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India's balancing act to address climate change under the Paris agreement

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This paper focuses on India's implementation and enhancements of its commitments under the Paris Agreement. The insights in this paper are derived from a series of interviews with subject matter experts in India. India is one of the largest economies in the world and, consequently, holds an important position in global climate politics. Despite low levels of historical and per capita emissions, India is the third largest emitter of greenhouse gas emissions. These emissions are expected to increase in line with the country's continued economic growth. Further, Indian climate policies have been shaped around domestic priorities such as poverty, provision of basic services, energy access, energy security, and other social and economic issues. Consequently, global climate change is a concern but not a priority. Currently, India has around 57 percent of installed coal power capacity in its electricity mix. This is needed to fuel its rising energy needs. Further, India imports the majority of its crude oil. However, environmental concerns related to air and water

pollution will continue to exert pressure on the Indian government to reduce its reliance on coal and crude oil. India, therefore, needs to link its energy security, energy access, and climate change policies. Under Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the topic of climate change has received growing attention from within the Indian political system. India would like to be seen as a leader on climate change, particularly when compared to China whose targets are treated as a benchmark. Many studies have estimated India to be the most geographically vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, in terms of both economic and social costs. The Indian government reconstituted the Prime Minister's Council on Climate Change, consisting of relevant ministries and independent bureaucrats, to achieve its climate change goals. Think tanks and independent institutions also play major supporting roles in formulating India's NDC emission targets and act as an advisory group to the prime minister's office.

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