4

Phase I

The Politics of Making Climate Mitigation a Policy Area

> Not so long ago the idea that global climate policy could exist would have seemed bizarre or simply nonsensical. The 'climate' was effectively just patterns of weather over time (Corry 2014: 219)

4.1 Introduction: Early Politicisations

This chapter sets out and explores the first political phase of climate mitigation – that of establishing it as a global public policy area. Doing so was no mean feat given that climate change was not recognised as an issue outside of extremely narrow scientific communities prior to the 1970s, let alone on any formal political agendas. Politicising mitigation in this fundamental sense, of making it subject to collective public choice, involved a range of other, related politicisations: raising the salience of climate change beyond climate science; making it subject to formal political debate and deliberation; and identifying compromises to bring parties together behind formal political agreement. These complex processes of establishing a new public policy issue, and setting associated goals, represent the most important step in the political cycle because, without it, no policy can be enacted (Andrews-Speed & Zhang 2019). In these ways, this chapter offers a novel exploration of politicisation as the process of moving an issue from relative obscurity onto formal legislative agendas.

The 1970s to 1990s are widely considered to be the period when climate emerged as a political issue (Paterson 1996; Schreurs 2004; Falkner 2008; Vogler 2016; Böcher 2023), hence the focus in this chapter on this timeframe. By 1989 only three countries had committed to stabilising or limiting greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions: Sweden, the Netherlands, and Norway, whilst in the early 1990s, 12 more OECD countries followed suit (Paterson 1996). The analytical focus in this chapter, however, is on UN political debates, struggles, and processes aimed at reaching a climate agreement as exemplifying this early, contentious phase

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of constructing climate mitigation. UN debates were, in turn, informed by and reflected various sets of interests, ideas, and narratives at national and sub-national scales. Rather than just exploring pro-mitigation ideas to see how they informed the agreement reached, the analysis below is structured according to the different sets of narratives articulated by both pro- and anti-mitigation coalitions. This is a more accurate reflection of the breadth of UN debates, of how fraught the struggle to get climate mitigation onto the global agenda was, but this approach also provides details of how each group narrated and framed climate mitigation.

In the 1990s, after decades of competitive struggles over whether to govern climate change (Corry & Jørgensen 2015), a series of breakthroughs occurred. By the mid-1990s a range of new climate research programmes and global, national, and local governance bodies had been created. Importantly, agreement had been reached on the establishment of the first global climate legal instrument, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), and a protocol, Kyoto, to operationalise it. At Kyoto, 41 nation states, the highest global emitters, committed to quantified GHG emissions reduction (Falkner 2008; Vogler 2016). This chapter builds on Steven Bernstein's emphasis on political compromise as central to reaching sufficient agreement to proceed with climate mitigation policy (Bernstein 2011: 371). Drawing, however, from insights into compromise as an integral aspect of politics as collective choice and agency, outlined in Chapter 3, this chapter places a greater emphasis on the role of UN negotiations in finding common ground sufficient to create a new, global policy area. What is just as important is the specific nature of compromises reached – around emissions, growth, justice, and approaches to policy – as they set the stage for future phases of climate mitigation politics. This chapter explores each compromise position, including their significance for this and future phases of climate mitigation politics.

In terms of understanding the nature of compromises, this chapter argues that they are bound by pro- and anti-mitigation narratives. In explaining the nature of the specific compromises struck, I build partly on the work of scholars that have explored the specific sets of ideas, interests, and institutions that informed global debates about climate change during this period (Bernstein 2001; Schreurs 2004; Newell & Paterson 2010; Garner 2011; Bäckstrand & Lövbrand 2016; Vogler 2016; Newell 2021). From this research we can form more specific understandings of how discursive struggles shaped compromises. Climate scientists had started to argue that global warming resulted from human actions, such as burning fossil fuels, thereby contesting what had previously been a normal side effect of economic growth – GHG emissions (Bernstein 2001). Science, however, offered few ideas about how to formulate, and pass, public policy solutions – hence it was a politically limited framing (Fagan 2023). With time, the increasingly

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dominant, market-friendly ideas of mainstream orthodox economics, co-opted by powerful incumbent political and financial actors, helped to fill the policy void. From this perspective, then, groups articulating 'reformist' approaches to climate mitigation, implying less of a break with existing institutions, won the debate against those recommending more radical sets of social and political changes (Bernstein 2001; Garner 2011; Vogler 2016).

This chapter sides with this interpretation of events but offers a slight re-reading of the politics of mitigation during this time. I present the debates that shaped compromise as far broader than just those between neoliberally informed 'reformist' and more 'radical' environmentalists, partly by widening the analytical focus to take account of non-elite narratives and domestic politics and institutions. This recognises active inter-relationships between global and domestic scales and the relevance of domestic politics, particularly in high-emitting countries, to global climate deliberations (see also Schreurs 2004). Indeed, if one considers this broader institutional and deliberative context, then getting so many countries to agree to making climate mitigation a matter for formal global governance was a significant achievement. It reflected a variety of successful politicisations: in salience terms as climate change had been established as an issue caused by human actions; in terms of the development of scientific knowledge capacities; and in terms of the ability of the UN to broker agreement amongst often bitterly divided groups.

The analysis in this chapter suggests that although the compromise position reached was not what many early climate mitigation protagonists had suggested, it did successfully frame GHG emissions as dangerous whilst also, through compromise, reflecting the very broad spectrum of pro- and anti-climate change ideas and interests at global and domestic scales. Put this way, instead of capitulation by environmentalists, it represented a middle position on GHG emissions – between denial of their dangers, or that they are anthropogenic, and more radical approaches towards delivering reductions. At the same time, compromise positions, as discussed in Section 4.4, were also depoliticising to the extent that they narrowed the scope of policy solutions and sidelined debates about limits to growth.

4.2 Politicising Narratives: Constructing Mitigation

This section explores the ideas and interests articulated by those that contested the high GHG emissions status quo and sought to drive political change in favour of climate change mitigation. At this early stage, of course, climate change and any recommendation of mitigating it needed to be articulated and understood with the intention of realising wider acceptance. In the very early days, this would have centred on constructing climate change as an issue; later it included more

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solution-oriented framings (Corry & Jørgensen 2015). Pro-mitigation advocacy coalitions were responsible for making the case for mitigation – so it matters deeply what ideas and knowledge they based their arguments on.

Arguments that climate change was a problem requiring political action started within niche, often élite, communities. These initially included climate scientists, domestic and transnational environmental civil society groups, and, with time, a narrow group of committed policymakers and businesses. In traditional power relations terms, scientists and civil society movements might not be expected to successfully advocate for considerable changes to deeply embedded structures. However, this period was also one of quite considerable, and growing, knowledge authority associated with 'objective' scientific knowledge. This coincided neatly with rapid growth in scientific knowledge about climate change. The 1950s to 1970s period was also marked by the emergence of mass forms of environmental activism in many OECD countries and, to some extent, transnationally, and of global forms of environmental governance.

To reiterate, in the 1970s there was no international climate change regime, whilst tentative moves at the global level, organised around the UN in the 1980s, needed to both attract and gain the support of increasing numbers of nation states, their politicians, and their publics. Climate deliberations were not initially discreet from, but took place as part of, wider environmental debates. These took place in an increasingly multilateral global political system – hence the UN became the natural 'home' for environmental negotiations. The UN was, of course, not politically neutral – it reflected political norms of the time. Global governance institutions established during the post-World War II period, of which the UN was but one, were largely Western funded, and often US dominated. Global problems, like access to capital, growth, and by the 1970s environment, meant multilateral solutions – and intergovernmental organisations (IGOs) were called upon to debate, reach decisions, and set new norms. As IGOs tended to govern specific 'issue areas' (Vogler 2016: 15), when understandings of environment and then climate change issues grew, it became clear that a new body needed to be established, but under the umbrella of existing organisational structures.

Climate change took a long time to emerge as a separate issue. It was discussed, but in a very marginal sense, as part of the first United Nations Conference on the Human Environment (UNCHE), in 1972. At this stage science had unearthed a bleak vision for society, with an associated recommendation to limit growth to prevent catastrophic environmental degradation (Meadows et al. 1972). Policy solutions articulated at UN events at the time, with some emphasis on state regulation and taxation and the importance of equity, fit with still relatively dominant Keynesian economic ideas (Bernstein 2001; Newell & Paterson 2010). The first World *Climate* Conference, attended largely by scientific experts, did not take

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place until 1979 (Falkner 2008), with the second World Conference only in 1990 at which the first Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report was launched (Jackson 2007).

This period had also been marked by the rise of the Soviet Union and the Cold War – where multilateral institutions were split between the Western and Soviet spheres of influence. The 1991 collapse of the Soviet Union marked an end to the Cold War, whilst the 1992 Treaty of Maastricht allowed for the formal creation of the European Union (EU). Many former members of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) were brought into the EU's sphere of influence. It was widely claimed that the Cold War had been 'won' by the West, whilst a growing consensus was building around liberal internationalism and neoliberal economic ideas (Bernstein 2001; Victor 2016; Vogler 2016). This era was also marked by a growing preference for 'evidence based' policy, 'objective' (quantifiable) evidence, and least-cost policy (Hay 2007: 99). It coincided with the rise of Washington Consensus influence in IGOs, like the World Bank and IMF (Bernstein 2001: 71). Environment and climate change were seen by some as part of cementing this new world order, as underpinned by Western-led global governance (Vogler 2016: 138).

It was within this context that the first formal UN environmental debates took place. Given the degree to which it remained a niche subject, discussed by a very limited group of people, climate change needed still at this stage to be more widely articulated as a credible concern. This was no easy task given the range of other global issues vying for attention at the time. Advocates for climate mitigation had much work to do to raise awareness and gain political salience as a basis upon which to build political change. They did this, initially, with scant capacity within a world where high GHG emissions had become normalised, relying on every resource available to them to grow their capacity to influence and extend their arguments beyond niche communities. By the early 1980s, however, the small institutionalisations of the environment as a policy issue area offered advocates for mitigation some support in the form of more evidence for action, useful precedents in policy terms, and new networks and ideas about how to reach wider audiences.

