CLIMATE CHANGE AND DEMOCRACY

Insights from Asia and the Pacific

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Joo-Cheong Tham

Case study authors
Eselealofa 'Ese' Apinelu, Julien Barbara, Motoky Hayakawa, Elise Howard, Om Katel, Romitesh Kant, Khalisah Khalid, Melissa Low, Niranjan Sahoo

International IDEA
Strömsborg
SE–103 34 Stockholm
SWEDEN
+46 8 698 37 00
info@idea.int
www.idea.int

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International IDEA
Strömsborg
SE–103 34 Stockholm
SWEDEN
Tel: +46 8 698 37 00
Email: info@idea.int
Website: <https://www.idea.int>

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FOREWORD

CLIMATE EMERGENCY is the most serious existential threat to the security and survival of the Pacific Islands peoples. The situation is dire, it calls for urgent global and collective actions by humanity.

In 2018, the IPCC Special Report on global warming of 1.5° Celsius warned that the impacts of warming at 2° Celsius would be significantly worse than 1.5° Celsius. In 2023, the IPCC reconfirmed similar warnings in its AR6 Synthesis Report. The world community is warned that the window of opportunity for real actions is rapidly closing.

Tuvaluans, those of us from the small island nation in the Pacific Ocean, understand all too well the gravity of the climate crisis that faces countries in the Asia-Pacific region and beyond. The impacts on food and water security, soil erosion and extreme weather events are issues we are already grappling with. Despite Small Islands Nations contributing the least to global emissions and environmental destruction, we are at the forefront of both the devastating impacts of climate change, and innovative policy and community responses to it.

As the country's former prime minister, I am also acutely aware that the climate crisis is not only a threat to our physical security but also to the very legitimacy of democratic governance. I am convinced that unless we deal with climate change and save the Pacific Island communities against the adverse effects of climate change, all our efforts to strive for sustainable and economic development will be in vain.

In Tuvalu, I want to highlight the specific impacts of sea level rise. Funafuti, our capital, is already imperilled by regular flooding which further threatens our freshwater. By the IPCC's calculations, sea level rise is only accelerating. It notes that water is rising by 3.2 millimetres per year over the last 27 years—this spells disaster for inhabitants of low-lying communities. We are unsure how the coral reefs surrounding our islands will respond to this rise. Will they be able to grow at a speed that will ensure that coral atolls will continue to be replenished with sand and rubble? I hope so, but we cannot know for certain. Some are suggesting largescale relocation—but that is unacceptable to those of us with deep ties to our land. We don't want this. Tuvaluans want to remain in Tuvalu and maintain our culture. The land is our culture.

Yes, there is much work to be done. The challenges posed by the climate crisis are enormous, and they require us to deepen our commitment to democratic values and institutions. People around the world are asking if democracies are up to the task of addressing this existential threat. This Report, *Climate Change and Democracy: Insights from Asia and the Pacific* offers valuable insights and recommendations for how we can do so, and I urge policymakers, academics, civil society organizations and citizens across the Asia-Pacific region to engage with its findings.

If we are to ensure that democracy survives and thrives in the twenty-first century, we cannot afford to fail this singular test. The climate crisis is the defining challenge of our time, and it is only by working together, across borders and sectors, that we can hope to overcome it. Let us rise to this challenge with courage, determination, and a steadfast commitment to democracy and its values.

I continue to say: 'We must Save Tuvalu in order to save the World'.

Enele Sopoaga
Prime Minister of Tuvalu (2013–2019)
Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Tuvalu to the UN
AOSIS Chairman and Chief Negotiator on Climate Change
SIDS first Representative on the UNFCCC
Adaptation Fund Executive Board Prominent person

PREFACE

Climate change is both a challenge and an opportunity for democracy. While the impacts of climate change are already being felt in many places, the effects of climate action rarely align with electoral cycles or other democratic timelines. At the same time, democracy offers pathways for consensus and coordination among governments, citizens, businesses, and civil society organizations that are essential for addressing the climate crisis. This context of challenge and opportunity makes it vital that democracies can draw upon the examples and lessons of their peers.

Asia and the Pacific is generally a region with high climate affectedness, making it ripe for such a peer learning exercise. This report explores how democracy and the climate crisis intersect through 10 case studies from Asia and Oceania, ranging from large countries such as Australia, India and Indonesia to small island states like Fiji, Tuvalu and Vanuatu.

The case studies highlight the complex interactions between democratic governance and climate action. On the one hand, the climate crisis will force democratic institutions to respond to new and heightened threats, such as climate-related inequalities and displacement. On the other hand, democratic systems can offer platforms for citizens to demand, inform, and co-develop climate-related policies and programs.

Moreover, the report shows how democracy itself can be improved by efforts to mitigate and adapt to climate change, such as by enhancing youth participation in political processes and revitalizing cooperation between local and national governments. In Indonesia and India, for example, religious organizations and other civil society groups have found new strength and solidarity through championing climate action.

The countries studied in the report vary considerably in their climate vulnerability, readiness, and response, due to different geographic contexts and levels of capacity and resources. Given this diversity, the report calls for multilateral action based on experiences from the most climate vulnerable communities, such as those in Bhutan, the Pacific Islands and Torres Strait Islands in Australia. The report also stresses the need not just to increase international climate funding to support states with high climate vulnerability, but to ground this funding in effective democratic mechanisms.

This Report is just one example of International IDEA’s commitment to help advance democratic climate action. This work is of the utmost importance, both for the climate and for democracy. If democracy cannot successfully address climate change, it will struggle to be seen as fit for purpose, particularly by the younger generations most insistent on the urgency of climate issues. Democracy’s reputation and relevance must be continuously earned by solving real problems for real people—and there is arguably no problem greater than the climate crisis.

Kevin Casas-Zamora
Secretary-General
International IDEA

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Acronyms and abbreviations

ACTU	Australian Council of Trade Unions
AIPA	Apex Committee for Implementation of the Paris Agreement
ALP	Australian Labor Party
AMAN	Indigenous Peoples’ Alliance of the Archipelago, Indonesia
AOSIS	Alliance of Small Island States
BCA	Business Council of Australia
BJP	Bharatiya Janata Party, India
CASA	Climate Action SG Alliance
CCAA	Climate Change Adaptation Act, Japan
CCPI	Climate Change Performance Index
COP	Conference of Parties
COP 26	Conference of the Parties to the UN Framework on Climate Change, 26th meeting, Glasgow, November 2021
COSIS	Commission of Small Island States
CRI	Global Climate Risk Index
CSE	Centre for Science and Environment, India
CSOs	Civil society organizations
DPSP	Directive Principles of State Policy, India
ETS	Emissions Trading System, Japan
GDP	Gross domestic product
GEF	Global Environment Facility
GHG	Greenhouse gas/Greenhouse gases
GNH	Gross National Happiness
GSoD	Global State of Democracy
IEA	International Energy Agency
ILO	International Labour Organization
IMCCC	Inter-Ministerial Committee on Climate Change, Singapore

INC	Indian National Congress
INDC	Intended Nationally Determined Contribution
INWG	International Negotiations Working Group
IPCC	Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
JCI	Japan Climate Initiative
LDC	Least Developed Country
LDP	Liberal Democratic Party, Japan
MEFCC	Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, India
METI	Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry, Japan
MoE	Ministry of Environment, Japan
NCCS	National Climate Change Secretariat, Singapore
NCMP	Non-constituency members of parliament
NDCs	Nationally Determined Contributions
ND-GAIN	Notre Dame Global Adaptation Initiative
NDPs	National Development Plans
NGT	National Green Tribunal, India
PCRAFI	Pacific Catastrophe Risk Assessment and Financing Initiative
RWG	Resilience Working Group
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SICAN	Solomon Islands Climate Action Network
TERI	Energy and Resources Institute (formerly the Tata Energy Research Institute), India
ULBs	Urban Local Bodies, India
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
VCAN	Vanuatu Climate Action Network
VSP	Vanuatu Skills Partnership
WALHI	Wahana Lingkungan Hidup Indonesia (Indonesian Forum for the Environment)
WWF	World Wide Fund for Nature

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

Democracy is on trial in the climate crisis.

Democracy is on trial in the climate crisis. It is charged with having failed—and with continuing to fail—to prevent dangerous climate change. It is indicted on a fundamental breach of a key obligation of legitimate government—to ensure the safety and survival of the people to whom democracies owe their allegiance. Its accusers go so far as to attribute these failures to congenital defects in democracy. To its critics, the very same features of democracy lauded as its defining virtues—popular sovereignty, the accountability and responsiveness of elected officials, public debate and deliberation—are handicaps that fatally impede effective climate action, leading to inexpert and ineffectual judgements, short-termism, and cumbersome and dilatory policy processes. Critically, democracy is damned as a fair-weather regime that is unable to navigate crises—particularly existential crises such as climate change. For some, '[d]emocracy is the planet's biggest enemy' (Runciman 2019).

This is undoubtedly a trial by fire. It has been strongly argued that authoritarian regimes are needed for the climate crisis. This is a double-barrelled argument as authoritarian regimes are said to be necessary both to effectively mitigate the risks of climate change, and to adapt to its disruptive impacts. Thus, even if humanity survives the climate crisis, the fate of democracies is deeply uncertain. Most clearly, the legitimacy of democracy as a form of government is at stake.

However, this trial is not over and it would not be safe to deliver a verdict at this stage. For one, the case for authoritarian regimes is flawed in both theory and practice (see below) and while the hour is late for preventing the worst impacts of climate change, there is still a narrowing window—with this decade being the critical one—to provide a climate-safe future (IPCC 2018). Here, it is overwhelmingly democratic nations that are taking the lead (Burck et al. 2021).

This urgent time calls not for pessimism—let alone fatalism—about democracy, but for a deepening of the democratic impulse; specifically, a grounded affirmation of the strengths of democratic institutions that is framed within a clear-eyed view of the enormity and complexity of the challenges posed by the climate crisis, including to democracy itself. In other words, the climate crisis should be grasped fully as a turning point and as a moment of truth that presents extreme dangers but also significant opportunities—for humanity generally and democracy more specifically (Diamond 2019). This is all the more the case since this is clearly not a short-term crisis but a 'long emergency' (Wiseman 2021). The climate crisis will be a defining, perhaps the defining, challenge for and to democracy for decades to come. As Figueres and Rivett-Carnac (2021) argue, '[i]f democracy is to survive and thrive into the twenty-first century, climate change is the one big test that it cannot fail'.

The climate crisis will be a defining challenge for and to democracy for decades to come.

With this in mind, this Report focuses on democracy and the climate crisis in the Asia-Pacific region. A regional approach based on detailed case studies has been chosen to contextualize the challenges to democracy arising from this crisis. The Asia-Pacific region is significant for various reasons—it is the most populous in the world; it is a region that will be disproportionately affected by climate change and where many countries are considered highly vulnerable; and, as this Report makes clear, it is also a place where there have been vibrant innovations to democratic institutions and practices for dealing with the climate crisis.

Two challenges frame this Report (see Casas-Zamora 2022):

- How can democracy effectively address the climate crisis?
- How can democracy effectively address the threats it faces from the climate crisis?

Box 1.1. **Meaning of democracy**

This Report adopts the conceptual framework of International IDEA's Global State of Democracy Indices. This framework defines the core of democracy as comprising popular control and political equality. It elaborates on this core meaning through five attributes: Representative Government, Fundamental Rights, Checks on Government, Impartial Administration and Participatory Engagement. In addition to this framework, International IDEA stipulates eight mediating values for democracy: Participation, Authorization, Legitimacy, Representation, Accountability, Transparency, Responsiveness and Solidarity. In sum, this Report understands democracy as having a core definition elaborated through values, institutions, laws and practice.

The remainder of this chapter maps out these challenges and explains the case study methodology used in the Report.

1.1. HOW CAN DEMOCRACY EFFECTIVELY ADDRESS THE CLIMATE CRISIS?

1.1.1. Democracy against a safe climate?

Climate change is a particularly wicked problem for humanity (Dovers 1996; see also Lindvall 2021) because of its:

- **Long-term frames**. The temporal distance between greenhouse gas emissions and climate change, as well as between measures taken and their effects, together with the level of urgency, given that dangerous climate change is already occurring and will intensify if sufficient action is not taken.

- **Spatial scale**. The disjuncture between a global problem that transcends national boundaries and an international system based on nation states, and also between the causes (responsibility for) and effects of (vulnerability to) climate change.

- **Limits to human activity**. The recognition that planetary boundaries place limits on economic and demographic growth (Stockholm Resilience Centre n.d.).

- **Connectivity and complexity**. Due to the interaction with and interdependence of natural and human systems that frame the imperative and the difficulty of global collective action.

- **Moral and ethical issues**. Such as intergenerational equity, equity between developed and developing countries and equity within countries.

1.1.2. Can democracy address climate change in its full complexity?

Held and Fane-Hervey (2009) argue that four structural characteristics obstruct the liberal democracies of nation states from effectively addressing climate change. First, short-termism attributed to the electoral cycle, as political parties seek re-election every few years and competitive party politics focuses on short-term electoral gain and the immediate interests of voters, and political processes are too responsive to the media cycle. Short-termism works against the long-term frames required to address the crisis and provides a moral outlook that is too narrow to capture intergenerational equity.

Short-termism works against the long-term frames required to address the crisis and provides a moral outlook that is too narrow to capture intergenerational equity.

Second, self-referring decision making is said to arise from democratic mechanisms, particularly elections, that are underpinned by accountability to the constituents of a nation state and accountability to current voters—a section of the present generation. To this can also be added the politics of self-interest (both sectional and individual). Such processes militate against proper consideration of the interdependence between natural and human systems, equity between countries and intergenerational equity. They may also run counter to fully recognizing the limits to human activity and be linked to weak multilateralism, due to the emphasis placed on national interests. In some contexts, populism will exacerbate these effects (Huber 2020), as populists tend to treat the views of the public as self-vindicating, regardless of their merit, and as opposed to those of the elite, including scientific experts.

Third, weak multilateralism is traced to the self-referring decision making of states based on national interest, as well as disagreements between developed and developing countries and opposition from fossil-fuel-dependent nations (Fiorino 2018). Weak multilateralism most obviously undermines the effectiveness of necessary global action. This fact is reflected in the commitments made under the 2015 Paris Agreement, a binding treaty agreed under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), which fell far short of its goal of limiting global warming to well below 2°C (preferably to 1.5°C) compared to pre-industrial levels (UNEP 2020), even after the UN Secretary-General sounded a ‘code red for humanity’ on the climate crisis (UN Secretary-General 2021). According to the Climate Action Tracker (2021), the Nationally Determined Contributions (pledges made by nations under the Paris Agreement) at the 2021 Glasgow Conference of Parties (COP) would set the planet on a catastrophic pathway to an increase in temperature of 2.1°C by the end of the century, while the dismal current status of policies against pledges would produce an even more disastrous scenario of a 2.7°C increase (Climate Action Tracker 2021). Swedish climate activist Greta Thunberg was unequivocal in her condemnation of the Glasgow COP as a ‘failure’ (BBC News 2021; see also Hales and Mackey 2021).

Finally, there is capture by vested interests, which is described by Held and Fane-Hervey (2009) as interest group concentration—specifically, commercial interests. Capture of the policymaking process is enabled by the structural dependence of governments on business for economic growth—what Lindblom (1977) famously characterized as ‘the privileged position of business’. This is brought about directly through lobbying by business interests, and their funding of political parties and election campaigns. Capture by, for example, fossil fuel businesses invariably means the delay—and at times defeat—of the measures required to address the crisis, including the uncoupling of economic growth from increases in greenhouse gas emissions and the use of fossil fuels.

There is no doubt that there has been a concerted effort by fossil fuel companies to bring about such capture. Building on their already considerable economic and political power in many states worldwide, these companies have funded key political parties and organizations in order to obstruct climate action (Holden 2020). A central strategy has been the decades-long campaign by these companies to deny the existence of climate change, principally by sowing doubt about the underlying science (Oreskes and Conway 2010), while internal research dating back at least as far as the 1970s clearly demonstrated the seriously damaging effects of fossil fuel use (McGreal 2021). The influence of fossil fuel interests was also obvious at the Glasgow COP, and the Climate Pact almost collapsed due to last-minute opposition from China and India to the original draft, which called for a 'phase-out of unabated coal power'. This opposition succeeded in diluting the text to 'phasedown' (see Arima 2021). Not surprisingly, David Attenborough (2020) has suggested that vested interests are 'the most formidable obstacle' to the switch to clean energy.

These circumstances of democratic debilitation are compounded by the speed and scale of the changes now needed to effectively address the climate crisis. According to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), 'rapid, far-reaching and unprecedented changes in all aspects of society' are required (IPCC 2018) (see Table 1.1).

There is now a critical need to move beyond the predominant view of societal progress as based on continuous economic growth as measured by gross domestic product. A view that treats the economy as an open system with limitless resources (e.g. capitalism with perpetual growth) will inevitably collide with a global ecosystem enclosed by planetary boundaries (Montt, Fraga and Harsdorff 2018). In the words of the UNFCCC Secretariat, 'a growth-oriented economy may not be compatible with a climate-safe economy' (UNFCCC Secretariat 2020). Living in the safe and just space of the 'doughnut' between a social foundation that meets the needs of humanity and ecological limits will require a different and more holistic understanding of societal progress (Raworth 2017), such as the one embodied in the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (UN DESA n.d.; United Nations General Assembly 2015).

There is now a critical need to move beyond the predominant view of societal progress as based on continuous economic growth as measured by gross domestic product.

1.1.3. The flawed preference for authoritarian regimes

Can democracy deal effectively with the complexity of the climate crisis as a policy problem, enacting the scale and depth of societal change required, given the compelling circumstances of democratic debilitation? The answer, according to one school of thought, is an emphatic 'no'. Since at least the 1970s, democracy has been said to be inherently incapable of addressing environmental problems such as climate change. Rather than democratic regimes based on popular

Table 1.1. **Climate change, mitigation and adaptation**

Climate change	**Mitigation of climate change**	**Adaptation to climate change**
Changes in the climate attributable in part/directly to human activity that alters the composition of the global atmosphere and which is in addition to natural climate variability observed over comparable time periods.	Human interventions to reduce emissions or enhance the sinks of greenhouse gases.	The process of adjustment to actual or expected climate and its effects in order to moderate harm or exploit beneficial opportunities.
	Systemic changes for 1.5˚C—Consistent Pathways • Energy system transitions • Land and ecosystem transitions • Urban and infrastructure system transitions • Industrial systems transitions	

Source: UNFCCC Secretariat, *Just Transition of the Workforce, and the Creation of Decent Work and Quality Jobs*, Technical Paper, 21 April 2020, <https://unfccc.int/documents/226460>, accessed 8 September 2022; IPCC, *Global Warming of 1.5˚C*, Chapter 4 and Glossary, 2018, <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009157940>.

rule, it has been claimed that authoritarian regimes are required based on the rule of experts—what Ophuls termed 'ecological mandarins' (Ophuls 1977; see also Heilbroner 1974). Such thinking has proved persistent, as illustrated by the publication of *The Climate Change Challenge and the Failure of Democracy* (Shearman and Smith 2007), which calls for governance by experts in order to deal with the climate crisis.

Such authoritarian sentiments have increased in appeal as the climate crisis has been likened to a war. James Lovelock, the distinguished scientist who developed the Gaia theory of Earth as a giant, self-regulating organism, stated that: 'Even the best democracies agree that when a major war approaches, democracy must be put on hold for the time being. I have a feeling that climate change may be an issue as severe as a war. It may be necessary to put democracy on hold for a while' (quoted in Hickman 2010). Others have gone further and likened the climate crisis to World War III (McKibben 2016; Stiglitz 2019; Blair, Treagust and McCulloch 2020).

The argument that authoritarian regimes are needed to deal with the climate crisis, however, is flawed in both practice and theory.

Box 1.2. **The case of China**

There may be some attraction to treating China, the world's largest emitter of greenhouse gases, as the poster child for an effective authoritarian climate regime. In the past decade, China's leaders have committed the country to a more environmentally and economically sustainable mode of development (Henderson and Joffe 2016), while also positioning China as a global climate leader (Hurri 2020; Wunderlich 2020). China ranked significantly higher than the United States, the world's second largest emitter of greenhouse gases (GHG), in the 2022 Climate Change Performance Index (Burck et al. 2021). On closer inspection, however, the attraction is superficial. While the USA languishes in 55th spot on the Climate Change Performance Index, China is ranked 38th, which is five places below its previous ranking. The Index's report on China states that it 'receives a low rating overall, but with mixed ratings across categories—very low for GHG Emissions and Energy Use, medium for Renewable Energy, and high for Climate Policy'. The low score on GHG Emissions and Energy Use is due to China's high levels of emissions: 'its coal phase-out [being] too slow', and its 'plans to continue building coal-fired power stations because of energy supply concerns' (Climate Change Performance Index 2022).

The argument that authoritarian regimes are needed to deal with the climate crisis, however, is flawed in both practice and theory.

In practice, democracies consistently out-perform authoritarian regimes in terms of climate change mitigation policies (Bättig and Bernauer 2009; Lindvall 2021). For instance, the climate performance of China is far from compelling (see Box 1.2). Indeed, increased quality of democracy corresponds with stronger climate policies and, to a lesser extent, climate outcomes (Hanusch 2017). These studies align with strong findings that increasing democracy reduces environmental degradation and improves environmental performance (Li and Reuveny 2006).

Likening the climate crisis to a war is false and dangerous (see Box 1.3). More fundamentally, there are fatal difficulties with the arguments in favour of expert rule. These arguments are a potent threat to the legitimacy of democracy and constitute a contemporary version of an argument for a guardianship regime (Holden 2002). Dahl (1989) has observed that a regime that rests on the idea that '[r]ulership should be entrusted to a minority of persons who are specially qualified to govern by reason of their superior knowledge and virtue' has been a 'perennial alternative to democracy'. As Dahl convincingly argues, however, this places 'extraordinary demands on the knowledge and virtue of guardians [that] are all but impossible to satisfy in practice' (Dahl 1989).

This applies as much if not more to the climate crisis, which will see an expansion of the power of the state. No credible answer has been provided regarding how the abuse of such power could be prevented in authoritarian regimes based on expert rule, where the mechanisms of public accountability that apply in democracies are absent. Lord Acton's aphorism that power tends to corrupt and absolute power corrupts absolutely remains unanswered.

It is not just virtue that is wanting but also knowledge. A deeply mistaken assumption underlying calls for expert rule to address the climate crisis is the characterization of the crisis as a set of technical problems that require technical solutions. This is an illustration of what Pope Francis has characterized as the 'technocratic paradigm', or 'the tendency, at times unconscious, to make the method and aims of science and technology an epistemological paradigm which shapes the lives of individuals and the workings of society' (Pope Francis 2015).

Given the scale and complexity of the climate crisis, it is absurd to believe that a small minority of guardians, experts or ecological mandarins will have sufficient knowledge to address it.

This paradigm seriously distorts any understanding of the climate crisis: it is not simply—or even predominantly—a technical crisis. It is true that technical expertise, including scientific and technological expertise, is central but other dimensions of the crisis are as salient, particularly its moral complexity, its risks and the trade-offs, including from uncertainties in scientific modelling. These interacting dimensions will traverse the profound political, social and economic changes that are necessary to address the crisis. All of this, moreover, will have to be negotiated and addressed in diverse national and cultural contexts. Given the scale and complexity of the climate crisis, it is absurd to believe that a small minority of guardians, experts or ecological mandarins will have sufficient knowledge to address it.

1.1.4. **Innovation borne of crisis**

The true value of the argument for authoritarian regimes lies, perhaps, in the exposure of key deficiencies in contemporary democracies that adversely affect how the climate crisis is addressed; that is, the circumstances of democratic debilitation. Taking these deficiencies

Box 1.3. **War as a false and dangerous metaphor**

Comparing the climate crisis to war resonates because both involve urgent and existential threats, and both require large-scale societal transformation and mobilization. Yet war as a metaphor fails because there is no enemy to be defeated. It is not the climate that is to be defeated, as it is part of our living world; nor is it other nations, as global cooperation is essential to address this planetary challenge.

A war metaphor implies that the climate crisis should be treated as a problem to be resolved by experts (see Section 1.3), although even war as a conflict between nations is not understood in this way, given its obvious moral dimensions. In such situations, there is no warrant for decision making to be completely entrusted to a select group of experts. As Georges Clemenceau observed, war is too important to be left to the generals (paraphrased in Dahl 1989).

This is not a harmless falsehood. The metaphor of war is positively dangerous. It not only has strong authoritarian tendencies and distorts the nature of the crisis to be addressed, but also paves the way for militarization of the crisis, including through the use of armed and security forces, and a reliance on coercive measures, the concomitant reduction of protections for freedoms and liberties, as well as a demonization of the 'other' through distinctions between 'friends' and 'enemies', and 'us' and 'them'.

seriously reminds us that winning the argument against authoritarian regimes is not the same as succeeding in the climate crisis.

A key challenge and opportunity for democracy is to innovate by imagining and implementing a vision of democracy for a safe climate that deepens democracy by disavowing corrosive tendencies. This vision should be based on four pillars—a democratic planning state, a solidaristic ethos, an invigorated multilateralism, and fair and inclusive politics.

Pillar 1. A democratic planning state

The periodic mechanisms of accountability provided by elections do not necessarily have to result in short-termism. There is no democratic reason why those who stand for office cannot be judged on their ability to attend to the long-term goals of a country, including addressing climate change. A solidaristic ethos among the public (see below), for instance, could anchor electoral accountability in the needs of future generations.

Effectively addressing climate change should also involve significant changes to the role of the state, including countering short-termism.

Effectively addressing climate change should also involve significant changes to the role of the state, including countering short-termism. The nation state is a critical actor and, in many respects, the critical actor tasked with implementing the necessary and unprecedented transitions required by the climate crisis. As the International Energy Agency (IEA) has noted, '[u]nderpinning all of these changes [to net zero emissions] are decisions taken by governments' (IEA 2021: 153). Giddens (2011) has convincingly argued that short-termism can be addressed by a nation state that takes the lead responsibility on:

- **Planning**. In terms of both mitigation and adaptation.
- **Regulation of the economy**. Including instituting the 'polluter pays' principle and establishing an economic framework for a low-carbon economy.
- **Coordination and integration**. Between government, the private sector and citizens, as well as different levels of government.
- **Holistic risk mitigation**. Addressing the risks of the climate crisis together with other risks experienced by contemporary societies, including through social protection.

Giddens has stressed that a planning state understood in this way, or a Green State as characterized by Eckersley (2004), will call for more democracy not less. While centrally informed by expert opinion, it will not be a technocratic state but one based on a vision of a climate-safe society that engages with the complex dimensions of the climate crisis, including its moral complexity. It be will neither centralized nor 'top-down' in its processes; it will involve various levels of government and different sectors of society; it will include the setting of targets and the determination of means, and the implementation and review of all these aspects will have a strong basis in popular involvement. The IEA has underlined that, '[c]itizens must be active participants in the entire process, making them feel part of the transition and not simply subject to it' (IEA 2021: 4).

Falling squarely within the scope of the democratic planning state is the role of technology. Technological innovations will be significant in the climate crisis (Gates 2021), but technological changes should not be seen as a politics-free zone exempt from democratic principles. Rather, the aspiration should be for ‘a process of technological change disciplined by the political wisdom of democracy’ (Winner 2020).

Pillar 2. A solidaristic ethos

Democratic accountability, including elections, does not necessarily have to produce a politics based mainly on the interests of voters, let alone their individual interests. Much depends on the moral and political outlook of voters—a politics of self-interest can be countered by a solidaristic ethos.

A solidaristic ethos should be broad and inclusive, encompassing, as Pope Francis (2015) has reasoned, both intergenerational and intra-generational solidarity, as well as solidarity with nature. It is vital to recognize that solidarity is a democratic principle. As International IDEA has explained, solidarity ‘refers to the ties in a society that bind different people to one another, expressing social bonds rather than autonomous individual ties’ (International IDEA n.d.). Viewed from this perspective, voters are not just protectors of their own interests, but also trustees of the public interest (broadly conceived).

It is vital to recognize that solidarity is a democratic principle.

This stems from a fundamental truth that democracies are by nature communities. They are not random collections of individuals, but a ‘we’ that considers itself ‘a people’. Democracy is the process of collective self-determination. It is through solidarity that fuller meaning is given to the third, neglected principle of the French Revolution—fraternity. As the Dalai Lama has stressed, fraternity should be at the heart of our response to the climate crisis (Dalai Lama and Stril-Rever 2018). Learning from Indigenous peoples is vital to a solidaristic ethos. As the IPCC puts it:

> Indigenous Peoples around the world often hold unique worldviews that link today’s generations with past generations. In particular, many Indigenous Peoples consider concepts of responsibility through intergenerational equity, thereby honouring both past and future generations.
> (IPCC 2022a: Chapter 18)

Institutions specifically dedicated to the interests of future generations, such as the Hungarian Ombudsman for Future Generations, the Israeli Knesset Commissioner for Future Generations and the Future Generations Commissioner for Wales, might be able to play a role.

Arguably, a positive-sum orientation is integral to a solidaristic ethos on the climate crisis. This entails framing issues in a way that promotes 'win-win' situations to address the climate crisis alongside other policy goals, as well as the needs of current and future generations and of the various groups within the current generation, especially those particularly affected by climate change and climate action. An orientation of this nature would be a launch pad for finding policies that can provide synergies between the complex dimensions of the climate crisis, such as through the creation of 'green' jobs for those employed in fossil fuel industries (ILO n.d.b). In the words of the IPCC, '[c]limate governance is most effective when it integrates across multiple policy domains, helps realize synergies and minimize trade-offs, and connects national and sub-national policymaking levels' (IPCC 2022b).

Central to this proposition is that nation states plan democratically for the future, including for the needs of coming generations.

Mechanisms that institutionalize solidarity are essential. Central to this proposition is that nation states plan democratically for the future, including for the needs of coming generations, and address the risks of the climate crisis together with other risks experienced by contemporary societies (see above). Mechanisms for deliberative democracy—both specific initiatives such as citizens' assemblies (Devaney et al. 2020) and initiatives for the political system as a whole (Parkinson and Mansbridge 2012), including elections (Thompson 2002)—are also likely to assist in cultivating a solidaristic ethos. By emphasizing the deliberation of matters of common concern, based on reason-giving, reciprocity (mutually justifiable reasons) and equality of recognition and voice, deliberative democracy is centrally focused on recognition of other affected interests (Bächtiger et al. 2018), including those of future generations.

Also vital in terms of solidarity is social dialogue—one of the four pillars of the Decent Work Agenda promulgated by the International Labour Organization (ILO) (ILO n.d.a). Social dialogue is integral to ‘the imperatives of a just transition of the workforce’, as stipulated in the 2015 Paris Agreement. In its 2015 guidelines, the ILO states that, ‘[s]ocial dialogue has to be an integral part of the institutional framework for policymaking and implementation at all levels’, which requires that ‘[a]dequate, informed and ongoing consultation ... take[s] place with all relevant stakeholders’ (ILO 2015: 5). The European Commission’s European Green Deal similarly emphasizes that, ‘[f]or companies and their workers, an active social dialogue helps to anticipate and successfully manage change’, thereby justifying ‘the role of social dialogue committees’ (European Commission 2019: 21). Policies that reinforce social dialogue ‘work to empower regional and local communities, including energy communities’ (European Commission 2019: 32).

Social dialogue in this context is emphatically democratic. It seeks to give effect to a fundamental principle of the ILO’s *Declaration of Philadelphia*, which calls for processes by which ‘representatives of workers and employers, enjoying *equal status* with those of governments, join with them in free discussion and *democratic* decision with a view to the promotion of the common welfare’ (ILO 1944: Annex, emphasis added). This is consistent with long-standing arguments for economic democracy (Dahl 1986) and research findings that consensus-based (corporatist) democracies are more effective at shifting to cleaner forms of energy (Matthews 2001), due to their ability to integrate various policy goals and interests.

Furthermore, a particular imperative should be to ensure a voice for communities vulnerable to climate change and action. The US Green New Deal Bill (US Congress 2019), for instance, mandates that a Green New Deal ‘be developed through transparent and inclusive consultation, collaboration, and partnership with frontline and vulnerable communities’. This emphasis dovetails with recent research that more egalitarian democracies have higher levels of climate ambition than other democratic types (Povitkina and Jagers 2021).

Pillar 3. Invigorated multilateralism

The obstacles to stronger multilateralism are certainly formidable, as evidenced by the grievously inadequate level of global action to date, but all is not lost. There are silver linings in the outcome of the 2021 COP 26. Important steps have been taken in relation to climate finance for developing countries (Arora and Mishra 2021). Significantly, the *Glasgow Climate Pact* recognized, ‘that limiting global warming to 1.5°C requires rapid, deep and sustained reductions in global greenhouse gas emissions, including reducing global carbon dioxide emissions by 45 per cent by 2030 relative to the 2010 level and to net zero around mid-century, as well as deep reductions in other greenhouse gases’ (UNFCCC 2022). It called on countries to submit strengthened Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) before COP 27, which was held in Egypt in November 2022 (UNFCCC 2022). The hope was that countries would ratchet up their pledges. As Alok Sharma, President of COP 26, noted:

> The 1.5°C limit lives. We brought it back from the brink, but its pulse remains weak. We must steer it to safety by ensuring countries deliver on the promises they have made, and on the expectations set out in this pact to increase climate ambition to 2030 and beyond.
> (Sharma 2021)

Democracy has a role to play here. Countering the self-referring mechanisms of nation state democracy facilitates stronger multilateralism. While electoral accountability does not currently apply to global institutions, democratization is possible by giving fuller effect to the principles of deliberative democracy in global climate governance (Stevenson and Dryzek 2014), including deliberative multilateral forums and mechanisms of deliberative accountability—the latter of which includes empowered civil society organizations such as the ‘climate action army’, with which UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres has associated himself (United Nations 2021).

Pillar 4. Fair and inclusive politics

Although capture by vested interests is a stark feature of contemporary democracies, it is a distortion of democracy not a result of it. This is most clearly reflected in the use of money by such interests to disproportionately influence politics. As the Global Commission on Elections, Democracy & Security (2012), chaired by the late Kofi Annan, stated, ‘[t]he rise of uncontrolled political finance threatens to hollow out democracy everywhere in the world, and rob democracy of its unique strengths—political equality, the empowerment of the disenfranchised, and the ability to manage societal conflicts peacefully’.

There are established policy options for dealing with capture by vested interests. The Council of Europe (2003) has recommended a whole series of measures to regulate the funding of political parties and election campaigns. The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development has made a list of recommendations aimed at preventing policy capture (OECD 2017), including through regulation of political finance and lobbying.

Ensuring an adequate voice for Indigenous peoples is essential. As the IPCC states:

> Climate change assessment and adaptation should be self-determined and led by Indigenous Peoples, acknowledge the importance of developing genuine partnerships, respect Indigenous knowledge and ways of knowing, and acknowledge Indigenous Peoples as stewards of their environment.
> —(IPCC 2022a: Chapter 18)

Providing adequate resources and robust freedoms for civil society will be essential for raising awareness of the urgency of climate action, and for reducing the disproportionate influence of vested interests, as has been powerfully illustrated by the youth climate strikes. These strikes also highlight another reform that should be considered in order to broaden representation in democracies—lowering the voting age. The democratic argument here is two-fold—younger people will disproportionately bear the burden of the climate crisis; and their leadership in the crisis makes it more vital to have their input into political decision making (Laybourn-Langton, Emden and Rankin 2019).

Providing adequate resources and robust freedoms for civil society will be essential for raising awareness of the urgency of climate action, and for reducing the disproportionate influence of vested interests.

The most comprehensive survey conducted in relation to public opinion on climate change and action makes it clear that there is ‘widespread recognition of climate change as a global emergency in every country surveyed’ (UNDP and University of Oxford 2021: 7).

A key democratic priority is to ensure that there are no blockages to this recognition being given effect.

1.2. HOW CAN DEMOCRACY EFFECTIVELY ADDRESS THE THREATS IT FACES FROM THE CLIMATE CRISIS?

1.2.1. The threats to democracy from the climate crisis

The analysis here runs in the opposite direction. Rather than focusing on the impact of democracy on the climate crisis, it is the impact of the climate crisis on democracy that is centre stage. The research in this area is asymmetrical; there has been less examination of the impact of climate crisis on democracy than the other way around (Javeline 2014). The threats to democracy result from a cascading series of risks arising from the climate crisis (Wallace-Wells 2019; Lindvall 2021), as risks to natural systems give rise to risks to human systems, which entail risks to democracy (see Figure 1.1).

The risks to democracy are defined as the 3Is—insecurity, inequality and instability.

The risks to democracy are defined as the 3Is—insecurity, inequality and instability. Insecurity will result from climate disruptions and their impact on lives, livelihoods (jobs), homes, food and water supply. According to Lindvall, food insecurity will fuel public discontent, nationalism and authoritarian populism, and emerge as the ‘one single consequence of the climate crisis that represents the biggest threat to democracy in the future’ (Lindvall 2020).

The climate crisis will also heighten the dynamics of inequality through the uneven impact of climate disruption, the unequal ability and resources to take climate action (mitigation and adaptation), and possibly through climate action itself. This inequality threatens democracy both directly and indirectly—directly where it entails political inequality, and indirectly through a reduction in democratic participation and faith in democracy and solidarity (International IDEA 2017).

Instability will result from climate disruptions. Insecurity and inequality might also contribute to conflicts within and between nations while large increases in forced migration (climate refugees) might also be an acute source of instability. The speed and scale of the transitions necessary to address the climate crisis could also be a source of instability.

Figure 1.1. **Cascading risks of the climate crisis**

RISKS TO NATURAL SYSTEMS

- Increases in mean temperature, hot extremes, heavy precipitation, drought and precipitation deficits
- Increases in sea level rise
- Impact on biodiversity and ecosystems (including species loss and extinction)
- Increases in ocean acidity and decreases in ocean oxygen levels and impact on marine biodiversity, fisheries and ecosystems

RISKS TO HUMAN SYSTEM

- Human health
- Livelihoods
- Food security
- Water supply
- Human security
- Economic growth
- Threats from climate action (mitigation and adaptation)

RISKS TO DEMOCRACY

- Insecurity—particulary food insecurity
- Inequality (social, economic and political)
- Instability—internal conflicts, wars, forced migration (internal and international)
- Democratic backsliding
- Threats to free and fair elections

Source: Author’s compilation.

Alongside the 3Is are other potential threats to democracy. There is the serious risk of democratic backsliding, or an erosion of the quality of democracy. The climate crisis, particularly the instability that results, might be exploited to institute undemocratic measures. For instance, genuine emergencies linked to extreme weather events might be used as a pretext for disproportionate measures and a prolonged state of emergency, perhaps even a permanent state of emergency justified on the basis of recurring natural disasters. A kind of ‘shock doctrine’ might take shape (Klein 2007), leading to stealth authoritarianism under cover of the climate crisis (Varol 2018). This might even be combined with an economic system based on ‘disaster capitalism’.

That climate backsliding is not fanciful is suggested by the Covid-19 crisis, and the notion of pandemic backsliding (Kolvani et al. 2021), as autocratic opportunists capitalized on the crisis to weaken democratic institutions (Daly 2021).

Less appreciated as a risk of democratic backsliding is the increased significance of the state in effectively addressing the climate crisis. This will probably mean that the state assumes more of a central role in planning and regulation of the economy, as well as coordination and integration to address the risks of the crisis. Unless measures to institute popular participation and public accountability are integrated into such changes, there will be an overall decline in the quality of democracy. There are also risks of corruption, in particular the abuse of governmental powers to maintain incumbency, including through coercive powers directed at managing climate disruption and through the extensive public investment required for climate action (World Bank 2022).

Elections may be more difficult to administer due to climate disruption, including extreme weather events and heat stress.

Finally, there are the threats to free and fair elections. Article 25 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights recognizes that ‘genuine periodic elections’ are a core democratic institution that ‘guarantee[s] the free expression of the will of the electors’ (ICCPR 1966). There are a range of threats here (Asplund, Birch and Fischer 2022). Elections may be more difficult to administer due to climate disruption, including extreme weather events and heat stress. Insecurity, inequality, and instability might bring about a lower level of electoral participation. Inequality is likely to specifically undermine the fairness of elections, as those disproportionately affected by the climate crisis might be the least able to participate in elections. Democratic backsliding in the form of incumbent governments abusing power to remain in office is another clear threat to the fairness of elections. In more extreme scenarios, elections may be suspended or postponed during prolonged states of emergency.

1.2.2. Countering threats by deepening democracy

These are all genuine risks but risks are not inevitabilities. Whether these threats to democracy become a reality will depend on complex causal processes. Some threats can be confidently predicted; for instance, food insecurity and some degree of increased inequality. Others, however, are much more uncertain. These include increased conflicts—both intrastate and interstate—and increased forced migration (WMO 2021). Centrally determinative, in many instances, will be the choices made by the international community and nation states.

