Long-term observations confirm that our climate is now changing at a rapid rate. Over the 20th century, the average annual US temperature has risen by almost 1°F (0.6°C) and precipitation has increased nationally by 5 to 10 percent, mostly due to increases in heavy downpours. These trends are most apparent over the past few decades. Science indicates that the warming in the 21st century will be significantly greater than in the 20th century.

There are also very likely to be unanticipated impacts of climate change during the 21st century. Such surprises may stem from unforeseen changes in the physical climate system, such as major alterations in ocean circulation, cloud distribution, or storms; and unpredicted biological consequences of these physical climate changes, such as massive dislocations of species or pest outbreaks. In addition, unexpected social or economic changes, including major shifts in wealth, technology, or political priorities, could affect our ability to respond to climate change.

To deal with these deficiencies is not easy, because it requires foresight and long-term planning; politicians are usually not well equipped to deal with challenges of this kind, as they are more interested in short-term results. Hence, it was a remarkable achievement when the world community unanimously adopted the Kyoto Protocol in December 1997. This was an attempt at long-term planning by politicians as it will occupy humankind for the greatest part of the next century. Leaders of the developed nations like Bill Clinton, Boris Yeltsin, and the former Chancellor of Germany Helmut Kohl were directly involved in pushing for the protocol.

If humans are to improve their relations with nature and moderate the conventional and prevailing patterns of environmental degradation, this must be done with some degree of co-ordination worldwide. No one can influence the global protection for the natural environment alone: if there is to be global protection for the natural environment, then strategies must be coordinated.
The signatory nations of the Framework Convention on Climate Change are negotiating the path they will ultimately take. Even with such reductions, however, the planet is certain to experience more than a century of climate change, due to the long lifetimes of greenhouse gases already present in the atmosphere and the momentum of the climate system. Adapting to a changed climate must be a necessary component of our response strategy.

Climate change has moved to the front burner of the United States foreign policy and international relations. The role of the United States is of particular importance since it is the world’s largest contributor to climate change. In aggregate, its emission of gases that contribute to climate change exceeds those of all other countries, and on per capita basis its emission are among the highest on the planet. If it acts in earnest to combat climate change, other countries may use it as an example.

There are great combinations of actors, processes, and institutions of United States foreign policy that decide the United States’ strategy for the larger international debate and the intricacies of global collective action on climate change.

The study is descriptive and analytical in nature and also undertakes the background, structure, process and outcome of various climate change negotiations.

The thesis is divided into five chapters. The first chapter titled “Introduction: Reaching Kyoto Protocol” seeks to trace the history of climate change negotiations. It also aims at explaining the causes and consequences of climate change in scientific terms. It further explores the events leading to the Stockholm Conference, which brought nations of the world together to show solidarity in combating climate change in Rio- de Janeiro as well as in uniting nations of the world to formulate a legally binding Kyoto Protocol.

The second chapter titled, “Kyoto Protocol: The Emergence of Regime,” examines various theoretical approaches towards international regime formulation. It examines the historical emergence of regimes building processes with particular focus on the origins of multistage approach towards the Kyoto Protocol. The complexities involved in the efforts at transnational regime formations are further explored by analyzing the divisions within
larger regional groups. A similarity of common political concerns and aspirations do not necessarily warrant a homogeneous unity within a larger group. More divisions within such a group emerge largely influenced by a myriad combination of different political and economic forces.

The third chapter titled, "Regime Erosion: U.S. Discarding the Kyoto Protocol," analyzes the role of the Congress in the Kyoto Protocol on climate change, its overpowering role in the politics of global climate change. This chapter examines the constraints arising out of the US domestic politics and its international position as a result of those constraints. Furthermore, the role of the President is analyzed vis-à-vis its relations with the Congress. Domestic constraints have played a major factor in determining the US position on climate change negotiations and explain the non-committal position it has continued to prefer over a legally binding regime in the form of the Kyoto Protocol. Hence, the US played the role of an overseer rather than an active participant in the Conference of Parties. In pursuit of an international order which has been made desirable by its domestic determinants, it has even sought to create and then maintain divisions among developing nations.

The fourth chapter is on "Kyoto Protocol: Responses, Priorities and Strategy." This chapter seeks to unravel the shifting priorities of different parties in climate change negotiations and the changes in their bargaining strategies and negotiating stances. These shifts and changes have been necessitated for adjusting to the changing diplomatic contexts and the pulls and pressures of the business lobbies. In particular, the stance of the US has been examined in the light of the domestic constraints analyzed in the preceding chapter. The US wants to play the role of a world leader in the politics of climate change while remaining outside of any legally binding regime that would demand a certain set of commitments from it. However, the United States government is currently pursuing a broad range of strategies to reduce emissions of greenhouse gases in the major greenhouse gas emitting sectors e.g. transportation, electricity, industries, etc.
It is hoped that this work will be helpful in understanding the various issues at stake, and provide a guide to the further development of the climate regimes. The scholar alone is responsible for the omissions, lapses and opinions expressed.

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