Federalism is a hot topic (so to speak) for scholars working on climate change, but we have so far remained resolutely at home, focusing solely on *American* federalism. It's now time to start thinking about how federalism might impact India, which has maintained a federal system for more than 60 years, and has decentralized greatly in recent years.

How might we do this? Here's a hypothesis:

Scholars of India's response to globalization have long recognized that federalism might advance a global liberal agenda because of the differing comparative and absolute advantages of Indian states. For example, Karnataka, the center of India's technology and software industries, will tend to support more liberalizing policies than backward, corrupt, and largely agricultural Uttar Pradesh. And this gets translated into national policy, as state governments and regional parties use their political muscle to effect changes at the national level.

We can translate this into the climate area by observing that climate mitigation and adaptation policies will have very different effects in different regions, and — importantly — these policies might contain significant comparative economic advantages for different states. Too much of the climate discourse has focused on the regulations and taxes that will be necessary to combat climate change. But of course there are important growth opportunities there as well.

For example, the Deccan plain in the heart of the country gets consistent sunshine all year with the exception of the monsoon. That means that policies that favor solar energy might present an opportunity for those states. Now, this doesn't always work: it's not like North Dakotans are excited about Waxman-Markey because their whole state can be turned into a wind farm (although they probably should be). The endowment effect is playing its role, and they are more concerned about giving agriculture a sweetheart deal.

But if we drill down into the economic potential of climate policy apart from particular subsidies (which really in some cases amount to buying off key constituencies), we may be able to put together a political economy strategy that will work for India. Adaptation technologies, for example, might be better produced or developed in some geographic areas than others. I'd be willing to bet, however, that those areas have no idea who they are. It's up to scholars to start letting them know.

India will not enact anything like national climate legislation any time soon. The task, as always, is to build it up by stages (and hope that we have enough time to do so!). Using the political economy of federalism is a potentially fruitful way to develop the emerging domestic constituencies to bend the Indian emissions curve.