

## Parliamentary Diplomacy and Climate Legislation in Pakistan: Institutional Responses to Global Climate Governance (2015–2025)

Zoya<sup>1</sup> and Rehana Saeed Hashmi<sup>2</sup>

---

Article Information	Abstract
Received: May 12, 2026 Revised: June 28, 2026 Accepted: June 29, 2026	With increased climate vulnerabilities for the global south, Pakistan has felt the need to shift its climate governance strategies from executive centric response to more institutionalized legislative frameworks. This research aims to study evolution of climate legislation in Pakistan between 2015 and 2025 by surfacing the role of parliamentary diplomacy in redefining the country's legislative and policy approach towards climate change. The research also poses a big question as to how global climate commitments and norms are incorporated into national and provincial legislative framework in Pakistan via inter-parliamentary engagements. To explore the objectives research questions designed for the study, a qualitative research design is employed based on secondary sources such as reviewing the existing literature, policy documents, legislative developments, and international engagements. Moreover, a thematic approach is designed which is extracted from the global climate commitments and national legislative framework via parliamentary actors, committees, and other parliamentary efforts mediated by inter-parliamentary engagements. A visible, yet inconsistent but growing alignment of Pakistan's climate legislation with global commitments, supported significantly by engagement forums such as IPU, CoPs, and CPA is revealed through the study. It is concluded from this study that parliamentary diplomacy serves as a critical bridge between international norms and national legislative approaches, reinforcing both legislative legitimacy and policy coherence. By situating Pakistan within broader global climate governance processes, this study contributes to the emerging discourse on the role of parliamentary institutions in advancing climate-responsive legislation in developing countries.
<b>Keywords</b> <i>Parliamentary diplomacy,</i> <i>Climate legislation,</i> <i>Climate change,</i> <i>Pakistan,</i> <i>Policy diffusion</i>	

---

### 1. Introduction

As a country ranked among the world's ten most climate-vulnerable states (German watch, 2021), Pakistan confronts climate change not as an abstract global challenge but as an immediate and existential threat materializing through catastrophic flooding, accelerating glacial melt, prolonged drought cycles, deteriorating air quality, and intensifying heatwaves. The floods of 2022, submerging about one-third of the country's landmass, and displacing nearly thirty-three million people, and

---

<sup>1</sup> Zoya, PhD Scholar, Department of Political Science and IR, University of the Punjab, Lahore and Lecturer, Department of Political Science, Kinnaird College for Women, Lahore. Email: [zoya.ashraf@kinnaird.edu.pk](mailto:zoya.ashraf@kinnaird.edu.pk)

<sup>2</sup> Prof. Dr. Rehana Saeed Hashmi, Department of Political Science and IR, University of the Punjab, Lahore. Email: [rehana.polsc@pu.edu.pk](mailto:rehana.polsc@pu.edu.pk)

caused damages estimated at thirty billion US dollars, illustrated more legislative intrusion and institutional responses to a warming climate (UNDRR, 2022).

In today's democratic world, legislative institutions are seen beyond passive recipients of executive policies and have rather emerged as spaces providing legislative insights and oversight where scientific knowledge, international norms and commitments and national political will is embedded into legislative frameworks. Parliamentary studies like these have acquired the analytical urgency that the relationship between legislative institutions, parliamentary diplomacy, and climate change now commands. This advancement is neither prompt nor inevitable, but gradual and systematic, as to how legislatures engage with climate issues across institutional traditions, geopolitical positions, and levels of economic development that makes the comparative and single-country study of legislative activism a productive scholarly contribution.

The nexus between legislation and climate change has increasingly become central to parliamentary diplomacy in developing states. The approach of Pakistan's parliament to surfacing climate related challenges at both national and provincial levels remained evident from 2015 to 2025. The periods are defined as an era of entering into global climate commitments such as the Paris Agreement and UNFCCC by embedding these norms into national initiatives, such as; Pakistan Climate Change Act 2017, the National Climate Change Policy 2021, and the institutionalizing of the Standing Committee on Climate Change in both houses of the parliament emerged alongside intensified engagement with international climate forums and inter-parliamentary organizations.

These developments were not merely the outcomes of global commitments but were intensified with perpetual participation in para-diplomacy forums facilitated by inter-parliamentary organization such as Inter Parliamentary Union (IPU), Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) and Conference of Parties (CoPs). In doing so, the study also highlights the importance of looking beyond executive policy actions and recognizing the evolving role of parliaments in addressing complex transnational challenges such as climate change.

In the broader global context, Robert. D Kaplan discussed his viewpoint in the 'The Atlantic' that climate change as an issue has predominantly been seen in the premise of parliamentary diplomacy in post-cold war scenario. His research predicts that future security threats such as scarcity of resources, uncontrolled population, diseases would emerge from environmental degradation instead of nuclear advancements of the states. His research also hinted towards the environmental issues which started to seep in Africa, Asia and the United States of America because of massive World Wars. (Kaplan, 1994).

The triangulated relation between the three has been acknowledged by the governments and international parliamentary institutions for past two decades. The recent outbreak of smog in the province of Punjab is declared as 'calamity' by the provincial government of Punjab with the acceptance that the only solution to this climate emergency shall be mitigated through climate diplomacy between both Pakistan India. Legislative measures at both provincial and national level shall be required based on the diplomatic strengths to ease the situation for the people of both the countries.

### **1.1 Research Problem, Significance and Structure of the Study**

There exists sufficient scholarship on Pakistan's climate vulnerabilities and on international climate diplomacy. However, the analytical attention given to parliamentary diplomacy as distinct from executive policymaking as a mechanism that mediates between international norms and domestic legislation is limited. Therefore, the study poses an essential question as to has parliamentary diplomacy shaped and facilitated Pakistan's climate legislation efforts by incorporating global norms from 2015 to 2025.

The study is essential to contribute to the existing literature which provides little understanding regarding the interplay of climate legislation, global climate commitments and the role of parliamentary diplomacy in advancing climate legislative framework in Pakistan. It also highlights the institutional channels through which legislators absorb, identify, contest and translate external norms into statutory arrangements such as committee inputs, legislative initiatives oversights arrangement.

**1.2 Research Objectives**

The study intends:

- To understand the journey of climate legislation in Pakistan from 2015 and 2025.
- To examine the interplay between parliamentary diplomacy and climate legislation?
- To describe the international climate norms incorporated into national and provincial institutional mechanisms.
- To identify structural factors hindering the implementation of climate-related legislation in Pakistan.

