

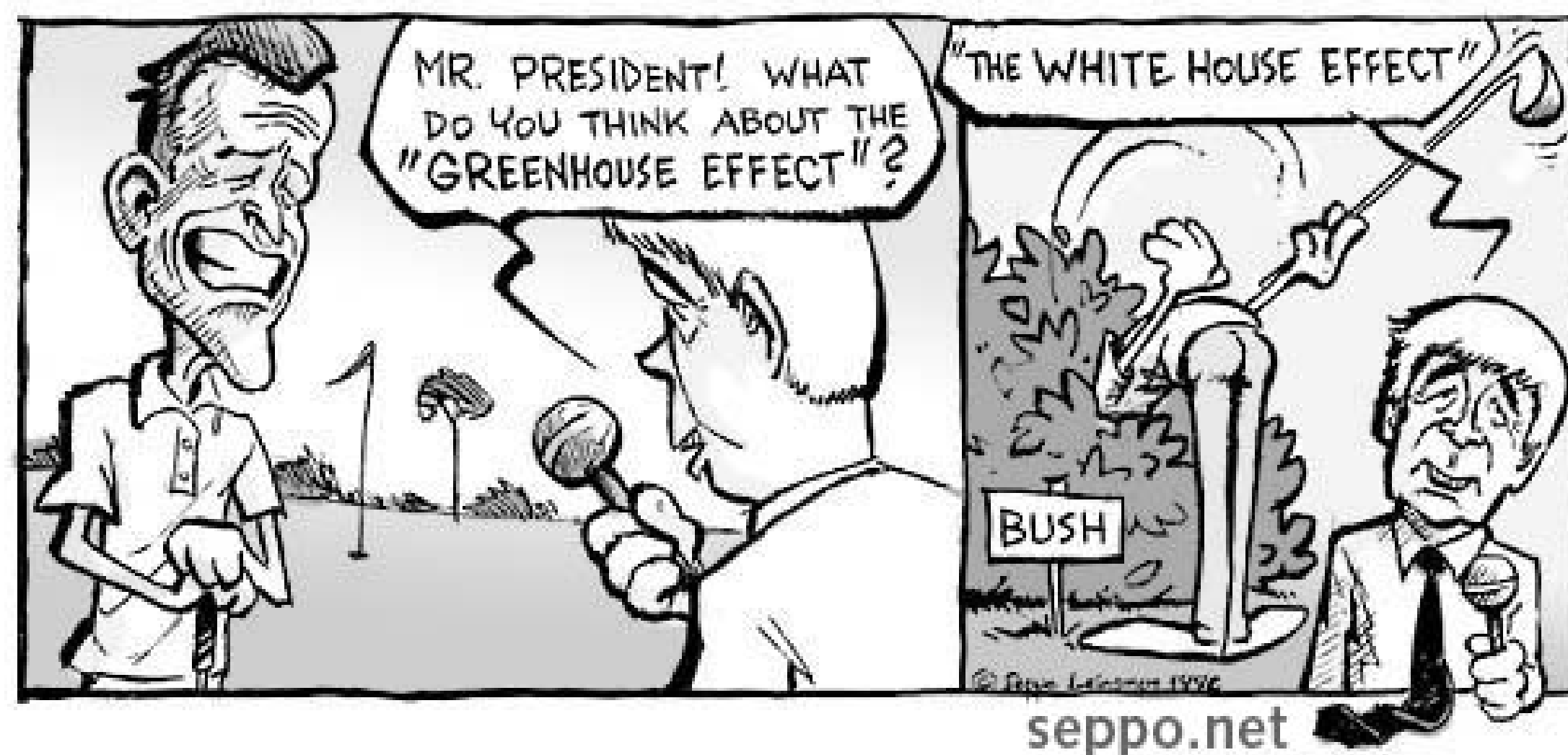
# Climate Change & US Inaction: A Comparative Analysis of Foreign Policy Determinants

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## Abstract

Climate change is a hot potato policy: the responsibility for it is constantly passed between the domestic and international realms. By definition global climate change is a global problem yet, in the US, domestic concerns are preventing federal lawmakers from taking action and presidents from taking leadership at both the national and international levels. We propose that the on-going federal inaction on climate change is the product of it being caught between two phases in the public policy life cycle: policy adoption and implementation. During the heat wave of 1988, the greenhouse effect emerged as an important problem and became a presidential campaign issue. Following a torrent of extreme weather events in 2012, climate change was widely acknowledged as a global crisis and foreign policy issue, but it was barely mentioned on the presidential campaign trail. In line with Putnam's theory of two level games, we argue that the climate change stalemate at the domestic level accounts for the inaction of the US at the international level. We test our hypotheses with a comparative case study of climate change in the two campaign seasons.

