

The geopolitics of nature and climate

From Russia's war against Ukraine to America's rivalry with China, tectonic geopolitical shifts have shaken multilateralism in recent years. While many of the consequences—from surging food and energy prices to the rising risks of major conflict—have been discussed at length, more attention must be devoted to the implications of these shifts for efforts to address the multifaceted climate and nature crisis.

The geopolitical change we are now experiencing threatens to split the world order in two. A key sign of this is the decision by much of the Global South to support—or at least refuse to condemn—Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine last year, despite the West's efforts to isolate and punish the Kremlin.

Moreover, the BRICS group of major emerging economies (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa)—which has always sought to create alternatives to Western-led international institutions—may be set to grow, as 19 countries have expressed interest in joining.

There is also a discussion of creating a new BRICS currency to challenge the US dollar's global dominance.

In the meantime, China is working hard to expand the in-



By Simon Zadek
Project Syndicate/Geneva, Switzerland
Executive director of NatureFinance

ternational use of its own currency, the renminbi, and is achieving some success.

Most recently, Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva has taken steps to facilitate renminbi-denominated trade settlement between China and Brazil.

Forging the shared sense of purpose and marshaling the coordinated action needed to tackle the climate and nature crisis would be difficult in the best of times. In a world characterized by distrust, competition, fiscal constraints, and divergent political priorities, it appears almost impossible. And yet, far from building bridges, many—particularly in the Global North—are exacerbating divisions.

The European Union's recent legislation banning imports of products linked to deforestation is a case in point. The law—which requires companies selling goods like coffee, beef, and soy in the EU to provide verifiable proof that they were not grown on recently deforested land—has been welcomed by green activists and European politicians. But the measure has also met with con-

siderable criticism—and not only from agri-business interests seeking to avoid incurring costs for environmental destruction.

Shortly before it was passed, the Brazilian and Indonesian governments submitted a letter, signed by 14 World Trade Organization member states, lamenting that the EU was pursuing “unilateral legislation”, rather than “international engagement”.

By failing to consult with the relevant countries, the EU devised “costly and impractical traceability and geo-localization requirements” for an “uncertain and discriminatory” list of products.

Voluntary carbon-credit markets and emerging biodiversity-credit markets are similarly flawed. Rich-country critics complain that these markets have failed to deliver credible “additional” reductions of atmospheric carbon.

Scandals arising from widespread flaws in certified nature-based carbon credits are a case in point.

Leaders from the Global South, for their part, highlight the inequalities they perpetuate, with carbon credits being bought for

as little as US\$5-\$10 in the Global South and then sold for \$100 or more in Europe.

Moreover, developing-economy leaders highlight wealthier countries' reluctance to fund the preservation of existing forests.

At the recent One Forest Summit, cohosted by Gabonese President Ali Bongo Ondimba and French President Emmanuel Macron, Gabon's environment minister, Lee White, noted that, as some of the world's most important carbon sinks, “forests potentially represent 20-30 percent of the solution to climate change”. Carbon credits can help channel financing toward forest preservation, but only if they are purchased at fair and predictable prices.

There are relatively straightforward ways to improve engagement and accelerate progress toward shared climate and nature goals. For example, the EU's deforestation law could have a far greater impact—and inspire more effective cooperation—if it included support for measures to advance, rather than override, relevant legislation in affected countries.

Moreover, building on the insights shared during the One Forest Summit, rich countries could embrace the idea of delivering ecosystem-service payments to

countries that maintain their forests, and establish a price floor for carbon and biodiversity credits.

The Group of Seven's recently announced Alliance of Nature Positive Economies—conceived as a “forum to share knowledge and create information networks on a voluntary basis in collaboration with the private sector and civil society”—could support the shift toward greater collaboration beyond the G7.

Key would be to focus on how to address nature and climate goals without deepening existing technological advantages and erecting more trade barriers, and instead to focus on inclusivity and equity.

Brazil's Group of 20 presidency in 2024, and its role as host of the United Nations Climate Change Conference in 2025 (COP30), also represent important opportunities.