**2. Conceptual and Theoretical Construct**

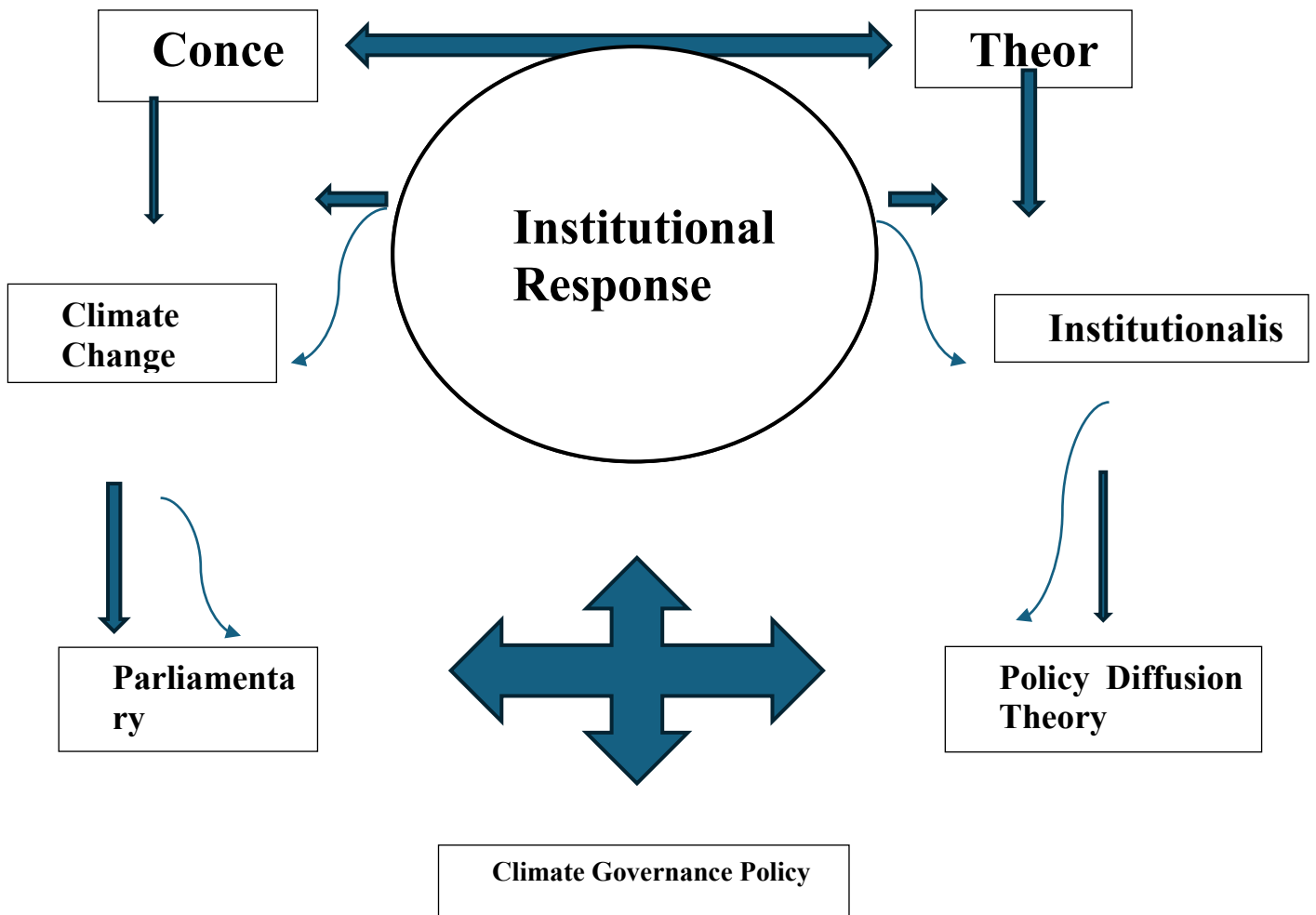


Figure 1: Theoretical and Conceptual Construct (created by the researcher)

Figure 1 is designed to illustrate three conceptual strands; i- Legislative progressivism and institutionalization theory provide the lens for assessing the quality and durability of Pakistan's legislative response, ii- policy diffusion theory accounts for the channels through which international norms enter national and provincial laws, iii- and the study's operational concept of parliamentary diplomacy distinguishes the legislature's international role from that of the executive.

## 2.1 Climate Change

Climate change refers to perpetual transitions in temperatures and weather patterns. Such transitions were primarily natural, due to changes of the activity of the sun or large volcanic outbursts. However, human activities have been the main factor of climate change, significantly due to the burning of fossil fuels such as coal, oil, and natural gas. The combustion of these fossil fuels generates greenhouse gas emissions, which act like a heat-trapping blanket around the Earth. This blanket-like effect causes the planet's temperatures to rise, leading to the climate changes we are experiencing today. (United Nations Environment Program, n.d.).

## 2.2 Parliamentary Diplomacy

Parliamentary diplomacy is essentially defined as interconnectedness of parliaments with other parliaments and engagements of parliamentarians with each other to cooperate across borders to address global issues and challenges. Post-2015m following the adoption of the Paris Agreement has marked significant shift in Pakistan's parliamentary diplomacy front when climate was seen as a priority agenda on all global platforms. Pakistan's parliamentary bodies have increasingly engaged in international forums, advocating for stronger global climate action while seeking international support to address domestic climate vulnerabilities (Khan, 2018).

The period from 2015 to 2025 witnesses Pakistan's parliament actively participates in climate-related dialogues, particularly in the IPU, CPA, COPs, South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) platforms. These engagements have been crucial in positioning Pakistan as a key player in regional climate initiatives; while also highlighting the challenges the country faces due to its high vulnerability to climate change.

## 2.3 Institutionalization and Legislative Institutions

"The process by which organizations and procedures acquire value and stability" is how Samuel Huntington defines institutionalization in his classic definition (1968, p. 12). According to Huntington, institutionalized organizations are characterized by their flexibility, complexity, autonomy, and coherence, while institutions themselves are "stable, valued, recurring patterns of behaviour." This framework is applicable to the parliament of Pakistan to understand the efficacy of its legislative efforts have inhabited to the needs and requirements of climate governance by integrating and sustain climate consideration into their standard processes. Judge (2008) elaborates on these criteria in the context of legislatures specifically, emphasizing that the adaptability of legislative institutions and their capacity to take on new mandates without losing coherence is a crucial indicator of institutional quality.

