

EXAMINING THE INTERSECTION OF CLIMATE CHANGE AND POST COLONIALITY AT COP27: A DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

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Abstract

This paper examines the discourse surrounding climate change at COP27 through the lens of Postcolonial Critical Discourse Analysis (PCDA), which combines insights from Postcolonial Theory and Critical Discourse Analysis. Using the frameworks of Fairclough, Dryzek, and Van Dijk, the study analyses speeches from the UNFCCC Secretariat, the European Union, and the Umbrella Group to explore representations of the Global South, recognition of historical responsibility, and equity in climate negotiations. The findings reveal that while the UNFCCC Secretariat emphasizes inclusivity and transparency, the EU and the United States often reinforce colonial hierarchies by framing themselves as global leaders and neglecting the agency of marginalized communities. This study underscores the necessity of decolonizing climate negotiations to achieve equitable and effective global climate action. It calls for recognizing historical injustices, valuing indigenous knowledge, and promoting the Global South's active role in addressing the climate crisis.

Keywords: *Climate Change, Postcolonial Discourse, COP27, Global South, Equity in Climate Negotiations*

Introduction

Global ecosystems and human livelihoods are both seriously threatened by climate change. It is one of several current crises that demand coordinated action and international cooperation. The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) orchestrates and supervises the international response to climate change¹. Delegates from more than 190 countries gather annually at the Conference of the Parties (COP) to set and advance climate mitigation and adaptation. In 2022, Sharm El-Sheikh, Egypt hosted the 27th Conference of the Parties

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¹ Dominick A. Della Sala and Michael I. Goldstein, eds., "Encyclopedia of the Anthropocene (Elsevier, 2017)"

(COP27) from November 6–20 with the high-level segment taking place between 15–18th November.²

The UNFCCC discussions have a significant impact on determining the standards, guiding principles, and priority levels for global climate action. The deeply ingrained, structural disparities that already support UNFCCC negotiations are supported by well-documented evidence. They include inadequate representation of indigenous communities and marginalized groups, a lack of opportunities for civil society participation, unequal power dynamics between parties from developed and developing countries, and unfair negotiation techniques like side consultations and informal meetings.³

As demonstrated by the large number of discourse studies on environmental policy analysis conducted over the past 30 years, discourse is relevant to environmental politics.⁴ Aside from a few studies that examined how climate change became a topic of political discourse and how climate justice and indigenous knowledge should have considerable merit in global climate negotiations, the number of studies on a postcolonial discourse analysis of climate negotiations is surprisingly small. There are studies about how discourses are employed for climate change policies, but they do not explain the transnational discursive processes.

The discourse surrounding climate change at COP27 has the potential to both reproduce and challenge colonial power dynamics. Developing countries are typically viewed as recipients of adaptation programs rather than equal participants in decision-making processes, whereas wealthy countries are frequently recognised as leaders in climate action. This dialogue illustrates historical patterns of oppression in which the Global North dictates responses while the Global South solicits equitable assistance and recognition. Nonetheless, rising counter-discourses from developing nations and advocacy organisations challenge these discrepancies and promote greater accountability and climate justice.

Particularly relevant to the study of climate negotiations is Postcolonial Critical Discourse Analysis (PCDA), which enables an examination of how discourse and language influence power relations between the Global North and South. By stressing the ideological purposes

² Sharm El-Sheikh, "Climate Change Conference—November 2022," UNFCCC, 2022, <https://unfccc.int/cop27#attend>.

³ Natalie Cogswell and Natalie Warszawski, "5 Challenges the UNFCCC Must Overcome to Spur Climate Action," World Resources Institute, 2022, <https://www.wri.org/insights/5-challenges-unfccc-must-overcome-climate-action>.

⁴ Lukas Hermwille et al., "UNFCCC Before and After Paris—What's Necessary for an Effective Climate Regime?" *Climate Policy* 17, no. 2 (2017): 150–170, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14693062.2015.1115231>.

of language and Postcolonial Theory's criticism of historical and structural inequalities, PCDA provides a solid framework for understanding how climate rhetoric at COP27 can either perpetuate or undermine neocolonial power systems.

In line with the discussion above, this paper aims to explore how the discourse surrounding climate change at COP27 reproduces and/or challenges colonial power dynamics by analysing the speeches of the UNFCCC secretariat along with two major negotiating groups largely representative of the Global North namely the European Union and the Umbrella group at the high-level event of COP27. The paper will use PCDA as a methodological and theoretical framework that combines insights from Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and Postcolonial Theory. Postcolonial Theory and CDA are combined since they share similar goals and principals.

This study enhances the existing literature on climate discourse by including a postcolonial perspective into high-level climate discussions, a viewpoint that has received less attention to date. Through an exhaustive examination of the statements made by influential parties, this research sheds light on the ways language supports or challenges prevailing narratives about responsibility, adaptation, and equity in the context of global climate governance. Moreover, this study could provide negotiators and lawmakers with discursive techniques that could either facilitate or hinder equitable climate action.

