

Climate Change and SDGs: the role of Civil Society in China and India

Introduction

Having emerged as major developing economies, China and India are key actors in international environmental politics. Much of the success of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) under Agenda 2030 and the aspirations of Paris Agreement 2015 will depend on the extent to which China and India can achieve them within their respective frontiers. Towards this, the participation of civil society will be of immense significance. While the state remains the key actor in policymaking in China and India, the role of civil society in agenda setting, and prioritising climate change and sustainable development cannot be underestimated.

This paper is an attempt to comparatively analyse the role of civil society in addressing climate change and SDGs in China and India. It seeks to probe how civil society influences the governments in setting agenda, policy formulation, and its implementation. The paper thereby probes into the nature of the relationships between the State and civil society in these two countries. The study begins by looking into the scope of the political space civil society organisations have occupied over the years in the two countries. It looks into the development of civic environmentalism briefly so as to unravel the nature of the relationship they share with the respective states. The paper then turns to the role played by civil society organisations on matters relating to climate change in particular.

Civil Society and environmentalism in China

Pre-revolutionary China - before 1949:

Civil society presence in Pre-revolutionary China had been rich. Studies show the use of the Chinese term “social organizations” as early as the Sui, Tang, and Song Dynasties (Ye, 2003). There existed various types of civil society organisations in founded on political, social welfare to the outright criminal lines. These groups included religious associations, business associations, clan associations, trade unions, welfare bodies and professional guilds. There also existed numerous political organisations, including alternative communist parties and democratic parties of various stripes (Hilton, 2013).

1949-1980 - Maoist statism:

The vibrancy enjoyed by Chinese Civil Society began to wane in the aftermath of the Chinese revolution under Mao Zedong's socialist centralism. The Cultural Revolution that soon followed in the 1960s and 1970s marked the almost complete destruction of autonomous civil society in China. The Interim Provision on the Registration of Social Organizations adopted by the PRC on October 19, 1950 underlined citizens' rights as well as punishment for counterrevolutionaries. The fourth article of the declaration heavily curtailed the scope of civil society organisations stating that, "all counterrevolutionary organizations that threaten the state security and the interests of the people should not be allowed to incorporate. Those already incorporated and found engaged in counterrevolutionary activities should be stopped and dissolved". While reiterating China's intent to suppress all counterrevolutionary activities, the fifth article of the Provision stated that, "All reactionaries, feudal landlords, and bureaucratic capitalists, after being disarmed and deprived of former privileges, should be deprived of their political rights when necessary. If they continue counterrevolutionary activities, they must be severely punished" (Ye, 2003).

Thus, none of the above mentioned pre-revolutionary civil organisations had survived in its original form and those organisations that the Party had not destroyed or brought under control had been driven underground. By the 1970s, there existed in China a few monochrome civil society organisations, such as the All-China Federation of Trades Unions, the All-China Women's Federation and the Communist Youth League of China. While all claimed large membership their primary function was to transmit the Party's message rather than to challenge its policies (Hilton, 2013). The Women's Federation became "the transmission belt" between the Party and women, whereas the Youth League came to be the "assistant of the Party," and also the "reserve of the Party," training successors for Communist Party officials. The Peasants' Union stopped functioning after the People's Commune System was formed in 1958. (Ye, 2003)

Post liberalisation (1970 and beyond)

The reemergence of civil society organisations in China coincides with the phase of economic reform and liberalization that occurred during the 1970s onwards. The introduction of decentralization and market competition had abated state centralism thereby opening up opportunities for the citizens. These economic changes resulted in corresponding social change fostering a society more complex and dynamic. This has altered the ways in which society is organized and interacts with the state apparatus (Ye, 2003). Economic liberalization undeniably led to the demands for more political assertion from the citizens, which further laid grounds for the re-establishment of the institution of civil society.