## 2.4 Policy Diffusion Theory + Climate Change Governance

Policy diffusion theory is defined as a process in which policymaking and policy outcomes in one polity influence policymaking and policy outcomes in other polities. (Gilardi, 2015)

This purposive theoretical approach is used to analyse and compare how the parliament and parliamentarians of Pakistan have and will learn climate change policy initiatives from other parliaments and parliamentarians to advance Pakistan's climate change regime through this approach.

### 3. Literature Review

Scholarly work on climate governance in Pakistan and beyond has expanded considerably in recent years. However, much of this literature remains fragmented across different domains, including climate vulnerability, institutional development, and international cooperation. For the purpose of this study, the literature can be organized into three broad themes: (i) climate vulnerability and governance challenges, (ii) legislative and institutional responses, and (iii) the emerging role of parliamentary diplomacy in global climate governance.

#### 3.1 A Global Scholarship of Parliamentary Diplomacy to Address Climate Change

Stavridis and Jančić (2016) are of the opinion that the shape and content of international relations underwent a significant transformation post cold war, and the bipolar world collapsed due to increased globalization of economics, finance, politics, and security. This unrelenting process is demonstrated by the 9/11 attacks, the emergence of the so-called BRICS group of nations (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa), financial and other crises at the regional and international levels. Traditional intergovernmental diplomacy is altered by all of this. The job of a diplomat according to Jancic (2016) is more complicated and includes communication, reporting, policy research, negotiation, and representation. This is due to: (a) the introduction of new responsibilities, like learning about certain policy domains, like terrorism, climate change, and global economic governance; and (b) the existence and actions of new players, including think tanks, parliamentary bodies, lobbying, civil society, academia, the media, cities, sub-state areas, celebrities, foundations, and non-state organizations. The authors have also highlighted that new forms of diplomacy have emerged as a result, including parliamentary diplomacy, economic diplomacy, cultural diplomacy, public diplomacy, Para-diplomacy, celebrity diplomacy, sports diplomacy, climate diplomacy and para-diplomacy which are contributing significantly to changing the very preface of a country at the global front. (Jančić, 2016)

Inter-Parliamentary Union has been an instrumental institutional vehicle to bring parliament and parliamentarians of the World under one roof. Ahead of the Paris agreement, IPU launched 'Parliamentary Action Plan (2016)', to draw the attention of the parliaments towards the pressing issue of climate change around the World. According to IPU, parliaments and parliamentarians are not only destined to run the affair of the governments but are also responsible to respond to national and international climate change issues with a coordinated intent. They can also account for their actions, or lack thereof. Moreover, parliamentarians also serve as bridge a between constituents, governments, and policy makers at the global level. IPU, in lieu of parliamentary diplomacy, is suggesting and facilitating the parliaments around the globe in defining key action areas to combat issues: such as; 1- risk assessment and modelling, coordinating and mitigating strategies from the best practices, national disaster loss databases and early warning system. 2- Accelerating the ratification and implementation of Doha Amendment in Kyoto Protocol. 3- Strengthening oversight of national and international commitments, last but not least; Enhancing consistency and complementarity between national climate legislation and other international goals. (Inter Parliamentary Union , 2016)

Parliamentary diplomacy has seen itself turned into an important tool in today's complex world to deal with issues that impact countries across the border. Vannarith (2021) mentions how parliamentary diplomacy can be categorized into four levels "intra-state, inter-state, intra-regional and inter-regional" (Vannarith, 2021, Pg. 187). The author goes on to suggest that to deal with international issues that parliamentarians engage in negotiations between governments, provide oversight to the negotiation process, promote dialogue and inform the public regarding international issues and organizations. When dealing with climate change the article points towards the complexity of the matter and how parliamentarians have started engaging in international cooperation and partnership. The author also acknowledges how parliamentary institutions provide a bridge between the people they represent and the government allowing for effective execution of international goals.

### 3.2 Climate Vulnerability and Governance Challenges

Pakistan is considered as one of the most vulnerable countries when considering climate change as suggested by Nadeem et.al. (2024). The authors focus on the Punjab region, which is the most fertile of the country, and as they put it “highly sensitive to climate change due to the region’ dominance as a major agricultural producer” (Nadeem et.al., 2024, Pg. 2). Their study reveals how the southern and northern parts of Punjab are highly susceptible to changes in the climate. The authors also note how lack to initiatives from the government and managerial issues hinder the abilities of the farmers to adapt to the changing climate scenarios. Policy making according to Nadeem et.al. (2024) needs a comprehensive overhaul to deal with the emerging challenges of climate change.

Jamal (2021) examines and contrasts the Pakistan Climate Change Act of 2017 with global climate frameworks. It evaluates the legislative framework of the Act, including the creation of the Climate Change Authority and Council, with the goal of strengthening Pakistan's adaptation and resilience plans. The paper does, However, highlight certain drawbacks, including lack of interaction with international frameworks, budgetary restrictions, and implementation gaps. According to the study, Pakistan's approach to climate change might be strengthened and alignment with international norms improved by modifying the Act.

### 3.3 Legislative and Institutional Responses to Climate Change

Ayaz (2020) details in her writing that Pakistan’s efforts towards climate change began when the committee of climate change was first established in 2005 during the regime of former President General Pervaiz Musharraf. The committee launched its National Environment Policy the same year to meet the needs of climate emergencies affecting the country and its people. The author goes on to say that in 2008, the Planning commission established a “Taskforce on Climate Change” that emphasized working on regional strategies such as water policies, policy on forestation, national conservation policy and to name a few. Pakistan’s climate change policy remained ineffective for a couple years until the Sustainable Development Goals taskforce was established in the National Assembly of Pakistan in 2014. The Climate change Act was introduced in 2017. Khan at.al. (2024) mentions how the act was introduced to provide a proper framework to deal with issues arising from the emerging climatic changes.

The act led to the formation of the climate change council and climate change authority and development of policies at the federal and provincial level to negate the effects of climate change. As Jamal (2018) mentions that the climate change act proved that Pakistan placed importance on the issue and was the 104<sup>th</sup> country to ratify the agreement at the United Nations.

