



Safeguarding development and limiting vulnerability: India's stakes in the Paris Agreement

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India has a great deal at stake in the Paris Agreement. As a large and poor developing country, India stands to gain or lose from both obligations under the Agreement and its effectiveness in addressing climate change. This comment describes India as a premature power in climate politics, locates Indian climate negotiating positions in global context, and develops a balance sheet of India's gains and losses in the Paris Agreement. The Paris Agreement has received a lukewarm reaction in India because it runs against some key principles of Indian climate politics. However, the Paris Agreement requires assessment by a different set of metrics. Instead of principle-driven changes in national actions, the Paris Agreement architecture relies on inducing changes through procedural commitments and supportive mechanisms. Viewed from this perspective, the Paris Agreement brings some signs of hope for India. The bottom-up contributions should allow India to safeguard development and explore more linkages between development and climate objectives. Even while inadequate, the existing pledges do collectively set an upper bound on catastrophic climate change, although the introduction of a 1.5° goal induces cynicism among Indian stakeholders. The transparency, expert review, and stocktake processes, when combined with regular updates of nationally determined contributions, are designed to ramp up contributions over time. Whether this trajectory is feasible or wishful thinking depends a great deal on future country actions. The Paris Agreement provides a framework within which India could productively engage its interests, even while it by no means guarantees their realization. © 2016 The Authors. *WIREs Climate Change* published by Wiley Periodicals, Inc.

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INTRODUCTION

India has a great deal at stake in the Paris Agreement. As a large developing country, with a substantial share of its population impoverished, India stands to gain or lose both from obligations under the Agreement, and its effectiveness in addressing climate change. India has a long and complex history

of engaging the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) process, and as the country looms larger on the global stage, it has played an important role in shaping and coordinating negotiating positions of other emerging economies.

This comment on India's stakes in the Paris Agreement starts by locating India on the larger landscape of climate politics, and in particular identifies India's key interests at climate talks. A brief second section locates Indian climate positions against the larger backdrop of climate politics using a heuristic device, the climate trilemma. The third section builds on the preceding two to develop in more detail a

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balance sheet of India's gains and losses in the Paris Agreement, given its interests and negotiating approach.

CONTEXTUALIZING INDIA: A PREMATURE POWER

India approached the Paris climate negotiations as a 'premature power.'¹ As a large, rapidly growing, emerging economy, India's aggregate economic clout has been steadily growing—in 2011 it was the third largest economy in Purchasing Power Parity (PPP) terms.² Consequently, its annual greenhouse gas emissions have also been steadily rising; it is now the third largest emitter, albeit just narrowly ahead of Russia and Japan, and far behind the top two emitters, with India's emissions at 50% of US emissions and 27% of China's emissions in 2012.³ Both these factors make India a climate 'power'—India matters to the outcome of climate politics.

At the same time, India's power quotient is strongly determined by scale: India's global economic power and its annual emissions are due to the size of its population. By any disaggregated measure, India occupies the lower rungs of economic and emissions rankings. For example, India's gross domestic product (GDP)-PPP per capita is \$5701 (in 2014), about 38% of the global average of \$14,957⁴; emissions per capita were 2.4 tCO₂ (in 2012), 38% of the global average of 6.4 tCO₂.³ Indeed, even if India were to grow at 8.75% (the high end of range assumed by Indian climate and energy models), India's 2030 per capita emissions would still stay below the current global average.⁵ These low economic and emission statistics translate into extremely low socio-economic indicators: India's score on the multi-dimensional poverty index is 0.283, which places it just above Bangladesh and far below the countries it is clubbed with in climate negotiations, Brazil, South Africa and China.⁶ The average per capita electricity consumption of Indian citizens is 1010 kWh (in 2014–2015),⁷ which is 33% of the global average of 3064 kWh (in 2012) and 7.79% of the US average of 12,954 kWh (in 2012).⁸ About 70% of Indian citizens rely on noncommercial fuels for cooking.⁹ In the words of India's former special envoy for climate change, 'India's relative power globally has outstripped the indices of personal and social well-being...' For all these reasons, India's power is premature.

