

Minilateral Governance of Solar Geoengineering

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Minilateralism, or institutionalized cooperation among a limited subset of states, is a model of governance that blends the thick institutions typical of global multilateral fora with exclusivity reflecting the distribution of power. With one notable exception (Ricke, Moreno-Cruz, and Caldeira, 2013), scant attention has been paid to the concept of minilateralism within the geoengineering literature. This is despite the fact that many in the geoengineering research community intuit that a “consortium,” “coalition,” or other selective interstate arrangement is the most likely form of real-world geoengineering governance. Some analysts have suggested that SRM might constitute an excludable but nonrivalrous “club good,” yet this possibility has not been explored in depth. The purpose of this research is to explore the concept of minilateralism in the context of possible governance of solar geoengineering. A typology of minilateral forms serves to facilitate a comparative assessment of minilateralism vis-à-vis multilateralism and unilateralism. This comparison covers a range of factors such as enabling conditions, levels of compliance and effectiveness, perceptions of legitimacy, and degrees of coercion. A key question addressed by this assessment is the applicability of minilateralism to solar geoengineering. These findings are then linked to existing social science research on geoengineering. Previous work on, inter alia, public goods, “exclusive coalitions,” consortium structures, the role of power, and antidemocratic tendencies is connected explicitly to the concept of minilateralism and to analysis of its suitability as an instrument of geoengineering governance. Finally, the overall appropriateness of minilateral governance for solar geoengineering relative to alternative political configurations is assessed.