

Fight against climate change can overcome geopolitical discord

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In the wake of the 9/11 attacks, leaders from around the world united to confront the growing threat of terrorism. Political, diplomatic, financial, and military resources were pooled to tackle a common enemy, demonstrating how a global threat can compel collective action across national boundaries. Today, the world faces an even greater challenge: climate change. Unlike terrorism, climate change threatens not just the security of nations but the very survival of the human race. The universal nature of this threat has the potential to unite the world in a way that transcends political, religious, and economic divisions. The seriousness of climate change is driving societies, especially the youth, to push for decisive, unified action. Just as the global fight against terrorism required collaboration and resource sharing, the fight against climate change demands unprecedented cooperation on a global scale. From enhancing the efficiency of interdependent supply chains to sharing climate technology, the mechanisms of climate cooperation offer a blueprint for addressing other global challenges. In the face of this existential threat, unity becomes not just a possibility but a necessity. Just as national security risks compel unity beyond political affiliations, the global threat of climate change has the potential to unite humanity across geopolitical divides.

Climate change has become the greatest concern for everyone. In the battle for survival for human race, climate change is rightly being seen as a collective challenge. The affects of climate change are felt by everyone. Be it the heat waves that expose humans to extreme temperatures, floods that destroy developments, or the changing pattern of rainfall that catches people and urban planners by surprise, all influence human beings adversely. Moreover, food chains are also at risk. These concerns are shared by everyone.

The threat of climate change has a uniting effect on human beings. Human beings unite in face of common enemy, be it an adversary state, terrorism, or now climate change. Since climate change is a common threat, the uniting effect transcends borders and politics of states.

Climate change poses severe threats to states around the globe. No part of land can be said to be secure from the consequences of global change. It has affected all states irrespective of their geographical locations, political systems, economic and military strengths. The unprecedented rains of 2022 that caused severe floods in Pakistan, also had impacts in India. The threat knows no borders. As former US President Barack Obama stated, "No nation, large or small, wealthy or poor, is immune to what this means." This commonality of threat to states pushes them to unite.

Climate change is a non-partisan issue. While politics usually divides along issues, the enormity of threat of climate change has uniquely united politicians on this issue. All significant political parties have included climate in their election manifesto. In the 2024 elections, all major parties of Pakistan included action against climate change in their political manifestoes. Public opinion has also driven this change. Pew Research Center in various survey showed that climate change was among the top concerns for people, and top concern for many. This common concern pushes for a unity among people.

The united effect of the threat of climate change is not just in politics but also religion. It is interesting to note that many religions of the world teach environmental conservation. Islam teaches its followers to plant trees and respect animals. Buddhism teaches that human depend on nature and nature depends upon humans. Deteriorating any one deteriorates both. Similarly, Christian pope Francis has repeatedly voiced his concern for climate change. This means that people of all faith see it as their religious duty to take action against climate change.

Apart from political and religious interests, the economic interests of states also push towards overcoming geo-political discord. Interconnectedness of threat of climate change to economies rationalizes overcoming geopolitical discords. As a result of climate change, the long-established industries are at threat. Many need to be eliminated to reduce the impacts of climate change. It is without doubt that if the world has to transition away from hydrocarbons and adopt renewable energy, it can not be possible without global cooperation. Oil producing giant need to be convinced to reduce production. On the consumption side, economies need to incentivize production from sources that produces less carbon. It is hard to do so alone in this globalized world of interconnected free markets. Green production is typically more expensive, and unless all agree to adopt green production, or at least incentivize it, it will not be possible to reduce carbon footprint in industrial production.

Apart from economies, the unequal distribution of effects of climate change poses a moral dilemma. It is widely acknowledged that worst affected states are those who have contributed least towards its causes. Various climate reports have acknowledged that Pakistan is among the states that are most at risk of effects of climate change despite contributing least. This shows that entire world needs to step up and take moral responsibility to curb climate change. Industrial hubs like China, Germany, and the US should take courage to greenify their industries. This responsibility needs cooperation beyond borders.

