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Between Unilateral and Multilateral Climate Policy: Priorities for a Future Climate Policy Architecture

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Policy Institutional Architecture - Expert Workshop*

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Overview

- ▶ **Contending Approaches to Climate Cooperation**
- ▶ **Evaluating Options: Defining Criteria**
- ▶ **Examples: UNFCCC, G20, IEA**



Contending Approaches to Climate Cooperation (I)

A Diminishing Role for Classical Multilateralism?

- ▶ UNFCCC (1992) and Kyoto Protocol (1997) still reflect a **grand vision** of multilateral cooperation, with strong central institutions, high degree of legal and procedural formality, and near universal participation
- ▶ Copenhagen Accord (2009) follows a period of increased **diplomatic stalemate**, and represents a **radical departure** from the tradition of the UNFCCC: voluntary pledges, unclear formal status, more fragmented participations – the “**Death of Multilateralism**”?
- ▶ After COP16 in Cancún, the way forward remains **largely unclear**



Contending Approaches to Climate Cooperation (II)

Emergence of Parallel Venues

- ▶ Recent years have seen the creation of **new fora and initiatives** specifically focused on climate change, while existing institutions operating in other fields have **expanded their mandate** and focus to include climate issues
- ▶ **Dedicated initiatives** include semi-formal venues (Major Economies Forum (MEF), Asia-Pacific Partnership on Clean Development and Climate (AP7)), informal meetings (Petersberg Dialogue, Cochabamba Conference), and technical initiatives (International Partnership for Mitigation & MRV, REDD+ P.)
- ▶ **Broader initiatives** expanding their focus include the Group of Eight (G8), Group of Twenty (G20), International Energy Agency (IEA) and sev. UN bodies



Contending Approaches to Climate Cooperation (III)

Attempting a Conceptualization

- ▶ In the literature, the evolving nature of international climate governance has been typically described through the binary perspective of “**top-down**” vs. “**bottom-up**” cooperation, conceding hybrid approaches
- ▶ “**Top-down**” approaches tend to entail comprehensive, legally binding arrangements, often coupled with centrally integrated procedures and hierarchically organized institutions with formal powers
- ▶ “**Bottom-up**” approaches, by contrast, are generally less formal and driven domestically, reflecting divergent priorities and circumstances



Evaluating Options: Defining Criteria (I)

Identifying Key Variants between Options

- ▶ **“Top-down”** approaches are credited with offering:
 - greater reciprocal certainty due to legally binding commitments
 - more transparency and uniformity of standards and procedures
 - higher legitimacy as a result of formal decision making

- ▶ **“Bottom-up”** approaches are credited with offering:
 - increased feasibility and ease of political adoption
 - greater flexibility as a result of their informal nature
 - better ability to reflect local and regional circumstances



Evaluating Options: Defining Criteria (II)

Policy Choice at the Domestic Level: An Analytical Model?

- ▶ Academic literature has developed a set of criteria to guide the selection of environmental policies and measures (e.g. IPCC AR4 WGIII: 751)
- ▶ Criteria typically include:
 - **environmental effectiveness**: how well does a policy instrument meet its intended environmental objective? How certain is environmental impact?
 - **cost effectiveness**: can the policy achieve its objectives at a lower cost than other policies? Does it create revenue streams that can be reinvested?
 - **distributional considerations**: can the policy be considered fair & equitable?
 - **institutional feasibility**: is the policy instrument likely to be viewed as legitimate, gain political acceptance, be adopted and ultimately implemented?



Evaluating Options: Defining Criteria (III)

A Criteria Matrix: Proposal for Evaluation

Level of Integration		
High		Low
Binding Nature		
High		Low
Political Feasibility		
High		Low
Relevance of Mandate		
High		Low
Geographic Inclusiveness		
High		Low
Institutional Capacity		
High		Low



Testing the Criteria Matrix: Case Studies (I)

UNFCCC and Kyoto Protocol

Level of Integration		
High		Low
Binding Nature		
High		Low
Political Feasibility		
High		Low
Relevance of Mandate		
High		Low
Geographic Inclusiveness		
High		Low
Institutional Capacity		
High		Low



Testing the Criteria Matrix: Case Studies (II)

Group of Twenty (G20)

Level of Integration		
High		Low
Binding Nature		
High		Low
Political Feasibility		
High		Low
Relevance of Mandate		
High		Low
Geographic Inclusiveness		
High		Low
Institutional Capacity		
High		Low



Testing the Criteria Matrix: Case Studies (III)

International Energy Agency (IEA)

Level of Integration		
High		Low
Binding Nature		
High		Low
Political Feasibility		
High		Low
Relevance of Mandate		
High		Low
Geographic Inclusiveness		
High		Low
Institutional Capacity		
High		Low



Case Studies: A Comparison

UNFCCC/KP, G20 and IEA

Institution	Level of Integration	Binding Nature	Political Feasibility	Relevance of Mandate	Geographic Inclusiveness	Institutional Capacity
UNFCCC and Kyoto Protocol	High	High	Low	High	High	High
Group of Twenty (G20)	Low	Low	High	Low	Medium	Low
International Energy Agency (IEA)	Medium	Low	Medium	Medium	Medium	High



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Thank You!

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