These threats reaffirm the imperative of strengthening the democratic impulse and, in this context, devising an effective risk management regime for the threats to democracy arising from the climate crisis. This regime should reflect the three prongs outlined below:

1. Reduce the risks to democracy.
2. Reduce vulnerability to risks.
3. Promote resilience to risks.

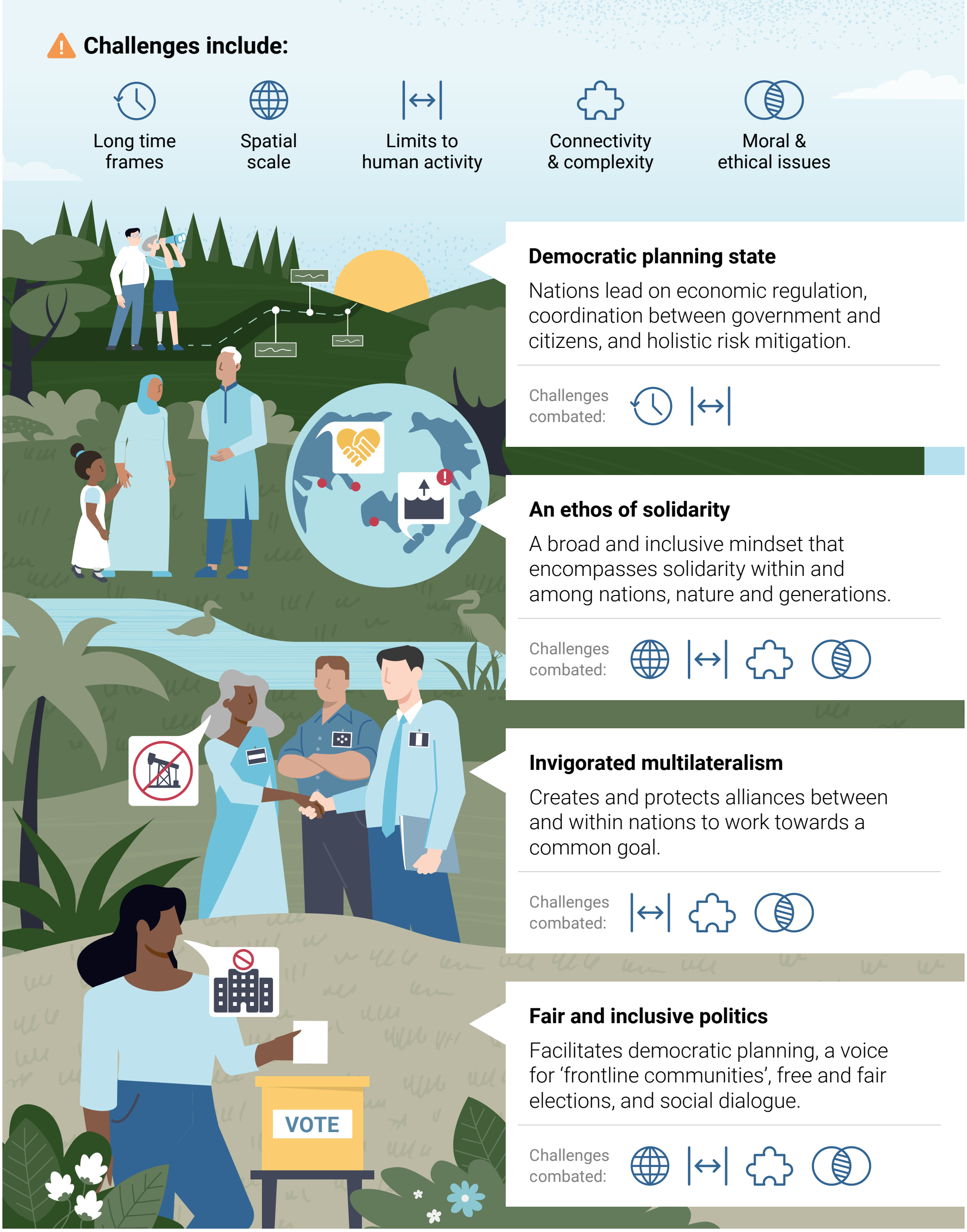
The critical priority of the regime should be mitigation of climate change (see Figure 1.1). Mitigation will reduce the risks to democracy by short-circuiting the cascading risks of the climate crisis (see Figure 1.2). It will also reduce the costs of adaptation to these threats through prongs 2 and 3.

This highlights the profound synergy between effectively addressing the climate crisis and dealing with its threats to democracy, but this synergy goes even deeper. The four pillars discussed above should also anchor the risk-management regime—they are pillars of both democratic innovation and insulation.

Most critical, perhaps, will be including democracy itself within the purview of a planning state. This will require a vision of how democracy should work in the decades to come and ‘back-casting’ that vision to work out appropriate targets and milestones (Giddens 2011). It will necessarily include efforts to reduce the risks to democracy and to enhance its resilience, or ability to adapt to those risks.

Solidaristic mechanisms reduce the risks of insecurity and inequality by providing an assurance of mutual support, including social protection, that reduces the likelihood of such risks spilling over into social conflict. Resilience is also promoted by the positive-sum orientation of a solidaristic ethos, and the problem-solving and social-learning capacities of its mechanisms, including deliberative democracy.

Figure 1.2. **Principles of democracy can help us overcome the unique obstacles of the climate crisis**



⚠ **Challenges include:**

- 🕓 Long time frames
- 🌐 Spatial scale
- |↔| Limits to human activity
- 🧩 Connectivity & complexity
- ◎ Moral & ethical issues

Democratic planning state

Nations lead on economic regulation, coordination between government and citizens, and holistic risk mitigation.

Challenges combated: 🕓 |↔|

An ethos of solidarity

A broad and inclusive mindset that encompasses solidarity within and among nations, nature and generations.

Challenges combated: 🌐 |↔| 🧩 ◎

Invigorated multilateralism

Creates and protects alliances between and within nations to work towards a common goal.

Challenges combated: |↔| 🧩 ◎

Fair and inclusive politics

Facilitates democratic planning, a voice for ‘frontline communities’, free and fair elections, and social dialogue.

Challenges combated: 🌐 |↔| 🧩 ◎

1.3. A GROUNDED APPROACH TO DEMOCRATIC INNOVATION IN THE CLIMATE CRISIS

Central to this Report are 10 country case studies on Australia, Bhutan, Fiji, India, Indonesia, Japan, Singapore, Solomon Islands, Tuvalu and Vanuatu. The case study approach has been adopted to elaborate on how the challenges to democracy posed by the climate crisis manifest themselves in specific national contexts, and to identify concrete ways to address these challenges through democratic innovation (see section 1.4 for the list of questions generated for the country case studies).

The 10 countries were chosen for their diversity, in terms of climate vulnerability and climate action. Climate vulnerability was given particular emphasis. There are four case studies from Pacific Island nations (Fiji, Solomon Islands, Tuvalu and Vanuatu), in recognition of the extreme climate risk faced by low-lying islands. The case studies are also diverse in terms of democratic regime types and geographic subregions of the Asia-Pacific region. They include the three most populous democracies in the Asia-Pacific—India, Indonesia and Japan (see Table 1.2).

1.4. LIST OF QUESTIONS FOR COUNTRY CASE STUDIES

1. What are the key elements of the country’s political system?

2. What are key aspects of its climate vulnerability?
    - How is the country vulnerable to climate impacts, such as increases in mean temperature; increases in sea level rise; impact on biodiversity and ecosystems; and impact on marine biodiversity, fisheries and ecosystems?
    - How does the country’s climate vulnerability compare to other countries? (Please include details from the Notre Dame Global Adaptation Initiative, 2020.)

Table 1.2. **Key attributes of country case studies**

Country	Climate vulnerability ranking	Climate change performance	Subregion
Solomon Islands	165	N/A	Oceania
Vanuatu	157	N/A	Oceania
Bhutan	136	N/A	South Asia
India	132	10	South Asia
Indonesia	107	27	South-East Asia
Fiji	96	N/A	Oceania
Singapore	65	N/A	South-East Asia
Japan	49	45	East Asia
Australia	16	58	Oceania
Tuvalu	N/A	N/A	Oceania

Sources: Climate Change Performance Index; University of Notre Dame Global Adaptation Initiative (ND-GAIN) Index.
Note: A higher climate vulnerability ranking indicates a lower level of vulnerability (e.g. Australia is ranked 16th out of 182 countries). Conversely, a lower ranking indicates a higher level of vulnerability (e.g. Solomon Islands is ranked 165th out of 182 countries).

3. What are key aspects of its climate action?
   - Is the country committed to key climate change international treaties and/or active in regional and/or international forums addressing the crisis?
   - Does the Constitution address the climate crisis?
   - Is there specific legislation addressing the crisis?
   - Who are the champions of climate action (political parties; cross-party alliances; civil society organizations, including environmental, labour and youth groups)?
   - What has been the role of various levels of government?
   - What has been the role of the courts?
   - How does the country's climate action compare to other countries? (Please include details from the Climate Change Performance Index, 2021.)

4. What are the key circumstances hindering effective climate action?
    - In the discussion, please include the following circumstances of democratic debilitation: short-termism; self-referring decision-making; weak multilateralism; and capture by vested interests.
5. How has, and how can, democracy in this country innovate to become more effective at addressing the climate crisis?
    - In the discussion, please include the following ways of democratic innovation: a planning state; a solidaristic ethos; invigorated multilateralism; and fair and inclusive political processes.
6. What are the key threats to democracy in this country from the climate crisis?
    - In the discussion, please include the threats of insecurity, inequality, instability, democratic backsliding, and the threats to free and fair elections.
7. How has, and how can, democracy in this country be better insulated from these threats?
    - In the discussion, please include the following ways of democratic insulation: a planning state; a solidaristic ethos; invigorated multilateralism; and fair and inclusive political processes.

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Chapter 2

AUSTRALIA

The island-continent of Australia is a federation or Commonwealth of eight states, two territories and the federal level of government. It is a parliamentary democracy with periodic elections for elected bicameral parliaments in all jurisdictions apart from the unicameral Queensland and the territories. Governments are formed by the party or coalition with a majority in the lower house (Parliament of Australia 2019; PEO 2022). The federal, state and territory levels of government have legislative and executive power in relation to environmental matters, including climate change. There are no constitutional provisions dealing specifically with climate change (Power 2019).

Australia is a settler-colonial state and its First Nations constitute the oldest living culture in the world. The Indigenous Estate—land where First Nations people hold rights and interests—amounts to 40 per cent of the continent, often in areas of high conservation value (Gammage 2012).

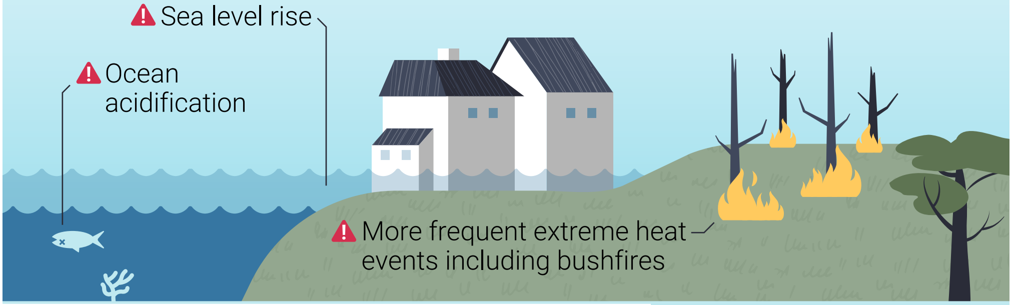
Australian politics is dominated by two main political groupings—the Liberal Party and the National Party as the right-of-centre Coalition, and the left of centre Australian Labor Party (ALP). The ALP currently holds power at the federal level, while the states and territories are governed by a mix of Coalition- and ALP-led governments. There are also several minor parties as well as elected independents. There is a mix of electoral systems across the legislatures of three predominant types—first-past-the-post, preferential voting and single transferable vote proportional representation (Bennett and Lundie 2007). Voting is compulsory in federal, state and territory elections (Australian Electoral Commission 2011).

Figure 2.1. **Australia**

AUSTRALIA

Climate Vulnerability Index (CVI) 16

Top climate vulnerabilities



Sea level rise
Ocean acidification
More frequent extreme heat events including bushfires

Democratic Innovation

- Planning state
- Ethos of solidarity
- Invigorated multilateralism
- Fair and inclusive politics

INNOVATION

Exhibits early signs of learning from Indigenous knowledge

Opportunities

Give marginalized communities a voice in climate action and eradicate the toxic influence of money in politics

2.1. **CLIMATE VULNERABILITY**

The key climate risks already experienced by Australia are:

- An increase in average temperature of 1.44°C since national records began in 1910, resulting in more frequent extreme heat events including extreme fires.

- A decline in rainfall and run-off in south-west Australia, together with increases in parts of Northern Australia.

- Ocean acidification and warming, contributing to more frequent and longer marine heatwaves.
- Rising sea levels, including at more frequent extremes of height.

Australia is projected to experience continuing increases in all of these risk areas in the coming decades (IPCC 2014, 2018; CSIRO 2020; Hoegh-Guldberg and Hughes 2021). The *Australia State of the Environment Report* (2021) found that the state of and trends for the environment in Australia are poor and deteriorating, and that climate change was 'continuing and ... increasing the impacts of other pressures on our environment' (Australia State of the Environment 2021).

Australia's rich biodiversity is one of the areas most vulnerable to climate change.

Australia's rich biodiversity is one of the areas most vulnerable to climate change (Australian Government 2009). Rising sea levels will affect the 85 per cent of Australia's population that lives in coastal areas and the major cities (excluding Canberra) (Cechet et al. 2011). It is estimated that coastal infrastructure to a value of more than AUD 226 billion will be affected by a rise of 1.1 metres (Australian Government 2011). Rainfall decline in the Murray-Darling Basin has reduced agricultural production, compromised water security for cities and towns dependent on its water flows and contributed to mass fish deaths (Pittock 2019). Marine heatwaves have resulted in the coral bleaching of one of Australia's most popular tourism destinations—the World Heritage-listed Great Barrier Reef. Climate change will also increase heavy rainfall events and flooding (CSIRO 2022). Catastrophic bushfires have increased in frequency. The horrific costs of the 2019–2020 bushfires have been recounted by a Royal Commission (Royal Commission into National Natural Disaster Arrangements 2020).

Indigenous communities have been particularly badly affected. The Lowitja Institute's report on *Climate Change and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health* states that: 'Climate change is compounding historical injustices and disrupts cultural and spiritual connections to Country that are central to health and wellbeing' (Lowitja Institute 2021: 1).

Australia is ranked 13th of 182 countries on the University of Notre Dame's Global Adaptation Initiative (ND-GAIN) Index for 2020, where it features as the 167th most vulnerable country and the 11th most ready country (University of Notre Dame 2022a, 2022b). Areas of particular vulnerability for Australia include projected changes in cereal yields and annual runoff, and an increase in urban populations (University of Notre Dame 2022b).

2.2. CLIMATE ACTION

Australia is among the highest per-capita emitters of greenhouse gases internationally.

Australia is among the highest per-capita emitters of greenhouse gases internationally (Climate Analytics 2019). The ALP Government elected in May 2022 has increased Australia's climate ambition by altering Australia's Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) under the Paris Agreement by committing Australia to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions to 43 per cent below 2005 levels by 2030. This is in contrast to the previous government's commitment to a 26–28 per cent reduction. The new government has also reaffirmed Australia's commitment to achieve net zero emissions by 2050 (Australian Government 2022). These targets have been enacted into law in the Climate Change Act 2022 (Cth), together with a ratchet mechanism based on recommendations from the Climate Change Authority. All states and territories have a net zero target of 2050 or earlier, as well as 2030 targets that translate to an estimated 37–42 per cent reduction on 2005 levels Australia-wide (ClimateWorks Australia 2021).

Powering Australia (Australian Labor Party 2021) sets out the federal government's plan to 'create jobs, cut power bills and reduce emissions by boosting renewable energy'. Among other things, it proposes investment in the electricity sector by upgrading the electricity grid, introducing solar banks and community batteries, and other emission-reduction measures, such as manufacturing renewables, low-emission technologies and emission-reducing livestock feed, as well as capping the emissions of the largest emitters and measures to encourage the uptake of electric vehicles.

The Australian courts, which are generally regarded as independent (Australia has a 0.98 GSoD score on judicial independence), have been involved in climate action through climate litigation. The ‘first generation’ cases have generally been administrative law challenges to government decisions. ‘Second’ or ‘next generation’ cases, on the other hand, have focused on holding governments and corporations to account for the climate change impacts of their actions (Peel, Osofsky and Foerster 2017).

The impact of second generation litigation remains to be seen. In *Sharma* v *Minister for Environment* (*Sharma* v *Minister* 2021), a Federal Court found a novel duty of care owed to children by the Australian Government to prevent climate harms when exercising power under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (Cth) (Peel and Markey-Towler 2021). This decision, however, was overturned on appeal to the Full Federal Court. The Court rejected the duty of care, among other things, because it was unsuitable for judicial determination as it concerned ‘core government policy’ or ‘public policy of the highest importance’ (*Minister* v *Sharma* 2022).

In an unprecedented international legal action, a group of eight Torres Strait Islanders known as the Torres Strait 8 successfully complained to the UN Human Rights Committee that the Australian Government had violated the plaintiffs’ rights under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, specifically, article 6 (right to life), article 17 (right to be free from arbitrary interference with privacy, family and home) and article 27 (right to culture). While the Committee did not find a violation of article 6, it concluded that articles 17 and 27 were breached by the failure of the Australian Government to take adequate climate action (UN Human Rights Committee 2022).

Climate action is also championed by civil society organizations through advocacy, research, and organizing and mobilizing, including during elections, with a range of organizations active in this space (0.66 GSoD score on civil society participation). These range from youth climate groups to organizations dedicated to climate change, such as the Climate Council and Climate Works; trade unions, including the Australian Council of Trade Unions; and employers and employer groups, such as the Business Council of Australia. The Australian Reserve Bank (Debelle 2021) and the finance industry regulator (APRA Practice Guide 2021; see also TCFD 2017) have also been vocal in warning of the financial risks of climate change (see also Kearns 2022).

The Climate Change Performance Index places Australia sixth-last in its assessment of the climate actions of 61 countries (Burck et al. 2022). Australia's climate action falls short in two major respects. First, there is inadequate climate ambition. While the federal government's climate ambition compares favourably with that of its predecessor, its climate ambition is consistent with warming of 2˚C, the upper end of the Paris Agreement's temperature targets (Climate Analytics 2022) and has only improved Australia's overall Climate Action Tracker rating from 'Highly insufficient' (Climate Action Tracker 2022a) to 'Insufficient' (Climate Action Tracker 2022b). It is argued that to be consistent with the lower end of the Paris Agreement's temperature targets (1.5˚C), Australia's emissions must be reduced by 75 per cent by 2030, and net zero emissions reached by 2035 (Climate Council 2022).

Australia remains among the most fossil-fuel-dependent countries.

Second, there is continued dependence on fossil fuels for domestic consumption and export income. Australia remains among the most fossil-fuel-dependent countries (Swann 2019; Clean Energy Council 2022). Powering Australia and the recently enacted Climate Change Act are silent on phasing out such fuels and ALP Prime Minister Anthony Albanese has recently argued that a ban on coal production would not reduce emissions as other countries will continue to engage in such production (Brown 2022).

2.3. DEMOCRATIC DEBILITATION HINDERING EFFECTIVE CLIMATE ACTION

The four circumstances of democratic debilitation discussed in Chapter 1 are already evident in Australia. There is the underlying orientation of short-termism. Australia's former Treasurer has referred to the climate crisis as requiring 'significant structural change' (Frydenberg 2021). The Grattan Institute has said that '[g]etting to net zero will be arguably the biggest economic transformation Australia has seen outside of wartime' (Wood, Reeve and Ha 2021: 17). However, there are no meaningful plans for jobs and industries in a climate-safe economy. The Climate Change Act has been criticized for failing to provide a long-term roadmap for decarbonizing the economy (Jotzo 2022).

Specifically, there is no plan for phasing out fossil fuel industries and many fossil-fuel-based projects are still under development (Ogge, Quicke and Campbell 2021), even though the changing economics of energy production will lead to further closures of coal-fired plants. The Australian Energy Market Operator projects that most of Australia's 20-odd coal plants will close over the next two decades (AEMO 2020). Without credible plans to address such closures, these stranded assets are likely to lead to stranded communities.

The short-term orientation stems in part from discourses on security that focus on the immediate future rather than the longer term (McDonald 2015). Part of the difficulty is also what Wilkinson has dubbed the 'no regrets' policy that has prevailed in both major political parties (the Coalition and the ALP) since the Howard Coalition Government's tenure (1996–2007), or the principle that climate action should not result in costs to Australia's economy in the short term, especially to its fossil fuel industries (Wilkinson 2020). The prioritization attached to avoiding negative impacts on fossil fuel industries is no coincidence and raises another circumstance of democratic debilitation—capture by vested interests.

The short-term orientation stems in part from discourses on security that focus on the immediate future rather than the longer term.

There are indications of a fossil fuel hegemony in Australia (Wright, Nyberg and Bowden 2021); one that was perhaps most vividly illustrated by former Prime Minister Scott Morrison brandishing a lump of coal provided by the Minerals Council of Australia in the Commonwealth Parliament (Murphy 2017). In the context of a GSoD score of 0.74 on media integrity, some have highlighted the nexus between the fossil fuel industry and the media (Holmes and Star 2018), while others have highlighted the historical and contemporary connections between the coal industry and the Australian state (Baer 2016). Professor Ross Garnaut, who has written two comprehensive reports on climate change, has observed in relation to Australia how '[e]missions-intensive industries have invested heavily to influence climate change policy since the early days of discussion of these issues' (Garnaut 2009: 15).

This investment in influence by these industries is notable in several ways:

- The resources industry is by far the largest sector making political contributions (Crowe 2021).
- The success of the AUD 22 million advertising campaign by mining companies against the Rudd Government's resource super-profits tax is part of political folklore—to the extent that '[i]t's now become routine for industry groups to threaten a "mining tax style campaign" every time they don't get their way with government' (Knott 2011; Davis 2011).
- Employees of and lobbyists for industry have included former ALP ministers, former National Party leaders and former Liberal Party ministers (see e.g. Davies 2015; Henderson and Bradfield 2016).

Power of this nature has a profound impact and enlivens the notion of 'policy capture' (OECD 2017). Wilkinson's book, *The Carbon Club*, provides a meticulous account of how a network of climate science sceptics, politicians and business leaders brought about decades of climate inaction in Australia (Wilkinson 2020). Under the Howard Government, climate change policy was effectively determined by fossil fuel lobbyists, many of whom were former senior public servants, who likened themselves to organized crime through the self-styled label 'the greenhouse mafia' (Hamilton 2007: Chapter 1). Perhaps the most singular fact is that fossil fuel companies have played an instrumental role in the ousting of two of the five prime ministers in office since 2007—Kevin Rudd (Davis 2011) and Malcolm Turnbull (Alberici 2018).

Power of this nature has a profound impact and enlivens the notion of 'policy capture'.

The capture by the fossil-fuel industry is undemocratic not only for who it unduly empowers, but also for who it disempowers. Among those disenfranchised are Indigenous communities. In an understated way, the 2022 IPCC report coverage of Australasia refers to '[r]ecognition of the role of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples in identifying solutions to the impacts of climate change [as] slowly emerging ... having been largely excluded from meaningful representation from the conception of climate change dialogue through to debate and decision-making' (IPCC 2022: Chapter 11).

Others have argued that Indigenous communities are ‘the first to be impacted and the last to be heard’ (Moggridge et al. 2022).

The third circumstance of democratic debilitation, self-referring decision making, is said to arise from democratic mechanisms (particularly elections) underpinned by accountability to constituents of a nation state and to current voters—a section of the current generation. To this can also be added the politics of self-interest, both sectional and individual. Signs of such debilitation are already apparent. The ‘climate wars’ have contributed to the ousting of three prime ministers since 2007 (Crowley 2021), while also distorting different interests to the point where they have become irreconcilable, thereby providing a platform for political polarization and the exploitation of division for electoral gain (Eckersley 2015). Such polarization is reflected in the importance ascribed to emissions reductions by voters, which sharply divides along lines of political party preference (Colvin and Jotzo 2021). It has also resulted in divisiveness and conflict—much of which is unnecessary—and false trade-offs between protecting jobs as opposed to the environment, between regions and cities, and between blue-collar and white-collar workers (Fitzgibbon 2021).

These self-referring dynamics are connected to the fourth circumstance of democratic debilitation, weak multilateralism. Rather than emerging as a global climate leader, Australia has been criticized by former UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon for not pulling its weight on climate action (Thorpe 2021), and by current UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres as a ‘holdout’ on meaningful 2030 targets (O’Malley 2022). At the 2021 Glasgow Conference of the Parties (COP) to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), Australia refused to join calls by more than 40 countries—including several fossil-fuel-dependent nations such as South Korea and Indonesia—to end the use of coal power (Morton 2021).

In a welcome sign, Powering Australia commits the federal ALP government to ‘[r]estoring Australia’s reputation with trading partners and allies by meeting international commitments made by Australia, and advancing climate diplomacy’, and includes a bid to co-host a future UNFCCC COP in Australia with Pacific nations. However, whether these efforts will be fully successful is somewhat moot, given the government's inadequate climate ambition (Harris 2022).

2.4. **THREATS TO DEMOCRACY FROM THE CLIMATE CRISIS**

The 3Is identified in Chapter 1 (insecurity, instability and inequality) are already evident in Australia. In relation to food insecurity, climate change will heighten the risks of food shortages and price increases (Quiggin 2007; Bartos 2022).

A Senate Committee report on the implications of climate change for Australia's national security identifies four categories of climate risk to Australia's national security (Government of Australia 2018)—extreme weather events and physical effects, health and well-being, the economy and threats to Australia's region. On the last category, the Climate Council has warned of the risks to Australia from conflicts over water, as well as increased displacement and forced migration from countries in the region facing significant sea level rises, notably the Pacific Island nations, Bangladesh, China, India, Indonesia and Vietnam (Spratt and Dunlop 2019; Durrant, Bradshaw and Pearce 2021). Powering Australia recognizes these risks by '[t]reating climate change as a security threat' and committing to 'an urgent climate risk assessment' by the Director-General of National Intelligence and the Secretary of Defence (Australian Labor Party 2021: 50).

Insecurity and instability intertwine with inequality because climate risks fall unevenly.

Insecurity and instability intertwine with inequality because climate risks fall unevenly. It has been said that '[c]limate change has the potential to significantly accelerate inequality' in Australia (University of Sydney 2018) and concern has been voiced for low-income workers and families (Brotherhood of St Laurence n.d.). Australia's GSoD score on social rights and equality is 0.84. Fossil-fuel-dependent communities in regional Australia will clearly be disproportionately affected by the shift away from fossil fuels. The climate crisis also threatens to deepen health inequities by creating a 'multiplier effect', notably through extreme weather events (Friel 2014).

Indigenous communities are at particular risk. The 2014 IPCC report explains that Indigenous peoples in Australia 'have higher than average exposure to climate change because of a heavy reliance on climate-sensitive primary industries and strong social connections to the natural environment, and face particular constraints to adaptation' (IPCC 2014: 1375). These interact with what the 2022 IPCC report characterizes as the 'ongoing impacts of colonisation', such as lower levels of income, and poorer school outcomes and employment opportunities, set against higher levels of poverty and ill-health compared to non-Indigenous Australians (IPCC 2022: Chapter 11).

The Lowitja Institute report highlights how rising sea levels are submerging the Torres Strait Islands (Lowitja Institute 2021). This is the context in which the Torres Strait 8 have made their claim to be 'refugees in their own country' (UN News 2022). The report also warns of the broader threat of forced climate migration, with Indigenous people moving from climate-affected Traditional Country to urban areas, becoming displaced from land, culture and spiritual connections.

The 3Is will invariably affect Australia's democracy. Political participation and equality will be affected, particularly in communities impacted by climate change and action. States of emergency risk significant shifts of power from the legislature to the executive branch of government, and the militarization of responses to extreme weather events such as bush fires (McDonald 2021). Calls to be 'put on a war footing' and fight the climate crisis like World War III serve only to exacerbate these risks (McInerney and Garrett 2020; Blair, Treagust and McCulloch 2020).

Political participation and equality will be affected, particularly in communities impacted by climate change and action.

There is also the impact on free and fair elections, noting Australia's GSoD score of 0.81 on Electoral Participation. In a report on the future conduct of elections in times of emergency, the Commonwealth Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters (Parliament of Australia 2021) acknowledges the impact of these situations on the conduct of elections—specifically, voter participation by vulnerable communities, election campaigning and, more generally, trust in the electoral process.

Australian democracy needs to be renewed in response to the climate crisis.

2.5. RENEWING AUSTRALIAN DEMOCRACY TO ADDRESS THE CLIMATE CRISIS

Australian democracy needs to be renewed in response to the climate crisis (Huntley 2019; Garnaut 2021; Megalogenis 2021). The debilitation it suffers and the threats it faces from the climate crisis can addressed in three ways: (a) a planning state; (b) a solidaristic ethos; and (c) a fair and inclusive politics.

2.5.1. A planning state

In its 2021 report, 'Achieving a Net Zero Economy', the Business Council of Australia states that:

> To achieve a net zero economy by 2050, the nation needs an unprecedented level of coordination, with bipartisan support, to align and accelerate investment signals, enhance regulation and provide much needed policy certainty for business and communities.
> (BCA 2021: 5)

There are elements here of what Giddens (2011) has called a Planning State in order to counter short-termism. More specifically, this is where nation states take responsibility for taking the lead on:

- **Planning.** In terms of both mitigation and adaptation.

- **Regulation of the economy.** Including instituting the polluter pays principle and establishing the economic framework for a low-carbon economy.

- **Coordination and integration.** Between government, the private sector and citizens, as well as between different levels of government.

- **Holistic risk mitigation.** To address the risks of the climate crisis, together with other risks experienced by contemporary societies, among other things through social protection.

The last point is critical and relatively neglected (IPCC 2014: 1376).

The centrality of the state in addressing the climate crisis is not difficult to understand. Both the Stern Review on the economics of climate change (Stern 2006) and, in Australia, the 2008 *Garnaut Climate Change Review* (Garnaut 2008) recognize that climate change is 'the greatest and widest-ranging market failure ever seen' (Stern 2006: i).

The Australian states provide some insights on how an effective planning state with elements identified by Giddens might implement climate policies (State of NSW and Office of Environment and Heritage 2016; Government of South Australia n.d.). These elements are also present in the climate change Bill proposed by the independent federal parliamentarian, Zali Steggall. The Bill emphasizes that planning in the climate crisis is a democratic enterprise and that one of its key principles is promoting 'community engagement and self-determination' (Climate Change (National Framework for Adaptation and Mitigation) Bill 2020 (Cth): cl. 15). This is consistent with the thinking of the International Energy Agency that: '[c]itizens must be active participants in the entire process, making them feel part of the transition and not simply subject to it' (IEA 2021: 4).

The vital importance of democratic planning in the climate crisis should not be downplayed. The crisis is a societal and existential challenge that raises a complex range of issues—not just technical, but also social, economic, political and environmental. It is therefore imperative that we harness our collective wisdom to address the crisis.

The vital importance of democratic planning in the climate crisis should not be downplayed.

Of central importance is ensuring that First Nations are adequately represented in decision making, as required by the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (2007). The call in the *Uluru Statement from the Heart* (2017) to address the 'torment of our powerlessness' through 'a First Nations Voice enshrined in the Constitution' and 'a Makarrata Commission to supervise a process of agreement-making between governments and First Nations and truth-telling about our history' is also critical.

Self-determination of First Nations is of particular significance to the Indigenous Estate not only because of its scale (around 40 per cent of Australia’s land mass), but also because of its importance to climate mitigation, including carbon capture and renewable energy, both wind and solar (O’Neill et al. 2021). Effective Indigenous representation also enables vital learning to be transmitted from the oldest living cultures, particularly in respect of developing an understanding of societal well-being that goes beyond gross domestic product and other economic considerations. As the Lowitja Institute report highlights:

> Central to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures is the holistic nature of health and wellbeing. Good health is dependent on respectful and reciprocal relationships to Country, culture, spirituality, community and family. It is a cultural responsibility to look after and respect oneself (connection to body, mind and emotions), each other (family, kinship, community) and the environment (connection to Country).
> (Lowitja Institute 2021: 13)

This broader conception of societal well-being is consistent with the Albanese Government’s plan—following initiatives in Canada and New Zealand—to introduce a ‘well-being’ budget that includes measures related to climate change (Chalmers 2022). It also profoundly connects with Indigenous sovereignty. As the *Uluru Statement from the Heart* (2017) says, ‘[t]his sovereignty is a spiritual notion: the ancestral tie between the land, or “mother nature”, and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples’.

The politics of self-interest arising from self-referring mechanisms should be countered with a solidaristic ethos.

2.5.2. Democratic renewal through a solidaristic ethos

The politics of self-interest arising from self-referring mechanisms should be countered with a solidaristic ethos, which can also be used to address the risks from insecurity, instability and inequality. A solidaristic ethos is a democratic principle that should be broad and inclusive, encompassing intergenerational and intra-generational solidarity, as well as solidarity within and among nations, and with nature (see Section 1.1).

In Australia, voice and social protection are two important aspects of promoting democratic solidarity in the climate crisis. Communities that are particularly affected by climate change and climate action—

frontline communities—should have a meaningful voice. This includes First Nations people, communities in regional Australia suffering from drought, water scarcity and bushfires, and fossil-fuel-dependent communities. The Climate Change Act signals these communities by emphasizing particular regard for the impact on rural and regional Australia.

Putting mechanisms for social dialogue in place will be integral to a just transition.

In the world of work, where there will be extensive industrial and employment restructuring, this means putting mechanisms for social dialogue in place that will be integral to a just transition (see Chapter 1). Indeed, the ALP's policy platform affirms the Paris Agreement's 'requirement for just transition planning involving local communities, unions, and industry' (ALP National Platform 2021: [23]), or what is referred to in Zali Steggall's Bill as a 'fair employment transition' (Climate Change (National Framework for Adaptation and Mitigation) Bill 2020: cl. 14).

A just transition in the climate crisis that—to quote from the UN Sustainable Development Goals—'leaves no one behind' (UN Sustainable Development Group n.d.) emphasizes the role of social protection, which is another pillar of the International Labour Organization's Decent Work Agenda (see Chapter 1). Protections of this nature in Australia will require dedicated plans for communities particularly affected by the climate crisis. The Business Council of Australia (BCA) has called for a low-carbon regional roadmap (BCA 2021). The Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU) advocates plans to provide for an orderly closure of coal-fired power stations (ACTU n.d.), as does the Australia Institute (Stanford 2020), including specific plans to phase out thermal coal (Quiggin 2020). An agreement between the ACTU and the BCA has called for 'an independent and properly resourced National Energy Transition Authority to manage an orderly and fair transition process for workers in emissions intensive industries and their communities, particularly in regional areas, that has governance of governments, industry, community and unions' (BCA 2022).

More general measures should also be contemplated, such as those suggested by Garnaut in his book, *Reset*, in which he argues for employment security in the form of a national commitment to full employment and income security through a universal basic income, together with proposals for a job guarantee (Garnaut 2021, 2022; Mitchell n.d.). Former ALP Deputy Opposition Leader, Jenny Macklin, has called for an emissions and employment accord that embraces a policy of full employment, nation-building plans and an increased social wage (Macklin 2019).

Together with broadening the understanding of societal well-being, there is much to be learned from Indigenous communities regarding the notion of a solidaristic ethos. In his book, *Sand Talk: How Indigenous Thinking Can Save the World*, Indigenous thinker Tyson Yunkaporta outlines how an Indigenous knowledge perspective can be helpful to curb self-interested (narcissistic) behaviour and deal with the sustainability crisis (Yunkaporta 2019).

2.5.3. Fair and inclusive politics

A fair and inclusive politics means democratic planning, a voice for ‘frontline communities’ and social dialogue.

A fair and inclusive politics means democratic planning, a voice for ‘frontline communities’ and social dialogue. Indigenous writer Tony Birch (2017) has emphasized how dialogue between Indigenous communities and non-Indigenous people must be equitable and reciprocal, and based on an unflinching recognition of colonialization and its continuing impact; others have similarly called for the ‘[d]ecolonising [of] solidarity’ (Land 2015). Equally, these dialogues should be based on a recognition of the Indigenous sovereignty called for in the *Uluru Statement from the Heart*, that ‘this ancient sovereignty can shine through as a fuller expression of Australia’s nationhood’. Treaties with First Nations are critical and treaty processes are under way in Queensland, Victoria, South Australia and Northern Territory, highlighting the need for a national treaty with Australia—one of the few settler-colonial states without a national treaty (ATNS n.d).

A fair and inclusive politics extends to two other aspects. The central role of the state underlines the importance of public integrity measures. The ALP’s Powering Australia involves a substantial amount of public funds and much of this money will be dispensed through the exercise of discretion, whether by ministers, government departments or public agencies. There is clearly a risk here of misuse of public funds.

Second, the toxic influence of money in Australian politics has to be eradicated. The Commonwealth is the most significant jurisdiction but has the weakest laws regulating political funding and lobbying. In the words of former Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull, we need ‘root and branch reform’ at the federal level (Grattan and Austin 2009). In relation to the funding of federal election campaigns, such reform should include effective transparency measures, caps on election spending, caps on political donations and a fair system of public funding of political parties and candidates. In relation to lobbying, the key reform measures are effective disclosure obligations, a code of conduct for lobbyists, fair consultation processes and resourcing of disadvantaged groups (Tham 2018). Promisingly, the federal ALP government is committed to introducing more effective disclosure obligations and spending caps (Karp 2022).

2.6. **CONCLUSION**

Australia has suffered from serious climate impacts and weak climate action. The latter is in part explained by democratic debilitation. The newly elected federal government promises hope of better. Whether its actions will be sufficient to achieve a climate-safe future, however, remains to be seen.

Australia has suffered from serious climate impacts and weak climate action.

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LEGISLATION

Climate Change Act 2022 (Cth)

Climate Change (National Framework for Adaptation and Mitigation) Bill 2020 (Cth)

Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (Cth)

CASES

Minister for the Environment (Cth) v Sharma (by their litigation representative Arthur) [2022] FCAFC 35; (2022) 400 ALR 203

Sharma (by their litigation representative Arthur) v Minister for the Environment (Cth) [2021] FCA 560; (2021) 391 ALR 1

Chapter 3

BHUTAN

3.1. INTRODUCTION

Bhutan is known as *Druk Yul*, which means 'Land of the Thunder Dragon', and is regarded as one of the last 'Shangrilas'. The Kingdom of Bhutan is located in the eastern Himalayas in South Asia. It is a landlocked country with an area of 38,394 km^2, bordered by China in the north, and by India in the south, east and west. Bhutan is divided into 20 *Dzongkhags* (administrative and judicial districts). Each *Dzongkhag* is further divided into *Gewogs* (subdistricts) and *Thromdes* (third-level administrative divisions or municipal areas). Government in Bhutan is parliamentary, with a monarch as head of state and a prime minister as head of government. The Parliament of Bhutan is bicameral and comprises the King, the National Council (the upper house), and the National Assembly (the lower house). Under the Constitution (Constitution of the Kingdom of Bhutan 2008: art. 10(1)), parliament is vested with all legislative power.

