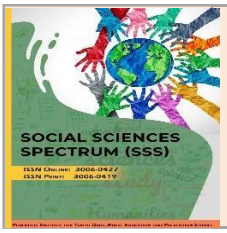

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Fragmentation and Climate Diplomacy in the Global South

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Abstract

This study examines the paradox of the Global South's numerical dominance in the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) alongside its limited influence in securing meaningful climate commitments and finance from developed countries. It contends that collective bargaining power is weakened by internal fragmentation which is fuelled by divergent economic interests, unequal climate exposure, geopolitical struggles, institutional limits and external forces. Through the prism of Realist, Liberal Institutional, and Postcolonial theories, the paper examines the main Southern alliances, such as Group of 77 + China, BASIC, and SIDS. The study, based on case studies of COP27, Nationally Determined Contributions by the Paris Agreement and floods in Pakistan in 2022, demonstrates inconsistent approaches and results. It concludes that fragmentation undermines the ability to negotiate and perpetuates Northern dominance pointing to practical, issue-focused coalitions as a viable way to go.

Keywords: Global South, Climate Diplomacy, Fragmentation, Collective Action, Climate Justice, UNFCCC, G77.

1. Introduction

The climate crisis is pressing and requires a joint effort. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) cautions that the world needs to reduce its emissions by 2030 to prevent disastrous warming (*Urgent Climate Action Can Secure a Liveable Future for All — IPCC,* 2023). This is coordinated by international climate diplomacy, mainly through the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). COP meetings have reached milestone agreements over the last three decades: The Kyoto Protocol (1997) required developed nations to make binding reductions, whilst the Paris Agreement (2015) required all countries to make submissions of Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) with the ambition of keeping warming to 1.52C. However, even these achievements and decades of negotiations, the present-day global commitments are still way short of the required level. We are still on track for about 2.7–3.2°C warming by century's end (*COP27 – 'Loss and Damage' Success Tempered by Lack of Implementation*, 2022).

One of the central aspects in climate negotiations is the dichotomy between North and South. The Global South (developing countries) has traditionally contributed much less than the rich countries, but they are the ones who are disproportionately affected by climate. The idea of climate justice emphasizes the fact that the least contributors to climate change are disproportionately (*Urgent Climate Action Can Secure a Liveable Future for All — IPCC*, 2023). This story tells the demands of the Global South: they demand more mitigation by North, lots of money and technology transfer, and acknowledgement of their right to develop. But there is a question mark, since most UNFCCC Parties are in the Global South (as of 2014, the G77+China coalition had 135 members), why has this group been so unproductive in achieving more effective climate action or finance? A lot of focus is well deserved on Global North obstructionism or failed aid promises (e.g. the unmet $100 billion/year promise of climate finance (Belhaj, 2024)). But the inner life of the Global South is also a crucial issue.

In this paper, we claim that fragmentation in the Global South is a major weakness to its bargaining capacity resulting in poorer performances in the global arena. Divisions within the country - even between such coalitions as G77, BASIC, AOSIS, developing countries do not have a single voice. Coordination failures are brought about by divergent interests (economic, political, vulnerability) and external pressures.

We are going to analyze it in the following way. Section II introduces the concept of environmental diplomacy in the climate context, the development of UNFCCC agreements, and theoretical lenses (Realism, Liberal Institutionalism, Postcolonial/Dependency) and the notion of collective-action problems. Part III explores the structure of the Global South, its major alliances, and internal heterogeneity, and concludes that the South is heterogeneous in structure and is likely to be disaggregated. Section IV examines five factors of fragmentation: (A) divergent economic interests, (B) unequal exposure to the impacts of climate change, (C) geopolitical competition among the Southern states, (D) institutional/capacity limitations in the South, and (E) external (North) divide-and-rule forces. Section V offers three case studies that demonstrate these dynamics: (1) negotiations of the COP27 Loss & Damage Fund, (2) differences in NDCs (China vs India vs least-developed states) within the Paris framework, and (3) climate diplomacy in Pakistan following the 2022 floods. Section VI discusses the impact of this fragmentation on climate outcomes: how it leads to weaker bargaining power, diluted agreements, delayed action, and continuing Northern dominance. Section VII is a critical discussion of the question of whether unity is realistic and what reforms (e.g. strengthening the G77, regional blocs, issue-based

coalitions) are possible, in a cautious manner. Section VIII wraps up by concluding on findings and implications: fragmentation in the Global South is a barrier to effective climate diplomacy, and therefore, a contributor to inadequate global climate action.

II. Conceptual and Theoretical Framework

A. What is Environmental Diplomacy?

Environmental (climate) diplomacy is the process of negotiations between sovereign states and other actors (international organizations, NGOs) to tackle climate change on a global level. The UNFCCC (adopted 1992, effective 1994) is an international climate policy with almost 200 countries convening at Conferences of the Parties (COP) each year. Some of the most important agreements can be used to demonstrate how climate diplomacy has developed: the Kyoto Protocol (adopted 1997, entered into force 2005) was the first document to establish legally binding emissions targets, but limited to Annex I (industrialized) countries only (*Paris to Kyoto*, 2026). The Paris Agreement (2015) was more inclusive: it compelled all the Parties to present the emissions reduction commitments (NDCs) and to strive to ensure that warming is kept well below 2o C (*Paris to Kyoto*, 2026). In contrast to the top-down targets of Kyoto, Paris has a pledge-and-review model: nations set their own NDCs (that are to be reinforced over time). Annual COPs serve as the bargaining ground to elevate the ambitions, mobilize funds, and streamline mechanisms (carbon markets, transparency models, loss-and-damage investments, and so on). These are inherently multilateral processes: they require collaboration between different states.