## 1988 Presidential Election



"Those who think we're powerless to do anything about the greenhouse effect are forgetting about the 'White House Effect.'"

Vice President George HW Bush, 1988

"We must now, at last, begin to use our economic strength in harmony with the environment to restore and protect our natural resources for generations to come."

Governor Michael Dukakis, 1988

## 2012 Presidential Election



"I think the American people right now have been so focused and will continue to be focused on our economy, jobs and growth that if the message is somehow that we're going to ignore jobs and growth simply to address climate change, I don't think anybody's going to go for that. I won't go for that."

President Barack Obama, 2012

"I'm not in this race to slow the rise of the oceans or to heal the planet. I'm in this race to help the American people."

Governor Mitt Romney, 2012

Variables	1988	2012
<b>Economics</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>GDP fell 5.5%</li> <li>The deficit increased by 3.2%</li> <li>Total Government Expenditures: 1.58 Billion</li> <li>The budget deficit and the drug crisis were more important issues than the environment (Lanore 561)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>GDP fell for the first time in 3.5 years by 0.1% in the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter when it was expected to grow 1%</li> <li>Total Government Expenditures: 3.56 Billion</li> <li>Looming fiscal cliff at the beginning of 2013 (Forbes)</li> </ul>
<b>Campaign Financing</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There was a mix of public and private financing. Bush and Dukakis accepted public funds, each receiving \$46.1 million in Federal funds while their respective national parties raised \$20-25 million in soft money on behalf of their campaigns (the full sum permitted by the public-funding statute).</li> <li>The public funding is described by some scholars as having "floors without ceilings," meaning when financial assistance is given that permits candidates to have access to the electorate but not exact to the accompanying price of spending (Alexander 9).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The majority of funding for candidates came from private donations to the national parties or the candidates themselves, but a large amount of money came from Super PACs</li> <li>The top Super PAC contributors for 2012 did not have obvious connections to the issue of global warming besides, perhaps, Romney contributor Robert Rowling who had ties to several oil companies throughout his career.</li> </ul>
<b>Party Platform</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Democratic Party Platform: Pro-Regulatory Environmental Platform with emphasis on protecting the environment                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Advocated for tougher rules and regulations on pollution</li> <li>Endorsed federal legislations to curb acid rain emissions</li> <li>Promoted the development of clean and renewable energy sources</li> </ul> </li> <li>Republican Party Platform: Promoted their dual commitment to both the protection of the environment and to the development of economic opportunities for all through a growing economy.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Democrats have drifted away from their passion for the issue:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Less "apocalyptic" view on climate change</li> <li>Less ambitious to reduce carbon emissions</li> <li>Now more embracing of fossil fuels</li> <li>Still have an upbeat attitude on exploring clean energy</li> </ul> </li> <li>The Republican party has completely separated itself from the issue of climate change in 2012, opposed to in 2008 when they had acknowledged the issue</li> </ul>
<b>International Context</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Foreign policy was a secondary issue behind the budget deficit, drug crisis and the environment.</li> <li>Scientists and political leaders worldwide were calling for international efforts to address climate change</li> <li>International Activity on Climate Change:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Toronto Conference</li> <li>The World Congress on Climate</li> <li>Creation of Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Foreign policy was a secondary issue in the election, behind jobs, the economy, and income security</li> <li>Foreign policy issues covered included relations and fighting terrorism in Afghanistan and Pakistan, the Arab Awakening, the global economy and China, Iran's nuclear program, and terrorism in other parts of the world</li> <li>International Activity on Climate Change:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Doha UN Climate Change Conference</li> <li>International Conference on Climate Change</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b>Scientific Community</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Global Warming exploded onto the political agenda when scientists turned to politicians to act.</li> <li>Scientists declared that global temperatures were the highest they had been in 130 years. Scientist James E. Hansen informed a Congressional committee of the correlation between the recent warm temperatures and global warming.</li> <li>Others and most of the public were less certain about these scientific findings</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Overall consensus within the scientific community that climate change is occurring</li> <li>Still debates as to how severe it is going to be:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Some scientists are saying that climate change will be more severe than previously projected</li> <li>Others believe that the projections are exaggerations and it will not be as severe as once projected</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b>Weather Events</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>United States:</b> Heat wave and drought that drastically impacted the agricultural industry</li> <li>Heat waves in China and Canada and extreme droughts in Guyana</li> <li>Major floodings in South Africa and Bangladesh</li> <li>Cyclone Bola in New Zealand and other cyclones in Australia and Bangladesh</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>United States:</b> 4<sup>th</sup> warmest winter, early wildfires, warmest spring, droughts, 3<sup>rd</sup> warmest summer, dust storms, Hurricane Sandy</li> <li>Major flooding in Brazil, Australia, Rwanda, China, Manila, Bangladesh, and many others</li> <li>Arctic Sea ice at record low</li> </ul>