It is within this changing societal complex where Chinese early civilian environmental efforts find origin. The loosening of state restrictions on citizens' actions in China has witness the rise of 'civic environmental movement' manifested through initial movements such as efforts to protect the Yunnan snub-nosed monkey and the Tibetan antelope (Eberhardt 2015, 36). These early efforts (occurring in the late 1970s and the 1980s) aimed at promoting the cause of environmental protection were primarily focused on organizing nationwide public campaigns on general environmental themes targeted at general public as primary audience (Lee, 2005, p. 35). Further, the environmental impacts of the decades of "great leap forward" were beginning to show through the rapidly increasing air, water, and noise pollution. These crises incited environmental complaints by the citizens who have now become more assertive about the environmental concerns affecting their daily lives (Ho, 2001, 899).

While many environmental protests and movements played out at the regional level, there emerged a nation-wide movement against the building of the Three Gorges Dam in 1989. The dam represented the unquenchable thirst for economic growth of the Chinese leadership, which they were willing to pursue even at the cost of massive environmental degradation and loss of human habitat. The project, largest of its kind till then, was to generate 18,000 megawatts of electricity. It was deemed to relocate more than one million people in the Hubei and Sichuan provinces (Ho, 2001, 900). Criticism against the project first made

public at a press conference in Beijing by journalist Dai Qing escalated into protests by farmers dissatisfied with the shortage of land allocated in the resettlement areas caused the central government to pay more attention to the environmental aspects of the dam construction. These demonstrations, although cautious, saw the emergence of a debate on the effects of land reclamation on the environment (Ho, 2001, p. 900). Peter Ho (2001, p. 901) observes that the growth of green organisations and movements in China resulted from a common sense of civic responsibility towards the environment and the urge to act in areas where the government was falling short. Further, they were also prompted by the central leadership's realization for the need for a strengthened civil society given the seriousness of the environmental problems in the face of the government's own limitations (Ho, 2001, p. 901). The return of Chinese environmental civil society was marked by the registration of the organisation known as Friends of Nature with the Ministry of Civil Affairs on 31 March 1994, with the purpose of raising environmental awareness¹ (Hilton, 2013).

The rise in public consciousness and action for the environment further prompted change in the attitude of the government towards ecological issues. The central leadership, driven by both heightened public environmental activism in China and increasing concern for the global environmental problems in the 1980s and early 1990s, had expressed concern for environmental issues. The late 1980s saw the elevation of "Environmental protection" as a national policy issue of important priority from being one in the backburner from the late 1950s to the early 1980s (Lee, 2005, p.36). Thus the rise in civil society organization in China saw an upswing. As of 2008, the Chinese Ministry of Civil Affairs recorded a total of 212,000 registered Social Groups of which 5,330 were of Environmental nature (Gao, 2014).

Civil Society and environmentalism in India:

Environmental movements in India have their origin in the colonial period. However, the nature and spread of these movements have widened in the post independence period. All these campaigns have been mass based in origin and

¹ The organisation was originally registered under the name of the Green Culture Institute of the International Academy of Chinese Culture.

were the results of people's opposition to the government's reckless developmental projects that threaten ecological well-being of the country. In certain cases though, environment crusaders have taken sharp rejections against ambitious plans initiated by business enterprises. Here is an attempt to briefly trace the various civil environmental engagements such as the Chipko Movement, the Silent Valley and Sardar Sarovar issues of Narmada, the Mulshi Satyagraha etc. that have taken form in India and their outcomes.

The Mulshi Satyagraha (1920-24) was a mass based opposition to a dam being built by the flourishing business house of the Tatas. The Mulshi Satyagraha stands as an important precursor of many people organized movements against major dam projects in the country. The Tatas, in the years following the First World War, embarked upon an ambitious project of building dams on the Sahyadri hills, mainly to supply power to the rising industrial city of Bombay. After building a dam near the hill station of Lanovala, the Tatas paid no compensation to the farmers whose lands were submerged. When the project furthered down to Mulshi, the builders ran into trouble. There were enormous protests from the peasants against the proposed dam, despite the Tatas being prepared to pay adequate compensation. Tragically, though, the payment was pocketed by the landlords while the actual tillers were left high and dry (Rangarajan, 2007, pp. 394-395). The movement, which is also known as the world's first anti dam movement (Guha, 2008), was successful in preventing the Tatas' ambition of constructing more dams with no other project being implemented in the region.