4.2.1 The Science: Salience and Knowledge Capacity

Scientific knowledge about climate change, developed over the preceding decades, is widely viewed as crucial to its emergence as an issue area (Bulkeley & Newell 2015; Corry & Jørgensen 2015; Vogler 2016). It explicitly underpinned the capacity of climate mitigation advocates to articulate a credible argument for change and raise its salience. Nineteenth-century studies had identified

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a 'greenhouse effect', whilst Eunice Newton Foote's research had found that the heating effect of the sun was highest in the cylinder containing carbon dioxide (CO_2) (History 2023). In 1938, G. S. Callender identified higher concentrations of CO_2 in the Earth's atmosphere than in the previous century, with fossil fuel use accounting for the difference (Bernstein 2001: 161). During the 1950s and 1960s, the development of computer-based models became increasingly central to climate-related science (Newell & Paterson 2010; Franta 2021). By 1958, Charles Keeling's systemic measurements of atmospheric CO_2 provided the first unequivocal proof that CO_2 concentrations were rising, whilst a later project, run by Gilbert Plass, concluded that doubling CO_2 concentrations would increase global temperatures by 3–4˚C (Weart 2008).

Much of the development of early research, within meteorology and environmental science communities, had taken place within European, and later US, organisations (Mercer & Simpson 2023). The US concentrated some efforts on knowledge building in the 1970s when climate research was brought together under the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), and in 1978, the US passed the National Climate Program Act, which created the National Climate Program Office (Mildenberger 2021). Ironically, given that US scientific communities had been crucial in the early decades of making the case for climate change (Bulkeley 2016: 24), it has subsequently sat as often on the side of anti- as pro-mitigation debates.

The 1980s and 1990s then saw a more explicitly global effort to develop detailed and rigorous capacities to understanding climate change, its causes, and its effects. This included institution-building by the World Meteorological Organisation (WMO) (Jackson 2007; Newell & Paterson 2010), which set up the independent Advisory Group on Greenhouse Gases (AGGG) in 1986 (Bernstein 2001: 164). The establishment of the IPCC, in 1988, contributed towards a considerable increase in deliberative and knowledge capacity. It increasingly reflected and communicated the now-established anthropogenic climate change consensus.

Findings from this growing research base included vital details of the impact of global warming on ecosystems and plant and animal species, as well as human societies (Falkner 2008), and, just as importantly, the urgency of acting now and not waiting for significant climate change to be demonstrated (WCED 1987). Proposed solutions included improved monitoring capabilities, further investments in climate knowledge capacities, reductions in causative gases, and adaptation (ibid.). In line with this, the 1988 Canadian government-sponsored Toronto Climate Conference called for worldwide CO_2 emissions to be reduced by 20% by 2005, and long term by 50% (Falkner 2008; Franta 2021). Although by this stage climate conferences had expanded to include a broader range of actors, some see this as the high point of scientific leadership (Bernstein 2001: 164). The

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IPCC's second assessment report was seen as vital in building salience and political momentum in the run-up to the UN Kyoto negotiations (Falkner 2008: 115; Newell & Paterson 2010: 18).

A range of scholars, and practitioners of the time, have already pointed to the fundamental role of scientific knowledge in establishing both the salience and credibility of climate change as an issue (Paterson 1996; Bernstein 2001; Schreurs 2004; Jackson 2007; Vogler 2016). This is partly, see below, because it provided the evidence base for taking immediate action. Climate science, in turn, was more widely communicated by environmental movements, pro-mitigation NGOs, and policymakers at domestic and UN negotiation scales (Dryzek et al. 2003; Schreurs 2004). The scientific framing of climate change as a global problem requiring a global solution also provided a sound basis for the concentration of deliberation at the UN scale (Falkner 2008; Vogler 2016).

Climate science also fit well with increasingly accepted sets of Western-informed political ideals regarding the policy role of scientific knowledge, which supported this epistemic community's ability to frame climate issues for negotiation (Bernstein 2001). Scientific research had already underpinned the global rise of industrialisation and technologies and may have been complicit in denigrating other longer-standing, often Indigenous, forms of knowledge about relationships between humans and nature (Mercer & Simpson 2023). Climate science, and the increasing dominance of maths and modelling, shared a methodological language with neoliberal economics and was perceived as 'objective' and 'non-political' (Bernstein 2001; Stevenson et al. 2021). Growing credibility, in turn, underpinned new levels of salience amongst policymakers and some social groups. Indeed, once a person finds the scientific arguments about the *anthropogenic* nature of climate change and the range of negative outcomes credible, it infers some requirement to act politically via collective choice (see Paterson 1996: 30). These dynamic relationships between building deliberative capacities and the ability to raise the salience of a subject can be understood, then, as important aspects of processes of getting climate mitigation into policy agendas.

4.2.1.1 Limitations of Scientific Framings

Steven Bernstein takes the view that 1988 represented the 'high point' for the influence of 'independent' science (2001), partly because the targets set then were directly informed by findings by the science-based AGGG (2001: 164). Explanations of the relative 'drowning out' of the influence of environmental science in the years that followed tend to emphasise both traditional power relations and the growing awareness of the 'political stakes' involved in taking climate change action (Bernstein 2001: 167; Stoddard et al. 2022). I would also argue, however, that although strong at discovering and explaining why climate change

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is an issue, the non-political nature of scientific arguments limited their ability to frame climate mitigation, as a solution, in ways that make it actionable.

Such limits to science framings have much to do with language and a lack of connection to broader publics, forms of both social and deliberative depoliticisation. The language of 'likelihoods', that was used to express insights about climate change, was overly measured and equivocal during crucial periods when climate mitigation advocates were pushing to raise its salience. In the late 1980s, when the first climate change conferences were being held, climate change was still framed as a 'plausible and serious probability' (WCED 1987). The first IPCC report likewise used measured language (Falkner 2008). There are excellent reasons for this, reflecting good disciplinary practice in light of constant, and often aggressive, scrutiny. But for many powerful politicians, with responsibilities to address multiple policy issues, plausible was not perceived as strong enough to enact the necessary structural changes. At the same time, science framings were built through highly technical language that was seldom comprehensible to non-experts without translation of some kind and did little to connect to relevant social and political debates.

To increase public salience and delineate why people beyond expert scientific and environmental communities should care, some pro-mitigation groups turned over time to more recognisable social framings. Scientific, and transnational and civil society, narratives started to draw on ideas of justice, both intergenerational and in historic emissions terms, to broaden the appeal, particularly in developing countries (Hadden 2015). Securitising narratives were also used to raise the salience of climate change in the face of delays in agreement, and action, in the 1980s and 1990s – just as they are today (Deudney 1992; Vogler 2016; Kuzemko 2014; Dupont 2019; Fagan 2023). Indeed, the official theme of the 1988 Toronto Climate Conference was the changing atmosphere and implications for global security. This approach reflected the deep frustrations of climate scientists, and wider coalitions, to engender political action by other means – but also of the, for many, existential implications of not addressing climate change. Security and 'crisis' framings appeal to long-embedded views about the role of the state in providing security – hence making climate change a security issue also inferred a need for government action (Kuzemko 2014; Dupont 2019; Hulme et al. 2020).

Another important issue is that scientific communities tend not to have formal political agency or social licence to adopt new policy areas or adjudicate between political ideas and interests – they are not, after all, democratically elected to do so. They can, of course, be assigned specific roles by governments – in the guise of 'independent' institutions – but this can run the risk of diminishing social interaction features of politics (Kuzemko 2015). Further, climate science was then, and is still (Hoffmann 2024), lacking in specific knowledge or narratives about *how*

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to enact widespread, profound political, economic, and social change – elsewhere referred to as 'actionable knowledge' (Castree et al. 2014).

Science framings, then, were strong on raising salience and convincing us that climate change was an issue but less so on social solutions – only in the latest (2022) IPCC assessment reports did they start to engage with a fuller range of public policy solutions (Clift & Kuzemko 2024). Scientific perspectives are also, at best, naive when it comes to understanding political interests, ideas, distributional issues, and conflict. This leaves them in a weak position when it comes to addressing and/or overcoming them through finding sufficient compromise. Interestingly, then, although concepts of epistemic communities and policy paradigm change both suggest that those that successfully frame the issue should go on to design the solutions (Bernstein 2001; Kuzemko 2013), for advocates of climate mitigation a narrative turn was made from science to social perspectives.

4.2.2 Social and Media Framings: Connecting Science to People

Given the limitations of science framings, social intermediaries were needed to interpret anthropogenic climate change in ways that broader sections of the public could better relate to and understand. This is a form of politicisation in social interaction terms to the extent that it contributed towards broader capacities to understand this new issue area. In the 1970s and 1980s, environmental non-governmental organisations (ENGOs) played a role in connecting, amplifying, and explaining climate science (Newell & Paterson 2010; Bernstein 2001; Ciplet et al. 2015). These civil society actors had more experience in making cognitive and personal interest-based appeals and were more capable of making climate risks and likely societal outcomes more understandable through narrative visions of futures under conditions of global warming. ENGO resources, and capacity to reach more audiences, accumulated as membership grew, as more climate knowledge was developed, and by connecting transnationally, like the Climate Action Network formed in 1989.

There had emerged, in addition, climate 'leaders' that bridged the gap between science, generalist politicians, and sections of the public – some were scientists that had entered government, others ran high-profile global organisations, and/or became reasonably high-profile media figures (Paterson 1996; Bernstein 2001). This coincided with other activists constructing alternative, more sustainable visions for human activity – see, for example, Amory Lovins' popular ideas about alternative, 'soft', more democratic, and peaceful energy pathways (Lovins 1977). The soft energy pathway, articulated in 1977, inferred far higher levels of conservation and energy efficiency, decentralised energy accessible to more people, and renewable energy. The book was published at the time of oil

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shocks, when more people were aware of vulnerability to fossil fuel imports at high prices, to show that environmentally sustainable energy can also be socially sustainable (Newell 2021: 175). This and other quasi-popular books contributed to raising the public profile, and salience, of climate change, the need for mitigation, and possibilities for more sustainable energy systems (Bernstein 2001: 33; Newell 2021: 175).

Parts of the media too played a role in articulating the need for immediate action. In the US this converged around specific events, including coverage of Earth Day, when 20 million US citizens protested the destruction of the natural world, and of the first photos of Earth taken by astronauts, which made the finite nature of our shared planet clearer to many viewers (BBC 2023). There had also been coverage of the deteriorations in air quality, and their devastating and very visible effects, in many countries in the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s (Schreurs 2004). The 1980s then proved to be the hottest decade on record. As such, environmental, including weather, events represented an increasingly clear route through which scientific arguments could connect to wider publics and for societal engagement with climate issues (Vogler 2016: 138).

