

Climate change adaptation as a global duty of justice? The case of the International
Adaptation Fund

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This paper argues that states have a duty of justice to contribute to the ‘Adaptation Fund’ for climate change. The Adaptation Fund created under the the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, is financed by government and private donors, as well as a two percent share of proceedings from Certified Emission Reductions (CER). These contributions are often thought in terms of duties of beneficence, as opposed to a duty of justice. This would imply that international public law cannot coerce countries into contributing to the Fund.

Egalitarians often agree that taxation is a justified way to enforce a duty of justice that citizens owe to each other in order to correct for unjust inequalities caused by natural and social lotteries. However, some egalitarians doubt that the same duties of justice that apply domestically should be enforced by international public law.

In this paper I offer a reason to regard contributions to adaptation as a global duty of justice. Simply put, the idea is that the adaptation risks that countries face largely depend on lotteries. For example, islands face higher risks than continental areas, but whether a state is located in an island or the continent is largely a matter of luck. Adaptation risks depend on the actions of past governments (both at home and abroad), which are a matter of luck to some extent as well.

The paper ends by discussing some common objections to extending egalitarian duties of justice beyond the national borders. Even if states do not share the same kind of cooperative structure as citizens within a country, states do face a common threat that was caused by—almost—all states.

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