

This is a graded discussion: 2 points possible due 7 Feb at 18:30



## Reading Reflection #11

[Jackson Herron](#)

4 Feb at 10:43

15 29

Answer in 200-400 words.

- Describe in a relative detail a specific mechanism by which the character of the Paris Agreement can be strengthened over time. What conditions can facilitate adoption of the strengthening mechanism?

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⋮

One of the mechanisms mentioned is the establishment of quotas or allowable harvest levels for harvesting living resources. The essay gives an example of quotas on whaling. As mentioned, this mechanism does involve a lot of step-by-step processes and thus is not a change that can be seen from one day to another. Conditions that can facilitate this type of mechanisms are international conventions in which quotas could be discussed, furthermore, if we are talking about climate change it would be related to quotas on either directly CO2 production or quotas on production for industries with high emissions. This is the command and control system of regulation that would prescribe emission limits and thus is more rigid than a market-based approach such as emissions trading or cap and trade. However, because the emissions goal is fixed, the performance of firms will depend on who can achieve a reduction in pollution at a cheaper cost, making the transition a bit more expensive for the other firms, which may differ those costs to the consumer. This is not necessarily something bad, but something to keep in mind. It would make the commitments way more strict and leave firms with little room to reject a transition

to a greener production.

← Reply



[Olivia Locke](#)

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2/2

This is a really good explanation. I thought this was an interesting method!

← Reply



[Taran Bains](#)

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2/2

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To me the most feasible sounding mechanism is that of quotas which are slowly adjusted over time. For this to happen there must be protocols for how these quotas are adjusted over time. The article gives the example of the 1946 International Convention for the Regulation of Whaling, in this example the quotas are the number of whales which can be hunted. At first the quotas were much higher than scientists and environmentalists wanted, however over time (1946-1982) they were reduced up to the point where the quota for several species is at 0. I think there are parallels between this case and that of global emissions. Much like with the Paris agreement, the effected parties did not want to agree to the scientifically recommended quotas. However, by beginning with relatively relaxed goals they were able to get parties to agree to meeting these quotas, much like how countries such as the USA have agreed to a watered down version of the Paris agreement. If over time the quota for emissions can be reduced then perhaps countries can be brought to agreeing to goals they would not have agreed with in the beginning.

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[Alexis Lytle](#)

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2/2 I also chose this mechanism. It also stood out to me that the initial agreement, be it whales or emissions, did not meet scientific standards, but it was easier to get people to sign first and negotiate later.

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[Taran Bains](#)

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I am slightly confused by the question. I think one of the main things that would help make the Paris Agreement stronger, would be forcing everyone to adopt more 'ambitious commitments [that] become increasingly effective over time'. We consider the Montreal Protocol for the ozone layer to be the gold standard but, that also doesn't mean its perfect. A lot of other factors played into it such as industries also rooting for banning them, but there are still harmful ingredients being used in products. One mechanism that can help force the commitments to get stronger, is a governing body that makes the decisions and forces countries to ban more things, and reduce their emissions. The Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer had a Meeting of the Parties that did this sort of work to help make sure that substances were phased out quickly, but also made sure that they were still economically and politically feasible.

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[Alexis Lytle](#)

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2/2 I agree, I was a bit confused by the question. A governing body could definitely strengthen the Paris Agreement, provided it was chosen fairly and with the best interests of all parties involved.

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[Michael Horner](#)

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2/2 I was slightly confused by the question as well, I wasn't sure if it specifically had to be within in the agreement, and it seems that the only way to "strengthen" it in its current form is adding to the INDCs.

