Continuity and Change in Indian Grand Strategy: The Cases of Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Climate Change[1]

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Introduction

What has the end of the Cold War meant for Indian grand strategy? In surveying scholarly analyses of Indian grand strategy since the end of the Cold War, there is far from one clear answer. In a recent volume on India's grand strategy, for example, the editors argue that after the Cold War, Nehruvianism, "the governing template of grand strategy" in post-Independence India, "has lost ground in the Indian strategic community."[2] And yet the foreword to the same volume contends that "modern India's foreign policy has shown a high level of consistency in its policies, views and behavior in spite of the change in governments, ruling parties and circumstances."[3] Arguments for both continuity and change in India's post-Cold War grand strategy abound.[4] However, few contemporary analyses of India's post-Cold War grand strategy engage with bounded and comparative empirical examples to bolster their claims of foreign policy stasis or transition. In particular, the "transformation scholarship," as we term those scholarly works which characterize the end of the Cold War as a pivotal turning point in India's foreign policy, often pinpoints small changes as evidence of a major transformation in grand strategy, and frequently implicitly or explicitly advocates for, and even commends, such perceived changes, thereby complicating their evaluation.

In an effort to offer an alternative understanding of India's grand strategy this article examines whether four key claims in the dominant "transformation scholarship" bear out in two central domains of Indian foreign policy: the nuclear non-proliferation and the climate governance[5] regimes. These two regimes are significant for both Indian national security and for India's role in the future of global governance. Our central argument is that the transformation scholarship treats policy issues as *binary*, and the constitution and pursuance of material interests as rational and *commendable*, and consequently, equates changes in a given policy issue with changes in grand strategy. We contend, however, that policy issues are a *continuum* within which there may be *strategic policy innovations*, leading to both

nuanced continuity *and* change. We conclude from this that change in Indian grand strategy is not a dichotomous shift between Nehruvian and post-Nehruvian power politics but is rather in a state of flux.

Continuity or Change in Indian Grand Strategy after the Cold War?

Grand strategy in the Indian context has been defined both broadly as "the combination of national resources and capabilities – military, diplomatic, political, economic, cultural and moral – that are deployed in the service of national security,"[6] and narrowly, as strategic interests that pertain to "concentric circles" of power.[7] Both conceptions of grand strategy are in contradistinction to classical definitions that center predominantly on war,[8] and more in line with the idea of grand strategy as political, all-encompassing and long-term, and specifically formulated by leaders.[9] As Goldstein argues, the grand strategy of any state simply refers to how a state may supervise and adapt its policies in various areas to reduce conflict between them. In other words, it is underpinned by the idea that there is a logic that connects varying policies: a vision of how the goals of a country can best be served given its own capabilities and the constraints of international structures.[10]

The end of the Cold War, and domestic changes including economic liberalization and the conduct of nuclear tests, therefore, served as a fulcrum for renewed discussion over India's grand strategy. Indeed, in this early post-Cold War phase, "a fairly rambunctious debate broke out in India over the future of grand strategy."[11] This debate led to divergent scholarly accounts of continuity and change in India's grand strategy that endure even today. While some found "remarkable continuity" in Indian policies,[12] others pointed to drastic changes.

This latter strand of scholarship,[13] which we refer to as the "transformation scholarship," has tended to dominate the field, and for this reason forms the central reference

point of our analysis in this article. The transformation scholarship posits India's grand strategy as having been influenced by two distinct eras—the Nehruvian or "idealist" era, and the post-Nehruvian or "pragmatist" and "realist" era, with the end of the Cold War serving as the structural break between these two phases.[14] As Mehta observed critically in 2003, "it has now become something of a standard view that India's foreign policy and strategic orientation towards the world underwent a profound shift during the late 1990s."[15]

Central claims and problems in the "transformation scholarship"

Broadly speaking, the transformation scholarship argues that India's Nehruvian era spanned the post-Independence years from 1947 until the end of the Cold War. The consensus is that Nehruvianism as a grand strategy emerged from the foreign policy vision of India's first Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, and emphasized a set of emancipatory international political principles. Nehruvianism was underpinned primarily by "liberal internationalism"[16] or the "logic" that, while the central precepts of realism hold in international politics, states can overcome the trap of anarchy and pursue peace and cooperation.[17] In other words, "as the acting subjects of world politics, [states] bear both rights and responsibilities."[18] As a result, Indian foreign policy strategy in this period included "eradicating colonialism and racism,"[19] "organizing the uplift of the world's poor and dispossessed,"[20] and, most importantly, remaining non-aligned in the world of (super) powers with self-serving interests and goals.[21] Certainly, the transformation scholarship does not hold a monolithic view of Nehruvianism,[22] nor does it conceive of a monolithic strategy. But even across its variations, consensus holds that, at its core, Nehruvianism as a grand strategy foreground notions of morality in international relations, and a strong belief in a moral leadership role for India.