The Chipko Movement: Also known as the Chipko Andolan, this is another example of a mass initiated environmental movement that captured the popular imagination. Literally translated as 'Hug the Trees Movement', the Chipko Andolan was a campaign initiated by village women of Uttarakhand, Himalaya in April 1973 against the felling of timber trees which later broadened into wider quest for local control over forest resource (Rangarajan, 2007, pp. 394-395). This rather humble beginning however acted as a predecessor to the simmering but widespread resentment among the hill peasantry towards the state forest policies, which often favored outside commercial interests rather than the

peasants' subsistence, need for fuel, fodder and small timber. Gandhian as well as left wing activists largely spearheaded these protests. Impressively, the movement gained wider expansion in the following decades and sprouted in tribal districts of states like Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Orissa and Andhra Pradesh where conflicts between the villagers and forest administration were on a rise (Rangarajan, 2007 pp 389).

The movement was a powerful assertion against the violation of customary rights of the people by the state forestry and it also brought into focus a wide range of issues concerning forest policy and environmental debate (Guha, 2000). The movement finally condensed in a coordinated opposition to the Draft Forest Bill of 1982, an act, which sought to strengthen the punitive powers of Forest Department. The government was pressured to eventually withdraw the bill while some notable changes in forest policy were induced, such as abandonment of programmes for clear felling natural forests to replace them with plantations of industrially useful exotic species (Rangarajan, 2007, p. 392).

The Koel Karo and Bhopalpatnam-Inchampalli Projects: The water rich regions of central India have also witnessed stiff popular uprisings against ambitious development projects in the form of proposed dams. In both these cases too, threatened tribal groups have put up spirited defenses, organizing demonstrations and work stoppages. Several left leaning political parties such as the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha and the Communist Party of India have lent support to the people in resisting the Koel Karo project. The Bhopalpatnam-Inchampalli project was given the much-needed leadership by Gandhian Baba Amte (CSE, 1985).

Silent Valley movement: Another movement that thrived on popular initiative and sustenance was that of the Silent Valley movement in Kerala in the 1970s. Here was yet another campaign, which stalled the construction of a dam by an infrastructure ambitious government, as the project would result in the submersion of a species-rich rain forest, the only surviving one in peninsular India. The Kerala Sastra Sahitiya Parishad, an organization dedicated to popular science education, which has a wide reach and influence in Kerala, led opposition to the project (Rangarajan, 2007, p. 398). Several left leaning groups formed of

teachers and students too joined the campaign. Eventually, the project had to be shelved and the government retreated from damaging the forest at the behest of raging environment guardians.

The Narmada Project: The Narmada River project, termed as 'the world's greatest planned environmental disaster' by writer Claude Alvares has inevitably met with enormous resistance from the people across the country. The project is a utopian scheme, which envisages the construction of thirty major dams on the Narmada and its tributaries in addition to the hundred and thirty-five medium and three thousand minor dams. The focus of popular opposition has been the Sardar Sarovar reservoir, the largest of the individual schemes in the project. The uniqueness of this project lies in the fact that the command area of major beneficiaries lies in one state, Gujarat while the major displacement will affect another state, Madhya Pradesh. Millions of people are to be rendered homeless out of which, 60% are tribal. Resistance to this project had taken the shape of a movement as seen in the Narmada Bachao Andolan tirelessly spearheaded by spirited social activist, Medha Patkar. Major processions and congregations like the Sangarsh Yatra (Struggle March) have been organized as a part of this movement. The massive rally in the town of Harsud in September 29, 1989, where representatives from social groups all over the country came to demonstrate their solidarity with the Narmada Movement, stands out as one of the most successful public rallies under this movement (Rangarajan, 2007 pp. 399-400). The Narmada Movement remains an epitome of a strong mass based resistance movement, dedicated to protect the environment from destructive development projects, which heightens scarcity and ecological threats.