The environmental diplomacy is based on a combination of legal obligations, economic incentives and moral persuasion. But there is laxity in enforcement. Failure to comply with Paris NDCs is not punishable; adherence is rather voluntary. This form implies that diplomacy frequently entails the acquisition of voluntary commitments and the progressive ratcheting up of these commitments (which is characteristic of liberal institutional design). Climate justice also has infiltrated into the language of diplomacy with developing nations demanding justice and compensation. Overall, there is no simple formula to climate environmental diplomacy, as it involves legal (treaties, conventions), normative politics (justice, equity), and interest-based bargaining.

B. Theoretical Framework

We use three theoretical lenses to explain Global South behavior:

1. **Realism.** Realists concentrate on self-interest and power seeking of states in an anarchic international system. In realist perspective, climate negotiations are a field of projecting power and national benefit. States are more concerned with economic development and security rather than international well-being. That is why the big developing nations tend to oppose binding targets: China and India claim that their citizens still require energy to come out of poverty. According to realists, the relative gains are also important: a nation will not tolerate restrictions on its emissions unless it is convinced that other nations will also make similar concessions. This view is the reason why it is predicted that solidarity among Southern states will be weak when national interests are divided. In fact, research indicates that the rapidly increasing G77 members have started to bilaterally negotiate climate and energy agreements with the developed nations, outside of the UNFCCC, effectively losing their interest in multilateral commitments (Kasa et al., 2007). In this way, realism can be used to understand the reasons as to why every state in the Global South is more concerned with its growth and security interests than common agreements.

2. **Liberal Institutionalism.** Liberals underline the importance of international institutions in promoting cooperation. They emphasize the UNFCCC and its COP mechanism as essential in the coordination of global action. Institutions are able to decrease uncertainty, give information and establish norms. As an example, when all countries signed the Paris framework, they at least pledged to the process of preparing NDCs, which is an indication of little cooperation. Nevertheless, liberalism also recognizes that institutions need enforcement in order to be functional. The fact that the climate regime is based on voluntary pledges is a vice: because there is no enforcement mechanism or penalty to default on the commitment, liberalists are concerned that the commitment will be diluted. This can be seen in the documents of the agreements: NDCs are required by the Paris Agreement, but are not enforced beyond naming and shaming. The results of COP usually depend on the ability to stay unanimous; in case the Global South is not unanimous, then consensus can result in the compromise language. Nevertheless, liberalism implies that developing nations have a platform to present their demands and hold the major powers responsible to a certain degree, through such institutions as the UNFCCC.
3. **Postcolonial/Dependency Theory.** This view emphasizes past exploitation and inequalities. Colonialism and unequal economic systems are a part of the memory of developing countries. In climate politics, they cite the idea of Common But Differentiated Responsibilities (CBDR) that the industrialized nations have a historical emissions debt to pay. The climate justice discourse is also compatible with this perception: mitigation and adaptation are seen as the development of global justice in the developing countries. Dependency theorists also focus on the fact that the Northern countries control the global financial and technological infrastructure (e.g. World Bank, authorship of IPCC). Indicatively, Edwards et al. observe that climate governance is perceived as a continuation of North-South dependency relations in the Global South (Faruque et al., 2025). They do not conceptualize losses and damages as charity but rather as compensation owed. This viewpoint is why the Global South is the most sensitive to the actions (or lack of action) by North. It also implies unity based on anti-colonial identity. However, as we demonstrate, the common postcolonial narrative cannot alone eliminate internal distinctions between Southern states.

Our analysis is framed by these theories. Realism emphasizes the role of self-interest in creating a divergence; liberalism demonstrates the possibilities and constraints of the UNFCCC model; postcolonial thought emphasizes the justice demands that drive Southern demands. We also draw on the concept of collective action problems: climate change is a global public good problem requiring cooperation, but incentives to free-ride are high. This is enhanced by fragmented coalitions where states are waiting to be acted upon. All the frameworks illuminate various aspects of Global South fragmentation.

C. Key Analytical Concept: Collective Action Problem

Climate mitigation is quintessentially a collective action problem: all benefit if emissions are cut, but each has incentive to let others do the work. To the Global South, this takes various forms. The nations are aware that although they reduce emissions, the collapse of the key emitters (even other developing nations) derails the international objective. This creates a free-rider culture: why not Country A to take up the bill when Country B (and C) will not? The lack of trust is also present: the developing countries tend to mistrust the rich countries to deliver the promised finance or technology, so they will not take action unilaterally. The prisoner dilemma is the classic that is played at COP. Institutions attempt to counter this through rules and reporting, but in cases where

the coalition is disjointed; trust is further destroyed. We shall observe how this principle lies at the basis of numerous instances of Southern states being backward to make ambitions without assurances, thereby creating watered-down pledges and stalemates.