Another attempt to combat climate emergencies was the initiative of Billion Tree Drive in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa followed by national drive of ‘Billion Tree Tsunami’ under the premiership of Imran Khan in 2018 presenting the case of Pakistan’s model for climate diplomacy. The progress in terms of legislative initiative is quite evident as the Pakistan’s National Climate Change Policy 2021 has also been presented and, the parliament of Pakistan is pacing its legislative initiatives through a proactive role by the parliamentary committee on Climate Change, However, the author suggests there is still a long way to go to mitigate challenges in the way and learning through best practices. (Ayaz, 2020)

What the literature also makes clear, however, is that the legislative trajectory has been shaped by the 2010 Eighteenth Constitutional Amendment, which devolved environmental governance to the provinces and created a legislative fragmentation that the 2017 Act sought to address at the federal level without fully resolving. The National Climate Change Policy 2021 and the creation of provincial climate policies in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Punjab, Sindh, and Balochistan since 2022 represent further elaboration of this post-devolution legislative architecture, but coordination between these instruments remains a work in progress (Khan et al., 2024; Ayaz, 2020).

The synthesis that emerges from this cluster of scholarship is that Pakistan's legislative response to climate change has been incremental, institutionally fragmented, and unevenly implemented. It also remains descriptive: the existing literature traces what legislative developments occurred and identifies constraints on implementation but does not systematically examine the mechanisms through which international engagement and specifically parliamentary diplomacy shaped these developments.

### **3.4 Research Gap**

The literature reviewed for this research facilitates with valuable insights into Pakistan's climate vulnerabilities, legislative appetite for climate emergencies, policy frameworks, and institutional development, as well as the evolving role of parliamentary actors in global governance. However, a noticeable gap exists in understanding how parliamentary diplomacy functions as a connecting mechanism between international climate commitments and domestic legislative processes with reference to Pakistan. The connection is evident if studied in co-relation, but a significant study on the nuanced connection still requires scholarly attention.

The intended research seeks to address this gap by examining how engagement with global climate regimes is reflected in Pakistan's legislative developments, and by highlighting the role of parliamentary institutions in mediating this relationship. In doing so, it moves beyond descriptive accounts of policy evolution and offers a more integrated perspective on the interaction between diplomacy and legislation.

## **4. Research Methodology**

A qualitative research method is designed to examine the impact of global climate norms and commitments on climate legislation in Pakistan during the period 2015–2025 through parliamentary diplomatic engagements. The study relies primarily on document analysis of secondary sources, including policy documents, legislative initiatives, institutional mechanisms, and documents associated with international climate frameworks such as the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and related agreements. A guided thematic analysis is conducted to achieve the objectives designed for the study and to fill the identified research gap. Thematic categories were extracted from the study's conceptual framework, which integrates Huntington's (1968) institutionalization theory, and Gilardi's (2015) policy diffusion framework. Documents were read in support of these categories to identify patterns of alignment between international obligations and national legislative developments, and to situate the institutional mechanisms through which such alignment was achieved or not. The study, through these, seeks trace process and pattern, identifying which parliamentary and legislative pathways were adopted to initiate climate legislative journey by incorporating global norms and via parliamentary diplomacy platforms. Data collection is based entirely on secondary sources.

## **5. Discussion and Analyses**

The trajectory of this part of the study is based on three interconnected mechanisms through which Pakistan's parliament's engagement with global climate governance shaped its national legislative framework between 2015 and 2025: i- norm incorporation through exposure to international standards, ii- parliamentary oversight that translates diplomatic commitments into accountability structures, iii- and diplomatic legitimation that facilitates international cooperation and finance. Before examining these mechanisms, a brief contextual account of Pakistan's international climate commitments and the global framework within which they sit is presented to orient the analysis.

## 5.1 Pakistan's Global Climate Commitments

Pakistan's stance and advancement in adopting and ratifying global climate commitment took its roots from conventions of Basel, Rotterdam, Stockholm, Minamata, Vienna, and Cartagena, the UNFCCC and its Kyoto Protocol, the Paris Agreement, the Convention on Biological Diversity, the UNCCD, the Bonn Convention on Migratory Species, and the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands (Standing Committee on Climate Change, 2022). These global norms and commitments ignited the light of obligation that successive governments have sought, with challenging degrees of success, to translate into national and provincial legislation.

The UNFCCC, signed in 1992 and ratified by Pakistan in 1994, established the foundational principle of common but differentiated responsibilities and created the Conference of Parties as the central arena for ongoing international climate diplomacy (Bodansky, 2010). The Kyoto Protocol (1997) introduced the first legally binding emissions reduction targets for industrialized states and established flexible mechanisms, including the Clean Development Mechanism, that allowed developing countries such as Pakistan to participate in the global carbon economy (Grubb et al., 1999). The Paris Agreement (2015) restructured this architecture significantly, by introducing Nationally Determined Contributions as the primary instrument for climate commitment, it placed domestic legislative institutions; parliaments, provincial governments, and sectoral regulators at the centre of implementation in a way that the top-down Kyoto model had not (Bodansky, 2016). Pakistan ratified the Paris Agreement in 2016, and this commitment directly shaped the legislative agenda that produced the Climate Change Act 2017.

These international commitments created the normative environment within which Pakistan's parliamentary diplomacy operated. The forums through which that diplomacy was conducted CoPs, the IPU, the CPA, SAARC are described briefly below before the three mechanisms are examined in detail.

The Conference of Parties is the supreme decision-making body of the UNFCCC and has become, since the formalization of parliamentary meetings at Copenhagen in 2009, a central venue for legislators as well as negotiators. Parliamentary meetings at COP27 and COP28 brought hundreds of legislators together to share best practices, coordinate positions, and engage with the negotiating process from within the Green Zone (United Nations, 2024). Pakistan's parliamentary delegations have attended CoPs consistently since Paris, and the exposure generated by these meetings has been one of the direct inputs into the domestic legislative agenda documented below.

Established in 1889, The Inter-Parliamentary Union, is the oldest international parliamentary organization and serves as a global platform for cooperation among parliaments. IPU seeks to strengthen parliaments and parliamentary forums to enable their participation in surfacing global issues, including climate emergencies, and environmental sustainability (Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2016). Parliamentary engagement in climate legislation and governance has been a core priority of IPU since last decade, national legislature is instrumental in translating international climate commitments into implementable policy framework. By providing guidance and facilitating dialogue among legislators from different regions, the IPU contributes to the diffusion of climate governance norms and best practices across national parliaments (Stavridis & Jancic, 2017).

One of the Commonwealth's oldest organizations is the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA). Founded in 1911, it is a membership organization that unites people of all genders, races, religions, and cultures who share a common interest, respect for the rule of law, individual liberties, and the pursuit of the idealistic goals of parliamentary democracy. The Association is composed of more than 180 Legislatures (or Branches) spread over the Commonwealth's nine geographical divisions. It provides a great chance for lawmakers and legislative employees to work together on topics of shared interest and to exchange best practices.