Fight against climate change has also mobilized public especially youth around the world. Since the worst results of climate change will be seen by next generation, youth is more concerned than other. The convincing speeches of Greta Thunberg are voice of every young person. Her words, "Our house is on Fire. I am here to say, our house is on fire," reflect deep concerns of youth. Through social activism, youth has been airing its voice for collective and immediate action against climate change. Facebook, Instagram and Twitter are frequently used to alarm of the incoming threats. Such activism has united youth across borders and across political divides. UNESCO's Youth Climate Action Network provides platform for increased cooperation. People of all color and races stand shoulder to shoulder, equally concerned for fighting climate change.

The concern for climate action has brought people together. But the global nature of solution to climate change brings even enemies together. In this do together or die situation, geopolitical discords become meaningless. All states, big powers or small powers, with large booming economies or faltering ones, with abundant resources or limited, technologically advanced or not, ideologically aligned or not, all need to unite and take collective action if human race has to survive. There is no time for geopolitical considerations to be made.

Climate change knows no borders. It affects everyone irrespective of borders, and requires a united effort to its solution. Even if a state transitioned entirely from hydrocarbons to green energy, and covered its land mass with forest, it will do no good to it if other states continue carbon emissions. Such nature of climate change issue requires states to go beyond their political discords and sit together to put a joint effort together. In international relations, there is a concept of "common good". A common good is a mutually beneficial situation between states that exists as long as a large majority of them keeps contributing towards it. Yet, some may choose to be a free rider. However, if number of free riders increase, the common good no longer exists. Climate action can be understood as common good. Conference of Parties or COP unites states and climate activists together every year to map out a strategy for next year. Yet, the results will be positive if each state put forth its best efforts.

It also needs to be understood that the threats of climate change are no less for any powerful state either. Even developed states require cooperation from others to mitigate the threats. Thus, it is necessary for states to cooperate on this issue. In 2015, China and US signed Paris Accord to jointly work towards mitigating climate change. Such cooperation for states in a cold war situation reflects that fight against climate change requires cooperation beyond geopolitical discords.

On the regional scale too, climate action requires cooperation beyond discords. Many bordering states share eco-systems, and resources like forests, plains and waters. A unified policy is required to effectively conserve environment and avoid further degradation. Pakistan and India are archrivals, yet they share ecology in their bordering areas. Plains of Indus and Ganges plains have similar climate. Both receive rainfall under influence of Himalayas in the north. Rivers for both flow from the same mountain range. A joint policy, learning from each other is the way to safeguard these fertile belts. Equally similar are the climate of Rajasthan and Thar deserts. Joint policy is required to safeguard the residents from heat waves and rising temperatures. Moreover, Both India and Pakistan are among the most vulnerable countries. Therefore, it is necessary to prioritize efforts against climate change over geopolitical discord.

The fight against climate change necessitates economic interdependence and cooperation for efficient supply chains. The threats of climate change and the solutions require economic cooperation and supply chains. For reducing reliance on hydrocarbons, electric vehicles are promoted as alternative. However, their batteries are made with Lithium, which is a trace mineral. However, its reserves are available in Afghanistan. If hydrocarbons have to be removed from transport, Afghanistan has to be brought into global supply chain despite the political conflicts with others. Similarly, economically weak states need financing to transition their economy to green economy. In this do together or die situation, those who can must put in efforts to bring forth a collective action.

Apart from interconnectedness of supply chains, innovations and climate technology also needs to be shared. In this joint war against climate change, this technology has to be used by everyone. Thus, it is irrational to put limits on its sharing. Poor nations must be subsidized for such technology. Technology such as carbon capture, efficient renewable energy systems, climate resilient agriculture resources need to be shared. The Green Climate Fund, established under the UNFCCC, aims to assist developing countries in accessing technology and funding to combat climate change, fostering international cooperation. However, if due to international politics, such technology is not shared, we might head towards a disaster.