It is within these broad environmental movements that scientific narratives about the dangers of climate change and of the need for immediate action are echoed and amplified (Schreurs 2004; Falkner 2008; Ciplet et al. 2015; Newell 2021). The rise of Greenpeace, combining notions of sustainability with peace, is illustrative here. It was initially founded, in Canada in 1971, to oppose nuclear but throughout the 1970s and 1980s developed considerable expertise and public narratives on climate (Leggett 1990 in Falkner 2008: 101). Active collaboration and interconnections between environmental and scientific communities, both within and between countries, were vital to broadening the audience and raising salience (Schreurs 2004). For example, early political gains from environmental movements in the US gave legitimacy and support to the demands of Japanese environmental movements (Schreurs 2004: 45), whilst the authoritative nature of scientific knowledge lent credibility to ENGO arguments for change. In these early decades, ENGOs did much to reveal the extent to which existing public policy was inadequate, that mitigation strategies needed to be adopted, and, later, in holding governments to account (Ciplet et al. 2015: 155).

ENGOs also had communicative strategies that targeted business leaders and policymakers, often calling on politicians to take heed of climate science and act accordingly. Greenpeace explicitly set out to broaden its climate message to reach business audiences. One of its clear successes was its decision to approach insurance companies, in the early 1990s, to explain the serious implications of climate change for their business models – using risk as a narrative. These narratives struck a chord bringing some insurance companies, and

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their representative groups, into the pro-mitigation camp (Newell & Paterson 2010: 28). The narrative of climate risk has come to dominate how insurance firms, and more recently banks, incorporate climate change into their business planning. This is not to suggest that all businesses were either neutral or against mitigation before this time, the Club of Rome whose first report was 'Limits to Growth' included business representatives (Meadows et al. 1972), but that ENGOs were active in broadening the appeal.

4.2.3 Political Framings of Mitigation: Targets and Policies

Listening to the science and ENGO engagements did, under conditions of growing science knowledge authority, convince a range of politicians from different political parties in a range of countries that climate change was an issue that required action (Paterson 1996). Scientific narratives had made reasons for mitigation action apparent, but did not offer up much in the way of how to make mitigation a political reality – no tools of negotiation, routes to political agreement, or ideas about how to engender policy and social change. A range of somewhat different political narratives about how to negotiate a deal and appropriate mitigation solutions started, however, to fill this gap at UN and domestic levels. They suggested concrete solutions, albeit of different types, whilst the political institution of the UN provided the forum for deliberation and negotiation.

By the late 1980s, a strong coalition of countries in support of climate mitigation had started to form, including the European Community (EC),[1] Sweden, Germany, Canada, Costa Rica, the Netherlands, the UK, some least developed countries, and the Association of Small Island States (AOSIS), and to push for a global agreement. Interactions between specific representatives of regions and countries were also important – one example being the conversation between the UK Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher, and the President of the Maldives, which led to the UK adopting a climate leadership role (Paterson 1996: 34). For some key advocate countries, where climate change's electoral profile had grown, domestic political support played a formative role in their adoption of climate mitigation advocacy. This was the case in Germany in the late 1980s and early 1990s making it easier for German politicians and civil servants to strongly support both global and domestic action. In 1992, the German Advisory Council on Global Climate Change was set up, which invested resources and time in further developing climate research capacities (Schreurs 2004: 154). The EC came a little later to the position of mitigation protagonist, but they subsequently worked hard to push the agenda (Victor & Heller 2011; Vogler 2016).

[1] In 1993 the EC became EU.

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In terms of identifying and agreeing on political tools that might be effective in establishing mitigation, one of the early debates was around whether to set firm targets for emissions reduction or not. One of the clear outcomes of the 1988 Toronto Climate Conference had been the recommendation to reduce worldwide CO_2 emissions by 20% by 2005, and long term by 50% (Falkner 2008; Franta 2021). As will be seen below, this proposal caused a not insignificant amount of political backlash – not least from the US. In the run up to the UN Kyoto conference, the EU, UK, Germany, and AOSIS group advocated lower global emissions reduction targets: 10% below 1990 levels by 2005 and 15% by 2010 (Falkner 2008: 114).

There were several factors supporting the EU's position on emissions reduction. These included the expansion of the union, at the end of the Cold War, the perceived need to grow in international stature at the time when climate was becoming a global issue, and the identity of the community as a peace project (Vogler 2016: 138). Germany's position, and strong domestic support, was also critical – in 1990, it had already established a domestic emissions reduction target of 25–30% against 1987 levels by 2005 (Schreurs 2004: 151). The EU was also a core sponsor of allocating quantifiable reduction targets to specific countries and the EU as a separate entity within stated timeframes, later dubbed the 'targets and timetables' approach (Vogler 2016: 66). This approach aligned directly with scientific arguments about the need to reduce GHG emissions but would be applicable only to a limited range of countries to take historic emissions into account. In 1996 the EU also argued that a mean temperature rise of 2ºC represented the threshold of dangerous change, but for small island states this was unacceptably high (Vogler 2016: 40).

A second way to think about political narratives of this time period is to consider what perspectives dominated and how they informed different approaches to environmental policy – what Berstein refers to as the 'fit' between climate change and broader political institutions. Global political debates about climate mitigation had originally started in an era where Keynesian economic ideas dominated global, and many domestic, governing bodies and these shaped what solutions were deemed appropriate. In the 1970s and early 1980s, UN political framings of environmental policy had emphasised the role of public authority in securing action and leaned on political ideas associated with 'command-and-control' policies (Vogler 2016: 36). This included discussion around the need to: limit growth, levy carbon taxes to raise the cost of emitting, and bring in state regulations (Vogler 2016; Bernstein 2001; Newell & Paterson 2010). In the deliberations running up to Kyoto, Sweden, the Netherlands, the EU, and Japan all favoured carbon taxes, whilst Sweden and the Netherlands had already implemented them domestically (Falkner 2008: 104). In the mid-1980s, the standout environmental report 'Our Common Future' stresses (broadly) Keynesian and

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(re-)distributional ideas and related policies. These included increased flows of aid from international development banks; improved compensatory financing for commodity pricing to even out economic shocks; stronger bargaining positions for developing countries versus transnational corporations (TNCs); and improved technical transfer arrangements (WCED 1987: 67–91 in Bernstein 2001: 66).

Not all countries, of course, had agreed with the notion of command-and-control measures, as we will see below, whilst many large corporations articulated strongly against tax whilst also advocating voluntary measures (Falkner 2008: 104). Here, to some extent, neoliberal economic and business interests came together in the move away from state-led mitigation solutions. Indeed, the later rejection of carbon taxes at the UN level in preference for a recommendation to set up emissions trading schemes (ETSs) is an example of the influence of changing political ideas, as the shift from Keynesian to neoliberal dominance gained in momentum but also reflected some country and corporate interests. Proposals for emissions trading were first made in a paper by a UK-based economist, Michael Grubb, in 1989. Grubb's initial idea was that it would be both efficient and equitable – at a time when (cost-)efficiency was emerging as an important policy value (Newell & Paterson 2010: 29). It was envisaged as a mechanism to enable North-South transfers of funds and technology. The principle of *per capita* emissions would be used as the legitimate basis for allocation, which would mean that low emissions per capita countries would have a surplus to sell back to high emissions countries. Interestingly, early on, neither industrialised nor developing countries supported the proposal, the former as it implied financial transfers and the latter as it implied that they would have to reduce emissions (Newell & Paterson 2010: 26).

At the same time, the debate about climate policy tools was hotting up in the EU, which had been the key, large-scale supporter of carbon taxes. The notion of a carbon tax was seen as a 'step too far' for EU business communities, including the European Roundtable of Industrialists and the Union of Industrial Employer's Confederation in Europe, who clubbed together with US and UK business groups in opposition (Newell & Paterson 2010). Indeed, their attempts to thwart it were referred to, at the time, as 'the most ferocious lobbying ever seen in Brussels' (The Economist 1992 in Falkner 2008: 104). It mattered, in domestic politics terms, that carbon taxes had often proved unpopular with certain vocal societal groups, whilst some member states were reluctant to cede tax powers to the EU (Newell & Paterson 2010: 26). OECD countries had, anyway, become increasingly focused on economic efficiency and saw markets, including for emissions, as sufficient to produce efficiency whilst lowering emissions. The US was the first to formally propose emissions trading in 1996 (Newell & Paterson 2010: 27), supported by business groups insisting on flexibility and avoiding strict limits. As such, again,

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the ETS fits with the newly dominant ideology and with the interests of increasingly dominant business and financial actors (Newell & Paterson 2010: 27).

4.2.4 Justice Framings: Limiting Mitigation to Industrialised Nations

It was understood early in the process of UN deliberations that developing economies needed to be parties to any agreement – not least given BRICS countries' population sizes and forecast growth in absolute emissions. It was also considered necessary to include as many world nations as possible for credibility reasons and to assuage domestic audiences in OECD nations. Many developing economies were strongly in favour of climate action, in recognition of the severe implications. Most, however, were prepared to commit to a global framework only on the justice-based condition that it should be industrialised nations, with historic responsibilities, that should lead the way in emissions reduction. Indira Gandhi's 1972 speech encapsulates this framing – she recognised environmental issues but reiterated that she was not in a position to suggest to citizens living in precarious conditions that India needs to spend money protecting oceans, rivers, and the air within the context of competition for scarce public resources (Ramakrishna 1992).

In the mid-1970s, the world was very unequal on most metrics, including daily income per capita – following centuries of colonialisation and extraction. Most low- and middle-income economies were, unsurprisingly, focused on economic development, based largely on the industrialisation-heavy model that the Global North, including the Soviet Union, had adopted. There had been significant borrowing in the 1970s and 1980s related to these growth strategies, and in the 1980s, the Latin American debt crisis exacerbated global inequalities (Newell & Paterson 2010: 21). This was also the case as, increasingly, borrowing was undertaken on 'Washington Consensus' conditionalities set out by global financial institutions dominated by industrialised nations, but also badly exacerbated by the oil shocks of the 1970s and early 1980s, given that most developing economies were importers of fossil fuels.