The above highlighted movements are evidences that India has had a vibrant history of environmental consciousness. The level of participation and commitment amongst its people has been remarkable. India has seen eminent environmentalists like Sundar Lal Bahuguna, Vandana Shiva and Medha Patkar who have dedicated their lives for the protection of the environment from un-mindful developmental programmes.

Ramachandra Guha (2008) classifies India's environmentalism in four phases. Beginning in the 1970s when environmental concerns were predominantly seen

as a luxury which only rich countries could afford, there began an emergence of an indigenous narrative of environmentalism based on survival as opposed to those of the west. Environmentalism in India in its second phase beginning in the 1980s gained immense media attention and popularization of the ecology agenda across the country. This phase also saw the establishment of a new Department of the Environment, which was upgraded five years later into a full-fledged Ministry of Environment and Forests. State Governments followed by setting up environment ministries of their own. This was followed by the third phase of environmentalism in India - its professionalization during which environmental issues attracted the attentions of Scientists and social scientists who began to systematically analyse the roots of environmental conflicts. The fourth phase that came about in 1995 saw the rise of anti-environmental backlash owing to the rising forces of globalization and private interests. Ecological concerns and guidelines came to be seen as hindrance to economic growth and therefore were dismissed as backward looking. Riding high on the wave of globalization, the pro-growth camp managed to woo the media on their side; the media stopped focusing on degradation of the environment and the marginalization of the rural communities that it caused. The period also saw the abdication by the Ministry of Environment and Forests as it relaxed the existing safeguards making the clearance of even the most destructive projects a mere formality (Guha, 2008). However, there is definitely a resurgence of green activism in India given the multitude of ecological crises the country is facing.

State-Civil Society relations

The interactions between the state and civil society organisations in China and India follow a marked difference owing to the nature of governance prevalent. The development of civil society organisations in China documented in the preceding sections throw some light on the Chinese central leadership's role in determining the progress or lack of it. On the other hand, the effervescent display of criticism and mass based protests organised on environmental issues in India from pre-independence to date underlines the democratising nature of its leadership.

This rise of civil society in China occurred after the economic liberalisation of the late 1970s. The burgeoning economic liberties emboldened the masses to demand political and civil rights, which includes right to clean environment. While the government also came to realise the implications of the years of unfettered growth following the “pollute now and clean up later” philosophy, it came to understand the importance of civil society participation in the efforts to abate the environmental crisis.

Further, China in the late 1980s was concerned with rebuilding its image as a democratic country. After the Chinese government’s response to democracy supporters in Tiananmen Square in 1989, China suffered diplomatic isolation with most of its aid temporarily cut off and there was a sharp deterioration in Sino-US relations. The climate change issue came into focus at the same time, thereby serving as an ideal tool for China to regain its international position (Kobayashi, 2003, p. 91). To achieve this aim, China was, in 1994, one of the first countries to formulate a domestic “Agenda 21,” mirroring the UNCED program of action on sustainable development. China also established the China Council for International Cooperation on Environment and Development in 1992 and passed the Air Pollution Law in 1996 accounting for provisions in the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (FCCC). The FCCC negotiations were high profile negotiations, putting China in the spotlight whenever it took the initiative. Its officials stated that China was a constructive player, citing afforestation and population growth controls as China’s contributions to the FCCC effort (Kobayashi, 2003, p. 91). These developments created space for civil society organisations to emerge and function with stronger impact and efficiency.

