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Biofuel promotion in India

Analyzing the policy process from
a discursive-institutional perspective

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The utilization of biofuels for transportation has received increasing support in national policy-making around the globe. Following this trend, the Indian government initiated a large-scale biofuel program in selected federal states. Although met with considerable opposition, the program was further expanded, and a national biofuel policy was adopted. Employing a discursive-institutional policy analysis framework, this study argues that the propagation of biofuels was camouflaged as a development strategy, which was backed up by national discourses on pro-poor growth and land rehabilitation as well as global discourses on climate change mitigation. The hegemony of biofuel promotion can be explained based on policy practices, involving technocratic design principles and subsidies, which have underpinned the design of other public programs in India. Furthermore, the ideology of *swadeshi* - an indigenous form of economic nationalism - was re-activated to legitimize the government's policy path for attaining self-reliant energy security. To address the increasing international pressure regarding norms on climate change mitigation, India pursued a post-liberal foreign policy approach. India presented itself as a frontrunner in green technology promotion to strengthen the picture of an emerging superpower, which pursues its way on the modernization path. A consolidated view of all these factors indicates that the continued domination of the pro-biofuel discourse in India draws on a weak ecological modernization paradigm, which has been embedded in deeply entrenched institutional logics for policy-making.