Clear differences between positions taken by developing and developed economies were emerging (Dasgupta 2019). Early on in the process of climate negotiations, advanced developing economies, like China and Brazil, had relatively low emissions per capita. But on an absolute basis, by the mid-1990s, their emissions were starting to grow quite rapidly, not least as industrialisation required high fossil fuel energy inputs. It became clear that developing economies with low historic responsibilities and shared interests in continuing industrial-based development should group together to avoid having to commit to limits on emissions. India and Brazil emerged as early leaders in putting forward

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a developing economy position focused on specific equity narratives (Vogler 2016; Sengupta 2019). In the run up to the Stockholm UNCHE in 1972, G77 countries had expressed concern over the narrow environmental focus on issues such as population growth and urbanisation and strongly objected to the 'limits to growth' approach (Bernstein 2001: 33). They demanded, through the UN, the inclusion of development issues and, by 1971, UN General Assembly resolutions directly linked environmental action and sustainable development. It was agreed that economic development plans should be compatible with a sound ecology and that 'adequate environmental conditions can be best ensured by the promotion of development' (UNGA Res. 2849 in Bernstein 2001: 33). Notably, the US and UK voted against this, whilst other industrialised nations abstained, already marking out disagreement along industrialised-developing economy lines.

These dividing lines continued into the negotiations that preceded the Rio Earth Summit of 1992, where the UNFCCC was formally established, and the UN Kyoto COP of 1997. The shared suspicion persisted that environmental rules would be used as a strategy to disrupt developing economy industrialisation and social development, referred to as environmental colonialism (Agarwal & Narain 2019). There was also a view, expressed by Indian representatives, that developed countries were using scientific data that was not politically neutral (Raghunandan 2019). They claimed that a study, published in the US by the World Resources Institute (WRI) in collaboration with the UN, was overly focused on emissions associated with deforestation and methane from livestock and underestimated the effects of CO_2 from fossil fuels (Agarwal & Narain 2019; Raghunandan 2019). India developed its own research to refute this report (Raghunandan 2019).

The 1989 UN General Assembly Resolution 44/207 had called on member states to urgently prepare a 'framework convention' – and India started to develop its position early. It hosted the 'Conference of Select Developing Countries on Global Environmental Issues' in New Delhi in 1990, where it secured general developing economy support for its position on climate – in essence, that they should not bear the burden of climate action. The principles were that the industrialised world was responsible for high emissions; that developing world emissions were relatively low, and they needed to develop; and that any formal agreement should also provide for technology transfer and developing country funds (Sengupta 2019). This was the position taken by most developing economies, albeit some (notably AOSIS) took stronger pro-mitigation positions (Dasgupta 2019). Core to the claim about relatively low emissions from BRICS countries was the argument, like Michael Grubb's, that measurement should be on the basis of *per capita* rather than absolute emissions.

Although the US, under George Bush Senior's presidency, had objected to these principles being part of the UNFCCC text, various proposals were put forward

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that built on them (Vogler 2016: 37). The proposals were that developing economies should not bear 'legal responsibility' for climate mitigation; any voluntary measures adopted should be consistent with national development and associated costs would need to be met by the developed world; and there should be low emissions technology transfer (Dasgupta 2019; Raghunandan 2019). Importantly, the negotiating position set out by India also called on industrialised nations to accept time-bound emission reduction obligations (ibid.). In a similar approach, Brazil called for 'relative responsibility' – specifically that Annex 1 countries should reduce emissions by 30% below 1990 by 2020 – that is, in relation to their accumulated, historical responsibilities at that time (Vogler 2016: 96).

The emphasis on action being taken by industrialised countries encapsulated notions of justice as international distributions of burdens and responsibilities (Sovacool & Dworkin 2014). This, in turn, evoked the language of mitigation policy as a cost, which was also heavily used by industrialised economy groups contesting climate action, and assumptions about trade-offs between economic and environmental security objectives (Khan et al. 2021; Marti & Puertas 2022 – both in Maltby & Misik 2024: 153). To the extent that UNFCCC frameworks took account of these justice framings, for example, through adopting the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities, this represents some capacity for the UN process to incorporate different interests.

4.3 Framing Contestations of Climate Mitigation

Any suggestions of significant changes to how economies are organised are going to engender opposition which would need to be addressed if agreement is to be reached. This section explores three of the most successful sets of arguments articulated against mitigation – that acted as a strong counterbalance to growing knowledge about and acceptance of climate change as an issue. In a way, the scale of these counter-narratives is proof of the success of early pro-mitigation arguments – to the extent that so much time and effort was put behind creating contestations. In another, of course, they are articulations on behalf of those, many of them powerful global actors, that considered mitigation to be against their interests. New counter-narratives formed part of clever strategies, paid for by actors with considerable resources to dedicate to anti-mitigation campaigns, which are mirrored in mitigation debates today. There is some emphasis in the analysis below on US-based campaigns, partly because it was by far the highest global emitter, which made their agreement to mitigate vital, but also because it was the global hegemonic power of the time with far-reaching influence.

Countries that most openly contested a global mitigation agreement were those with embedded high emissions material interests and those with considerable

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'rents' from fossil fuels. In fossil fuel exporting nations, revenues from high emissions sectors contribute to tax income, foreign exchange revenues, and provide direct contributions to political parties (Blondeel & Bradshaw 2021). Many fossil fuel-producing countries have benefitted considerably from existing high emissions systems and practices but stand to lose the most under conditions of profound change. Some have used their privileged access to high-value, but fixed and finite, fossil fuel assets as a source of global power and influence (Strange 1994). Saudi Arabia, Russia, and the US, using data from the fossil fuel industry, combined to block calls for emissions reduction in 1990, whilst at the Rio Summit the US articulated a position against targets and timetables (Falkner 2008: 103). In advance of Kyoto, Saudi Arabia exploited its position within the G77, and relations with international oil companies, to demand compensation to fund the diversification of their economies (Vogler 2016: 76). It is important to note that the interests of fossil fuel producers, countries and companies alike, are also aligned with the embedded assumption that economic development should be achieved via industrialisation. Arguments about the economic centrality of fossil fuels had been well-rehearsed during the, then still recent, 1970s energy crises (Jones 1980).

Political contestation of mitigation has also been led by international oil companies (IOCs) and national oil companies (NOCs). Not only do agreements to reduce emissions threaten their core interests but also clean energy economic opportunities tend not to come anywhere near matching those enjoyed from fossil fuels whilst the costs of decommissioning, for example, of gas infrastructures, are high (Falkner 2008; Blondeel & Bradshaw 2021; Christophers 2022). Of course, incumbent high emissions interests spread far beyond fossil fuel companies. Many corporations in the decades preceding Kyoto, were increasingly reliant upon fossil fuels – including electric utilities, industry, and manufacturing firms. Whilst many shareholders, pension funds, commercial and central banks had vested interests in high emissions via investments.

In the aftermath of the Toronto Climate Conference, when it became clear that climate was developing into an accepted global political issue, various lobby groups were established with the explicit aim of derailing mitigation (Newell & Paterson 2010; Grasso 2019). The Global Climate Coalition (GCC), an alliance of 40 corporations with fossil fuel and other anti-mitigation interests, including European companies with US subsidiaries, became the world's first dedicated anti-climate lobbying group. They had high degrees of influence (Falkner 2008: 102; Newell & Paterson 2010; Franta 2021), partly because they represented a large portion of US GDP across the petroleum, utilities, manufacturing, mining, car, and steel sectors (Newell & Paterson 2010: 36). They had become a significant actor in the negotiations running up to the establishment of the UNFCCC, at the Rio Summit, and were increasingly treated as actors in their own right,

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alongside governments (Vogler 2016: 62). The most actively engaged against change, like Exxon Mobil and ENI senior management, already had access to information about climate change, which they supressed even as they argued against it (Cohen 2020; Franta 2021; see also Kenner & Heede 2021; Garner 2011: 106). Anti-mitigation communication strategies were often aimed domestic and international audiences.

There were, however, some divisions within pro-emissions groups, which grew over time. For example, some European incumbents, like Shell and BP, recognised climate change, whilst BP left the GCC, and business anti-climate mitigation groups fragmented post-Rio, in run up to Kyoto (Falkner 2008; Newell & Paterson 2010). Any deal struck would have to take advantage of these splits by articulating solutions acceptable to enough groups formerly sceptical about the merits of mitigation.

4.3.1 Action is Premature, the Science is Too Uncertain

Narratives based on uncertainty and denying the purpose of new mitigation policy were central to many campaigns. In 1983, the US National Academy of Sciences warned that continued fossil fuel use would have dire consequences, but a group of influential economists counter-argued on the basis that global warming might not be that bad (Franta 2021). Others, like the GCC, argued that climate change is not anthropogenic, and therefore that political action cannot have any mitigating effects (Rheem 1996 in Franta 2021). However, like early responses to demands to protect the ozone layer, many started to pursue a strategy of pointing to the limits of, or actively undermining, climate science to evidence their positions on denial. Even as these narratives opened climate science up to question, albeit based on very one-sided information, this was one of the more severe depoliticising narratives in that it denied any reason for making mitigation subject to collective choice.

Over time, this narrative converged around the dangers of pursuing climate mitigation on the basis that the science was still too uncertain. Energy and industrial groups, who had invested in creating advocacy and policy teams to communicate anti-climate messages, actively picked up on the sometimes-tentative language of climate science to caution against rushing into action until the main scientific issues had been 'settled' (Falkner 2008: 101). Similarly, in 1989 the US sided initially with the USSR and China in framing Dutch, German, and Swedish calls to stabilise CO_2 emissions by 2000 and reduce emissions by 20% by 2005, as 'premature' (Schreurs 2004: 150). This was accompanied by an expansion in the construction and weaponisation of more specific narratives of uncertainty designed to undermine the credibility of specific scientific groups, including the IPCC.

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The key was to exploit any uncertainties or tentative language in documents produced by them (Franta 2021). Climate science became the target for anti-mitigation groups given how important knowledge authority had been in building credibility, salience, and political support.

This approach was soon bolstered by strategies of producing *alternative* climate science. This involved giving a platform to the work of known climate sceptics to directly refute the work of the IPCC (Garner 2011: 106). This strategy was similar to that taken by tobacco firms who had funded their own scientists to convince the public that smoking harms were unproven (Cohen 2020; Franta 2021). Indeed, a handbook had already been produced in 1978 which set out how to undermine science in the service of business interests (Franta 2021). This strategy was boosted by privileged access to the media at the press conferences put on, and paid for, by industry to announce the results of their anti-mitigation research (ibid.). Similar narratives and strategies remain in place today – presidential election campaigns of Jair Bolsonario and Donald Trump and the Brexit campaign in the UK all used social media to undermine the credibility of scientists and 'experts' (Marquardt et al. 2022).

