

Sustainable Development Within the Context of International Environmental Politics & Non-State Actors & The Limitations by Neo-Liberalism Against Climate Change

Nadire Burcu Gümüşfiliz
Yeditepe University

ABSTRACT

Sustainable development has become a crucial concept that includes a wide range of issues in many different areas. It highlights the aspects of environmental, political and social dimensions of development. Within this perspective, this paper analyses the significance of international environmental issues by taking into consideration the effects of international environmental politics based on the claim of assuring and promoting sustainable development. This paper also aims to shed light on the role and the significance of NGOs in global politics which mostly take part in global environmental governance against the neo-liberal state policies. In this sense, it discusses that the role of NGOs come to the forefront which play a part in international politics that are supposed to make contributions to international environmental politics. Furthermore, this study discusses using resources as well as to prevent and overcome climate change in a sustainable manner which is driven by international environmental politics based on NGOs by also considering the meaning of Neo-Liberalism and its impacts on international environment in a critical perspective with regard to sustainable development. Thereby, understanding the impacts of global issues as climate change is an urgent and a required task in the sense that they play a major role in the case of understanding the importance of global environmental politics and the role of NGOs and international agreements with regard to environmentally sustainable development. More precisely, this study deals with the question of how global environmental issues and problems arise basically with the neo-liberal policies and important role of NGOs as well as international institutions in order to contribute to sustainable development in relation to international environmental politics. This paper examines the role of NGOs and the importance of international institutions in coping with global environmental problems with respect to international environmental politics based on qualitative descriptive research.

Keywords: Sustainability, Climate Change, Neo-Liberalism, NGOs, International Environmental Politics, Sustainable Development

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, many countries are engaged in developing themselves where they conduct industrialization of their countries with the aim of development.

Similarly, sustainable development has become a popular phenomenon especially for the past few decades which it has an economic, social and environmental dimension. Moreover, the

environmental issues which emerged in late 20th century as a major concern and how global environmental change became at the global agenda of the countries that is an urgent issue. Thereby, this paper analyses how the agreements and international environmental politics have been developed as the Earth Summit Agreement within the context of the concept sustainable development.

In recent years, environmental issues like global warming increasingly became at the global agenda of the states, politicians, and the international institutions due to the fact that the awareness with respect to international environmental problems has increased rapidly which also have direct effects on sustainable development of the international environmental politics. As also advocated by Jalil A. (2010), there are many reasons that contribute to the environmental degradation as the dangerous gas as methane that leads to global warming which is even more dangerous than carbon dioxide.

In this regard, international environmental problems as global warming may be evaluated as a challenge against the issue of sustainable development and furthermore, mechanisms as the international institutions like United Nations are told to be as the ones which assures sustainable development in relation to the problems caused by neo-liberal policies of some states or governments.

Thereby, this article investigates the sustainability in international environmental politics and the basic cornerstones of sustainable development by mainly considering the role of international institutions as the policies implemented & the Conferences by United Nations to assure development in relation to environmental problems that affect the states and governments worldwide and moreover, the paper tries to shed light on how some of the neo-liberal policies of some governments pose threats for sustainable development.

Within this respect, one of the main aims of this study reveals to the fact that non state actors as non-governmental organizations are effective tools in order to influence the ideas and beliefs in the case of global governance which have also significant impacts in decision making and further, policy making processes worldwide which will be further discussed in much detail. If these are considered, it can be asserted that sustainable development may be achieved through these mechanisms.

That is to say, the processes that generate most environmental problems are closely related to broader political or social and economic processes, which are themselves part of an increasingly global system that will be further discussed with respect to the research question of this study. Within this respect, this study aims to explain the importance of the institutions and the role of the agreements to create environmental regimes in order to establish additional measures that lead to sustainable development in many new areas.

Therefore, this study will evaluate how non-governmental organizations and other international organizations are established themselves as the key actors in international environmental politics besides the states which contributed a lot in the case of the promotion of the concept of 'sustainable development' in order to develop international actions such as UN Conferences and additionally, how their policies are focused around the development as reformist in order to facilitate further sustainable development by also encouraging

governments to review their policies and practices in which the network of non-governmental groups, and government representatives are capable of developing and influencing agendas. Furthermore, it is crucial to note that the effects are naturally global and within this context, it is believed that the problems may be only solved through cooperation.