Consequently, India does not fall neatly into any of the usual political categories used at climate negotiations, but rather straddles them. India is

simultaneously a 'large emitter,' (but only in annual emission terms, not in per capita or cumulative terms) and, because of the low incomes of most of its citizens, it is a highly vulnerable country to climate impacts.

This duality translates into split, and somewhat contradictory objectives at climate talks. First, India seeks to ensure that pressures for climate mitigation do not limit the nation's access to low-cost energy for development. This is an abiding concern within India's political establishment as energy needs are likely to be substantial in the coming two decades or so for several reasons: infrastructure is poor and inadequate to support a strong manufacturing base; India is urbanizing rapidly; the need for new job creation is considerable as a result of India's demographic transition which is driving an estimated 10 million people to enter the workforce each year¹⁰; and aspirations for material consumption are growing from a very low base, and will lead to demands for higher levels of energy and material consumption. India's emphasis on equity stems from a real concern that its development transformation will be curtailed by limited access to cheap energy.

At the same time, there is a growing internal discussion about the prevalence of 'co-benefits,' or actions that could simultaneously yield development and climate gains, that has created political space for enhanced domestic climate action.¹¹ Recent reviews of Indian climate politics uniformly point to the increasing scope and prevalence of domestic climate action in India and a re-framing of the strict dichotomy between development and climate mitigation to one that allows for some potential for overlap.^{12–15} This modified narrative, and the proliferating national and subnational climate plans it has spawned, soften but by no means eliminate the concern over the challenges to India's future from potential climate-driven constraints on energy use.

The second objective, which has long been overshadowed by the first, is to limit India's vulnerability to human-induced climate impacts. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change suggests that South Asia is, indeed, a vulnerable zone because of impacts on the water cycle, crop yields, and violent weather events.¹⁶ And although there is evidence of growing understanding of the costs of climate impacts,¹⁷ there is little evidence that this concern has translated into domestic political pressure for a more ambitious climate deal. For example, in a Parliamentary debate after the Copenhagen COP, all the questions were focused on energy for development, and none on vulnerability.¹⁸

Examining these dual objectives together, there is a grim but defensible rationality to a broadly held view in Indian climate politics, which turns on the effectiveness of global cooperation. If a global agreement increases pressure on India to limit energy use, but does relatively little to address the worst consequences of climate impacts, then supporting a global agreement may well be a bad trade-off. Instead, India may be better served by focusing on growing rapidly, so as to deal with climate impacts through enhanced adaptation at home. Without an effective global mitigation response, a hard-nosed rational strategy would be to prioritise growth to limit vulnerability, even if it leads to increased emissions.

Layered on top of this narrow reading of domestic Indian climate politics, however, are also a set of Indian foreign policy objectives, recognition of which suggest interpreting climate politics as a two level game between domestic and international considerations.¹³ Shifting geopolitical circumstances, as well as modified Indian foreign policy objectives in the light of these circumstances, have been read as factors affecting both the content and articulation of India's international climate negotiating stance.^{13,14,19}

Taken collectively, the dominant objective of safeguarding access to adequate energy for development remains central to the Indian climate negotiating positions, one which has centrally informed India's emphasis on equity and the UNFCCC principle of 'common but differentiated responsibility and respective capabilities' (CBDRRC).²⁰ The emergence of co-benefits as an important idea, the growing attention to vulnerability, and the heightened concern with broader foreign policy objectives have opened the door to more nuanced arguments and a willingness to engage alternative formulations, but have not displaced the central negotiating objective. How India's concern with its energy future translates into a negotiating stance at the UNFCCC, and the implications of these concerns for India engagement with the Paris Agreement, are usefully understood through a heuristic device—the climate trilemma.