These were powerful narratives in political and public terms. For members of the public, especially those who remained undecided on climate change, it became more problematic to agree to significant change, particularly if that involved higher costs, if the evidence for action was uncertain. Indeed, in the words of Andy Stirling, few strategies have been more "powerfully self-fulfilling, than the ways incumbent interests configured 'scientific' knowledges such as to condition wider social expectations over what is 'realistic' or 'unrealistic' as directions for … change" (2014b: 86). The narrative of scientific uncertainty was explicitly used by the US as part of the debate in the United Nations Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (INC), established to agree on Kyoto terms, in support of its opposition to the EU's drive for quantifiable emissions reduction targets (Schreurs 2004: 151). The US delegation had been instructed to support only a weak, voluntary framework convention (Falkner 2008: 103), whilst President Bush Senior refused to attend the Rio conference if emissions targets were to be included in the framework convention (Schreurs 2004: 152). They were joined in opposition to global targets by Japan, Canada, Switzerland and oil-producing countries.

4.3.2 Climate Action Is Too Expensive

A second, equally powerful narrative set out a battleground choice between environmental action and the economy (Schreurs 2004: 60). This framing highlighted mitigation policy as costly, whilst ignoring the negative economic effects

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of inaction. It was arguably initiated by the US but found broad purchase. Whilst pre-1988 most countries had viewed climate as a scientific and environmental problem, the US, from the start, viewed it from an explicitly economic perspective (Bernstein 2001: 164). President Bush Senior's administration favoured a deregulatory approach to environmental matters, like Reagan's before (Falkner 2008: 103). The US adopted what they termed a 'no regrets' approach whereby any environmental policy adopted could only pose minimal costs to the economy, with a keen eye on industrial competitiveness in fossil fuel and car industries (Schreurs 2004: 151). The US White House had set up its own environmental committee, the White House Domestic Policy Council (WHDPC), to prevent the State Department or the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) from moving faster than it desired. It prioritised measuring economic costs and cost-benefit calculations (Bernstein 2001: 164), in line with wider economic policy orthodoxies of the time.

Many corporations had expressed concerns about the business costs of climate mitigation (Meckling 2011), both in terms of lost opportunities and of meeting new regulations and targets. This underpinned, for many, stated preferences for flexible and voluntary measures (Falkner 2008: 94). A clear strategy then emerged to pit one set of experts, pro-mitigation climate scientists, against another, neoliberal economists. From the early 1990s onwards, economic consultants were hired by the oil and gas industry, and the George Bush Senior administration, to estimate the costs of various proposed mitigation policies (Franta 2021). They used models that inflated policy costs without taking account of any economic benefits of mitigation policy, or the many costs associated with climate impacts.

This framing was repeatedly used to undermine mitigation politics in the US (Franta 2021). In the run up to the Rio Summit, the US Department of Energy released a report stating that the 20% reduction in emissions, put forward at Toronto, would require a carbon tax of $500 billion per ton (Bradley et al. 1991 in Franta 2021: 4). The American Petroleum Industry (API)-funded report of the same year claimed that there would be no economic benefits until the year 2100 and that climate damage would be limited to no more than 0.5% GDP (Franta 2021). Whilst significant resources and investment were put behind producing these cost claims, it is noteworthy that similar funds were not being spent on calculating the economic and social costs of climate change – indeed not for some time to come.

The focus on policy costs, interestingly, was also taken up by the IPCC, which, in its attempts to include social science in its second assessment report, had reached out to economics to inform the WGIII report, which deals with climate mitigation. Again, under US influence, WGIII research became somewhat focused on assessing the economic costs of climate mitigation policy according

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to cost–benefit analyses of environmental problems. Analysis used to predict costs of an international climate treaty – that it would hit developed economy GDP by about 3.5% and developing countries by about 1.75% – was presented at the 1996 UN climate conference (Franta 2021). Their cost estimates were subsequently taken up by other countries that had not had time or resources to dedicate to making such a calculation (ibid.). This indicates the importance both of having capacities to create and communicate mitigation frames and of first-mover advantages in mitigation policy knowledge. The mitigation policy cost framing has had widespread and enduring appeal and shapes assumptions built into net zero scenarios used by the IPCC still today (Clift & Kuzemko 2024). This is depoliticising to the extent that it has for decades limited the capacity for deliberating and understanding the full extent of benefits and costs associated with climate mitigation.

4.3.3 Mitigation Is Bad for Ordinary People

A third, closely related, framing was utilised to counter the popular upswing in environmental groups of the 1970s/1980s and, thereby, to undermine arguments for climate action on the basis of democratic support. In social inclusion terms, this is an interesting strategy – it recognises the importance of citizens within democracies and seeks to mobilise groups that feel marginalised behind a countermovement – not unlike many right-wing populist strategies today. As discussed in Chapter 3, the struggle for mitigation has been shaped by which narratives broader populations hear, connect with, and believe on climate change and, indeed, by popular understanding of the policies that can be pursued to reduce emissions. It matters, then, where people access such information, how it is framed in relation to their lived experiences, and who provides it. Much as more visible environmental damages had supported the growth of environmental movements by making it more tangible, so too had the degree to which high emissions practices had become part of everyday lives shaped views on how difficult it might be to mitigate. It is this tangible notion that narratives about mitigation being harmful to ordinary people seek to engender and speak to.

Mobil Corporation enlisted a campaign of telling Americans that they would lose jobs and face a reduced quality of life (Mobil Corporation 1997). Such narratives hit home for employees of high-emissions industries – but also for those who enjoyed high emissions, for example car, cultures. These were, of course, partial stories that, again, ignored jobs benefits associated with creating new, low-emissions industries, and made no mention that the research informing Mobil's claims had been funded by the American Petroleum Institute (API). Like cost-based narratives, this framing has stood the test of time – with strong echoes

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in election campaigns of the populist far right today that frame climate mitigation as harmful to the interests of ordinary working people (Lockwood 2018; Marquardt et al. 2022). Recent research on the politics of mitigation positions these arguments as a form of securitisation whereby accepted ways of life, the norms and values of dominant social groupings, are framed as under threat from climate mitigation (McLaren & Corry 2023).

Such negative framings of the market, economic, and job implications of mitigation were further augmented by framings of mitigation as premature and associated questions about the common sense of taking action (Falkner 2008; Newell & Paterson 2010; Franta 2021). In the run up to Kyoto, a significant amount of money was invested in undermining mitigation – targeted specifically at citizens. Western Fuels Association and Edison Electric Institute, for example, founded the deliberately misleadingly titled 'Information Council for the Environment', which ran a $500,000 campaign to 'reposition global warming as theory, not fact' (Newell & Paterson 2010: 39). The citizen-focused campaigns, 'The Cooler Heads Coalition' and 'Coalition for Vehicle Choice', spent $13 million on campaigns to discredit both the Kyoto Protocol specifically and climate change as an issue (ibid.).[2] Their strategy was to focus on schools, local media, and 'middle America', widely distributing leaflets claiming that any climate change experienced was natural and that burning coal and oil is a good thing given the energy, prosperity, and jobs that it provides (Newell & Paterson 2010: 39). The 'American Energy Alliance', formed by the API, developed an 'influence campaign' focused on the costs of mitigation directed at columnists and TV hosts (Morgan 1996 in Franta 2021: 7), whilst the GCC also ran a major multi-media, newspaper, radio, and television campaign to discredit mitigation (Falkner 2008: 119).

Another well-used narrative, articulated by anti-regulatory groups against emissions controls (Meckling 2011), drew on the powerful combination of popular anti-regulation, anti-government ideas, and of framings of climate action as costly. Painting the IPCC as market interference or "government by stealth" stirred up emotions in those that believed that markets should be free of political intervention (Lorenzetti et al. 1996 in Franta 2021). The use of an 'anti-regulatory' stance was seen as having contributed towards keeping binding emissions reductions out of the UN Framework Convention prior to Kyoto (Falkner 2008: 109). Anti-regulatory sentiments were, and still are, popular in many Anglo-Saxon countries, which is partly why this form of mitigation contestation was interpreted as being directly linked to popularised neoclassical

[2] It is interesting how these groups are named – 'Cooler Heads' infers rational thinking, in line with neoclassical economic concepts, and 'Coalition for Vehicle Choice' inferring (a) that choice is a 'good' thing, and (b) that a lack of choice would emerge if governments were to bring in mitigation policy in transport.

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economic ideas (Antonio & Brulle 2011). Any political attempt to restrict business (i.e., place controls on fossil fuels) was seen by many as tantamount to an attack on free markets and individual rights (ibid).

To the extent that pro-mitigation coalitions, and climate scientists, felt that they had to respond to this variety of contestations, the wide communication of anti- and pro-mitigation framings at this stage tended to reduce any available space for more positive articulations of mitigation strategies, pathways, or policies. That a positive societal outcome will proceed from reducing emissions is mainly only inferred in pro-mitigation framings that are otherwise focused on avoiding harms, whilst anti-mitigation framings consciously destroy space for deliberation of positive socio-economic outcomes.

4.4 Agreement, Compromises, and Policy-Political Implications

Given the range of pro- and anti-mitigation ideas that had been narrated, a global political agreement could only be reached with considerable degrees of compromise. At the start of this process, radical scientific and environmental ideas were debated within relatively niche circles of interested parties without too much contestation but with time were opened up to a far wider range of actors. This move has been interpreted by some as a somewhat regretful moving of climate from a scientific to a political issue (Bernstein 2001). From the view of politicisation set out in Chapter 3, however, climate mitigation could not have remained a 'scientific' issue – the support of other sections of society, elite or otherwise, was required in the process of making it an actionable global political issue. Hence the exposure of climate science to wider social deliberation. Given the range of interests and ideas outlined above, the political choice that emerged was between reaching compromises that could take some account of the broad spectrum of narratives and having no global climate agreement at all (Bellamy et al. 2011).

Politicisation in collective choice terms, as set out in Chapter 3, suggests that agreement needs to be reached amongst competing interests for new public policy goals to be adopted and policies formulated. Compromise is understood as a political process wherein the agents involved adapt their "position to make it compatible with others in order to reach an agreement and to embark on a course of action" (Bernstein 2011: 371). Whereas Bernstein applies the notion of compromise in a neo-Gramscian sense, to suggest that climate compromises reflected the position of hegemonic forces, including the US and global energy corporations, here I interpret it as a vital aspect of processes of reaching political agreement between opposing groups. Again, that there were stark differences between groups is a normal part of the politics of making a new policy area designed to challenge and change high emissions norms.

