rise, some countries would completely disappear with rising sea levels, while others would face a diverse set of catastrophic consequences, from drought to flooding to heat waves and storm surges on top of sea level rise. It is now well documented that the poorest countries, which have the lightest footprint on the climate, are suffering worst and first from climate change and will continue to do so in a warmer world.

These are our core questions: How did we get to this point, and is there any way out? *Power in a Warming World* draws on nearly three

decades of our experience as observers and participants in the UN global climate change negotiations. We have been in roles as government delegation member (Mizan), negotiation group research and writing support (Dave, Timmons, and Mizan), nongovernmental organization participants (Dave and Timmons), and researchers (all three). We have used these opportunities to take a close look at how global environmental inequality has been made, reproduced, and contested through this political process. In doing so, we offer a window into the complex global politics of power and consent that provides insights beyond climate change, involving unlikely divisions and alliances between players in both the global North and South. We demonstrate that environmental inequality has been preserved in these negotiations by both big systems processes and grounded social relationships of domination, accommodation, and consent.

Beyond material self-interest and the use of coercive force, there are three more currencies of power: identities, ideas, and institutions. National identities survive and are reshaped from experiences such as wartime alliances and colonialism, explaining the behavior of developed nations and developing nations, who continue formal and informal negotiations in historic blocs even when it may not be in their longer-term self-interest. But new identities are emerging that disrupt those enduring coalitions, and these get leveraged to gain and preserve new privileges. Ideas of justice and of viable policy solutions come into the negotiations from civil society, national delegations, and international institutions like the UN Secretariat or global trade organizations. The quirky institutional structure of UN climate negotiations, and the larger governance architecture that has emerged around the issue of climate change, shape what is possible and which interests, identities, and ideas gain and hold sway. In this way, we offer a challenge to much of the literature on international politics that defines power solely in material and coercive terms or, alternatively, rejects power altogether and instead focuses on institutions or ideas. And we provide a rare empirical account of how everyday relationships of inequality are reproduced and contested in the international realm, and in environmental politics in particular.

Power in a Warming World is geared to lay readers, climate experts, and upper-level undergraduate and graduate students in the areas of international relations, global politics, environmental sociology, geography, public policy, social movement studies, and environmental studies. The scholarly literature on climate change politics is gaining volume and substance. We build on four distinct groups in the literature that deal

explicitly with contemporary global climate change politics. First, there are books that deal with normative or ethics-based arguments of justice in addressing climate change. A second group of scholars more explicitly deals with relationships of power and inequality in global politics and focus on obstacles to preventing progress. Roberts's previous MIT Press book (co-authored with Bradley Parks), *A Climate of Injustice* (2007), falls in that category, and we hope this book will be a useful sequel, updating its history from the 2009 Copenhagen negotiations and expanding it in new directions. A third, and related, series of books offers possibilities for overcoming gridlock. These include a focus on the need to leverage rational national self-interest rather than wishful thinking to overcome gridlock, how international law can be tailored to facilitate cooperation and effective action, and the need for an individually and collectively rational and fair climate treaty. The fourth group of scholars focuses on nonstate actors in global climate politics including civil society and market actors, multilateral development banks, donors, and cities across multiple levels of political organization.

We hope that *Power in a Warming World* addresses a key need by providing an analysis of power that is attentive to both macrostructural and microrelational processes that have shaped inequality and inaction in the contemporary UN climate negotiations and beyond. Following Barnett and Duvall, we define power as the "production, in and through social relations, of effects that shape the capacities of actors to determine their circumstances and fate."² This conception highlights that power is embedded in social relations and that its effects work to the advantage of some and the disadvantage of others. It also emphasizes that power determines the capacities of actors to control outcomes, but it does not prescribe to them a prefabricated desired outcome based on a narrowly defined conception of rationality.