INDIA IN THE CLIMATE TRILEMMA

A 'trilemma' is a three-objective problem of which only two can be achieved at one time (see Figure 1). In the climate trilemma, the objectives are: an environmental goal of limiting warming to a given temperature; ensuring equity in access to carbon space; and ensuring no competitive disadvantage to a country as a result of a climate agreement. Sides 'A' and

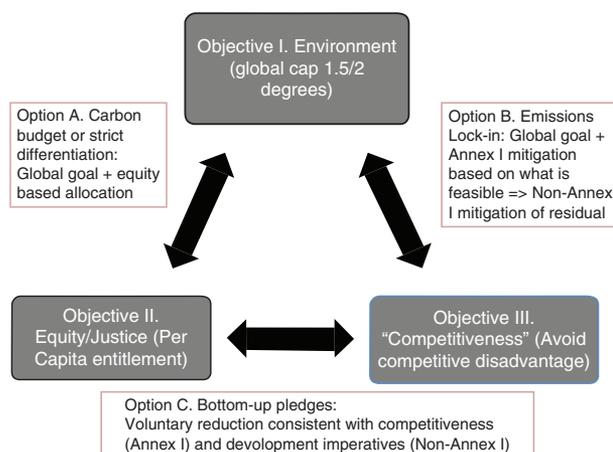


FIGURE 1 | The climate trilemma. Source: Dubash²¹.

'B' of the resultant triangle represent two, fundamentally different, possible resolutions that achieve the global climate goal.

Option A, which would favor India and other developing countries, is based on carbon stocks and requires an explicit allocation of the global carbon budget based on an equity-based principle, such as per capita allocation. Alternatively, it represents a strict interpretation of CBDRRC, which would result in the allocation of mitigation responsibilities on the basis of historical responsibility and capability. Option B, which would favor developed countries, represents a 'Kyoto plus' resolution, in which developed countries would determine their emission reductions, and the remaining limitations required to meet the environmental goal would be met by developing countries. Both have enormous political costs but to different parties: 'A' would impose substantial burdens on developed countries and 'B' risks placing the burden of any residual adjustment on developing countries. In particular, 'B' in combination with weak or no differentiation raises fears in India of curtailed future access to fossil fuel energy.

In the years leading to Paris, however, it has become apparent that option 'C' is the only politically viable option. It softens political constraints for both sides: developing countries can ensure their pledges take into account their future energy needs; developed countries can calibrate their pledges to avoid a loss in competitiveness. In a more positive interpretation, Option C is built around a 'poly-centric' approach to climate governance, one which allows each country to build climate policy to exploit co-benefits, thereby delivering on national priorities.²² Whether framed as politically expedient or as creatively enabling, this approach potentially comes at the cost of the global environmental goal. The

only way to accommodate a 2° (or 1.5°) target under option C is through a feedback loop that takes into account progress of pledges toward the temperature goal.

The climate trilemma helps explain India's historical climate position and negotiating options. The option with the highest chance of both safeguarding development and limiting vulnerability is Option A. Hence, Indian negotiating positions have focused on strict differentiation, albeit without equivalent levels of emphasis on the global environmental goal. In the course of the last few years, however, it has become clear that the architecture of the Paris Agreement would be closer to Option C. The central strategic question for India was whether and how it could re-conceive its negotiation stance to either reshape this emerging consensus, or effectively work within it to achieve its objectives. These were the pressures Indian negotiators faced going into Paris.

THE PARIS AGREEMENT THROUGH AN INDIAN LENS

The climate trilemma helps explain why the Paris Agreement was greeted with a great deal of skepticism within India, particularly by former negotiators and veteran climate watchers. If India's interests are only truly protected by Option A, then any other option, and notably Option C, represents a substantial retreat.

The Paris Agreement, it was argued, diluted the notion that industrialized countries bear a historical responsibility for past emissions, opening the door for the burden for future mitigation to be shifted to developing countries such as India. According to some, the Agreement 'cements climate apartheid,'²³ and by changing the agreed rules of the game, amounts to 'regime change.'²⁴ While elements of the UNFCCC framework were retained, Paris represented at best a 'holding operation.'²⁵

A second important theme was that the Agreement stood little chance of achieving its environmental goal, and was therefore a testament to the 'human capacity for self-deception.'²⁶ This argument is built on the observation that the sum of the pre-Paris Intended Nationally Determined Contributions (INDC) amount to considerably less than what is required by science. Moreover, since the Agreement provides no way of leveraging pledges up in a manner that reflects equity, future efforts at shoring up the environmental goal will, indeed, come at the cost of the developing world.²⁷

These are trenchant criticisms, and, indeed, from India's viewpoint, there is little doubt that an

Agreement more explicitly built around both equity and the environmental goal would have better served Indian interests, had this been politically possible and enforceable. However, in practice, the Paris Agreement is built around a fundamentally different architecture, as signaled by the trilemma heuristic.