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To put it another way, an agreement does not represent compromise if all parties just do what the most powerful want – compromises require concessions – even if these concessions are informed by embedded ideas, interests, and institutions. In the run up to Rio, finding compromise positions had been complicated by the need to enrol the globally hegemonic and very high emissions US, the influence of George Bush Senior's administration, and corporate-sponsored anti-mitigation strategies. The latter found support with many TNCs and countries sceptical of change. On the other side of UN debates, however, sat increasingly strongly committed EU and AOSIS countries with compelling and increasingly existential narratives (Vogler 2016: 63). In the run up to Kyoto there had been some movement amongst more 'middle ground' business groups towards accepting climate change as an issue (Falkner 2008), whilst a limited number of European-based oil and gas companies were prepared to endorse a global agreement (Meckling 2011). It was, of course, also vital that the more climate-friendly, Democrat administration of Bill Clinton was in position by Kyoto.

'Grand' compromises, like reaching global agreement on climate, do also "… reflect power differentials or hegemonic ideas or discourses" (Bernstein 2011: 372). On the one hand, then, compromise positions incorporated aspects of the specific narratives, and normative positions, that informed climate change debates. This reinforces the notion that how climate mitigation was initially conceptualised and narrated really mattered (Paterson 2021: 14). On the other hand, compromises were also shaped by wider, non-climate-specific, political institutions – including dominant ideas about growth and appropriate approaches to policy. Either way, initial climate narratives, compromises, and agreements all played a role in shaping the nature of new mitigation norms, with no single narrative winning out. Important here is also the decision to make UN climate decision-making a consensus process – meaning that no decision was binding if any party disagreed to it. The agreement reached was quite far from original climate science, and environmental movement, positions – but these coalitions had anyway evolved over time to incorporate other voices to gain political influence.

The four sub-sections below set out the particular compromises that together formed the basis of the Kyoto agreement, explore how they were informed by the underlying pro- and anti-mitigation narratives set out above and their implications for how climate politics developed in further phases.

4.4.1 Compromise: From Environment to GHG Emissions Targets

Some analysis of early climate agreements emphasises the degree to which climate science was compromised to fit with the hegemonic liberal economic order of the time (Newell & Paterson 2010; Bernstein 2011). Whilst this insight is useful in many

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ways in understanding the nature of the science-politics compromise focusing on movement *away* from early climate narratives can underplay aspects of change to the existing economic order. The Kyoto Protocol, by putting in place GHG emissions reduction targets binding on countries that represented 60% of the world's emissions, formalised a new norm. Specifically, it formally recognised that emissions are not a harmless outcome of economic growth but a danger to society. The protocol was also informed by narratives articulated by developing economies of differentiated responsibility and of target setting for developed countries only. Focusing on the hegemonic nature of the compromised agreement also fails to differentiate sufficiently between groups within the liberal international order – that is, between US and fossil fuel interests and the EU and other nations pushing for change.

This moved global governance on from a position of not recognising the GHG emissions upon which modern economies had been built to one where scientific claims of the harms associated with emissions had been agreed upon, rendering climate change more 'actionable' (Haarstad et al. 2023). New multilateral institutions and norms were established and responsibility for historic, and reducing current, emissions was formally assigned. Specifically, the Kyoto Protocol calls for reducing the emissions of six GHGs in 41 countries, plus the EU, to 5.2% below 1990 levels during the 'commitment period', 2008–2012 (UN 1997). The protocol also established vital monitoring, review and verification, and compliance systems. Climate change mitigation had emerged from a potential solution discussed within niche groups to a global public policy area with dedicated rules, governance, and knowledge capacities, and the norm of emissions reduction was established.

In negotiation terms, the achievement of agreeing to a convention and protocol is often related to the significant efforts of the EU and its negotiating partners (Vogler 2016: 41), and to their efforts in keeping other high emitters on board at key times through incorporating their interests. As seen above, it was the EU, with reference to climate science, that pushed strongly for the uptake of the 'targets and timetables' policy approach.

They did so explicitly against significant opposition from the JUSCANZ, later the Umbrella, negotiating group.[3] At the time of Rio, the US negotiator and UK Environment Minister found compromise language that made it possible for the US President, George Bush Senior, to attend keeping the possibility for future agreement alive. Bush had objected to developed countries being held formally responsible for emissions reduction, but did concede to the compromise position that parties could adopt national policies that would demonstrate developed country 'leadership' with the aim of returning individually or jointly to their 1990 levels (Schreurs 2004: 153–154). The change of government in the

[3] JUSCANZ stands for: Japan, US, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand.

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run up to Kyoto then led to the US being able to agree to more defined emissions reductions (Vogler 2016). The flip-flop back and forth between Republican and Democrat positions reflected the divided nature of the domestic debate about climate mitigation.

Compromise positions on emissions reduction did resulted in new norms, but the large concessions from science-based arguments also mattered to this compromise position. The emissions reductions agreed upon did not match up to scientific recommendations of the time (Green 2022). It is also worth noting that the 1990 base year against which to measure emissions reductions worked particularly well for some powerful parties to the Kyoto Convention. The UK had already begun to phase out coal by this time, for non-environmental reasons; reunification had already positively impacted emissions in Germany; whilst the great Russian recession had started close to 1990, resulting in huge reductions in emissions (Kuzemko 2015; Vogler 2016). As Russia was one of the world's highest emitters, the EU had focused considerable efforts on bringing it fully into the Kyoto Protocol, which was achieved via a series of deals. Russia was exempted from capacity-funding responsibilities; was allowed to trade Assigned Amount Units (AAU), otherwise referred to as 'hot air'; was invited to join the World Trade Organisation (WTO); and was allowed to count forests as carbon sinks (Vogler 2016: 72).

The 1990s also coincided with a period of economic globalisation that included the deindustrialisation of many OECD countries. Due to their growth as manufacturers and exporters, a considerable number of consumption-related emissions moved to China, India, and other developing economies. Agreement was also made more possible by the fragmentation of business groups – including in energy. By Kyoto, some new renewable and energy efficiency companies had been formed, whilst this nascent industry spoke out in support of a global limit on GHG emissions (Falkner 2008: 107). Divisions had also started to emerge within oil groups – European incumbents, Shell and BP, openly recognised climate change and the need to transition to alternatives. The International Climate Change Partnership (ICCP) was formed, including large companies like DuPont, Allied Signal, AT&T, Electrolux, General Electric, and 3M, which openly recognised the threat of climate change and advocated for mitigation (Falkner 2008: 110).

In terms of lasting implications, the Kyoto Protocol turned the EU narrative on 'targets and timetables' into a policy norm – one that has pervaded climate politics at global, national, and local scales since this time. At the same time, targets were focused on 'territorial' over global emissions. This is important as this focus did not take account of GHG emissions from growing global supply chains and underplayed the impacts of the migration of heavy industry to developing economies (Vogler 2016). Indeed, between 1990 and 2010, emissions embodied via the migration of heavy industry towards developing economies grew by an average of

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10% a year – to a total of 1.4 billion tonnes (Schiermeier 2012). As such, although middle-income countries had avoided agreeing to targets at later stages of UN negotiations, emissions, measured in territorial terms, had grown significantly for China and India.

The ways in which target setting was taken up further contributed towards the new norm of (some) scientific arguments directly underpinning UN agreement. The EU had directly cited scientific arguments about the need for measurement and targets, whilst the US administration, under Clinton, had also cited the IPCC's second assessment report as a justification of their decision to join (Falkner 2008: 115). Scientific knowledge *authority* was being used as a form of legitimacy and increasing credibility for mitigation actions, but also as a basis for political agreement. At the same time, technical GHG emissions reduction narratives increasingly resonated with the increasing emphasis on technical 'expertise' in informing policy and measurable outcomes within IGOs (van Coppenolle et al. 2023). Emissions, at least in theory, are material outputs that can be measured and monitored, and reported on, thereby showing evidence of progress and/or policy failings. This, in turn, necessitated the establishment of new capacities and regimes to measure and report emissions (Vogler 2016), which have proven important in revealing which governments have met targets or not and attempts to hold them to account.

There is a second, long-standing consequence of the target-oriented nature of climate mitigation – the narrowing down to GHG emissions measurement from the earlier, more holistic environmental position. This marked a collapsing of the complexity of the climate system and its interaction with human behaviours to a single metric (emissions) and, later, paved the way for 'net zero' (van Coppenolle et al. 2023). Measuring policy success according to falling emissions leaves room for environmentally controversial forms of energy, such as nuclear, whilst the wider environmental effects of mitigation efforts were often not seen or acknowledged (Newell & Bumpus 2012). The singular emphasis on emissions *reduction* also meant that maintaining and/or extending emissions sinks as a climate solution was somewhat sidelined. This marks quite a departure when considering that climate mitigation governance grew out of the environmental movement, and that climate change was not mentioned in the 1972 UNCHE 'principles' (Vogler 2016: 16). Such technical targets also left little room for the consideration of social, environmental, or other outcomes of mitigation policies – a theme to which this book returns in Chapter 7.

Some aspects of the liberal order were, then, contested by the creation of the Kyoto Protocol. Placing mitigation on the global agenda, and conferring responsibility on specific nations, was a foundational form of politicisation – delineating a new purpose to which authority could legitimately be put. At the same time,

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notably, conflict often persists post-compromise as the agreed policy may initially be framed as addressing the issue and resolving underlying conflicts, whilst only really masking them (Bernstein 2011: 372). Certainly, conflict persisted along a number of lines. Over the decades that followed, it became abundantly clear that the Kyoto Protocol was inadequate spurring demands for more climate action. Anti-mitigation groups also continued to contest emissions reduction, including in the US. Indeed, following another change in administration, the US under George Bush Junior refused to ratify the Kyoto Protocol.

4.4.2 Compromise: Neoclassical Economics and Appropriate Policy

If the agreement to GHG emissions reduction targets was a 'win' in terms of formally recognising the need for mitigation, much of the rest of the agreement reached fell further short of scientific and ecological recommendations (Bernstein 2001; Newell & Paterson 2010; Meckling 2011; Vogler 2016; Katz-Rosene & Paterson 2019). In the early decades of the climate debate, groups of environmental scientists had supported state regulations and carbon taxes as preferred policy measures. Steven Bernstein explains the shift away from this position, towards a more market-friendly position, partly in relation to the epistemic authority of climate science coming to an end (Bernstein 2001). From the perspective taken in this book, given that climate science was not in a position to provide all the answers, it is little wonder that its epistemic authority hit up against limitations. At the same time, the capacity of climate science to influence political debate did not wane completely given the established norm for policymakers to use it as one basis for making mitigation decisions.

