

24 - 26 July 2026

Copenhagen , Denmark

Diplomacy, Ideology, and Sustainable Development

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Abstract

This paper examines how diplomatic practice and ideological commitments shape the framing, negotiation, and implementation of sustainable development agendas, addressing a persistent gap in research that often treats these areas as separable. It argues that intersecting paradigms—such as liberal institutionalism and developmentalism—determine what is deemed “sustainable,” which policy instruments are considered legitimate, and whose knowledge is prioritized in multilateral and bilateral contexts. By drawing on constructivist and critical theory perspectives, the study reveals how dominant ideologies, including neoliberalism, influence policy formulation and international cooperation regarding sustainable development goals. The concept of "sustainable development," while widely accepted, often acts as an "empty signifier," leading to strategic ambiguity in diplomatic negotiations, where states may superficially agree yet hold divergent interpretations. This ambiguity can temporarily facilitate consensus but ultimately contributes to implementation gaps and hinders transformative action, as underlying ideological conflicts remain unresolved.

Keywords: Diplomatic Practice; Ideological Commitments; Implementation Gaps; Neoliberalism; Strategic Ambiguity