III. The Global South in Climate Diplomacy

A. Who is the Global South?

Global South is a general term used to refer to developing nations mostly in Latin America, parts of Oceania, Africa and Asia. It encompasses the poorest states in the world and the recently industrialized ones. While often geographically southern, the term is political-economic. Major features are histories of colonization, reduced per-capita income, and reduced industrialization. Global South countries often present themselves as a group of non-Annex I countries under the UNFCCC in climate negotiations, not wanting to make any binding commitments. Nevertheless, as Faruque et al. (2025) point out, this bloc is internally heterogeneous: members of it vary in terms of wealth, resource, and structural location (Faruque et al., 2025). In brief, Global South is an alliance of numerous actors. The Global South does not have a single government- each nation has national interests. It is important to learn this diversity: Global South policy prescriptions need to take note of the fact that it is not a monolith.

B. Major Coalitions

Practically, developing nations form coalitions to increase their voice. The most notable is the G77 and China formed in 1964. It includes more than 130 countries now (*Party Groupings | UNFCCC*, n.d.), between Bangladesh and Zambia. The G77+China alliance has frequently represented the Global South in the climate negotiations. It publishes joint statements (e.g. on equity, finance) and presents common negotiating positions on general issues. It is however large and diverse, which causes internal strains. Even UNFCCC records acknowledge that G77 is so heterogeneous, that individual Parties and sub-groups (such as AOSIS or the African Group) tend to intervene themselves. This in practice implies that sometimes the G77 takes a group position, but at other times, e.g. the members of the Small Island or Least Developed Countries group speak individually in case of disagreement.

Another key coalition is **BASIC** (Brazil, South Africa, India, China). BASIC was established in the 2009 Copenhagen summit in order to organize four big emerging economies. All BASIC members have relatively large emissions and economies, and all stress development priorities. Theoretically, such a bloc would be the center of a developing-country bargaining team. In practice, though, analysts observe that BASIC is not very united. As an illustration, CFR analyst Levi noted that the positions of BASIC are more indicative of the policy of China than of a consensus (Levi, 2010). India became a member of BASIC in part to spy on China since it feared that it would make agreements with the west. BASIC was not much of benefit to Brazil except to express solidarity with African nations. South Africa was mainly taking the deal in order to be at the table. So, BASIC exists in paper, yet its members tend to follow slightly different strategies. In negotiations, BASIC countries occasionally talk collectively (particularly against Western demands) but occasional side statements are also made.

The third interesting coalition is the **Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS).** It is an alliance of 39 small island and low-lying states united due to their high susceptibility to sea-level rise. Members of AOSIS have a common call of ambitious mitigation (to secure their futures) and compensation of loss and damage. They have demanded more than once 1.5C targets and robust funding of adaptation. AOSIS is also fairly united, as the interests of its members are close to each

other, concerning climate threats. But they are a small portion of the G77 and cannot, individually, alter things; they have to find partners in greater groups.

Table 1: *Below for a summary of major coalitions*

Coalition	Members	Size (# countries)	Cohesion (High/Med/Low)	Typical Position
G77 + China	135+ developing countries	~135	Low/Medium	Broad South interests; demands on finance; equity
BASIC	Brazil, SA, India, China	4	Low	Defend development space; often align with China
AOSIS (SIDS)	Small island states	39	High	Emphasize 1.5°C target; loss & damage compensation
LDC Group	Least Developed Countries	46	Medium	Emphasize finance, adaptation needs
African Group	African Union members	54	Medium	Often united but internal differences in priorities
LMDC (subset)	Like-Minded Developing Countries (various)	~25	Low/Med	Align on finance, technology (e.g. G77 middle bloc)

C. Internal Diversity

Despite these coalitions, the Global South is *internally diverse*:

- **Economic diversity:** The disparity between developing countries, both rich and poor, is large. The Chinese economy is now the second largest in the world; the development process does not resemble that of Haiti or Chad. Developing countries with high income (e.g. Gulf oil states, Mexico) and countries with low income (e.g. Malawi, Afghanistan). There are resource-endowed exporters and there are those that rely on tourism or farming. These disparities determine the priorities of negotiations. As an example, oil-exporters tend to object to tough words about the gradual elimination of fossil fuels, whereas oil-importers or low-carbon economies may advocate more ambitious targets. This is exactly what the G77 analysis by Kasa et al. (2007) observed: the fast development of the leading developing nations has made them seek national interests, despite the fact that this has perpetuated the G77 traditional opposition to binding caps (Kasa et al., 2007). In the meantime, global mitigation is more advantageous to the weakest LDCs and hence they would be more inclined to have a more ambitious collective objective.
- **Political diversity:** Governments of Global South are both democracies and single-party states. Others are closely associated with western institutions, others with rising powers. As an example, Western-led programs (e.g. more ambitious climate targets) can be consistent with the initiatives of countries such as Chile or South Africa, but not with the traditionally resistant

countries such as Venezuela or Iran. The G77 is further divided into sub-groupings based on political aspects (e.g. the Arab Group, African Group). These coalitions are indicative of diplomatic networks outside of climate policy, and may draw members in opposite directions. Climate position of a country can be shifted drastically with political changes (e.g. elections or coups), which further divides any alleged bloc consensus.