The climate threat has united people and states. The only solution to climate change is cooperation at all scales. This realization has brought states together despite geopolitical discords. It is need of the time to leverage this atmosphere of cooperation to other important areas.

The regime of cooperation can be extended for building trust and diplomatic channels among states on wide range of issues. Such pattern of cooperation creates hopes for resolution of geopolitical discords. The successful cooperation on climate change can build trust among nations, creating pathways for collaborations on other contentious issues. Climate diplomacy opens the door to broader diplomatic engagement. The Paris Agreement negotiations brought together countries like the U.S. and China, who, despite their rivalry, collaborated on climate commitments. Former U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry highlighted the broader potential of climate diplomacy: “If we can work together to solve the climate crisis, there’s nothing we can’t do.” This cooperation has been cited as a model for addressing other global challenges.

Success in multilateral frameworks for addressing climate change creates hope for more international platform for solution of contentious issues. The climate cooperation has led to the creation of multilateral frameworks and institutions. The model of these platforms can be used for creation of new platforms to address others global issues like security, health and trade. Even the existing platforms can be expanded to include more global and regional challenges. As UN Climate Chief Patricia Espinosa stated, “The Paris Agreement is more than just a climate deal; it’s a new framework for global cooperation.” The success of multilateral platforms for climate change has established a positive precedent for future engagement of geopolitical discords.

Even more convincing is the fact that climate change has re-established the patterns for economic cooperation. Cooperation on climate change, particularly in the green economy, can stabilize global markets and foster economic interdependence, reducing the likelihood of conflicts. This economic stability can be a foundation for broader international cooperation. The European Union’s Green Deal, which aims to make Europe the first climate-neutral continent, is also seen as a strategy to strengthen the EU’s economic position and foster unity within the bloc, potentially serving as a model for other regions. Moreover, the Climate Loss and Damage Fund has also once again initiated helping poor nations. Such patterns also build positive attitude between states. Such economic cooperation can be extended for development, health and security overcoming discords.

Climate Change has brought people together which can be leveraged to create a global community transcending borders and geopolitical discords. Climate change has spurred the development of a global community of practice, where scientists, policymakers, and activists share knowledge and strategies. This community can be mobilized to tackle other transnational issues, like pandemics,

cybersecurity or border conflicts. The successes of cooperation of global community gives a promising hope for future. Initiatives like the Global Covenant of Mayors for Climate & Energy have created networks of cities and local governments that collaborate on climate solutions, setting a precedent for cooperation on other urban challenges like housing or public health. The united response to commitments below expectations in last COP conference held in Dubai can be a precedence of response of failure of leadership to resolve geopolitical discords. A global community focused on making world a better place can resolve geopolitical discords.

Even more promising is the fact that in this fight together, a shared global identity has emerged. Climate action often involves a collective effort that transcends national identities, fostering a sense of shared global citizenship. This global identity can be harnessed to address other global challenges that require collective action. In this shared identity, geopolitical discords can hardly find a place. Former UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon emphasized, "Climate change is a matter for global action... It reminds us that we are all part of a global family." This sense of family sets forth the expectation of overcoming geopolitical discords.

To conclude, the threat of climate change has brought a sense of commonality among all humans. It poses risk to all human beings. This transcending threat requires a response from all states. The solution lies in contributions by each and every state, and assisting one another for the cause. The fight against climate change thus has built such for at national, regional and international scales that have shown cooperation beyond the lines of discord. The success of these platforms creates hope and expectation for solution of other global and regional challenges. Even, geopolitical discords can be solved. A shared global identity has brought people of all sates, of all races, and of all ideologies to realize that unity is the way to a better life for everyone. So, the fight against climate change can overcome geopolitical discord. It is now our duty to use this unique opportunity of globally shared feelings, identities, communities, and platforms to create a world where geopolitics is not a discord anymore.