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*Describe in a relative detail a specific mechanism by which the character of the Paris Agreement can be strengthened over time. What conditions can facilitate adoption of the strengthening mechanism?*

One mechanism for strengthening the Paris Agreement would be to set a quota for allowable harvesting of living resources. The example given by the paper is the International Convention for the Regulation of Whaling: originally, allowable whaling quotas were well above what scientists were recommending, but the quotas were lowered incrementally until finally reaching a moratorium. Similar to the Paris Agreement, it was easy to get parties to sign on initially because the agreement did not require too much work or loss of privileges. However, the mechanism was set up so that parties had to actively object and come up with a better solution if they wanted did not want to allow the continual lowering of allowable limits. For the Paris Agreement itself, this could mean countries must commit to a certain annual limit on forest harvesting or carbon emissions, which would slowly be reduced with each iteration of NDCs.

One condition listed in this paper which facilitates the adoption of strengthening mechanisms is having veto players agree to the terms. This is similar to what we discussed last class, that large global negotiations like the Paris Agreement would likely fail if major countries like the US did not

initially sign on or chooses to follow through with their plan to exit the agreement.

← Reply



[Ashna Misra](#)

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2/2

← Reply



[Michael Horner](#)

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2/2 Oil and gas could be another limited resource, although it is tough because we are unsure of how much there is.

← Reply



[Michael Horner](#)

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***Describe in a relative detail a specific mechanism by which the character of the Paris Agreement can be strengthened over time. What conditions can facilitate adoption of the strengthening mechanism?***

A mechanism that can strengthen the Paris agreement would be by the decision of “veto-players” to stop producing products that increase CO<sub>2</sub> emission. For the Montreal protocol, this was assisted by DuPont’s decision to scale back refrigerant production. In the case of the Paris agreement, this could come through the decision by large oil and gas companies to slow down their production or choose which industries they sell their products to. These decisions could be included in a countries’ INDC, thereby strengthening the Paris agreement. This change could be accelerated politically by not allowing for the lobbying of oil & gas in government, and by removing subsidies from these industries. If a government forces unfavourable conditions for production, then these companies will either adapt or disband. Also, since these businesses possess large amounts of money, the transition to renewable energy could be made the focus of these organizations. Being a leader in this regard is has financial benefits as well as environmental.

Secondly, conditions for this change can be improved by a government intelligently planning its energy infrastructure and reducing its reliance upon oil & gas. Again, the projected shutdowns and subsequent transitions to different forms of energy can be included in an INDC, and be tied directly to a carbon reduction.

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[Ashna Misra](#)

(<https://canvas.ubc.ca/courses/26675/users/94031>)

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2/2

← Reply



[Jackson Herron](#)

(<https://canvas.ubc.ca/courses/26675/users/31047>)

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Oooo I really like this idea!! Adding clauses to the Paris agreement to pull support/block lobbying from the big oil and gas corporations. If the oil and gas majors get on board, are incentivized to shift their business model to renewable energy they would be a huge benefit to the movement. They have some of the most talented engineers and largest balance books in the world.

← Reply



[Ashna Misra](#)

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One of the Paris Agreement's greatest strengths, the amount of signing members, is also its largest weakness. Although countries design their own NDCs, there still needs to be a general feeling of improvement to encourage the continued strengthening of NDC's. In this regard I think it would be good to follow a mechanism like the International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships (MARPOL). This convention allowed amendments to be made and assumed that they were legally binding on members who did not object within a certain time period.

I think a similar mechanism would be effective for the Paris Agreement. It would be easy to first reduce the time periods between NDC revamps (perhaps from 5 years to 3) which I doubt many countries would reject. Then to start slowly including legally binding aspects until the whole agreement is able to hold members more responsible to their commitments.

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2/2

I like the idea, but feel that if the requirements were not ratified by all parties some countries may be disincentivized to stay in the agreement. I do think adding legally binding aspects to the agreement over time will help!