First, a brief overview of the climate negotiations under UNFCCC will be provided, highlighting all important milestones. After a review of climate negotiations under the UNFCCC, the paper will present Postcolonial Critical Discourse Analysis (PCDA) as the theoretical framework, substantiating its relevance to climate discourse. The methodology section will elucidate the selection criteria for speeches from representatives of the European Union, the Umbrella Group, and the UNFCCC Secretariat, while defining the analytical framework revised by Fairclough, Dryzek, and Van Dijk. The findings section will meticulously employ PCDA to identify rhetorical techniques, framing devices, and allusions to historical accountability. Emphasising patterns of discursive hegemony, counter-discourses, and their consequences for future climate policy, the article will critically examine these results through a postcolonial perspective. The paper will end with ideas for decolonising climate negotiations and advancing fair climate action.

Climate Negotiations under the UNFCCC

The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) was established in 1992 at the UN Conference on Sustainable Development in Rio, following the success of the 1987 international agreement on ozone layer depletion and growing concerns about climate

change.⁵ In the 1990s, discussions on climate change were mostly limited to developed countries. However, with the advent of the new decade, it became quite implicit that both developed and developing countries would be impacted. Reducing emissions required developed nations to reassess their way of life, while for developing nations, it became a matter of survival.⁶

From the start, there were different perspectives on what the UNFCCC should focus on. Developed countries like those in Western Europe and North America believed that anthropogenic gas emissions were a global problem that needed a coordinated effort to reach common environmental standards, thereby circumventing inequitable competition from nations with less rigorous standards.⁷ On the other hand, developing countries criticized developed nations' focus on the environment, arguing that environmental issues are intimately linked to socioeconomic concerns; certain environmental remedies, like slowing down economic development, could imperil sovereignty.⁸

The UNFCCC negotiations began with the execution of the Kyoto Protocol (KP) in 1997, which necessitated an 8% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions for industrialised countries specified in Annex I of the treaty, while developing economies were just obligated to report their emissions.⁹ However, in 2005, arguing that it was unfair to let the emissions of major emitters like China go unregulated, the United States, the most polluting nation in the world, rejected the accord.¹⁰

Beginning in 2007, the UNFCCC worked towards a new climate agreement at the COP15 in Copenhagen in 2009. Negotiations reached a standstill on disagreements about financial aid structures and carbon reduction pledges.¹¹ Western nations have targeted emerging economies,

⁵ Dominick A. Della Sala and Michael I. Goldstein, eds., *Encyclopedia of the Anthropocene* (Elsevier, 2017).

⁶ Lukas Moosmann, *The COP27 Climate Change Conference—Status of Climate Negotiations and Issues at Stake* (Study for the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety, Policy Department for Economic, Scientific and Quality of Life Policies, European Parliament, 2022).

⁷ Raoni Rajão and Tiago Duarte, "Performing Postcolonial Identities at the United Nations' Climate Negotiations," *Postcolonial Studies* 21, no. 3 (2018): 364–378.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Yong Gung Kim, Kanako Tanaka, and Shunsuke Matsuoka, "Environmental and Economic Effectiveness of the Kyoto Protocol," *PLOS ONE* 15, no. 7 (2020): e0236299, <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0236299>.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Xueman Wang and Glenn Wiser, "Compliance Regimes Under the Climate Change Convention and Its Kyoto Protocol," *Review of European Community & International Environmental Law* 11, no. 2 (2002): 181–198, <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9388.00319>.

particularly China, due to their reluctance to pass carbon laws and doubts about their emission data. Developing nations complained about inequitable and inadequate sustainable development requirements from developed nations. The resulting Copenhagen Accord highlighted the differences in global climate governance between wealthy and developing nations but did not impose legally enforceable requirements.¹²

Subsequent to the unsuccessful Copenhagen negotiations, the Ad Hoc Working Group on the Durban Platform for Enhanced Action (ADP) was established at COP 17 in 2011, with the objective of expediting the negotiations for the forthcoming climate agreement, culminating in the Paris Agreement in 2015.¹³ Achieving a global average temperature increase of less than 2 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels was one of the primary objectives of the Paris Agreement. It also aimed to improve the world's adaptive capacity, strengthen resilience, and reduce vulnerability to the effects of climate change.¹⁴

Parties were able to approve other significant outcomes and conclude the Paris Agreement Rulebook despite contentious negotiations at COP 26. Several parties stated that they were adopting the package "in the spirit of compromise." In order to build on prior accomplishments and prepare the path for future ambition to effectively address the climate emergency, Egypt hosted COP27 in November 2022. Thirty years had passed since UNFCCC was established, and seven years had passed since the Paris Agreement was ratified. The conference's agenda featured discussion on partnership enhancement, climate finance, adaptation, and mitigation.¹⁵

Theoretical Framework

By positioning postcolonial power relations at the heart of the examination, PCDA emphasizes the necessity to analyse speeches by stakeholders and their subsequent media representations by drawing on Postcolonial Theory and CDA. Although totally unrelated to one another as the central concern of Postcolonial Theory is the persistence of power disparities in modern societies as a direct outcome of (post)colonial

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Lukas Hermwille et al., "UNFCCC Before and After Paris—What's Necessary for an Effective Climate Regime?" *Climate Policy* 17, no. 2 (2017): 150–170, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14693062.2015.1115231>.