The core of this architecture is contained in Article 4.2, which requires each country to prepare nationally determined contributions, which they aim to achieve. In essence, the Agreement sets in place a set of procedural obligations to produce bottom-up pledges, to regularly update these pledges, to strive for progression in these pledges over time, and to establish a set of supporting top-down elements intended to build a virtuous circle over time. The promise of Paris is that this mechanism will, over time, encourage a learning-by-doing dynamic, lead to evidence that climate action is compatible with other goals, build trust between countries, and flourish into a true global collective response.

Given this architecture, which did fall in the realm of political possibility, the salient question is: does the Paris Agreement, in its current form, serve Indian interests and to what extent? In the remainder of this article, I explore this question, structuring the discussion around four categories that are helpful for understanding possible Indian interpretations of the Paris Agreement: differentiated responsibility; the 1.5° goal; processes of transparency and review; and finance and technology.

Differentiated Responsibility

The Indian government has long viewed CDRRC as essential to operationalizing notions of equity in the climate regime and thereby safeguarding development.²⁰ If responsibility is differentiated according to relative contribution to stocks of emissions, it allows those less responsible, such as India, to claim more time and carbon space. The second dimension, capability, enshrines the common sense idea that those who are poorer suffer a higher relative cost from the burden of mitigation (albeit with the implied and partial understanding that mitigation is almost always a burden).

In the recent past, India has zealously defended these ideas. Following the Durban Platform, for instance, which laid the groundwork for an agreement 'applicable to all,' seemingly diluting CDRRC, the Indian government observed that negotiations would also proceed 'under the convention,' implying the inclusion of all its principles, including CDRRC.^{28,29} Notably, sticking to the Convention formulation allows India to maintain its alliances

with other emerging economies, while a stand that called for a more precise categorization allowing for graduation of countries as they grow may have excluded some of its allies. More recently, in its intended nationally determined contribution, for example, India stated its expectation for Paris: 'Our objective is to establish an effective, cooperative and equitable global architecture based on climate justice and the principles of Equity and Common but Differentiated Responsibilities and Respective Capabilities, under the UNFCCC.'³⁰

On differentiation, contrary to the more skeptical Indian voices, the Paris Agreement is better read as providing a carefully crafted middle ground, one that leaves space for India to argue that its mitigation obligations should be conditioned by past context, but also allows for dynamism and change. Three aspects are particularly salient.

First, equity and CDBRRC find a place in overarching components of the Agreement such as the preamble, and the aim of the Agreement (Article 2), albeit with the modifier 'in the light of different national circumstances' (drawing on compromise language from a China-US joint statement in late 2014).³¹ Article 3 balances universal obligations such as '...efforts of all Parties will represent a progression over time...' with recognition of the need to support developing countries.

Second, instead of a blanket Kyoto-like firewall between countries listed in an Annex, the Paris Agreement refers to differing obligations by developed and developing country categories, but often provides language that blurs this distinction, and encourages countries to self-select into more strenuous obligations. For example, on mitigation, developed countries 'should continue taking the lead,' while developing countries are 'encouraged to move over time toward economy-wide emission reduction or limitation targets.' (Article 4). From an Indian perspective, while this is undoubtedly a weaker formulation of differentiation than an Annex-based firewall, it provides a basis for India to continue to opt-out of developed country level obligations, on the basis of both responsibility and capability. However, it allows wealthier developing countries to opt-into more stringent pledges over time, either because of co-benefits arguments, or because of a perceived geopolitical cost to not doing so, a politically important consideration for the overall Agreement.