Just as the transformation scholarship agrees on these key characteristics of the Nehruvian period, it shares common ground on the nature of change following the end of the Cold War, namely, that India has moved decisively away from Nehruvianism.[23] This post-Nehruvian shift, not coincidentally, has corresponded with the decline of India's historically dominant party, the Indian National Congress, and the rise of the "Hindu nationalist" Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), a party whose core philosophy appears to be centered on developing a martially and materially strong India.[24] Key evidence of this shift, according to transformation scholars, were India's 1998 nuclear tests, which appeared to reject the country's longstanding commitment to strategic restraint. India's nuclear tests came to symbolize a rejection of Nehruvian "moral posturing" and instead, a focus, in line with the BJP's Hindu nationalism, on power and material interests. India supposedly adopted a "self-help" (structural realist) approach to foreign policy[25] and shifted to an understanding of the world "in terms of a clash of interests and the pursuit of power by individual states."[26] Post-Cold War, Indian leaders were said to suddenly view the use of force as necessary in international politics, and India began to pursue rapid economic growth and great power.[27]

Taken together, the transformation scholarship and its claims of a post-Cold War shift in Indian grand strategy centers on four indicators. First, Indian strategy has shifted to *a prioritization of national interest over moral claims* in international politics.[28] Second, following from this, Indian strategy, now less doctrinaire about alliances, has shown a *shift from non-alignment to a limited embrace of alliances*.[29] Third, while Nehruvianism as a grand strategy placed great emphasis on "the coming together of weak states to resist the more powerful,"[30] post-Nehruvian strategy no longer shies away from joining the ranks of the powerful: in other words, the post-Cold War period has seen *an abandonment of coalitions of the weak South against the strong North and an embrace of great power oligarchy*.[31] Finally, Indian strategy in the post-Cold War era also aims to enhance India's status by *actively*

seeking to expand influence in international regimes and treaties, both, regionally and internationally.[32]

Using these indicators, transformation scholars seek to develop broader epistemological frames of, or "ways of knowing," India's post-Cold War grand strategy. However, they rarely evaluate bounded sets of empirical evidence, often instead identifying small changes as equivalents of claims of larger shifts in grand strategy. We also note that these scholars often shuttle between describing change, and advocating for, or implicitly commending, change. These approaches are a result of two problems in the literature.

First, policy issues are treated as binary rather than as a continuum. As a result, a policy change *within* a given policy issue is conflated with a shift in grand strategy *on* the policy issue. For example, Modi's decision to not attend the Non-Aligned Summit in Venezuela last year was seen as evidence that India was finally and publicly acknowledging the weakness of the Global South and the uselessness of the non-aligned mission, and thus, was decisively moving away from the non-aligned movement (NAM).[33] Similarly, India's establishment of a diplomatic relationship with Israel in 1992 has been touted as transformational and attributed to non-alignment being "overtaken by the collapse of the Soviet Union," while Modi's visit to Israel twenty-five years later in 2017, was pointed to as further evidence of a "ground breaking" shift.[34] Both of these policy issues were treated as binary: embracing NAM or rejecting NAM, strengthening or weakening India-Israel ties.

However, the reality is, of course, more complex because India's stances on such issues in fact lie on a continuum. Any shift in stance on a given issue plays out through a long process, and often continuity is in evidence as much as change. In the first example, setting aside even the reported practical difficulties that cropped up in the prime minister's schedule and conflicted with the NAM summit,[35] such stark conclusions ignore the complexities of continuity in strategy—the Indian Ministry of External Affairs put out careful statements

reaffirming India's support of "the collective interests of the developing world" and NAM.[36] Similarly, in the India-Israel case, aside from the ironies of a relationship being classified as transformational over twenty-five years, such a label overlooks the many factors that affected the establishment of diplomatic relations in 1992, including the lack of identity alignment, and the resulting carefully maneuvered and fragile relationship. While Modi's visit was indeed historic in that it was the first by an Indian prime minister to Israel, major differences in outlooks on key issues continue to plague and undermine the establishment of strong bilateral ties in different areas from the Middle East, to cooperation on terrorism, and the issue of Iran.[37]

This does not imply that grand strategies are static and unchanging. They can, as Mochizuki has argued, be "recalibrated."[38] Such recalibrations, however, are a result of not just changes in the international system but also of major structural breaks in domestic politics that "transcend leaders, governments, and particular election results."[39] Small shifts within any given policy area cannot be equated facilely with recalibrations of grand strategy. Rather, recalibrations of grand strategy may (although not necessarily) lead to particular selections of both, incremental change and continuity within foreign policy over long periods of time. Certainly, sustained incremental changes in policy can eventually lead to more substantial changes over time but they are rarely as abrupt as the transformation scholarship suggests.

Second, the transformation scholarship is frequently normative: in other words, it seeks to advocate as much as describe change. The 'commendation' of change in the transformation scholarship arises from a strict realist interpretation that, for any state, rational interests are constituted by material and economic factors. Ollapally and Rajagopalan, for example, blame the moralist and liberal internationalist commitments of Nehruvianism for India's "strategic missteps," since they encouraged moral posturing to be placed above the

national interest.[40] Ganguly argues that the transformations in India foreign policy after the end of the Cold War meant that "India was now finally free of the 'mind-forged manacles'. . .of Cold War thinking. Indian policymakers have now ceased berat[ing] the United States and the Western alliance over a range of real and imagined grievances."[41] Others not only advocate for India to abandon Nehruvianism as a grand strategy and emerge on the world stage as a materially powerful state in the twenty-first century[42] but also indicate palpable relief that this reframing of grand strategy is now a given, and that India will stop "disappointing itself" and rise to its deserved great power potential.[43] Thus, if a state appears to be pursuing interests defined as material capabilities, they are not only (finally) acting rationally but also Doing. The. Right. Thing. However, as has been shown, interests are often constituted by factors other than material ones, and the pursuit of such interests does not necessarily indicate irrationality.[44]

Strategic policy innovations and the introduction of new policy ideas are usually the result of a policy choice to "construct strategies of action" based on pre-existing ideas, culture and political institutions.[45] Decision-makers often engage in strategic actions that "answer political and cultural logics"—the essence of pragmatic, rational action is the construction of "bricolage" or "strategies of action based on pre-constructed ideational and political institutions."[46] Thus strategic innovation in policy which often occurs *within* policy issues (because they form a continuum, and because interests are not reducible to capabilities) cannot be equated simply with a transformational shift in grand strategy. Rather political leaders leverage "sticky" pre-existing ideational frameworks and institutions and find strategic balance between them to navigate incremental changes or keep continuities within foreign policy issues.[47]

Cases: Nuclear Non-proliferation and Climate Governance

We evaluate the extent to which the four indicators of change in India's grand strategy used by transformation scholars bear out in the cases of two regimes—nuclear non-proliferation, and climate governance centered on the UNFCCC. These cases were selected for the following reasons.

