

Mitigating Climate Change: Cross-Country Variation in Policy Ambition

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Abstract : Under the international cooperation — Paris Agreement — countries outline their self-determined policy ambition for emissions reduction in their Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) as a key to addressing climate change globally. Although practically all countries commit themselves to reach the Paris landmark (below 20 C) globally, some act as climate leaders, others behave as followers, and others turn out to be climate laggards. As a result, there is a substantial variation in 'emissions reduction targets' across countries. Thus, a question emerges: What explains this variation? Or why do some countries opt for higher while others opt for lower 'emissions reduction targets toward global mitigation efforts? Conceptualizing the 'emissions reduction targets by 2030' outlined in NDCs by each country as the climate policy ambition (CPA), this paper explores how certain national political, economic, environmental, and external factors play vital roles in determining climate policy ambition. Based on the cross-country regression analysis among 168 countries, this study finds that democracy, vulnerability to climate change effects, and foreign direct investment have substantial effects on CPA. The paper also finds that resource capacity has a minimal negative effect on CPA across developed countries.

Keywords : climate change, Paris agreement, international cooperation, political economy, environmental politics, NDCs

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