¹⁴ Raphael Clemencon, "The Two Sides of the Paris Climate Agreement: Dismal Failure or Historic Breakthrough?" *The Journal of Environment & Development* 25 (2016): 3–24, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1070496516631362>.

¹⁵ Lukas Moosmann, "*The COP27 Climate Change Conference: Status of Climate Negotiations and Issues at Stake* (Study for the European Parliament's Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety, Policy Department for Economic, Scientific, and Quality of Life Policies, 2022).

practices, institutions, and situations,^{16 17 18 19} while CDA dissects discursive techniques to uncover how power is perpetuated in political discourse,²⁰ both theories are interested in the idea of power and using different strategies to uncover oppression and power imbalances. When the goal is to investigate discourses produced in postcolonial milieus, Postcolonial Theory offers a suitable theory of meaning to contextualize the application of CDA.

The investigation of speeches by stakeholders at the high-level events of climate conferences can certainly benefit from the ideas and methods provided by postcolonial theory, but given the breadth of knowledge that constitutes postcolonial theory, several conceptions have emerged as a result of a wide range of (post)colonial experiences. The literature frequently references the post colonial's seemingly perpetual "redefinition" since it is closely tied to ethical, political, economic, theological, and cultural issues.²¹ The postcolonial serves to highlight the historical context and, consequently, the responsibility that the colonisers have for their former colonies, a connection and an obligation that are quite neglected and need to be addressed.²²

CDA, on the other hand, examines how discourse, power, and social inequality interact with the subjective position of the discourse analyst within these social connections.²³ Language reflects and perpetuates the uneven allocation of power and social functions between socioeconomic classes or various national or racial groups. The term "critical" in discourse analysis goes beyond a mere description of discourse to critique it as well as the agents who create it in order to perpetuate and reproduce

¹⁶ Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin, *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures* (Routledge, 2003).

¹⁷ Leela Gandhi, *Postcolonial Theory: A Critical Introduction* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2019).

¹⁸ Sankaran Krishna, *Globalization and Postcolonialism: Hegemony and Resistance in the Twenty-First Century* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2009).

¹⁹ Tejumola Olaniyan, "On 'Post-Colonial Discourse': An Introduction," *Callaloo* 16, no. 4 (1993): 743–749, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2932207>.

²⁰ Norman Fairclough, *Critical Discourse Analysis: The Critical Study of Language* (London: Routledge, 2018).

²¹ Robert J. C. Young, *Postcolonialism: An Historical Introduction* (Malden, MA: John Wiley & Sons, 2016).

²² Raoni Rajão and Tiago Duarte, "Performing Postcolonial Identities at the United Nations' Climate Negotiations," *Postcolonial Studies* 21, no. 3 (2018): 364–378, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13688790.2018.1482597>.

²³ Piotr Cap, "Contemporary Critical Discourse Studies: Introduction," in *Contemporary Critical Discourse Studies*, ed. Christopher Hart and Piotr Cap (London: Bloomsbury, 2014), 1–15.

the asymmetrical power relations that are in their favour.²⁴ In other words, critical scholars work to reveal the strategies used to uphold the interests of the wealthy and powerful while defending the rights of those who suffer as a result (the powerless).

By situating discourse analysis within critical social theory, attention has recently turned to the relationships between language use and the socio-political practices and situations surrounding it. These practices need to be examined in light of the historical setting and socio-political processes that influenced their development and dissemination in the speeches of various stakeholders.²⁵ This is what PCDA aims to do. This transdisciplinary and problem-focused approach necessitates the integration of CDA with various theories and methodologies that provide a critical perspective on social inequality and injustice.

Due to CDA's inherent flexibility, it is possible to link it in a variety of ways with other widely accepted theoretical and methodological approaches.^{26,27} In this regard, CDA gains from postcolonial theory since, when taken together, it offers CDA theoretical insights for the creation of a particular discourse analysis framework which is based on both historical and modern (post)colonial interactions. The relationship between the two viewpoints would also aid in placing these disparities into a theoretical and historical context, therefore enabling the analyst to surpass mere literary analysis to dig out the multiple interlocking systems of colonial oppression and socio-ecological inequities.

In PCDA, the postcolonial perspective provides the analysis's "critical" nature; as a result, the "critical" stance is one that supports the former colonized (i.e., the weaker party in this relationship) and investigates the manner in which the uneven power relations that exist after colonialism are replicated through discourse.²⁸ The essence of postcolonial theory itself dictates the reluctance to be objective and to criticize the entities that emerge as stronger parties.²⁹

²⁴ T. A. van Dijk, "Principles of Critical Discourse Analysis," *Discourse & Society* 4, no. 2 (1993): 249–283.

²⁵ Tejumola Olaniyan, "On 'Post-Colonial Discourse': An Introduction," *Callaloo* 16, no. 4 (1993): 743–749, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2932207>.

²⁶ T. A. van Dijk, "Principles of Critical Discourse Analysis," *Discourse & Society* 4, no. 2 (1993): 249–283.

²⁷ Norman Fairclough, *Critical Discourse Analysis: The Critical Study of Language* (London: Routledge, 2018).