First, scholars and policy analysts, today, broadly concur that rising states such as India, China, Brazil and others will play a prominent role in the future of global governance. In 2010, Robert Zoellick, president of the World Bank, asserted in a landmark speech that the distribution of power in the international system was fundamentally changing, with economic and political power flowing east and south.[48] In this changing international system, Kahler notes, "[r]ising powers will aim to place their imprint on reconstructed global institutions and that stamp will differ markedly from a status quo supported by the incumbent powers."[49] Not only is India's role within international regimes, such as non-proliferation and climate governance, highly significant today but it is crucial to evaluate whether Indian strategy has changed in keeping with its expanding role.

Second, both nuclear non-proliferation and climate governance are central to Indian national security. While this is obvious in the first case and is widely discussed by transformation scholars, the second case is often neglected or dismissed as peripheral to security. Yet India's engagement with global climate governance, too, speaks to the broader conception of national security delineated by Bajpai *et al*. The potential challenge to India's economic and energy security posed by an international agreement to mitigate climate change is significant. India is also located in one the most climate-vulnerable parts of the world and thus, has significant interests in contributing to a meaningful international climate agreement.[50]

Third, the characterization of change in both of these regimes, and particularly non-proliferation, is often through the "fallacy" of "binary propositions" when, in fact, they each

constitute "a long process."[51] In proliferation, "states that decide to take the first step do not always take the last…simply acquiring a small stockpile of bombs is not the end of the story."[52] Similarly, India's approach to international negotiations on climate change under the UNFCCC sits within a longer history of India's foreign environmental policy. Understanding these regimes as a continuum allows us to evaluate different aspects of strategic policy innovation within each.

India's engagement with the nuclear non-proliferation regime

India's 1998 nuclear tests and their relationship to India's hard power prestige and national security have served as a focal point of claims of a major post-Cold War shift in Indian grand strategy. This is unsurprising given that India's relationship with the nuclear non-proliferation regime, centered on (but not limited to) the nuclear non-proliferation treaty (NPT), underwent major changes in the years after New Delhi tested nuclear weapons in 1998. First, India broke with decades of nuclear disarmament activism, to become a nuclear-armed state. Second, by testing five nuclear devices in May 1998, India transgressed perhaps the center-most norm of the NPT, enshrined in Article II, according to which non-nuclear weapons states—a de facto, if not a legal status held by India until 1998—agree "not to manufacture or otherwise acquire nuclear weapons or other explosive devices." Third, India shifted from a position of challenging the discriminatory character of both the NPT and a number of multilateral technology denial or regulatory regimes, to actively complying with the former, and seeking formal entry to the latter.[53] At first glance, therefore, India's relationship with the nuclear non-proliferation regime clearly bears out major shifts, in line with those identified in the transformation scholarship, including an embrace of hard power and a break with moralizing discourses of the past. However, as we proceed to show, change

has been less clear cut than we might expect, particularly in relation to the central four indicators set out in the transformation scholarship.

National interest over moral claims?

Accounts of India's nuclearization that equate nuclear weapons primarily with enhanced national security attribute the decision to go nuclear in 1998 to two structural shifts: New Delhi's increased threat perceptions in a unstable post-Cold War world and evidence of nuclear and ballistic missile development in the South Asian region. This narrative sees a succession of India's leaders leaving the nuclear option open by both developing India's nuclear infrastructure and refusing to accept external constraints on India's nuclear program. In short, "[t]he evolution of the nuclear program and the 1998 tests were the product of calculated political choices based upon considerations of national security."[54] At the same time that Indian leaders acquired an overt nuclear weapons capability, they are supposed to have embraced the prevailing logic of deterrence and abandoned moral grandstanding on the question of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, exemplified in initiatives such as Jawaharlal Nehru's attempts to press for a ban on nuclear testing in the late 1950s, the contribution of Indian diplomats to the negotiation of the PTBT in 1963, India's activism at the Eighteen Nation Disarmament Committee (1962–69), and India's proposal for the Rajiv Gandhi Action Plan for Nuclear Disarmament (RGAP) in 1988.

Two perspectives counter this portrayal of a simple shift. First, ideas about nuclear morality have long played an important role in both India's nuclear discourse and policy praxis, either in terms of the renunciation of, or restraint in wielding, nuclear technologies.[55] Unsurprisingly, such ideas did not simply disappear after May 1998. In a post-test statement delivered to the Lok Sabha, for example, Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee stressed that the tests and India's future nuclear policy would "continue to reflect a commitment to the