As the world's most influential representative of nature-rich developing economies, Brazil could use these platforms to mobilize greater support for the countries that are doing the most to protect the climate and preserve nature, despite having done the least to cause the crises we face.

Transforming the global economic and financial architecture to advance sustainability goals

will be key.

Nature and climate will be part of the new geopolitics, for better or worse. The alternative to a more inclusive approach is not slower progress, but potentially no progress at all.

Just as Russia has redirected its energy exports to countries that have not embraced Western sanctions, food exporters, facing de facto deforestation “sanctions” from the EU, may simply find new buyers for their goods. In such situations, everyone loses, including nature.

Without a collaborative approach, nature-rich countries may even decide to create a sovereign sellers' club aimed at improving their terms of trade, like OPEC has long done for oil producers.

Already, Brazil, Indonesia, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo—which possess the world's largest tropical forests—have formed an alliance focused essentially on pressuring the rich world to finance forest conservation.

Measures like the EU's deforestation legislation or voluntary carbon markets may look like steps in the right direction. And they may bring short-term benefits. But by alienating the developing world—at a time of global geopolitical realignment, no less—their long-term costs may be too high.

Challenges for Indonesian airport development



By Yaries Mahardika Putro and Ridha Aditya Nugraha
Surabaya/Jakarta

Yaries Mahardika Putro is a lecturer in air and space law at the University of Surabaya School of Law. Ridha Aditya Nugraha is a lecturer in air and space law studies at Prasetyi Mulya University. The views expressed are their own.

As a vast archipelagic country, Indonesia requires a reliable transportation system to run an efficient logistics sector and facilitate connectivity between its islands. Air transportation, besides sea and land, is one of the most suitable modes.

Enhanced air connectivity through air transportation links is essential for economic growth because it facilitates access to the region for business, culture and tourism, as well as physical access to resources and markets.

There are expansions of domestic and regional trade which requires air logistics—not merely with pioneer routes around Papua.

According to the Directorate General of Civil Aviation, there are now around 340 airports and airfields across the country. Of that total, 32 airports are classified as international airports and the rest are classified into class I, class II, class III or work units.

Not all airports can operate effectively. Jenderal Besar Soedirman Airport in Purbalingga, Central Java, Ngloram Airport in Blora, Central Java, and Kertajati Airport in Majalengka, West Java, are examples of state-funded airports that operate far below capacity due to lack of traffic.

Banyuwangi Airport at the easternmost tip of Java brings another story of a poorly performing facility. The airport's terminal won the Aga Khan Award for Architecture in 2022, and it is deemed as an Indonesian green airport.

However, the traffic to this airport does not match its architectural achievement. Dependence on subsidies is an issue, and the Banyuwangi-Jakarta-Kuala Lumpur international route has failed to sustain it.

Immigration facilities are available there, serving especially Indonesian migrant workers. In fact, Banyuwangi is a major migrant worker supplying region.

The issue of nonperforming airports raises a question about planning, including feasibility studies as regards the outlook of traffic demand and the multiplier economic impact.

A public-private partnership (PPP) scheme could reduce the burden of state budget financing. Presidential Regulation No. 38/2015, as the legal basis for PPPs, allows government and private collaboration in the infrastructure sector. This includes airport construction and operation.

Komodo Airport in Labuan Bajo, East Nusa Tenggara, Singkawang Airport in West Kalimantan and Dhoho Airport in Kediri, East Java, are the exam-

ples of airport construction projects under the PPP scheme.

Komodo Airport marks a significant milestone as the first Indonesian airport built through the PPP arrangement.

A joint venture between Cardig Aero Services and Changi Airports International as operator, the project had a total investment of Rp 1.2 trillion (US\$80 million) and operates under a 25 year concession.

The investors are guaranteed the right to charge fees on both aeronautical and non-aeronautical services. The government, for its part, has fully supported the land acquisition.

With a runway of 2,250 meters, Komodo Airport is capable of handling wide-body aircraft such as the Airbus A320 and Boeing 737 series. Previously it was limited to smaller aircraft such as ATR.