Bhutan has made tremendous progress with transforming its system of governance from a feudal system in the 1940s to a national, top-down system, and then a combination of bottom-up and top-down institutions from the start of the 21st century. The records are sparse regarding the system of governance in place prior to 1907, but it is known that Bhutan was never subject to a colonial system and was ruled by several kings until unification in 1907, when the first hereditary monarch was crowned. A National Assembly (*Tshogdu*) was established in 1953 and representatives were elected from

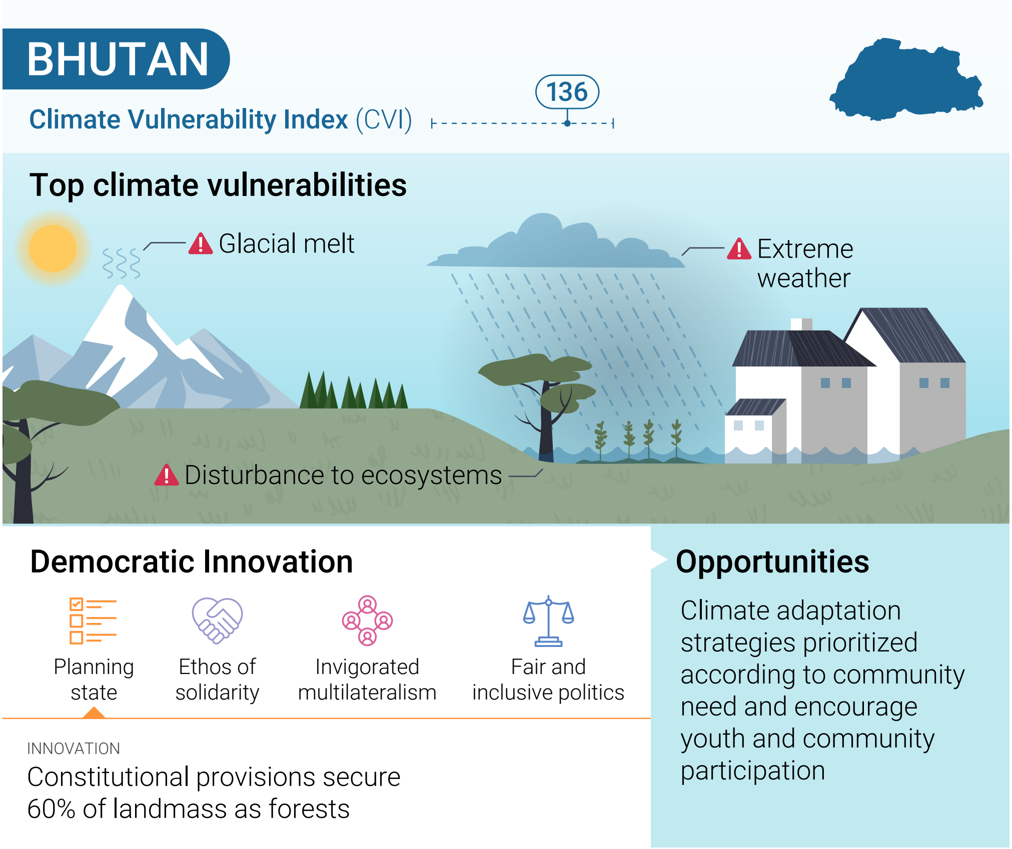

Figure 3.1. **Bhutan**

BHUTAN
Climate Vulnerability Index (CVI)
136
Top climate vulnerabilities
Glacial melt
Extreme weather
Disturbance to ecosystems
Democratic Innovation
Planning state
Ethos of solidarity
Invigorated multilateralism
Fair and inclusive politics
INNOVATION
Opportunities

Constitutional provisions secure 60% of landmass as forests

Climate adaptation strategies prioritized according to community need and encourage youth and community participation

districts for the purpose of enacting laws and discussing issues of national importance. In 1963, a Royal Advisory Council (*Lodoe Tshogde*) was established as a link between the Monarch, the Council of Ministers and the people. The fourth King was crowned in 1974. Under his reign, a *Dzongkhag Yargay Tshogdu* (District Development Assembly) and a *Gewog Yargay Tshogtshung* (County Development Assembly) were established in 1981 and 1991, respectively. In 1998, the King assumed the power as head of state to nominate the prime minister as head of government. Freedom House (2022) describes Bhutan as having made ‘significant strides toward democratic consolidation and the rule of law in recent years’ and as having achieved a ‘successful transition from a system in which the monarch dominated governance to one in which policies and legislation are mostly determined by elected officials'.

Bhutan adopted its first Constitution in 2008. It codifies the institutions of government and provides the legal framework for democratic elections in a multiparty system. The Constitution vests executive power in cabinet ministers who provide advice on national and international affairs to the monarch. Since enacting a democratic electoral system in 2008, Bhutan has held regular democratic elections, the third and most recent of which were held in 2018. These have facilitated orderly changes of government. Voter turnout was relatively poor in the first elections, held in 2008, but has improved in subsequent election years.

The Bhutanese landscape is incredibly varied and broadly divided into six agro-ecological zones—a 1,000m tropical/subtropical zone; a 2,000m subtropical/warm-temperate zone; a 2,500m warm-temperate/cool-temperate zone; a 3,000m cool-temperate/sub-Arctic (cold-temperate) zone; a 3,500m subzone within a sub-Arctic zone; and a 4,000m sub-Arctic (cold-temperate)/Arctic zone (Ohsawa 1987: 17). Bhutan's location in the eastern Himalayas makes its climate complex and its topography diverse, comprised of rugged terrain and large variations in altitude over short distances. More than 70 per cent of Bhutan's land is forest, largely due to article 5.3 of the Constitution: 'The Government shall ensure that, in order to conserve the country's natural resources and to prevent degradation of the ecosystem, a minimum of sixty percent of Bhutan's total land shall be maintained under forest cover for all time' (Constitution of the Kingdom of Bhutan 2008). Bhutan's economy is highly dependent on climate sensitive sectors (see e.g. Hoy et al. 2015; National Statistics Bureau 2021).

About 57 per cent of Bhutan's population is dependent on subsistence farming for its livelihood, but less than 3 per cent of the country's land is arable (Chhogyel and Kumar 2018). The contribution of agriculture to Bhutan's gross domestic product (GDP) has declined significantly from 26.8 per cent in 2000 to about 17 per cent in 2014 (Chhogyel and Kumar 2018; National Statistics Bureau 2021). Agriculture is highly dependent on water and temperature, and vulnerable to the monsoon season and extreme weather events.

Any variation in climatic variables is likely to affect the country's population. As a landlocked country sandwiched between India and China, Bhutan's dependence on a limited number of markets from which to source its sizeable food imports places its food security and food sovereignty, or ability to source food for its population, at considerable risk.

While democracy has proved resilient in a formal sense, it faces a number of challenges, due in part to the significant number of people leaving Bhutan to seek employment elsewhere. This has created labour shortages that are already apparent in rural Bhutan, where there has been a significant reduction in arable farming. Crop yields have also been affected by shifting seasons and extreme weather events. Bhutan is particularly vulnerable to high variations in rainfall and precipitation patterns that limit the scope for crop and livestock farming in the limited area of arable land (National Statistics Bureau 2021). When the crop yield is low, due to climatic variables, the resulting food shortages put pressure on the country's economy and affect community trust and confidence in policymakers.

While democracy has proved resilient in a formal sense, it faces a number of challenges, due in part to the significant number of people leaving Bhutan to seek employment elsewhere.

3.2. CLIMATE VULNERABILITY AND ACTION

Bhutan is considered to be one of the countries most vulnerable to climate change in the world. It is ranked 94th of 182 countries on the University of Notre Dame's Global Adaptation Initiative (ND-GAIN) Index for 2020, where it features as the 46th most vulnerable country and the 64th most ready country (University of Notre Dame 2022a, 2022b). Bhutan's low ranking is based on the intersection of climate change impacts that are predicted to cause a decline in food crop yields and promote vector borne diseases. Bhutan's vulnerability is also affected by glacial retreat, changes in precipitation and temperature patterns, extreme weather events and disturbance to ecosystem services (Eguchi and Wangda 2012; IPCC 2007; Xie et al. 2010; Hoy et al. 2015). Given that Bhutan practises subsistence crop farming, which is highly dependent on precipitation and temperature, any changes in these variables would be expected to have a significant impact on agriculture (Chhogyel and Kumar 2018; Chhogyel, Kumar and Bajgai 2020).

Bhutan has made commitments on a high level of environmental protections but it is likely to experience the impacts of climate change due to the level of global emissions.

As noted above, Bhutan's climate ranges from tropical conditions in the south to harsh alpine conditions in the north. Seasonal atmospheric circulation and change are linked to the Indian summer monsoon and the Siberian cold, and the latter dominates in winter. As a least developed, mountainous, and landlocked country, Bhutan is highly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change (BMCI/ICIMOD 2016). Bhutan has made commitments on a high level of environmental protections but it is likely to experience the impacts of climate change due to the level of global emissions. Extreme and unusual weather events, for example, have already affected Bhutan, and incremental changes are predicted to unfold in the near future. Such developments pose high risks to the environment, the economy and community safety in Bhutan (Hoy et al. 2015; National Statistics Bureau 2021).

The Bhutanese Government has acted to address the impacts of climate change by enacting national policies, submitting National Communications to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and increasing carbon sequestration. It has also formulated a National Adaptation Programme of Action, in which five key areas for action have been identified—agriculture and livestock, forestry and biodiversity, health, water resources and energy, and natural disasters and infrastructure. There is unity among national and international non-governmental organizations (NGOs), communities and young people on the need to develop and implement measures that address the impacts of climate change. Initially, action to address climate change involved a limited number of projects. The number substantially increased after 2016, however, with the assistance of international funders (Islam, Hove and Parry 2011).

Fundamental to Bhutan's mitigation efforts is its commitment to remaining carbon neutral as part of a low carbon development policy to ensure that greenhouse gas emissions do not exceed the sequestration capacity of the country's forests.

3.3. CLIMATE CHANGE: LAWS, POLICIES AND PRACTICE

Bhutan adopted the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (the Sustainable Development Goals, SDGs) in 2015 and incorporated many of the goals into its five-year development plans, including the current 12th plan for 2018–2023. Fundamental to Bhutan's mitigation efforts is its commitment to remaining carbon neutral as part of a low carbon development policy to ensure that greenhouse gas emissions do not exceed the sequestration capacity of the country's forests. Bhutan's Constitution has an unusually strong article on the environment (Constitution of the Kingdom of Bhutan 2008, art. 5), in which Bhutan's forests are singled out for particular protection. As noted above, there is a requirement under article 5.3 that at least 60 per cent of Bhutan's land must be 'maintained under forest cover'. Bhutan's constitutional commitment to protecting the environment also has a cultural dimension. Article 5.1 states that: 'Every Bhutanese is a trustee of the Kingdom's natural resources and environment for the benefit of the present and future generations and it is the fundamental duty of every citizen to contribute to the protection of the natural environment, conservation of the rich biodiversity of Bhutan and prevention of all forms of ecological degradation…'. The goals underlying the climate change policy developed by the Bhutanese Government focus on:

> [E]nsur[ing] that Bhutan remains carbon neutral and protects the wellbeing of the people of Bhutan by adapting to climate change in an efficient and effective manner; [ensuring] meaningful participation of all relevant stakeholders in climate change action in a coordinated and coherent manner with clear roles and responsibilities; and [ensuring] that the challenges and opportunities of climate change are addressed at all appropriate levels.
> (National Environment Commission 2020: 1)

In 2009, Bhutan made its first pledge to remain carbon neutral and ensure that its greenhouse gas emissions do not exceed the rate of carbon sequestration by its forests. It has requested that the international community support its mitigation and adaptation strategies, which comprise: (a) forest conservation and management under the National REDD+ Strategy; (b) low emission development strategies for food security, human settlement, industry and surface transport; (c) waste management; (d) sustainable hydropower development; (e) alternative renewable energy; (f) a Green Hydrogen roadmap; (g) its National Energy Efficiency and Conservation Policy, 2019 and its Energy Efficiency Roadmap, 2019; and (h) cooperative mechanisms to support its mitigation ambitions (National Statistics Bureau 2021: 30–79). Bhutan's adaptation initiatives involve approximately 10 broad priority areas for development in the National Adaptation Plan, as well as National Key Result Areas in the Government's 12th five-year plan (Government of Bhutan 2019). At the international level, Bhutan has signed the three Rio conventions, the UN Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the UNFCCC and the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), and ratified the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES).

Bhutan's current reliance on revenue from climate-sensitive sectors demands an urgent shift to the development and use of alternative resources.

Bhutan is economically dependent on hydropower, tourism and agriculture, but each of these sectors is in turn heavily dependent on natural resources and ecosystem services that are sensitive to the impacts of climate change. Bhutan's ecosystem services produce an estimated revenue of USD 4.944 billion, but they are expected to experience significant disruption from climate change (Kubiszewski et al. 2013; Hoy et al. 2015). Bhutan's current reliance on revenue from climate-sensitive sectors demands an urgent shift to the development and use of alternative resources, such as solar and wind power for energy; participation in a carbon market, such as Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation; the sustainable management of forests; and the conservation and enhancement of forest carbon stocks (REDD+) through economic diversification. Bhutan's heavy reliance on hydropower leaves the country vulnerable to the impacts of climate change.

3.4. STATE OF DEVELOPMENT, CLIMATE CHANGE IMPACTS AND THE POTENTIAL IMPLICATIONS FOR DEMOCRACY IN BHUTAN

Bhutan's historical growth and development, which began in the 1960s with improved access to trade and agricultural products, among other things, and continued in the 1970s, through decentralization and institution building, laid the foundations for more recent developments, such as Bhutan's rapid economic growth through the development of hydroelectricity, and the government's commitment to Gross National Happiness (GNH). The concept of GNH has played a major role in modernizing society by measuring national well-being and presenting an alternative to GDP. GNH comprises four pillars, nine domains and 33 indicators (see Table 3.1). The concept of GNH has paved the way for effective environmental policy, such as *The Middle Path: National Environmental Strategy for Bhutan* (1998), which emphasizes balance between development, and ecological and biological sustainability; and which is supported by legislation such as the Environmental Assessment Act (2000), the National Environment Protection Act (2007), the Waste Protection and Management Act (2009) and the Water Act (2011).

Since the introduction of the GNH indicators, Bhutan's rate of economic growth has increased and poverty levels have reduced (Asian Development Bank 2013). Bhutan is ranked 129th of 189 countries in the UNDP Planetary Pressures-Adjusted Human Development Index (HDI) for 2019 (UNDP 2020). In the medium-level human development group, Bhutan is ranked 10th among 37 countries with an HDI score of 0.654 (UNDP 2020). Indicators such as income, poverty, slow development of economic activity, limited local governance capacity, youth unemployment, and a lack of awareness of risks are said to define Bhutan's vulnerability to climate change (BMCI/ICIMOD 2016).

The areas where Bhutan is considered most vulnerable to climate change are: forests and biodiversity, agriculture, water resources, glacial lake bursts, health and landslides (BMCI/ICIMOD 2016). Climate change poses a significant threat to human development in Bhutan, and climate-related disasters and risks are likely to have significant socio-economic impacts as protected resources and ecosystems become more fragile. This makes adaptation and mitigation a national priority. Urbanization and rural-to-urban migration trends are occurring in parallel with economic growth (Yangka and Newman 2018) and are often linked to climate impacts. Rural-to-urban migration has resulted in a reduction in farming activity in rural areas, and labour force decline has reduced the supply of food to urban areas. Bhutan currently imports about 80 per cent of the rice required to meet food sufficiency needs.

The areas where Bhutan is considered most vulnerable to climate change are—forests and biodiversity, agriculture, water resources, glacial lake bursts, health and landslides.

Bhutanese forests currently sequester three times more carbon than is emitted (Government of Bhutan 2015). Bhutan's goal of maintaining net carbon sink status is expected to suffer from the effects of global climate change, but it remains committed to a

Table 3.1. **Components of Gross National Happiness Index**

Gross National Happiness Index

4 Pillars	9 Domains	33 indicators
Preservation of culture	Psychological well-being	Life satisfaction Positive emotions Negative emotions Spirituality
	Time use	Work Sleep
	Community vitality	Donation (time and money) Safety Community relationship Family
	Cultural diversity and resilience	Artistic skills Cultural participation Speak native language The way of harmony
Conservation of the environment	Ecological diversity and resilience	Responsibility towards environment Ecological issues Wildlife damage Urban issues
Economic development	Living standards	Per capital income Assets Housing
	Health	Self-reported health status Healthy days Disability Mental health
	Education	Knowledge Literacy Schooling Values
Good governance	Good governance	Fundamental rights Governance performance Political participation Services

Sources: Ura, K., Alkire, S. and Zangmo, T., 'GNH and GNH Index', The Centre for Bhutan Studies, 2012, <https://ophi.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/GNH_and_GNH_index_2012.pdf>, accessed 6 November 2022; Yangka, D. and Newman, P., 'Bhutan: Can the 1.5°C agenda be integrated with growth in wealth and happiness?', Urban Planning, 3/2 (2018), pp. 94–112, <https://doi.org/10.17645/up.v3i2.1250>.

carbon-neutral future. Bhutan has made significant progress in transitioning its energy sources from fuelwood to hydropower and solar energy. Renewable energy is widely promoted and prioritized, with a view to increasing the number of electric cars and reducing fossil fuel consumption. Bhutan's climate action efforts are, however, being impeded by concerns about its national debt, which increased to 132 per cent of GDP in 2021 (National Statistics Bureau 2021; World Economics n.d.), and the need to balance economic growth with reducing GHG emissions and increasing GNH.

Bhutan has been severely affected by natural hazards in the past (Chhogyel and Kumar 2018); and an increase in temperature will lead to an increase in natural hazards (Wester et al. 2019). Food security is a major concern, as famine, food scarcity or rising food prices could prove a turning point, given that the majority of farming households are subsistence farmers with small landholdings (Rai et al. 2022). Climate-extreme events appear to have become more common in the recent past than they were decades ago (Chhogyel and Kumar 2018; Chhogyel, Kumar and Bajgai 2020). The record loss of crops associated with such events has caused food insecurity for households (Chhogyel, Kumar and Bajgai 2020). Unsurprisingly, such events have contributed to rates of rural–urban migration, which are among the highest in South Asia. Although not officially declared, there is a sense that many of these migrants could be classified as climate refugees.

In his discussion of 'Democracy and the Challenge of Climate Change', Lindvall refers to the impact of climate change on food production, which affects food availability, nutrition and people's livelihoods, and ultimately affects social harmony (Lindvall 2021). In Bhutan, for example, as a Least Developed Country (LDC), the increasing impacts of climate change could lead to struggles for control over scarce resources, while also adding to the burden on the state. Given its location and the limited prospects of enhancing economic activity, Bhutan is dependent on external funds to support its adaptation and mitigation efforts, and is therefore keen to become more involved in international affairs. Action on climate change issues has tended to be top-down in the past, but this has changed more recently through greater public participation and awareness.

The CIVICUS Monitor, which rates countries according to the degree to which citizens are able to express their views and exercise their rights in the civic space, has assigned a rating of ‘obstructed’ to Bhutan (CIVICUS Monitor 2022a). CIVICUS states that it has ‘concerns about media independence, access to information and the chilling effect of defamation laws on journalists’ in Bhutan (CIVICUS Monitor 2022b). This rating, and how it manifests in Bhutan, is problematic for meaningful political participation, particularly given the important role of the media as a conduit for conveying information.

3.5. **CONCLUSION: ADDRESSING CLIMATE ACTION, THREATS TO DEMOCRACY AND THE WAY FORWARD**

Hydro-meteorological data indicates that Bhutan is one of the most climate-vulnerable countries in the world (Hoy et al. 2015; National Statistics Bureau 2021). Although this data is not yet embedded in local decision making, the experience of holding elections during the Covid-19 pandemic, and using the best available Covid-19 protocols, illustrates that the safety of the population is being considered by local and national decision makers. This suggests that similar discourses could be used to address the climate crisis in future. The government has prioritized the link between community adaptation and ecosystems as a National Key Result Area (Government of Bhutan 2019).

In Bhutan, elections are held and leaders chosen on the basis of pledges made in respect of socio-economic policies rather than arguments on climate change impacts, although this is starting to change. Climate change impacts and socio-economic variables are clearly interlinked, so it might be expected that measures which incorporate both agendas could assist efforts at climate adaptation and mitigation. However, the tension between these policy areas will only increase and could pose a threat to democracy in Bhutan, especially as it is set to graduate from its LDC status in 2023, which could put further pressure on the economic system. The prospects for meaningful collective action and the formulation of a clear solidaristic ethos on climate change are problematized by the predominance of socio-economic policies in elections and the gap between local and national decision making. This may become less pronounced as Bhutan matures over time and its political system becomes more competitive.

As it becomes more clearly understood that a shared agenda on climate change is necessary, through initiatives that advance political awareness, a greater degree of solidarity on addressing the climate crisis will become more likely. Advances in political awareness since the first democratic elections in 2008 provide cause for optimism on this point, particularly as more people start to participate in politics. Ultimately, politics is a necessary tool for shaping and implementing Bhutan's mitigation and adaptation strategies in response to the climate crisis. Climate change issues could help to address the current democratic deficits if climate adaptation strategies are prioritized according to community need, youth and community participation in the political process is encouraged (giving them a voice on how the climate crisis is addressed), and connections between local and national governments are fostered for the purpose of developing locally relevant solutions. All of this would provide a meaningful and credible basis for future democratic engagement in Bhutan.

Bhutan has chaired the group of LDCs since 2020, through which it has been involved in formalizing one of three initiatives promoted by the LDC Universities Consortium on Climate Change (LUCCC). At COP 26, Bhutan asked the international community to deliver ambitious, concrete and enhanced climate action through low emission and climate-resilient development pathways. As LDC chair, Bhutan recommended that climate action could only be achieved with enhanced support, access to finance for adaptation to compensate for loss and damage, technology transfer, and capacity building to enable the responses of vulnerable countries. Bhutan has stated that the funds received thus far have been inadequate, and that global solidarity and cooperation are vital for a meaningful response to the climate crisis and effective implementation of strategies to address it (Glasgow Climate Change Conference 2021).

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Chapter 4

FIJI

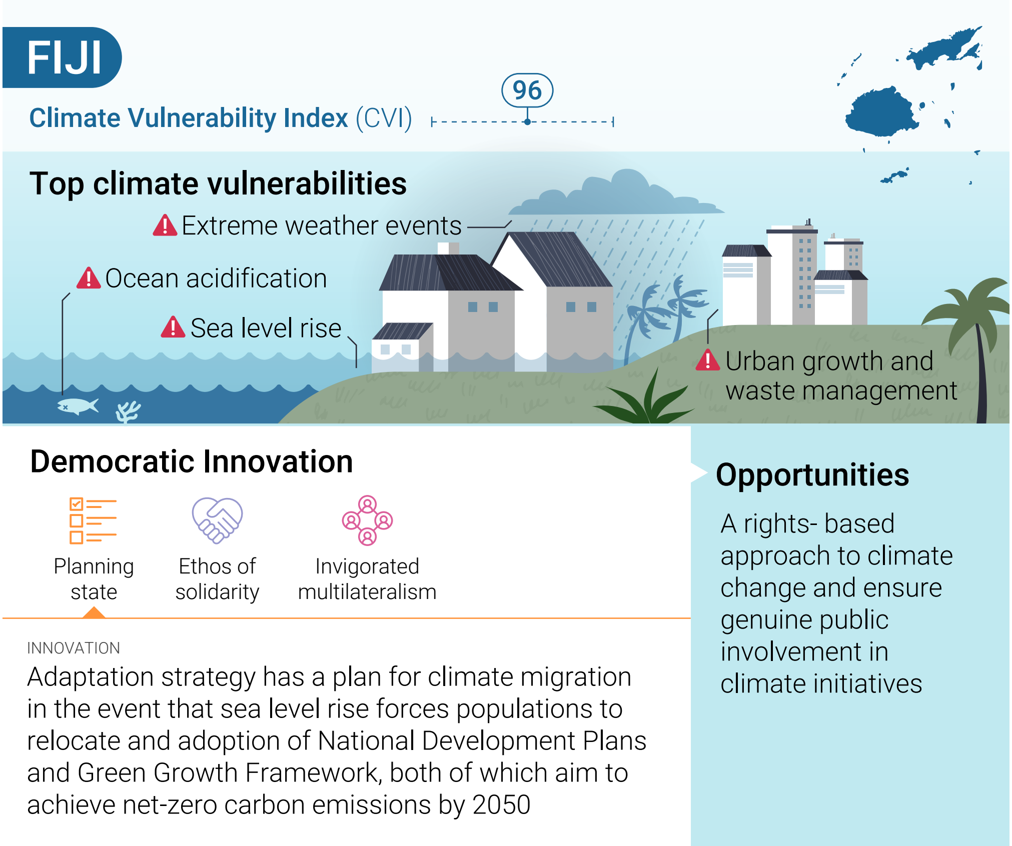
4.1. INTRODUCTION

Fiji is a republic with a democratic constitution and three tiers of government—national, provincial and municipal. Fiji's system of government is unicameral parliamentary, with a president as the ceremonial head of state and a prime minister as the head of government. Parliament has 51 members, which will increase to 55 at the next election. Members of Parliament (MPs) are elected to four-year terms via an open-list system of proportional representation. Only 14 per cent of parliamentarians are women, which is just one example of the broad underrepresentation of women at all levels of state authority in Fiji (United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights 2018). Fiji has four administrative divisions—the northern, eastern, central and western divisions—and 14 provinces. Each division has a commissioner responsible for coordinating government activities (Rahman and Singh 2011). The island of Rotuma is a dependency with an island council, which gives it some degree of internal autonomy (Titifanue et al. 2018). There are also municipal and rural councils.

Fiji is a republic with a democratic constitution and three tiers of government—national, provincial and municipal.

While the National Board of Health regulates rural local councils, municipalities are regulated by the Ministry of Local Government. Fiji also maintains a traditional *iTaukei* (Indigenous Fijian) system of customary law and government alongside its western legal system. *iTaukei* villages are excluded from the Local Government Act 1972, even though some are located inside municipal boundaries. *iTaukei*

Figure 4.1. **Fiji**



FIJI

Climate Vulnerability Index (CVI) 96

Top climate vulnerabilities

- ⚠ Extreme weather events
- ⚠ Ocean acidification
- ⚠ Sea level rise
- ⚠ Urban growth and waste management

Democratic Innovation

- Planning state
- Ethos of solidarity
- Invigorated multilateralism

INNOVATION

Adaptation strategy has a plan for climate migration in the event that sea level rise forces populations to relocate and adoption of National Development Plans and Green Growth Framework, both of which aim to achieve net-zero carbon emissions by 2050

Opportunities

A rights- based approach to climate change and ensure genuine public involvement in climate initiatives

affairs are governed under the iTaukei Affairs Act 1944 (Winterford and Gero 2018). At the provincial level, there are 14 councils that form part of the traditional system of governance.[1] Despite their lack of legislative power, provincial councils are essential conduits through which traditional leaders and the national government communicate. In 2009, the government dissolved all elected municipal councils and replaced them with government-appointed Special Administrators to oversee the system of local government (Rahman and Singh 2011).

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[1] The 14 provinces have a total of 187 districts (*Tikina*) and about 1,171 villages (*Koro*).

Fiji’s politics have been volatile and dynamic since independence in 1970. Regular coups d’état have disrupted democratic governance on several occasions. Disagreements regarding how democracy should be normatively institutionalized defined these disruptions. Elections have been held only irregularly in Fiji. The promulgation of a new Constitution in 2013 paved the way for Fiji to move from eight years of arbitrary rule (2007–2014) to a parliamentary democracy. Two relatively free elections followed in 2014 and 2018. The transition to a fully functioning democracy by international standards is far from complete, and Fiji’s history of military-backed coups (Kant 2017) is reflected in the country’s relatively low ratings for social rights and equality, direct democracy and local democracy in the GSoD Indices (International IDEA 2021). Fiji receives higher scores for inclusive suffrage and electoral participation.

Fiji’s politics have been volatile and dynamic since independence in 1970.

Fiji’s democratic past was influenced by its history of coups, and by the influence of Prime Minister Josaia Voreqe ‘Frank’ Bainimarama (a former coup leader) and his FijiFirst party over the legislature. Optimism surrounding Fiji’s return to parliamentary rule in September 2014 gave way to pessimism as the government continued to behave more like a dictatorship than a democracy (see e.g. Kant 2017). Elections in 2014 had shifted Fiji’s political landscape towards democracy while legitimizing Bainimarama’s personalist/military dictatorship as an elective autocracy. The CIVICUS Monitor classifies Fiji’s civic space as ‘obstructed’ due to the severe restrictions on fundamental civil rights (CIVICUS Monitor 2022; see also CIVICUS Monitor 2021a, 2021b). The 2013 Constitution gives the Republic of Fiji Military Forces overall responsibility for the security and well-being of all Fijians (Constitution 2013: s. 131(2)). Writing for the Lowy Institute, Stewart Firth states that: ‘Fiji is a democracy by military permission, and the military forces are charged to intervene once again if necessary’ (Firth 2018). Thus, the likelihood of further military intervention in the democratic process is ever-present.

4.2. CLIMATE VULNERABILITY

A combination of political, geographic and social factors leave Fiji particularly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change.

A combination of political, geographic and social factors leave Fiji particularly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. It is ranked 71st of 182 countries on the University of Notre Dame’s Global

Adaptation Initiative (ND-GAIN) Index for 2020, where it features as the 87th most vulnerable country and the 66th most ready country (University of Notre Dame 2022a, 2022b). Fiji's agriculture, forestry, tourism, and water and energy supply are all facing the effects of climate change (Government of the Republic of Fiji 2020).

Rapid urbanization is driving up the demand for housing, infrastructure and public services in the greater Suva region.

Approximately 90 per cent of Fiji's population and infrastructure, from towns to airports and resorts, are currently located in coastal or low-lying areas that could be adversely affected by inundation or other damage to coastal systems (Government of the Republic of Fiji 2020). Rapid urbanization is driving up the demand for housing, infrastructure and public services in the greater Suva region. Environmental and human rights experts are particularly concerned about urban growth, inadequate sanitation and wastewater treatment facilities, and poor solid waste management. Fiji has roughly 200 informal settlements that are host to about 15 per cent of the population. Many informal settlements on the fringes of towns and cities have not been subject to zoning or subdivision, making them especially sensitive to climate change. Low housing quality and restricted access to municipal services leave these areas vulnerable to increasingly frequent climate-related extreme weather events (UN OHCHR 2018).

Climate change is likely to exacerbate all the weather-related hazards in Fiji. Compared to the 1986–2005 baseline, long-term warming in Fiji is anticipated to range from 0.6°C to 2.6°C by the 2090s (World Bank Group 2021). The wide range of predicted temperature increases reflects the high degree of uncertainty. According to the 2021 World Risk Index, Fiji is the world's 14th most disaster-at-risk country because of its high level of vulnerability and inability to cope with natural disasters (Aleksandrova et al. 2021). According to statistics gathered by the Pacific Catastrophe Risk Assessment and Financing Initiative (PCRAFI), cyclones and floods are significant threats. The PCRAFI data shows that of 129 documented events, 71 were tropical cyclones and 30 were floods (Narasimhan and Cisse 2020). The 2016 Tropical Cyclone Winston (category 5) and the 2020 Tropical Cyclone Yasa (category 4) showed how Fiji's assets and infrastructure are vulnerable to climate-related damage (UNCDF, UNU-EHS and UNDP 2020).[2] Many of the projected consequences of climate change are manifest in the loss of coral reefs and the reduction of other important marine and terrestrial ecosystems. These losses will continue to disproportionately affect Fiji's poor, marginalized and distant populations who live and work in these areas.

In 2014, the Fijian Government predicted that 676 communities were likely to be affected by climate change and require future relocation (Leckie 2016). Piggott-McKellar et al. (2019) refer to the Fijian Government as having identified 80 communities requiring relocation due to the impacts of severe weather events. The Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) predicts that 3,614 Fiji residents will need to be relocated annually because of storm surges and another 2,076 because of cyclonic winds (IDMC 2021).

In 2014, the Fijian Government predicted that 676 communities were likely to be affected by climate change and require future relocation.

4.3. **CLIMATE CHANGE LAWS AND POLICIES IN FIJI**

Fiji is ranked 147 out of 180 countries, with a score of 31.30[3] in the Yale and Columbia 2022 Environmental Performance Index (Environmental Performance Index 2022). It recorded relatively good scores for fisheries and heavy metals, but its scores on biodiversity, ecosystem services, acidification, wastewater treatment, air quality, sanitation and drinking water indicate areas that require urgent improvement. Other areas that need strengthening are biodiversity and habitat protection, waste management and air pollution (Government of the Republic of Fiji 2020).

Fiji is a common law jurisdiction and a constitutional democracy that guarantees citizens the right to a clean and healthy environment. Section 40 of Fiji's Constitution provides that: 'Every person has the right to a clean and healthy environment, which includes the right to have the natural world protected for the benefit of present and future generations through legislative and other means'. As a condition of these rights, the government must take steps to ensure clean air, clean water, adequate sanitation, healthy and sustainable food, a safe climate, a non-toxic environment in which to live, work, study and play, and healthy biodiversity and ecosystems. Fiji's Constitution includes provision for the right to a healthy environment, which is a significant step forward. However, article 40(2) states that: 'To the extent that it is necessary, a law or an administrative action taken under a law may limit, or may authorise the limitation of, the rights set out in this section.'

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[2] The effects of Tropical Cyclone Winston led to the internal displacement of up to 76,000 people in February 2016. In addition, 40,000 homes were damaged or destroyed, affecting approximately 350,000 people, most of whom lived in Viti Levu's northern region (see e.g. Aljazeera 2020).

[3] Zero (0) being furthest from the high-performance benchmark target of 100.

Fiji's Government has displayed global, regional and national leadership on climate action.

Fiji's Government has displayed global, regional and national leadership on climate action. At the global level, Fiji presided over COP 23 in 2017, becoming the first Pacific Small Island Developing State to advance implementation of the historic Paris Agreement. As the first country to ratify the Paris Climate Accords, Fiji emerged as a global leader in climate change governance (Cuff 2016). Nationally, Fiji has developed several significant climate change policies in recent years (see Figure 4.2).

Fiji's 5-year and 20-year National Development Plans (NDPs) commit the government to inclusive, pro-poor and ecologically sound green growth. The NDPs also support and complement the Fiji Green Growth Framework (GGF), which aims to reduce carbon emissions, improve resource productivity and better manage natural resources in an integrated strategy that 'creates a supportive environment for everyone' (Government of the Republic of Fiji 2020: 6, 8). Fiji aims to be carbon-neutral by 2050, as set out in a raft of treaties, accords and laws. Fiji's climate adaptation strategy has a plan for climate migration in the event that sea levels rise and force populations to relocate (Government of the Republic of Fiji 2018b).

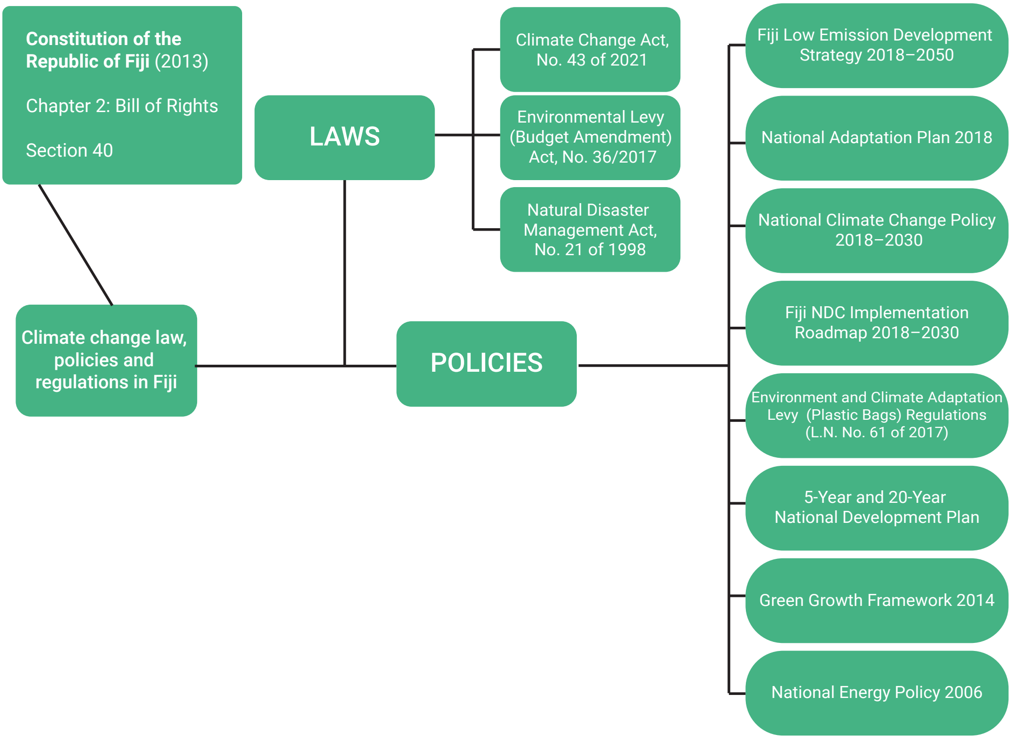
The government's most recent legislative proposal on its climate change adaptation ambitions is the Climate Change Bill, enacted by parliament in September 2021. The overall aim of the Act is to develop mechanisms for Fiji to minimize the consequences of climate change by encouraging adaptation and resilience. The Act's primary stated objective is to 'provide a framework by which Fiji can develop and implement clear and long-term climate change measures and policies that will safeguard the future of Fiji and its people, ecosystems and biodiversity in the face of the climate emergency' (Climate Change Act 2021: s. 4(a)). The Act is situated within the framework of the Paris Agreement's international commitments.

The Fijian Government has highlighted obstacles to adopting climate change mitigation and adaptation strategies, such as the lack of capacity, information, expertise and technology (Government of the Republic of Fiji 2018b). These obstacles could prevent increased access to gender- and age-disaggregated data, the monitoring of climate change impacts on vulnerable populations or improved access to information for stakeholders. Institutional impediments, such as the inadequate integration of climate risks into national development planning, reduce the ability of local government and subnational entities to carry out the work required to improve local adaptation (Government of the Republic of Fiji 2018b). The Local Government Act offers a structure for subnational coordination of operations under the direction of the Ministry of Local Government, Urban Development, Housing and Environment. However, local efforts to adopt climate change adaptation activities are not aligned with the central government's strategy, and the lack of finance, human resources and technical expertise hinders successful localization (ADPC and UNDRR 2019).

Fiji's civil society organizations have effectively collaborated with the government to bring climate action to global forums. Their success is due to significant programmes of work conducted at numerous levels from the local to the national, regional and international to accelerate climate action on agriculture, oceans, climate finance and low carbon development. Among the Fijian climate action campaigners and activists at the national level are Save the Children Fiji, the Pacific Islands Climate Action Network, the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) Pacific, the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), the Locally Managed Marine Area Network, Diverse Voices in Action (DIVA), the Pacific Centre for Peacebuilding, Transcend Oceania and the Fiji Commerce and Employers Federation, as well as faith-based organizations such as Global Compassion. These organizations collaborate with communities, development partners and the government to address climate change and develop sustainable response systems (see e.g. Fiji CSO SDG Task Force 2016).

Fiji's civil society organizations have effectively collaborated with the government to bring climate action to global forums.

Figure 4.2. **Climate change laws, policies and regulations in Fiji**


Constitution of the Republic of Fiji (2013)
Chapter 2: Bill of Rights
Section 40
LAWS
Climate Change Act, No. 43 of 2021
Environmental Levy (Budget Amendment) Act, No. 36/2017
Natural Disaster Management Act, No. 21 of 1998
Climate change law, policies and regulations in Fiji
POLICIES
Fiji Low Emission Development Strategy 2018–2050
National Adaptation Plan 2018
National Climate Change Policy 2018–2030
Fiji NDC Implementation Roadmap 2018–2030
Environment and Climate Adaptation Levy (Plastic Bags) Regulations (L.N. No. 61 of 2017)
5-Year and 20-Year National Development Plan
Green Growth Framework 2014
National Energy Policy 2006

Source: Grantham Research Institute on Climate Change and the Environment, 'Climate Change Laws of the World', London School of Economics, [n.d.], <https://climate-laws.org/geographies/fiji>, accessed 15 May 2022.

4.4. DEMOCRATIC THREATS IN THE CLIMATE CRISIS

Fiji's desire to be more involved in international affairs is strongly linked to domestic political issues. The activities of the Fijian administration in the region, and throughout the world, serve to legitimize it in its domestic political context. The military origins of Fiji's current administration and the allegations of human rights abuses made against it were barely discussed at COP 23, but whether COP 23 constitutes a success for Fiji domestically remains open to question and requires additional investigation (Ratuva 2016).

Since the military coup in 2006, populist politics, unaccountable leadership and opaque decision-making processes have been common features of Fiji's political landscape. Since transitioning to parliamentary rule in 2014, state authority has been concentrated around the executive and the central government has dominated climate change policymaking. The Fijian Government has successfully constrained individual liberty and suppressed public participation, while at the same time granting limited freedom to select groups for the purposes of boosting regime legitimacy. Political tensions in Fiji make governance a contested topic, and this has a considerable impact on climate change adaptation (Gero, Méheux and Dominey-Howes 2011).

Political tensions in Fiji make governance a contested topic, and this has a considerable impact on climate change adaptation.

4.4.1. **Top-down approach to climate change action**

Government action on climate change has been thorough and holistic, but Fiji's alignment with global discourses on development, sustainability and resilience has resulted in a top-down response influenced by the 'economic rationalist' narrative on climate change (Gelves-Gómez and Brincat 2021: 72–73). The need has emerged for enhanced public participation in environmental governance in response to criticisms of traditional top-down administration (Endres 2012). However, current participatory techniques are considered ineffectual (see e.g. Bixler et al. 2015), or to be paying lip-service to the concept of public participation as influential figures seek to conceal problematic or undemocratic political practices.

In the case of the Vunidogoloa relocation, for example, the Fijian Government used the relocation process to gradually erode villagers' autonomy, until they were left with an adaptation project that compromised their aspirations and values, and advantaged the government (Bertana 2020). By excluding the village from the technical components of the relocation—housing structure and village layout—the government exercised unilateral decision-making power, and in so doing eliminated any possibility of confrontation while at the same time moulding the tastes and desires of the Vunidogoloa villagers. Climate change is an ongoing concern for governments worldwide, and frequent high-intensity storms generate public anxiety. As in Vunidogoloa, climate calamities generate emergency circumstances and motivate government action. The government plays an important role in respect of climate-change-induced relocation, which makes it crucial to focus on how it negotiates relationships with affected communities, especially given the powerful position of government in relation to marginalized people (Bertana 2020).

