

GREEN IMPERIALISM: ETERNAL BATTLE OF THE SOUTH FOR EQUITY, JUSTICE AND FAIRNESS IN GLOBAL ENVIRONMENTAL GOVERNANCE

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The political tension between the North (the developed countries) and the South (the developing countries) is of prime concern to the global environmental decision-makers; it is also the underlying theme of this research. Therefore, it is important to establish at what levels the environmental governance system has failed to recognize, and address, the key factors that have resulted in the North-South polarization of environmental policy making. As Sands states, “the challenge for international environmental law in the world of sovereign states is to reconcile the fundamental independence of each state with the inherent and fundamental interdependence of the environment”. Consequently, environmental policy making in many Southern states become subject to external influences which highlights the dangers of setting project norms based on international environmental standards rather than setting national and local environmental norms.

To this end, this paper explores three international environmental law principles, some of which have been incorporated into international instruments, while others have been created by customary international law: state sovereignty, the right to development and, common but differentiated responsibilities. Traditionally, international law ensures the right of all states to the political determination over their own environments, which implies paramount of the concept of non-intervention of one state in the internal affairs of another. Right to development emphasizes the importance of collective effort in achieving three pillars of sustainable development – economic development, social development and environmental protection. The common but differentiated responsibilities principle entails that the North should take the lead in implementing international environmental standards and policies for the reason that they are the main contributors of the global environmental crisis.

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In spite of these legal safeguards, however, the North- South disparity and the application of equity, fairness and justice have not yet been fully addressed in terms of Southern states' participation in the decision-making process. This paper suggests that the main reason for Southern environmental concerns not being heard is that they have not been effectively represented at the global level because of insufficient representation in decision-making process, ineffective implementation of global environmental standards, and the lack of local scientific knowledge and research. It seems clear that what is required is more equitable governance procedures and a better distribution of resources, which could be achieved by educating local scientists and creating research centers. Such innovations could be a progressive way to broaden Southern participation in the development of an equitable global environmental agenda.