As a whole, the research on contemporary global climate politics to date suffers from some important shortcomings. First, there has been a notable focus on short-term global political dynamics, while neglecting long-term global historical trends, especially steady and abrupt transformations in the structures of the global economy. Second, there has been a shortage of analysis of the social relations of accommodation and consent between actors and the role of ideas, institutions, and identities in the climate negotiations. Third, there has been an overwhelming focus on the politics of emissions reductions (mitigation), while neglecting issues of adaptation and climate finance, areas that have exploded in importance and where we have focused much of our attention over the

past decade. Fourth, the literature continues to portray a simplified and no longer accurate view of North–South political alliances, which have grown far more complex over the past decade in the climate negotiations. As we’ll discuss, there are now over a dozen negotiating groups, with ten or so in the South and several in the North. Finally, there have been only limited analyses of the relationship between transnational civil society, states, and market actors within the negotiations, an area we consider fundamental for progressive change. By addressing these shortcomings that we see in the literature, we hope to offer some new insights into why major changes have occurred in the negotiations, what accounts for their timing, and what possibilities exist for transformative change down the road, both within and outside the UN process.

We acknowledge the publications where earlier versions of this book’s chapters appeared. A portion of chapter 2 was published in Ciplet, Roberts, and Khan (*Edgar Elgar Handbook on Climate Governance*, forthcoming 2015) and part appeared in Roberts (*Global Environmental Change*, 2011). Part of chapter 4 appeared in Ciplet (*Global Governance*, 2015). An earlier version of chapter 5 appeared in Ciplet, Roberts, and Khan (*Global Environmental Politics*, 2013). An earlier version of chapter 8 appeared in Ciplet (*Global Environmental Politics*, 2014).

We acknowledge the amount of focus on the United States in this book: we are two Americans and a Bangladeshi based in the United States for the year we worked most on this book. We are aware that this shades our understanding and influences our types of knowledge. We have also spent time researching this book in South America, Europe, and elsewhere.

Chapter 1 includes an outline of the book’s chapters; what remains here is to acknowledge our remarkable support network in completing this exciting and sometimes exhausting project. First, we thank our spouses, Jennifer Ciplet, Holly Flood, and Parvin Khan, and our children: Eliza, Cora, and Marlon (Dave); Quinn and Phoebe (Timmons); and Farhana (Mizan). We express our sincere thanks to Brown University’s Watson Institute and Center for Environmental Studies for support, including an office and support for Mizan during his 2012–2013 stay as visiting fellow, and our thanks to Patti Caton, Jeanne Lowenstein, and the Center for Environmental Studies (now the Institute for the Study of Environment and Society) for much support over the years. We thank the Graduate Program in Development for support for Mizan’s stay at Brown in fall 2012. For the 2011–2012 work with the Climate and Development

Lab and Mizan's visits, we appreciate support from Anna Karina Wildman and Matt Guttman from Brown's Office of International Affairs, former director of Watson Carolyn Dean, Barbara Sardy, and Katherine Bergeron, former dean of the college.

We have learned from conducting research in support of the Least Developed Countries group, and we deeply appreciate former chair, Pa Jarju Ousman, and the International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED) climate change staffers, Achala Chandani and Saleemul Huq, for facilitating that. We have learned a lot from attendees at the several conferences we have organized at the Watson Institute at Brown, including representatives from a half-dozen key negotiating groups. We are also grateful to the Global Alliance of Waste Pickers, from whom we have learned a great deal. And we have learned from our constant work with and support of members of our Climate and Development Lab at Brown: Guy Edwards, Adam Kotin, Linlang He, Brianna Craft, Spencer Field, Keith Madden, Emily Kirkland, Kelly Rogers, Hanna Ross, Becca Keane, Graciela Kincaid, Daniel Sherrell, Cecilia Pineda, and other current members and alumni. Dave is also grateful for funding from the Switzer Foundation and the Horowitz Foundation for Social Policy, which generously supported him in this research.

We thank Clay Morgan and Beth Clevenger at MIT Press for their supportive and thoughtful editorial wisdom and guidance and their patience as the book got pushed back twice by three busy lives. Series editors Oran Young and Frank Biermann were incredibly supportive from the beginning and provided some useful tough comments at a key early stage when we could act on them. Anonymous reviewers of the prospectus and the first draft manuscript helped shape this final product. We thank Guy Edwards, Damien White and Brian Gareau for reading earlier drafts of the chapters. The errors that remain are, of course, our own.

Finally, a parting word on what we hope to achieve. Modestly, we hope to provide a picture not of an inevitable train wreck of human realpolitik with the geobiophysical climate system that supports us. Rather, we hope to create a useful framework to understand the roots of this political crisis as a tool to help identify pathways forward. The material interests of the global North and South on which we dwell at length here are crucial to understand and acknowledge in developing new frameworks for agreement. We hope this book can help to inform a new generation of global climate solutions. The time is short.