Ensuring that local voices are heard by the state and in the political arena are critical to climate change adaptation and relocation.

To ensure environmental justice, an adaptive relocation strategy requires cooperation among state and non-state actors, while meeting the needs and wants of affected communities (Bronen 2015). Ensuring that local voices are heard by the state and in the political arena, as well as translating state and policy language into the local vernacular, are critical to climate change adaptation and relocation. Local narratives need to reach government and state institutions, just as government and policy communications need to reach communities through a medium that is compatible with community understandings and worldviews. In other words, the issue is allowing and enabling communication between varied stakeholders (Barnett and McMichael 2018).

4.4.2. Climate change relocation/migration and land

To fully appreciate Fijian culture, it is crucial to grasp the importance of land and how it affects people's sense of self, social well-being and cultural cohesion. *Vanua* is the Indigenous Fijian term for this interdependence of the physical, social, spiritual and economic. Where land is regarded as an extension of the person, moving will affect financial, spiritual and cultural well-being. *Vanua* could offer an alternative method for assessing the effects of climate-induced migration; specifically, by mediating the tension resulting from an all-encompassing policy that prioritizes 'community, security, and well-being', over an emphasis on materialism and 'progress' (Batibasaqa, Overton and Horsley 1999: 106).

As stated above, climate change has a cultural influence because of the importance of land and how it shapes people's sense of self. It is conceivable that growing conflicts between *iTaukei* and non-Indigenous communities over land ownership could impede successful climate-induced migration and relocation within Fiji (Brookbanks, Chand and Thomas 2019). Relocating populations affected by climate change raises questions about who will be permitted to move. In this respect, the government must address relocation in a manner that respects *iTaukei* sovereignty and prevents the exacerbation of land ownership issues.

If communities are forced to move, existing land conflicts in Fiji could be aggravated because of a lack of adequate land for relocation. As more communities require relocation, the issue of land and its accessibility will raise questions regarding who to relocate, and how relocation might be negotiated between communities and *mataqalis*[4] in a way that protects Indigenous rights and prevents future conflicts over land ownership. For Indo-Fijian groups, the fear of forced displacement is real. The planned relocation of *iTaukei* communities inland from the coast could exacerbate insecurity for Indo-Fijian settlements that rely on leasing Indigenous land for their livelihood (Brookbanks, Chand and Thomas 2019). In addition, although the Indo-Fijian community is equally vulnerable to climate change, it currently lacks the same mechanisms for requesting migration as *iTaukei* people. The development of a nationalistic Fijian identity could help to resolve the race-related features of Fiji's land-based disputes.

4.4.3. **Securitization of climate change**

A militaristic approach to disaster response could be problematic as it promotes short-term thinking by focusing on the most visible and devastating effects of climate change while ignoring the root causes of the crisis and the need for long-term adaptation. Community relocation, for example, is a long-term consideration (McDonald 2018). One of the harmful elements of securitization is that it legitimizes actions that delegate agency to state institutions, such as the military, while positioning affected populations as passive objects of official policy. This approach disregards the need for interchange and conversation, the participation of a diverse range of state and non-state actors to structure and implement long-term climate change adaptation, and the agency of local communities. Pacific peoples have demonstrated agency and weathered great difficulties. Adaptation should therefore be conducted with the people, not for them; it must be a joint endeavour that includes all stakeholders.

Adaptation should be conducted with the people, not for them; it must be a joint endeavour that includes all stakeholders.

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[4] An Indigenous Fijian clan or landowning unit.

As noted above, the Fijian Constitution prescribes a more proactive security watchdog role for the military. Section 131(2) gives the military 'overall responsibility to ensure at all times the security, defence and well-being of Fiji and all Fijians'. Serious concerns have been raised about the Fijian military's commitment to democracy (see Kant 2017). While the military sees this constitutional provision as a bulwark against unconstrained ethno-nationalism, critics regard it as a constitutional licence to intervene in national politics under the pretext of ensuring security, defence or well-being (Firth 2018; Kant 2017). In April 2020, Jone Kalouniwai, then a brigadier-general in the Fijian military and now its Commander, defended the view that Covid-19 was a good reason to remove the media's right to question policy decisions: '[I]n times of such national emergency, our leaders have good reasons to stifle criticism of their policies by curtailing freedom of speech and freedom of the press'. He added that the fight against Covid-19, was 'likely to end up violating the individual rights and rule of law that are at the heart of any liberal society' (Kalouniwai 2020).

Adaptation techniques, such as those considered for Fiji, demonstrate the need to look beyond technocratic and policy remedies.

4.5. CONCLUSION: DEMOCRATIZING CLIMATE ACTION

Fiji's international and constitutional human rights commitments argue that the Fijian Government should pursue a rights-based approach to climate change and ensure genuine public involvement in all climate-related initiatives, especially by the most vulnerable groups such as women, children and the poorest segments of the population. The ability of people to cope with the effects of climate change will be crucial to their long-term survival, well-being and full participation in socio-economic growth. Governments continue to play a critical role in developing and coordinating local adaptation measures by leveraging the cooperation of numerous external and internal agencies and actors at all levels. Adaptation techniques, such as those considered for Fiji, demonstrate the need to look beyond technocratic and policy remedies. It is clear from these lessons that adaptive co-management techniques are required to enable optimal adaptation outcomes (Fabricius and Currie 2015).

4.5.1. Promotion of inclusive democratic politics and processes

Local people affected by adaptation are more likely to participate if there is robust democratic decision making. Fiji's influence on the UNFCCC process led to the Talanoa Dialogue being a key Fiji-driven outcome of COP 23. The term *Talanoa* is extensively used throughout the Pacific. It places emphasis on skills such as listening and exchanging, which makes it an invaluable negotiating tool in climate change negotiations. The Talanoa proposal for climate discussions was promoted by Bainimarama as President of COP 23. He later described Talanoa as:

> [A]n inclusive, participatory process—devoid of finger-pointing and blame … of sharing stories and experiences and achieving best practice in the decisions we make. And now we have taken this process to the global level to encourage everyone to move closer to our goal of keeping the temperature rise to 1.5°C above that of the pre-industrial age.
> (Bainimarama 2018)

While promoting a local Indigenous deliberative process at the international level, the Fijian Government has not been interested in pursuing the same process at the national and local levels of decision making and policymaking in Fiji. The difficulty is in establishing an open and inclusive decision-making process at both the national and the local levels in Fiji. At the strategic level, local actors—particularly from affected communities—must have substantive involvement in the formulation and implementation of adaptation strategies, as adaptation will only work if it is acceptable to the people affected, and consistent with their values and way of life (Spires, Shackleton and Cundill 2014). Putting communities at the heart of project design and execution facilitates understanding of their capacities, knowledge systems and needs.

While promoting a local Indigenous deliberative process at the international level, the Fijian Government has not been interested in pursuing the same process at the national and local levels of decision making and policymaking.

4.5.2. Incorporating socio-cultural factors in climate action

The inclusion of local knowledge in adaptation planning promotes efficiency. Disadvantaged people often benefit from financial, technical and informational assistance, but awareness is crucial for effective adaptation (Heyward 2017). According to the

Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, local actors and community engagement are required for successful adaptation (Mimura et al. 2014). Listening to Indigenous narratives and acknowledging Indigenous knowledge and skills in relation to climate change are crucial for inclusion and trust. Unfortunately, local knowledge and stories are difficult to translate into formal state and donor reports. Fijian policymakers and project implementers must consider how best to include socio-cultural aspects that bring local value and belief systems, community needs and customs into the conversation on effective climate action.

4.5.3. **COP 26: Outcomes and implications for Fiji**

At the beginning of COP 26 in Glasgow, Tuvalu’s Minister of Foreign Affairs, Simon Kofé, gave a speech while knee-deep in the sea to highlight the consequences of sea-level rise for Small Island Developing States (Perkins 2021). Adapting particularly vulnerable countries to the effects of climate change was one of the ‘hot topics’ at COP 26, but outcomes fell short of expectations. The 2020 goal of raising USD 100 billion a year for the Least Developed Countries (LDCs) will not be met until 2023 (Pill 2021). The final text ‘urges’ states parties to deliver on the USD 100 billion goal by 2025, but this is only a recommendation (Evans et al. 2021).

For particularly vulnerable countries, the ‘loss and damage’ negotiations—labelled a significant issue for COP 26—left a bitter taste, as no commitment was made to mobilize new funds in the framework of a specific mechanism, thereby delaying the issue until COP 27. Fiji’s Attorney-General and the Minister Responsible for Climate Change, Sayed-Khaiyum, described the draft text on loss and damage as ‘very vague’ and indicated that an alternative text had been suggested, which had the support of the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS), the Pacific SIDS and the LDCs (Doviverata 2021). The Minister stated that what they wanted from ‘loss and damage’ was not simply insurance but ‘some financial commitments’ (Doviverata 2021). The Fijian Prime Minister and Attorney-General also expressed disappointment after China and India made a successful last-minute attempt to water down the language on coal in the Glasgow Pact (Krishant 2021), with its shift from ‘phase out’ to ‘phase down’.

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LEGISLATION

Climate Change Act 2021 (Republic of Fiji)

Constitution of the Republic of Fiji (2013)

Chapter 5

INDIA

With an electorate of more than 900 million people, India is a federal, multiparty democracy with an independent judiciary and a vibrant civil society.

5.1. INTRODUCTION

The Indian Constitution, which came into effect on 26 January 1950, provides for a parliamentary form of government. With an electorate of more than 900 million people, India is a federal, multiparty democracy with an independent judiciary and a vibrant civil society. Apart from a brief period (1975–1977) in which parliamentary democracy was suspended, India has held free and fair elections at regular intervals. International IDEA's report on the Global State of Democracy credits India with holding relatively clean elections but ranks the country poorly in relation to safeguarding civil liberties and checks against executive excesses. It identifies India as a 'backsliding democracy', citing democratic violations during the Covid-19 pandemic, and lists it as a 'major decliner' (International IDEA 2021). Freedom House (Repucci and Slipowitz 2021) ranks India as 'partly free'. In short, democracy in India is passing through a period of great stress and turbulence, linked to growing polarization, authoritarian tendencies, the rapid erosion of individual freedoms and a steady decline in the institutional autonomy of key democratic institutions.

5.2. INDIA'S CLIMATE VULNERABILITIES

India is among the countries most vulnerable to climate change. The 2020 Global Climate Risk Index (CRI) ranks it among the 10 countries

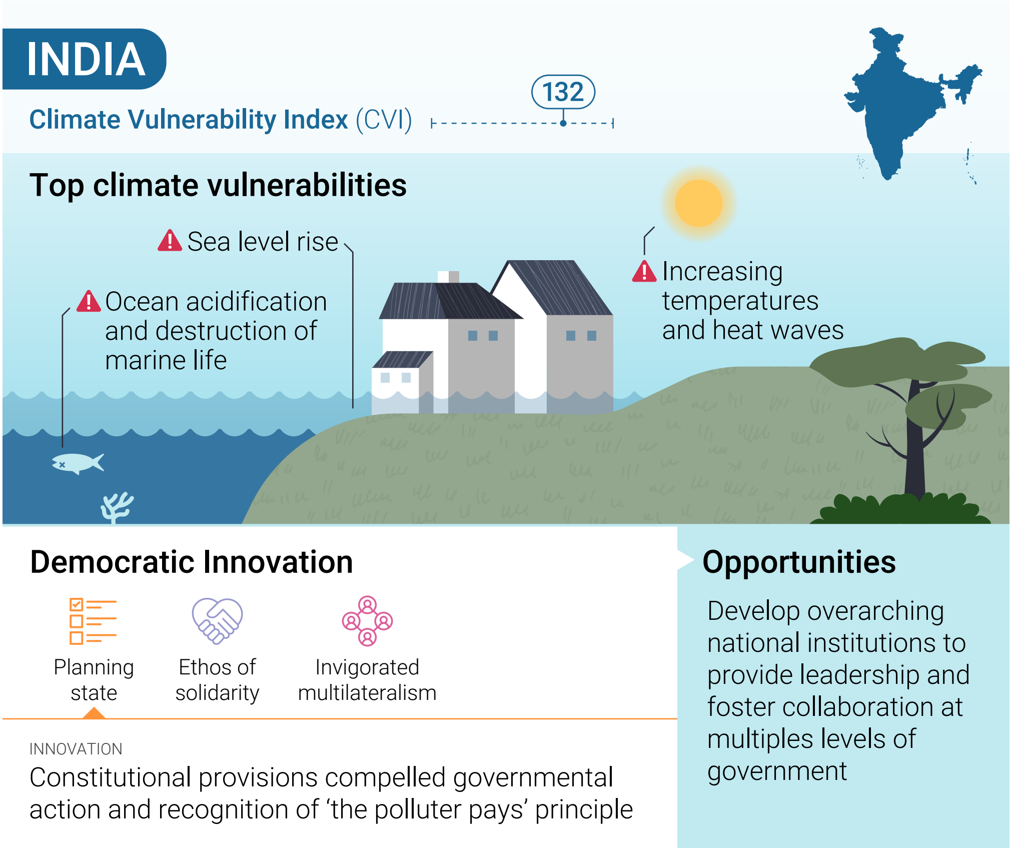

Figure 5.1. **India**

INDIA
Climate Vulnerability Index (CVI)
132
Top climate vulnerabilities
Sea level rise
Ocean acidification and destruction of marine life
Increasing temperatures and heat waves
Democratic Innovation
Planning state
Ethos of solidarity
Invigorated multilateralism

INNOVATION

Constitutional provisions compelled governmental action and recognition of ‘the polluter pays’ principle

Opportunities

Develop overarching national institutions to provide leadership and foster collaboration at multiples levels of government

most affected by heatwaves and fifth overall in the CRI (Eckstein et al. 2019). This makes it among the worst-affected countries and highly vulnerable to climate change (FAO n.d.). In addition to increasing temperatures, India is also vulnerable to rising sea levels. According to analysts, ‘India’s 7500-km long coastline, largely monsoon- and river-dependent livelihoods, and vulnerability to heat and flooding extremes make its people deeply vulnerable to the impacts of climate change’ (Chandra, Karkun and Mathew 2021). Approximately 33 per cent of the country’s coastline receded between 1990 and 2006 and coastal erosion is expected to take place 1.5 times more quickly in the next three decades than in the preceding three decades (Youdon 2020). This poses a threat to coastal wetlands such as mangroves and will lead to the destruction of marine life and marine-based occupations such as fishing and adversely affect biodiversity and coastal populations through increased flooding. A report by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) highlights that 28.6 million people in six Indian cities will face floods due to rising sea levels (IPCC 2021).

India's climate vulnerability has been measured by the Notre Dame Global Adaptation Initiative (ND-GAIN), which 'summarizes a country's vulnerability to climate change and other global challenges in combination with its readiness to improve resilience' (University of Notre Dame 2022a). India is ranked 111st of 182 countries in the ND-GAIN Index for 2020, with a high score for vulnerability to climate change and a low score for readiness to adapt to climate change. India scored 132 on vulnerability, making it the 51st most vulnerable country; and is the 104th most ready country (University of Notre Dame 2022a, 2022b). At 111st, India's ranking in the ND-GAIN index is higher than Pakistan (146th) and Bangladesh (164th), the same as Ghana (also 111st), and lower than Sri Lanka (104th) and China (39th) (University of Notre Dame 2022a).

5.3. CLIMATE CHANGE AND INDIAN LAW

The Constitution provides that the state should 'endeavour to protect and improve the environment and to safeguard the forests and wildlife of the country'.

The Indian Constitution does not refer directly to climate change, although many of its provisions cover issues related to environmental protection and the promotion of sustainable development, among other things. For example, the Directive Principles of State Policy (DPSP) (see e.g. Mukherjee 2014/15) in the Constitution provide that the state should 'endeavour to protect and improve the environment and to safeguard the forests and wildlife of the country'. This provision was incorporated into article 48A in 1976 (the 42nd Amendment) in response to growing global awareness of environmental degradation and the need for collective action.

Over the decades, India has enacted a number of statutes that address different aspects of environmental protection and climate change. Prominent examples include: the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972; the Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1974; the Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Cess Act, 1977; the

Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980; the Air (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1981; and, most notably, the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986. In addition, India has enacted various supporting statutes in recent years, such as: the National Environment Tribunal Act, 1995; the National Environment Appellate Authority Act, 1997; the Forest Rights Act (FRA), 2006; and, importantly, the National Green Tribunal Act, 2010. Although these statutes touch on climate change in one way or another, they do not comprehensively address the challenges of global climate change (Sinha 2021).

5.4. THE ROLES OF VARIOUS LEVELS OF GOVERNMENT

The central government focuses on developing national policies, enacting federal legislation and participating in international conventions, treaties and dialogues on climate change. Technically, India's national efforts are led by the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MEFCC). The MEFCC mobilizes the national response at multiple levels, overseeing the Central and State Pollution Boards, and coordinating statutory bodies on the environment. While India lacked a visible and coherent institutional response for many years, the establishment of the Prime Minister's Council on Climate Change (PMCCC) in 2007 was a turning point that galvanized country-wide efforts to fight climate change. In the same year, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh created the position of Special Envoy on Climate Change to lead major initiatives in close consultation with the Prime Minister's Office (PMO).

While India lacked a visible and coherent institutional response for many years, the establishment of the Prime Minister's Council on Climate Change in 2007 was a turning point that galvanized country-wide efforts to fight climate change.

Since taking office in 2014, Prime Minister Modi has increasingly centralized climate policy and made key decisions to increase the visibility of India's global response. Examples of national policies under his leadership include the National Action Plan on Climate Change (NAPCC) and the Pradhan Mantri Kisan Urja Suraksha evam Utthaan Mahabhiyan (PM-KUSUM) (NRDC 2020). The Modi government abolished the office of Special Envoy but created a new institution—the Apex Committee for Implementation of the Paris Agreement (AIPA)—in November 2020 (Sangomla 2020). The AIPA has powers to invite expertise from industry, research institutions and civil society to provide technical inputs. Modi has taken a keen interest in championing initiatives to address climate change, and the PMO has emerged as the centre of India's coordinated national response. In addition, the federal think tank, NITI Aayog, has acted as a 'brains trust' on the climate change response.

State governments have played crucial roles in developing and sustaining regional partnerships on mitigating climate change.

Notwithstanding the above, the real action takes place at the subnational levels. State governments have played crucial roles in developing and sustaining regional partnerships on mitigating climate change. According to the Climate Group's report, *Driving Climate Action: State Leadership in India*, there were '32 state action plans on climate change' in 2019 (Climate Group 2019: 9). These fall under a subnational institutional framework known as State Action Plans on Climate Change (SAPCC) (Centre for Policy Research n.d.).

At the local level, Panchayats (rural local bodies) and Urban Local Bodies (ULBs) have become increasingly involved in instituting climate-friendly policies. The Kerala Institute of Local Administration, for instance, has developed strategies for addressing climate change, and 270 Panchayats in Kerala participate in a programme on developing climate-friendly governance responses (Nair 2018). Similarly, the ClimateSmart Cities Assessment Framework (Government of India n.d.), initiated by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs, encourages ULBs to develop and implement policies on climate change. However, Panchayats and ULBs face constraints on operationalizing climate-friendly policies, due to the inadequate devolution of functions and finances (Sethi et al. 2021).

Beyond the government, numerous actors are active on climate-related issues and the major political parties are taking climate threats seriously (Dubash 2013a). For example, during the 2019 general election, the two major political parties—the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and the Indian National Congress (INC)—made commitments to address climate change issues in their party manifestos (Doslak and Prakash 2019). Smaller and regional parties—especially those from states facing the impact of climate change, such as extreme weather events—have also incorporated climate change issues into their agendas (Yadav 2022). However, while there is consensus on India's strategy and response to climate change in various international forums, cross-party consensus on the climate response is yet to emerge.

While the political discourse on the climate crisis is still evolving, India's vibrant civil society has been persistent in putting climate change initiatives centre stage. Some pioneering civil society organizations—such as the Centre for Science and Environment (CSE) and the Energy and Resources Institute (TERI), formerly the Tata Energy Research Institute—engaged with climate change/environmental issues early on, and have carried out impressive work and advocacy to reframe the global debate on climate change (Dubash 2013b). The CSE's work, such as on per capita based formulations on equity and the responsibility of the industrialized countries for their emissions—has provided a foundation for India and other countries from the Global South to actively negotiate in global climate forums. TERI has contributed to and shared the findings of IPCC reports in global negotiations (Dubash 2013b). In addition to the CSE and TERI, other prominent environmental civil society organizations (CSOs) have led nationwide advocacy efforts on restoring the fragile ecology of the Himalayan states.

5.5. **THE JUDICIARY AND CLIMATE CHANGE**

It is the judiciary that has shaped the cumulative national response to environmental protection and climate change.

Among India's formal institutions, it is the judiciary that has shaped the cumulative national response to environmental protection and climate change. Since the late 1980s, the judiciary has delivered several landmark judgments on environmental protection that have touched on climate change in one way or another. The courts have done this by imaginatively interpreting existing constitutional provisions, such as articles 48A and 51A, under the DPSP to compel action by the executive branch (see Mauskar and Modak 2021). As noted above, article 48A states that: 'The State shall endeavour to protect and improve the environment and to safeguard the forests and wildlife of the country'. Article 51A contains fundamental duties applicable to 'every citizen of India' and, at sub-section (g), states that its citizens have a duty 'to protect and improve the natural environment including forests, lakes, rivers and wildlife, and to have compassion for living creatures'.

Unsurprisingly, environmental organizations and activists have approached the Supreme Court and the various High Courts to commence Public Interest Litigation (PIL), in cases that target industrial pollution, air pollution in metro-cities, big dams, deforestation and the protection of ecologically fragile zones, among other things. For instance, in *M.C. Mehta* v *Union of India* (1987), a case concerning an oleum gas leak, the Supreme Court imposed penalties on industries involved in hazardous and harmful activities. The Court implicitly recognized ‘the polluter pays principle’ (see Shastri 2000). More specifically, the Supreme Court stated:

> We would therefore hold that where an enterprise is engaged in a hazardous or inherently dangerous activity and harm results to anyone on account of an accident in the operation of such hazardous or inherently dangerous activity resulting, for example, in escape of toxic gas, the enterprise is strictly and absolutely liable to compensate all those who are affected by the accident.
> (Supreme Court of India, *M.C. Mehta v Union of India*, 1987)

In a number of decisions concerning industrial and air pollution, the Supreme Court has linked the right to a pollution-free environment, free air and water with a fundamental right such as the right to life under article 21 (see e.g. *Vellore Citizens Welfare Forum* 1996: paras 13 and 14). The judiciary has gone a step further on environmental activism by setting up the National Green Tribunal (NGT), which is a judicial-led forum for monitoring adherence to environmental or green norms in India. Through the NGT, the judiciary has been trying to fill the enforcement gaps left in legislation such as the Mining Laws, the Water Act and the Environment Protection Act. While India lacks concrete legislation on climate change, in a growing number of instances the NGT is taking steps to address climate-related issues.

5.6. **INDIA’S CLIMATE ACTION IN COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE**

The Climate Change Performance Index evaluates and compares the climate protection performance of the European Union and its member states and 57 countries. India ranked 10th in the 2021 index, with a score of 63.98. Sweden ranked 4th with the top score of 74.42 while the United States was ranked 61st with the lowest score of 19.75 (Burck et al. 2020). The top three places were left unoccupied, as none of the countries was deemed to have ‘done enough to prevent dangerous climate change’ (Burck et al. 2020: 7). Notably, of the G20 countries in that year, ‘only the EU as a whole, along with the UK and India, rank[ed] among *high* performers’ (Burck et al. 2020: 6).

5.7. POLITICAL SHORT-TERMISM AND STRUCTURAL BOTTLENECKS HINDERING EFFECTIVE CLIMATE ACTION

Like most democracies, India’s response to climate threats has been guided by political short-termism, hesitancy and incrementalism. This is evident in its response to reducing India’s dependence on fossil fuels, particularly coal-based energy. Despite India’s strong pitch on renewables, including promotion of a big-ticket solar initiative by leading the International Solar Alliance in 2015, India continues to rely heavily on coal. This was clearly reflected in its recent pledges at COP 26 in Glasgow. Prime Minister Modi pledged that India would achieve net zero by 2070, but his wording on the use of coal was changed at the last minute from ‘phase out’ to ‘phase down’.

Like most democracies, India’s response to climate threats has been guided by political short-termism, hesitancy and incrementalism.

This illustrates a major dilemma for India—coal is critical to its energy security and contributes significantly to the employment and livelihoods of millions of Indians living in some of the least developed areas of the country (Ramachandran and Pai 2021). More than 4 million people are directly or indirectly employed in the coal industry, and as many as 500,000 pensioners depend on the coal sector (Ramachandran and Pai 2021). The closure of coal mines would lead to considerable unemployment and devastate local communities. Coal is also the cheapest and most available mineral for driving India’s quest for electrification in all households to help close the gap between India and the developed world. In addition, the continuation of coal mining is supported by an influential lobby of labour unions, media outlets, pressure groups, NGOs, and small and large businesses (Swarnakar 2019), many of which are strongly invested in maintaining the status quo. The growing business–politics nexus and the opaque nature of political finance, particularly since the introduction of electoral bonds in 2018, is likely to have a decisive bearing on policies and regulation on phasing out fossil fuels (Price 2021).

Successive governments and political parties have therefore played it safe on coal and its eventual replacement with cleaner renewable options. Furthermore, political resolve has weakened in the face of large emitters such as the United States and China showing little commitment to ending their dependence on coal. Thus, in multilateral climate change and other global forums, including the G-77, India has used the lack of commitment on fossil fuels shown by the developed West and the funding required by developing countries for a green transition to extract concessions on phasing out coal.

As noted above, the real challenge to India's green transition comes from its domestic politics.

As noted above, the real challenge to India's green transition comes from its domestic politics. Any policy response to climate threats becomes deeply entangled in India's competitive federal structure. The priorities of subnational governments and the accompanying adversarial politics often act as roadblocks to a coherent national response. The provision of free power to farmers in Punjab, Haryana and other states provides a useful example. While the policy was intended to help farmers, especially those who grow water-intensive crops such as wheat, rice and sugar cane, it has resulted in a climate crisis across a vast region as the water table has depleted alarmingly in recent years (Ghosal 2021). Finding a solution to this issue will not be easy, as farmers constitute a large voting bloc and governments fear the likely political backlash. The federal government's recent attempt to alter farm subsidies (i.e. the minimum support price and reform of the fertilizer sector) led to massive year-long protests by farmers from these states, and ultimately forced the government to withdraw much needed reforms (Sharma 2021). Thus, competitive populism and electoral compulsion present major obstacles to bold but unpopular policies to address climate change.

5.8. THREATS TO INDIA'S DEMOCRACY

Climate-related events such as exposure to rising sea levels are causing millions of people from ecologically fragile regions to migrate to the cities. The threats posed by climate change will inevitably challenge state capacity and democratic stability. The under-funding and limited empowerment of vital institutions mean that most Indian cities do not have the capacity or resources to accommodate millions of environmental migrants or climate refugees (Patel 2021).

Frequent climate disasters in the form of floods, cyclones and droughts are disrupting the lives of millions and increasingly becoming electoral issues that can decide the fate of governments at the subnational level. For instance, in 2021, the mismanagement associated with Cyclone Amphan became a major issue during the assembly election in West Bengal (S. Chakraborty 2021). Similarly, water scarcity and drought in the vast region of Vidharbh in the state of Maharashtra frequently test the state's capacity and have played a decisive role in electoral outcomes. In short, climate change poses the single largest non-traditional threat to democratic politics. India is a diverse, strongly federal, heavily populated country where many areas are beset by poverty and a lack of resources. This makes these challenges far more serious than those in other large democracies.

Notwithstanding India's vulnerabilities, given its considerable experience of tackling disasters, it has the capacity to weather climate storms. Climate change poses a serious challenge but provides India with an opportunity to become energy secure by reducing both its dependency on oil and the huge drain on its foreign exchange reserves.

5.9. CAN INDIA INSULATE ITS DEMOCRACY FROM CLIMATE THREATS?

India's formal democratic institutions have been paying closer attention to the threats emerging from climate change, and recent parliamentary discussions have placed considerable emphasis on climate threats. Rousing debates on climate-related issues and India's preparedness have taken place between the government and opposition in both houses of parliament (Nandi 2021). The same can be said in state legislatures, particularly those most vulnerable to extreme weather events, air pollution and climate-induced migration. Thus, the deliberative aspects of democracy are increasingly recognizing the threats posed by climate change, although this has not yet been translated into any major legislative outcomes.

India's formal democratic institutions have been paying closer attention to the threats emerging from climate change.

5.10. **PLANNING STATE**

Conscious of the growing threats presented by climate change, India's former Planning Commission created a subgroup on mitigation and adaptation in 2012, as well as an expert group to make recommendations on low carbon strategies for India. The latter submitted a comprehensive report in 2014 (Planning Commission of India 2014). In this context, India's 12th Five-Year Plan (2012–17) emphasized commitments to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and planned initiatives directed at India's international obligations. Similar objectives were proposed at the state and local government levels. Notably, the 12th Plan encouraged governments to generate funds domestically and through private sector finance. NITI Aayog, the Planning Commission's successor and the federal government's apex policymaking body, has followed the Commission's lead on climate change through focused policies targeting areas such as the phasing out of fossil fuel dependency, renewable energy, a low carbon economy and mitigation. In addition, successive Finance Commissions (the 14th and 15th) have made substantial allocations for adaptation and mitigation efforts related to climate change (L. Chakraborty 2021).

Prior to these plans, India launched its flagship National Action Plan on Climate Change (NAPCC) in 2008. This broadly captured India's vision of ecologically sustainable development. Importantly, it was based on an awareness that climate change action has to proceed in parallel in several interrelated domains—energy, industry, agriculture, water, forests, urban spaces and the fragile mountain environment (Saran 2019). However, the real action is happening at the state level through State Action Plans on Climate Change (SAPCC), which complement national efforts. A number of state governments are investing in climate mitigation strategies and some of the leading states (e.g. Maharashtra) have launched initiatives such as C40 cities, Cities4Forests and the solarization of highways (Chaturvedi 2021). Many states are also rapidly embracing an electric vehicles policy while phasing out old vehicles.

Evidence that India is operating as a planning state in respect of climate change measures is visible in the accelerated efforts to increase renewable energy. Since COP 21, India has been aggressively pushing solar, wind and other sources of renewable energy. It set up the International Solar Alliance in 2015 (Jayaram 2018), which is slowly having an impact. While India's dependency on coal remains, its renewable capacity has increased rapidly (from 20 GW solar power in 2010 to 96 GW in 2021) and, as per its pledge in Glasgow in November 2021, India has set an ambitious target of generating 500 GW from renewables by 2030 (see Table 5.1). The strategy of reducing India's heavy dependence on fossil fuels by dramatically increasing renewables, through planned and rapid national action, could insulate India's democracy by reducing pollution, enhancing energy security and facilitating India's rise as a global leader in renewable energy.

Table 5.1. **Renewable energy trajectory (non-fossil fuel energy capacity by 2030)**

	Installed capacity (GW) 2019	% of installed capacity 2019	Generation (billion units) 2019	% of generation 2019	Installed capacity (GW) 2030	% of installed capacity 2030	Generation (billion units) 2030	% of generation 2030
Coal and gas	228	63	1,072	80	282	36	1,393	56
Hydro	45	12.5	139	10.1*	61	7.5	206	8
Renewable	82.5	22.7	126	9.2	455	54.5	805	32
Nuclear	6.7	1.9	378	2.7	19	2.3	113	5
Total	**362.2**		**1,715**		**817**		**2,517**	

** Including imports from Bhutan.*

Source: Government of India, Ministry of Power, Central Electricity Authority, 'Report on Optimal Generation Capacity Mix for 2029–30', January 2020, <https://cea.nic.in/old/reports/others/planning/irp/Optimal_mix_report_2029-30_FINAL.pdf>, accessed 6 March 2023.

5.11. SOLIDARISTIC ETHOS

Much of the action to counter the threat of climate change is taking place in India's vibrant civil society. Although climate-related programmes are primarily shaped by government, CSOs are providing a much-needed complement to government action. Some of the world's best known environmental campaigns (e.g. preventing the construction of big dams and protecting forests and the fragile ecology of the Himalayas) were pioneered by activists and affected communities, such as the Chipko movement in the 1970s led by Chandi Prasad Bhatt, and later Sunderlal Bahuguna, to protect the hill forests of Uttarakhand; and the movement to save the Narmada River led by activist Medha Patekar.

These early ecological movements led to the creation of a wider network and forged solidarity across thousands of CSOs in South Asia and other regions of the world. Environmental activists and CSOs with a particular focus on environmental justice, human rights and protecting the poor and communities vulnerable to environmental degradation—and, more recently, to climate change—have found their way on to government policymaking bodies (Swarnakar 2019). While the institutional response to climate change is relatively weak, India's strength in this space resides in the CSOs, community-based associations, youth groups and religious/charitable organizations that have collectivized around a common purpose to fight climate change and its effects.

It should be noted, however, that the CIVICUS Monitor, which rates countries on the degree to which citizens are able to express their views and exercise their rights in the civic space, has classified India as 'repressed' (CIVICUS Monitor 2022a). This means that India is considered to have a 'significantly constrained' civic space where the work of CSOs is 'regularly impeded' and peaceful protests are vulnerable to the use of excessive force by the authorities (CIVICUS Monitor n.d.).

India has championed the importance of adopting a multilateral approach to climate change.

5.12. INVIGORATED MULTILATERALISM

Having recognized that climate change is a global challenge that requires global cooperation, India has championed the importance of adopting a multilateral approach to the issue. It is a signatory to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and has ratified the 2002 Kyoto Protocol. In 2005, together with Australia, Canada, China, Japan, South Korea and the United States, India launched the Asia Pacific Partnership on Clean Development and Climate (Asia Regional Integration Center n.d.). Significantly, India indicated its support for the Paris Agreement by submitting its

Intended Nationally Determined Contribution (INDC) in October 2015, prior to its adoption of the treaty. In 2016, India signed and ratified the Paris Climate Change Treaty, which aims to limit carbon dioxide emissions to prevent average global temperatures from increasing by more than 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels.

India has a bilateral relationship with the United Kingdom, referred to as the ‘2030 Roadmap’, which includes measures to mitigate climate change, such as encouraging clean energy, technology, and transport, as well as protecting biodiversity (British High Commission 2021). Similarly, India has forged strong bilateral relationships with the US (Government of India 2017) and the European Union (Ahuja, Kaushik and Sastry 2021). At COP 26 in 2021, Prime Minister Modi pledged India’s commitment to achieve net zero emissions by 2070. These examples illustrate that India has been actively investing in multilateral and global cooperation to fight the threat of climate change, and to obtain specific benefits such as green technology and financial assistance.

The fact that the major political parties are increasingly talking about climate threats is a positive indicator of how the relationship between democracy and climate change can be negotiated in India. As noted above, the respective commitments of the parties are contained in their party manifestos. The ruling BJP and the INC made commitments to fight climate change, albeit in a relatively low-key manner, at the last general election (Doslak and Prakash 2019). The BJP’s 45-page manifesto mentions climate change prominently in the context of infrastructure and the party’s contribution to renewable energy and the International Solar Alliance. The INC’s 55-page election pledge refers to the environment and climate change, as well as climate resilience and disaster management (Doslak and Prakash 2019). Recently, smaller and regional political parties, especially those in the states facing a greater threat from climate change, have been more aggressive in pursuing their agendas on climate-related issues. Increasing media and civil society coverage of the threats posed by climate change means that political leaders from different parties are often seen talking and writing about the issue and discussing how India can prepare for the challenge (Yadav 2022).

To sum up, India has made a significant effort to address climate threats, particularly in relation to safeguarding its vulnerable population and protecting democracy. Nonetheless, India will find it hard to completely insulate its democracy from the growing threat of climate change. India's democratic institutions are vulnerable in the face of its vast geography, its large population with very low per capita incomes, the limited state capacity and the challenge of obtaining the finance and technology required for a green transition. This vulnerability is exacerbated by the fact that climate threats and preparedness are yet to feature strongly in national and subnational policy outlooks. The clearest evidence of this is the absence of national legislation that specifically deals with the challenges of climate change, and the absence of an overarching national institution to provide leadership and foster collaboration at multiple levels of a large and diverse federation.

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Chapter 6

INDONESIA

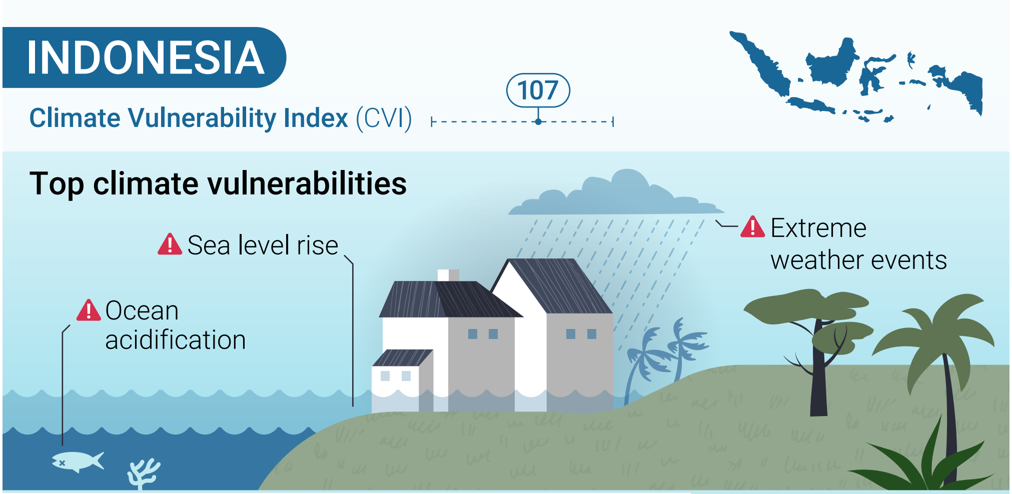
6.1. INTRODUCTION

Since the fall of the authoritarian regime in 1998, Indonesia has slowly become a democratic country. Despite 23 years of reform, however, the quality of democracy in Indonesia still faces serious challenges. In International IDEA's most recent Global State of Democracy report, it refers to Indonesia as one of the countries where 'anti-corruption agencies have been either eliminated or placed under severe restrictions' (International IDEA 2021: 32). Similarly, Transparency International refers to Indonesia as one of several countries facing the more complex challenge of 'grand corruption', which it contrasts with 'petty corruption'. Transparency International describes grand corruption as 'the abuse of high-level power that benefits the few at the expense of the many, and which can destroy whole sectors, create recessions and end democracies'. It states that addressing it 'requires the systematic dismantling of rent-seeking structures and dishonest cultures' (Transparency International 2022). On an institutional level, Freedom House states that corruption is 'endemic in the national and local legislatures, civil service, judiciary, and police' (Freedom House 2021).

Since the fall of the authoritarian regime in 1998, Indonesia has slowly become a democratic country.

Indonesia's president is directly elected by the people and serves as head of state and government. The main parliamentary chamber is the House of Representatives, which has 575 members elected from 34 multi-member districts. There is also a House of Regional Representatives, which has 136 members and is described as being

Figure 6.1. **Indonesia**


INDONESIA
Climate Vulnerability Index (CVI)
107
Top climate vulnerabilities
Sea level rise
Ocean acidification
Extreme weather events

Democratic Innovation

Planning state

Ethos of solidarity

INNOVATION

Cross-sectoral civil society organizations, including religious organizations, increasingly champion the climate agenda

Opportunities

Open up democratic spaces and encourage meaningful citizen participation collaboration at multiples levels of government

‘responsible for monitoring laws related to regional autonomy’ (Freedom House 2021). Recently, a number of policies have been enacted into law without substantive public participation, including the Mineral and Coal Mining (Minerba) Law, the Omnibus Law on Job Creation (Law No. 11 of 2020) and revision of the Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK) Law. The Omnibus Law, for example, has been criticized for lack of public consultation and the haste in which it was rushed through parliament (Freedom House 2021). On 26 November 2021, Indonesia’s Constitutional Court declared the Omnibus Law conditionally unconstitutional, as it had failed to follow the procedure outlined in Law No. 12 of 2011 on making legislation (Satrio 2022).

Democracy in Indonesia continues to experience post-reform regression, marked by increasingly restricted civil and political rights. Even the means of exercising civil and political freedom is limited by violence and efforts at criminalization, and the misuse of laws such as the 2008 Law on Electronic Information and Transactions. Freedom House states that this law has 'extended libel to online media and criminalized the distribution or accessibility of information or documents that are "contrary to the moral norms of Indonesia"' (Freedom House 2021). In October 2020, prior to the passage of the Omnibus Law, journalists covering demonstrations against the proposed law were targeted by the police and subjected to 'intimidation, physical violence, and detention' (Freedom House 2021). Freedom House also reports that the government 'used the Covid-19 pandemic to tighten restrictions on journalists, including criminalizing criticism of the government' (Freedom House 2021). Unsurprisingly, the CIVICUS Monitor has assigned a rating of 'obstructed' to Indonesia, in relation to the degree to which citizens are able to express their views and exercise their rights in the civic space (CIVICUS Monitor n.d.). The civic space in countries that receive this rating is 'heavily contested by power holders', constraints are placed on fundamental rights and there is undermining of civil society organizations (CIVICUS Monitor 2022).