However, the scope of liberties enjoyed by the environmental civil societies like all civil society organisations in China still remain limited or at least curtailed. Chinese government in the late 1980s promulgated three administrative regulations to govern the operation and activities of NGOs namely the Regulations on the Registration and Management of Social Organizations, the Regulations on the Registration and Management of Foundations, and the Interim Provisions for the Administration of Foreign Chambers of Commerce in China. These laid down general regulations for civil organisations, clearly

emphasizing on government control. The regulations instituted a two-tiered management system, which required NGOs to have a government line agency as their sponsoring agency before they could be legally registered at the Ministry of Civil Affairs or its provincial or municipal affiliates. Further, the sponsoring agency was to supervise the NGO's day-to-day activities and annually review the work of its affiliated NGOs. (Ye, 2003). This requirement facilitated governmental supervision over the registered civil organization and thereby effectively bringing them under the authoritative control of the government.

Modifications in regulations and new laws to monitor the parameters of green activism in China kept emerging. For instance, in January 2007, the State Council introduced Measures on Open Environmental Information along with the new Regulations on Open Government Information that guaranteed citizens the legal right government information. Coming into force on 1 May 2008, these new pronouncements were heralded as 'important milestone for freedom of information in China', and a 'powerful lever for the public to monitor companies' environmental performance'. These measures were to enable environmental activists to monitor pollution and bring polluters to public attention; it granted them the right to demand information on violators, including what action they might have taken (Hilton, 2013).

The relationship between the state and environmental civil organisations in China may be located within the prevailing trend of what scholars have termed 'authoritarian environmentalism'. It is be defined as a "non-participatory approach to public policy-making and implementation in the face of severe environmental challenges" (Gilley, 2012). This argument is supplemented by the fact that the policy response to climate change in China has been built upon the top-down, regulatory powers of the central state.² While non-state participation comes from a scientific advisory committee, most of its members are employees

² For instance, the Climate Change Leadership Group was established within the then-State Council's Environmental Protection Commission in 1990; in 1998, the National Coordination Committee on Climate Change was established and upgraded in 2007 into National Leading Group to Address Climate Change (NLGACC). The group is headed by the premier and headquartered in the National Development and Reform Commission's (NDRC) Department of Climate Change.

of government-funded or owned research institutes, especially the Energy Research Institute of the NDRC (Gilley, 2012).

Climate activism has been limited in its reach and impact. While there are initiatives taken by Legal scholars, environmental scientists, and state-funded researchers, and the China Civil Climate Change Action Network formed in 2009³ to press for greater participation, this activism has been restricted to campaigns for public participation rules to be upheld or focused on downstream policy implementation. There are little efforts attempted at shaping public policy. Similarly, the media has been used to float policy proposals or 'expose bad examples' of local government failures but not to challenge state policies (Gilley, 2012).

In the context of India, civil society has enjoyed considerably wider space as seen in the preceding environmental movements. The constitution through Article 19(1)(c) guarantees to all its citizens the right "to form associations and unions" within reasonable restrictions.⁴ These fundamental rights to freedom and association safeguard the civil society organisations including ENGOs functioning in India. The democratic nature of the relationship between the state and civil society organisations in India are seen in the successful and expansive environmental movements in India's independent history. However, restrictions to civil society movements and organisations have been witnessed at certain junctures. The emergency period from 1975-77 under the late Prime Minister Indira Gandhi stands out as one such period of curbing personal freedoms as well as those of the society as a whole.

Climate Change, SDGs and Civil Society

This section will look into the role and prospects for civil society in dealing with climate change and enhancing the success of SDGs in China and India. Given the global reach and implications of climate change, it is imperative that civil society acts along with the governments to ensure a safer future. Also, civil society has

³ This is a coalition representing 60 different non-governmental organisations working on environmental issues.