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[David Ontaneda](#)

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2/2

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A mechanism for strengthening the PA would be to standardize the format of NDCs in such a way that the magnitude of GHG reductions between countries are directly comparable. Then, there can be added specific clauses on how countries should continuously improve on their emissions mitigations until the point of GHG neutrality. There can also be more clarity for which countries are exceeding vs. failing in ambition, and eventually possible global sanctions on the countries with the least ambitious efforts // greatest contribution of emissions. The clauses for continuous improvement will need to account for developed vs. developing countries which will not be easy to negotiate... They could also be contingent on bringing down per-capita emissions first and foremost. However this would especially hurt Canada, which has high per-capita emissions

because of its large land mass and resource extractive economy. Again, this would be hard to negotiate.

The main condition that I see facilitating adoption of this mechanism is, unfortunately, worsening global climate impacts. When more tangible/fiscal impacts of climate change become real, political leaders will be more willing to put good faith effort towards emissions reductions. In doing so, they will want to make sure other countries are also doing their fair share by standardizing the NDC process. If a coalition of countries gets on board with the idea, that will be a good way to begin. Better technology sharing and more inexpensive ways of reducing GHGs would also help.

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[Katie Reeder](#)

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2/2. Agreed. I now understand what you meant by 'condition' in the original question.

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2/2

On the second note: What if with worse impacts (and climate migration) you have countries less willing to collaborate? (ex. India & Bangladesh)

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One of the main issues in the strength of the PA is that all countries developed their own goals, to be measured with their own metrics. This lends to a lot of uncertainty and possible scapegoating by countries that don't want to play fair at any given time (think US). The issue of a developed power such as the US not signing up to the same level of commitment can lead to other less developed countries falling into a tragedy of the commons attitude where they feel justified in not

being stringent in their own goals.

That said, I think there should be a standardized measuring system, that is based on transparency but also enforcement. There should be certain standards defined for how countries measure their carbon emissions, but also for how countries measure their offsets (ex. brazil trying to play the world and double count the amazon's positive impact). This would require a third-party, and transnational regulating body that could develop a fair system that accounts for contextual aspects as well. Then the regulating body should be able to inform countries on how stringent their goals should be in order to achieve a global 2 degree goal. And finally on the hand of enforcement, I think we could develop different social systems that incentivize heavily. (Think an expansion of economic embargoes, what would a social embargo look like?) Obviously international politics is too complex to reduce to these assumptions, yet I believe we could innovate international relations so as to incentivize without forcing. Taking for example a successful microfinance structure's methods of repayment enforcement (or encouragement) and scaling that system to the global political landscape. Maybe that is idealistic and a bit ridiculous, but I think it could be worth investigating.

← Reply



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One mechanism for strengthening commitments embedded in the Paris Agreement involves offering funding to help developing countries to find ways to grow their economies without increasing emissions of GHGs and to adapt to the impacts of climate change.

I do not fully understand the second part of this question. A condition that may enable this mechanism is gathering a force of a smaller group of large actors/emitters to throw their force behind strengthening funding commitments? We could increase commitments from private climate finance supported by public funding in a developing nation? Or maybe we allow MOP's to increase financial commitments over time unless they are rejected by the government back home?

← Reply



[\(http](#) [Olivia Locke](#)

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2/2

Good explanation! This seems like an interesting approach but definitely one that needs some sort of oversight to ensure it is not happening in a colonial way (Like the IMF has a history of doing).

← Reply



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2/2 I do not know if also more technology transfer through R & D will help this mechanism, maybe?

← Reply



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**Topics that we covered in class (that may or may not be on the midterm):**

4 world views of global environmental change (table at end of reading)

Why is climate change a difficult problem?

Myths: Engineers, scientists, environmentalist's myths

Climate justice

Human rights

Social Justice

UN Emissions gap report (timeline on abilities to reduce course on climate change)

Sectoral Emissions (ex of mitigation technologies/strategies for each sector)

Policy Making Process

Two ways in which technology has political properties

Environmental policy making process

Capitalism, Individualisation, neoliberalism

Carbon tax and cap & trade systems (similarities and differences)

UN framework on climate change - PA - NDC - Mecanisms to strengthen agreement

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[Antonio Rodriguez](#)

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