Third, the Paris Agreement moves beyond rote recitation of CDBRRC in overarching text to efforts to operationalize it in the context of the various issues areas: mitigation, adaptation, transparency and so on. This operationalization spells out what

differentiation actually implies for the functioning of the regime, which arguably is more useful for India than statements of principle with unclear operational implications. Importantly, this approach also allows flexibility across issue areas, and accommodation of different political priorities. For example, the article on finance clearly separates obligations of developed country and 'other' parties, an important issue for India. On the other hand, the Agreement includes a number of common obligations on transparency. Finding a single formulation across all elements would have been far more challenging.

In sum, India agreed to a somewhat more porous version of differentiation than in the past, but one that includes a clear operational basis across the various elements. While short of the watertight compartments of the past, this outcome does meaningfully preserve aspects of differentiation. The outcome on CDBRRC provides a reasonable basis for India, given its relatively low level of development, to argue for the lower tier of obligations on various elements, notably mitigation and finance.

1.5° Aspirational Temperature Goal

A much discussed outcome of the Paris talks was the inclusion of a strengthened global temperature goal: '... holding the increase ... to well below 2°C above pre-industrial levels and to pursue efforts to limit the temperature increase to 1.5°C...'³² This outcome was welcomed by advocates from vulnerable countries, and apparently resulted from a sustained effort to include this strengthened goal by these advocates.³³

Although India is deeply vulnerable to climate impacts, ironically this outcome has raised red flags for India.^{27,34} First, a tightening of the global goal was not accompanied by corresponding substantive measures coming out of Paris—the aggregate effect of country pledges remained the same. Second, viewed in carbon budget terms the effect of lowering the global temperature target leads to an impossibly small carbon budget. Based on IPCC estimates, the 2°C goal allows for a further 1300 GT of carbon dioxide being emitted from now until 2100 (at a 50% probability level of meeting the goal), which drops to 1000GT for a 66% chance. A 1.5°C goal lowers this budget to 550GT and as low as 400GT for a 66% chance.³⁵ The synthesis report produced by the UNFCCC Secretariat prior to Paris finds that the aggregate pledges by countries would result in 542 GT being used up between 2012 and 2025 and 748 by 2030.³⁶ Based on current pledges, the *entire* 1.5° budget, even with just a modest 50% chance of

success, would be used up in the next decade. Even allowing for strengthening of pledges over time, these numbers suggest that even a 2°C target is a huge challenge, while a 1.5°C target is well beyond reach.

If the Paris Agreement made a pathway to 1.5° more realistic, it would have been a welcome outcome for India. But these numbers lend themselves to a more cynical political interpretation. Adding in the lower 1.5°C target allowed for some political points to be scored by a self-declared ‘high ambition coalition’ at Paris³⁷ but with little real chance of realization. More problematic, the articulation of this more ambitious goal could be used as a lever to limit future emissions from late developers such as India. In the absence of far more stringent pre-2020 reductions by developed countries, the 1.5°C risks shifting the mitigation burden toward countries such as India, while yielding negligible gains, in practice, in terms of reduced vulnerability.

Processes of Transparency and Stocktaking

The aggregate effect of ‘bottom-up’ country pledges will fall well short of reaching a 2°C temperature goal.^{36,38,39} If the Paris Agreement is to result in a virtuous cycle of more ambitious pledges over time, and more effective implementation, then complementary ‘top-down’ mechanisms are needed that induce such a cycle. The presence and effectiveness of these mechanisms stand as the only viable response to those who see in the Paris Agreement (and there are many such in India) a voluntary mechanism with no ability to induce countries to move beyond national political constraints.

In this context, the transparency mechanism and the process of global stocktake enshrined in the Paris Agreement are critical to its credibility. A transparency mechanism can provide hooks for domestic actors—evocatively dubbed ‘beneficiaries of compliance’ and ‘victims of non-compliance’ by Dai⁴⁰—to promote enhanced action, and can serve as the basis for naming and shaming. A global stocktake is intended to prompt renewed periodic urgency to update pledges. Collectively, these are important elements of a ratchet mechanism.⁴¹

For India, however, the transparency framework, in particular, evokes mixed reactions. Because India is a vulnerable country, and more ambitious actions are needed to reduce vulnerability, transparency mechanisms are essential. However, they also risk exposing India to greater scrutiny, and potentially greater pressure for enhanced mitigation at the cost of development. For the latter reason, India has often expressed concern about any transparency

process that could be viewed as intrusive or violative of sovereignty.

