

Environmental cooperation in South Asia: India and Nepaltrans-boundary air pollution

P.L.S. Dias

Department of International Relations, University of Colombo, Sri Lanka

The region of South Asia, inhabited by one fifth of the world population, is faced with the common problems of underdevelopment, poverty, population pressure, and environmental degradation. Environmental problems have made life almost unmanageable for a considerable proportion of the population. Air pollution, a significant environmental problem, is damaging the region's natural resources. India and Nepal are prominent contributors to trans-boundary air pollution in the region due to industrialization, population growth, and weak implementation of air pollution policies. This paper explores the puzzle of why South Asian countries such as India and Nepal do not cooperate for the environment, compared to Europe's successful regulatory regime, even though both regions have borne similar conditions in terms of atmospheric problems. Regional cooperation must take place in South Asia through an examination of the factors that shape the environmental foreign policy of the sovereign states. The acid rain of Europe has been investigated through the lens of the epistemic community approach and the interest-based approach. The investigation has resulted in a successful regional cooperation in Europe. The main objective of this paper is to identify a successful environmental cooperation method in South Asia to address the trans-boundary air pollution problem in India and Nepal. Due to the existence of a knowledge-based community perspective, some self-interested states have difficulties in defining their interests and development goals and preferences. It finds that a lack of a domestic and regional consensus on the shared ecological vulnerability to trans-boundary acid deposition and the high economic costs involved in reducing toxic emissions have contributed to the slow development of environmental cooperation in South Asia.

Keywords: *environmental cooperation, trans-boundary air pollution, foreign policy, sovereignty*