On the contrary, it has also been emphasized in the literature that several mechanisms like free market economy, businesses of fossil fuels contributed a lot to global warming increasingly a lot. Thus, in this perspective, neoliberals faced with challenging rejections and condemnations that they reasoned a lot to global warming as a barrier against 'sustainable development'.

Hence, this study also aims to shed light on the limitations that are caused by the Neo-Liberal perspectives with respect to the environment based on market liberalism which contributed a lot to international environmental problems in which Neo-Liberal strategies may even further exacerbate the international environmental problems as global warming. This may be

evaluated as an important groundwork for the development of the arguments around whether how neo-liberal policies of the governments play part in terms of creating obstacles or drawbacks against sustainable development particularly with respect to international environmental policies.

My research question is what are basically the role of NGOs and international institutions that contribute to sustainable development in relation to international environmental politics and the problems posed by Neo-liberal policies of some governments in regard to environmental issues?

In this context, this study develops a conceptual framework and agenda for the study of the role of international institutions considering UN Conferences on Environment and Development in relation to environmental dynamics governance, politics and the effects of neo-liberal policies in critical perspective by mainly taking into consideration the Rio Conference and Agenda 21 that is a detailed programme of action for sustainable development in environmental politics.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Sustainable Development

As discussed in the existing literature, sustainable development and sustainability are the concepts that are dynamic and provide an encompassing solution to different notions to what is good while it also brings differences into a common field of dialogue, dispute, and potential agreement as the basis of collective action (Blewitt J., 2015). It covers the needs basically the essential needs of the poor to which priority should be given.

Similarly, it is also advocated that non-governmental organizations play a crucial role to exert political influence on the processes and furthermore, it will be worth of noting that environmental concerns developed especially after 1960's in regard to particularly pollution problems and still ongoing (Baylis J., and Smith S., 2009).

Moreover, it is worth of noting that the institutions as United Nations plays an important role to assure and promote sustainable development through universally accepted standards and principles on a global basis in terms of institutional solutions (Napolitano J., 2012).

Napolitano J. (2012) advocates that the concept of development is definitely associated with the uneven distribution of the power sources within the society which triggers the environmentalist awareness against capitalism with respect to sustainable development in order to make the world a better place to live in.

Apart from this, the author (Napolitano J., 2012) has found out sustainability has a close connection with the notion of development that has been emphasized as 'sustainable development'. As to give examples, it is worth of noting population growth, environmental damages as climate change are among some of the issues that are closely interlinked with the notion of sustainability that require to be evaluated within the process of globalization.

Additionally, Zbikowska (2012) and Napolitano J. (2012) pointed out the fact that the policies on sustainable development need to be acquired to guarantee the most effective and efficient forms of governance which are also relevant to the concern of this study.

Likewise, the concept of sustainable development refers to the fact that finding strategies to promote social and economic development in ways that preventing over-exploitation or environmental degradation (Greene O., 1996).

Furthermore, the authors (Napolitano J., 2012; Zbikowska A. 2012) in their studies also reviewed the challenges against sustainable development as the damages in the environment. Likewise, sustainable development may be defined as both economic and social development which it aims to maintain a proper balance between economic and social development and further, protection of the environment (Baylis J., and Smith S., 2009).

On the other hand, it also refers to a contested concept in the sense that the different groups with respect to different economic, political, and social perspectives have different point of views about the meaning of sustainable development (Akkartal E. & Aras G.Y., 2021; Baylis J., and Smith S., 2009; Connelly S., 2007).

Likewise, as discussed by the author, sustainability also refers to a general concept that deals with different arguments based on different fields (Akkartal E., 2021). Therefore, sustainable development requires some degree of dialogue and continuous learning (Blewitt J., 2015). In a similar context, sustainable development indicates the necessity of politics of alliance building and moreover stands for collective action on the basis of diverse knowledges and multiple actors as the politics of sustainability and development are central issues (Scoones I., 2016; Bakker J., 2009).