⁴ 'Reasonable restrictions' on this right are issued in the interest of public order or morality or the sovereignty and integrity of India.

the capacity to hold their governments accountable and ensure that they provide for a secure environment for the people. In the same way, the much celebrated SDGs declared to essentially make the world cleaner, safer and more equal, require strong commitments from all countries. In fact, the success of the SDGs will certainly depend on how far countries such as China and India are able to meet these targets domestically given that they represent two thirds of the global population and green house emissions today. The role of civil society stands prominent as ever on this as well. Governments need to be kept accountable and focused; the people must organise themselves to keep a check on the governmental policies and ensure that they are in tandem with the larger goals specified under the SDGs. However, to what extent civil societies are able to achieve these tasks will depend on the space allocated to them by their respective states.

Despite the limited space for civil society engagement in China, the issue of climate change has triggered plenty of civil actions over the past years. There are two major types of NGOs engaged on climate change. There are organisations which are embedded and operate within the state structures such as the Guangdong Energy Conservation Association, the Guangzhou Source Association (GZES), and the Guangdong Low-Carbon (Development and Promotion) Association (GLCA), to name a few. Simultaneously, independent ENGOs working on climate change exists, too, with education and spread of public awareness of climate change among the masses as their major goal (Kuhn, 2015). Some of such ENGOs functioning in China have formed a coalition under the China Civil Climate Action Network (CAN-China) which includes the Chinese Association for NGO Cooperation (CANGO), Chinese Youth Climate Action Network, Friends of Nature, the Environmental and Development Institute, Global Village Beijing, Green Earth Volunteers, and Xiamen Green Cross Association (XGCA) (CAN-China, 2017). Apart from those within the coalition, there are other organizations such as the Greenovation Hub, The Green Zhejiang (Hangzhou), Institute of Public and Environmental Affairs, OASIS Shanghai, Green Watershed Yunan, Xiamen Green Cross Association, etc. (Kuhn, 2015).

The focus of these state controlled and independent organisations are diverse.

While the Chinese Youth Climate Action Network works primarily to promote the idea of climate protection among the youth especially, the Institute of Public and Environmental Affairs started by journalist Ma Jun engages primarily in major monitoring activities that focus on the most polluting industries. OASIS Shanghai, which stands for the Shanghai Oasis Ecological Conservation and Communication Centre (OASIS) promotes green commuting and thereby aims to contribute to low carbon lifestyles. On the other hand, the Green Watershed in Yunnan has “mobilized the public and experts to closely monitor the environmental impact of major infrastructure projects and create awareness among local communities in Yunnan province” (Kuhn, 2015). The above examples of climate activism in China represent a general trend that is prevailing in today’s context. One can conclude that while civil society activism on climate change is a real phenomenon and is certainly gaining prominence, their scope of action remains limited to ‘downstream activism’ in areas of policy implementation or spreading awareness. These groups are largely excluded from policymaking and formulation processes, an area that continues to remain the sole bastion of the state.

As discussed above, civil participation on environmental protection and climate change action has been more conducive in India in tune with the democratic provisions of freedom enshrined in the constitution. As such, the contribution of civil society organisations on the climate issue in India is seen both at the policy formulation stages - upstream activism, as well as implementation stages.

Climate policy making in India is influenced by a host of civil society groups and actors such as environmentalists and experts on climate change, non-governmental organizations and independent research institutions. Dr. Jyoti Parikh, Member of the Prime Minister’s Council for Climate Change, opines that the government does “listen to environmentalists and reputed non-governmental organizations more than private industrialists” on matters related to climate policy making because of the fact that the “private sector may have some axe to grind” (Parikh, interview, 2014).