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Rahul Sanz Sabido, "Postcolonial Critical Discourse Analysis: Theory and Method," in *The Israeli-Palestinian Conflict in the British Press*, ed. Rahul Sanz Sabido (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), 19–53.

Methodology

This section will explain how PCDA is used to analyse the dimensions and discourses present in the statements of the UNFCCC secretariat, the European Union and the Umbrella Group. It will outline the specific data used for analysis along with the process of sampling.

Data and Sample

The data used in this study is obtained from the UNFCCC database,³⁰ which contains statements made by country representatives during the high-level segments of the convention. The opening and closing speeches of the selected world leaders were delivered on 6th, 11th and 15th November 2022. Overall, there were two major reasons for selecting the data set. First, speeches made by the chosen world leaders at the high-level segment provided a useful foundation for analysis as these were used to identify an actor's core argument or lack thereof with regard to the analytical rubric designed for PCDA. Second, accessibility and feasibility of data were also important criteria for selection. In cases when a speech was missing it was retrieved online.

In addition, only a sample of higher-level statements was chosen due to scope and feasibility considerations. Such meetings held by the host nations have been crucial for senior officials to participate in international climate negotiations since the first COP in 1995.^{31,32} Although the high-level segment does not participate in COP decision-making, it greatly impacts COP negotiations and sets the tone for what is to be expected from the conference overall. A brief overview of the climate negotiations under the UNFCCC, as explained in section two, highlighted the discrepancies between developing and developed nations in the demands they put forth and the expectations that they had from each other. To further explore these dynamics, statements from the UNFCCC secretariat, the EU and the USA as a representative of the Umbrella group were chosen to understand how the discourse surrounding climate change at COP27 reproduces and/or challenges colonial power dynamics.

The UNFCCC secretariat was included in the analysis since it represented the normative opinion of the organization itself and served as a benchmark for how wicked problems like climate change should be understood and dealt with in the context of COP27 keeping in mind its

³⁰ UNFCCC, *Sharm El-Sheikh Climate Change Conference—November 2022* (UNFCCC, 2022), <https://unfccc.int/cop27#attend>.

³¹ Lindsay Maizland, "Global Climate Agreements: Successes and Failures," *Council on Foreign Relations*, 2022, <https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/paris-global-climate-change-agreements>.

³² Raoni Rajão and Tiago Duarte, "Performing Postcolonial Identities at the United Nations' Climate Negotiations," *Postcolonial Studies* 21, no. 3 (2018): 364–378, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13688790.2018.1482597>.

colonial roots. The EU was chosen because it consists of countries that were former colonisers and still have relationships with their former colonies. Not only is the EU one of the largest emitters, but it also has a big role to play in the climate change negotiations since it holds private meetings outside the COP and also presents a unified stance at such conferences.

Lastly, USA was chosen because of its role as a major emitter and, from a theoretical viewpoint, since the findings of postcolonial theory are applicable in settler colonial contexts, even if it is a body of work with origins in many post-colonial locations. The legacy of colonialism is seen to persist in the postcolonial era in the shape of new forms of dominance that continue and broaden previous imperial practices of asymmetrical interdependence.³³

The table below will introduce each of the aforementioned groups with a brief description regarding their origin and composition, along with their major agendas during the previous COPS. For the purpose of this paper, the name and designation of the representative of each group is also provided in the table along with the segment of the conference where they delivered their addresses.

³³ Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin, *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures* (Routledge, 2003).

Table 1: Description Of Negotiation Groups With Major Mandates During Previous Cops And Statements From COP27 Included In The Analysis.³⁴

Negotiating Groups	Description of the group	Focus during previous COPs	Representative	Segment of the conference
UNFCCC	The main platform for international negotiations on climate change since its establishment (1992).	It is essential to maintain atmospheric greenhouse gas concentrations at a level that will protect the climate system from detrimental human activities.	Simon Stiell, Executive Secretary UN Climate Change.	Opening Plenary.
European Union (EU)	A 27-member bloc, signatory of both the Paris Agreement and the UNFCCC. Undertakes private climate negotiations and submits a collective report of its GHG emissions to the UNFCCC.	Emphasizes upon enhancing ambition for mitigation and demands transparency on both support and activity. Highlights the EU's and its Member States' efforts in this area while recognizing	Frans Timmermans, Executive Vice President of the European Commission.	Resumed High-Level Segment for Heads of State and Government.

³⁴ UNFCCC, *COP27 Opening Remarks by the UN Climate Change Executive Secretary* (November 7, 2022), <https://unfccc.int/news/cop27-opening-remarks-by-the-un-climate-change-executive-secretary>.

		the significance of support for developing nations.		
Umbrella Group (UG)	A coalition of roughly 10 parties formed after the adoption of the Kyoto Protocol, comprising of developed countries, most of them having high per-capita greenhouse gas emissions.	Primarily pushes emerging nations to play a role in mitigation efforts, however some of its members are wary of ambitious mitigation measures. In general, the group urges all parties to have strict standards of transparency.	Joe Biden, President of the United States of America.	First Part of the High-Level Segment for Heads of State and Government.