The Paris Agreement, the Glasgow Climate Pact, and Agenda 2030 are few of the pledges made by the international community on climate change and sustainable development. These pledges are crucial resources for legislatures in their efforts to combat climate change and carry out the Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations.

The CPA's mission is to empower its members to effectively advocate for sustainable development and climate action. Our programs and other endeavours reflect this dedication. Raising awareness of biodiversity and climate change inside the CPA has been spearheaded by the CPA Small Branches network.

As a member of the UNFCCC Parliamentary Group, the CPA helps parliamentarians and parliamentary networks participate in UNFCCC meetings and COPs. The Group, led by GLOBE International, provides administrative, information and coordination support to engage cross-party legislators at these major international meetings.

### 5.2 Parliamentary Diplomacy and Climate Legislative Journey of Pakistan

The following table highlights that international norms, parliamentary diplomacy and national and provincial legislative initiatives are not exclusive pathways, nor do they operate in silos. However, they are pragmatically distinguishable and are each supported by traceable evidence in the documentary record. Table 1 maps these mechanisms, the international norms they draw on, and their national and provincial legislative manifestations.

**Table 1:** Parliamentary Diplomacy Mechanisms for Climate Legislation in Pakistan, 2015–2025  
(created by the researcher)

Mechanism	Rationale	International Commitments and Norms	National	Provincial
1- Legislative Initiatives Through International Norms	Legislators are exposed to international climate standards (such as adaptation, mitigation, climate financing, loss and damage, and ecosystem-based approaches) through international parliamentary networks, treaties, and diplomatic interactions. Following that, these standards are converted into domestic laws.	Paris Agreement, The Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Sustainable Development Goals	International agreements are integrated into the institutional architecture by the Climate Change Act of 2017. NCCP Climate Change Council	Climate Change Council (federal-provincial entity)
2- Parliamentary Oversight and Accountability Via Diplomatic Dimension	By surfacing climate change issues to the legislative agendas, (parliament and provincial	COPs	Parliamentary Committees (Standing Committee on Climate	Committees Cross Border Cooperation via provincial parliamentary

	legislatures) can monitor climate commitments, hold the executive responsible for treaty-based obligations, and enact appropriate legislation.		Change) Calling Attentions, Questions, Adjournment Motions Prompt Climate centric Legislation Parliamentary Friendship Groups SDGs Secretariate	friendship groups) (Commonwealth Conference hosted by the Punjab Assembly) Provincial Adaptation Plans Provincial SDGs Secretariate
3. International Cooperation Via Legislative Framework	Open to international collaboration, financing, and technical support is facilitated by parliamentary diplomacy. International actors identified the legitimacy of the domestic institutional foundation (law, policies, councils) established by the legislative frameworks. The debate, approval, and oversight of these frameworks by Parliament links diplomatic pledges to national legislative framework.	COPs	MoU during COP28, 29 9 (remaining to be confirmed)	Provincial Adaptation Plans Provincial SDGs Secretariate

The designed table sets out three mechanisms tracing the relationship between global norms, role of parliamentary diplomacy in aiding the climate legislative framework for Pakistan;

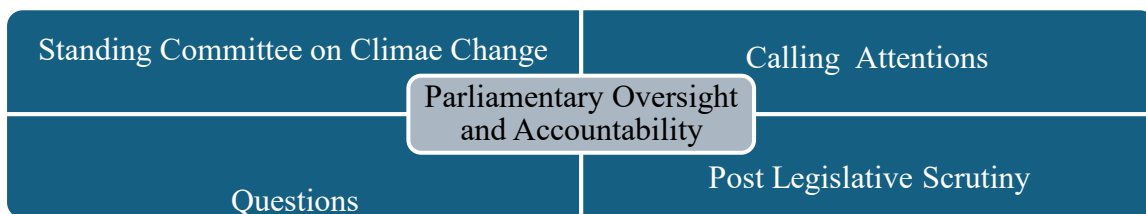
### 5.2.1 Legislative Initiatives Through International Norms

The Pakistan Climate Change Act 2017 is the first and primary legislative effort came into being as a result of global commitment, The Paris Agreement, ratified in 2016 and translated into this act in 2017. The Climate Change act also provides its institutional architecture, the Climate Change Council, the Climate Change Authority, and the mandate to monitor international agreement implementation, directly reflects the NDC obligations and institutional requirements articulated in the Paris framework. Jamal (2018) notes explicitly that the Act was designed to address the legislative void that ratification of the Paris Agreement exposed, and that its drafting drew on parliamentary engagement with international climate institutions.

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa’s Billion Tree Tsunami program, launched in 2014 and mounted nationally from 2018 is a testament to the transmission of global commitments into provincial efforts as the program was brought to life in dialogue with international conservation frameworks, and its legislative underpinning drew on best practices shared through CPA and IPU channels. The National Climate Change Policy 2021 extended this pattern, embedding NDC commitments into a domestic sectoral framework across water, agriculture, forestry, and energy.

When it came to implement the changes detailed in the act, it became apparent that the motivation was somewhat lacking. The promised clauses of the act were not executed until seven years after sailing through the parliament and was only taken up again after the Supreme Court of Pakistan intervened. Through the public interest constitutional petition (No. 42 of 2022) was the search for members of the authority initiated (Express Tribune, 2024). With the pressure from the Supreme Court, the Parliament enacted the framework, but still the executive failed to operationalize it, leading to the judiciary forcing their hand even further. Such patterns of enforcement raise questions regarding the depth of institutionalization that has been achieved so far by parliamentary diplomacy.

### 5.2.2 Parliamentary Oversight and Accountability



**Figure 2:** Mechanisms of Parliamentary Oversight and Accountability (Created by the Researcher)

This mechanism is rarely found in the literature but its significance cannot be overstated. Due to parliamentary diplomacy the political importance of international climate commitments is observed and creates national accountability for their implementation.

#### 5.2.2.1 The Climate Change Committee

Established under the 14<sup>th</sup> National Assembly, The Standing Committee on Climate Change, is considered as a constructive vehicle through which parliament exercises oversight of climate policy. Its meetings constitute the direct documentary evidence of the oversight accountability mechanism in operation. The following analysis draws on press releases and meeting records from the National Assembly’s official archive. mandate of climate change committee constitutes; ensuring adequate laws are implemented, facilitating political and public support for climate centric initiatives, reviewing national policies and holds formal accountable framework within which parliamentarians may question whether diplomatic commitments have been embedded into legislative and budgetary initiatives. (Standing Committee on Climate Change, n.d.). Committee may also request reports from parliamentary delegations presenting Pakistan’s climate case at inter-parliamentary platforms to ensure smooth and effective incorporation of global ideas into national efforts.