sensibilities and obligations of an ancient civilization, a sense of responsibility and restraint, but a restraint born of the assurance of action, not of doubts or apprehension."[56] Vajpayee not only declared that India had "no intention of engaging in a nuclear arms race",[57] but announced a moratorium on further testing. Considering the speculation both within and outside India that the May testing of a thermonuclear device was less successful than claimed by Indian scientists, this move appears surprising.[58] Rather than continue testing to prove mastery of the production of advanced nuclear weapons and to bolster his country's deterrence claims, Vajpayee announced the moratorium on testing "as proof of Indian restraint."[59] Second, even while New Delhi has conformed more closely to central non-proliferation norms in the wake of its nuclear tests, it has also continued to propose particularistic nuclear behaviors as standards of (moral) appropriateness.[60] For example, India's nuclear doctrine officially positions India as seeking only "minimum credible deterrence" through its nuclear forces. While there is ambiguity within India's conception of minimum deterrence,[61] especially in view of India's preoccupation with improving its delivery systems and operationalizing a triad of nuclear forces, India appears to have neither significantly expanded its arsenal nor—officially at least–moved away from a non-deployed posture, although this may change if or when India's first indigenously built nuclear-powered ballistic missile submarine, INS Arihant, is armed with a nuclear capable missile.[62] In other words, moral claims have persisted in India's nuclear discourse *and* practice, with efforts made by Indian leaders to structure a new moral universe, both inwardly and outwardly, around the hard facts of India's post-1998 nuclear weapons capability.

Shift from non-alignment to a limited embrace of alliances

Since 1998, India has made remarkable progress in gaining international recognition as a responsible nuclear power, and the United States has played a pivotal facilitating role in

this process. In 2005, President George W. Bush categorized India as "a responsible state with advanced nuclear technology."[63] In 2008, a waiver, granted by the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG) after the expenditure of much diplomatic energy by the United States,[64] permitted India access to international civil nuclear trade. As a result, India's nuclear weapons capability paved the way for a deeper engagement with the United States, in what some saw as the death knell to the autonomy of non-alignment,[65] and others saw as the "bridge to the entire West, to all that had been denied to India through the entire half-century of Independence."[66] Today, in part as a result of the boost that the civil nuclear agreement has lent to the bilateral relationship, the United States and India have closer trade and defense ties than they did in the early 1990s. However, India has now signed bilateral civil nuclear trading agreements with France, Russia, Mongolia, Namibia, Argentina, Canada, Japan, Kazakhstan, South Korea and Australia, presenting a picture that adheres more closely a conception of "multi-alignment."[67]

Moreover, even since deepening ties with the United States, India has continued to take a range of significant independent foreign policy decisions, such as voting against the United States (and Israel) on the question of Palestine's status in the United Nations, maintaining positive relations with Iran or with Myanmar during periods of high US tensions with these countries, and, most recently in June 2017, voting in favor of a Mauritian-led UN resolution that raises questions over the future of the Chagos islands, including Diego Garcia, a US military base stationed in the Indian Ocean and leased from Britain.[68] Certainly, New Delhi may have hewn close to US policy in many other instances, but these examples demonstrate a significant margin of freedom in Indian foreign policy decision-making, given the centrality of these issues to US interests.

Abandonment of coalitions of the weak South against the strong North and an embrace of great power oligarchy

The entry into force of the of the NPT in 1970 established a legal categorization between nuclear weapon states (NWSs) and non-nuclear weapon states (NNWSs), the latter of whom consented to relinquish their right to acquire nuclear weapons under the terms of the Treaty.[69] However, this categorization was also social. Not only did the Treaty, which was indefinitely extended in 1995 and today enjoys widespread adherence,[70] create a clear material hierarchy between nuclear possessor states and others, but as emblems of prestige, the possession of nuclear weapons conferred high social status upon the five nuclear-armed powers recognized as NWSs.[71] This status differential has come to be embedded in dominant discourses on proliferation, and formed a part of both India's opposition to the Treaty in the 1970s and 1980s, as well as a locus of solidarity with other developing states, as signaled in numerous joint statements of Non-aligned summits.

Both India and Pakistan's overt nuclearization in May 1998 unsettled the previously quite stable categorization between the NWS and the NNWS under the NPT. India's tests were "a means of asserting India's autonomy in international affairs... a means of establishing India's international status and prestige, and [a means] to enhance India's self-image."[72] Both the hard power fact of India's possession of nuclear weapons and the status implicit in India's recognition as a responsible power became institutionalized internationally. The IAEA safeguards agreement concluded with India in order to enable the 2008 NSG waiver positioned India as a de facto NWS, since its military nuclear installations—like those of the NWSs—were not subjected to international scrutiny. India has also signed and, in 2014, ratified an Additional Protocol with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). For NWS, and for India, the purpose of the Additional Protocol is to provide the IAEA with information on any nuclear cooperation with NNWS, to assist the IAEA in detecting

undeclared nuclear activities in NNWS. This further cements India's categorization as a NWS and positions it in contradistinction to a NNWS. NNWS have not missed India's "graduation" from their ranks. In 2009, the 116 members of the Group of Non- Aligned States within the NPT argued that nuclear trade should not be permitted to non-NPT signatory states, while by 2013, their position had shifted to demanding the lesser requirement of adherence to comprehensive safeguards and to the NPT as preconditions for nuclear cooperation.[73]

In effect, through testing nuclear weapons and gaining a degree of international acceptance as a nuclear-armed state *outside the NPT*, India's social positioning within the non-proliferation regime has increased, a transition that is all the more conspicuous when one compares the positioning of India's nuclear rival, Pakistan, which also conducted nuclear tests in May 1998. What this means, however, is that a clear gulf has opened up between India and the NNWS. Even as India has forged closer ties through civil nuclear trade with the countries listed above, other states have found it hard to forgive India's "nuclear betrayal," for example, Mexico.[74]

Overall, India does therefore appear to have abandoned the Global South and embraced oligarchy, even if much of India's nuclear discourse and some of its policy praxis seeks to project alternative social roles, that is, to present "fresh ideas that may serve to challenge or disrupt underlying assumptions and biases in nuclear analysis and policymaking," such as "an official moratorium on testing despite being outside the CTBT, and a generally well-regarded non-proliferation record despite being outside the NPT."[75]

Seeking influence through international regimes and treaties?