- **Climate vulnerability differences:** Not all developing countries face the same risks. There are long droughts and food insecurity in some African countries; cyclones and flooding on the coasts of South Asia; rising sea levels on Pacific islands. Conversely, wealthier Asian nations (China, Malaysia) or Middle Eastern oil producers can be at a comparatively greater capacity of coping (although Middle Eastern oil states experience water shortage and heat waves). This implies that what is considered urgent is relative. The countries with high vulnerability (such as Pakistan, Bangladesh, Maldives) prioritize such aspects as loss-and-damage and adaptation funding as existential. The less vulnerable nations may pay more attention to progressive decarburization and energy shifts. The disproportionate effect is emphasized by the IPCC, which points out that almost half of the global population resides in the most vulnerable regions (*Urgent Climate Action Can Secure a Liveable Future for All — IPCC*, 2023). Due to these varying interests, priorities are different: some nations seek rich-country-funded "adaptation insurance, others focus on export competitiveness or industrial policy.

Global South is structurally disorganized. The national interests of developing countries are very different due to economic, political and vulnerability differences. Internal divisions still exist even in formal coalitions. This preconditions conflict or compromise in negotiations: when it comes to collective action, it is always difficult to bring such a heterogeneous group on the same train. The subsequent paragraphs discuss the particular reasons and forms of this fragmentation.

IV. Causes of Fragmentation in the Global South

Building on the above, we analyze five main sources of fragmentation among Global South countries. These factors interact, but each creates friction in joint negotiating positions.

A. Diverging Economic Interests

Emerging vs. Least-Developed: The emerging economies like China, India etc. are seeking industrialization and high growth of GDP. They usually rely on coal and other fossil energy to run factories and uplift people out of poverty. To them, stringent emission limits are perceived to be in conflict with development. On the other hand, the Least Developed Countries (LDCs) and Small Island States, which have little industry and high poverty, consider climate mitigation to be compatible with, or even helpful to, development. They put survival first: obtaining assistance to become resilient, safeguard food, and deal with disasters. As an illustration, island countries claim that the reduction of warming would leave their economies (primarily tourism and fishing) with a future, whereas India could consider electrification and infrastructure initially.

This is reflected in the literature. Kasa et al. (2007) apply the rationalist approach to demonstrate that China, India, Brazil, etc. have already gotten confidence such that they can negotiate with the West without the need to make joint commitments as G77 (Kasa et al., 2007). In fact, their further development of industry weakens more ambitious emission targets. Practically, this split has resulted in literal differences: at COPs, nations such as India and China have traditionally opposed the commitments that they believe would slow their economies, and SIDS and LDCs are demanding as hard as they can get.

An illustration is the case of During the COP26 negotiations, small island states demanded a phase-out of coal, but India and other developing countries that rely heavily on coal interfered to alter the wording to phase-down of unabated coal. The Indian representative made a strong case that coal is required to develop and to have energy security. This negotiation is a representation of the divide: islanders are insisting on zero tolerance towards coal (to protect their houses), India is insisting on its growth requirements. The compromise term (phase-down) was the manifestation of this internal schism. Therefore, there is no convergence of economic interests among Southern countries, which implies that the latter cannot agree on major mitigation commitments.

B. Unequal Climate Vulnerability

Various climate risks result in various agendas. The most at-risk nations (e.g. Pakistan, Bangladesh, Pacific Islands, some parts of Africa) have suffered catastrophic climate effects. The 2022 floods in Pakistan displaced millions of people and resulted in losses of around $40 billion (Shaikh, 2023). Such experiences make climate change an immediate threat. Such nations thus emphasize funding of loss and damage, adaptation to climate and stringent global mitigation. As an example, during COP27 discussions, Pakistani and small-island representatives eloquently talked about their position on the frontline and their need to have a special fund as a climate justice issue (Lakhani, 2022).

Conversely, less risky Southern nations (e.g. Gulf oil exporters, more latitude developing countries) might not feel the effects of climate to be urgent. Their short-term interests tend to be economic stability or battles in the region. They may be willing to believe that climate change is a long-term problem, but urgent socio-economic demands are more important. These nations may not be as ready to give up growth in favor of mitigative action. As an illustration, Middle East countries that are rich in oil (though technically part of the Global South) have traditionally opposed language on a restriction of the use of fossil fuels, with the emphasis being laid on diversification strategies. With these divergent risk profiles, priorities cannot be negotiated.

Developing countries emphasize issues differently because of various vulnerabilities to climate. A country with floods will demand one type of result (loss-and-damage support), whereas another country with no disaster at hand will object to new requirements or prioritize other UNFCCC items. This is a conflict in itself in making a single Southern front. Although climate justice is applied on a large scale, the nature of justice (mitigation vs. compensation vs. adaptation) is subject to debate.

C. Geopolitical Rivalries

Southern countries are not in a vacuum; the history and regional tensions influence the cooperation. The most conspicuous competition is that of China vs. India. They are both huge emitters and developing states, yet they have a history of border wrangles and strategic rivalry. This rivalry bleeds into climate talks. An example is that the initial assumption of the united front by BASIC frequently resulted in India checking on the actions of China (Levi, 2010). Each side of the conflict does not completely believe in the intentions of the other. As a result, the other (who fears being disadvantaged) finds agreements that would compel one to lead (e.g., China going all-out on clean energy) suspicious.