In a similar sense, it is advocated that sustainable development has three elements that are economic development, social development and protection of the environment. With respect to environmental protection and as the environmental protection is the main concern of this paper, it is discussed that some of the world's resources or wealth require to be reserved for the future generation as also mentioned in the Brundtland Report of 1987 since the world's resources are finite (Jalil A., 2010). Thereby, the main aim is to develop international actions to promote sustainable development (Baylis J., and Smith S., 2009).

It is also advocated that international institutions as U.N are the ones whose main purpose is to assure green economy in the realm of sustainable development. That is to say, such international institutions could contribute to struggle with poverty and sustained economic growth while maintaining the healthy existence of Earth's ecosystems (United Nations, 2012). Similarly, in 1987's U. N's report on World Commission on Environment and Development, the concept of sustainable development put on the agenda. The concept of sustainable development drew attention on finding strategies to promote both economic and social development that focused on preventing environmental degradation, and over exploitation of the resources (Greene O., 1999).

More importantly, the U.N established a World Commission on Environment and Development to propose strategies. The Brundtland Report of 1987 discussed that the priority needs to be given to succeeding sustainable development and in turn, received a huge international support (World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987). That is to say, after the publication of The Brundtland Report of 1987, the concept of sustainable development has become a buzzword in the eyes of the global community.

On the other hand, several issues remained unclear as discussed by the report. With the aim of carrying the agenda of sustainable development forward, the General Assembly of U.N decided in 1989 to convene an Earth Summit to the Stockholm Meeting and thereby, the U.N Conference on Environment and Development was taken place in Rio de Janeiro in the year 1992 as a part of international environmental politics (Baylis J., and Smith S., 2009).

As it has been highlighted in the literature, environmental issues basically with respect to pollution, climate change and global warming, appeared on the international agenda that lead to the rise of environmental awareness as well as the emergence of environment protection regimes in many new areas so that the 1972 Stockholm Conference established a number of principles to provide a further framework to highlight the requirement to promote development and environmental protection that is also influential in the development and construction of environmental politics (Baylis J., and Smith S., 2009; Kaya İ., 2000).

Moreover, besides the states as the key actors, international organizations, NGOs appeared as the key actors in international environmental politics (Blewitt J., 2015; Baylis J. and Smith S., 2009; Thomas C., 1992).

Within this context, it may be highlighted that international environmental politics mainly aim for the continuity of sustainable development in respect to the development of international political regimes.

The Rio Conference and Sustainable Development

The UN General Assembly decided to start an Earth Summit in Rio at 1992 in the aim of promoting and improving sustainable development.

As advocated by the author that the principles agreed at Rio must become governmental actions in the future, and NGOs have a significant role in assuring that this will be achieved (Ennals L., 1993) with the expectation of several interlinked institutions shaping the expectations of all relevant actors in order to promote sustainability as well as preventing damaging climate

change. Therefore, the UNCED agreements provide a framework for international efforts to achieve this (Baylis J. and Smith S., 2009).

Furthermore, The Rio Conference is considered to be as one of the biggest summits which included the presentation of 150 states with nearly 45.000 people also including the representatives of non-governmental organizations in order to promote the goal of sustainable development with respect to prevent environmental degradation (Baylis J. and Smith S., 2009). Similarly, negotiations aimed to generate two main documents at the Conference one of which is Rio Declaration and more crucially, the second document is considered to be as the more detail-oriented to sustainable development that is known is Agenda 21. It is discussed that the main aim of Agenda 21 is to the institutions encourage the agenda domestically or internationally to attain sustainable development in many areas. Besides, in the case of implementation of Agenda 21, the institutions established have encouraged the national plans for sustainable development as well as they provided a forum in which several non-governmental groups may develop agendas (Baylis J. and Smith S., 2009).

International Environmental Politics

The concepts with respect to international environmental issues contribute substantially in order to understand the international environmental politics. It is important to highlight the fact that some of the risks of global environmental change require to be considered as a form of response to international environmental issues. More to the point, it is important to give information in terms of the historical development of international environmental politics by looking at the issues briefly in the case of development of international regimes and politics. Thereby, it is crucial to mention the fact that international regimes can also ease down the tension created by anarchy.