Preface and Acknowledgments

1. Climate Interactive's website forecasts 4.5 degrees Celsius of warming by 2100 if national pledges made by April 2013 are met (Climate Interactive 2013). A UN Environmental Programme report (2010) found that even if the Copenhagen pledges are met, the amount of greenhouse gases remaining in the atmosphere would "imply a temperature increase of between 2.5 to 5°C before the end of the century." Other calculations also show that voluntary pledges under the accord, even if implemented, will raise temperature more than 3 degrees Celsius (Rogelj et al. 2010). The International Energy Agency (2012) also predicts 4 degrees Celsius of warming with current pledges.
2. Barnett and Duvall (2005, 42).

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Trading a Livable World

Crisis in Copenhagen

It was 3:00 a.m. on December 20, 2009, during the final plenary session of the United Nations (UN) Copenhagen climate change conference. Representatives of 187 countries gathered as part of the official UN decision-making body on climate change, what is called the “Conference of Parties” (COP), to decide on how the international community would collectively address the problem of climate change. After more than a decade and a half of intense negotiations, many regarded this moment as the last chance to effectively tackle climate change to avoid catastrophic ecological tipping points.

In the hands of most of the delegates was the confidential twelve-paragraph Copenhagen Accord, which radically changed how the nations of the world would address the climate problem. Just hours before, the Accord had been secretly drafted by an unlikely alliance of five countries: the United States, China, India, Brazil, and South Africa. For many developing country delegates, this was the first time over two long weeks of negotiations that they had set eyes on this document.

Acknowledged finally by the chair, the lead delegate of the tiny low-lying island nation of Tuvalu, Ian Fry, turned on his microphone. He looked up at Lars Løkke Rasmussen, the Danish prime minister and chair of the proceedings, and exclaimed: “It looks like we are being offered 30 pieces of silver to betray our people and our future. Our future is not for sale. I regret to inform you that Tuvalu cannot accept this document.”¹

Fry was furious about what he and many other representatives of developing countries considered to be a highly unequal and ineffective framework for addressing climate change. Rather than strengthening the existing international legal process to combat climate change in the Kyoto Protocol, the Accord put forward a “voluntary” framework. Developing

country delegates felt that the Kyoto Protocol was being stripped of its teeth; the bedrock of global climate change policy was being fundamentally shattered. Many also objected to a decision-making process they considered a violation of UN procedure.

As part of the Accord, developing countries such as Tuvalu were being offered promises of dollars: \$30 billion over the coming three years and \$100 billion a year by 2020. Despite these financial promises, delegates of several countries refused to offer their consent to the Accord, and it was not adopted as a legal agreement in Copenhagen.

One year later at the international climate change negotiations in Cancun, the tide had dramatically turned.² The main content of the Copenhagen Accord was integrated into the Cancun Agreements, adopted nearly unanimously.³ In doing so, the international community set in motion a process, solidified in Durban and Doha the next two years, that would replace the legally binding Kyoto Protocol with a voluntary pledge-and-review system and delay core decisions on an alternative path forward until 2015.⁴

In this new approach, there is not an agreed-on aggregate figure for reducing greenhouse gas pollution or a system to ensure that the pledges made are deep enough to meet scientifically required targets. As currently configured, this framework will allow a temperature rise substantially above what scientists predict will trigger catastrophic environmental events around the world.⁵ In the case of such temperature rise, several countries, such as Tuvalu, would completely disappear under water due to rising sea levels, and others would face similarly catastrophic consequences such as massive famine and disease outbreak. For example, global circulation models (GCMs) publicized just before the Copenhagen meeting suggested that Africa would warm 50 percent faster than global average temperatures.⁶ It is now well documented that the poorest countries with the lightest footprint on the climate are suffering worst and first from climate change and will continue to do so in the future.⁷

Beyond the formal negotiation sessions of this UN regime, global efforts to address climate change have been correspondingly weak. Rises in temperature and sea level due to human-caused emissions of carbon dioxide from fossil fuel burning from 2000 to 2008 were higher than even the most pessimistic scenarios developed by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC).⁸ Levels of carbon dioxide already in the atmosphere have locked in inevitable and dangerous levels of climate change.