Other regional blocs are involved, beyond that. Africa has internal politics of its own (e.g. Nigeria vs. South Africa vs. Egypt disagreeing on energy exports). Countries of Latin America have divided loyalties (some are in the U.S., others with China). Such geopolitical processes imply that certain Global South delegations can be better attentive to regional demands than to a unified

Southern approach. Indicatively, one country, Saudi Arabia (G77 member) focused on OPEC unity on fossil fuel concerns, and they sided with Russia at some point on opposing binding restrictions. Other African nations on the other hand have joined hands with Arab nations in G77 working groups to advocate some financing arrangements. Such alliances and changes of allegiance also complicate the process of coming up with a consensus even within the developing country caucus.

Weak collective negotiation is as a result of geopolitical rivalry. Two or more major Southern countries with conflicting interests will tend to seek parallel policies. This was observed when China and India presented very different NDC targets as opposed to a joint submission. It also manifested itself in efforts to form competing coalitions (e.g. a China-led coalition vs. an India-led one). All in all, the presence of rivalries creates distrust in the process, which makes it more difficult to negotiate as a bloc on the part of the South.

D. Institutional and Capacity Constraints

The institutional weaknesses that make it difficult to act in unison are prevalent in many Global South countries. Advanced climate negotiations demand technical skills (e.g. knowledge of carbon accounting, renewable technologies). Although some countries such as China and India have specialized negotiators, small or poorer countries usually have a limited number. As an illustration, island states and LDCs may only send delegations of a small number of individuals, some with multiple portfolios (climate, foreign affairs, development aid). This difference in capacity implies that strong Southern nations tend to dictate the agenda, and weaker ones are observers.

Money is also important. The annual climate finance pledged at 100 billion/year (since 2020) has been shortchanged (Belhaj, 2024). As a result, many developing countries cannot afford to invest in mitigation (renewables, efficiency) or adaptation infrastructure without external help. Financial doubt causes them to be reluctant towards taking firm action towards cutting emissions as they are afraid of social backlash in the event that the money they promise to cut does not come. Thus, the failure of incomplete finance deliveries has rendered most Southern countries incapable of implementing significant mitigation, strengthening their call to have the financial commitments of developed states fulfilled.

Outside finance, institutionally, developing countries do not have well-coordinated mechanisms. The G77 is a small secretariat, and changes the chairmen; it is not an institutionalized organization. The coherence of the coalition is impaired when the country that holds the position of the chair of the G77 is less experienced or has internal problems. An example is that in 2022, Pakistan was successful in leading the G77 because of the good leadership and the ethical value of its floods (Lakhani, 2022). However, a few times the chairmanship of the G77 (e.g. small countries with minimal preparation) has not been able to impose strict discipline. The point is that scarce diplomatic resources and institutional aid causes cracks: the countries might miss meetings, leave others to speak, or even fail to develop a detailed position because of the lack of knowledge.

E. External Influence (Global North Divide-and-Rule)

Finally, external actors (mainly wealthy countries and institutions) reinforce Southern fragmentation through *divide-and-rule* tactics. Developed countries and blocs have long used their economic leverage to sway parts of the Global South. Two common methods are:

- **Bilateral deals:** The large countries of the South have frequently made climate/energy agreements with the North (or among themselves) not in the multilateral arena. As an illustration, China and the US signed bilateral agreements on emissions intensity and finance

which others claim weakened pressure on China to assume Kyoto-like caps (Kasa et al., 2007). Likewise, India has also entered into independent agreements with Europe over renewable energy projects. Such deals provide individual countries (investment, technology), with advantages that make them less pushy in UN negotiations. They also divide: when Country A has already made its own agreement, it might not be as willing to join Country B in demanding more action by the multilateral.

- **Conditional finance and pressure:** The developed nations also seek to manipulate the developing nations with their climate assistance and trade authority. As an example, they can attach some of the emissions commitments to the loaning or granting them, thereby dragging some nations out of the group positions. During COP27, it was reported that certain rich countries were pressuring the Vulnerable Twenty (group of small countries) with promises of aid or exclusivity to withdraw their demands on big emerging countries (Lakhani, 2022). In negotiations on loss-and-damage the Parties who were rich, also attempted to keep the major developing emitters off the donor list, and others attempted to compel them to do so. Such maneuvers can create discord: a developing nation that is being wooed by the North can be an insider and take a different position than the G77.

Fragmentation of the Global South is thus both **internal and externally reinforced**. Even if countries share some goals, the North's ability to selectively reward or pressure states prevents a unified South front. External influences exploit existing divisions and further embed them. The end result is a Global South that often appears divided, even when its members share a general diagnosis of climate injustice.

V. Case Studies

We are now going to discuss three case studies that indicate the impact of Global South fragmentation on climate diplomacy. In each case, it is a group problem, with the South sharing a common interest but showing partial cohesion.