As one study puts it, the issues with respect to environment since the late 1960's has raised the awareness about the impacts of the risks derived by global environmental problems such as the degradation of soil, pollution problems worldwide, waste products in the sea and air as well as hazardous materials (Abubakar I.R., et al., 2022).

In a similar vein, acid rain and depletion of the ozone may be considered among the reasons of global problems that arose from the pollution of the atmosphere which have great impacts on the whole human communities which have caused severe damage of the environment as well as unsustainable exploitation all over the globe. Thereby, it is clear that the impacts of environmental changes had become in a real sense global by the end of twentieth century in the case of global environmental issues that led to the development to international environmental politics. To put it another way, the effects are definitely global and the regarding problems may be tackled by cooperating on a global basis (Baylis J. and Smith S., 2009).

Furthermore, as advocated in the literature, some of the problems also include the exploitation of the global resources which are shared by the international community as a whole as to that of the regarding resources need to be sustained and preserved in the name of the common interest of the whole humanity (Baylis J. and Smith S., 2009; Scholtz W., 2008).

More significantly, there is a close connection among the environmental degradation and political and socio-economic processes. Precisely because, the processes of interdependence as

well as globalization increasingly give the environmental issues an international dimension. Therefore, it may be argued that 'international environmental issues' covers several issues as well as a wide variety of problems that offer challenges to those who would like to come up with effective responses in which each issue requires to provide a different perspective and solution in the sense that international environmental problems and the requirement for the development of international responses clearly give rise to the international environmental politics with the aim of assuring and promoting 'sustainable development' as the examples of both economic and social development (Gupta J. & Vegelin C., 2016).

Thereby, I have the impression that international environmental issues appeared as the main focus of international politics also which contributed to the development of international politics. In many senses, environmental issues have become global as well as being both transnational and national. These issues emerged as the part of an increasingly international system in which each problem require to be examined specifically within their own contexts even if they share several common characteristics.

With regard to the historical origins of international environmental issues, it is advocated that the first international treaty in terms of flora signed in Bern in 1889 in order to prevent a spread of the disease, namely Phylloxera that was pursued by the other global and regional agreements with regards to flora with the aim of maintaining stocks of cultivated plants in order to prevent disease in the years of 1920's and 1950's respectively that marked for the development of international environmental politics (Baylis J. and Smith S., 2009; 315-316).

Other than that, in developed countries there was a growing international concern in the case of preservation of natural environment and to prevent global pollution during 1960s which encouraged environmental movements referring to Silent Spring (Carson R., 2000) which created a global consciousness in the case of the international environment. Moreover, as there is an increase in the case of acid rains and transnational air pollution, discussions began on the development of a new Law in terms of the use of the global seas and the seabed especially in Canada and Scandinavia where the damages are high in terms of forest and the ecosystem (Baylis J. and Smith S., 2009; 316).

Consequently, the awareness about the international environment come to the forefront after 1960s as a way of responding to problems of pollution which was significantly reflected in the transformation of existing agreements into global environmental regimes by the purpose of constructing several measures in order to protect the international environment in certain areas which also give rise to the development of international environmental politics (Baylis J. and Smith S., 2009; Zürn M., 1998).

State and Non-State Actors

As advocated in the literature of IR Theory and more significantly, in the context of Realist theory, states are taken into consideration as the primary actors based on the idea of sovereignty of the states which is mainly state-centric. So that one may argue international politics is driven by the states which pursue their interests. However, it is crucial to highlight the fact that international environmental problems are unintended side effects of broader socio-economic processes. Moreover, international agreements are crucial in the sense that they aim to produce cooperative solutions against international environmental problems in

which interstate diplomacy appears on the agenda of the states whilst states are going to be the legal parties to any treaties (Baylis J. and Smith S., 2009).

On the contrary, there are a vast number of non-state actors as local authorities, financial institutions, non-governmental organizations, individuals and groups as political actors. More to the point, the non-state actors are quite significant in the sense that they play a primary role to responding international environmental problems within the realm of international environmental politics. For instance, there are a huge number of non-state actors that play a major role in relation to international environmental negotiations and agreements in order to prevent environmental problems. In other words, only the states are not sufficient in the case of implementing environmental commitments globally. Therefore, it becomes clear that international institutions, states and national organizations require to cooperate to each other to overcome problems that were the results of international environmental pollution and global warming. Thereby, it is discussed that the decisions with respect to international environment in order to cope with environmental degradation need to involve the non-state actors like non-governmental groups, groups and individuals (Auer M.R., 2000).