Analysis of Statements by Selected Actors

This research aims to examine how the discourse surrounding climate change at COP27 reproduces or challenges colonial power dynamics. The analysis is done using an adapted version of Fairclough, Dryzek and Van Dijk's checklist for discourse analysis, which takes into account multiple dimensions of discourse, such as the vocabulary, grammar, structure, and rhetorical devices used by relevant actors³⁵³⁶³⁷. They argue that discourses are similar to stories told by actors, and therefore, it is not enough to only look for explicit references to key terminologies regarding the focal points of analysis.

³⁵ Norman Fairclough, *Critical Discourse Analysis: The Critical Study of Language* (London: Routledge, 2018).

³⁶ T. A. van Dijk, "Principles of Critical Discourse Analysis," *Discourse & Society* 4, no. 2 (1993): 249–283.

³⁷ John S. Dryzek, *The Politics of the Earth: Environmental Discourses* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

The above-mentioned model has been modified by borrowing issue areas from postcolonial theory in the backdrop of climate change such as the recognition of historical responsibility, how the developing world or the Global South is framed in the analysis, whether references have been made to climate justice in terms of the distribution of costs and benefits in addressing climate change etc. Other categories of the analytical rubric include the reference to technological solutions, emphasis on mitigation or adaptation and a focus on transparency and accountability measures. All these criteria within this framework are explained in the table below.

Table 2: Rubric for PCDA

Components of PCDA	Description
Thematic Focus and Key quotations	Important words, phrases, metaphors, and other literary devices.
Recognition of Historical Responsibility	Developed countries have historically been the largest contributors to climate change, and whether this responsibility is acknowledged.
Framing	The way in which Global South is represented in discourse. Is climate change framed as a problem to be solved by developed countries, or as a shared responsibility? are they portrayed as victims or as active agents in addressing climate change?
Emphasizing equity	Climate change disproportionately affects developing countries and whether this fact is recognised along with highlighting the importance of equity in the distribution of costs and benefits of addressing climate change.
Stressing upon technical solutions	Whether the discourse revolves around technical solutions to address climate change which cements the developed world's supremacy in having the necessary knowledge and resources to tackle climate change.
Mitigation Vs Adaptation	Is the focus placed on the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions or on addressing the impacts of climate change? focuses on the n
Transparency and Accountability	Whether the chosen stakeholders focus on making the climate negotiation process more transparent by also holding all parties accountable for their commitments.

Results

The conclusions based on the theoretical and analytical framework are summarized for each of the identified stakeholders in the tables below. The analytical rubric is used to evaluate both opening and closing statements from world leaders. The interpretation of the speech's discourse based on the identified components stemming out of postcolonial theory is summarized at the end of each assertion.

Table 3: PCDA Rubric For UNFCCC

Components of PCDA	Simon Stiell, Executive Secretary UN Climate Change ³⁸
Thematic Focus and Key quotations	<p>“The heart of implementation is: Everybody”;</p> <p>“We have a duty to speed up our international efforts to turn words into actions”;</p> <p>“Today a new era begins – and we begin to do things differently”.</p> <p>“Mitigation, adaptation, finance and crucially - loss and damage”</p> <p>“Enhance the delivery of the principles of transparency and accountability throughout our process.”</p>
Recognition of Historical Responsibility	No mention
Framing	Climate change is a shared responsibility. Talked about collective action throughout.
Emphasizing equity	No mention
Stressing upon technical solutions	No mention
Mitigation Vs Adaptation	Focuses on both mitigation and adaptation.
Transparency and Accountability	Talks about holding “everyone” accountable and making all proceedings transparent.

The stance of the UNFCCC secretariat as put forth by the Executive Secretary is geared towards the implementation of the Paris Agreement, making the process as inclusive as possible for all involved stakeholders. Stiell concentrates on the requirements of the most disadvantaged and urges the world to accelerate all efforts in order to combat climate change. He avoids the use of metaphors and other rhetorical devices to make his point and emphasises the need for both mitigation and adaptation along with the need to make the implementation process more transparent. Although there were no mentions of climate justice or technological solutions for the climate crisis; however, it can be inferred from his speech

³⁸ UNFCCC, *COP27 Opening Remarks by the UN Climate Change Executive Secretary* (November 7, 2022), <https://unfccc.int/news/cop27-opening-remarks-by-the-un-climate-change-executive-secretary>.

that the UNFCCC secretariat believes in supporting marginalized groups and holding those responsible accountable.

Table 4: PCDA Rubric For EU

Components of PCDA	Frans Timmermans, Executive Vice President of the European Commission ³⁹
Thematic Focus and Key quotations	<p>“Major emitters trying to reach back from agreements in COP26”;</p> <p>“Keep 1.5 alive”;</p> <p>“Cut our emissions by at least 55% by 2030”;</p> <p>“Bridge the gap between those in need and those in a position to contribute”;</p> <p>“our people and planet have no more time to lose”;</p> <p>“Europe is staying the course”.</p>
Recognition of Historical Responsibility	<p>Recognizes the responsibility of major emitters regardless of them being from the developing or developed blocs. Emphasis on addressing loss and damage for vulnerable countries and not all developing countries.</p>
Framing	<p>Distinguishes between all parties on the basis of emissions. Propose to take the global south emitters with “them”. Discursive othering⁴⁰ can be seen in how Europe is portrayed as a global leader on climate change and their solutions hold merit. Eu would like to take the “emitters from the South with them”.</p>
Emphasizing equity	<p>Acknowledges the fact that the developing countries are not being heard but no mention of how climate change affects different countries differently.</p>
Stressing upon technical solutions	<p>No mention</p>
Mitigation Vs Adaptation	<p>Recognises the importance of both mitigation and adaptation. Talks about the need to accelerate adaptation and double its funding and also talks about the importance of the mitigation works program.</p>
Transparency and Accountability	<p>No mention</p>

³⁹ European Commission, *Opening Statement EVP Timmermans at COP27* (November 15, 2022), https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/SPEECH_22_6927.