On 16<sup>th</sup> September 2019, the Standing committee held its sixth meeting under the chairpersonship of Ms. Munaza Hassan, who exemplified the Committee’s oversight and policy-shaping role. During the meeting, the Ministry of Climate Change enlightened members on the Ten Billion Tree Tsunami Program, while the Global Change Impact Studies Centre (GCISC) presented evidence on climate impacts across key socio-economic sectors. Moreover, the establishment of a digital monitoring mechanism for tree plantation activities, the committee also recommended greater involvement of parliamentarians in constituency-level, and demanded the submission of the Water Policy 2017 for the committee review, thereby linking climate adaptation with broader sectoral governance (National Assembly of Pakistan, 2019). The interventions by the climate change committee highlights their

commitment and dedication that has moved not only beyond information-sharing but towards progressively shaping executive implementation and mainstreaming climate considerations into related policy domains. The oversight function of the committee continued to grow in 2021 through parliamentary diplomacy and post-legislative scrutiny. Chairperson Ms. Munaza Hassan's participation at COP26, where she represented Pakistan in discussions on the role of parliaments in climate governance, the Committee engaged in post-legislative scrutiny of the Climate Change Act 2017 through a Westminster Foundation for Democracy workshop, serves as a testament towards committee's appetite towards advancing oversight. Committee meetings since then, perpetually reinforced this oversight role by reviewing implementation progress and formally transmitting recommendations to the Ministry of Climate Change, illustrating the integration of international parliamentary engagement with domestic legislative accountability (Standing Committee on Climate Change, 2021).

### **5.2.2.2 Parliamentary Questions and Calling Attention Notices**

Beyond the committee proceedings, questions and calling attention notices are another set of crucial parliamentary record for climate related legislative engagement. In accordance with the Rules of Procedure and Business of the National Assembly, any member may pose a question to a minister that enquires into the activities of the said minister's department. Similarly, any member may raise a calling attention notice to direct the attention of the house to a certain matter of urgent public importance.

MNA Mirza Ikhtiar Baig, member of the National Assembly's Standing committee on economic affairs, brought the House's attention to the 2022 flood that ravaged the country and the lack of recovery. He noted that the pledged international reconstruction finance had not materialized and called for losses to be recuperated from the fund setup at the COP28 (Business Recorder, 2025). Such statements point towards the increased focus towards the agenda of climate change.

Amidst all the fervour it would be pertinent to point out how despite an increase of hundred and eighty percent in mitigation funding in the 2025 – 26 federal budget, the finance bill was not adequately scrutinized by parliamentary committees, neither did they challenge the eighteen percent tax on solar panels or the sixty six percent cut in pollution abatement, which went in contrary to Pakistan's NDC commitments (Dawn, 2025). The lack of oversight was exposed after the civil society and the media had begun scrutinizing the parliamentary performance against the NDC targets and international commitments that would have been unheard of a decade ago. Due to the diffusion of international practices and protocols in domestic institutions through parliamentary diplomacy, the standards through which action on climate agendas were judged has drastically changed.

### **5.2.2.3 Post-Legislative Scrutiny and the Climate Change Authority Petition**

Two significant evidences of post legislative scrutiny with the help of external support can be traced; first, the post-legislative scrutiny workshop conducted by the Westminster Foundation for Democracy for the Standing Committee in 2021 2022 produced a formal assessment of the Climate Change Act 2017's implementation, the findings show significant gaps between the Act's institutional mandates and their execution. The workshop concluded on a critical juncture highlighting that the Climate Change Authority had not been constituted, the Climate Change Fund provided for in Section 12 of the Act is not adequately capitalized. Moreover, it was also highlighted and presented to the committee that NDC reporting obligations assigned to the Authority were being fulfilled by the Ministry rather than by the statutory body the Act had created. (Standing Committee on Climate Change, 2022). This is a documented instance of the feedback loop between international diplomatic engagement (COP26 participation), parliamentary oversight (the Committee's post-legislative scrutiny), and domestic institutional pressure (questions on the Authority's operationalization).

Second, when it came to implement the changes detailed in the act, it became quite apparent that the motivation was somewhat lacking. The promised clauses of the act were not executed until seven years after sailing through the parliament and was only taken up again after the Supreme Court of

Pakistan intervened. Through the public interest constitutional petition (No. 42 of 2022) was the search for members of the authority initiated (Express Tribune, 2024). With the pressure from the Supreme Court, the Parliament enacted the framework, but still the executive failed to operationalize it, leading to the judiciary forcing their hand even further. Such patterns of enforcement raise questions regarding the depth of institutionalization that has been achieved so far by parliamentary diplomacy. This is consistent with the literature on climate litigation's role in complementing legislative action, as documented in Nachmany et al.'s (2017) global study, and it places Pakistan's domestic experience within a recognizable comparative pattern.

### 5.2.3 Diplomatic Legitimation

The third mechanism operates at the interface of national and international institutions. Pakistan's participation in CoPs, its engagement with the IPU and CPA, and its positioning as a spokesperson for climate-vulnerable developing states have cumulatively constructed a diplomatic identity that is itself a resource. Diplomatically, Pakistan advances a consistent position articulated by the Ministry of Climate Change and Environmental Coordination (2017) as a climate-vulnerable state advocating for equitable burden-sharing, loss-and-damage mechanisms, and access to climate finance. The domestic legislative framework that parliament has constructed the 2017 Act, the institutional bodies it created, the provincial policies that followed lend credibility to that diplomatic position by demonstrating that Pakistan has fulfilled its side of the Paris bargain to the extent its institutional capacity permits.

This legitimation has practical consequences: access to Green Climate Fund resources, bilateral climate cooperation agreements, and technical assistance from international bodies all depend in part on the demonstrated existence of a domestic legal and institutional framework. Parliamentary diplomacy, in this respect, is not merely a mechanism for importing norms but also for projecting them outward in ways that open resource channels unavailable to states without credible legislative foundations.

