Post-Paris: Pledge and Review and Politics Research

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My Perspective: Interests, Incentives, Research

- Individuals and states act on the basis of their perceptions of their own self-interest, but these interests – and incentives – are shaped by institutions.
- Our job as political analysts: first of all, is to understand the politics of climate policy.
- When we understand the politics, we can try to help get institutional incentives right to improve policies and strategies. Understanding is critical to better political strategies and better policies.
Theory and interpretation, then research questions

• The next fifteen minutes: my interpretation of the Paris Accords in the context of theories of international cooperation.

• The second half of the talk: suggestions for political science research on climate change politics.
Self-interested cooperation can occur

- Contrary to some comments yesterday, there is a much-cited political science literature on global and local cooperation, going back more than 30 years:
  - Elinor Ostrom, *Governing the Commons* (1990)
Lessons from this literature: key conditions for cooperation:

• Cooperation comes from discord, not harmony.
• Key actors need to want to achieve results that can only be achieved through cooperation;
• Practices of reciprocity must be institutionalized;
• Institutions must enable credible commitment;
• There must be considerable transparency;
• Repeated play is needed over a long period of time.
Pledge & review: discretion and vagueness

• Discretion for national governments: good politics, uncertain outcomes.

• Vagueness:
  – Article 4: no binding commitment to implement;
  – Article 14: just stocktaking on implementation;
  – Article 13: Only an injunction to the COP to decide on transparency in the future.
This is how cooperation happens!

• In the real (political) world, the alternative to discretion and vagueness was no action at all.
• The Paris Agreement elevates vagueness to an art form but this was a stroke of political genius because it made agreement possible.
• Governments could gain reputation by pledging.
Reputation asymmetries and “organized hypocrisy”

• Before Paris, there were only reputational gains from pledging action – no costs due to the vagueness of commitments.

• Now there are costs. So there is a disconnect between promises and expected results.

• As Stephen Krasner has argued, much of world politics is “organized hypocrisy.” Don’t get outraged but don’t get fooled!
If governments are to act on the Paris Accords, they need incentives to do so. Exhortations will not work and domestic politics will be crucial. Four incentives need to be harnessed:

- Achieve domestic purposes:
- Respond to domestic constituencies;
- Get benefits through reciprocity;
- Enhance reputation.
Post-Paris Politics as a “Two-Level Game”

• Think of a bargaining game at two levels: inter-state and within states. Outcomes have to be in the “win-set” at both levels.

• At the inter-state level, simplify the game to three sets of actors:
  – OECD countries that are committed to action;
  – BRICs;
  – Poor developing countries.
Actors’ Interests:

• Many countries in all three sets have leaders who genuinely want to respond effectively to climate change.

• But all governments want to:
  – Reduce their own costs relative to benefits;
  – Maintain policy flexibility and autonomy.
Possible Deals:

- OECD-BRICs: BRICs will demand concessions on OECD emissions levels, technical assistance, and financial aid.
- OECD-poor developing countries: OECD only needs poor countries not flagrantly to violate agreed emissions limits.
- The OECD-BRICs deal is harder but both deals seem feasible.
Will feasible deals help with climate change? Not so clear.

- High-level bargaining equilibrium: substantial emissions reductions by BRIC countries, and some by small poor countries, with compensating financial transfers.
- Low-level bargaining equilibrium: “We pretend to cut emissions and you pretend to pay us.” This is a major danger.
Part II: Research topics on political action. NOT:

• Efficient policy (the economists’ orientation);
• Hypothetical effects of different policies;
• Criticizing national or international policies on normative grounds;
• Articulating a normative-philosophical view of ethical climate policy.
• Instead, I want to encourage work that describes and seeks to explain political action.
Premise: strategies for change require better understanding of politics

• No apologies for fundamental research.
• Don’t rush prematurely to policy analysis.
• Look for *anomalies*: puzzling phenomena that we don’t understand well.
• Example: What accounts for the climate agenda’s almost exclusive emphasis on emissions? (Stefan Aykut’s paper)
Political analysis and global politics

• What strategies are employed by states and coalitions and under what conditions?
• What conditions affect how cooperative or uncooperative are states’ bargaining tactics?
• What accounts for secretariat behavior? (Helge Jorgens)
• What accounts for increased regime complexity, including the creation of new international institutions? (Zelli-Asselt-Moller)
Understanding the comparative politics of climate change policy

- National policies vary on many dimensions such as ambition, comprehensiveness, distributional incidence, institutionalization. How should we explain this variation?
- The NDCs provide a remarkable data source.
- So, how do the NDCs vary and why? Test theories of comparative politics against NDC variation. Material interests, political culture, path-dependent institutions, etc.
The comparative sensitivity of climate policy

• How is the *sensitivity* of climate policy to shocks (positive or negative) affected by:
  – Interest groups;
  – Public attitudes;
  – Government structures;
  – Global interdependence.

• Expectation: Sensitivity to climate shocks will be different in different countries. Comparative analysis will be needed.
Two level games: the INDC process and state policy

- What are the effects of the INDC process on national policies?
- Review and naming and shaming?
- Diffusion – imitation and competition?
- Use by pluralistic interests?
- Signals to markets?
- Possible openings for new state strategies – INDCs as ways to justify new policies at home?
Private authority and orchestration

• What is the impact of “private authority?” (Jessica Green)

• Can we expect self-organization (“polycentricity,” in Lin Ostrom’s phrase)? Under what conditions? (Presentation by Marcel Dorsch)
Legitimacy and Effectiveness

• To what degree, and under what conditions, are the procedural legitimacy of climate institutions and their effectiveness mutually supportive or in conflict with one another, generating tradeoffs? That is, what is the impact of procedural legitimacy on effectiveness?
Understanding the organizational ecology of climate policy

• Organizational ecology: focus on *populations* as the unit of analysis, not the individual organization.

• How have the populations of different types of climate-related organizations changed?

• Rise of private regulatory networks and public-private partnerships; relative stagnation in the number of IGOs. How should we try to explain this? (Abbott-Green-Keohane, *International Organization*, spring 2016.)
What do we need to understand to understand the politics of climate?

- Interests, Strategies, and Institutions
- How Reciprocity and Reputation work
- The comparative politics of climate policy, including comparative sensitivity.
- The two-level bargaining game and effects.
- Private authority and orchestration.
- The organizational ecology of climate policy.
- THIS IS A BIG AGENDA, WORTH WORKING ON!