

An Approach to equity in climate change

Prodipto Ghosh, Ph.D
Distinguished Fellow
The Energy & Resources Institute
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The Terrain of Equity in Climate Change

- “Equity” refers to “fairness” or “ethical conduct”.
 - Securing the interest (and involvement of) future generations
 - Obligations in relation to GHG mitigation,
 - Adaptation to impacts of climate change,
 - Loss of livelihoods owing to GHG mitigation actions by others
 - Transfer of finances and technology
- Climate change obligations need to be realized on the basis of equity, if the arrangements are to have wide political acceptability, and hence sustainability in practice.

The imperative of formal justification of proposed equity principles

- In “*The Economics of Climate Change*”, Nick Stern asserted that advocates of equity norms, must do more than simply assert the norm – they must provide *justification*.
- *We accept this prescription and subject our proposed equity norm to a test of validation*

Proposed equity norm

- ***Proposition 1:*** All humans should cooperate in securing the Ultimate Objective in respect of the global climate (furnished in Art 2 of the UNFCCC), the terms of such cooperation being as follows:
- ***Proposition 2:*** In respect of persons of low capability, in order to remedy the residual damage of climate change impacts (i.e. when the Ultimate Objective is met), persons of high capability should provide resources and technology in proportion to their respective capabilities.
- Note: The “residual damage” may be within or external to a given country. The point is that the obligation of a country to remedy the damage depends only upon its respective capability. Thus, a poor country, with little capability, but high climate damage would be entitled to transfer of resources from others with high capability.

Equity norm...

- **Proposition 3:** *In respect of persons of low capability, in order to enable such persons to remain within their assigned entitlements to the global environmental resources while continuing to develop unfettered, persons of high capability should provide resources and technology in proportion to their respective capabilities.*
- **Proposition 4:** *In respect of harm to persons of low capability beyond residual damage i.e. when the Ultimate Objective is not met, persons who have exceeded their respective shares of the global environmental resource and have high capability must remedy such excess harm in proportion to the extent to which they have exceeded their respective entitlements.*

Equity norm...

- **Proposition 5:** *In respect of those with low capability whose livelihoods are adversely affected by the actions of others to mitigate GHG emissions, assistance towards alternative livelihoods must be provided by those with high capability in proportion to their respective capabilities.*
- **Proposition 6:** *All human beings have equal entitlements to global environmental resources. Each person is the legatee of her parents, and carries their undischarged obligations as well as their unused entitlements. They may exchange these entitlements/obligations by mutual, prior, informed consent. These entitlements/obligations, in the aggregate are limited by the Ultimate Objective of the Climate Change Convention.*
- The context, of course, is global society comprised of sovereign states, in turn comprised of, and representing human beings. *Thus the actual locus of the Propositions will be sovereign states, rather than individuals.*

Test of Validation

- The test of validation follows the Popperian approach to scientific enquiry, i.e. *critical rationalist philosophy of science*, which holds that the growth of scientific knowledge occurs through deliberate attempts to *falsify*, rather than *confirm*, proposed hypotheses, and derives from earlier work by MacRae.

Scientific Method...

- There is wide agreement that the scientific method comprises of:
 1. Formal statement of candidate hypotheses to explain observed empirical phenomenon in respect of a given domain, in advance.
 2. Demonstrating that the hypotheses *relate* to the entire body of empirical phenomenon in the given domain.
 3. Demonstrating that the hypotheses are *consistent* with accepted general “laws”.
 4. Demonstration of consistency of the candidate hypothesis with observed empirical phenomenon in the given domain.
 5. Peer review, publication, and open debate about the candidate hypotheses.
 6. Candidate hypotheses that survive these tests are taken as “not falsified”.

Steps in Our Validation Methodology:

1. The candidate ethical hypotheses are specified by the protagonists in advance.
2. The candidate ethical norm must apply to all situations which relate to the proposed domain of policy-making (Relevant portions of Art 2 and Art 4 of UNFCCC).
3. The identification of a set of mutually consistent (meta) ethical criteria with which all candidate hypotheses should be demonstrably consistent – corresponding to consistency with general scientific laws
4. External consistency with widely shared ethical beliefs (Reflective Equilibrium) – corresponding to empirical testing
5. Peer review, publication, and open debate about the candidate hypotheses
6. Candidate hypotheses that survive these tests are taken as “not invalidated”.

(Meta) Ethical Criteria Applied

- These include:
 - (i) Principle of Universalizability, i.e. persons with relevant similarities to be treated similarly
 - (ii) Keeping promises, i.e. discharging one's obligations in express or implied contracts,
 - (iii) Repaying benefits received from others (whether individuals or community or other societal institutions), if not given as a gift, and not declined; and
 - (iv) Avoiding (uncompensated) harm to innocent persons.

Shared Ethical Convictions

- (i) “*Thou shalt not steal*”: It is impermissible for anyone to divest others of their valued goods at their personal discretion, except that the former need it for life or basic sustenance.
- (ii) “*No slavery*”: Voluntary contracts for the supply of inputs to production by others must be the norm.
- (iii) “*Polluters pay*”: Victims of harm committed by others must be compensated by the perpetrators.
- (iv) *Poverty, (i.e. serious material and intellectual deprivation), must be eradicated*
- (v) *No unique human cultural group must be driven to (cultural) extinction*

Survival of the equity hypothesis

- Applying the specified tests of validation, we find that the proposed candidate equity hypothesis passes all the tests, and hence stands not *invalidated*.
- *We assert that all candidate equity norms must be similarly tested, and only those that survive are to be considered for policy making.*

Further questions

- How is “capability” to be defined? Further, are gradations intermediate between “low” and “high” capability necessary?
- How are GHG emissions of a country to be reckoned? Do they refer to all emissions which physically occur within the borders of a country, or do they relate only to emissions related to goods and services consumed, and investments made, within a country?
- From what date does one reckon that historical responsibility starts?

The Scientific Method, which our methodology emulates, requires open debate about alternative hypotheses.

This presentation is intended to start, not end the debate!

Thank You