The notion of fit with existing institutionalised policy ideas and power relations does much to explain the compromise on approach to policy (Bernstein 2001; Newell & Paterson 2010; Vogler 2016). Both earlier climate solutions allowing for a greater role for government intervention, taxation, and regulation and the policies agreed upon later at Kyoto reflected political ideas of their time. By the time climate change had emerged as a salient problem, global governance institutions were starting to embrace neoliberal economic ideas. The 1980s had seen a significant turn, led by Chile, the US, and the UK, towards more market-friendly ideas with associated preferences for *least-cost* policy, echoed in some anti-mitigation narratives, and for incentivising rather than regulating market actors. By Rio, "most developing countries had already largely accepted – whether by will or submission" – the new policy orthodoxy (Bernstein 2011: 381). As such, the political gap left by climate science on *how* to mitigate was filled with neoliberal economic ideas about appropriate policy. This is depoliticising to the extent that

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it narrowed down deliberation about alternatives, but it is politicising to the extent that this policy compromise both reflected societal ideas about how to govern and contributed to capacity to govern by offering solutions, however limited.

Indeed, for some in opposition to mitigation, and businesses in the undecided category, the move to flexible, market-based instruments was the compromise that convinced them to support the Protocol (Meckling 2011; Green 2021). Here we see an interesting alignment of neoliberal economic ideas, and associated preferences for flexible instruments and least-cost policy, with business interests. The Kyoto choices of ETSs, over tax instruments, to put a price on carbon and of carbon offsetting instruments both exemplified the accepted approach to policy. Growing preferences for least-cost policy approaches were also reflected in the Second Assessment Report of IPCC Working Group III on mitigation, which had switched analytical focus onto cost–benefit analyses and assessing the costs of climate mitigation policy. Seeing climate mitigation as a cost, and treating it as such analytically, echoes various anti-mitigation narratives outlined above. Still, in 2024, the costs of mitigation were given far greater emphasis in models and scenarios of 1.5ºC futures than the socio-economic costs of not mitigating (Clift & Kuzemko 2024).

These approaches to policy can, and have, been questioned in relation to their efficacy partly because they placed greater emphasis on the role of market actors in mitigating climate change, including the many businesses that had opposed mitigation. They have also been opposed on the basis that supporting countries, and businesses, can pass emissions reduction responsibilities to others via offsetting. The UN Joint Implementation (JI) policy, which essentially encouraged and enabled offsetting, had been advocated for by the anti-mitigation group, JUSSCANZ, and those business groups preferring flexible mechanisms, as the quid pro quo for agreeing to targets binding on Annex 1 countries (Falkner 2008: 119; Vogler 2016: 139). Offsetting, the norm of kicking the emissions can down the road, remains common practice today for a wide range of actors – not least as part of corporate greenwashing strategies (Buller 2022).

A wide range of businesses and groups, including Shell, BP, the European Petroleum Industry Association, and various financial groups, had advocated for emissions trading as part of a wider preference for flexible mechanisms (Falkner 2008; Newell & Paterson 2010; Meckling 2011). In the run up to Kyoto, the climate establishment, including the EU and some environmental NGOs, came to accept this position (Green 2022), as it fit the policy ideals of least-cost policy and of incentivising rather than regulating market actors to reduce emissions (Meckling 2011). The emission trading 'bandwagon' took off post-Kyoto – spawning an industry in emissions trading – the industry was worth $128 billion by 2008 – it did not engender any substantive change in other high emissions practices and

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business models. Whilst mitigation was monetised via putting a value on trading, the cost of emissions remained low failing to engender significant changes to high-emissions business models (Newell & Paterson 2010: 74–75). The ETS norm, whilst by no means taken up by all nations actively seeking to mitigate, did influence some policy choices at the regional and national levels. The EU was the first to implement an ETS and, for the first decade or so, they placed a heavy emphasis on it as a primary tool in meeting emissions reduction targets. By 2024, there were 36 systems in place in jurisdictions covering 58% of global GDP, but with mixed track records in emissions reduction (Green 2021).

On the one hand, by agreeing to certain policies and targets, climate mitigation became actionable with some prospect of contributing towards the social goal of mitigation. On the other hand, by naming certain policies as appropriate, and establishing certain norms around offsetting, counting mitigation costs, and trading carbon, this placed some limits on the policy landscape. These policies might have been more convenient choices, given the interests of many businesses, but setting up these policies as good governance choices was also seen as dangerous in climate change terms (Newell & Paterson 2010). This is not just because they were insufficiently effective, but also because they distracted from the pursuit of alternatives (Clift & Kuzemko 2024).

4.4.3 Compromise: Economic Growth

A compromise had already been made, before Kyoto, referred to as the 'sustainable development paradigm', which suggested that economic growth and environmental sustainability are compatible (Bernstein 2001; Asara et al. 2015). This was visible in the shift away from early environmental narratives of 'limits to growth' towards placing growth as central to processes of sustainable change. The growth compromise also became central to the nature of the climate change agreement at Kyoto. Growth was a core issue for all concerned, not least developing countries, who had been worried that global climate legislation could be used as an excuse to limit their economic and social development. Kyoto's split of parties into Annex 1 and non-Annex 1 groups was based partly on how economically developed each country's economy was, essentially embedding the idea that emissions underpin economic growth. Similarly, the UNFCCC explicitly recognised that "economic and social development and poverty eradication are the first and overriding priorities of developing country Parties" (UNFCCC 1992). The Rio Declaration had already squared away conflict between climate action and growth by conferring a new kind of ecological 'legitimacy' onto economic growth (Bernstein 2001: 105), following the Brundtland Report, which had made "accelerated economic growth" its top strategic priority (Bernstein 2011: 380).

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From electoral politics perspectives, this is the least controversial compromise – so embedded were assumptions about the necessity of growth (Dryzek 2022). Economic growth was a core government commitment, alongside security, in almost every world nation and, as such, a popular electoral narrative in democracies. Likewise, both Keynesian and neoclassical economic policy orthodoxies were both concentrated on how to deliver growth, albeit via very different political approaches (Green 2022). If the focus of Rio was partly to strike the first post-Cold War North-South bargain, then avoiding threats to economic growth was the obvious way of uniting the two. Indeed, as has been argued elsewhere, the move from the 'limits to growth' approach was one of the key compromises, alongside the adoption of market-friendly policies, that brought climate mitigation into the mainstream of international governance (Bernstein 2001: 3). Development should come first, whilst it was assumed that the outcome of development would be more available capital to spend on sustainability policies. If politics as social interaction is partly about meeting policy goals – this growth compromise can be seen as politicising – even if some climate change specialists would question whether continuing to grow will result in meeting emissions reduction goals.

The compromise on growth reflected perceived failures, during the decade since the 1972 Stockholm conference, to produce positive environmental outcomes as well as narratives that focused on mitigation as an economic cost. By 1984, the OECD, under Environment Director Jim MacNeill, had decided that there had been too much focus on solutions that were a "cost burden to industry" and wider economies (Bernstein 2001: 198). As a result, the 'Environment & Economics' conference was established to find more market-friendly solutions with many influential states and businesses in attendance. The conference concluded that the environment and the economy can be made mutually reinforcing (Bernstein 2001: 199). This formed the basis for a compromise around 'ecological modernization' (Bäckstrand & Lövbrand 2016), drawing on Cornucopian ideas of the possibilities of human ingenuity (Dryzek 2022).

Neoliberal economic ideas prescribed particular policy approaches to delivering growth with climate mitigation. One of the main purposes of the 'polluter pays' principle put forward by the OECD, which implies the use of market-friendly instruments such as pollution charges and tradeable permits, was to support economic growth by achieving mitigation with minimal distortion of markets (Bernstein 2001: 196). Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) and JI policy programmes were designed to be flexible in order to enable continued economic growth, and associated emissions, in Annex 1 countries whilst paying for reductions in the developing world. Together with measuring emissions territorially, they supported a spatial disconnect between the point of consumption and emissions in production (Vogler 2016: 26). Beyond embedding ideas about the

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automatic compatibility of mitigation with growth, other negative environmental and socio-economic side effects of CDMs in developing economies are well documented (Newell & Paterson 2010; Newell & Mulvaney 2013).

What is less well debated in research on Kyoto outcomes are the inbuilt, but problematic, assumptions about positive relationships between economic growth, industrialisation, and energy demand growth – and how they relate to emissions. Although the political reification of growth is clearly articulated in UNFCCC documents, underlying assumptions about the role of energy and extraction in fuelling growth are left implicit. The role of fossil fuels in energy production, which had for a century or so underpinned economic growth, was obscured. These positive assumptions downplay the importance of implementing mitigation policies – not least around fossil fuel phase out (Clift & Kuzemko 2024). Certainly, fossil fuel phase out was not articulated at the UNFCCC level as a policy approach, whilst very few phase out plans were enacted at national or sub-national levels in the decades post-Kyoto.

Likewise, linking back to the compromise of limited approaches to policy, the Kyoto Protocol contained nothing on demand reduction as a route to reducing emissions. This is an interesting omission given the 1980s lesson, taken from consumer country responses to the oil shocks, that energy demand reduction is a useful policy tool for improving energy security (Kenner & Heede 2021). Nearly 30 years later, lingering preoccupations with growth, supported by energy that is still 80% provided by fossil fuels, persist. Models and scenarios of future energy systems under 1.5ºC limits, used by a wide range of political actors, assume continued energy demand growth or, at best, stagnation on the basis of assumptions about it fuelling economic growth (Clift & Kuzemko 2024).

4.4.4 Compromise: Equity and Justice

Some aspects of justice and equity narratives, articulated by developing nations including India and Brazil, went on to inform the basis of a further compromise around differentiated responsibilities. This is an example of the UN negotiation process incorporating some of the views articulated by middle- and low-income countries, reviewed above. To the extent that the JUSCANZ group, amongst others, had objected to divisions of responsibilities, this represented a compromise undertaken by anti-mitigation groups. Questions about equity and justice had been a key aspect of UN climate debates from the start. There had been some emphasis on questions of intergenerational justice and uneven effects of climate change on different countries, particularly small island states, in narrating why it was a global issue. UN climate *mitigation* debates became increasingly centred around questions of historic responsibility for emissions and the rights of developing countries to grow

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their economies via industrialisation – as had OECD countries. From a realist theoretical perspective, emphasising relative power relations, the acceptance of 'common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities' (CBDR-RC) was puzzling (Vogler 2016: 137). Concessions, however, needed to be made to developing countries given UN climate negotiation rules about consensus-based decision-making. This, in turn, represents politicisation in the form of establishing capacities to engender agreement amongst competing positions.