Similarly, it is advocated by the authors in the existing literature that there is an increasingly significant role of non-state actors worldwide which imply a transition from government into governance operating at the international level by the early 1970s focusing on new actors with new patterns of interaction since the regarding problems are not only limited to the state territories yet, international environmental problems are transboundary and therefore, the problems to be solved require international cooperation (Arts et.al., 2001; Bouwer K., 1985; Keohane., R & Nye J., 1987). That is to say, there appears rising levels of interdependence in which some examples defined as a 'complex interdependence' (Keohane., R & Nye J., 1987). This refers to a much more pluralist approach in the sense that the supremacy of the state as the main actor somehow undermined with the emergence of non-states actors.

Furthermore, it may be highlighted that with the inclusion of non-state actors, new forms of governance emerged in respect to the international environmental politics (Vig N.J, and Axelrod R.S., 1999). In that sense, institutions may be also indicated as important actors in

world politics in which cooperation may yield better outcomes such as achieving a series of reciprocal arrangements in international environmental world politics (Auer M.R., 2000).

Therefore, the emergence of non-state actors as non-governmental organizations, transnational networks as well as corporation have become significant in the international arena with respect to the politics of global environment.

Neo-Liberalism

As advocated by Thorsen and Lie (2006), Neo-Liberalism relates to absolute gains where cooperation is possible under hegemon as well as cooperation reshapes the interests of states in which complex interdependence is the key.

Furthermore, Neo-Liberalism may be defined as a return to the classical liberal economic theories of Adam Smith in which the basic argument is laissez-faire stance on economic policy

issues based on open market economy and a demand for a minimal state intervention (Thorsen D. E & Lie A., 2006).

Similarly, it is discussed that Neo-Liberalism is considered as an ideology which marks for policy making and further, as a 'Theory of Economics' in the case of a development of a capitalist order and likely, the revival of Adam Smith's economic theories from the previous times (Clarke S., 2005).

As advocated by the scholars in the literature, Neo-Liberalism refers to the processes which are characterized by free trade, free market economy and powerful private property rights and hence, the state requires to assure the proper functioning of the market as well as providing the functions to secure the rights of private property (Blomgren 1997; Harvey D., 2005).

In a similar vein, the author discusses that the state intervention with respect to the market should be kept at minimum due to the fact that "the state cannot possibly possess enough information to second-guess market signals (prices) and because powerful interest groups will inevitably distort and bias state interventions for their own benefit" (Harvey D., 2005, 2).

According to the several scholarly arguments, there is a degree of relationship between the state and state's external environment that make neoliberalism a loose set of ideas of how the relationship should be organised and nevertheless, it is not a complete ideology (Blomgren A., 1997; Malnes R., 1998).

Therefore, rather than completely being a political ideology, it may be argued that the concept of Neo-Liberalism associates with political economic practices.

Effects of Neo-Liberal Policies in a Critical Perspective

It is discussed that Since the late 1970s, neoliberal ideas have gradually affected into the domain of environmental policy as part of a wider change in the global political economy especially since the year 1970s (Castree N., 2010).

Within the realm of neo-liberal policies as market liberalism, fossil fuel businesses, and the improvements in technology have further accelerated the amount of the resources that have been used as well as the increasing number of production capabilities that reveals to the systematic degradation of the global environment (Clark B. & York R., 2005). To put it another way, neoliberalism is associated to the privatization of state-owned, or the resources of common property like forests and biodiversity.

As advocated by the author (Fukuyama F., 1989), neo-liberalism is the ideological summit as there is nowhere better to go however, there is no end to the trajectory of progress and development, growth and consumption and hence ecological destruction.

Similarly, Fremstad (2022) in his study pointed out that the countries with neo-liberal perspectives do worse in terms of proposing solutions to climate change or global warming which clearly prevent the climate action in many countries as in the case of United States. Moreover, the author discusses that anti-neoliberal frameworks require to be adapted with

respect to climate regulations which are binding to aim growing decarbonization to protect the environment and to overcome global warming (Fremstad A., 2022; Jerwis R., 2011).