### 5.3 Alignment and Its Limits

The three mechanisms documented above have produced a measurable degree of alignment between Pakistan's international climate commitments and its domestic legislative architecture. The Climate Change Act 2017, the National Climate Change Policy 2021, and the provincial climate policies adopted since the Eighteenth Amendment devolution have collectively created a statutory framework that broadly reflects the NDC obligations Pakistan undertook while ratifying the Paris agreement. Parliamentary diplomacy through the three mechanisms of norm incorporation, oversight accountability, and diplomatic legitimation was a constitutive element of the process that produced this framework. Pakistan's parliamentary delegations' presence and Speaker's addresses at the Annual Conferences of IPU and CPA by presenting Pakistan's climate vulnerabilities and climate priorities is testament to growing appetite for legislative framework for climate change.

It would be misleading, however, to characterize this alignment as deep or consistent. Ahmed and Bukhari (2021) document persistent implementation deficits. Coordination between federal and provincial legislative bodies remains fragmented, budgetary allocations for climate action fall short of stated commitments. The Ministry of Climate Change itself has acknowledged that formal commitments and ground-level outcomes diverge, and independent assessments consistently find a gap between legislative provision and administrative delivery. Parliamentary diplomacy, in other words, has been more effective at producing legislation than at ensuring its implementation a finding consistent with Huntington's (1968) warning that institutionalization without coherence and adaptability produces brittle rather than durable institutions.

## 6. Implications

The intertwining of climate change legislation and parliamentary diplomacy create several favourable consequences:

- By engaging in parliamentary process and diplomacy, the legitimacy of climate laws is significantly bolstered
- International expectations and domestic implementations are aligned
- Provinces are looped into the diplomatic process, allowing for implementation of legislation at the provincial level
- Parliament assumes a major role of overseeing the implementation of laws to maintain accountability

## 7. Challenges

Despite efforts, progress on the Pakistan's legislative approach to climate change has been marred by lack of implementation, insufficient levels of coordination and inadequate funding. Political instability and the undermining of policies by subsequent governments have led to less than adequate attention and effort towards a sustained climate action (Ahmed & Bukhari, 2021).

Another significant challenge is the lack of evidence based legislative indicatives, lack of research capacity building for the parliamentarians continue to hinder the process of realization for effective and urgent legislative framework or amending the loopholes in the existing climate act and policy.

Absence of a strong and functional local government system also accounts for one of the many challenges for climate change legislative support at the local and provincial level.

This assessment is not a counsel of pessimism about Pakistan's legislative trajectory. The existence of a statutory framework, a functioning standing committee, a Climate Change Authority, parliamentary platforms; SDGs Secretariate and Climate Caucus, and a consistent diplomatic positioning on climate justice all represent institutional achievements of the period under review. However, the significance of these achievements must be assessed against the severity of the challenge Pakistan faces: as one of the most climate-vulnerable countries in the world, the question of whether parliamentary diplomacy has produced not merely legislation but implementation-capable governance frameworks is one the next decade will answer.

## 8. Conclusion

An evolving transition from a fragmented climate response to more institutionalized framework in response to climate emergencies in Pakistan has been seen in Pakistan from 2015 to 2025. Literature and existing parliamentary activity are evident that the transition owe significantly to increased parliamentary diplomacy contributing to shaping country's climate governance architecture rather than just through executive policymaking. Resultantly, Pakistan's parliament has begun to internalize global climate norms within domestic legislative processes through engagement in international climate forums, inter-parliamentary cooperation, and legislative oversight mechanisms. This research points towards parliamentary diplomacy as a mechanism that ensures the implementation of international climate commitments at a national policy level. Such international agreements have influenced legislation, institutional initiatives and policy framework. The Pakistan Climate Change Act 2017, National Climate Change Policy, Parliamentary standing committees and the federal – provincial coordination mechanisms testify to the growing importance of the issue of climate change as a governance and legislative priority. At the same time significant gaps in coordination between the provincial and national legislative authorities. By highlighting this gap, the research exposes perpetual structural factors like lack of implementation mechanisms, political polarity that are restricting climate initiatives. Although legislative progress is clearly clamouring to make a headway, the

unwillingness to translate climate commitments into something actionable remains a major hindrance that needs to be dealt with.

## 9. Recommendations

### 9.1 Strengthen Parliamentary Oversight Mechanisms

The traces from parliamentary committee reports indicate that Parliamentary standing committees on climate change has the margin to institutionally strengthened through improved research support, inclusion of technical experts on climate governance and legislation, and regular monitoring mechanisms to ensure effective implementation of climate-related legislation and international commitments. Moreover, parliamentary engagement reports such as that of COPs should also be submitted to the committee to have farsighted approach during oversight business.

### 9.2 Federal-Provincial Legislative Coordination

To ensure uniform execution of global climate commitments and adaptation strategies while institutionalizing parliamentary diplomacy, a well-coordinated climate governance structure should be developed between federal and provincial legislatures. It would also help reducing policy fragmentation at all levels.

### 9.3 Legislative Continuity

Political discontinuity hinders the process of smooth climate legislation which should be protected through bipartisan parliamentary consensus to ensure climate policies to remain sustainable despite changes in governments and political leadership. By promising continuity efficacy in climate governance shall have lasting imprints.

### 9.4 Inclusive Public Engagement

Climate legislation should incorporate stronger consultation mechanisms involving civil society, academia, environmental experts, and local communities to improve democratic participation and policy effectiveness.

### 9.5 Align Domestic Laws with International Commitments

Pakistan should continue harmonizing domestic climate laws with international frameworks such as the Paris Agreement and Sustainable Development Goals while adapting them according to local socio-economic realities and institutional capacities.

### 9.6 Learn from Best Practices

Parliamentary institutions should actively engage with international best practices and comparative legislative models to improve climate governance frameworks and strengthen adaptive legislative responses.

## References

- Adnan, A. (2006). Pakistan: Creation and genesis. *Muslim World*, 96(2).
- Ahmed, N., & Bukhari, S. (2021). Challenges in climate change legislation in Pakistan. *Environmental Policy and Law*, 51(2), 123–138.
- Ali, K. A. (2023). Progressives, Punjab and Pakistan: The early years. In *State of subversion* (pp. 13–44). Routledge India.
- Ayaz, A. (2020, December 3). Climate diplomacy: The Pakistan chapter. *Paradigm Shift*.
- Bodansky, D. (2010). *The art and craft of international environmental law*. Harvard University Press.