This situation is alarming, especially given that Indonesia is facing two global crises—the Covid-19 pandemic and the climate crisis. Both threaten the safety and lives of Indonesian citizens, especially vulnerable groups such as women, children, Indigenous people, farmers and fishers. Indonesia has a particularly high level of vulnerability to the impacts of climate change.

6.2. **CLIMATE VULNERABILITY**

As an archipelagic and maritime country comprising large islands and thousands of small ones, Indonesia is one of the countries with a high level of vulnerability to the impacts of climate change. The increase in the earth's temperature is predicted to have a major effect on sea levels and water temperature. Several cities in Indonesia are at risk of flooding if the government does not take immediate and robust action to address climate change. In its analysis of the impact

Indonesia is one of the countries with a high level of vulnerability to the impacts of climate change.

of rising sea levels in 21 provincial capitals, Kompas determined that 199 of the 514 regencies/cities in Indonesia, including 21 provincial capitals, will be below sea level or submerged by 2050 (Kompas 2021). Kompas's analysis of the impact of rising sea levels was conducted using simulation data from the Climate Central report, and combined spatial analysis, population and economic data, and details of local government policy. Statistics Indonesia describes the looming climate threat:

> Sea level rise, extreme weather and global warming will have devastating consequences for archipelagic countries like Indonesia. United States Agency for International Development (2017) said that the threat of extreme surge, coastal flooding, and abrasion must be faced by 42 million people living less than 10 meters above sea level. Therefore, these threats result in changing the morphology of the coast, submerging small islands, polluting fresh water sources, and having negative impacts on coastal and marine ecology. Warming temperatures in the oceans are bleaching coral reefs.
> (BPS Statistics Indonesia 2020: xi)

The University of Notre Dame Global Adaptation Initiative (ND-GAIN) ranks Indonesia 100th of the 182 countries listed in the ND-GAIN Index for 2020. It has a vulnerability ranking of 107, making it the 76th most vulnerable country, and a readiness ranking of 103, making it the 103rd most ready country in the Index (University of Notre Dame 2022a, 2022b). The vulnerability ranking is classified as 'lower middle', with the 'worst scores' assigned to the projected change in cereal yields, agriculture capacity and dam capacity (University of Notre Dame 2022b). Indonesia and India have populations that are among the largest in the world and have experienced a similar level of economic development. Even though India's land area is larger than that of Indonesia, both countries face similar challenges and vulnerabilities. India's vulnerability ranking is 132 (lower middle), with the 'worst scores' also assigned to projected changes in cereal yields, agriculture capacity and dam capacity (University of Notre Dame 2022a, 2022b).

6.3. **CLIMATE ACTION**

Indonesia ratified the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) through Law No. 6 of 1994, and the Kyoto Protocol through Law No. 17 of 2004. It also ratified the Paris Agreement through Law No. 16 of 2016, following which it submitted Indonesia’s first report on its Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs). These have since been revised to improve the MRV (measurement, reporting, verification) mechanism that measures emissions and to strengthen the adaptation agenda. Nonetheless, the target remains the same—to reduce emissions by 29 per cent through domestic efforts by 2030, or by 41 per cent with international assistance. Together with the revised NDCs, Indonesia has also submitted a long-term strategy document for 2050, which indicates that Indonesia’s emissions peak is projected to occur in 2030, and it will reach net zero in 2060, if not sooner.

Indonesia has engaged with a number of organizations in support of its commitments to the UNFCCC. It is a member of the G77+China bloc, all the members of which are developing countries. The G77 was formed at the UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) in 1964, for the purposes of providing developing countries with ‘a voice to participate in and influence the debate on development and in the effort to build a better, development-oriented economic, financial and trade architecture’ (Ricupero 2004). It currently participates in all the systems of the United Nations, including those related to climate change. Indonesia is also a member of the Cartagena Dialogue Bloc of 30 developed and developing countries, which aims to bridge the differences between developed and developing countries in relation to climate change negotiations. In addition, Indonesia is a member of the Coalition for Rainforest Nations, which comprises 52 forest-owning countries, and of the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC)—the group of 14 petroleum-exporting countries—even though Indonesia is technically a net importer of oil.

Indonesia has engaged with a number of organizations in support of its commitments to the UNFCCC.

The Indonesian Constitution does not refer to climate change, and nor does Indonesia have any laws that specifically regulate or address the climate crisis. Political parties in Indonesia have not made the climate crisis an important political issue that requires resolution through legislation or policymaking. The party coalitions that support the ruling government, and those that support the opposition, have all failed to make the climate crisis a priority issue. In 2013, however, parliamentarians at the national level formed a Green Economy Caucus as a forum for expressing concern about climate change, and to strengthen the role of the House of Representatives in relation to implementing low-carbon development. A year earlier, the Indonesian Green Party had been established as a result of efforts by civil society movements and grassroots communities. It has made the climate and democratic crises part of the party's strategic agenda. The party is relatively new, however, and has not been officially registered as a party eligible to participate in elections.

Policies on climate change focus on reducing emissions from various sectors at the national level.

It is the central government that is the state party to the UNFCCC, although local government and civil society organizations are included as non-party stakeholders. Policies on climate change focus on reducing emissions from various sectors at the national level. The sectors referred to in Indonesia's NDCs are: agriculture, forestry and land use change (the AFOLU sector); the energy sector (electricity and transport); the industrial and processing sector; and the waste management sector. Most of these sectors come under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Environment and Forestry (Kementerian Lingkungan Hidup dan Kehutanan, KLHK). Although emission reduction targets are based on projections and the capacity of ministries in each sector, the KLHK has the authority to carry out cross-sectoral coordination, push priority agendas in climate change negotiations at the Conference of Parties (COP) and coordinate with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The Ministry of National Development Planning is in charge of mainstreaming climate policy on the national development agenda and linking the agenda to the regions. The Ministry of Finance formulates fiscal policies such as budget tagging for central and regional budgets, which tracks budget allocations for mitigation and adaptation measures to address the climate crisis; the issuance of debt securities through green bonds; and advocating for a carbon tax.

The Indonesian courts have not played a significant role in addressing the climate crisis, due in part to the absence of litigation in this area. Indonesia has not yet had a lawsuit directly related to the impacts of climate change, although environmental organizations have recently begun to discuss climate litigation. Such lawsuits in Indonesia are generally directed at the environmental and social impacts of development, especially where violations of environmental regulations are alleged. In other countries, litigation on climate change generally involves alleged government contraventions of emission-reduction policies formulated in accordance with the UNFCCC and the Paris targets, litigation against private sector entities or corporations that are alleged to have contributed to climate change or its impacts and have generated more than 70 per cent of historical global emissions, or both. The remedies sought from such litigation include changes to state and corporate policies directed at drastically reducing emissions, and compensation for loss and damage suffered as a result of disasters caused by climate change.

In the absence of a clear position from the government or political parties on addressing climate change, the climate crisis has become a priority agenda for cross-sectoral civil society organizations (CSOs), which have engaged in joint action and made organizational and community proposals for an appropriate market mechanism for carbon trading in accordance with article 6 of the Paris Agreement. The CSOs work across a number of issue areas from environmental issues (WALHI, Greenpeace Indonesia) to Indigenous peoples' rights and tenure issues (the Indigenous Peoples' Alliance of the Archipelago, AMAN), agrarian and rural reform (the Agrarian Reform Consortium), and gender issues (Women's Solidarity for Human Rights). Several CSOs work on the climate crisis and its relationship with the energy sector, such as the Institute for Essential Service Reform (IESR), which focuses on climate policy, and the Mining Advocacy Network (JATAM), which focuses on mining and energy advocacy. More recently, issues related to intergenerational justice and the role of young people have built momentum, due to the increasingly rapid global development of youth movement networks demanding faster and more ambitious climate action from country leaders through, for example, 'Friday for Future'. The youth movement in Indonesia includes groups such as *Jeda Iklim* (Break for Climate) and Extinction Rebellion Indonesia. Civil society activity on the issue of climate change illustrates the breadth of concern and the degree of awareness being raised at the grassroots level.

The climate crisis has become a priority agenda for cross-sectoral civil society organizations.

Despite the participation by labour groups internationally in the debate on the transition from fossil fuels to renewable energy, the labour movement in Indonesia has not yet engaged with the issue of climate change. The Indonesian Trade Union Confederation (KSBSI) has tried to build a network with environmental organizations on the issue of a just transition, but has not yet succeeded in doing so. This is not assisted by the fact that the climate crisis has not yet been made a policy priority by labour organizations. This is unfortunate as the solidaristic ethos reflected in the coalitions forming around this issue is crucial to any chance of persuading governments and political parties to take the issue of climate change seriously.

In contrast to labour organizations, religious organizations in Indonesia—a Muslim-majority country—play an important role in championing the climate crisis agenda. Although not yet included in the mainstream discussion, a role for religious adherents in addressing the climate crisis is clearly emerging. This is illustrated by the inclusion of disaster-related and environmental issues on the agendas of such organizations. The resolutions proposed in several national meetings of Indonesian religious organizations reflect discussions on environmental issues such as forest fires and renewable energy. The Indonesian chapter of the Interfaith Rainforest Initiative was launched in January 2020. It included religious and Indigenous leaders from the major forest areas (Mollins 2020). The Declaration resulting from this event states that:

> The destruction and loss of tropical forests is not consistent with the teachings and principles of religion, traditional beliefs and values, or the State Constitution, which mandates that every human being maintain the integrity of nature and social justice. We recognize the destruction and loss of tropical forests as a threat to the sustainability of human life for generations to come, so we demand immediate and decisive action. Fundamental changes are needed to the country’s values, lifestyles and policies to protect the tropical forests of Indonesia, and we have a deep moral and spiritual obligation to protect them.
> (UNEP 2020)

Religious leaders were urged to encourage the government to strengthen and fulfil its commitment to protect forests and the rights of Indigenous peoples through, among other things, dialogue, policy, regulation and action (Interfaith Rainforest Initiative 2020).

The Climate Change Performance Index (CCPI) makes comparative assessments of the progress of the climate action and emissions-reduction efforts of 57 countries and the European Union, which collectively produce 90 per cent of global emissions annually. The CCPI assesses these efforts according to four categories: greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, renewable energy, energy use and climate policy (Burck et al. 2020). The CCPI 2021 index ranks Indonesia 24th overall. It is ranked 30th for GHG emissions; 15th for renewable energy; 13th for energy use; and 34th for climate policy, although Indonesia receives a ‘low’ rating for national climate policy performance.

The Climate Action Tracker assesses Indonesia’s performance as ‘highly insufficient’ and states that its long-term strategy ‘presents a pathway that if implemented would be compatible with achieving net zero emissions by 2060’ (Climate Action Tracker 2021). On Indonesia’s dependence on coal, the Climate Action Tracker states:

> Coal capacity continues to increase until 2027 and is planned to represent 64% of electricity generation by 2030, whereas it would need to be a maximum of 10% by 2030. These plans are completely diverging from the Paris Agreement’s goals. Coal is Indonesia’s biggest export product, and with major export markets beginning to implement the Paris agreement with consequential reductions in demand, there is a clear need for Indonesia to diversify its economy and reduce the risks of relying on fossils fuel exports.

Despite being one of the countries particularly at risk from climate change, Indonesia has invested heavily in coal-fired power plant infrastructure. Like China, India and Vietnam, Indonesia added to its coal-burning capacity in the period 2015–2019 (Strauss et al. 2021). This policy has been criticized by environmental organizations such as Greenpeace Indonesia and the Indonesian Forum for the Environment (WALHI).

COP 26 produced agreement on carbon trading as a climate change mitigation mechanism, pursuant to article 6 of the Paris Agreement (Climate Council 2021) which regulates emission reductions through carbon trading mechanisms. The Indonesian Government welcomed the Glasgow Climate Pact, particularly in relation to article 6. Indonesia has pledged to stop building new coal-fired power plants by 2056, and has expressed its intention to phase out coal by 2040. However, coal remains the primary energy source underpinning its economic development (Suoneto and Paramitha 2021; Barrett 2021). During the COP 26 negotiations, Indonesia's president, Joko Widodo, announced a plan to wean the nation off coal in partnership with the Asian Development Bank and the Philippines (Barrett 2021). Indonesia will not be able to achieve this goal and achieve net zero by 2060 without considerable external financial assistance (Barrett 2021).

Also at COP26, Indonesia signed a pact to end deforestation by 2030, but it has since stepped back from its pledge and questioned the terms of the deal (Ellis-Petersen 2021). According to government ministers, 'forcing Indonesia to zero deforestation in 2030 is clearly inappropriate and unfair' and the 'massive development of President Jokowi's era must not stop in the name of carbon emissions or in the name of deforestation' (BBC News 2021; Barrett 2021). Furthermore, it has been reported that Indonesia's 'recent pledges are at odds with development projects approved by the Indonesian government, which will likely see 135.9m acres of forest cut down by 2040' (Ellis-Petersen 2021). This is problematic in a context where 60 per cent of Indonesia's total emissions result from deforestation and it is the world's largest producer of palm oil (Barrett 2021).

The coalition of CSOs formed by AMAN, Forest Watch Indonesia, Greenpeace Indonesia and the Indonesian Forum for the Environment has expressed concerns that the carbon offset mechanism will lead to an increase in the expropriation of customary forests in the name of climate change mitigation (Dalidjo 2021). This a valid concern, given that the Indonesian Government has failed to adequately protect customary forests and the rights of Indigenous people and implemented policies with negligible respect for the principle of free, prior and informed consent (FPIC).

6.4. **DEMOCRATIC DEBILITATION AND INNOVATION IN ADDRESSING THE CLIMATE CRISIS**

Procedural democracy as exemplified in regional and national elections does not include a climate action agenda.

Democracy is expected to support effective climate action but, in practice, procedural democracy has become a means of inhibiting it. Procedural democracy as exemplified in regional and national elections does not include a climate action agenda. This is a notable absence. Research by the Centre for Strategic and International Studies shows that of all the political parties participating in the 2019 general election, only one—Partai Solidaritas Indonesia—had a specific environmental agenda in its vision and mission document (Amri et al. 2019). Political parties and candidates argue that voters prioritize the economy over environmental issues or the climate crisis.

Clientelist politics is a fundamental problem behind many of the challenges facing Indonesia, from environmental damage to persistent social inequality, weak spatial planning, inadequate public services and endemic corruption. Procedural democracy has been hijacked by oligarchs to defend their wealth, 'through the effective control (directly or indirectly) of political parties, law enforcement, media, and government' (Aulia 2022). Auriga and *Tempo Magazine* (2019) found that 262 of the 575 members of parliament (45.5 per cent) are affiliated with companies and businesses in various sectors, including the extractive industries, that are a key source of GHG emissions. Indonesian democracy is therefore vulnerable to capture by vested interests linked to industries that produce or facilitate climate change. Although there is a Green Economy Caucus in parliament, it has no real political power when dealing with the oligarchs.

The Minerals and Coal Law (Minerba Law) and the Omnibus Law on Job Creation—both of which were rushed through parliament without proper public consultation—illustrate the challenges faced by advocates of climate action in Indonesia. The Omnibus Law, in particular, significantly reduces the public participation in environmental protection and management that had been enabled by the Environmental Protection and Management Law, No. 32/2009. In a press release following enactment of the two statutes, Greenpeace Indonesia stated that CSOs believe that the Omnibus and Minerba laws will exacerbate the climate crisis (Greenpeace 2020). For example, the Omnibus Law on Job Creation effectively revokes the authority of local government over environmental protection and management (Sembiring, Fatimah and Anindarini 2020). This is a cause for particular concern, as regional and local leaders present an important avenue for democratic innovation on climate action in the absence of strong leadership from central government on the issue. The idea here is that regional leaders, who are directly elected by the people through the Pilkada (regional election), could be encouraged to address the climate crisis at a regional level through regional work planning. Several regional leaders have made strong climate commitments, such as the Regent of Sorong in West Papua who issued a policy to revoke palm oil company permits and return the land to Indigenous peoples whose rights have been violated. The Regent was sued by the companies, but the Jayapura State Administrative Court dismissed the lawsuits (*West Papua Daily News Update* 2022).

There is also the prospect of democratic innovation at the citizen level, through the strengthening of citizen politics. This would extend political participation by citizens beyond the traditional confines of electoral politics. According to the non-profit organization Cakra Wikara Indonesia, it is important for civil society to intervene and participate in the political space at the community level, as the issues identified at village level are very close to the daily problems of citizens.

Political participation, especially by young people—as shown, for example, by their rejection of the Omnibus Law on Job Creation—is another area ripe for democratic innovation. There is critical awareness among young people across the world of the threat posed by the climate crisis to future generations. Approximately 80 million voters are from the ‘millennial’ and ‘Generation Z’ generational groups. A survey by Indikator Politik and CERAH found that the issue of climate change is of particular concern for the majority of young voters (CERAH 2021). Encouraging solidarity among citizens across generations, and across groups, will be fundamental to the impact that this level of society can have on championing and participating in climate action. Examples of such movements include Rakyat Bantu Rakyat and Warga Bantu Warga (People help People), which advocates for ecological rights and climate action in the vacuum left by the state.

Citizen solidarity and advocacy of climate action will be more effective if a shared agenda to increase awareness of the issues can be advanced through education at the community level. Greater awareness and understanding of the issues will encourage political participation in decision making at various levels, and thereby be translated into a form of political power that can be wielded to bargain for the inclusion of climate action on local and regional political agendas. People or citizen power, in conjunction with the other avenues for democratic innovation referred to above, could step into the gap left by the central government and elevate the discourse on climate action to the point where inaction ceases to be a viable option.

Citizen solidarity and advocacy of climate action will be more effective if a shared agenda to increase awareness of the issues can be advanced through education at the community level.

Finally, and no less importantly, the media has a critical role in raising awareness and publicizing the impacts of climate change, the measures being taken to address the climate crisis and the lack of substantive action taken by governments. In this respect, it is a vital democratic institution that must resist the lure of simply parroting the propaganda of governments and interests aligned with the energy sector, as well as others uninterested in the systemic change required to adapt to and mitigate the effects of climate change. This will not be easy, given the CIVICUS classification of Indonesia as ‘obstructed’ in terms of the freedom associated with exercising rights and criticizing the government in the civic space. This would need to be bolstered by a grassroots movement focused on raising the profile of climate change and providing an alternative discourse to the vacuum that currently exists at the level of central government.

6.5. ADDRESSING THE THREATS TO DEMOCRACY FROM THE CLIMATE CRISIS

According to a National Disaster Management Agency (BNPB) press release, Indonesia is extremely vulnerable to hydrometeorological disasters (Tehusijarana 2019). Despite this fact, the government and election organizers have not seriously considered the threat of ecological disasters and the climate crisis to their conduct of the electoral process. The government, parliament, election organizers, political parties and candidates do not appear to be motivated by the importance of public political participation. Nor does the quality of democracy appear to be a measure of the quality of Indonesia's governance process. This is illustrated by the fact that local elections were still held during the Covid-19 pandemic, despite a wave of protests by CSOs.

The prevalence of money in politics and the defence and/or promotion of vested interests are endemic components of the electoral process in Indonesia.

The prevalence of money in politics and the defence and/or promotion of vested interests are endemic components of the electoral process in Indonesia. In this context, it becomes legitimate to sacrifice the environment for licensing sales. Referring to the example of the palm oil industry in Kalimantan, Aspinall and Berenschot state that politicians 'not only make deals with palm oil companies to enrich themselves' but 'also need to use these deals to recover the expenses they incurred during their last election, and gather funds for the next' (Aspinall and Berenschot 2019: 210). The authors highlight that the costs associated with such deals and the expenses of running an election are 'an important reason why Indonesia's democratization process has not led to curtailment of the dominance of economic elites'; and, in that sense, it is possible to say 'that democratization is accelerating deforestation and the expansion of palm oil cultivation' (Aspinall and Berenschot 2019: 210). This situation has developed, in part, because candidates are required to fund their own campaigns (Aspinall and Berenschot 2019). The current Indonesian political system favours the political parties associated with vested interests and closes the space to alternative political forces, including those advocating for climate action, thereby reducing the short-term prospects for a government-led response to the climate crisis.

Failure to acknowledge and address the urgency associated with the climate crisis will further weaken democracy in Indonesia. The impacts of climate change are not the same, and will vary according to characteristics such as geography, gender, and social and economic position. If differences of impact are not taken into consideration by those developing and implementing policy on climate change, then citizens will lose confidence in political institutions, which will affect democratic stability in Indonesia. With procedural politics captured by the political and economic power of oligarchs, the threat posed by the climate crisis, ecological disasters and inequality will increasingly be felt by the most vulnerable groups. Attempts to express opinions, criticize the government or fight for basic rights might be suppressed by the authorities. This is an unstable dynamic that would inevitably result in increasing social unrest and civic disturbance, which could lead to more violent enforcement measures being deployed by the police and security services.

Winding back the current situation will require the opening up of democratic spaces and encouragement of meaningful participation by citizens. Without democratic space and public participation in policy formulation, the threat posed by the climate crisis will continue to grow. Climate disasters will be more devastating, require more resources to address and continue to destabilize communities, which will threaten the sustainability of elections and other forms of political participation. National and regional elections will be difficult, if not impossible, to hold in the midst of a climate disaster, laying the foundations for a return to more authoritarian government in circumstances that could be framed as a permanent state of emergency. Indonesia has a long history of being dominated by a centralized, authoritarian regime, and a more limited history as a democracy. It is not beyond the realms of possibility to imagine the climate crisis providing an opportunity for authoritarian power to return to Indonesia.

Without democratic space and public participation in policy formulation, the threat posed by the climate crisis will continue to grow.

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Chapter 7

JAPAN

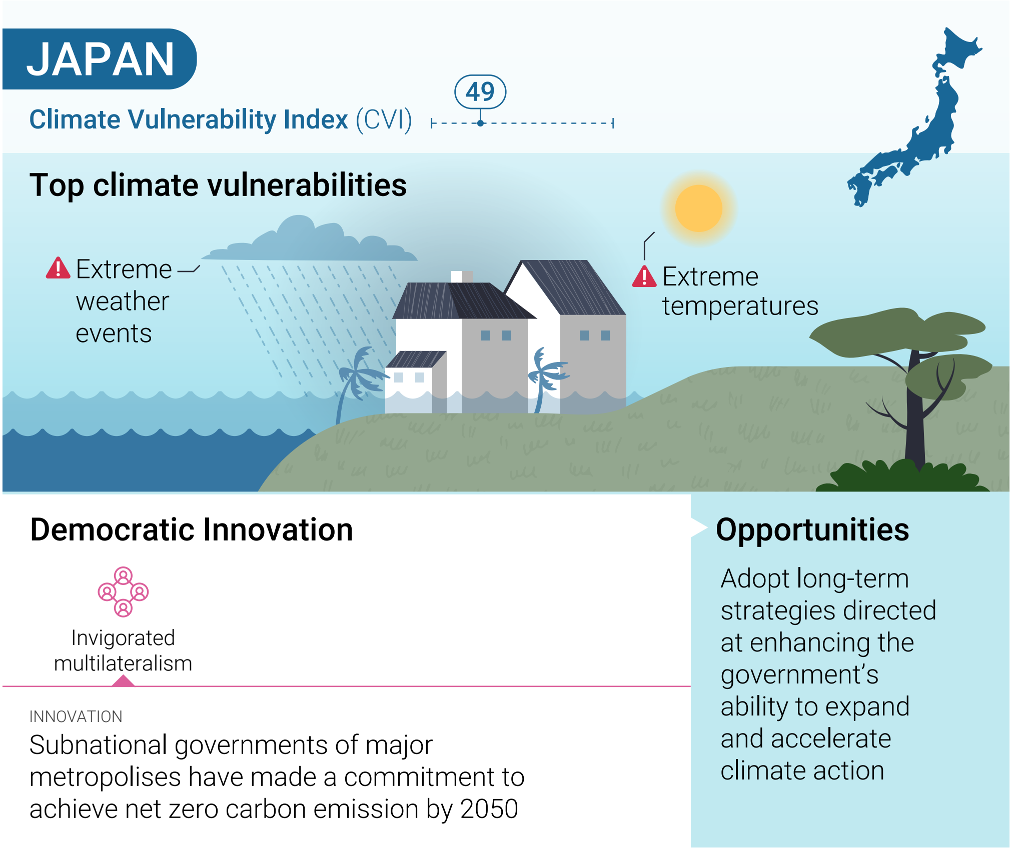
7.1. **INTRODUCTION**

Japan is a parliamentary democracy with a unitary system of government. The 1947 Constitution provides for a separation of powers among the legislative, executive and judicial branches of the national government. The prime minister and Cabinet are accountable to a freely elected bicameral national parliament, the Diet. At the subnational level, Japan is divided into 47 prefectures and 1,741 municipalities, where governors, mayors and unicameral legislatures are elected by popular vote. The party system is characterized by the dominance of the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) as the ruling party, and the near-complete absence of opposition parties capable of winning voter trust as a credible alternative at the national level.

International IDEA's Global State of Democracy (GSoD) Indices show that Japan has performed strongly in terms of forming a representative government, guaranteeing fundamental rights, holding the executive branch accountable and protecting the rule of law, but it has underperformed in the areas of direct democracy, electoral participation, women's political representation and judicial independence. Overall, Japan is considered to be well prepared for climate change and its risks. However, democratic improvements to some of the areas in which it has underperformed could help it to achieve its full potential in the global fight against climate change.

Japan is a parliamentary democracy with a unitary system of government.

Figure 7.1. **Japan**



JAPAN
Climate Vulnerability Index (CVI)
49
Top climate vulnerabilities
Extreme weather events
Extreme temperatures

Democratic Innovation

Invigorated multilateralism

INNOVATION

Subnational governments of major metropolises have made a commitment to achieve net zero carbon emission by 2050

Opportunities

Adopt long-term strategies directed at enhancing the government’s ability to expand and accelerate climate action

7.2. CLIMATE VULNERABILITY

The LDP–Komeito Coalition Government recognizes that climate change is having profound impacts on many parts of Japanese society (Government of Japan 2017). It accepts that climate change has severely affected a wide range of areas, such as agriculture, forestry, the fishing industry, the water environment and resources, the natural ecosystem, public health and urban living. The government predicts that, as climate change continues, the frequency and intensity of water-related natural disasters will increase, including flooding and landslides near rivers, and storm surges in coastal areas.

The government's views on climate vulnerability are well supported by data on the impact and frequency of climate-related disasters in Japan. The Global Climate Risk Index ranked Japan the most affected country in the world in 2018 and the fourth-most affected country in 2019, in relation to fatalities and monetary losses from extreme weather events (Eckstein et al. 2019; Eckstein, Künzel and Schäfer 2021). According to data from the World Bank Climate Change Knowledge Portal (2021), the most severe climate-related natural hazards in Japan are floods, extreme temperatures and storms. Between 1980 and 2020, storms were the most frequently occurring natural disaster in Japan, followed by earthquakes, floods, extreme temperatures and landslides.

Despite experiencing climate-related events of this nature, Japan is considered to have a relatively low level of climate vulnerability because it exhibits a high level of climate change readiness. It is ranked 19th of the 182 countries listed on the University of Notre Dame Global Adaptation Initiative (ND-GAIN) Index for 2020, where it features as the 133rd most vulnerable country and the 11th most ready country (University of Notre Dame 2022a, 2022b). These scores suggest that Japan has a relatively low level of vulnerability and a higher state of readiness in respect of climate change impacts. It should, however, be noted that Japan is considered especially vulnerable in relation to dam capacity, urban concentration and its dependence on imported energy (University of Notre Dame 2022b).

Japan is considered to have a relatively low level of climate vulnerability because it exhibits a high level of climate change readiness.

7.3. LEGAL ASPECTS OF CLIMATE ACTION

Today, climate change is high on the government's agenda, although Japan's record of global climate action is largely mixed. Despite its unique position as the third-largest economy (World Bank 2022a), and the fifth-largest emitter of greenhouse gases (World Bank 2022b), Japan has been less active in global action against climate change. Apart from the late 1990s, as the Kyoto Protocol was being adopted, Japan's leadership on the issue has been largely absent at the global level, and its commitment to international treaties on climate change (e.g. the Paris Agreement) has often been criticized (Koppenborg and Hanssen 2021). Similarly, the government's commitment has not translated into domestic policy and action. The global climate policy watchdog, Climate Action Tracker, rates Japan's climate change policies as 'highly insufficient' (Climate Action Tracker 2022).

In recent years, however, there have been signs of positive change. Since the beginning of his premiership in October 2021, Prime Minister Fumio Kishida has been advocating the creation of 'a new form of capitalism' that promotes economic growth and redistribution in a more sustainable manner (Prime Minister's Office of Japan 2021). Whether his vision leads to major policy change remains to be seen, but in his 2022 New Year's speech to the Diet he stated that tackling climate change is among the priority issues that will serve as 'engines of growth' (Prime Minister's Office of Japan 2022). His Administration has formally updated Japan's Nationally Determined Contribution targets, made an official commitment to achieving a 46 per cent reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2030 and pledged carbon neutrality by 2050. The challenge is now to ensure that the country as a whole fulfils its commitments.

Japan's 1947 Constitution makes no specific reference to climate change or environmental protection.

Japan's 1947 Constitution makes no specific reference to climate change or environmental protection. Given that climate change threatens the constitutional rights of individuals to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness, however, it might be possible to suggest that the Constitution provides the state with a responsibility to address climate change issues and protect the natural environment. Meanwhile, some environmental civil society organizations (CSOs) have called for an amendment to enshrine protection of the environment as the fourth principle in the Constitution, in addition to the existing principles of pacifism, popular sovereignty and fundamental human rights (e.g. Japan Association of Environment and Society for the 21st Century n.d.).

At the statutory level, two separate laws provide the overall legal framework for governmental climate action. The first is the Act on Promotion of Global Warming Countermeasures (Law No. 117 of 1998), intended to promote the formulation and implementation of a national mitigation plan for reducing greenhouse gas emissions. It sets out the roles and responsibilities of government, business and citizens, as well as institutional arrangements at the national and subnational levels. Several amendments have been made to the Act since its enactment. Most notably, a 2021 amendment incorporates the objective of achieving carbon neutrality by 2050 and a 2022 amendment is designed to facilitate private investment in decarbonization projects and intergovernmental transfers to support climate action by subnational governments.

The second piece of climate legislation is the Climate Change Adaptation Act (CCAA, Law No. 50 of 2018). This focuses on the formulation and implementation of a national plan and adaptation measures to respond to climate change impacts. Like the 1998 Act, the CCAA defines the roles and responsibilities of government, business and citizens, as well as nationwide institutional arrangements to promote climate change adaptation practices. The CCAA also calls for international cooperation and assistance to developing countries.

According to the Global Climate Change Litigation database published by the Sabin Center for Climate Change Law, there are three active climate litigation cases in Japan (Global Climate Change Litigation n.d.). A civil and administrative case on the construction of new coal-fired units in Kobe and an administrative case on the construction of a new coal-fired power plant in Yokosuka have been brought by citizens concerned about climate change. These are critically important not only in their own right, but also in shaping the prospects for climate change litigation in Japan. It is worth noting that the GSoD Indices assign a mid-range score to judicial independence in Japan (International IDEA 2020), which can probably be attributed to Japan’s long tradition of judicial restraint and conservatism. It is possible that this may have an impact on the prospects for climate change litigation.

7.4. **POLITICAL ECONOMY OF CLIMATE ACTION**

Climate policymaking is ultimately a political exercise that involves making choices among competing interests and preferences.

Climate policymaking is ultimately a political exercise that involves making choices among competing interests and preferences, which produces winners and losers. Thus, the design and implementation of climate policy and action are shaped by a complex interplay of power interests and incentives among different political and economic institutions, and societal actors.

At the national level, the pro-business Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry (METI) and the pro-environment Ministry of Environment (MoE) have taken the lead in determining climate policy action. METI is usually considered the better-established ministry with more political clout and influence within government than the relatively newly established MoE (Sofer 2016). The two ministries were not previously viewed as sharing the objective of achieving carbon neutrality, but it seems that there is currently broad consensus within government on the transition. This is a significant departure for METI, which was reluctant to pursue climate action and carbon neutrality at the expense of economic growth. There is less consensus around how to achieve carbon neutrality. METI favours voluntary approaches to carbon pricing, such as the creation of a carbon credit market in which participation by private business and industry would be voluntary. This approach clearly contrasts with the more hands-on regulatory approach favoured by MoE (e.g. through implementation of a carbon tax) (Arimura 2022).

METI has long supported the interests of the business community, especially those of the powerful Japanese Business Federation (Keidanren), which serves as a collective lobbyist and interest group on climate policymaking and represents more than 1,000 Japanese corporations and industrial associations. Given that its members include energy-intensive industries such as iron and steel, power generation, coal, oil and car makers, Keidanren is reluctant to shift its position on carbon neutrality. The business community is generally more interested in developing ‘green technology’ to achieve carbon neutrality rather than make structural changes in the energy sector (Yamada 2021). However, it is worth noting that not everyone in the business community shares Keidanren’s position on climate action. The Japan Climate Leaders’ Partnership—a growing coalition of business corporations—has expressed a commitment to the creation of a decarbonized society and actively supports climate action.

In 2018, various non-state actors, including business corporations, CSOs and subnational governments, established the Japan Climate Initiative (JCI) as a member of the Alliances for Climate Action, a global network of coalitions. The JCI aims to accelerate climate action in Japan. As of April 2022, it had more than 680 member organizations from the private business sector, the non-profit sector and the public sector. Notable JCI members include the Tokyo Metropolitan Government, the Kanagawa Prefectural Government and the Kyoto Prefectural Government. However, it is as yet unclear how non-state actors and groups committed to carbon neutrality will be able to affect public opinion and climate policymaking in Japan.

Public demand for comprehensive climate policy and urgent action is not particularly strong. A recent survey suggests that most Japanese people are well aware of the climate crisis but do not necessarily believe that a comprehensive climate policy and urgent action are required. According to a global public opinion survey conducted by the United Nations Development Programme and the University of Oxford (2021), 79 per cent of Japanese people believe that climate change is a global crisis, but only 62 per cent consider it necessary for Japan to take urgent, comprehensive climate action. Thus, there is a gap between public awareness of the global climate crisis and public support for climate action. Together with the general perception that Japan has a relatively low level of climate vulnerability and a high level of readiness for climate change, the relatively low level of public support for urgent, comprehensive climate action could explain the current government’s less than robust approach to taking action to limit global temperature rises and address climate change.

Public demand for comprehensive climate policy and urgent action is not particularly strong.

7.5. **INTERGOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS AND CLIMATE ACTION**

Both national and subnational governments are involved in climate action. Generally, the national government sets nationwide policy and subnational governments implement it within their jurisdictions. For example, the Act on Promotion of Global Warming Countermeasures and the Climate Change Adaptation Act both spell out the roles and responsibilities of subnational governments in the implementation of mitigation and adaptation measures. However, this division of labour is gradually changing. Recent years have witnessed subnational governments not only implement national policies, but also develop their own initiatives and play a more prominent role in the planning and implementation of climate action.

According to the Japanese Ministry of the Environment (2022), as of 30 June 2022, 749 subnational governments, including those in major urban cities such as Tokyo, Osaka, Kyoto and Yokohama, had made a commitment to achieve net zero carbon emissions by 2050. These subnational governments are host to 119 million people and account for 94 per cent of Japan's population. Working closely with the national government, many of them are now busy developing and implementing action plans and priority measures to achieve the net zero target. Their performance varies, and some are certainly performing better than others, but they are all part of a broader movement with the potential to reshape Japan's national climate policy (Koppenborg and Hanssen 2021).

With a population of over 13.5 million, Tokyo is often considered to be at the forefront of subnational climate action in Japan. It announced its commitment to achieve carbon neutrality by 2050 in 2019—ahead of the national government. The Tokyo Metropolitan Government has implemented a range of climate measures (Lee 2020) such as an Emissions Trading System (ETS), which is the world's first mandatory carbon dioxide cap and trade programme at the city level. Launched in 2010, the ETS was considered a local response to the national government's inability to make a strong commitment (Roppongi 2016). It initially included 1,340 large facilities from industrial factories to public and commercial buildings, and education buildings (Lee and Colopinto 2010). According to the Tokyo Metropolitan Government, the ETS has contributed to a 33 per cent reduction in baseline emission levels compared to average emissions in the compliance period 2002 to 2007 (Tokyo Metropolitan Government 2022).

7.6. **CLIMATE ACTION IN A COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE**

While Japan appears to be in a better position than most to protect its national interests in the global climate crisis, as the world's third-largest economy and fifth-largest greenhouse gas emitter, its climate action may be insufficient. Critics highlight that the government's commitment and action fall short of what is required to limit global temperature increase to the critical threshold of 1.5°C. It is argued that Japan's updated targets are still insufficient even for a 2°C benchmark. In addition, concerns have been raised about the lack of a clear plan and policies from the government for achieving targets, as well as the low share of renewable energy sources in total power generation and Japan's significant continuing dependency on coal (Burck et al. 2021).

Japan is ranked 45th on the 2022 Climate Change Performance Index, performing at a medium level on efficient energy consumption and at a lower level on reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, developing renewable energy capacity and implementation of climate policies (Burck et al. 2021). In the Asia-Pacific region, Japan is ranked eighth, far behind countries such as India, the Philippines, Indonesia and Thailand. Similarly, the Climate Action Tracker assesses Japan's climate targets, policies and financing as 'insufficient', an indication that Japan will need to improve its climate policies, commitments and contributions substantially to be in alignment with the Paris Agreement's 1.5°C threshold (Climate Action Tracker 2022).

7.7. **DEMOCRATIC CONSTRAINTS ON CLIMATE ACTION**

It is likely that climate action in Japan is hampered by a combination of weak supply from government and weak demand from the general public. The lack of momentum behind climate action in Japan is linked to institutional characteristics that can affect liberal democracies, such as short-termism, self-referring decision making, weak multilateralism and capture by vested interests (Held and Hervey 2009). As in many other democratic countries, short-termism is a defining feature of Japanese politics. Political leaders attempt to increase their chances of election or re-election by presenting policies and promises directed at providing short-term benefits to constituents within the electoral cycle. At the same time, voters tend to select candidates who they hope will deliver benefits to them in the not-too-distant future.

It is likely that climate action in Japan is hampered by a combination of weak supply from government and weak demand from the general public.

While free, fair and regular elections are a central accountability mechanism in democracies, the self-referring decision making of voters can lead to decisions about parties or individual candidates based on their ability and performance in serving voters' self-interest. The characteristics of short-termism and self-referring decision making do not readily translate into strong demand for and supply of climate action, particularly as upfront transaction costs are often unattractively high while the benefits manifest themselves over the longer term and beyond generations. Indeed, climate change is not a key feature of national elections in Japan. Recent research conducted by WWF (2021) on the 2021 general elections in Japan noted that neither the LDP nor Komeito made a strong commitment to reducing greenhouse gas emissions or eliminating coal-fired power stations in their manifestos. Voter turnout was as low as 55 per cent, which is not unusual given Japan's under-performance on electoral participation, as reflected in the International IDEA GSoD Indices (International IDEA 2020). The two-party coalition retained control of the country's lower house.

Self-referring decision making in democratic elections prevents the emergence of strong multilateralism, which in this context would manifest as a coordinated global effort to address the climate crisis. Japan is a high-income country with one of the highest levels of greenhouse gas emissions per capita, but it is the poorer countries that generally face greater risks and levels of suffering from the climate crisis. Thus, there may not be a strong incentive for Japan to participate in global collective action against climate change if such action conflicts with Japan's self-interest. Indeed, Japan's mixed record on global climate action could, in part, reflect its relatively weak engagement with multilateralism more generally.

Finally, there is the problem of capture by vested interests. It is clear that Keidanren is in a unique position to influence climate policymaking in Japan. The business federation enjoys strong connections not only to METI, but also to the LDP. It is reported that Keidanren has been a major donor to the LDP in the past (Sofer 2016). Keidanren has also negotiated with the MOE on behalf of polluting corporations and industries. In addition, when new environmental policy and regulations are being created, Keidanren is regularly invited to serve as a member of the government's advisory board, the opinions of which are often used as the basis for drafting documents (Arimura et al. 2016). The active involvement of Keidanren in climate policymaking helps to explain the lack of strong climate action in Japan.