⁴⁰ Critical discourse analysis calls discursive othering the development of a 'we against them' dichotomy that sustains power imbalances. Wealthier states portray themselves as climate leaders in climate negotiations while portraying developing nations as dependent on aid.

Both the opening and closing statements by Frans Timmermans were quite concise. He began with a reassurance that Europe is not backing down from the commitments that it made during the Paris agreement regarding the maintenance of the 1.5-degree target. He then talked about providing financial support for adaptation measures. The EU aimed to demonstrate leadership and express concern for the well-being of vulnerable countries. To back up this stance, Timmermans urged other parties to take action and announced that the EU will cut emissions by at least 55% by 2030.

The EU is portrayed as a group that cares about the well-being of all, as indicated by the reference to "our people and planet." There is no mention of technological solutions to avert the problem, which shows that the dependence of the global South on North-based technological advancement is sidestepped. A lack of focus on transparency and accountability, and no mention of the EU's specific responsibility for emissions or any other EU-specific issues, suggests that perhaps the EU has done its part, and now it is the turn of the other emitters to take the EU's lead and help avert the climate crisis.

Table 5: PCDA Rubric For UG

Components of PCDA	Joe Biden, President of the United States of America ⁴¹
Thematic Focus and Key Quotations	<p>"My administration has led with a bold agenda to address the climate crisis";</p> <p>"Clean energy economy is imperative for our present and future";</p> <p>"Accelerate decarbonation beyond our borders";</p> <p>"Leaving no one behind as we implement the Sustainable Development Goals";</p> <p>"It's going to take all of us".</p> <p>"Building a path to prosperity compatible with our climate imperative";</p> <p>"Science is devastatingly clear".</p> <p>"United States [is] the first-ever contributor to the Adaptation Fund."</p>
Recognition of Historical Responsibility	No mention.
Framing	Re-establishes the United States as a trustworthy, committed, global leader on climate. No mention of the disproportionate effects of climate change but urging "countries that are able to help" to support developing countries.

⁴¹ The White House, *Remarks by President Biden at the 27th Conference of the Parties to the Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP27)* (Sharm El-Sheikh, Egypt, November 11, 2022), <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing->

Emphasizing equity	Talks about the need for all parties to work towards climate action especially all major emitters.
Stressing upon technical solutions	Focuses on clean energy technology and enhancing its availability so that it is accessible to the entire world.
Mitigation Vs Adaptation	Major Emphasis on adaptation. Pledges \$3 billion annually by 2024 for adaptation". Introduces the "Emergency Plan for Adaptation and Resilience (PREPARE) to help developed countries adapt to the effects of climate change."
Transparency and Accountability	Emphasis on Transparency: "the project we're facilitating is built on transparency".

Former President, Joe Biden, of the United States demonstrated his commitment to the Paris Agreement by highlighting the US as a leading country in fighting climate change. He presented the issue of climate change not as a challenge, but as an opportunity to promote green growth initiatives, such as clean energy and economic growth, and discussed topics like vulnerability, ecological justice, and clean energy economy throughout his speech. Biden also emphasized the global nature of the problem and the need for international cooperation to address it, acknowledging that wealthier countries have a responsibility to contribute to the effort. He announced plans to increase financing, allocate more resources towards adaptation, and launch the Emergency Plan for Adaptation to help developing countries tackle climate change. Biden's speech also touched upon the obligation of countries with high emissions to take responsibility for their actions.

Discussion

In this section, the results would be analysed through the lens of postcolonial theory. One key aspect of postcolonial theory is the idea that wealthy, industrialized nations, often former colonizers, hold disproportionate power and resources in relation to developing nations, many of which are former colonies along with the continued exploitation and degradation of landscapes, cultures, people, and the planet in the name of white supremacy to enrich themselves at the expense of the developing world.⁴² In fact, climate change itself is a manifestation of imperial policies of the past, and as Táíwò notes, the exploitative historical

⁴² Yasser Ahmed, "Political Discourse Analysis: A Decolonial Approach," *Critical Discourse Studies* 18, no. 1 (2021): 139-155, <https://doi.org/10.1080/17405904.2020.1755707>.

political and economic structures of colonialism hamper the Global South from adequately addressing its impacts.⁴³

In light of this, the speeches by President Biden (Table 5) and Frans Timmermans (Table 4) can be seen as reproducing these power dynamics in a number of ways. For example, President Biden's emphasis on the US as a "leading country" in fighting climate change, and his focus on "green growth initiatives" and "clean energy economy" can be interpreted as a continuation of the colonial mindset of wealthy nations dictating the terms of development for less wealthy nations. The United States is responsible for approximately 24.6% of the 1.69 trillion tonnes of CO₂ emissions, which is significantly higher than its estimated 4.2% proportion of the global population (2021).⁴⁴ This disparity also applies to other high-income countries and regions such as Japan and the EU which account for about 58.7% of global CO₂ emissions, even though they make up only 15% of the world's population today. Timmermans' call for other parties to take action, and his emphasis on the EU's role as a leader in cutting emissions, can also be seen as reproducing these power dynamics, as it implies that it is the responsibility of less wealthy nations to follow the lead of the EU.