In the wake of the 1998 tests, successive Indian leaderships have expended much energy in developing a constructive working relationship with the non-proliferation regime, and are today broadly in compliance with its key normative pillars.[76] As a result, India has secured status, institutional recognition and material advantages. In stark contrast to India's low status in the three decades after its 1974 test, India has gained widespread, though not universal, acceptance as a nuclear state in abidance with key global non-proliferation norms. Despite India's achievement of limited recognition as a nuclear responsible, India is not a shaper of norms within the non-proliferation regime. India remains formally outside the NPT and there is no clear prospect for its inclusion within, or its accession to, the Treaty. NPT aside, India has been active in its quest for membership in four multilateral regimes linked to the non-proliferation regime—the NSG, the Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR), the Wassenaar Arrangement, and the Australia Group—all of which offer more equal membership terms and decision-making by consensus. These efforts demonstrate that India is indeed seeking an institutionalized place and insider status within the global nuclear order, however for the foreseeable future, these efforts will not include accession to the NPT.[77]

India's engagement with global climate governance

Global climate governance is also a case in we might not immediately anticipate continuity in Indian grand strategy, given that the regime architecture that has come to underpin climate change negotiations was only in a nascent form by the end of the Cold War. It was only with the establishment of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in 1992, that an international treaty was established that aimed at the "stabilization of greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere at a level that would prevent dangerous anthropogenic interference with the climate system."[78] However, India's stance today can be traced to the UN Conference on the Human Environment, convened in

Stockholm, Sweden in June 1972, the first major international conference on environmental issues which paved the way for meaningful international cooperation on the environment.[79]

In her address to the Stockholm plenary on June 14, 1972, Prime Minister Indira Gandhi framed environmental degradation in a manner that distinguished clearly between the national interests and historical legacies of industrialized and developing countries. Her address set the general tone for India's future environmental policy positions, underpinning India's "environmental policy orthodoxy."[80] Resonating with much of the Nehruvian template of Indian grand strategy outlined above, Indira Gandhi's enunciation of interests and preferences included the primacy of socio-economic development over environmental protection for developing nations, the defense of national sovereignty, and equity in terms of industrialized nations both owning the historical responsibility for environmental damage, and taking on a greater burden in ameliorating environmental degradation because of their increased capacity to do so. This approach to foreign environmental policy has accompanied Indian leaders and negotiators into the next decades, though bargaining stances achieved greater sophistication as awareness of the political and economic implications of key environmental policy pathways developed.

The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change was signed by 154 countries, including India, at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), also known as Rio Earth Summit, in 1992. The twin commitments of safeguarding access to sufficient energy to meet India's developmental needs and seeking equity through demands that developed countries take responsibility for their historical emissions and help to carry the costs of mitigation in line with their relatively higher capacities were at the root of the India's negotiating position on the treaty. One commentator of the time described how from an Indian viewpoint "the success of the Rio Conference lay in

affirming the right to development, appreciating national sovereignty over a country's resources... and calling on the developed countries to come forward with more liberal financial assistance to the developing ones."[81] The chief Indian delegate, Chandrashekhar Dasgupta, expressed his approval that "in all areas there is 'differentiation' between developed and developing countries."[82] Although there have been some changes in India's negotiating approach within climate change negotiations since the early 1990s—mostly in style and in terms of whom India sees as like-minded countries—today, India remains wedded to Principle 7 of the 1992 Rio Declaration, whose central thrust can be summarized as a commitment to "common but differentiated responsibility and respective capabilities (CBDRRC)."[83]

National interest over moral claims?

As Dubash notes, "[t]he Indian government has long viewed CBDRRC as essential to operationalizing notions of equity in the climate regime and thereby safeguarding development."[84] This stance is embedded in a longstanding moral discourse: an anti-colonial and anti-imperial critique was clear in Indira Gandhi's speech at Stockholm in 1972, in which she argued that "[m]any of the advanced countries of today have reached their present affluence by their domination over other races and countries, the exploitation of their own masses and their own natural resources."[85] A continuation of this position was in evidence at the Rio Summit in 1992, when Dasgupta framed the Indian stance on climate change in terms of historical responsibility, arguing that "developed countries with high per capita emission levels of greenhouse gases are responsible for incremental global warming" and that "those responsible for environmental degradation should also be responsible for taking corrective measures."[86]

India's 'core moral claim… that any international outcomes should not jeopardize its development prospects'[87] remains at the heart of the Indian negotiating position today because it directly *serves* India's national interest. As Dubash argues, "India's emphasis on equity stems from a real concern that its development transformation will be curtailed by limited access to cheap energy."[88] For this reason, the Indian political establishment has fiercely guarded India's development space. Any global agreement to undertake emissions reductions will necessarily impact upon patterns of energy consumption for all nations, especially within vital sectors of national economies.[89] However, India faces particular socio-economic challenges, including a vast rural poor who are 'dependent directly on climate-sensitive natural resources that heighten the need for retaining access to low-cost energy.'[90] In addition, significant structural features of the Indian economy and energy sectors, such as the dominant place of coal in India's energy portfolio and the regulatory challenges posed by the huge scale of India's informal economy, pose significant roadblocks to making meaningful emissions reductions.[91]

At the same time, South Asia is ranked as one of the most vulnerable regions to the effects of climate change.[92] As Rajamani summarizes,