7.8. **POTENTIAL APPROACHES TO THESE CONSTRAINTS**

Government and public support for climate action to address the global climate crisis is currently limited by the self-interested agenda that dominates domestic politics and voter sentiment. As a high-income country and significant greenhouse gas emitter, Japan is expected to mitigate its own climate risks and contribute to global action on climate change. Potential strategies for stimulating substantive climate action by Japan would include incorporating approaches that draw on notions of ‘a planning state’, ‘a solidaristic ethos’, ‘invigorated multilateralism’ and ‘fair and inclusive politics’ (see Chapter 1)—all of which are largely absent from contemporary Japanese politics.

To overcome short-termism and self-referring decision making, Japan’s political leaders and political parties need to adopt a long-term, programmatic orientation directed at enhancing the government’s ability and willingness to expand and accelerate climate action—not only to protect Japan’s national interests, but also to promote global public goods. A programmatic approach to politics emphasizes the distribution of public goods and services, rather than the delivery of private goods in return for political support. This approach is better suited to an agenda that envisages action on climate change, where such action could be characterized as a public good, the benefits of which are enjoyed by all members of society. While programmatic politics on climate change may still be at an early stage of development in Japan, the long-term focus of a planning state and the intergenerational development of a solidaristic ethos on climate action would be likely to contribute to the creation of an environment in which programmatic practices take root, thereby making the government less reluctant to design and implement long-term climate action and policies.

The prevalence of multilateralism and inclusive politics in the global ‘climate action’ space might lead to an increase in domestic public demand for an improved and accelerated effort by the national government to accelerate climate action. One of the benefits of strong multilateralism in the global space is the opportunity for domestic climate action movements to link up with those around the world. As the notion of multilateralism on climate action is further acknowledged and accepted in Japan, the public will be able to leverage the influence of global climate action to demand more action on climate change from the national government. This has the potential to open up the climate policymaking process to make space for the public to voice their concerns and opinions on climate action, while also enabling consultations between the government and relevant stakeholders.

Public education and information campaigns on the global climate crisis will be crucial to elevating public awareness on the urgent need for action on climate change.

Public education and information campaigns on the global climate crisis, including how it will affect Japan both directly and indirectly, will be crucial to elevating public awareness on the urgent need for action on climate change. Some national government agencies, subnational governments and CSOs are already actively engaged in this space. The key to implementation of the approaches referred to above, in terms of encouraging Japanese citizens to demand greater action on climate change from their government, is for citizens to have a better understanding of the suffering generated by the global climate crisis, regardless of nationality, ethnicity or age. It is hoped that greater empathy might prompt people to take action and demand an expansion and acceleration of climate action. Greater public awareness will be equally important in helping people to make more informed decisions, including changing their social and political behaviour in the light of the global climate crisis. It may even force climate change onto the policy agenda of political parties as an electoral issue.

7.9. CLIMATE THREATS TO DEMOCRACY

The effect of the global climate crisis on the state of democracy in Japan is an important question that requires further research, particularly in relation to the risk of insecurity, inequality and instability (see Chapter 1). The government’s failure to respond to the climate crisis might lead to political instability and democratic backsliding, and undermine free and fair elections. As the issue gains traction with the public, the government's inability or refusal to respond to the climate crisis and climate-related natural disasters could lead to greater opposition or civic unrest as dissatisfaction with the government's position on climate action animates a more informed citizenry. This might create a more hotly contested electoral space, as voters articulate their dissatisfaction through the ballot box. Although changes in government are part of a healthy, functioning democracy, if they occur frequently in a political culture unused to such changes this can destabilize the democratic system and risk disrupting long-term, coherent climate action.

Public dissatisfaction with mainstream political parties and their climate policies might fuel the rise of populists and extremists.

On the other hand, public dissatisfaction with mainstream political parties and their climate policies might fuel the rise of populists and extremists, who could challenge existing democratic institutions and norms in the name of more comprehensive, accelerated climate action. Political stability has been one of the key features of Japanese democracy. Since the current political system was established in 1955, the LDP has dominated Japanese politics and formed the government except for two brief periods in 1993–1994 and 2009–2012. Power tends to transition between different factions in the LDP, not among different political parties. However, it is possible that the ruling party's poor handling of the climate crisis and major climate-related natural disasters could set the stage for the rise of populist sentiments, as the latter play on people's grievances and create polarization as a way to gain control and remain in power.

Alternatively, those dissatisfied with the government's attitude to climate action might feel disconnected from climate policymaking, lose confidence in the political establishment and subsequently disengage from the democratic process altogether. A recent opinion poll shows that 60 per cent of the people in Japan are dissatisfied with the way democracy works, 42 per cent say that the political system needs major reform and 24 per cent believe that it needs to be completely overhauled (Wike et al. 2021). At the same time, people may be less optimistic about the prospects for change through politics. Just a few years earlier, a similar survey indicated that 68 per cent of the population believed that nothing changes, regardless of who wins an election (Stokes and Devlin 2018). Aside from apathy, widespread cynicism may also explain the country's low voter turnout, which at slightly above or below 50 per cent of eligible voters has been among the lowest in the region (International IDEA 2021). When people walk away because of dissatisfaction and cynicism with the democratic system, the quality of democracy deteriorates—or deteriorates further.

7.10. **MITIGATING THE CLIMATE THREATS TO DEMOCRACY**

If democracy in Japan is to better address the threats from the global climate crisis, it is essential that public dissatisfaction with the government's climate action and response leads to more public engagement in the democratic process rather than greater public disengagement. This means increasing the number of people involved in democratic politics and climate policymaking, as well as changing the way that people become involved in the climate policy process.

It is critically important that the democratic process of climate policymaking becomes more transparent and inclusive.

It is critically important that the democratic process of climate policymaking becomes more transparent and inclusive, creating a space and incentives for all segments of the population—CSOs, women, youth and minorities—to participate in deliberations on climate action. The inclusion of those who have been underrepresented and disengaged in the past could counterbalance the strong influence of energy-intensive industries and others who stand to lose the most from comprehensive, accelerated climate action. Shifts of this nature have the potential to create new dynamics in the political economy of climate action in Japan.

It is essential that the mode of public engagement shifts from simple information sharing and ad hoc consultation to more systematic involvement in climate policymaking, and eventually to collaboration and co-production where government works with citizens as partners to design and implement climate policy and action (on different types of policy engagement, see Martin 2009). Meaningful public engagement underpins the foundations of a healthy democratic society. It could help to overcome the Japanese public's deep-seated mistrust of government and the political system, and prevent the global climate crisis from turning into a democratic one.

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LEGISLATION

Act on Promotion of Global Warming Countermeasures (Law No. 117 of 1998)

Climate Change Adaptation Act (Law No. 50 of 2018)

Constitution of Japan 1947

Chapter 8

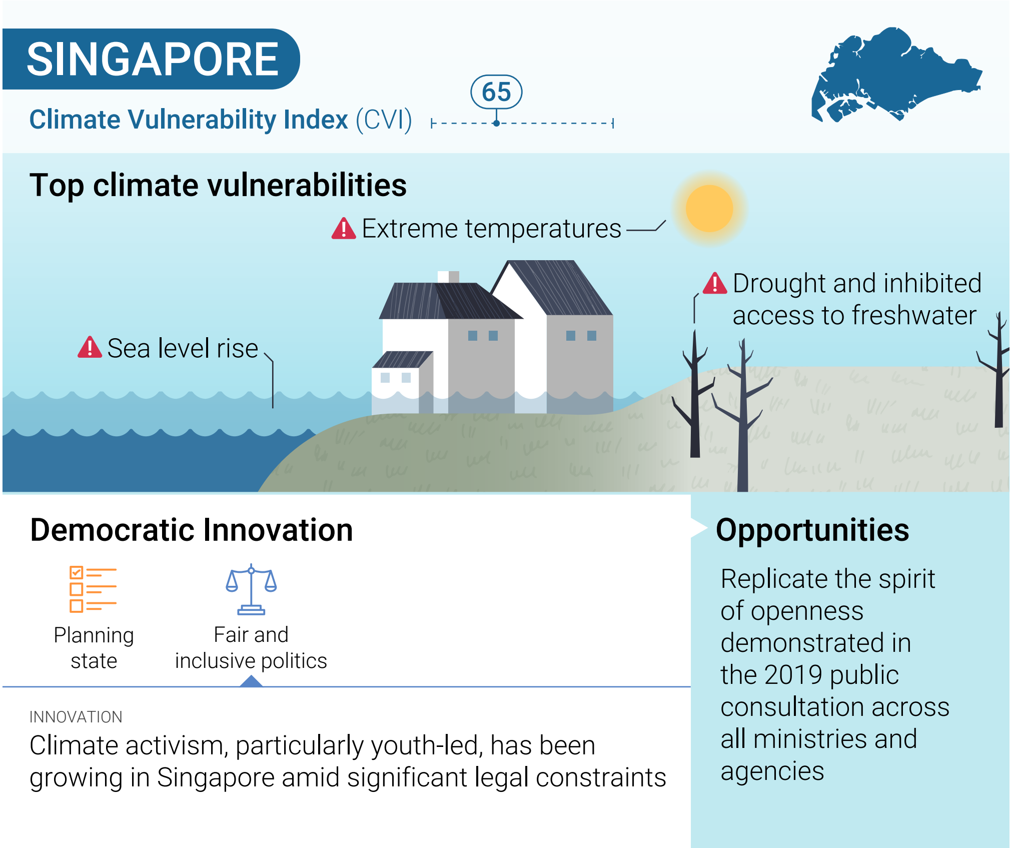
SINGAPORE

8.1. INTRODUCTION

International IDEA’s Global State of Democracy Indices describe Singapore’s performance as mid-range (0.40–0.70) in categories such as representative government, fundamental rights, social rights and equality, and checks on government. Singapore received a high-performance rating (0.86) for Impartial Administration but a low performance rating for both Freedom of Expression (0.39) and Direct Democracy (0.01) (International IDEA 2021).

In December 2021, the CIVICUS Monitor 2021 downgraded Singapore’s civic space rating to ‘repressed’ in response to concerns regarding ‘restrictions on free speech, the curtailment of media freedoms, and the use of overly broad and ambiguous laws to restrict activism’ (CIVICUS Monitor 2021b). According to CIVICUS, the Foreign Interference (Countermeasures) Act (FICA), which was enacted in October 2021, enables the Minister of Home Affairs to target individuals who act, for example, ‘towards a political end’, thereby creating a broad ambit within which ‘almost any form of expression and association relating to politics, social justice or other matters of public interest in Singapore may be ensnarled’ (CIVICUS Monitor 2021b). The downgraded rating is consistent with the low performance rating for freedom of expression assigned to Singapore by the Global State of Democracy Indices.

Figure 8.1. **Singapore**



SINGAPORE

Climate Vulnerability Index (CVI) 65

Top climate vulnerabilities

⚠ Extreme temperatures
⚠ Sea level rise
⚠ Drought and inhibited access to freshwater

Democratic Innovation

Planning state
Fair and inclusive politics

INNOVATION

Climate activism, particularly youth-led, has been growing in Singapore amid significant legal constraints

Opportunities

Replicate the spirit of openness demonstrated in the 2019 public consultation across all ministries and agencies

Singapore has been a parliamentary democracy since independence on 9 August 1965 (Singapore Ministry of Foreign Affairs n.d.). Singapore's Head of State is President Halimah Yacob and the executive branch of government is led by Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong of the People's Action Party (PAP). The 14th Parliament has 103 members (MPs)—92 elected constituency MPs, 2 non-constituency MPs (NCMPs) and 9 nominated MPs (Parliament of Singapore 2022b). At the 2020 general election, the PAP won 83 seats, the Workers' Party won 10 seats and the Progress Singapore

Party was allocated 2 NCMP seats.[5] Having doubled its number of seats at the 2020 general election, the Secretary-General of the Workers' Party, Pritam Singh, became the Leader of the Opposition (Parliament of Singapore 2022a).

8.2. **CLIMATE VULNERABILITY**

Singapore is vulnerable to the effects of climate change on a number of levels. First, 30 per cent of the island is less than 5 metres above sea level, leaving it vulnerable to increases in sea levels, as well as the risk of coastal erosion and inland flooding. Tide-gauge measurements in the Singapore and Johor Straits show that sea levels rose by 12–17 mm per decade between 1975 and 2009 (Tkalich et al. 2013). Swell waves swept up by the north-east monsoon storms pose an increasing threat to reclaimed land.

Second, thermal comfort will be disrupted by the 'urban heat island effect', which compounds warming and adversely affects livability and the quality of urban life. Third, food security will become an increasingly important issue as Singapore currently imports over 90 per cent of its food, exposing it to the volatility of supply and demand in the global food markets (Singapore Food Agency 2020). Fourth, Singapore has no natural water resources. It imports much of its water from Malaysia, and the remainder is drawn from collected rainwater, desalination and filtered sewage water (see e.g. Ghangaa 2018; Vietnam Investment Review 2019). Drought has affected the region, including Malaysia, so Singapore will need to strengthen its water security and its resilience to drought conditions. Singapore's climate vulnerabilities will require comprehensive adaptation efforts and strategies.

Singapore is ranked 6th of 182 countries in the University of Notre Dame Global Adaptation Initiative (ND-GAIN) Index of 2020, between Denmark (5th) and Austria (7th) (University of Notre Dame 2022a). It is the 118th most vulnerable country, with a ranking of 65, and is the most ready country (ranked 1st) (University of Notre Dame 2022a, 2022b).

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[5] The Singapore Constitution allows for up to 12 NCMPs to be elected. NCMPs are from opposition parties; they are offered NCMP seats if they lose the election but receive the highest percentage of votes among unelected candidates from opposition parties. This policy ensures that there will always be a minimum number of opposition members in parliament.

8.3. **CLIMATE ACTION**

Singapore ratified the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change on 27 August 1997, which it signed on 29 May 1997. It also signed the Kyoto Protocol on 12 April 2006 and ratified it on 11 July 2006. In addition, Singapore ratified the Doha Amendment to the Kyoto Protocol on 24 September 2014 and signed the Paris Agreement on 22 April 2016, which it subsequently ratified on 21 September 2016 (see United Nations Treaty Collection n.d.).

Singapore's Constitution does not address the climate crisis but as a party to the above treaties, it has introduced climate change laws and policies (Lin 2020). In 2015, Singapore submitted an Intended Nationally Determined Contribution (INDC), which was later resubmitted as Singapore's first Nationally Determined Contribution. In the NDC, Singapore pledges to reduce emissions intensity by 36 per cent below 2005 levels by 2030 (NCCS 2020b). On 31 March 2020, Singapore updated its NDC in line with the Paris Agreement's 'ratchet mechanism' to reflect an absolute emissions limitation target of 65 million tonnes of CO_2 equivalent ($MtCO_2e$), which uses the latest IPCC methodologies and includes nitrogen triflouride (NF_3) as an additional gas (NCCS 2020b). This updated target represents progress beyond the first NDC. Singapore has also submitted its long-term Low Emissions Development Strategy (LEDS), pursuant to article 4, paragraph 19 of the Paris Agreement, and aims to halve emissions to $33MtCO_2e$ by 2050, with a view to achieving net zero emissions as soon as it is viable in the second half of the century (NCCS 2020a).

Singapore's Constitution does not address the climate crisis but it has introduced climate change laws and policies.

In 2021, the Climate Action Tracker, which tracks countries' NDC submissions, assessed Singapore's climate target to be 'critically insufficient' and gave it the worst rating on the Climate Action Tracker's five-point scale (Climate Action Tracker 2021). A spokesperson for the National Climate Change Secretariat (NCCS) said that the government was reviewing the methodology used and observed that the Climate Action Tracker may not have fully accounted for Singapore's unique challenges as a small city-state with limited capacity to harness alternative energy resources (Tan 2021a).

A number of laws have been passed to address climate change. For example, the Environmental Management and Protection Act 1999 consolidates the laws relating to the control, protection and management of environmental pollution. Its focus is on environmental pollution control in the air and water, and on noise pollution (Bea et al. 2019). On 13 September 2021, amending legislation was passed to provide for the control of greenhouse gases (GHG). Among other things, the Environmental Protection and Management (Amendment) Act 2021 mandates measures to mitigate the GHG impacts of the hydrofluorocarbons typically used in refrigeration and air conditioning (Singapore National Environment Agency 2021).

The Carbon Pricing Act 2018 (CPA), which took effect on 1 January 2019, together with the various regulations made under the Act, are further examples of such legislation. The CPA sets out the framework for a carbon tax and the obligations of large GHG emitters, including measurement, reporting and verification (MRV) requirements. The carbon tax covers six GHGs (Second Schedule, Part 1). An industrial facility that emits direct GHG emissions equal to or above 2,000 tonnes CO_2e annually is required to register the business facility as a reportable facility and submit an Annual Emissions Report (Part 3). Once an industrial facility has emitted direct GHG emissions equal to or above 25,000 tCO_2e annually, it is also required to register as a taxable facility and submit annual Monitoring Plans and Emissions Reports (Part 3). Taxable facilities will have to pay a tax at the rate of SGD 5 per tonne of GHG emissions (tCO_2e) in the period 2019 to 2023 (CPA 2018).

Singapore's emissions profile for 2019 shows that total emissions were approximately 51.6 $MtCO_2$e, of which power and industry constituted 84.3 per cent of primary emissions (NCCS 2022a, 2022c). Because Singapore's carbon tax applies to large emitters that directly emit 25,000 tCO_2e per year, the CPA effectively covers around 80 per cent of Singapore's total emissions (NCCS 2022a). The carbon tax applies uniformly to all sectors without exemption, making

Singapore's carbon tax system one of the most comprehensive in terms of coverage. In 2021, it was announced that the initial carbon tax rate of SGD 5/tCO_2e would be reviewed and increased to between SGD 10 and SGD 15/tCO_2e by 2030; the results of the review were to be announced in the 2022 Budget (Ho 2021). In 2022, the Singapore Government announced that its carbon tax would be revised from SGD 5 to SGD 25/tCO_2e in 2024 and 2025, following which it would increase to SGD 45/tCO_2e in 2026 or 2027, and SGD 50 to SGD 80 per tonne by 2030 (NCCS 2022b; see also Singapore Ministry of Finance 2022).

Other relevant legislation includes the Energy Conservation Act 2012, which promotes energy conservation and improved energy efficiency. This was amended by the Energy Conservation (Amendment) Act 2017, which requires the 30 or 40 largest emitters covered by the Act to develop monitoring plans and submit verifiable emissions reports (s. 78). In 2019, parliament passed the Resource Sustainability Act 2019, which addresses relatively high waste generation streams with low rates of recycling, such as electronic waste (Part 3), and food and packaging waste including plastics (Parts 4 and 5) (Singapore Ministry of Sustainability and the Environment 2020). This Act also introduced an Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) scheme for electronic waste in Singapore (Part 6).

8.3.1. **Climate action champions**

In 2018, the Singapore Government worked with an informal group of green group leaders and individuals to set up the Climate Action SG Alliance (CASA), which aims to harness mass communication to inspire climate action. Its members came from the private sector and civil society, and the Senior Minister of State for the Ministry of Sustainability and the Environment attended in an advisory capacity. CASA has undertaken three broad projects on climate action—Project Education, Project Business and Project Recycling (Climate Action SG Alliance n.d.).

Climate activism has been growing in Singapore.

Climate activism has been growing in Singapore. Groups such as Eco Singapore, Singapore Youth for Climate Action and LepakInSG have organized events to raise awareness about climate action, including bringing young people to and involving them in international climate negotiations and sharing their findings on return. Inspired by the global climate youth movement generated by the Swedish teenager Greta Thunberg, SG Climate Rally organized the country's first climate rally at Hong Lim Park on 21 September 2019. The park hosts the only designated Speakers' Corner in Singapore, where public protest is permitted subject to police permits having been obtained. Organized by students, the SG Climate Rally attracted more than 1,700 participants, all dressed in red, calling for greater action on climate change (Tan 2019; Wong 2019).

During the 2020 general election, two civil society groups—SG Climate Rally and Speak for Climate (S4C)—ran a campaign called Greenwatch to identify which political parties supported enhanced climate action (Singapore Climate Rally n.d.). They produced a Climate Scorecard to assess the party manifestos and ranked parties on how they addressed climate change (in the case of the ruling party), or how they proposed to address climate change (in the case of opposition parties) (Greenwatch n.d.). Greenwatch found that all political parties in Singapore support enhanced climate action. The scorecard was consulted widely by younger voters to understand the parties' climate ambitions.

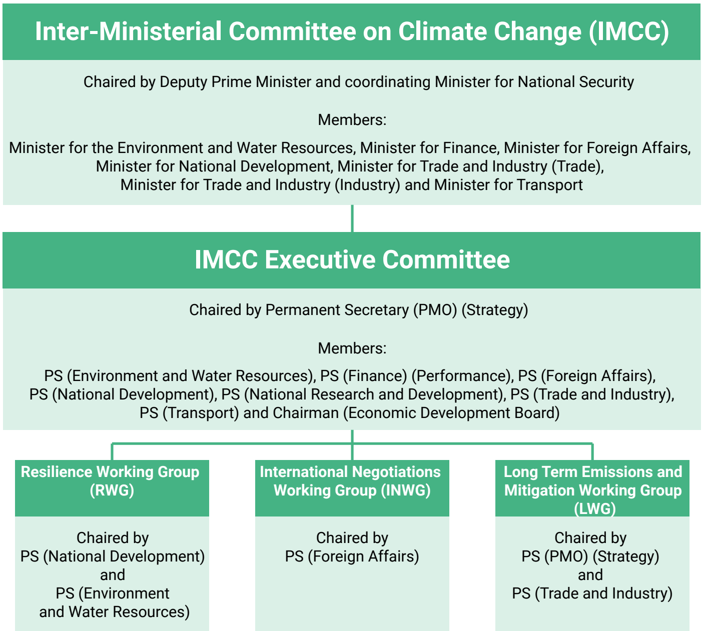
8.3.2. **The role of various levels of government**

The Inter-Ministerial Committee on Climate Change (IMCCC) was set up in 2007 to coordinate climate action across ministries. The IMCCC is chaired by the Senior Minister and Coordinating Minister for National Security (see Figure 8.2). The IMCCC Executive Committee oversees the work of the International Negotiations Working Group, the Long Term Emissions and Mitigation Working Group and the Resilience Working Group (Singapore National Environment Agency 2016). The National Climate Change Secretariat (NCCS) was established in July 2010, as part of the Prime Minister's Office, to ensure effective coordination of Singapore's domestic and international policies, plans and actions on climate change.

8.3.3. **The role of courts**

Laws have been strengthened and amended over the years to manage GHG emissions, but affected firms are usually given considerable latitude in the form of transition periods to adhere to new rules, thereby reducing non-compliance (Singapore Ministry of Finance 2018). While environmental groups, activists and

Figure 8.2. **Inter-Ministerial Committee on Climate Change**



Inter-Ministerial Committee on Climate Change (IMCC)

Chaired by Deputy Prime Minister and coordinating Minister for National Security

Members:

Minister for the Environment and Water Resources, Minister for Finance, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Minister for National Development, Minister for Trade and Industry (Trade), Minister for Trade and Industry (Industry) and Minister for Transport

IMCC Executive Committee

Chaired by Permanent Secretary (PMO) (Strategy)

Members:

PS (Environment and Water Resources), PS (Finance) (Performance), PS (Foreign Affairs), PS (National Development), PS (National Research and Development), PS (Trade and Industry), PS (Transport) and Chairman (Economic Development Board)

Resilience Working Group (RWG)

Chaired by PS (National Development) and PS (Environment and Water Resources)

International Negotiations Working Group (INWG)

Chaired by PS (Foreign Affairs)

Long Term Emissions and Mitigation Working Group (LWG)

Chaired by PS (PMO) (Strategy) and PS (Trade and Industry)

Source: Singapore National Environment Agency (NEA), *Singapore's Second Biennial Update Report, 2016: Under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change* (Singapore: NEA, 2016), <https://unfccc.int/documents/180715>, accessed 21 May 2022.

communities elsewhere have used the law and the courts to influence governments and corporations to take climate action, this has not yet happened in Singapore.

8.4. DEMOCRATIC DEBILITATION AND INNOVATION IN ADDRESSING THE CLIMATE CRISIS

The Singapore Government regularly issues calls to action directed at individuals, the wider community and businesses. In developing policy responses, the NCCS and the Ministry of Sustainability and the Environment have held public consultations to understand the interests of and barriers experienced by various stakeholders. Public consultations have been held either physically or online since 2015, and form part of a democratic process to address the climate crisis.

In-person public consultations regularly involve 50–100 participants. The government has organized sector-focused stakeholder dialogues and sought to capture responses online, in order to canvass a range of views (see e.g. NCCS 2015).

In February 2020, the government announced that it would publish a summary of the responses to the consultation on the websites of the government's feedback unit, REACH, and the NCCS in the first quarter of 2020. The NCCS reached out to those who submitted feedback for permission to publish their responses but only 21 of the around 2,000 responses were published on 4 March 2020 (NCCS 2020a). These responses were from well-known climate activists and observers in Singapore. The small number of published responses could indicate that most of the respondents were not keen to have their feedback published for fear of repercussions.

On 1 February 2021, the 14th Parliament debated and passed a motion recognizing climate change as a global emergency and threat to mankind and calling

> on the Government, in partnership with the private sector, civil society and the people of Singapore, to deepen and accelerate efforts to mitigate and adapt to climate change, and to embrace sustainability in the development of Singapore.
> (Parliament of Singapore 2021)

During the nine-hour parliamentary debate, 18 MPs shared their views and highlighted the low level of the carbon tax. Following the debate, the Minister for Sustainability and the Environment, Grace Fu, announced a new Green Plan to help Singapore improve its approach to sustainability. The Deputy Prime Minister and then Finance Minister, Heng Swee Keat, announced that the trajectory and level of Singapore's carbon tax would be reviewed after 2023 'in consultation with industry and expert groups' (Tan 2021b). He added that businesses would be given time to adjust to any revision in the carbon tax trajectory.

There was no further reference to public consultations on the carbon tax review until 13 September 2021, when the MP Louis Ng Kok

Kwang asked the current Minister for Finance, Lawrence Wong, whether public consultations would be held. The Minister replied that the government planned to 'engage widely' as part of the review. On 7 December 2021, the Ministry of Finance invited 'views and suggestions' from the public on three themes ahead of the 2022 Budget statement, which was scheduled for 18 February 2022. The third theme referred to 'preparing Singaporeans for a greener and more sustainable future'. However, there was no mention of the carbon tax review in the press release or annex document (Singapore Ministry of Finance 2021b). A small number of climate activists were invited to a 'Pre-Budget engagement' with the Second Minister for Finance, Indranee Rajah, on 24 January 2022.

Public consultations are an important tool for ensuring public participation in democracy, as a means of disseminating information or as a forum for responding to policies.

Public consultations are an important tool for ensuring public participation in democracy, as a means of disseminating information or as a forum for responding to policies, such as those to address the climate crisis. The Singapore Government has attempted to provide avenues for public feedback in the past year, such as through REACH or in conversations with a broad agenda (e.g. the Singapore Green Plan Conversations). At their best, these public consultations allow some members of the public to provide feedback to public servants. At worst, they can lack meaning—it is not always transparent whether or how feedback has been considered in policymaking on climate change. The NCCS public consultation in 2019 was innovative, as it provided a clear response in the form of a 94-page document and allowed those who submitted feedback to have their responses published on an official government website. One possible reason for this could be that the consultation was in relation to long-term policies rather than policies with a more immediate implementation timeline. This appears to have been a one-off effort, however, as the spirit of openness demonstrated in the 2019 public consultation does not appear to have been replicated across ministries or agencies since.

Han (2017) refers to Singapore's approach to environmental policymaking in the context of authoritarian environmentalism, describing it as top-down and non-participatory in nature, partly due to the prioritization of economic development. Han refers to the government as 'maintain[ing] a top-down, managerial, and non-participatory approach to environmental governance based on an instrumental view of nature', and highlights how non-state actors, such as environmental and non-governmental organizations, are marginalized (Han 2017: 6). This is problematic, as meaningful engagement with organizations and NGOs will be important if Singapore wishes to address the climate crisis within a democratic framework. At the SG Climate Rally in 2019, organizers demanded that the government: (a) face the truth about the climate emergency; (b) combat the crisis with a national climate mitigation plan; and (c) engage with the people on the climate crisis. To this end, they called on the government to remove the 'roadblocks' that are currently discouraging open political discussion on the matter, and to provide safe and open spaces to encourage dialogue.

SG Climate Rally has asked that policy information and statistics be made publicly accessible and transparent, and for the government to involve 'independent' academics and members of the public when drafting policies (Singapore Climate Rally n.d.). On the subject of climate mitigation, SG Climate Rally has demanded: a Climate Change Act; a commitment to net zero emissions by 2050; a just transition away from the petrochemical industry; an increase in the carbon tax, with the proceeds used to support low-income households; and that the government support renewable energy projects in the region.

8.5. **THREATS TO DEMOCRACY FROM THE CLIMATE CRISIS AND POSSIBLE RESPONSES**

In 2020, the police investigated two Singaporeans for allegedly participating in a public assembly without a police permit (Iau 2020). The incidents occurred on 13 March and 22 March and involved an 18-year-old woman and a 20-year-old man, respectively. The woman was holding placards that read 'Planet Over Profit', 'School Strike 4 Climate', and 'ExxonMobil Kills Kittens &Puppies' outside HarbourFront Tower One. The man held up a placard that read 'SG IS Better Than Oil @fridays4futuresg' in front of the Toa Payoh Central Community Club and the Toa Payoh Neighbourhood Police Centre. In both cases, photographs were posted and circulated on social media, which led to the police seizing electronic devices including laptops and mobile phones during their investigation. Both were 'strongly advised' by the police to take down the 'Fridays for Future Singapore' website and social media accounts (Han 2020). There is no publicly available information regarding the outcome of the investigation, including whether the two Singaporeans were charged under the Public Order Act.

On 4 October 2021, after a 10-hour debate, the Singapore Parliament passed the Foreign Interference (Countermeasures) Act 2021 (FICA). Lawyers, the opposition and civil society groups such as Climate Rally, among others, raised concerns that the proposed law would undermine civic freedom in Singapore, but it was passed without substantive amendments to address such concerns (CIVICUS Monitor 2021b). CIVICUS published an open letter from a group of concerned organizations which described FICA's provisions as 'contraven[ing] international legal and human rights principles—including the right to freedom of expression, association, participation in public affairs, and privacy' which, it stated, would 'further curtail civic space, both online and offline' (CIVICUS Monitor 2021a).

Academics have argued that FICA is too broad and threatens academic freedom (see e.g. George et al. 2021). In response, the Ministry of Home Affairs stated in a Facebook post that: 'If the professors are able to get their articles accepted in international journals, their books published by prestigious academic presses overseas, or if they receive splendid fellowships and awards from any foreign university, they will face no hindrance whatsoever from FICA—or for that matter, any other law in Singapore' (Singapore Ministry of Home Affairs 2021). The ministry also stated that the FICA would not hinder the activities of academics involved in 'foreign collaboration and online dissemination', unless they 'were acting on behalf of a foreign agency to conduct a hostile information campaign online directed against Singapore's public interest'.

It remains to be seen whether academic discussions on controversial issues in foreign journals or at foreign universities will be affected by passage of the FICA. Concerns raised in this context include FICA curtailing the 'free-flowing exchange of ideas and resources' that has contributed to the global climate youth movement and foreign research funding; and, ultimately, that it will 'leave Singapore academia and society worse off' (George et al. 2021). The SG Climate Rally and Academic.SG are concerned that broad legislation like FICA could deter open and frank discussions about addressing climate change, particularly in respect of potentially sensitive information relevant to evaluating the effectiveness of policies.

The MP Louis Ng Kok Kwang queried whether the Ministry for the Environment and Water Resources (now the Ministry of Sustainability and the Environment) planned to publish the total amount collected by the carbon tax in respect of 2019 emissions, and whether the ministry would consider releasing a breakdown of the revenue collected from each taxable facility when the data became available. In response, the relevant minister, Masagos Zulkifli, stated that the government was 'unable to disclose company- or facility-specific data due to data confidentiality requirements as provided for in the [Carbon Pricing Act]', and because it was not 'productive or correct to actually put any company under scrutiny' (Parliament of Singapore 2020).

This response offers insight into the government's mindset and strategic relationships when it comes to addressing climate change and navigating issues such as the carbon tax—both of which involve negotiating the tension between Singapore's developmental (growth) approach and the government's efforts to tackle climate change and mitigate emissions, which it appears to manage by maintaining a fine balance between economic imperatives and sustainability goals. The government will need to prioritize meaningful dialogue and public consultation—and publicize the nature of such communications—to ensure transparency in policymaking. This will encourage members of the public and environmental NGOs to engage in socio-political discussions, where previously they might have been somewhat reticent, and thereby promote fair and inclusive political processes for managing and responding to the climate crisis.

8.6. **SIGNIFICANCE OF THE GLASGOW OUTCOMES FOR SINGAPORE**

The 26th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP 26), held in Glasgow in November 2021, resulted in the completion of the Paris Agreement rulebook, including article 6 on international cooperative approaches (European Commission 2021). The article 6 mechanisms presents a significant opportunity for Singapore to advance its ambition to become a carbon services hub, as greater clarity on cross-border carbon markets will help to generate demand for associated services on a global scale (Low and Bea 2021). Furthermore, Grace Fu has committed Singapore to review its Nationally Determined Contribution in line with the Glasgow Climate Pact (Board 2021). After more than 80 countries submitted net zero targets at COP 26, Lawrence Wong announced in February 2022 that Singapore would increase its ambition to achieving net zero emissions by around mid-century. He also stated that the government would ‘consult closely with industry and citizen stakeholder groups’ in 2022 to finalize the date for achieving net zero (Singapore Ministry of Finance 2022).

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Chapter 9

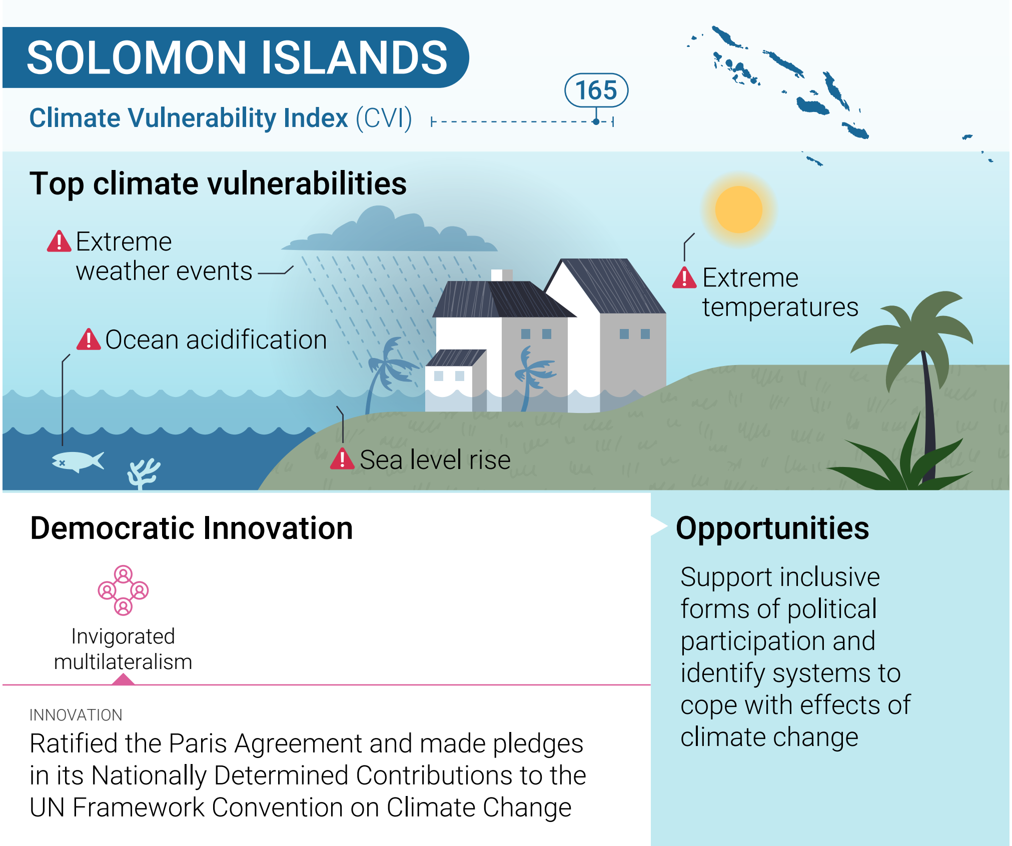
SOLOMON ISLANDS

9.1. **INTRODUCTION**

Solomon Islands is an archipelagic nation comprising over 900 islands in the South Pacific. It could be characterized as having a resilient democracy. It holds regular democratic elections—its 10th general election since independence took place in 2019 (Wiltshire et al. 2020)—that facilitate orderly changes in government. Electoral participation and voter turnout are strong, and local media outlets, while small in number, are active. Suffrage is theoretically inclusive (International IDEA 2021), but women are under-represented in parliament. Only six women have been elected to the Solomon Islands Parliament since independence in 1978. Solomon Islands has previously achieved a CIVICUS rating of ‘open’, which indicates the degree to which citizens are able to express their views and exercise their rights in the civic space, but this was downgraded to ‘narrowed’ in December 2021 (CIVICUS Monitor 2021).

Solomon Islands is a parliamentary democracy with a Westminster system of government. It has two formal levels of government—the national government and nine provincial governments. Area councils once provided a further reach of the state, but these were suspended in 1998 as a cost-saving measure and the municipal council in Honiara is the only remaining operational local council (Allen et al. 2013). The influence and profile of provincial governments has increased in recent years. Representatives of the Malaita Provincial Government have been particularly outspoken about the recent

Figure 9.1. **Solomon Islands**


SOLOMON ISLANDS
Climate Vulnerability Index (CVI)
165
Top climate vulnerabilities
Extreme weather events
Ocean acidification
Sea level rise
Extreme temperatures
Democratic Innovation
Invigorated multilateralism
Opportunities

INNOVATION

Ratified the Paris Agreement and made pledges in its Nationally Determined Contributions to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change

Support inclusive forms of political participation and identify systems to cope with effects of climate change

changes in diplomatic ties with Taiwan and China (Ride 2021). On independence, Solomon Islands inherited a weak state apparatus that has faced long-term capability challenges. This has hampered its capacity to deliver inclusive development to its highly diverse and widely dispersed population (Allen et al. 2013).

While democracy has proved resilient in a formal sense, it faces a number of challenges in practice. Developing a sense of national identity has been difficult, in part due to its dispersed and mostly rural population (80 per cent), which relies on subsistence food production; and in part due to the level of cultural, language and social diversity. There are approximately 75 different language groups in a population of 670,000 people (Allen et al. 2013). Independence arose largely from the withdrawal of colonial powers rather than the struggle of a united citizenry, effectively creating a 'state without a nation' and resulting in a weak sense of national identity or political cohesiveness (Dinnen 2008).

Recent riots and protests in Solomon Islands as a result of tensions linked to the diplomatic switch from Taiwan to China, which led to the deployment of security personnel from Fiji, Papua New Guinea and Australia, were widely reported in the media. Commentators noted that protest and disruption were not entirely unexpected, due to longstanding unresolved grievances such as uneven and inadequate development, an unresponsive state and social issues, some of which are related to ethnic tensions (see e.g. Australian National University 2021).

Solomon Islands has weak state–society relationships.

Solomon Islands has weak state–society relationships. Structural factors such as high levels of social and cultural diversity, geographic dispersal and low levels of industrial development have hindered the development of effective political parties and broad-based social movements, further limiting the prospects for inclusive political participation. The localized nature of politics means that citizens engage with government in personalized ways. Local sources of connection and income generation are important and governance, social arrangements and hierarchies are constituted through a combination of local custom and religion. Kinship, shared language, and religious and customary land connections take precedence over abstract notions of citizenship or nation (Dinnen 2008). This complicates how government is understood and social contracts are constituted, which in turn complicates processes of policy development and the role of government as a responsive development actor.

9.2. CLIMATE VULNERABILITY AND ACTION

Climate predictions indicate that Solomon Islands will experience more intense cyclones, increasing land and ocean temperatures, greater variability in rainfall and more extreme rainfall events, larger than global average sea level rise, and coral bleaching and ocean acidification (Solomon Islands Meteorological Service et al. 2015). In recent times, Solomon Islands has experienced frequent extreme flooding events affecting housing, water supply and sanitation. Although Cyclone Harold was only a Category 1 storm when it hit Solomon Islands, it led to the loss of a number of lives at sea and caused widespread damage to food crops (Australian Government n.d.).

On the University of Notre Dame's Global Adaptation Initiative (ND-GAIN) Index, Solomon Islands is ranked 123rd of 182 countries. It is the 17th most vulnerable country and the 94th most ready country, in terms of its capacity to respond to climate change (University of Notre Dame 2022). These rankings are based on the intersection of climate change impacts, which are expected to result in a decline in cereal yields and medical staff capacity, as well as critical infrastructure such as roads (University of Notre Dame 2022). Solomon Islands also ranks very high globally in terms of the risk of natural disasters (Behlert et al. 2020).