Moreover, as depicted in Table 5, Biden's continued insistence on "clean energy technology" is a testament to the construction of hierarchies using a predetermined metric for industrialisation or development. Poorer nations are represented as "primitive" or "ill-equipped" since climate solutions are typically framed in terms of technological innovation and infrastructure readiness. Because of this hierarchy, the less developed nations are forced to follow the norms that are set for them and are constantly trying to catch up on an unjust playing field⁴⁵. The range of action would be significantly limited if one rigorously adhered to a technocratic approach that depends on economic growth to promote technological innovation.

In addition to being hailed as the saviour, Biden's view on technology also discredits any other body of knowledge that is not built around the Western idea of science. People affected by climate change and policy makers rely heavily on knowledge about the impacts and causes of climate change, as well as potential solutions. However, colonial mindsets and practices continue to influence climate research and global climate governance, resulting in unequal distribution of knowledge and neglect of

⁴³ Olúfẹ́mi Táíwò, *Reconsidering Reparations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022).

⁴⁴ International Energy Agency (IEA), "Global CO₂ Emissions Rebounded to Their Highest Level in History in 2021," 2022, <https://www.iea.org/news/>.

⁴⁵ Warwick Anderson, "Introduction: Postcolonial Technoscience," *Social Studies of Science* 32, no. 5/6 (2007): 643–658.

the perspectives of marginalized communities.⁴⁶ This is particularly evident in the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, where there is ongoing debate about the need for diverse ways of knowing to inform and shape climate policy.

It is important to note here that the concept of diverse ways of knowing does not create distinctions between different forms of knowledge. Rather, it emphasizes the importance of recognizing and valuing different knowledge systems and ways of understanding and experiencing climate change within specific contexts, and actively working together to co-create knowledge. None of the speeches mentioned sharing knowledge, especially indigenous knowledge, to mitigate and adapt to climate change.

On the other hand, the stance of the UNFCCC secretariat as presented by the Executive Secretary (Table 3) can be interpreted as challenging these colonial power dynamics. The focus on the needs of the most vulnerable people, and the emphasis on the need for both mitigation and adaptation, as well as the need for transparency, can be seen as an attempt to level the playing field and ensure that the voices and needs of developing nations are taken into account in the implementation of the Paris Agreement. Additionally, the lack of focus on technological solutions and the sidestepping of the dependence of the global South on North based on technological advancement can be seen as an attempt to move away from the colonial mindset of developed nations imposing solutions on developing nations.

Additionally, a contrast between the global North and South countries during the negotiations leading to COP27 reveals an interesting dynamic. Typically, postcolonial scholars have criticized the North for promoting a fallacy portraying the global South as "developing", seeking monetary and economic aid. However, in the climate negotiations as described in section 2, it is the developing countries who are reasserting their distinct identity in relation to the global North, thereby soliciting further financial commitments from the North. Conversely, the North is trying to level the playing field by deconstructing the distinction between "developed" and "developing" nations.

In addition, equity in the distribution of costs and benefits of addressing climate change from a postcolonial perspective involves ensuring that the burdens and consequences of addressing climate change are not disproportionately borne by marginalized communities,

⁴⁶ Raoni Rajão and Tiago Duarte, "Performing Postcolonial Identities at the United Nations' Climate Negotiations," *Postcolonial Studies* 21, no. 3 (2018): 364–378, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13688790.2018.1482597>.

particularly those in colonized or exploited countries.⁴⁷ This requires recognizing and addressing the historical and ongoing injustices that have contributed to the climate crisis and actively working to redistribute power and resources to enable marginalized communities to have a greater say in shaping climate solutions and accessing their fair share of the benefits.

Also, recognizing historical responsibility in the context of climate change through a postcolonial lens refers to acknowledging the role that colonialism and imperialistic actions have played in causing and exacerbating the current climate crisis. This perspective encourages a shift away from the traditional dominant Western-centric narratives and in the direction of a fairer and more inclusive strategy to addressing climate change that takes into account the perspectives and contributions of marginalized communities.⁴⁸

Table 3 illustrates that the UNFCCC Secretariat predominantly refrains from referencing historical responsibility, opting for a neutral, scientific stance on climate policy. In contrast, while acknowledging loss and damage, the EU's terminology (Table 4) perceives the Global South as recipients rather than proactive decision-makers.