Case Study 1: Loss and Damage Fund (COP27)

Background: Loss and Damage -compensation of climate impacts that are neither mitigable nor adaptable is one of the most expected outcomes at COP27 in 2022. The need to create a fund on L&D was not new to developing countries (particularly the Small Island and Least Developed States). The COP27 outcome was a historic one: parties came to an agreement to set up a Loss and Damage Fund (*COP27 Reaches Breakthrough Agreement on New "Loss and Damage" Fund for Vulnerable Countries | UNFCCC*, 2022). But the negotiations revealed Southern divisions.

South's Demands: G77+China, headed by Pakistan (torn apart by floods), demanded that the fund should be global and funded by developed economies. Weak countries (such as Antigua and Barbuda) insisted that rich developing countries (China, India) should contribute as well ("COP27," 2022). As a bloc, developing countries wanted the fund to be located in a place where it is readily accessible (not necessarily at the World Bank). Within, there were also conflicts: some Southern countries feared that a broad fund would imply commitments to all the developing states whereas others demanded guarantees of access.

Negotiation Outcome: The agreed decision (Sharm el-Sheikh Implementation Plan) did create a transitional committee and fund, but the details were watered down. It is important to note that the contributions were voluntary and the fund was under the trusteeship of the World Bank with a period of four years. The representatives of the developing countries were disillusioned: No

developed country or any other would be forced to pay. The demand that contributions be voluntary (not compulsory) was a result of a combination of bargaining stances. Big developing emitters were opposed to have set commitments and developed nations wished to have China and others as donors.

Fragmentation in Action: This case demonstrates that a shared vulnerability failed to bring about a coherent Southern position. To illustrate, the prime minister of Antigua publicly urged China and India to contribute to the financing of L&D, in contrast to considering only Annex I as binding. This however placed those countries on the defensive. Finally, the G77 solidarity was sufficient to establish the fund, however, its form had its compromises: no compulsory payment, wide eligibility, and the participation of the World Bank. The result, in effect, was not as strong as many developing countries desired, which demonstrates that internal fault lines (and external influence) undermined the ultimate agreement.

Case Study 2: Paris Agreement and NDCs

The Paris Agreement (COP21, 2015) introduced a novel system of **Nationally Determined Contributions** (NDCs). Each country sets its own targets and updates them. Because developing countries have varied circumstances, their NDCs differ widely.

- **China's NDC:** China committed to reach a peak level of CO 2 emissions prior to the year 2030 and subsequently cut the emissions by 7-10% by the year 2035. It also committed to increase non-fossil energy share to about 30% by 2030. This is the first absolute emissions cap of China. These are strategic targets: they are indicative of a commitment on the part of China but have a certain degree of flexibility (e.g. no fixed peak year, range of 7-10%). It is observed that China is taking actions consistent with its official policy of dual-control balancing growth and emissions.
- **India's NDC:** The new NDC (2026) of India focuses on a 47 percent decrease in the intensity of the carbon emissions on the GDP by the year 2035, and a 50 percent non-fossil electric capacity by 2030. More importantly, the plan of India emphasizes that everything depends on the transfer of finance and technology. This is an indication that India is willing to mitigate on the condition that it will receive the help of the more advanced countries. India also delayed outlining some of the targets until it evaluates the progress and finances globally. Simply put, India has committed certain cuts, but on foreign assistance. CarbonBrief reports that the NDC of India is light on the details on finance requests.
- **Least Developed and Other Developing States:** Many LDCs have far more modest NDCs. They usually have no absolute limits, but provide energy efficiency gains or minor emission reductions on the condition of aid. Other LDCs such as Bangladesh have proposed ambitious climate plans (solar expansion), but these are very dependent on external financing. Others merely pointed out the need to adapt without the quantification of mitigation. The inability to do it (political, financial) implies that LDC NDCs are less specific in general.

Fragmentation was properly codified in the Paris NDC system. The Global South had no common attitude on the NDCs appearance. All three countries (China, India and LDCs) negotiated their own terms. This implied that Paris had already shown a patchwork of South commitments. The big emitters (China, India) only calculated their national numbers, not a collective South position (no shared G77 NDC numbers). Consequently, the burden-sharing in Paris became grossly imbalanced; aggregate Southern commitments became unequal and, in most instances, inadequate (relative to equity-based or 1.5C pathways).

Table 2: *We summarize these variations*

Country/Group	2030 Target Example	Conditionality	Finance Need (if stated)
China	Peak CO_2 by 2030, then 7–10% cut by 2035	Mostly unconditional	Not explicitly quantified
India	47% reduction in CO_2 intensity by 2035	Conditional on aid/support	Implicit (asks for technology and funding)
Bangladesh (LDC)	15% reduction below BAU by 2030 (if financed); else 0% baseline	Mostly conditional	~$10–20B per year needed
Nepal (LDC)	Renewable energy expansion targets	Conditional	High (not specified)
Indonesia	31.9% cut (unconditional), 43.2% (conditional) by 2030	Partial conditional	$48B needed annually

Table 2: Examples of NDC commitments among Global South (illustrative). Sources: UNFCCC NDC database and analysis reports (e.g. WRI, CarbonBrief).