In Paris, the early contours of a relatively robust transparency framework were spelt out, which hold the potential for a meaningful top-down component of a ratchet. But equally so were a number of caveats and safeguards. Looking first at the framework, the purpose of the transparency provisions is to enable clarity and tracking of progress on *individual* country contributions, while the global stocktake operates at an *aggregate* level. Thus, the former are intended to stimulate and monitor implementation, the latter includes consideration of adequacy, but only at an aggregate level.

Since *each* party is required to provide an emissions inventory and any additional information necessary to track progress, the transparency provisions, of all the elements of the Agreement, perhaps least reflect a fully differentiated approach although, as discussed below, there are several elements that also provide flexibility to developing countries. The framework goes beyond provision of information to subject the submissions of all Parties to a technical expert review and a ‘facilitative, multilateral consideration of progress’ (Article 13). While details of this mechanism are still to be worked out, the Agreement lays the basis for a reasonably robust mechanism that holds out the potential, at least, for holding countries to their voluntary pledges. Given India’s vulnerability to climate impacts, this is welcome.

There are other aspects of the mechanism that speak to India’s more traditional concern with sovereignty. The text states that the transparency framework will build on existing mechanisms and includes a long list of qualifiers: facilitative, non-intrusive, non-punitive, respectful of sovereignty and not burdensome. All these provide safety valves when the actual mechanism is designed, although certainly from the viewpoint of India’s vulnerability, and hence interest in ambitious mitigation action, it would be preferable if these were not heavily used. Finally, of importance to India, the transparency framework includes clarity not just on action, but also on support, and, in a departure from the rest of the article, does so in a way that is differentiated for developed and developing countries.

Taken collectively, several elements of the transparency framework—the information provisions, technical expert review, and facilitative mechanism—are important for vulnerable countries, including India, as they hold the promise of leveraging more ambitious future pledges. Equally, however, the relatively limited intrusiveness of the transparency framework, and the fact that the only

review of adequacy is at the aggregate level, is significant from the perspective of India's future energy needs.

Finance and Technology

Consistent with India's insistence on the bedrock principle of CBDRRC, provision of finance and technology by developed countries have been central to India's negotiating position.^{42,43} In India's view, it is important that India's actions are contingent on provision of enabling finance and technology by developed countries that bear a greater responsibility and have more capability. India's 'intended nationally determined contribution' established a soft linkage between action and provision of international support: 'The successful implementation of INDC is contingent upon an ambitious global agreement including additional means of implementation to be provided by developed country parties.' (For a discussion and critique of India's INDC, see Refs 44,45)

On this score, the Paris Agreement represents little more than the status quo: it is sufficiently elastic to accommodate India's long-standing insistence on the need for finance, even while providing little by way of specific measures to suggest that provision of financing will be either scaled up or accelerated. Consistent with the politically creative treatment of differentiation, Article 9 on finance places the primary obligation on developed countries to provide finance, while opening the door for other Parties to do so voluntarily. This latter, voluntary formulation, is more acceptable to India than earlier formulations under consideration that required countries in a position to do so to provide finance, which may have placed India in the position of having to justify its decision on whether or not to contribute finance, and acceptance of which would have marked a substantial departure from India's position.

Also important for India is the specific mention of the 'significant role of public funds' and the need for developed countries to report on projected levels of public funds to be made available. In the context of a pre-Paris OECD report on climate finance, India has been at the forefront of arguing that definitional issues around climate finance, in particular the blurring of public and private funds, and within public funds, categories of climate and development aid funds, have the effect of inflating the amount of climate finance available.⁴⁶ While Article 9 of the Paris Agreement refers to a 'wide variety of sources, instruments and channels' the specific attention to public funds is significant in light of these recent debates.