> Even a small change in temperature could have a significant impact on the Indian monsoon, resulting in up to 25% lower agricultural yield. A 2–3.5-degree centigrade temperature increase could cause as much as 0.67% GNP loss, and a 100-centimetre increase in sea level could cause 0.37% GNP loss. A quarter of the Indian economy is dependent on agriculture, and any impact on this sector will fundamentally impair India's ability to meet its development goals.[93]

For these reasons, the inability of the international community to tackle climate change increasingly presents real threats to India's national interest. Moreover, the global economic crisis of the late 2000s somewhat reduced the expectation that the Global North would take significant measures to assist countries of the global South in their mitigation and adaptation strategies, at the same time as India's status as a developing country in the context of the negotiations raised questions about the appropriate level of commitment from India and other large, emerging economies. Over all, this shifting global political and economic landscape has required a greater willingness to cooperate on the part of India, a requirement met in part through India's signing of the 2015 Paris Agreement, which entered into force in November 2016. Crucially, however, India's moral position on differentiation persists, because it continues to serve India's most central national imperatives of retaining development space. For this reason, the Modi government was at pains to point out that the 2015 Paris Agreement, "also explicitly recognizes that the principles of equity and Common But Differentiated Responsibilities and respective capabilities, in the light of different national circumstances will be respected."[94]

Shift from non-alignment to a limited embrace of alliances?

The major geopolitical fault line on environmental issues, including global climate governance, has traditionally been that between the Global North and the Global South. We do not find evidence of a shift to an embrace of "alliances" as understood in the transformation scholarship except in the sense of India moving towards seeking common purpose with other larger, emerging economies, and, to an extent away from the G77, as we set out below.

Abandonment of coalitions of the weak South against the strong North and an embrace of great power oligarchy?

The platform afforded by the Stockholm Conference in 1972 placed India in the international spotlight on environmental issues. Indira Gandhi's defensive, principled and development-prioritizing stance, according to one observer, "eloquently expressed the position of the Third World countries."[95] In the decades after Stockholm, India's foreign environmental policy continued to reflect a number of concerns felt by other developing countries. Against the backdrop of the struggle for a New International Economic Order, India played a key role in the coordination and articulation of the Global South's response in global environmental negotiations.[96] Moreover, India's baseline stance on the Climate Change Convention in 1992 was shared by other developing countries.[97] Oppositional consensus-building among Southern countries, comprising the G77 and China, proved successful on a number of issues pertaining to financial assistance and technology transfer, as well as the need for commitments made by developing countries to be conditional on these two mechanisms.[98]

While by no means monolithic, India's solidarity with the global South in the form of seeking common cause with the G77 has remained to some extent foregrounded in India's negotiating stance. In 2015, for example, the Indian government declared that through the Paris Agreement "India has been able to secure its interest and that of the developing countries."[99] However, in reality, preparations for the earlier 2009 Copenhagen Summit saw the beginnings of a shift from North-South polarization to broader forms of collaboration on the part of India. A new negotiating bloc emerged, together with China, India, South Africa and Brazil – the so-called BASIC countries, whose growing economies, and hence emissions, mean that they matter for climate politics. While India's interests have, in part, moved away

from a fully shared position with the G77 and Global South, nonetheless, it retains the overriding objective of a climate regime underpinned by differentiated responsibility.

Seeking influence through international regimes and treaties?

Since 2009, Indian leaders have sought ways to shape the international agenda rather than simply resist it, in line with longstanding domestic and principled commitments to prioritizing development before environmental protection.

With Jairam Ramesh's assumption of office in the Ministry of Environment and Forests in May 2009, Indian stances on climate change mitigation began to shift away from the orthodox, principled and defensive position, as became apparent at international conferences in 2009. At the G8-G5 summit in L'Aquila in July 2009, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh expressed a willingness to abide by a two degrees Celsius cap on the rise in global temperatures and returned home to a barrage of domestic critique, amidst fears that such a ceiling could have a disadvantageous impact on India's future growth.[100] Subsequently, in a private letter to the Prime Minister, airing his views on India's stance within climate change negotiations, Ramesh suggested a number of revolutionary measures that included undertaking voluntary cuts in emissions and subjecting these to international verification, without any guarantee of finances and technology, in addition to delinking India's stance from that of the G77.[101] He stressed that India's present approach was "disfavored by the developed countries" and would be damaging to "India's aspirations for permanent membership of the Security Council."[102] The letter was leaked to the media and caused a public uproar that forced him to retract it. Nonetheless, at the penultimate negotiating session prior to the Copenhagen Conference, held in Bangkok in October 2009, Ramesh revealed plans to put in place domestic legislation that would set targets for India's

greenhouse emissions.[103] These plans also met with strong resistance from opposition parties in India.[104]

By questioning the per capita stance, Ramesh was suggesting that India adopt a path of development that differed from that pursued by developed countries. His proposed approach represented the second deviation from India's traditional stance: voluntary domestic legislation to reduce India's emission intensity from 20-25 percent by 2020 from the 2005 level. This would be achieved by implementing a number of emissions reducing strategies and moving India towards low-carbon growth.

On the whole, this more positive and constructive approach has continued—India has positioned itself "(differently) from past negotiation patterns and (in turn has) received recognition and appreciation."[105] Overall we see a shift from a defensive to a constructive position but the baseline negotiating stance has not changed, and India has always sought leadership in one way or another, whether it be leadership of the G77 or, today, an approach that bridges competing positions.

Conclusion

We find, by examining two cases of international regimes, that the transformation literature's emphasis on a major shift in Indian grand strategy is problematic. By treating policy issues as binary rather than as operating on a continuum, and by attributing the rational pursuit of interests to material capabilities, this body of scholarship equates strategic policy innovation with change in grand strategy. Rather than stark shifts or even continuity in grand strategy what we find is complex: strategic incremental change as well as continuity *within* policy continuums because they answer "political and cultural logics." Both cases are strongly tied to identities and world views that are slow to change, for example, India as a

restrained and moral steward of nuclear technologies, and India as resistant to calls from the industrialized powers to carry the burdens of addressing environmental degradation.