Urbanization in Solomon Islands is increasing rapidly, mostly through the movement of young people who lack access to educational and economic opportunities. The municipal government in Honiara currently lacks the capability and resources to develop and implement policy directed at managing urbanization and the increase in informal settlements in climate vulnerable locations. In addition, the erosion of traditional dispute resolution systems in urban centres, due to the concentration and mix of ethnicities, is a key concern for maintaining stability (Keen et al. 2017). Community displacement linked to sea level rise will present challenges for social stability and require localized negotiations between traditional owners, given customary systems of land ownership.

Solomon Islands has committed to reaching net zero emissions by 2050.

Solomon Islands has committed to reaching net zero emissions by 2050 and is an active player in climate negotiations and regional forums designed to respond to climate change. Solomon Islands has ratified the Paris Agreement, made pledges in its Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and recently joined forces with other Pacific Island nations to campaign for zero carbon shipping (Lo 2021). Solomon Islands is heavily reliant on using its forests as a carbon sink and as a means of transitioning to renewable energy, in order to reduce emissions and ensure greater energy security. At the same time, however, it recognizes that it faces significant challenges with regard to mitigation and adaptation, most notably due to lack of personnel, particularly at senior levels (Ministry of Environment, Climate Change, Disaster Management and Meteorology 2021). Funding for climate change mitigation and adaptation is largely from donor sources, particularly the Global Environment Facility, Japan and the European Union. Most funding is directed to adaptation, with a focus on disaster prevention and preparedness, as well as water and food security (Atteridge and Canales 2017).

The Solomon Islands delegation to COP 26 was led by Chanel Iroi, the Deputy Secretary of the Solomon Islands Ministry of Environment, Disaster Management and Meteorology. He actively participated in preparations for COP 26 in civil society forums such as the Pacific Climate Justice Summit, and in collaboration with other Pacific Island nations through the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP), to ensure that the region had a ‘united voice’ at the negotiations.

Solomon Islands has a vibrant civil society and a number of advocates attended COP 26.

Solomon Islands has a vibrant civil society and a number of advocates also attended COP 26, representing Pacific Island Students Fighting Climate Change, Solomon Islands National University, Solomon Islands Climate Action Network (SICAN) and People with Disability Solomon Islands. SICAN was formed in 2019 as the main forum for community mobilization on climate change. The network aims to raise awareness of climate change, develop more inclusive mitigation and adaptation action, coordinate civil society groups and mobilize more community members to demand action on climate change from leaders (see e.g. Pacific Island Students Fighting Climate Change 2021).

Following COP 26, civil society and government representatives collaborated to host ‘Yumi After Glasgow Tok Stori blo Solomon Islands: The wins and losses of COP26’. This event was broadcast live on Facebook and included a session explaining UNFCCC processes in a mixture of English and Solomon Islands Pidgin. In a country where Internet access is limited and media access is mostly through radio stations, explaining the relevance of global forums to local communities faces significant challenges.

While Solomon Islands government representatives and civil society advocates share the same goals in seeking climate justice on the international stage, significant gaps remain domestically over implementation of the outcomes of global and regional forums. The disconnect between government statements and the resourcing of and budgeting for policy implementation, as well as inefficiencies and a lack of capacity for service delivery (Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat 2018), are not unique to climate change policy and should be considered in the broader context of fragile state systems in Solomon Islands.

9.3. **HOW WILL THE CLIMATE CRISIS INTERSECT WITH THE STATE OF DEMOCRACY IN SOLOMON ISLANDS?**

Climate change is expected to magnify stresses that will intersect with a nation already characterized by 'localism and division' (Dinnen 2008: 58), and faced with a range of democratic challenges. The political economy of Solomon Islands promotes short-termism and privileges vested interests. Elections are influenced by self-referred decision making in the form of money politics and patronage, while political culture is shaped by strong cultural and gendered norms that favour 'big-men' (Dinnen 2008; Wiltshire et al. 2020). Gifting or vote buying plays a significant role in cultivating a support base. The first-past-the-post voting system enables candidates to win with a small share of the vote, often on the basis of personality and kinship networks rather than ideology (Dinnen 2008) or policies aimed at the national interest. In the absence of political parties, a government is formed by a loose coalition of parliamentarians with an interest in accessing and dispersing material benefits in the form of constituency development funds (CDFs) to their constituents. On occasion, significant personally directed financial inducements have been reported as playing a large role in shaping the development of majority coalitions (Dinnen 2008).

Climate change is expected to magnify stresses that will intersect with a nation already characterized by 'localism and division'.

That government in Solomon Islands is susceptible to the influence of vested interests is most evident with regard to the logging sector, which is the largest source of export earnings. The sector is weakly regulated and prey to the influence of foreign logging companies that use logging revenues to secure political support for the protection of unsustainable logging practices (Dinnen 2008; Hameiri 2012). The influence of logging interests on domestic politics adds to political instability within Solomon Islands and undermines the prospects for significant reform, including in areas relevant to climate adaptation. Given that resource extraction is one of the few forms of major income generation, vested interests are likely to prevent wide-scale systemic reform in this area (Porter and Allen 2015).

The funds generated from logging have also provided common ground for alliances in national politics, which is significant because the Solomon Islands prime minister is chosen by members of parliament rather than the citizenry (Dinnen 2008). The weak regulation of logging exports has deprived the Solomon Islands government of a reasonable share in logging revenues, contributing to state weakness and damaging the prospects for building a ‘planning state’.

Poor regulation has also resulted in unsustainable logging practices and weakened the role of forests as an adaptive resource in Solomon Islands, including as a carbon sink and as a basis for livelihoods. The continuing nexus between logging interests and political elites undermines stable government and allows logging interests to block adaptive initiatives that impinge on resource extraction. Poorly regulated logging has also generated local-level conflict within communities dependent on logging resources, thereby further undermining the social solidarity required to underpin sustained collective action in support of adaptation (Hameiri 2012).

State weakness in the Solomon Islands undermines the prospects for state-led adaptation to and mitigation of the impacts of climate change.

State weakness, and in some cases absence, in the Solomon Islands undermines the prospects for state-led adaptation to and mitigation of the impacts of climate change. The climate crisis reveals that the concept of a ‘planning state’ is less relevant to Solomon Islands, as state systems tend to operate according to traditional kinship ties and systems of obligation and reciprocity rather than through the neutral and detached public service model developed in other cultural contexts (Dinnen 2008). Communities rely on customary governance systems, such as ‘chiefly systems’, and subsistence livelihoods. These systems have come under increasing pressure due to the lack of support from and connection with state systems in some cases, and due to chiefly or local leader involvement and self-interest in resource extraction projects, particularly logging, in others (Allen et al. 2013). Local systems of authority will come under increasing stress as climate change puts pressure on water and food security, and other natural resources, particularly in locations where customary systems of land ownership lead, at times, to contestation over land boundaries.

While Solomon Islands has plans and policies in place on adapting to climate change and access to significant sources of international finance, the limited capacity of bureaucratic systems and state fragility mean that implementation will be a real issue. One notable example concerns communities being required to organize their own relocations, due to the lack of legitimacy and authority of government agencies over land tenure and management (Monson and Fitzpatrick 2016). While key climate policy documents foreshadow a role for the government in organizing these relocations, in practice they are being negotiated by communities themselves (Monson and Fitzpatrick 2016). Communities have managed successful relocations without state assistance through extended kin networks, marriage or historical relationships of trade and exchange. Communities that lack these networks have been marginalized and have no power to organize relocations. They must rely instead on largely ineffective state actors. As climate change results in more wide-scale displacement, the role of the state in organizing relocations will become more important. At present, however, the state lacks capacity and legitimacy in this area (Monson and Fitzpatrick 2016).

The political marginalization of many communities—particularly those which lack a direct kinship or other form of connection with a national parliamentarian—limits avenues for political participation, as well as the prospects for nationally united and inclusive adaptive action (see e.g. Baker and Barbara 2020). The prospects for the emergence of a solidaristic ethos are reduced by the unfinished business of nation-building, as local identity remains more relevant than a sense of nationalism, and given the limited capacity of civil society and the media to hold governments accountable (Barbara 2014). Such prospects are further limited by the weak nature of political parties and broad-based social movements.

Climate change may be driving new forms of political participation that could begin to address the collective action deficits that have plagued Solomon Islands. For example, there has been some mobilization among young people in relation to climate action at Solomon Islands National University and through SICAN, but the numbers are small. Understanding what constitutes a political community is still a challenge where state–society bonds are weak. There is also evidence of communities mobilizing to implement adaptive strategies at the local level, such as local infrastructure development. Whether these forms of bottom-up mobilization will connect and revitalize national democratic systems in solidaristic ways is an important unanswered question.

Fair and inclusive political processes in Solomon Islands are impeded by the 'big-men' culture and gendered social norms, which tend to preclude women from decision making and restrict their ability to cast free votes (Wiltshire et al. 2020). The combination of a limited tradition of social movements and social hierarchies that privilege age over enthusiasm means that young people are also often excluded from politics. Similarly, the combination of a limited social contract—where parliamentarians owe obligations to their backers rather than their constituents—and a lack of transparency inhibits the potential for inclusive adaptive processes, at both the local level within local communities and nationally.

Finally, while Solomon Islands is an active player in regional and global forums, multilateral frameworks on climate change adaptation lack implementation. The notion of the state has more relevance internationally than domestically. It has enabled membership of global forums but policy implementation remains an issue as multilateral agreements lack legitimacy in the domestic realm.

9.4. **THREATS TO DEMOCRACY FROM THE CLIMATE CRISIS AND POSSIBLE RESPONSES**

While resilient and enduring, democracy in Solomon Islands has faced significant challenges with connecting communities with government and underpinning inclusive forms of development. The significant weakness of the post-colonial state in Solomon Islands means that democracy has been adapted to support a personalized form of politics characterized by patronage and clientelistic forms of political exchange, where connections between state and society are weak and the state apparatus is limited in its capacity to respond to community needs.

While there is no question that the Solomon Islands Government is a key supporter of global initiatives to reduce carbon emissions, the domestic challenge is not one of developing voter support for climate action, but rather to identify systems to cope with the overwhelming impacts heralded by climate change. The nature of the domestic political economy in Solomon Islands means that the practice of democracy favours self-interested policy processes and limits the prospects for solidaristic responses to development challenges.

The flexible nature of democracy in Solomon Islands means that formal democratic systems could be well placed to adjust to climate-related stress.

As an existential challenge, climate change is expected to place additional burdens on democratic institutions and their ability to mediate peaceful and equitable responses to emerging adaptive challenges. The flexible nature of democracy in Solomon Islands means that formal democratic systems could be well placed to adjust to climate-related stress. However, such stresses are expected to exacerbate the long-term challenges for democracy to strengthen state–society relations and provide more responsive forms of state-based development. Climate change is likely to exacerbate existing fragilities within the state and existing democratic deficits, due to the poor connections between democracy and development. There is also the potential for climate change to exacerbate local conflicts and if these are not effectively managed, experience shows that local conflicts can spill over into national tensions. Managing the risks associated with inequitable development and uneven flows from resource extraction, together with contested land boundaries, community relocations and urbanization, will be critical to maintaining peace in a time of climate change. While communities have demonstrated resilience and local forms of adaptation, their capacity to adapt should not be overemphasized, as the effects of climate change will accelerate and potentially become overwhelming.

As an existential threat to Solomon Islands, climate change may, however, give rise to regenerative forces with the potential to help address democratic deficits. For example, adaptation will require forms of subnational state building to help communities prepare disaster responses. Similarly, climate change anxiety is driving new forms of political participation, as young people in particular engage with global climate movements. Support for more inclusive forms of political participation that enable marginalized communities to better connect with government and develop locally relevant adaptive solutions might be a good way to revitalize a meaningful form of democracy.

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Chapter 10

TUVALU

Every new government brings a new strategy to the problem of climate change in Tuvalu but the issue remains the same:

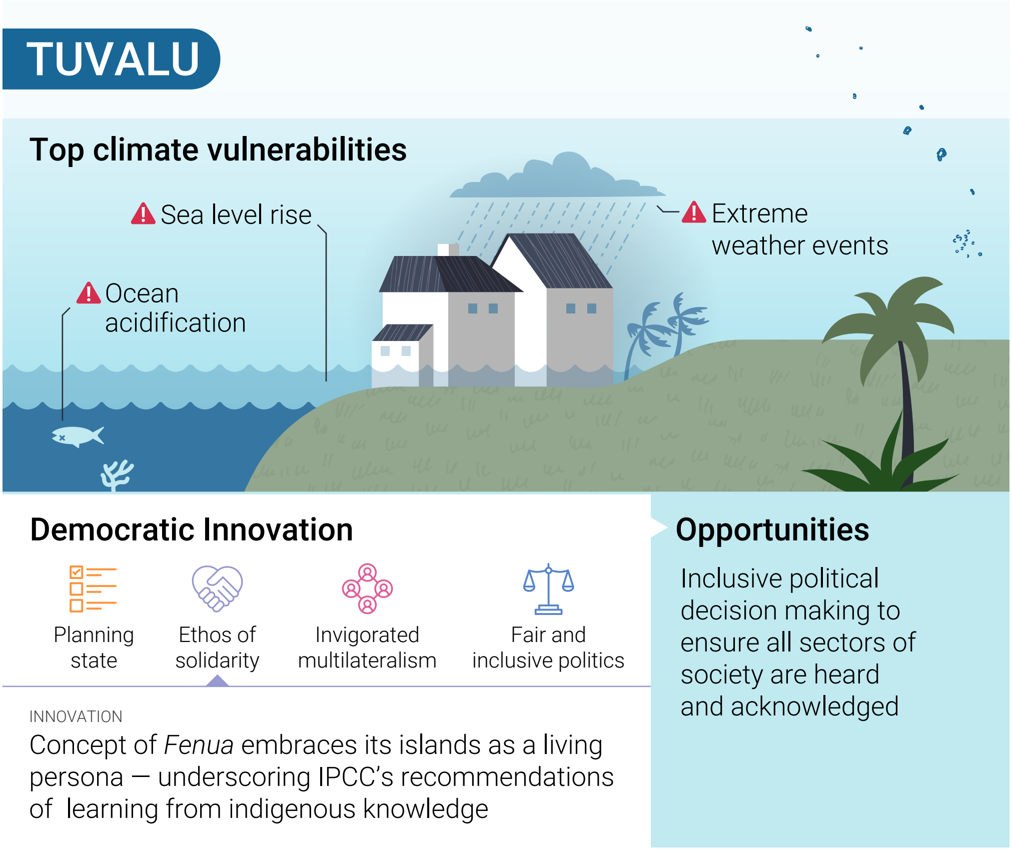
> Our fragile and highly vulnerable atoll environment makes us among the first nations to disappear under the rising seas. Thus, we seek a greater degree of security not only from climate change but also disaster by increasing our adaptive capacity through an increased level of financing from global climate funding sources and high-tech innovative development measures.
> (Government of Tuvalu, 2020a: 4)

10.1. **INTRODUCTION**

Tuvalu is located in the Central Pacific Ocean. It has a total land area of 25.1 square kilometres and a population of approximately 11,000. Tuvalu is a constitutional monarchy with the British King as its Head of State and a Governor General as the monarch's representative (Government of Tuvalu, 2020b). Freedom House (2021) describes Tuvalu as a parliamentary democracy that has 'regular, competitive elections' and 'generally [upholds]' civil liberties. However, it also notes 'ongoing problems' with, among other things, the absence of anti-discrimination laws to protect women and LGBTIQ+ people (Freedom House 2021).

Tuvalu is the conjoining of two words—*Tu*, meaning 'stand' or 'culture', and *valu*, meaning 'eight' or 'the act of scrapping something'. Tuvalu

Figure 10.1. **Tuvalu**


TUVALU
Top climate vulnerabilities
Sea level rise
Ocean acidification
Extreme weather events
Planning state
Ethos of solidarity
Invigorated multilateralism
Fair and inclusive politics

Democratic Innovation

INNOVATION

Concept of *Fenua* embraces its islands as a living persona — underscoring IPCC's recommendations of learning from indigenous knowledge

Opportunities

Inclusive political decision making to ensure all sectors of society are heard and acknowledged

is usually described as 'eight standing united' to signify the eight islands of Tuvalu but has also been described as the conjoining of eight cultures (Apinelu 2022: 142). Despite the fact that there are nine islands, this is accurate as only eight cultures or island customary practices underpin what are formally and informally recognized as the islands of Tuvalu.

Tuvalu was made a British Protectorate in 1892, before forming part of the Gilbert and Ellice Islands Colony in 1916. In a period characterized by global decolonization, Tuvalu separated from Kiribati in 1976 and became an independent nation on 1 October 1978. It became a member of the United Nations on 5 September 2000. Its population is predominantly Tuvaluan but also comprises minority races. English is the official language of schools and government but Tuvaluan is the official language for formal and everyday communications on the islands.

As a by-product of British colonization, Tuvalu's formal governance system is greatly influenced by the British Westminster tradition. At the national level, every island of Tuvalu is represented in parliament, and each island has two seats regardless of population. Tuvalu's parliament is unicameral with equal representation from the eight islands. The member of parliament able to command majority support from the other members becomes the Prime Minister. The Speaker is elected by the members and any member who does not support the Prime Minister becomes a member of the opposition.

Unlike other Westminster systems, Tuvalu does not have an established party system. However, the eight cultures that underpin Tuvalu's democracy play a very similar role and effectively constitute a Tuvalu indigenized party system. Each of the eight islands of Tuvalu has its own local governance system, referred to as the *Falekaupule*. The *Falekaupule* occupies a similar role to the Parliament of Tuvalu and its *Kaupule*, or executive arm, plays a similar role to that of the national government. The *Falekaupule* system is governed by the Falekaupule Act 1997 and is authorized to conduct its operations in accordance with the local custom and usage of each island, or *aganu*. The law also recognizes that each island has powers not included in the 1997 Act.

Tuvalu does not have an established party system.

This fusion of Indigenous governance and understanding with the traditions of a constitutional monarchy presents its own challenges, as well as elements deserving of praise. Where the formal legal and parliamentary system might not be equipped to oversee the behaviour of political leaders, Indigenous island governance is always watching and putting them to the test. Parliamentarians fully appreciate that they are ultimately answerable to the *Fenua*, a concept that cannot be simply defined. While this concept is shared among most Pacific Island nations, it is experienced differently: 'In Samoa it is the *Fanua*, *Enua* in the Cook Islands, *Fonua* in Tonga, *Whenua* in Māori, *Hanua* in PNG and *Vanua* in Fiji'. *Fenua* encompasses the physical islands but, more importantly, constitutes its living persona and its interconnectedness with the living and evolving environment, around which the eight islands of Tuvalu have their own unique interconnectedness with *Fenua* (Apinelu 2022). A solid understanding of Tuvaluan society and culture is needed to contextualize the challenges presented to and the governance approaches taken by Tuvalu's leaders in response to matters such as climate change.

Tuvalu is an archipelago of nine islands that is barely noticeable on the descent from a two-hour flight from north-east of Fiji, bound for the island of Funafuti, which is the capital. The nine coral islands lie between 5 and 11 degrees south of the equator and just west of the International Date Line (Apinelu 2022). It is easily possible to walk the length or breadth of any island in less than a day. The islands have a 'combined land area of 26 km^2 and are surrounded by 1.3 million km^2 of ocean, including an Exclusive Economic Zone of 719,174 km^2' (Government of Tuvalu 2015; see also Government of Tuvalu 2021a). Notably, the highest point on any of the islands is about three metres above sea level (Government of Tuvalu, 2012, 2020b). Tuvalu's eight self-governing islands are Nanumea, Nanumaga, Niutao, Nui, Nukufetau, Funafuti, Vaitupu and Nukulaelae. Niulakita, the most southerly of the group of islands, is administered as part of the northern island of Niutao. Travel between the islands is conducted largely by boat. It takes approximately 5–8 hours to travel from the capital, Funafuti, to the central and southern islands, and about 12 hours to reach the northern islands.

The people of Tuvalu enjoy relative freedom and opportunities to voice dissent in the civic space available to them. The CIVICUS Monitor rates Tuvalu as 'open' (CIVICUS Monitor n.d.a), which means that the state 'enables and safeguards the enjoyment of civic space for all people', including the online space, where content is considered to be 'uncensored' and government information is readily available (CIVICUS Monitor, n.d.b).

The outlook for Tuvalu's climate has long been precarious.

10.2. CLIMATE VULNERABILITY

The outlook for Tuvalu's climate has long been precarious. A 2019 special report by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change

(IPCC) clearly states that, if global greenhouse gas emissions are not reduced, the world will become dangerously warmer and global temperatures will easily exceed 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels by 2030 (IPCC 2018). This IPCC prediction constitutes a 'climate crisis' for Tuvalu—a term that was accepted by Pacific Island Forum Leaders as depicting the reality for Tuvaluans, and is reflected in Tuvalu's National Climate Change Policy 2020–2030 (Government of Tuvalu, 2021a).

Tuvalu features in the 'low' category on the University of Notre Dame's ND-GAIN Index. Together with a handful of other countries, Tuvalu is not ranked in the Index because the data required to determine a ranking is not available. Tuvalu does not have a vulnerability rating for the same reason, although it does have a readiness rating of 28 which places it above other Pacific Island nations, as the next country from the region featured is Kiribati at 76 (University of Notre Dame 2022a). In its analysis of Tuvalu, the ND-GAIN Index indicates that Tuvalu is particularly vulnerable to projected changes in cereal yields, and reduced 'access to improved sanitation facilities' and numbers of medical staff. It also lacks 'engagement in international environmental conventions' (University of Notre Dame 2022b).

Climate change has affected Tuvalu to the extent that it has become the number one challenge for Tuvaluan leaders in government and religious organizations; the latter occupy a key role in this space. Climate change in Tuvalu is approached as an existential threat. As a Small Island Developing State, the most pressing challenge arises from extreme exposure to climate change, natural disasters and climate-change-induced weather events. Tropical cyclones Pam (2015) and Tino (2020) are stark reminders of the cyclones that frequently affect Tuvalu's low-lying islands and have become a popular theme in everyday prayer for Tuvaluans.

Climate change has affected Tuvalu to the extent that it has become the number one challenge for Tuvaluan leaders in government and religious organizations.

Increases in sea levels also cause major problems with coastal erosion, particularly in relation to dwindling land areas and shifting boundaries, which increasingly result in land disputes. These land disputes have been exacerbated by the effects of Covid-19 on food security, as Tuvalu has been increasingly required to rely on domestic resources for food production. Agricultural products, such as *pulaka* (a native root crop), coconuts, bananas and pandanus fruits, are important sources of food for Tuvaluans, and are now being threatened by climate change and other factors (Ralston, Horstmann and Holl 2004). Marine biodiversity has also been affected by increasing ocean acidification in Tuvalu's territorial waters (International Climate Change Adaptation Initiative 2014).

10.3. **CLIMATE CHANGE AND DEMOCRACY**

Tuvalu adheres to key international treaties on climate change and is active in the regional and international arena addressing the climate change crisis. Tuvalu signed and ratified the Kyoto Protocol on 16 November 1998, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) as a non-Annex I party in March 1994 and the Paris Agreement on 22 April 2016. Although faced with many challenges, Tuvalu maintains a commitment to implementing its treaty obligations domestically and regularly attends the UNFCCC Conference of the Parties (COP) and regional/international climate action talks. The major challenges affecting Tuvalu's engagement with international conventions are its regular changes in government, resulting in varying priorities, and its limited resources.

There are certain mechanisms in the Constitution for addressing a climate-related crisis.

Tuvalu's Constitution does not explicitly address climate change but there are certain mechanisms in the Constitution for addressing a climate-related crisis, as demonstrated by the declaration of a 'State of Emergency' during Cyclones Pam and Tino, and in relation to Covid-19. Legislation that deals directly with climate change includes the Climate Change Resilience Act, 2019 and the Climate Change and Disaster Survival Act, 2015. Both Acts address internationally agreed areas of climate change relevant to Tuvalu.

The national government has adopted innovative measures to address the impact of climate change in Tuvalu. At COP 26 in November 2021, it signed an agreement with Antigua and Barbuda, which established the Commission of Small Island States (COSIS) on Climate Change and International Law (Caribbean News Global 2021). The principal role of the Commission, as stated in article 1(3), is:

> [T]o promote and contribute to the definition, implementation, and progressive development of rules and principles of international law concerning climate change, including, but not limited to, the obligations of States relating to the protection and preservation of the marine environment and their responsibility for injuries arising from internationally wrongful acts in respect of the breach of such obligations. (Commonwealth Foundation 2021: 3)

This is an additional and complementary measure to those taken in the international sphere, with a view to ensuring that the voices of the people and countries most vulnerable to climate change are heard. In Tuvalu's dealings with the international community, it aims to utilize and enhance Indigenous ways of sharing and reciprocity, the neighbourhood principle and the culture of shared duties, responsibilities and obligations as a guide to international engagement.

Tuvalu has developed the *Tou Ataeao Nei* or Future Now Project, which considers ways of safeguarding its future survival as a nation, in response to the impact of climate change and rising sea levels. The project seeks to ensure that Tuvalu's maritime boundaries, regardless of any rise in sea levels, have perpetual recognition as the sovereign nation of Tuvalu.

Beyond the government sphere, the *Falekaupule*, NGOs and civil society groups are engaged in addressing the challenges and impact of climate change. The *Falekaupule* is defined in the Falekaupule Act 1997 as the islands of Tuvalu, as well as the governing authorities of the eight islands of Tuvalu according to custom. As a governing authority, the *Falekaupule* of each island differs from the others according to its customary practices. *Falekaupule* is better understood locally as *Fenua*, which as noted above is not easily defined. The attempt to defined it in law has brought its own challenges, and most people do not really understand how the Falekaupule Act has defined *Falekaupule*.

Nonetheless, the *Falekaupule* as defined in the Falekaupule Act manages all development activity on the islands, including the marine resources within each island territory. NGOs and civil society groups such as the Tuvalu Climate Action Network (TUCAN) are the most active in climate change advocacy. Others, such as the Tuvalu Family Health Care Association (TuFHA), the Everyone Matters Project, which assists those who have fallen through gaps in the educational system, and the Live and Learn Project for food security, provide much needed assistance in terms of health, food security and educational outreach to sectors of the community not necessarily served by national and local government. Ekalesia Kelisiano Tuvalu also plays a significant role in addressing climate change issues in Tuvalu and abroad.

The role of the courts in relation to climate change issues has not been properly analysed. At the international level, as noted above, the governments of Tuvalu, and Antigua and Barbuda signed an agreement establishing the COSIS on Climate Change and International Law. The Commission is registered with the UN and is authorized to request advisory opinions from the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea (ITLOS) on the legal responsibility of states for carbon emissions, marine pollution and rising sea levels. This joint initiative aims to develop and implement fair and just global and environmental norms and practices, which would include compensation for loss and damage (Government of Tuvalu 2021b).

National and local government are competing for the same resources to address climate change.

10.4. **IMPACT OF THE CLIMATE CRISIS ON DEMOCRACY AND POSSIBLE RESPONSES**

The power struggle between the *Falekaupule* and the national government is a notable and significant effect of climate change. Coastal erosion, flooding, salt water intrusion, drought, and powerful and destructive winds are a climate change certainty for Tuvalu (TCAP 2017), but there is no clear framework for demarcating ownership of major national resources. National and local government are competing for the same resources to address climate change. Rather than opt for development plans reached through consultation with the islands, the national government might be more inclined to exert increasing authority over the islands through control of the legislative agenda. This course of action would run counter to notions of fair and inclusive political processes and increase the risk of civil unrest.

A coordinated, balanced and integrated approach to climate action is required. Tuvalu is a fragile and vulnerable atoll nation with an elevated and very real risk of disappearing under the rising seas (Government of Tuvalu, 2020a). It is therefore crucial that Tuvalu develop and implement plans to mitigate and adapt to the impacts of climate change. Adopting such an approach will have the added benefit of assisting international donors to see where climate finance should be directed to facilitate implementation of mitigation and adaptation plans. The 10-year National Strategic Plan, *Te Kete*, is an example of the Tuvalu Government's efforts to plan for and address climate change. It deals with issues such as insecurity, instability and inequality, and promotes five key strategic actions:

1. Develop a long-term national adaptation strategy, including a staged land reclamation programme addressing the worst-case scenario of sea levels in Tuvalu rising by one metre by 2100.
2. Secure more funding from global climate financing facilities.
3. Strengthen access to labour mobility schemes.
4. Develop effective frameworks for disaster risk and resilience management.
5. Implement a land rehabilitation and reclamation framework that is resilient to sea level rise and climate change impacts.

If Tuvalu's national climate policies are to address climate change successfully, they will need to be more inclusive and gender neutral, enabling the contributions and development of women as island leaders (Cordenillo 2017). To facilitate this process, the government should be encouraged to provide better pathways for women to enter parliament. Similarly, in the absence of local government initiatives, it should legislate to ensure that women are adequately represented in *Falekaupule* meetings. Gender should not be a barrier to political participation. Women are an integral part of Tuvalu's community and will be directly affected by the impact of climate change. They should therefore be included in decision making on the development and implementation of policies to combat its effects. The call for a global effort to combat climate change must be applied equally at all levels of the community to ensure that the process is inclusive and reflects the differential impacts of the crisis (United Nations Climate Change 2023).

If Tuvalu is to drive effective climate change policies internationally and nationally, it must prioritize finding an appropriate place for Indigenous *Falekaupule* governance in its Westminster system of government. Existing laws do not embrace the totality of Indigenous governance. The system would benefit from championing local climate change initiatives, with the national government perhaps being better placed to participate in the international climate change discourse. Maintaining a good working relationship between the Indigenous and national levels of governance will be fundamental to ensuring that Tuvalu is equipped, at all levels of society, to address the impact of climate change.

10.5. **CONCLUSION**

Tuvalu will need to address its governance issues if it is to mount an effective response to the challenges posed by the climate crisis.

In addition to Tuvalu’s climate vulnerabilities, climate change has also exposed the vulnerabilities in Tuvalu’s system of governance. Tuvalu will need to address its governance issues if it is to mount an effective response to the challenges posed by the climate crisis. Finding a proper place in Tuvalu’s democracy for Indigenous and Westminster-style governance to coexist and operate with fewer tensions will be a positive and necessary step towards addressing Tuvalu’s climate change challenges. The politics of climate change in Tuvalu should focus on the local, national and international processes directed at mitigating and adapting to the effects of climate change. Political decision making must be inclusive and ensure that all sectors of society are heard and acknowledged. A multi-tiered approach will be essential to managing the climate crisis, while also maintaining and further developing the practice of democracy in Tuvalu.

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Chapter 11

VANUATU

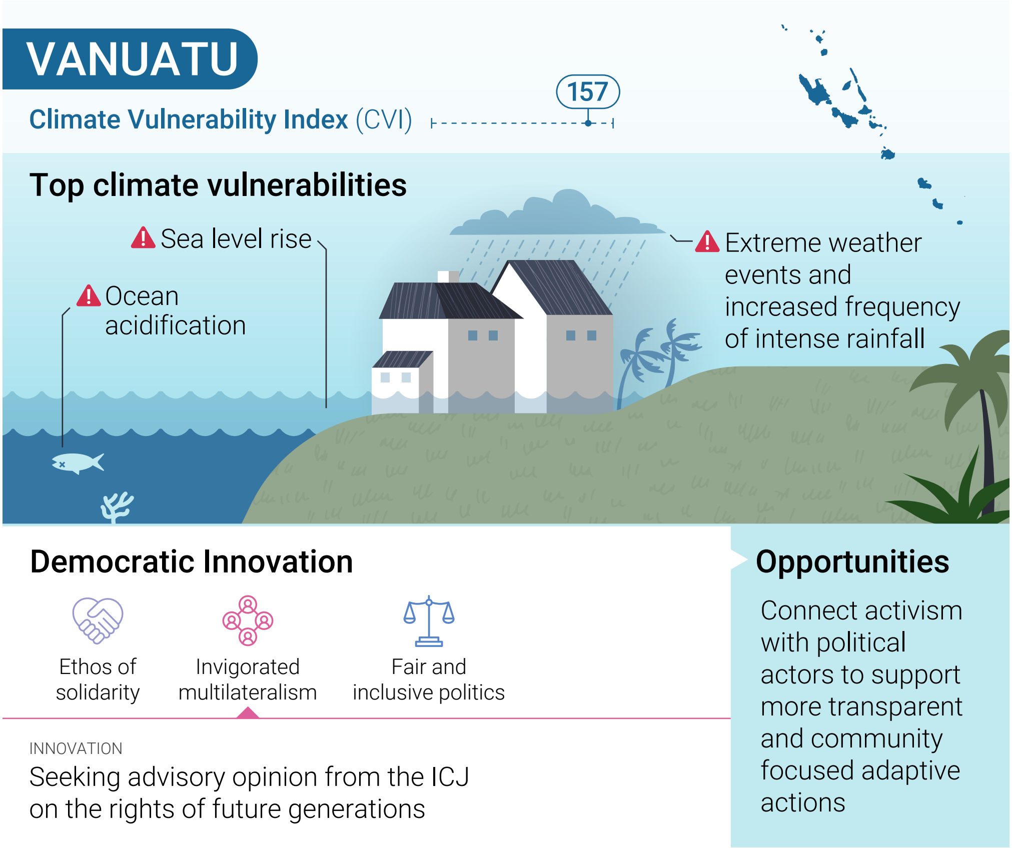
11.1. INTRODUCTION

In the Pacific Islands region and across the globe, Vanuatu is acknowledged as one of the nations most vulnerable to climate change. While the threat of sea level rise is less of an issue compared to atoll nations such as Kiribati and Tuvalu, Vanuatu's risk of natural disaster, particularly linked to cyclones, means that the climate crisis is already having profound effects on the state. The implications arising from the intersection of the impacts of climate change and Vanuatu's democracy, which has been characterized as turbulent and fragmented (Cox et al. 2007; Freedom House 2021; Veenendaal 2021), remain to be seen. They must be considered in the context of a widely dispersed rural population that relies heavily on subsistence food production and local governance systems, in the absence of any substantive connection with the state.

Vanuatu's risk of natural disaster, particularly linked to cyclones, means that the climate crisis is already having profound effects on the state.

National politics in Vanuatu is highly fluid and personality driven, and the proliferation of political parties creates difficulties with forming a majority government. Vanuatu experienced a protracted push for independence driven by key political parties divided along Francophone and Anglophone lines, which derived from the dual administrative arrangements of the pre-independence period. Over the past three decades, however, the relative cohesion of the political party system has weakened, resulting in political fragmentation and instability (Morgan 2008; Veenendaal 2021). For example, the most recent election in 2020 brought to power Vanuatu's third consecutive

Figure 11.1. **Vanuatu**


VANUATU
Climate Vulnerability Index (CVI)
157
Top climate vulnerabilities
Sea level rise
Ocean acidification
Extreme weather events and increased frequency of intense rainfall
Democratic Innovation
Ethos of solidarity
Invigorated multilateralism
Fair and inclusive politics
INNOVATION
Seeking advisory opinion from the ICJ on the rights of future generations
Opportunities
Connect activism with political actors to support more transparent and community focused adaptive actions

all-male parliament with representatives from 18 political parties that lack substantial differentiation in terms of ideology or policy commitments (Howard 2020). Women have been absent from parliament since 2012, and only five women parliamentarians have been elected since independence.

In what could be described as the most tumultuous period in Vanuatu politics, the government changed 21 times in 24 years in the period 1991–2015 (Barbara and Baker 2019). Motions of no confidence are frequent, and accountability mechanisms have been used to dismiss or imprison members of parliament in connection with allegations of bribery and corruption (Van Trease 2016, 2017). Vanuatu's lack of political stability means that it is difficult to focus concerted political action on political actors or advocate consistently (Barbara and Baker 2019).

Independent media, newspapers and radio stations are active in Vanuatu and work to hold government to account, although at times the government has used strategies to limit the media's scrutiny (see e.g. McGarry 2019). Vanuatu has a rating of 'narrowed' from the CIVICUS Monitor, which rates the degree to which citizens are able to express their views and exercise their rights in the civic space (CIVICUS Monitor 2022a). A recent example of why Vanuatu has this rating, which is the next level down from 'open', is the government's refusal to allow a proposed strike by the Vanuatu Teachers' Union in 2022 (CIVICUS Monitor 2022b).

Vanuatu recently celebrated its 40th anniversary of independence with a nine-day holiday, public processions and other celebrations, which demonstrated a strong sense of pride in Vanuatu's sovereign status. Organizations such as the Vanuatu Cultural Centre have played an important role in revisiting and valuing local and traditional sources of knowledge and governance (*kastom*) in communities across Vanuatu (Bolton 2003). Valuing the 'local' over perceived outsider interference is a consistent and important theme in politics, and this has provided a platform for key political actors to develop their support base (see e.g. Rousseau 2012).

The state-building project in Vanuatu is 'unfinished' (Cox et al. 2007) in terms of both state reach outside of urban centres and citizens' (particularly rural) expectations of government. Remoteness and reach are real issues in a context where a largely rural population is spread across 65 of Vanuatu's 83 islands. Vanuatu's Constitution and associated legislation provide for decentralized government through provincial and municipal government authorities, which comprise 72 area councils across six provinces. In practice, however, diverse systems of local governance, such as village councils headed by a chief, provide the main source of governance and decision making, as well as justice systems, for many *ni-Vanuatu* (Brown and Nolan 2008; Morgan 2013). Democracy therefore works in hybridized ways, whereby citizens engage with authority through mechanisms such as elections, but also through the systems of obligation and reciprocity embedded in social systems.

11.2. **CLIMATE VULNERABILITY AND ACTION**

Successive assessments over the past decade have ranked Vanuatu as extremely vulnerable to climate change due to the high risk of natural disasters (Behlert et al. 2020). It is ranked 135th of 182 countries on the University of Notre Dame's Global Adaptation Initiative (ND-GAIN) Index for 2020, where it features as the 25th most vulnerable country and the 117th most ready country (University of Notre Dame 2022a, 2022b). Vanuatu's vulnerability ranking is partly due to projected changes in cereal crop yields and agricultural capacity, and its high dependency on external resources for health services due to, among other things, insufficient medical staff (University of Notre Dame 2022b).

Climate predictions for Vanuatu foresee increasing land and ocean temperatures, larger than global average sea level rise, coral bleaching and ocean acidification affecting fish stocks and more intense cyclones. While rainfall is not expected to change overall, an increased frequency of intense rainfall events is anticipated (Vanuatu Meteorology and Geo-hazard Department et al. 2015). Intense rainfall can lead to groundwater contamination, particularly where Vanuatu still has active volcanoes (National Advisory Committee on Climate Change 2007). In addition, most of the infrastructure on the main islands is situated in coastal areas, which makes Vanuatu vulnerable to sea level rise or storm surges (National Advisory Committee on Climate Change 2007).

In 2015, Cyclone Pam had a major impact on the people, environment and economy, notably of the capital, Port Vila, and the eastern and southern islands. This was the first Category 5 cyclone to make landfall in the Pacific Islands region, but it was followed by Category 5 Cyclone Harold in 2020. Cyclone Harold is estimated to have affected just over half of Vanuatu's population, particularly in the northern provinces, and left an estimated 87,000 people without homes (Australian Government n.d.). The costs of rebuilding have already exceeded the national government's capacity. The frequency of serious climate events has been described by former foreign minister Ralph Regenvanu as having placed Vanuatu in a permanent state of emergency (Wewerinke-Singh and Salili 2020). Natural disasters have also severely affected tourism, which is an important economic sector and a key driver of economic development.

Vanuatu is highly dependent on aid for adaptation, mitigation and recovery following disasters, and this has real implications for democracy in a time of climate crisis.

Vanuatu is highly dependent on aid for adaptation, mitigation and recovery following disasters, and this has real implications for democracy in a time of climate crisis. For example, rebuilding in Port Vila after Cyclone Pam occurred rapidly due to the proximity of the port to inflows of humanitarian assistance and the ‘biggest problem was not in attracting enough aid, but managing its distribution’ (Van Trease 2016). Similarly, when Cyclone Harold hit Vanuatu concurrently with the Covid-19 state of emergency, the Vanuatu Skills Partnership (VSP)—a human resource development and training programme funded through the Australian aid programme—was relied on heavily to coordinate the government’s emergency response. This approach contrasted with, and was prompted by, the previous over-reliance on external consultants for disaster management, rather than investment in local capacity (Vanuatu Skills Partnership 2020). In this context, the politics of adaptation are likely to have a significant impact on Vanuatu’s climate response (Sovacool et al. 2017), where adaptation projects are funded externally, rely on external assistance rather than local capacity and are prone to elite capture at the community level.

Vanuatu is active at the international level. It ratified the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in 1993, submitted its first National Communication to the UNFCCC in 1999 and provided a national plan of action in 1999 (Government of Vanuatu 1999; National Advisory Committee on Climate Change 2007). Vanuatu is also taking international legal action on a number of fronts as a means of pursuing climate justice. For example, Vanuatu is exploring the possibility of using international law to sue carbon-emitting governments and the fossil fuel industry for the climate change-related costs of loss or damage to low-carbon nations (Esswein and Zernack 2020; Wewerinke-Singh and Salili 2020). It is also seeking an advisory opinion from the International Court of Justice on the rights of future generations to be protected from climate change (Jackson 2022).