Case Study 3: Pakistan's Climate Diplomacy

The 2022 floods in Pakistan are a bright example of South-South dynamics. In mid-2022, unforeseen rains flooded approximately 1/3 of the Pakistani territory, bringing colossal destruction to life and property. This disaster put Pakistan at the forefront of climate negotiations. Pakistan was the G77+China chair of COP27 and took this opportunity to promote climate justice. Prime minister Shehbaz Sharif and Minister Sherry Rehman repeatedly pointed out that even though Pakistan was contributing less than 0.3 percent of world emissions, it was a victim like an industrialized nation (Shaikh, 2023). They insisted on "loss and damage, not charity." Through moral authority, Pakistan was able to keep developing countries on course to L&D: Observers remarked that the G77 was more united than at any time since 2009, under the umbrella of Pakistan leadership, the G77 remained united (Lakhani, 2022).

But this unity had its boundaries. The resultant L&D agreement was not as good as many had hoped. There were no definite funding commitments; the question of payment was postponed. Even self-initiatives of Pakistan to win international support were hampered. Climate diplomacy was seen as an opportunity to bring injustice to the fore in the country but its real capacity to influence long term structures is poor. The economy and geopolitical strength of Pakistan (as compared to China/India) is weak. The establishment of the L&D fund itself was the only significant concession it made (*COP27 Reaches Breakthrough Agreement on New "Loss and Damage" Fund for Vulnerable Countries | UNFCCC*, 2022). In the COP text, Pakistan got repeated mentions of climate justice, but without forcing developed countries to pay more than voluntary. Following COP27, observers cautioned that there was no particular contributions or concept on size yet - i.e. the Pakistani dream of a well-financed fund was not fulfilled entirely (Lakhani, 2022).

The case of Pakistan demonstrates the opportunities and limitations of the Southern climate diplomacy. The floods formed a collective complaint and the art of Pakistan was able to rally most

of the developing nations behind a demand. However, in the end structural influence was constrained: finance remained in the hands of the North, and a few Southern emitters (China) were granted exemptions. Pakistan was unable to impose a full-funded result. The leadership of the country helped to overcome internal differences at least temporarily, but as soon as those negotiations switched to technical aspects, fragmentation reoccurred (who pays? how much?). As highlighted in the case, despite the high moral suasion, power imbalances can weaken Southern endeavors through domestic divisions and external circumstances.

VI. Impact on Climate Change Outcomes

The fragmentation of the Global South has tangible effects on the climate diplomacy process and outcomes:

1. **Weak Bargaining Power:** A fractured bloc is unable to take advantage of its combined weight. The Global South, despite its many numbers, tends to end up with diluted demands. An example is whereby some developing countries would not accept tougher language on emissions and consequently other countries would have to yield. As it has been mentioned, the L&D fund of COP27 was not compulsory but voluntary due to Southern disunity. Likewise, during COP26 the difference between the positions of the two groups, India and SIDS, resulted in a less strong coal agreement. In the absence of unity, the Global South cannot plausibly threaten to veto bad deals; consensus politics therefore supports those who are most compromising (often larger emitters or developed countries).
2. **Dilution of Agreements:** Fragmentation promotes the lowest common denominator text. Contracts are left at loose or voluntary obligations. The very Paris Agreement which is a product of the South-South and North-South compromise, makes NDCs promises that are not binding. The language of compromise can be found in the decisions of COP27: loss and damage are acknowledged but voluntarily funded, adaptation is renewed but without new binding commitments. Some key words (such as low-emission energy) are occasionally added in order to appease obdurate members. Fragmentation, therefore, adds to unclear wording that undermines global climate action.
3. **Delayed Climate Action:** Polarization in the South usually implies that negotiations are stretched out, and that actions are delayed. Controversial topics (e.g. fossil fuel cut, finance) will be postponed to subsequent COPs. As an illustration, following COP26, there were not many consensus targets tightened; COP27 concentrated on the finance mechanisms. This dynamism of two speeds, whereby certain nations are progressing and others lagging behind, retards the worldwide reaction. According to the UNEP Finance Initiative, irrespective of the success of COP27, the ambition gap is still substantial and the planet is moving towards 2.732C warming (*COP27 – 'Loss and Damage' Success Tempered by Lack of Implementation*, 2022). Part of this delay arises from needing consensus: with a fragmented South, finding consensus means lowest-ambition compromises.
4. **Continued Global North Dominance:** In a situation where the Global South is split, the Global North still has the power of setting the agenda. The developed nations dominate the key international financial institutions and technology flows. A divided South will put less pressure on the North to give their all. An example is that the final COP27 texts contained wording that was sensitive to the developed countries (e.g. no forced contributions to the fund). The COP results enabled the World Bank to control new funds - an outcome that has been criticized as keeping them under Northern control. The negotiation architecture is therefore still mostly

influenced by the Northern countries. Effectively, fragmentation enables rich states to control negotiations or pass the buck, preserving the actual power structures.

The Global South is directly affected by fragmentation which compromises the effectiveness of global climate diplomacy. The three case studies and the COP results demonstrate the fact that Southern disunity creates weaker demands, softer agreements and slower progress. In short, when the alliance is divided, it is difficult to act collectively.