According to the Investment Coordinating Board, the Rp 4.3 trillion Singkawang airport project is being offered to private investors under a 32-year concession period. Currently at the pre-qualification stage, the bid process is scheduled to be held from December of this year to April 2024. The government has also provided a guarantee to assist in land acquisition.

Dhoho Airport in Kediri, East Java, is scheduled for operation in October of this year. Financed by Surya Dhoho Investama, a subsidiary of the cigarette giant PT Gudang Garam under the PPP scheme, the Rp 10.8 trillion project will have a concession of 50 years and will be able to handle wide-body aircraft.

Currently the airport construction has achieved 72 percent progress. The local government supports the land acquisition. The main objective is to make the airport a pilgrimage embarkation point and logistics hub.

It will be the third international airport in East Java besides Juanda Airport in Surabaya and Banyuwangi Airport. However, national defense and security should also be taken into account in the construction of Dhoho Airport. The reason is the Indonesian Air Force base in Madiun has a fighter squadron that is situated close to Dhoho Airport.

Operational issues from a civil-military perspective should be considered, which also refers to legal certainty in aeronautical information publication on prohibited areas. Security for civil flights should not be compromised.

The national airspace management bill could bring solutions to this situation on time.



Traditional way: A fisherman prepares to place his bamboo frame fish trap on Tuesday as he wades into the sea from Sani-Sani Beach in Kolaka regency, Southeast Sulawesi.

Unlocking Indonesia's potential through a blue economy



By Zuzy Anna
360info/Bandung, West Java

A professor at the Faculty of Fisheries and Marine Science, Padjadjaran University, Bandung, and the director of the SDGs Center. The article is republished under a Creative Commons license.

marine resources, and preserving terrestrial ecosystems.

These goals reflect Indonesia's commitment to sustainable development and its recognition of the interconnectedness between economic growth, social well-being and environmental protection.

Indonesia's commitment to incorporating blue economy principles into their policies is not new. During a June 2012 UN conference, the administration of then-Indonesian president Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono voiced their commitment to implementing a blue economy.

His successor, President Joko “Jokowi” Widodo, has established a blueprint known as Nawacita (nine goals), which outlined the government's vision and priorities. The commitment to implementing a blue economy was a key aspect of Nawacita, highlighting the administration's determination to prioritize sustainable practices, including the responsible use of marine resources.

In June 2021, Indonesia committed to the Initiative Natural Capital Carbon Communities Super Power at the Tri Hita Karana Climate Forum. This initiative emphasizes the importance of natural capital, including marine resources, in mitigating climate change and promoting sustainable development.

By recognizing the significance of natural capital, Indonesia aims to position itself as a leading force in addressing climate change and fostering sustainable communities.

The opportunity to pursue a blue economy in Indonesia is strong and potentially lucrative. The World Bank estimates the

value of Indonesia's blue economy at \$1.34 billion, which includes opportunities for revenue through coastal culture, capture fishery, treasure-laden shipwrecks, marine tourism, coral reefs, seagrass and mangroves.

There are challenges in implementing blue economy principles in Indonesia.

Coastal areas are facing population growth, which will lead to more demand for land in limited space, leading to internal migration and environmental strain.

Tidal flooding due to land subsidence poses a significant threat to coastal urban areas, damaging infrastructure and affecting communities, households and individuals.

Indonesia produces the second largest volume of marine debris after China; it is vulnerable to oil spills and marine fisheries are unsustainably exploited.

Ninety percent of Indonesian boats draw their catch from areas that are already overfished and overcapacity.

Traditional communities in Indonesia, whose lives have long revolved around the sea, face challenges to their way of life due to rising populations, coral reef destruction and the abandonment of traditional fishing practices.

With many significant challenges, Indonesia needs to carefully pick its battles, considering its limited resources.

The Indonesian government still heavily relies on revenue from the mining and fossil energy sectors. The objectives of promoting a low-carbon economy cannot be achieved if the government continues to depend on these sectors.