Civil society in Vanuatu is also active on climate change mitigation and adaptation issues. *Women I Tok Tok Tugeta* and the Vanuatu Climate Action Network (VCAN) are key advocates for action on climate change (Sterrett 2015; Cornish 2018) and VCAN is an important player credited with increasing the inclusion of community priorities in government policy. This remains limited, however, as the information on climate change exchanged in such forums is not easily disseminated more broadly due to the difficulty of reaching rural communities (Sterrett 2015). Where VCAN has organized climate justice marches, protest is directed at international actors rather than calls for greater equity in domestic responses to climate impacts.

In the run-up to the COP 26 negotiations in Glasgow, for example, citizens marched in a climate action parade organized collaboratively by government and civil society. The key players were the Ministry of Climate Change, the British High Commission, VCAN, Wan Smol Bag Theatre, ActionAid and Oxfam. Government and civil society actors share the same political focus in calling for other countries to phase out fossil fuels and advocating for climate justice. Rather than focusing on domestic issues related to service delivery or climate adaptation, political mobilization was based more on a sense of unity in Vanuatu against external threats such as the lack of action by carbon-emitting countries. Vanuatu was limited to an online presence at COP 26 due to the travel challenges linked to Covid-19. This underscored the importance of collaborative regional approaches to negotiations at COP 26, such as through the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP) and Vanuatu's membership of the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS), which had in-person representatives at the negotiations.

The political focus of climate action in Vanuatu is directed at international rather than domestic injustice.

Thus, the political focus of climate action in Vanuatu is directed at international rather than domestic injustice, and the Vanuatu Government is active in global and regional climate forums calling for international actors to take stronger mitigation actions and reduce carbon emissions.

11.3. **HOW DOES THE CLIMATE CRISIS INTERSECT WITH THE STATE OF DEMOCRACY IN VANUATU?**

The dynamics of political economy and the related instability in Vanuatu’s political system tend to promote political short-termism.

The dynamics of political economy described above and the related instability in Vanuatu’s political system tend to promote political short-termism, which undermines the prospects for implementing long-term structural reforms necessary to support climate adaptation (Cox et al. 2007). Electoral competition is conducted on highly localized and personalized terms, in which political elites achieve electoral success through patronage and by mobilizing kinship networks. Voter decisions may be based on the direct benefits received from candidates, rather than party ideology or policy which is largely absent from many political parties. Rice, solar panels and other benefits can be used to entice voters; and a big reputation and personality are important factors in gaining voter recognition at election time. Reciprocity, obligation and religious affiliation are important foundations for success among candidates (Van Trease 2005). Political fragmentation and patronage systems have prevented substantial infrastructure development and service delivery (Cox et al. 2007; Van Trease 2016). In this context, there is limited space for widespread implementation of policy responses to complex issues such as climate change.

Political dynamics aside, Vanuatu’s planning state faces important challenges in implementing significant adaptive initiatives. As noted above, the post-colonial state in Vanuatu has been described as unfinished (Cox et al. 2007). Government resources and infrastructure development are largely concentrated in Port Vila, and the government faces significant capacity and resource challenges in delivering services to its widely dispersed rural population. The fragility of the formal state system has elevated the importance of *kastom* and traditional governance systems which operate, to varying degrees, within and alongside formal democratic systems. The *kastom* systems are particularly important in rural areas and are one of the main ways in which *ni-Vanuatu* citizens engage with authority.

Vanuatu is notable for its success at hybridizing its political system by incorporating customary institutions into national systems, such as through its Council of Chiefs, the *Malvatu Mauri*. However, ongoing issues of connectivity remain between formal and informal systems and the degree to which customary and traditional governance systems are able to work alongside formal state systems to improve localized service delivery. These institutional complexities will affect Vanuatu’s capacity to deliver adaptive policies in areas outside of the capital and the large centres.

Vanuatu’s hybridized political system has important implications for the exercise of democratic accountabilities and the nature of political participation. While Vanuatu has an established and resilient democratic system, its traditional and customary institutions are more opaque and—to the degree that they are incorporated into democratic institutions—have the potential to compromise accountabilities. The interaction of customary and introduced political institutions has important consequences for who might influence policy decisions and how scarce public resources are allocated. Access to material resources and services is often dictated by social ties of kinship, island or provincial identity, church affiliation or elite school networks (Rousseau and Kenneth-Watson 2018), rather than more abstract, long-term notions of the national interest or public good. Such systems also operate in ways that can undermine public accountability. It is generally perceived that corruption is widespread in the public sector and in parliament (Morgan 2013; Rousseau and Kenneth-Watson 2018).

The social dynamics referred to above are important in determining who can participate in public policymaking processes. Most notably, women have been marginalized as decision makers in the national parliament and the key government ministries. Women are also marginalized in customary institutions, where they face exclusionary social norms and customary practices. The structural factors noted above also mean that the prospects for collective action and a solidaristic ethos on climate change remain limited.

The personalized nature of politics can make it difficult for civil society and other activist groups to influence policymaking. Where institutions are fragile, it can be difficult for communities and civil society groups to find opportunities to engage. This is particularly the case where civil society groups find themselves dependent on external donor support and can therefore be perceived as having been captured by outsider influence (Barbara and Baker 2019). For example, recent efforts to promote fairer and more inclusive politics, such as the *Vote Women* quota campaign facilitated by Oxfam and led by *ni-Vanuatu* nationals, was dismissed as interference in Vanuatu's domestic politics (see Baker 2019). The implications this may have for perceptions of foreign interference in climate networks facilitated by aid partners, such as *Women I Tok Tok Tugeta* or VCAN, are yet to play out. Other efforts to include women are considered token rather than credible and, as referred to above, social hierarchies tend to exclude young people from decision making.

Vanuatu's general dependency on aid and resource development makes it vulnerable to elite capture of the politics of climate change adaptation. The exploitation of customary land, driven by foreign investors and facilitated by political elites, has been a long-term source of instability (McDonnell 2017). Given Vanuatu's dependence on donor funding, and the anticipated high volume of incoming climate funding, it is likely that vested interests will exercise considerable influence in shaping the country's adaptation response and selecting its beneficiaries—both internal and external. Mechanisms such as the Global Environment Facility (GEF) have effectively established a 'node of power beyond the state' (Sovacool et al. 2017). These arrangements have strengthened the climate change adaptation sector—donors, agencies, international NGOs and scientific organizations—rather than the intended beneficiaries of the GEF—governments and the citizens of less developed countries. Unless efforts are made to ensure transparency, localization and genuine participation in adaptation initiatives, these dynamics are likely to be repeated in Vanuatu.

At the local levels, elite capture of climate adaptation projects has exacerbated existing inequalities in social hierarchies, leading to jealousy and disputes (Buggy and McNamara 2016). High levels of dissatisfaction have been noted with climate adaptation projects administered through local governance systems, particularly due to the dominance of chiefs and local patriarchal structures which tend to exclude women, people with disabilities and young people. In instances where communities have been required to relocate, disengagement by young people has been noted because traditional hierarchies exclude them from having a voice in decision making at the local level (Warrick 2011).

Shared concerns about climate change could be an important source of innovation in helping a relatively fragmented polity to begin to take collective action on adaptive preparations. Vanuatu has a strong degree of cultural cohesion and sense of self-reliance (Rousseau 2012). This provides a basis for national collective action that can at times be mobilized to support policy reform. On the use of *kastom* to support reform in the skills sector, for example, see Barbara (2020). There are also signs that climate change is supporting innovation, in terms of development directed at strengthening the capacity of the state to act in a planning capacity. As highlighted above, the national government has ratified multilateral frameworks and developed a range of climate change adaptation policies, but it faces ongoing challenges in the area of implementation.

At the same time, there is evidence that climate change adaptation is driving new forms of local state-building with the capacity to address longstanding state fragilities and state–society deficits. For example, while the VSP is an aid-funded programme, it is driven by local leaders who have invested significantly in local relationships, networks and leadership development. The VSP provides an example of commitment to subtle but effective local state-building with an emphasis on trust- and relationship-building rather than dehumanized rational policymaking processes, and could provide important lessons for further decentralization of the state (Barbara 2020).

11.4. **THREATS TO DEMOCRACY FROM THE CLIMATE CRISIS AND POSSIBLE RESPONSES**

Vanuatu will face serious challenges as it tries to adapt to the impacts of climate change. By putting pressure on Vanuatu’s political, economic and social systems in the context of its fragmented polity, climate change may exacerbate these fragilities, thereby raising questions about the legitimacy of democratic institutions and their ability to address the needs of citizens.

As democracy and identities in Vanuatu are highly localized, climate change will add to existing pressures but is unlikely to dramatically alter the nature of democracy. It is more likely that Vanuatu’s political systems will be overwhelmed by the continuing crises driven by climate change, which are undermining the prospects for inclusive governance.

However, there are also signs that climate change is a driver of democratic innovation, as evidenced in the way climate change is motivating new forms of political action, often in collaboration with globalized activist networks. It remains to be seen whether such activism will connect with domestic political actors to support more transparent and community-focused adaptive actions. Climate change may also be driving new forms of subnational state building, as the government works to help vulnerable communities respond to the impacts of climate disasters. Innovation is particularly notable in areas where the impacts of climate change are most pressing, such as disaster response.

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Chapter 12

HARNESSING AND PROTECTING DEMOCRACY IN THE CLIMATE CRISIS

12.1. **INTRODUCTION**

Two challenges frame this Report:

- How can democracy effectively address the climate crisis?
- How can democracy effectively address the threats it faces from the climate crisis?

The Report is based on case studies of ten countries. The case studies are a rich source of findings on the challenges to democracy that arise from the climate crisis. The first might be obvious but should be made explicit: *democratic governance shapes climate action and the responses to the threats to democracy that arise from the climate crisis*. This finding is elaborated on below in relation to democratic debilitation, threats to democracy and democratic innovation in the climate crisis.

The second major finding provides an important perspective on the significance of democracy in the climate crisis: *democratic governance is not the sole factor shaping climate action or responses to the threats it faces from the climate crisis.* This too is an obvious finding but its virtue is to prompt the question: what else matters?

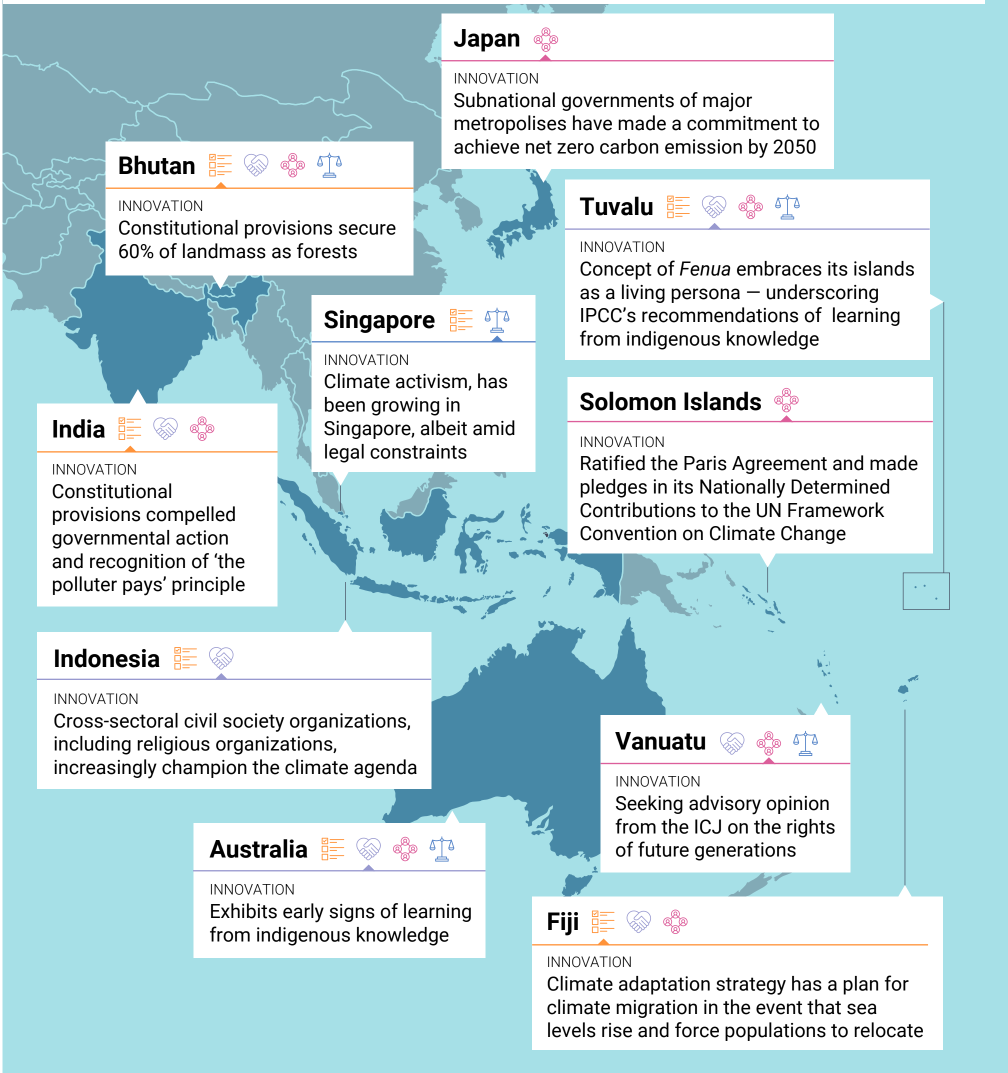
The case studies suggest several other significant and related factors. First, there is the extent of climate vulnerability, which is

Figure 12.1. **Democratic innovation in the climate crisis**

Mitigation of and **adaptation** to climate change can be achieved through democratic action.

Nations with these icons have shown progress on the four pillars of democracy for a safe climate:

- ☰ Key elements of a planning state
- ♡ An ethos of solidarity
- ✿ Invigorated multilateralism
- ⚖ Fair and inclusive politics



Japan ✿

INNOVATION
Subnational governments of major metropolises have made a commitment to achieve net zero carbon emission by 2050

Bhutan ☰ ♡ ✿ ⚖

INNOVATION
Constitutional provisions secure 60% of landmass as forests

Tuvalu ☰ ♡ ✿ ⚖

INNOVATION
Concept of *Fenua* embraces its islands as a living persona — underscoring IPCC's recommendations of learning from indigenous knowledge

Singapore ☰ ⚖

INNOVATION
Climate activism, has been growing in Singapore, albeit amid legal constraints

Solomon Islands ✿

INNOVATION
Ratified the Paris Agreement and made pledges in its Nationally Determined Contributions to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change

India ☰ ♡ ✿

INNOVATION
Constitutional provisions compelled governmental action and recognition of 'the polluter pays' principle

Indonesia ☰ ♡

INNOVATION
Cross-sectoral civil society organizations, including religious organizations, increasingly champion the climate agenda

Vanuatu ♡ ✿ ⚖

INNOVATION
Seeking advisory opinion from the ICJ on the rights of future generations

Australia ☰ ♡ ✿ ⚖

INNOVATION
Exhibits early signs of learning from indigenous knowledge

Fiji ☰ ♡ ✿

INNOVATION
Climate adaptation strategy has a plan for climate migration in the event that sea levels rise and force populations to relocate

brought into stark relief by the dire situation in the low-lying islands of Fiji, Solomon Islands, Tuvalu, Vanuatu and the Torres Strait Islands in Australia where the threat is to the survival of these communities. Without wanting to diminish the severity of this threat, however, climate vulnerability is not the same as being climate-affected. Japan and Singapore are among the most climate-affected countries in the world but are not ranked as the most climate-vulnerable because of their climate-readiness.

This brings us to the second factor—the extent of state capacity and resources. An established state, such as Australia, Japan and Singapore, has greater capacity to undertake effective climate action and is less vulnerable to the threats from the climate crisis. On the other hand, a state that is 'weak', such as Solomon Islands, or 'unfinished', such as Vanuatu, faces greater difficulties with climate action and more potent threats to its functioning. Between these two poles are the diverse, geographically vast and populous countries of India and Indonesia.

The third factor is related to the second—dependence on international funding. Such dependence, which is clear in relation to Fiji, Indonesia, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu, is challenging for democracy in the climate crisis. It will evidently shape the extent of effective climate action that can be delivered through democratic governance. Equally, it poses real threats to democratic governance, such as the dilution of national sovereignty and corruption, which are discussed in Section 12.3.

The fourth factor is the structure of the economy or, more specifically, the significance of climate-vulnerable economic sectors and fossil fuel industries. The significance of climate-vulnerable economic sectors such as agriculture and tourism can be a prompt to climate action (as in Bhutan) while dependence on fossil fuel industries, including the coal industry, can be a roadblock to such action (as in Australia, India, Indonesia and, to a lesser extent, Japan). Both can lead to threats to democracy in terms of instability, insecurity and inequality but through different dynamics—climate-vulnerable economic sectors through climate impacts, and fossil fuel industries through climate mitigation.

The case studies demonstrate that democratic debilitation contributes to climate inaction and the damaging role of commercial interests.

12.2. **DEMOCRATIC DEBILITATION IN THE CLIMATE CRISIS**

The country case studies demonstrate that democratic debilitation contributes to climate inaction and the damaging role of commercial interests. In some countries, the outsized influence of particular industries, notably the fossil fuel industries in Australia, the coal industry in India and the logging industry in Solomon Islands, has been directed at preventing climate action. In several of the case studies, commercial interests make their voices heard loudly through the politics–business nexus, such as in the clout wielded by the Japanese Business Federation ('Keidanren') within the ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) and the pro-business Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry (METI), the centrality of business interests to Singapore's developmental approach to growth and the 'oligarchization' of Indonesian politics. In Australia, India, Indonesia and Japan, the disproportionate influence of commercial interests has been facilitated by political contributions and lax political finance regulation.

Another key element of democratic debilitation is short-termism, as identified by Chapter 1. This is deeply connected to the damaging role of commercial interests. Where commercial interests have a disproportionate influence on public policy, there is a powerful tendency among the political elite to equate the national interest with the short-term demands of business, and at times even the particular agendas of a select few powerful industries. Correspondingly, electoral agendas tend to be framed around these particular economic interests, which can explain why in some countries, such as Indonesia and Japan, there is no strong push for climate action.

Another source of short-termism is highly localized politics. In Solomon Islands and Vanuatu, voting is often based on personality and kinship networks rather than policies or party ideology. This also interacts with the role of money in politics, making vote buying a mainstream way to cultivate electoral support.

This analysis suggests that the problem of short-termism is not intrinsic to periodic elections but arises from a particular kind of electoral politics—one that is deeply corporatized and/or localized.

Possibly connected to these aspects of short-termism is the absence, in all the case study countries apart from Australia, of any concerted effort at a just transition—despite the profound changes that the climate crisis will produce in terms of climate impacts, mitigation and adaptation. Even Australia is still in the early stages of planning for a just transition.

Short-termism does not just arise from the features of electoral politics; it is also linked to absences in the legal framework. Table 12.1 shows that more than half the case study countries have no constitutional provisions on protection of the environment. It also indicates that more than half the case study countries have no climate-specific legislation but instead address climate change through a patchwork of environmental legislation. For example, the case study on India found 10 separate statutes that impact on climate change while Japan has 2 dedicated statutes on climate change. These absences in terms of constitutional provisions and climate-specific legislation have compounded the problem of short-termism in some countries.

Short-termism does not just arise from the features of electoral politics; it is also linked to absences in the legal framework.

Alongside the corrosive role of commercial interests and short-termism there is ‘top-down’ climate action, which refers to highly centralized climate action that involves limited responsiveness to public sentiment. Among the case studies, top-down climate action is most apparent in Fiji, with its threatened militarization of climate response, and in Singapore, through its ‘authoritarian environmentalism’. In neither country does limited responsiveness to public sentiment mean no responsiveness. There are highly managed public consultations on climate change in Singapore and strong cooperation between the government and civil society organizations in the international arena in Fiji. Responsiveness is nonetheless limited and underscored by the suppression of political freedoms in both countries.

While less acute in the other case study countries, top-down climate action is a risk or reality in all of them. Such action exacerbates the challenge of coordination on and coherence of climate action. This applies to federations such as Australia and India but also in other governmental contexts. In Tuvalu, there is the complex task of coordinating government climate action with the *Falekaupule,*

Table 12.1. **Constitutional environmental protection and climate-specific legislation**

	Constitutional environmental protection	**Climate-specific legislation**
Australia	No	Yes
Bhutan	Yes	No
Fiji	Yes	Yes
India	Yes	No
Indonesia	No	No
Japan	No	Yes
Singapore	No	Yes (*Carbon Pricing Act*)
Solomon Islands	No	No
Tuvalu	No	Yes
Vanuatu	Yes	Yes

the authorities which separately govern the eight islands of Tuvalu. In Vanuatu, the lines of coordination are between the formal state system and *kastom* and traditional governance systems.

Finally, there is weak multilateralism or inadequate climate ambition measured against the Paris Agreement. Australia, India, Indonesia, Japan and Singapore fall into this category, as assessed by the Climate Action Tracker. Bhutan is a strong outlier, as the first country in the world to become carbon-negative. (The Climate Action Tracker does not include Fiji, Solomon Islands, Tuvalu and Vanuatu.) There has also been a failure to translate international commitments into effective domestic action in countries such as Japan, which exhibits low levels of international ambition, but also in countries where there is high ambition, such as Fiji, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu.

12.3. **THREATS TO DEMOCRACY FROM THE CLIMATE CRISIS**

The case studies highlight powerful threats to democracy from the climate crisis.

The case studies highlight powerful threats to democracy from the climate crisis. First, there is the instability linked to extreme weather events, which have profoundly affected all the case study countries. They are already experiencing extreme temperatures, flooding, cyclones and storms, all of which are predicted to worsen in the coming decades. All except for landlocked Bhutan are experiencing rising sea levels and coastal erosion, which in the case of Fiji, Solomon Islands, Tuvalu and Vanuatu are threatening to submerge these countries; several Indonesian cities are also at risk of sinking. Drought is seriously affecting Australia and India, and Australia is also suffering from wildfires that are intensifying in frequency and severity.

Climate-induced food insecurity is also on the rise. In Fiji, Solomon Islands, Tuvalu and Vanuatu, this is linked to the loss of arable land; while coral bleaching and ocean acidification are affecting fish stocks. It is also an acute issue in Bhutan, which relies on subsistence farming and food imports, and Singapore, which imports the overwhelming majority of its food. Climate migration is already occurring within several countries. In India, millions have migrated to the cities from climate-affected regions, particularly those exposed to rising sea levels. In Bhutan, extreme weather events have destroyed crops, contributing to rural–urban migration.

All this gives rise to threats to and from the state. In the case of Fiji, Solomon Islands, Tuvalu and Vanuatu, the threat of climate impacts to fragile states is existential. Even where the survival of the state as a whole is not at stake, its capacity might be severely tested, as in the case of India where mass climate migration to the cities places tremendous pressure on the ability of the state to manage the process of urbanization, including the provision of basic services.

A clear and present threat to the state in some countries and a looming one in all others are conflicts over the increasing scarcity of food and habitable land. In some cases, this exacerbates existing tensions between different governance systems. In Fiji, conflicts over land might increase frictions between the Indigenous *iTaukei* system of customary law and Western governmental systems. In Solomon Islands, customary governance systems are experiencing increased stress, linked to the lack of support from state systems, due to climate pressures on water, food and other natural resources. In Tuvalu, '[t]he power struggle between the *Falekaupule* [the authorities that govern the islands of Tuvalu based on custom] and the national government is a notable and significant effect of climate change' (Chapter 10).

The temptation to indulge in top-down climate action is an inevitable response to these formidable threats to the state. In Solomon Islands and Tuvalu, there is a real risk that the tensions between the formal state system and customary governance will be resolved in favour of the former through the exercise of overwhelming state power. In all countries, there are problems associated with the characterization of climate risks as national security risks. While there is a legitimate connection between climate and national security, as recognized by the governments of Australia and Singapore, there is a danger that the national security banner might provide permission for authoritarian measures. Fiji provides a cautionary tale through the significant risk that its disaster response could be militarized, as underwritten by its Constitution which charges the military with 'overall responsibility to ensure at all times the security, defence and well-being of Fiji and all Fijians'. It illustrates the danger posed to democracy of equating the climate crisis to a war (see Chapter 1).

Instability due to extreme weather events and climate migration, growing food insecurity and the threats to and from the state mean that for better or worse the climate crisis will increasingly define electoral politics. It seems almost inescapable that political parties and governments will be judged on their responses to climate disruptions. This suggests that climate adaptation will bring the climate crisis to the top of the political agenda even in countries such as Indonesia and Japan where the current push for climate action is not strong.

What this will specifically mean for electoral politics remains to be seen. On the one hand, it might be a driver of stronger climate action, as occurred in the recent Australian federal election. Several of the case studies, however, warn of potent threats. The case study on

Japan suggests that ‘the ruling party’s poor handling of the climate crisis and major climate-related natural disasters could set the stage for the rise of populist sentiments, as the latter play on people’s grievances and create polarization as a way to gain control and remain in power’. More emphatically, the case study on India argues that ‘climate change poses the single largest non-traditional threat to democratic politics’.

One important finding of the Report concerns the distortionary effects of international action, which manifest themselves in two ways. First, as exemplified by the case of Fiji, strong climate action at the international level can legitimize undemocratic practices domestically. Second, dependence on international funding (in Fiji, Indonesia, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu) poses risks to democratic governance based on national sovereignty. The case study on Vanuatu perceptively sums up these risks by warning that ‘[g]iven Vanuatu’s dependence on donor funding, and the anticipated high volume of incoming climate funding, it is likely that vested interests will exercise considerable influence in shaping the country’s adaptation response and selecting its beneficiaries—both internal and external’, resulting in the formation of a ‘node of power beyond the state’.

The final finding in this section is that much is still unknown about the threats to democracy from the climate crisis. Chapter 1 identifies threats from the ‘three Is’ of insecurity, instability and inequality, as well as those from democratic backsliding (a decline in checks on government and the protection of fundamental rights) and the increased significance of the state, as well as threats to free and fair elections. The case studies have clearly advanced knowledge on many of these threats but they equally suggest significant gaps in understanding in relation to the democratic threats from the climate crisis that stem from inequality, particularly political equality, the increasing significance of the state, and the conduct of free and fair elections.

12.4. **DEMOCRATIC INNOVATION IN THE CLIMATE CRISIS**

There has been significant democratic innovation in response to the climate crisis in all of the case study countries.

There has been significant democratic innovation in response to the climate crisis in all of the case study countries. Democratic innovation has two meanings in this context—an intra-national sense where democratic initiatives are specifically devised in a country to address the climate crisis; and a cross-national sense where overseas practices can be a source of democratic innovation for other countries.

In Australia, India and Japan, subnational climate action is leading the way. Until the recent election of the Australian Labor Party (ALP), the climate performance of the Australian states and territories outpaced that of the federal government. In India, state governments have developed State Action Plans and regional partnerships. In Japan, major urban cities such as Tokyo, Osaka, Kyoto and Yokohama have committed to net zero carbon emissions by 2050. Tokyo is considered to be at the forefront of climate leadership. There are also signs in Vanuatu that thanks to aid funding, climate adaptation is contributing to 'new forms of local state-building' (Chapter 11).

There has also been innovation to deal with the problem of short-termism. Key elements of a planning state are present in all the case study countries, such as targets, plans and coordinating mechanisms related to climate change. Bhutan, for example, has a National Adaptation Programme of Action. Fiji has National Development Plans and the Green Growth Framework, both of which aim to achieve net zero carbon emissions by 2050. Tuvalu has *Te Kete*, the 10-year National Strategic Plan which seeks to develop a long-term national adaptation strategy, including worst-case scenarios for rising sea levels. In India, the Prime Minister's Council on Climate Change has driven nationwide climate action; NITI Aayog, the federal government's highest policymaking body which includes the Chief Ministers of all the states and Union Territories, has developed plans on phasing out fossil fuel dependency, renewable energy, a low carbon economy and climate mitigation. The Singapore Government has established an Inter-Ministerial Committee on Climate Change to coordinate climate action across ministries.

There are, of course, major caveats to this. Central elements of a planning state, such as regulation of the economy and holistic risk management—including planning for a just transition—are far less evident. Critically, there is little evidence of a concerted effort to ensure democratic planning states. Indeed, the evidence runs in the opposite direction to 'top-down' climate action (see Section 12.2).

In some of the case study countries, constitutional provisions seek to promote longer-term thinking.

In some of the case study countries, constitutional provisions seek to promote longer-term thinking. Anticipating the UN General Assembly's 2022 resolution on 'The human right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment' (United Nations 2022), these constitutional provisions specifically provide protection for the environment and regard for future generations. Bhutan's Constitution, for instance, states that '[e]very Bhutanese is a trustee of the Kingdom's natural resources and environment for the benefit of the present and future generations and it is the fundamental duty of every citizen to contribute to the protection of the natural environment, conservation of the rich biodiversity of Bhutan and prevention of all forms of ecological degradation'. It also requires that more than half of Bhutan's land be maintained under forest cover. Fiji's Constitution provides that: 'Every person has the right to a clean and healthy environment, which includes the right to have the natural world protected for the benefit of present and future generations through legislative and other means.' Vanuatu's Constitution imposes a duty on every person 'to protect the Republic of Vanuatu and to safeguard the national wealth, resources and environment in the interests of the present generation and of future generations' (Vanuatu's Constitution 1980 (2013): art. 7(d)).

India's Constitution states that its citizens have a duty 'to protect and improve the natural environment including forests, lakes, rivers and wildlife, and to have compassion for living creatures', and that '[t]he State shall endeavour to protect and improve the environment and to safeguard the forests and wildlife of the country'. In several landmark decisions, the Indian judiciary has interpreted these provisions to compel governmental action and to recognize 'the polluter pays principle'. The case study on India concludes that '[a]mong India's formal institutions, it is the judiciary that has shaped the cumulative national response to environmental protection and climate change'.

These constitutional provisions highlight innovation in relation to a solidaristic ethos. All of the above provisions seek to establish solidarity in three dimensions—intragenerational solidarity (present generation); inter-generational solidarity (future generations); and solidarity with nature (environmental). Such innovation does not have to take the form of fundamental legal norms but can also be effected through fundamental political norms (what might be called a 'political constitution': Griffith 1979). In Fiji, *Vanua* refers to the interdependence of the physical, social, spiritual and economic; in Tuvalu, *Fenua* embraces its islands as a living persona that is connected to the environment. Both countries underscore the IPCC's recommendation to learn from Indigenous knowledge (see Chapter 1). In Australia too, there are early signs of such learning.

In Bhutan, a solidaristic ethos is given effect through a developmental approach based on Gross National Happiness, which comprises four pillars—preservation of culture, conservation of the environment, economic development and good governance. In Japan, the ruling LDP has raised the prospect of a developmental approach based on 'a new form of capitalism'.

Three-dimensional solidarity is also evident in political practice through the exceptional cohesion between government and civil society organizations (CSOs) in terms of international climate action in Bhutan, Fiji, Tuvalu and Vanuatu. In Vanuatu, for instance, prior to the COP 26 Glasgow meeting, a climate action parade was jointly organized by government and CSOs.

Despite the curtailment of space for civic action (as assessed by CIVICUS), there have been strong civil society efforts on climate action. In India, for instance, solidarity within civil society is strong with 'CSOs, community-based associations, youth groups, and religious/charitable organizations that have collectivized around a common purpose to fight climate change and its effects'. In Indonesia, cross-sectoral CSOs, including religious organizations, increasingly champion the climate agenda.

There has also been innovation in terms of fair and inclusive politics. The recently elected ALP has committed to enact controls on political spending, effective disclosure obligations and truth-in-political advertising laws in an effort to address the toxic role of money in Australian politics. The case studies on Japan, Solomon Islands, Tuvalu and Vanuatu call for greater inclusiveness in processes for dealing with the climate crisis, in particular more involvement in political processes by women and youth—including in the legislature.

Finally, there have been powerful efforts to invigorate multilateralism. Of the case study countries, Bhutan, Fiji, Solomon Islands, Tuvalu and Vanuatu stand out in terms of global and regional leadership on climate action. The Torres Strait 8 have had their complaint against the Australian Government alleging breaches of key human rights upheld by the UN Human Rights Committee. In taking international legal action to obtain climate justice, Vanuatu is actively exploring possibilities under international law to sue carbon-emitting governments and the fossil fuel industry for the costs of loss and damage to low-carbon nations linked to climate change, and seeking an advisory opinion from the International Court of Justice on the rights of future generations to be protected from climate change.

There have been powerful efforts to invigorate multilateralism.

Multilateral meetings have been instrumental in prompting multilateralism. Fiji presided over COP 23 in 2017 and Japan was active internationally at the time the Kyoto Protocol was adopted. The recently elected ALP government is seeking to co-host a future Conference of the Parties in Australia with the Pacific nations.

12.5. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR DEMOCRACY IN THE CLIMATE CRISIS

In *Democracy and the Challenge of Climate Change*, Lindvall (2021) makes wide-ranging recommendations clustered under six headings:

- Overcome short-termism
- Ensure citizens’ participation
- Act on climate injustice
- Develop knowledge-based decision making

- Strengthen state capacity
- Further research needed

The findings of this Report endorse the multi-pronged approach adopted by Lindvall (namely, various democratic objectives; different levels of government and society; integration of policy and research). It specifically supports the following recommendations made by Lindvall:

- **Overcome short-termism.** Adopt climate laws and emission reduction targets, and develop constitutional frameworks (broadly conceived) for long-term decision making.
- **Ensure citizen participation**. Invite citizens to participate in formulating climate policies.
- **Act on climate injustice**. Ensure a just transition and strengthen gender equality.
- **Strengthen state capacity**. Fight corruption and counteract aggressive lobbying and policy capture.
- **Conduct further research.** Particularly on the threats to democracy from the climate crisis.

This Report makes five further recommendations on policy and research:

- **Identify and implement ways to establish a democratic planning state**. The climate crisis calls for a stronger state in the form of a planning state and democratic responses should be situated in that context.
- **Strengthen a solidaristic ethos**. The challenge here is to expand what de Tocqueville (1874) characterized as ‘the spirit of democracy’ to include future generations and nature; and to institutionalize this ethos in laws and policies, including economic and development plans.

- **Place Indigenous perspectives at the centre of democratic politics**. This is imperative in terms of voice, justice and also learning—especially in relation to a solidaristic ethos.

- **Ensure that international funding for climate action is based on effective democratic mechanisms**. Such funding is essential for many countries and should not come at the expense of undermining their democratic institutions.

- **Invigorate multilateralism by learning from the most climate vulnerable**. Through their concerted action in international forums, climate-vulnerable communities such as those in Bhutan, the Pacific Islands and the Torres Strait Islands in Australia have set an example for the rest of the world.

All these recommendations seek to harness democracy to address the climate crisis. They also draw strength and support from democracy in a way that transforms and deepens our understanding of the concept.

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About the authors

Main chapters and Australia case study

Joo-Cheong Tham is a Professor at Melbourne Law School with expertise in labour law and public law. His public law research centres upon law and democracy with books on money and politics: *The Democracy We Can't Afford* (2010, UNSW Press); *Electoral Democracy: Australian Prospects* (2011, MUP); *The Funding of Political Parties: Where Now?* (2012, Routledge); and reports for International IDEA, the New South Wales Electoral Commission and the New South Wales Independent Commission Against Corruption. He is also the inaugural Director of the Electoral Regulation Research Network and a Director of the Centre for Public Integrity.

Bhutan

Om Katel (PhD) is a faculty member at the College of Natural Resources, Royal University of Bhutan, Lobesa, Punakha, Bhutan, and currently works as a lecturer at the Department of Environment and Climate Studies. Dr Katel teaches courses on environmental governance, natural resources management, statistics, climate change vulnerabilities and adaptation, integrated watershed management and other courses related to environmental conservation. He is a visiting researcher at Nagoya University, Japan, and an alumnus of Youth Encounter on Sustainability (YES), Switzerland; Intensive Program on Sustainability (IPoS), Asian Institute of Technology, Thailand and the University of Tokyo, Japan; among others.

Vanuatu and Solomon Islands

Elise Howard, Coral Bell School of Asia Pacific Affairs. Elise's research explores women's leadership and security in the context of climate change in the Pacific Islands region. Her research focuses on gender inequalities, leadership pathways and the structural changes needed to build greater inclusion of women's perspectives in decision making.

Julien Barbara, Associate Professor, is Head of ANU's Department of Pacific Affairs and Deputy Team Leader of the DFAT-funded Pacific Research Program. A political economist and development expert specialising in politics, democracy and governance in the Pacific, he has conducted research on political and social change across the Pacific including in the areas of elections, political participation, public policy, governance and institutional reform, leadership, gender and urbanisation. He has significant foreign and aid policy experience, having worked in various roles for the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade and the Australian Agency for International Development since 2000, including as a diplomat posted to the European Union and Director of the Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands Machinery of Government Program.

India

Niranjan Sahoo, PhD, is a senior fellow with 20 years of work experience in diverse work environments: institutions involving public policy think tanks, the development sector, international multi-lateral organizations and consultancy firms. His key areas of expertise are on a range of policy issues mainly on the intersection of political economy, laws, institutions and governance. His doctorate was on 'Politics of Environmental Governance in India'. A recipient of Asia Fellow and Sir Ratan Tata Fellow, Dr Sahoo currently focuses on democracy, human rights, conflicts, insurgencies and peacebuilding, among other things in the South Asia region.

Fiji

Romitesh Kant is a PhD Scholar, Department of Pacific Affairs, Coral Bell School of Asia and the Pacific, College of Asia Pacific Affairs, the Australian National University, Canberra, Australia and an Honorary Research Associate, Institute for Human Security and Social Change, College of Arts, Social Sciences and Commerce, La Trobe University, Melbourne Australia. Romitesh Kant has more than 15 years of experience in governance, civic education and human rights.

Tuvalu

Eselealofa 'Ese' Apinelu is an Indigenous Tuvaluan lawyer and served as the Attorney-General of Tuvalu for more than 10 years before joining Tuvalu's Suva Mission as the Head of Mission in 2022. Her research work focused on the disconnection between custom and law with a particular focus on human rights in Indigenous understandings. Ese holds qualifications from the Australian National University, University of Tasmania, University of the South Pacific and Swinburne University of Technology.

Japan

Motoky Hayakawa is a governance specialist with more than 15 years of broad experience in democratic reforms in fragile and conflict-affected situations. Previously, he served as a Programme Manager at International IDEA, leading a parliamentary assistance project in Myanmar. Prior to joining International IDEA, he worked with the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, the World Bank and the World Health Organization. His research interests lie in the interconnections of environment, institutions and individuals. He holds a Master of Arts in Political Science from Waseda University in Japan, and a Master of Public Administration and a Master of Arts in International Relations from Syracuse University in the USA.

Indonesia

Khalisah Khalid is the Public Engagement and Action Manager of Greenpeace Indonesia. Khalisah has experience advocating environmental policies and supporting environmental cases in Indonesia, and campaigns for the right to the environment and on corporate responsibility for environmental damage and human rights abuses. She is also focused on environmental policy mainstreaming in politics and is widely published in her fields.

Singapore

Melissa Low is a Research Fellow at the National University of Singapore’s (NUS) Centre for Nature-based Climate Solutions. She previously worked at the Energy Studies Institute, NUS, where she carried out research projects on a range of energy and climate issues of concern to Singapore and the region. She has participated in the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) Conference of Parties (COP) for over a decade and is an active sustainability thought leader, authoring, publishing and presenting at various forums.

About International IDEA

The International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA) is an intergovernmental organization with 34 Member States founded in 1995, with an exclusive mandate to support and advance democracy worldwide.

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<https://www.idea.int>

International IDEA
Strömsborg
SE-103 34 Stockholm
SWEDEN
+46 8 698 37 00
info@idea.int
www.idea.int

Democracy is on trial in the climate crisis. It is charged with having failed to prevent dangerous climate change. To its critics, the very same features of democracy praised as its defining virtues—popular sovereignty, the accountability and responsiveness of elected officials, public debate and deliberation—are handicaps that impede effective climate action. However, this trial is not over and it would not be safe to deliver a verdict at this stage. The case for authoritarian regimes is flawed in both theory and practice and while it is late for preventing the worst impacts of climate change, there is still a window to provide a climate-safe future. Here, it is overwhelmingly democratic nations that are taking the lead.

With this in mind, this Report focuses on democracy and the climate crisis in the Asia and the Pacific region. A regional approach based on case studies has been chosen to contextualize the challenges to democracy arising from this crisis. The Asia and the Pacific region is significant for several reasons—it is the most populous in the world; it is a region that will be disproportionately affected by climate change and where many countries are considered highly vulnerable; and, as this Report makes clear, it is also a place where there have been vibrant innovations to democratic institutions and practices for dealing with the climate crisis.

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