Normative views on limited responsibility, capability building, and developed countries taking the lead were operationalised in the Kyoto Protocol and built into principles of mitigation in the categorisation of convention parties (Vogler 2016: 91). CBDR-RC had become a key part of the final text adopted at Rio. It openly acknowledged that 'the largest share of historical and current global emissions' originated in developed countries; that developing countries' share of global emissions would need to grow; and that parties should protect the climate in accordance with CBDR-RC (UNFCCC 1992). The Berlin Mandate, of 1995, set out which countries would be in Annex 1 and, therefore, responsible for reducing emissions. Notably, the EU also used equity considerations, the 'bubble' protocol, to assign responsibilities and gain internal EU member agreement. Beneath the overall EU emissions reduction target of 8%, some former Soviet Union countries continued to grow emissions reflecting their need to develop economically (UN Climate Change 2024). China was not included as an Annex 1 party, despite high absolute emissions, given its low emissions per capita versus developed nations (Schiermeier 2012).

Annex 1 parties, excluding Russia, were also assigned responsibility for the provision of sustainable development finance (Vogler 2016: 40), whilst Article 4.4 set out the duties of Annex 1 countries to aid developing countries particularly vulnerable to climate change and meet the cost of adaptation (Vogler 2016: 103). These approaches to measurement and financial responsibility also echo narratives put forward by middle-income countries, in particular India and Brazil.

Long-lasting implications flow from the specific interpretations of equity and justice built into the UNFCCC. The rapid economic growth of middle-income countries, particularly China and India, meant that high levels of absolute emissions were not covered by the Kyoto agreement in the decades that followed. China and India had, of course, vigorously defended their rights to emit based on their need for economic development (Vogler 2016: 61), and on assumptions about fossil fuel energy usage as a basis for industrialised forms of growth. It proved nearly impossible, in the decades post-Kyoto, to add to the membership of Annex 1 as developing countries, also including South Korea, grew into considerably sized economies with high absolute emissions (Vogler 2016: 40). Clear issues had emerged, then, in relation to climate mitigation, but other political

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contestations also emerged. CBDR-RC became an electoral issue in the US based on the 'unfairness' of allowing emerging economic rivals, with an emphasis on China, not to reduce emissions and on increasingly accepted views of mitigation as an economic cost. George Bush Junior articulated this narrative in his rejection of the Kyoto Protocol in 2001, and it was widely echoed in the environmental policy pullbacks of the first Trump administration.

On the basis that the rights and duties incorporated into the Kyoto Protocol UNFCCC were about rights to develop and historic responsibility, they arguably incorporated arguments about international distributional justice but were less reflective of a range of other ethical arguments. Justice and equity can, of course, mean many things. Article 3.1, where much of the CBDR-RC principle is set out, did provide "some basis for allocating benefits and burdens in respect of past actions and present and future generations of humankind" (Vogler 2016: 87). The meaning of 'equity' was, however, left under-defined contributing to a range of subsequent contestations. Although technical data had been used to evidence historic emissions differentials and where emissions originated, technical and scientific narrations of climate change as an issue were limited when it came to recognising or making other justice claims (Sultana 2021 in Lefstad & Paavola 2024). Technocratic policies, especially those focused on emissions, failed to recognise wider societal needs such as the need to reduce emissions in the near term to protect future generations' rights.

The focus on equity and justice issues between countries excluded considerations of distributional justice *within* countries and of those most vulnerable, in socio-economic terms, to the effects of climate mitigation policy (Newell & Mulvaney 2013). On the one hand, it remained the case that certain groups and areas within nations were particularly vulnerable to continued emissions growth – and not just in terms of the impacts of changing weather, like floods, droughts, and fires. But also, in terms of air pollution, which was fast becoming one of the leading avoidable causes of disease and death globally (WHO 2015). On the other hand, mitigation policies themselves also have different socio-economic outcomes. For example, CDMs and voluntary carbon offset markets tended to offset high carbon lifestyles in the Global North by acquiring land and resources in poorer countries (Newell & Paterson 2010: 32–33). More widely publicised (at this stage potential) outcomes were job losses. Even as very few fossil fuel phase out strategies existed at this point, the threat of sections of the population, especially in fossil fuel-producing regions, being 'left behind' under conditions of sustainable transitions was politically potent. For some societal groups, this threat was exacerbated by the fact that China, in absolute not per capita terms, started to overtake US emissions by the end of the 00s. This adds to arguments of China as 'free riders' and domestic action as unfair, but, importantly, also to anti-mitigation narratives of climate action as 'pointless' – and not just in the US.

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Although reflecting some key narratives within UN climate debates, the lack of recognition of and accounting for other forms of justice and equity have arguably contributed towards policy that tends to be emissions focused but not on considering, or delivering on, broader societal needs. The justice compromises, then, shored up contestations not only in terms of not meeting the social goal of climate mitigation but also in terms of those who viewed mitigation as unfair. These are all important factors when considering the relationship between policy, outcomes, and politics over time.

4.5 Conclusions

Taken together, the four compromises outlined above reflected narratives and arguments from pro- and anti-mitigation groups – embodying many of the broad range of views reviewed in the first half of this chapter – as is often the case with consensus-based forms of governance. The ability of pro-mitigation groups to get climate onto agendas, even in this compromised manner, was partly underpinned by successful politicisations in terms of raising the salience of climate change as an issue and the establishment of climate science as 'authoritative knowledge' (Bernstein 2001). This, in turn, was partly supported by the growing capacities for deliberation of climate change through the creation of dedicated research institutions, not least the IPCC, and the growing availability of climate information to civil society, policymakers, negotiators, and the public (Falkner 2013; Green 2013; Hickman 2015). This phase of getting climate onto agendas, then, was made up of multiple politicisations that connect to politics as capacity for agency, deliberation, and social interaction and that came together to facilitate the construction of climate mitigation as a global public policy area. Multiple and varied forms of politicisation, then, mattered in this foundational phase of constructing climate politics – as did the dedication and hard work of those involved in pro-mitigation coalitions.

On Hay's understanding of politicisation, however, what mattered most here is that that agreement had been reached and, therefore, that mitigation had finally been established as a global public policy area. This aspect of politicisation is rarely, however, foregrounded in studies that make points about climate politicisation. As we saw in Chapter 2, politicisation is often understood as a negative in the specific sense that climate change is contested by anti-mitigation narratives, whilst analyses that seek to politicise climate mitigation rarely consider this fundamental step of getting it onto agendas, and how it has been done. State-led mitigation literatures, of course, bring our attention to the importance of public policy but the basic starting position is that climate change should be on the agenda. This assumption, in turn, neglects the consideration of the debates, conflicts, and compromises that led to the initial agreement. Some would like to see the environment

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as the central state goal, sidelining other political goals, tend not to explain how that might be achieved. This closer analysis of the debates underpinning this phase of climate politics suggests both that that was never in prospect and that it might complicate politicisation as balancing social goals.

By delineating climate mitigation as a new purpose to which international and national authority can legitimately be put (Bernstein 2011: 371), Kyoto paved the way for politics as agency. As discussed in Chapter 3, without establishing that climate is an issue and that certain states are responsible for mitigating it, it is politically very hard to put resources behind it. In effect, by ratifying the Kyoto Protocol, 37 countries were committed to national emissions reduction targets, even if it only came into force in 2005. Having agreed policy goals in place inferred further political negotiations and debates, often in Annex 1 countries, about how to meet them. Debate about how to deliver on policy goals is a key aspect of politics as collective choice and agency.

As becomes more apparent in Chapter 5, the period post-Kyoto did see the deliberation, design, and implementation of specific national, and sub-national, emissions reduction targets, strategies, and mitigation policies – often in the energy sector. It also matters in deliberative politicisation terms that legal, measurement, research, and decision-making capacities had been created by this early phase – providing considerable underpinnings for future policy debates and negotiations at global, national, and local scales. The establishment of measurement and research bodies became crucial to continuing to make the case for climate mitigation, firming up evidence of climate change, holding nations to account for their emissions, as well as, over time, better informing efforts to reduce emissions.

That new climate mitigation norms were constructed on the basis of these compromised positions had lasting consequences. One of which is that the global climate agreement that so many climate groups had struggled to achieve did not result in sufficient sustainable change to slow global warming (Vogler 2016). In the decades that followed, climate mitigation norms were exposed to contestations from climate science and environmental groups based on failure to deliver on core aims. At the same time, establishing a narrow range of technical, market-friendly policies as the accepted mode of global governance inferred some limits to the *scope* of state intervention – a form of depoliticisation in collective choice and agency terms. As Chapter 5 makes clear, at the national and sub-national scales there emerged a wider variety of policy approaches, even if the overall direction of travel was towards market-friendly policies. By the time of Kyoto, neoliberal economic ideas may have gained in influence relative to ecological scientists (Bernstein 2001; Barry 2002; Keen 2021), but they shared a focus on measurable evidence that lent them both authority given the wider empiricism of the time. Their combined dominance served to maintain a relatively narrow approach to

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policy, excluding insights and perspectives from much of political science and sociology, also leaving questions of redistributive and other justice aspects of policy in the shadows and under-deliberated.

Whilst at Kyoto final agreements were ultimately reached via representations from all signatory nations – the Kyoto Protocol was also limited in terms of politics as social interaction. Not least given the lack of representative or participatory forms of public engagement. This had been picked up by some anti-climate groups, particularly in narratives of mitigation as bad for ordinary people, who voiced concerns about a "semi-independent group of scientists" having the potential to influence global agreements with wide implications but without democratic answerability (Bernstein 2001: 166). At the same time, in failing to meet the public policy goal of limited global warming, the Kyoto Agreement also represented depoliticisation in social interaction terms. Failure to limit warming has affected how climate change has been experienced, and the fact that many people have now experienced its effects and have paid the associated costs.

Proof of failures to meet goals and evidence of climate change are essential elements of climate politics understood "in relation to a recurring dynamic of de- and re-politicisation, as climate interventions are … re-politicised" (Paterson 2021). At the same time, however, the notion of dynamic de- and re-politicisations is somewhat narrow and tends not to disaggregate between *types* of politicisation, which is partly why it can seem to suggest that climate mitigation once depoliticised remains so until it is re-politicised. This analysis of the early climate politics phase, however, based as it is on a more disaggregated framing of politicisation, also suggests that there were recurring politicisations and depoliticisations at the same time. This might seem like an overly complex point – but what it essentially means is that mitigation from the moment that it started to be understood as necessary, and especially once it was accepted as an area of public policy, had become politicised.

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