On the contrary, Mooney (2012) reviewed the challenges set by neoliberalism in the sense that some of the global institutions are not successful to act decisively to prevent inequality and to sustain health at the global level. Therefore, from the perspective of health issues, neoliberalism has a negative impact on the global institutions.

Therefore, the author investigated the fact that neoliberalism is mostly considered as an economic strategy that serves to the interests of the capitalists. So that, the neoliberal ideology revolves around the discourses of progress, growth and sustainability (Cervantes J., 2013). In other words, when one think in relation to sustainability in terms of economically, it may have clearly negative impacts on the environment globally unlike the role of U.N to promote sustainable development in the case of international environmental politics.

Promotion of Sustainable Development in the Context of Global Issues

Environmental issues as climate change became a major focus within the realm of global issues which also encouraged international political responses. Thus, since the year 1970s, several institutions as non-state actors including NGOs and environmental regimes with respect to international governance have developed through a variety of actors. Thereby, concepts with respect to international environmental politics give the reader ideas about ontological as well as epistemological discussion.

On the other hand, it is crucial to note that the states have the responsibility to control or they do not cause any damages to the environment in which international community needs to determine the limit on the usage of resources that are characterized as the 'Common Heritage of Mankind' require to be preserved or used for the common benefit and the measures to overcome pollution as well as protecting the whole environment need to be balanced against the goals of both economic and social so that, the international agreements could consider the differing requirements or needs of the states.

Within that context, the main objective is to prevent the climate change as well as global warming including to preserve biodiversity to promote sustainability. Hence, there is still a room exists for ongoing arrangements to achieve mutually satisfactory results however, it is also important to note that all types of cooperation will not always yield to good outcomes as there is still a likelihood of failure to cooperate that needs to be kept in mind.

Most significantly, Agenda 21 which is a dynamic programme involving both state and non-state actors may be considered among the body which encouraged the production in terms of the domestic plans to promote sustainable development and furthermore, Agenda 21 may be evaluated as a forum where plans can be evaluated and the network of non-governmental groups and the representatives of many governments become influential in playing a part for the development of new agendas even though their impact on developing agendas is small.

Therefore, the bodies like Agenda 21 needs to be encouraged to have more impacts on certain processes which drive patterns of development as well as international environmental regimes reinforce and at the same time, they institutionalize reciprocity.

Consequently, it will be worth of noting that global environmental issues cover a variety of problems and several issues to be addressed and responded as each issue is specific and need to be analyzed differently which looks for international responses as the development of environmental regimes in the case of climate change regimes and further, it is required to

mention the role of the international institutions in order to promote sustainable development provides a critical role mainly in the realm of international environmental politics.

CONCLUSION

The environment has become a global issue in the late 20th century due to the fact that international environmental issues become a focus for international concern that is institutionalized in which international actors apart from states have the responsibility to reduce pollution and to assure and promote sustainable development in the case of international environmental politics.

Furthermore, it is noteworthy to mention that much of the international environmental regimes focus on the development (Young O.R., 2011).

On the contrary, regimes are sometimes inadequate in the sense that transforming the socio-economic processes which create environmental degradation.

In this context, neo liberal policies also refer to the factors that underly environmental degradation and moreover, sustainable development becomes a contested concept since the people think in different ways in terms of politically, socially, economically and environmentally.

Besides, several non-governmental organisations and international organizations play an important part as key actors which played a role in the formation of new environmental agreements to promote sustainable development.

In line with these arguments, UN Conference on Environment and Development in 1992 in Rio presents a good example by developing international actions to promote the concept of sustainable development.

Simply because, the Conference also encouraged political and institutional changes for environmental regulations as well as the stimulation of international networks of environmental non-governmental organizations that are considered to be representing examples for sustainable development in terms of environmental issues. Together, these outcomes covered every aspect of sustainable development. These agreements and guidelines are still adhered to today and are influencing many political and business decisions. Finally, it is recommended that the development of international environmental regimes may be the area of research for future studies.

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