Both cases reveal important challenges to the claims of the transformation scholarship. Had India truly transformed along the four indicators, we would have seen quite distinctive behaviors. For example, India would have dropped its moralizing stance on both non-proliferation and on climate change: it could have pushed for more than a minimal credible deterrence and continued testing to verify thermonuclear yields, and expanded its arsenal. However, arguably, this would have harmed the national interest, since it is unlikely that India would have gone to receive recognition as a responsible nuclear power and been granted civil nuclear trading rights in the absence of these initiatives.[106] Or on climate change, India could have dropped the moral rhetoric, as China has done,[107] but would arguably have been unable to support its argument for differentiation in the same way.

Treating policy issues as a continuum teaches us that Indian grand strategy—as the "logic" that connects its various policies—is in a state of flux because any given issue often has elements of both continuity and change. Thus, dichotomous characterizations of Indian grand strategy strategies as either Nehruvian or post-Nehruvian power politics are misleading. Moreover, the normative nature of the transformation scholarship advocates for deliberate change in grand strategy to focus on material interests, underlining a traditional assumption that "success in foreign policy" comes from deliberately "delineating the elements of a grand strategy" and prioritizing (material) interests and threats.[108] However, as Popescu's work shows, it may be more useful to think of successful strategy as an emergent learning process which recognizes patterns and accordingly, adapts to outcomes.[109] As our cases show, a fixed grand strategy that followed the indicators of the transformation scholarship rather than adapting to the fluid nature of world politics as well as domestic political and cultural logics would have resulted in less flexibility in Indian foreign policy.

This opens up an avenue for further research on how India's grand strategy may develop a new "logic" as it rises to be a great power.

[1] The authors are grateful to Devesh Kapur and two anonymous reviewers for their feedback and suggestions on this article.
[2] Kanti Bajpai, Saira Basit and V. Krishnappa, "Introduction," in: Kanti Bajpai, Saira Basit, V. Krishnappa ed. *India's Grand Strategy: History, Theory, Cases* (New Delhi: Routledge, 2014), 17, 20.
[3] Arvind Gupta and Sven G. Holtsmark, "Foreword," in: Bajpai, Basit, and Krishnappa (eds), *India's Grand Strategy*, ix.
[4] For summary overviews, see: Kanti Bajpai, "Narendra Modi's Pakistan and China Policy: Assertive Bilateral Diplomacy, Active Coalition Diplomacy," *International Affairs*, Vol. 93 No. 1, 2017, 70-71; Bajpai, Basit and Krishnappa,"Introduction".
[5] Centered on the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).
[6] Bajpai, Basit and Krishnappa, "Introduction," 1.
[7] The concentric circles pertain to relations with great powers, relations with the wider neighborhood (i.e. China), and relations with the immediate neighborhood. C. Raja Mohan, "Poised for Power: The Domestic Roots of India's Slow Rise," in Ashley Tellis ed. *Strategic Asia 2007-08*, National Bureau of Asian Research, 2007.
[8]See B.H. Lidell Hart, *Strategy* (Praeger1954); Andre Beaufre, *Introduction to Strategy* (Praeger 1965).
[9] See for example Avery Goldstein, *Rising to the Challenge: China's Grand Strategy and International Security* (Stanford University Press 2005); Barry Posen and Andrew Ross, "Competing Visions for US Grand Strategy," *International Security* Vol. 21 No. 3, 1996/97, 5-53; Richard Rosecrance and Arthur Stein ed. *The Domestic Bases of Grand Strategy* (Cornell University Press 1993).
[10] Goldstein, *Rising to the Challenge*, 18-19.
[11] Bajpai, Basit and Krishnappa, "Introduction," 8.
[12] Kanti Bajpai, "Narendra Modi's Pakistan and China Policy: Assertive Bilateral Diplomacy, Active Coalition Diplomacy," *International* Affairs, Vol. 93 No. 1 (2017), 70, 71.
[13] See, for example: C. Raja Mohan, *Crossing the Rubicon: The Shaping of India's New Foreign Policy* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003); Sumit Ganguly, "India's Foreign Policy Grows Up," *World Policy Journal* Vol. 20 No. 4, Winter 2003–04, 42; Deepa Ollapally and Rajesh Rajagopalan, "The Pragmatic Challenge to Indian Foreign Policy," *Washington Quarterly* Vol. 34 No. 2, 2011, 145-62; Deepa M. Ollapally and Rajesh Rajagopalan, "India: Foreign Policy Perspectives of an Ambiguous Power," in Henry R. Nau and Deepa M. Ollapally (ed.) *Worldviews of Aspiring Powers: Domestic Foreign Policy Debates in China, India, Iran, Japan, and Russia*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), pp. 73-113; N. S. Sisodia, "Economic Modernisation and the Growing Influence of Neoliberalism in India's Strategic Thought," in: Bajpai, Basit, and Krishnappa ed. *India's Grand Strategy*, 176-199; Harsh V. Pant, "A Rising India's Search for a Foreign Policy," *Orbis*, Vol. 53 No. 2, 2009, 250-264.
[14] Ideology and strategy have often been conflated in studies of Indian foreign policy. Thus Nehruvianism and post-Nehruvianism have been referred to as both. There is also a smaller and older body of scholars who have insisted that India completely lacks a grand strategy (see George Tanham, "Indian Strategic Thought: An Interpretive Essay" in Kanti Bajpai and Amitabh Mattoo ed. *Securing India: Strategic Thought and Practice* (New Delhi: Manohar 1996). This, has however, been countered in more recent years (see Rahul Sagar, "State of Mind: What Kind of Power Will India Become?" *International Affairs* Vol. 85 No. 4, 2009).
[15] Pratap Bhanu Mehta, "A New Foreign Policy?" *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 38 No. 30, 2003, 3173.
[16] Stephen P. Cohen, *India: Emerging Power* (Washington DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2001), 38.
[17] Kanti Bajpai, "Indian Conceptions of Order and Justice: Nehruvian, Gandhian, Hindutva and Neoliberal," in Rosemary Foot, John Gaddis, and Andrew Hurrell ed. *Order and Justice in International Relations* (Oxford UK: Oxford University Press 2003), 240.
[18] Ibid.
[19] James Chiriyankandath, "Realigning India: Indian Foreign Policy After the Cold War," *Round Table: The Commonwealth Journal of International Affairs* 93(374), 2004, 200.
[20] Ganguly, "India's Foreign Policy," 42.