Although all three stakeholders that were a part of this analysis have called for greater inclusivity; however, neither the US (Table 5) nor the EU (Table 4) have admitted their role in bringing about the climate crisis and being the leading global emitters of CO₂. Although vulnerable factions have been mentioned again and again and the need to facilitate them has also been reiterated however, their agency in solving the climate crisis has been ignored and the global South's dependency on the Global North for technology transfers and funding has been reiterated.

Equity in climate negotiations also implies recognizing the role of the developed countries in the current climate crisis and the need of developed countries to take more ambitious actions to tackle climate change. Equity also calls for a acknowledgement of the entitlements of indigenous populations and local communities that have a direct relationship with their land, territories, and natural resources and to

⁴⁷ Heike Schroeder, Maxwell T. Boykoff, and Laura Spiers, "Equity and State Representations in Climate Negotiations," *Nature Climate Change* 2, no. 12 (2012): 847–851, <https://doi.org/10.1038/nclimate1742>.

⁴⁸ Sarah Mason-Case and Julia Dehm, "Redressing Historical Responsibility for the Unjust Precarities of Climate Change in the Present," in *Debating Climate Law*, ed. Benoit Mayer and Alexander Zahar (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021), 170–189, <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108879064.014>.

respect their traditional knowledge and practices.⁴⁹ Neither of the stakeholders focused on any such aspects either.

To conclude, all three actors reinforce or challenge colonial power dynamics, which can be seen by linking their rhetorical choices to power structures, postcolonial narratives, and historical context using PCDA. By avoiding accountability for historical emissions and so avoiding controversy, the UNFCCC Secretariat utilises neutrality as a linguistic ruse to depoliticise climate negotiations. The Secretariat perpetuates the status quo by framing climate action as a collective global obligation while ignoring historical injustices, allowing wealthy nations to avoid accountability for their disproportionate involvement in the climate calamity. Nonetheless, its emphasis on inclusivity and openness indirectly challenges colonial power systems by emphasising the need for increasing participation from marginalised voices and the lack of institutional tools to support this transformation.

On the other hand, the EU's climate narrative presents the Global South as an inept recipient of climate funds and adaptation programs, portraying Europe as a climate change leader. Despite acknowledging loss and damage, the EU promotes its help as aid rather than compensation, maintaining donor-recipient dominance. The EU's unwillingness to acknowledge past carbon guilt and provide legally enforced reparations perpetuates neocolonial economic domination by keeping financial institutions under European control.

Lastly, Similar to Biden's climate address, technological determinism positions Western science and market systems as the foundation for solutions to climate change. This aligns with the colonial knowledge hierarchy, in which the Global North advances technologically while disregarding indigenous and localised knowledge. The absence of historical accountability exemplifies settler-colonial reasoning in US foreign policy, which disregards past injustices in favour of a future-oriented, commercially motivated approach to climate change. Western corporations are essential to the clean energy transition and contribute to maintaining economic dependency in the Global South, as green energy represents a commercial opportunity rather than a climate justice concern.

Conclusion

This paper aimed to explore how the discourse surrounding climate change at COP27 reproduces and/or challenges colonial power dynamics by analysing the speeches of the UNFCCC secretariat along with two major negotiating groups largely representative of the Global North

⁴⁹ H. Schroeder, M. T. Boykoff, and L. Spiers, "Equity and State Representations in Climate Negotiations," *Nature Climate Change* 2, no. 12 (2012): Article 12, <https://doi.org/10.1038/nclimate1742>.

namely the European Union and the Umbrella group at the high-level event of COP27. Overall, it was found that USA and EU reproduced the colonial power dynamics by projecting themselves as global leaders in curbing emissions despite being the major emitters themselves, focusing on western centric knowledge and technology as solutions to climate and representing the Global South as passive victims of climate change thereby reinforcing the idea that they are not capable of addressing the issue themselves, and that developed countries have a greater responsibility to do so.

Moreover, both countries have also failed to acknowledge the historical contributions of industrialised countries to climate change, thereby reproducing the idea that developing countries are primarily responsible for addressing the issue. Lastly, discourses by both stakeholders ignored indigenous knowledge and local perspectives of developing countries, thereby furthering the idea that the knowledge and perspectives of developed countries are superior.

The need to reduce emissions and strengthen our capacity to deal with the climate disaster at hand grows more urgent with each COP. However, despite a few glimpses of improvement, we are still far from taking climate action at the size and pace required to ensure an environmentally sustainable and robust future by 2050. The most recent NDS synthesis report demonstrates that although emissions will stop rising after 2030, there is still no proof of the sharp decline in emissions that scientists believe is required in this decade⁵⁰.

Equity in climate negotiations is required for them to be more adaptable to global crises and to make progress on climate change. To do that necessitates engagement with global power dynamics, most notably the colonial legacies ingrained in global geopolitics, given the close relationship between climate and larger structural imbalances. This implies that a more active transfer of power from the Global North to the Global South is necessary if the climate regime is to develop into one better prepared to address climate change. In addition, the recognition of the colonial roots of climate change is crucial, as is the possibility for decolonization and climate action to work together to inspire drastic transformation on an international scale.

⁵⁰ UNFCCC, *Sharm El-Sheikh Climate Change Conference—November 2022* (UNFCCC, 2022), <https://unfccc.int/cop27#attend>.