Another nuance relevant for India is references to supporting and taking into account 'country-

driven strategies.' This invokes a long-standing debate in climate finance, one in which India holds strong views, that climate finance should not be construed in terms equivalent to aid, but rather should be understood in terms of support to help address a collective problem, but one for which developing countries bear relatively limited responsibility. Given this, it follows that developing countries should not be expected to prioritize climate actions over development ones, should the two conflict. The determination on the level of conflict between these two objectives, and hence, the uses to which climate finance should be put, are best determined by recipients. This logic leads to a favorable view of country-led approaches, and in particular, the potential departure it signals for climate finance from the legacy of aid-based conditionality.⁴⁷

As with finance, the content of the technology section represents little more than a treading of water. The Paris Agreement reiterates the importance of technology development and transfer, and calls for cooperative action, but does not develop an institutional framework with which to accelerate these outcomes. While India has long called for mechanisms of transfer or sharing of intellectual property rights for key mitigation technologies with the climate regime, the Agreement only makes somewhat coy mention of 'facilitating access to technology ... to developing country Parties' (Article 10).

While finance and technology loom large on the Indian agenda, this agenda has scarcely been advanced at Paris. Given contemporary political realities—notably the perceived rise of some developing countries and the relative slowdown of growth in key developed regions—both large financial transfers and technological arrangements that may undermine competitive advantage are unlikely to be realized. Instead, for India and other countries, finance and technology arguably retain value, but less for any hope of material gains in the near future, and more for their bargaining value as part of a larger edifice of climate politics built around differentiation. The Paris Agreement represented a work-around, but one that retained some elements of that edifice, particularly finance and technology, relatively unchanged.

CONCLUSION

The Paris Agreement has received a lukewarm reaction in India because it runs against some key articles of faith in Indian climate politics. Its essentially bottom-up and voluntary architecture, albeit with top-down elements, is entirely divorced from an

explicit principle-based approach to equity and, therefore, allocations of future emissions. Its pledge-based approach is only linked through the loosest of mechanisms—an aggregate global stocktake—to what is required by science. The first aspect does not fully safeguard India's development future, and the second only very loosely promises reduced vulnerability.

However, by its very nature, the architecture of the Paris Agreement requires assessment by a different set of metrics. Instead of directly bringing about changes in national actions through substantive commitments backed by compliance mechanisms, the Paris Agreement architecture relies on inducing changes through procedural commitments and supportive mechanisms such as transparency and review.

Viewed from this perspective, there are some signs of hope for India in the Paris Agreement. The voluntary, bottom up nature of nationally determined contributions should allow India to safeguard development, by calibrating its pledges to its national needs. Both these allow for India to explore more fully a co-benefits-led approach to climate mitigation, one that simultaneously pursues both development and climate objectives.⁴⁸ If these co-benefits are substantial, India's future pledges could well contribute to building a global virtuous cycle of national actions. If, instead, there are substantial trade-offs between development and climate mitigation, the

maintenance of CBDRRC in a meaningful, if not absolute, formulation, also provides some safeguards against global pressure to ramp up action. While there are no appreciable gains on finance and technology, neither are there losses.

On avoiding vulnerability, there is at least the promise of some gains, even while the inclusion of a 1.5° goal arouses only concern and cynicism. Even while inadequate, the existing pledges do collectively set an upper bound on catastrophic climate change, even if a high upper bound. But more significant, the transparency, expert review, and stocktake processes, when combined with regular updates of nationally determined contributions, are designed to ramp up contributions over time, leading to mitigation actions that are closer to those required by science. Whether this trajectory is feasible or wishful thinking depends a great deal on country actions in the next 5 years, on whether countries learn that climate actions are consistent or run counter to development and economic competitiveness, and whether transparency-based mechanisms are sufficient to keep countries on track for implementation of their pledges. As a vulnerable country, it is in India's interest to support use of the Paris framework to build a virtuous cycle of global cooperation. The Paris Agreement provides a framework within which India could productively engage its interests, even while it by no means guarantees their realization.

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