VII. Critical Discussion

A. Is Unity Realistic?

In the light of the structural disparities in the Global South, it is not realistic to anticipate a flawless unity. Economic needs, political beliefs and security issues are varied in these nations. The paper has demonstrated that these differences lead to radically different standpoints. Trying to make everyone the same disregards the realities on the ground. But realistic does not imply hopelessness: unity tends to be partial and issue-focused. It is possible to have coalitions based on limited interests (e.g. adaptation finance) where more extensive alignment is not possible. Pragmatism proposes concentrating on areas of consensus (such as the insistence of Northern finance as promised) instead of idealistic universal solidarity.

B. Limits of South–South Cooperation

There are established limits to South-South cooperation. Developing states do not trust each other politically; they tend to consider each other as rivals. As it happened, India was suspicious of Chinese actions; prosperous Southern nations tend to protect their independence first. If there is a competition among the leaders (e.g. of China and India to gain influence) then even collective groups possess internal rivalries. Additionally, dissimilarities in regime type and economic relationships cause additional divisions. Empirically, the new COPs have demonstrated that although Southern states usually speak with one voice as they make joint declarations, they also make back-room deals separately. It is not a political surprise: in the case of limited resources and pressing needs, states are more concerned with national survival than with cohesive ideology.

C. Reform Possibilities

If full unity is out of reach, how might Southern countries improve their climate diplomacy? Several paths are possible:

- **Strengthening the G77:** Reforming and investing in the G77 process could help. For example, creating a robust secretariat, providing negotiation training to weaker countries, and pre-COP coordination could tighten the group's coherence. A more professional G77 could better mediate internal conflicts.
- **Regional blocs:** African Union, AILAC (Latin America), or ASEAN frameworks could be leveraged. These groups share regional interests and often negotiate collectively. A unified African position on carbon markets or Latin American stance on technology transfer could carry weight. Regional consensus can then be brought to the global stage, making coalitions more manageable than one huge bloc.
- **Issue-based coalitions:** As Fahmy & Daoud (2026) suggest, a shift toward "selective collectivism" may be occurring (Fahmy & Daoud, 2026). Countries could form small alliances around specific issues. For instance, the "Vulnerable 20" coalition (V20) groups climate-vulnerable states of all levels for finance debates. Similarly, the Carbon Neutrality Coalition or

LMDC alliance form around narrow common positions. These focused coalitions can sidestep broader fragmentation.

- **South–South climate finance initiatives:** The dependency on North-led funds could be decreased by encouraging joint South-led funding (e.g. a Green Fund financed by BRICS, or regional climate banks). It may not be a solution to the problem of fragmentation, but it might restore some of the agenda-setting authority to the South.
- **Negotiation strategy:** Southern nations could make more coordination on procedural tactics. As an illustration, it can be helpful to agree on a minimum common ground on important matters (such as insisting on transparent finance mechanisms). Although end game targets may vary, solidarity on process or fairness concerns can enhance leverage.

These ideas require recognition of realpolitik constraints. We have been wary not to be idealistic: at least change in South-South dynamics can be gradual. However, reforms, capacity building and diplomatic networking would enhance cohesion gradually. The trick is to collaborate with diversity - not to ignore it but to create coalitions of the willing and create institutional support that is responsive to the varying national situations.

VIII. Conclusion

This article discussed the role of fragmentation in the Global South in determining the outcomes of climate diplomacy. We discovered that even at the surface, there is solidarity of developing countries around climate justice, but developing countries are by no means a single bloc. Global South has been structurally fragmented due to internal disparities, economic, political, vulnerability based and external pressures. We have demonstrated that this fragmentation is due to the self-interested actions of states, constraints of international institutions, and past inequities, using IR theories (Realism, Liberalism, Dependency). The collective-action aspect of climate change implies that fragmentation compromises the collective bargaining strength: South is seen to be weak and divided, resulting in watered-down agreements and slow action.

We observed tangible evidence through our three case studies. The COP27 Loss & Damage Fund, which vulnerable countries had long been requesting, was only possible through intensive internal discussions and finally through voluntary contributions. The Paris Agreement NDCs demonstrate a divided South: China established its own goals, India was conditional and LDCs provided little plans (Table 2). The 2022 floods in Pakistan pushed the country towards a vocal stance on climate justice, yet the decisions that followed were not substantial enough to be forced reparations. In every instance, there was a partial realization of the common purposes, but only through compromises prescribed by the most backward or the slowest Southern players.

The effect on climate outcomes is evident: The fragmentation of Global South has a direct impact on less powerful international climate pledges. This makes agreements softer, finance slower, and reduces emissions cuts more modest. The promise of international climate diplomacy will not be fulfilled without dealing with these internal divisions. In this critical discussion we emphasized upon realism: wholesale unity is improbable considering the factors involved. Rather, coalitions need to be more flexible - by forging more robust regional relationships, issue-specific alliances, and enhancing coordination - to better leverage whatever collective strength can be achieved.

To sum up, the conclusion is made again: the fragmentation of developing nations results in inadequate diplomacy and unfavorable climate results. The presented data and cases demonstrate that in spite of the Global South being numerically dominant, its heterogeneity dilutes its influence.

The climate action is an imperative, yet so long as the Global South does not manage to get its members unanimously behind similar demands the climate change burden will fall on them anyway disproportionately. Fragmentation is not a mere academic game, but a reality that needs to be tackled in order to achieve justice and efficacy in global climate policy.

Conflict of Interest

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