- Bodansky, D. (2016). The Paris Climate Change Agreement: A new hope? *American Journal of International Law*, 110(2), 288–319.
- Braibanti, R. (1965). Pakistan: Constitutional issues in 1964. *Asian Survey*, 5(2), 79–87.
- Business Recorder. (2025, June 23). Speakers spell out challenges posed by climate change. <https://www.brecorder.com/news/amp/40426839>
- Choudhury, G. W. (1956). The constitution of Pakistan. *Pacific Affairs*, 29(3), 243–252.
- Commonwealth Parliamentary Association. (n.d.). Climate change and sustainable development. <https://www.cpahq.org/what-we-do/our-cross-cutting-themes/climate-change-and-sustainable-development/>
- Commonwealth Parliamentary Association. (2021, August 9). Workshop H: The climate emergency. <https://www.cpahq.org/65-cpc/cpc-workshops/workshop-h-the-climate-emergency/>
- Dawn. (2025, July 3). Parliament's climate role. <https://www.dawn.com/news/1921779>
- Express Tribune. (2024, July 2). Pakistan climate change act – challenges. <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2475219/pakistan-climate-change-act-challenges>
- Gilardi, F. (2015). Problems (and solutions) in the measurement of policy diffusion mechanisms. *Journal of Public Policy*, 35(1), 87–107.
- Government of Pakistan. (2012). National climate change policy. Ministry of Climate Change.
- Grubb, M., Vrolijk, C., & Brack, D. (1999). *The Kyoto Protocol: A guide and assessment*. Royal Institute of International Affairs.
- Inter-Parliamentary Union. (2016). Parliamentary action on climate change. <http://archive.ipu.org/pdf/publications/climat16-e.pdf>
- Jančić, D. (2016). The rise of parliamentary diplomacy in international politics. *The Hague Journal of Diplomacy*, 11(1), 105–120.
- Jamal, A. (2018). Climate change legislation in Pakistan: A comparative analysis. *Environmental Policy and Law*, 51(2), 123–138.
- Jamal, A. (2021). The Pakistan Climate Change Act 2017 and global climate frameworks: A comparative assessment. *South Asian Law Review*, 7(1), 55–74.
- Judge, D. (2008). Institutional theory and legislatures. In J. Pierre (Ed.), *Debating institutionalism* (pp. 115–151). Manchester University Press.
- Kaplan, R. D. (1994). The coming anarchy. *The Atlantic*, 273(2), 44–76.
- Kennedy, D. M. (1975). Overview: The progressive era. *The Historian*, 37(3), 453–468.
- Khan, M. A. (2018). Pakistan's role in regional climate diplomacy. *Journal of South Asian Studies*, 33(1), 47–61.
- Khan, M. A., Ali, S., & Rehman, F. (2024). Climate change governance and legislative frameworks in Pakistan. *Pakistan Journal of Environmental Studies*, 12(1), 34–50.
- Malik, A. P. (2016). Transparency in parliament. Senate of Pakistan. <https://senate.gov.pk/en/essence.php?id=58&catid=4&subcatid=138&cattitle=House%20of%20%20Federation>
- McGerr, M. (2010). *A fierce discontent: The rise and fall of the progressive movement in America*. Simon and Schuster.
- Ministry of Climate Change and Environmental Coordination. (2017). Climate diplomacy and Pakistan's position. Government of Pakistan.
- Mukhtar, S. (2017). Social transformation of Pakistan under the Objectives Resolution. *Social Transformation in Contemporary Society*, 5, 67–77.
- Nachmany, M., Fankhauser, S., Setzer, J., & Averchenkova, A. (2017). *Global trends in climate change legislation and litigation: 2017 update*. Grantham Research Institute on Climate Change and the Environment, London School of Economics and Political Science.
- Nadeem, M., Iqbal, N., Shah, A., & Hussain, Z. (2024). Climate change and agricultural vulnerability in Punjab, Pakistan: A regional analysis. *Environmental Research*, 221, Article 115345.
- National Assembly of Pakistan. (2012). Standing committees. <https://www.na.gov.pk/en/cmen.php?type=1>
- National Assembly of Pakistan. (2019, September 16). NA Standing Committee on Climate Change meets [Press release]. [https://www.na.gov.pk/en/pressrelease\\_detail.php?id=3805](https://www.na.gov.pk/en/pressrelease_detail.php?id=3805)
- Pardesi, Y. Y. (2012). An analysis of the constitutional crisis in Pakistan (1958–1969). *Dialogue (Pakistan)*, 7(4).

- Parliamentary action plan on climate change. (2016, March 23). UNFCCC.
- Rashid, A. (2020). Climate change and national security in Pakistan. *Journal of International Relations*, 14(2), 89–103.
- Rashiduzzaman, M. (1969). The national assembly of Pakistan under the 1962 constitution. *Pacific Affairs*, 42(4), 481–493.
- Rehman, S. (2023, October 5). Adaptation and resilience [Interview]. Interviewed by T. T. Pole.
- Robertiello, G. M. (2024). US legislation on climate. EBSCO Research Starters. <https://www.ebsco.com/research-starters/politics-and-government/us-legislation-climate>
- Sheikh, F. (2017). The climate change act of Pakistan: An overview. *Pakistan Law Review*, 22(3), 102–115.
- Standing Committee on Climate Change. (n.d.). Mandate and functions. National Assembly of Pakistan. <https://climatechangePakistan.com/>
- Standing Committee on Climate Change. (2021). COP26 activities and post-legislative scrutiny. National Assembly of Pakistan. <https://climatechangePakistan.com/>
- Standing Committee on Climate Change. (2022). Treaties. <https://climatechangePakistan.com/treaties/>
- Stavridis, S., & Jančić, D. (2017). *The rise of parliamentary foreign policy*. Routledge.
- United Nations. (2024). UN climate conferences. <https://www.un.org/en/climatechange/un-climate-conferences>
- United Nations Environment Programme. (n.d.). What is climate change? <https://www.unep.org/explore-topics/climate-action/what-is-climate-change>
- United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. (2025, November). Conference of the parties (COP). <https://unfccc.int/process/bodies/supreme-bodies/conference-of-the-parties-cop>
- Vannarith, C. (2021). Parliamentary diplomacy in a changing world. *Asian Journal of Comparative Politics*, 6(3), 183–199.
- Westminster Foundation for Democracy. (2022). Consultation meeting with CSOs, academia, and experts. Westminster Foundation for Democracy.
- Zaka, R. M. (2013, May 5). Parliamentarians' handbook 2013. Pakistan Institute of Parliamentary Services. [https://www.pips.gov.pk/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/028\\_parliamentarians\\_hand\\_book\\_2013.pdf](https://www.pips.gov.pk/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/028_parliamentarians_hand_book_2013.pdf)
- Zamfir, I. (2019). *Connecting parliamentary and executive diplomacy at EU and member state level*. European Parliamentary Research Service.