In fact, it was the Centre for Science and Environment’s path-breaking work titled “Global warming in a unequal world” authored by Agarwal and Narain that

informed India's official position of per capita approach and equity principle. Providing an incriminating critique to the western approach of focusing on current emissions rather than the holistic build up of the CO₂ stock in the atmosphere, the study argued that what is required is a per capita emission entitlement approach in which each individual is provided with an equal entitlement to the carbon space (Agarwal and Narain, 1991). The Indian government was quick to adopt this position. Pointing out low levels of per capita emissions of developing nations and the need for these nations, the government was able to argue and eventually incorporate the principle of 'common but differentiated responsibility' in the international climate negotiations (Lele, 2011). The Centre continues to play a very important role in knowledge creation as well as advocacy of environmental causes which provide crucial information and research basis to public as well as private stakeholders. In the same way, various other independent research institutes and organizations such as the Energy Research Institute, Centre for Policy Research, and the Integrated Research for Action and Development carry out dedicated research on diverse aspects of climate change, energy and development providing crucial knowledge assistance to climate policy making. Additionally, distinguished scholars of these institutes constitute members of crucial climate policy making bodies such as the Prime Ministers Council for Climate Change.

Apart from influencing climate policy making, civil society groups also act as critiques to government action. For instance, the Coalition for Dignity and Survival, a network of trade unions, farmers' organizations, forest workers and NGOs issued a statement in critique of the NAPCC in 2008 saying "We view the Government's formulation and finalization of India's National Action Plan on Climate Change (NAPCC) and its eight missions as undemocratic and unilateral (Centre for Education and Documentation, 2012). Similarly, in a memorandum addressed to the Government in 2009, Climate Justice Activists comprising of several organizations working on issues related to climate change such as National Alliance of People's Movements (NAPM), National Forum of Forest Peoples and Forest Workers (NFFPFW), Environment Support Group, etc., criticized the NAPCC for not questioning the current non-sustainable, high emissions pattern of economic development and urged the Government to arrive

at a new NAPCC with reference to Parliament, in consultation with state and local governments, and through the widest possible participation of affected people (South Asia Citizens' Web, 2009).

Thus, on climate policy making, Amb. Shyam Saran, one of India's leading climate change experts, points out the following: "Climate policy making is constantly being influenced by civil society and business given the democratic set up that India has. The Government must follow an inclusive approach (in climate policy making). The success of climate policy implementation would depend on how much public consensus the government can get behind it. India is doing that... but needs to do more" (Saran, interview, 2014).

Conclusion

That climate change has emerged as an agenda of high priority in China and India is well established. The preceding sections in this paper have seen how environmental issues pan out in the public domain in both China and India. Located within the discussion of the larger framework of civic participation, the paper attempted to understand how far civil society organisations have contributed in the fight against climate change in the two largest growing economies today.

It was seen that in while both India and China have certain elements of authoritarian environmentalism and democratic environmentalism in varying degrees, China has more characteristics of centralism even in the sphere of environmental protection. While civil society groups have become increasingly active in promoting and spearheading the fight against climate change, their role in policy making and formulation remains limited. However, the Chinese leadership has considerably warmed up to the idea of having a vibrant civil society take up the challenge of dealing with environmental issues albeit within considerable limits set by it. The post 1970 liberalisation of economy sought to widen the scope of public participation especially in the field of environmental activism as the central leadership aims to refurbish its image as a democratic as well as legitimate authority. This fact is compounded by the increasing demand for cleaner environmental resources by an increasingly assertive populace. Thus, China today sees a lively level of civil activism on various aspects of dealing with

climate change.

India on the other hand has always presented a hospitable political reality for civil society to operate. Thus, civil society based environmentalism that took shape before independence has continued to remain a strong bulwark against ecological destruction from both the state sponsored destruction or private interests. However, this stand of environmentalism faced a serious setback with the liberalisation process of the 1990s where in the state was seen to favor private interests thereby weakening the green agenda. Despite this, the role of civil society organisations in initiating or formulating ecological policy remained strong in India. Independent scientific institutions, experts and activists were always consulted by the government during the policy formulation stages in matters relating to the ecology especially climate change. Campaigns organized by civil society organizations on climate change are prevalent. However, the zeal seen by environmental movements of the past seem to be absent in today's context.

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