[21] Cohen, *India*, 40.
[22] Cohen, for example, makes a distinction between Nehruvianism and militant Nehruvianism (*India*, 41–3).
[23] Although Nehru himself passed away in 1974, the concepts of Nehruvianism were seen to survive well into the 1990s. A post-Cold War attempt by parts of the intellectual elite in India to deliberate and offer a revised grand strategy called it "Non-alignment 2.0," acknowledging the enduring hold of the one of the key principles of Nehruvianism (Sunil Khilnani *et al* ed., *Non-Alignment 2.0: A Foreign and Strategic Policy for India in the Twenty First Century*, Centre for Policy Research, 2012). One reason for this could be that Nehru's personal charisma as well as power as both prime minister and foreign minister combined with the dominance of the Congress party to ensure the institutionalization of these ideas for decades.
[24] Rahul Sagar, "Jiski Lathi, Uski Bhains: the Hindu Nationalist View of International Politics," in Kanti Bajpai, Saira Basit and V. Krishnappa, ed. *India's Grand Strategy*, 234–57.
[25] Sumit Ganguly and Manjeet S. Pardesi, "Explaining Sixty Years of India's Foreign Policy," *India Review* Vol. 8 No.1, 2009, 4.
[26] Mohan, *Crossing the Rubicon*, xxi.
[27] Ganguly, "India's Foreign Policy," 47, 42.
[28] Mehta, "A New Foreign Policy?," 3173.
[29] Sumit Ganguly, "India After Non-Alignment," *Foreign Affairs*, 2016.
[30] Bajpai, "Indian Conceptions of Order and Justice," 242.
[31] Mohan, *Crossing the Rubicon*; Sumit Ganguly, "Has Modi Truly Changed India's Foreign Policy?," *The Washington Quarterly* Vol. 40 No. 2, 2017, 131-143.
[32] Ollapally and Rajagopalan, "The Pragmatic Challenge," 149–51; C. Raja Mohan, "India and the Balance of Power," *Foreign Affairs*, 2006.
[33] Ganguly, "India After Non-Alignment,"
[34] Sadanand Dhume, "India Gives Israel a Firm Embrace," *The Wall Street Journal*, July 7, 2017.
[35] Kate Sullivan de Estrada and Patrick Quinton-Brown, "The Myth of India's Non-Aligned Boycott," *The Diplomat*. November 23, 2016.
[36] Sullivan de Estrada and Quinton-Brown, "The Myth."
[37] Michal Ben-Josef Hirsch and Manjari Chatterjee Miller, "How Identity Issues Keep India and Israel Apart," *Foreign Affairs*, July 2017.
[38] Mike M. Mochizuki, "Japan's Long Transition: The Politics of Recalibrating Grand Strategy," in Ashley Tellis ed. *Strategic Asia*, 69-111.
[39] Mochizuki's work shows transformations in three crucial elements of a domestic regime—institutions, societal elements, and a public policy profile—can lead to recalibrations of grand strategy ("Japan's Long Transition," 73). Layne's work shows how the international system can affect grand strategy (Christopher Layne, *Peace of Illusions: American Grand Strategy from 1940 to the Present* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press 2007).
[40] Ollapally and Rajgopalan, "The Pragmatic Challenge," 149–50.
[41] Ganguly, "India's Foreign Policy," 42.
[42] Mohan, *Crossing the Rubicon*, 268.
[43] Mohan, "India and the Balance of Power."
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[48] Robert H. Wade, "Emerging World Order: From Multipolarity in the G20, the World Bank and the IMF," *Politics and Society* Vol. 39 No. 3, 348.
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[53] Kate Sullivan, "Is India a Responsible Nuclear Power?" Policy Report, S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, 2014.

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[61] Rajesh Basrur, *Minimum Deterrence and India's Nuclear Security* (Singapore: NUS Press 2009), 53.
[62] Our thanks to an anonymous reviewer for making this point.
[63] "Joint Statement by President George W. Bush and Prime Minister Manmohan Singh," July 18, 2005, Washington, D.C.
[64] Anupam Srivastava, NSG Waiver, *Pacnet* #46, September 8, 2008.
[65] Kate Helen Sullivan, "Discourses on the Nuclear Deal: Persistence of Independence," *Economic and Political Weekly* Vol. XLIII No. 3, 2008, 73-76.
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[67] Ian Hall, "Multialignment and Indian Foreign Policy Under Narendra Modi," *The Round Table*, Vol. 105 No. 3, 2016, 271-286.
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