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## Global warnings

The Copenhagen protocol will not succeed unless China and India sign up, but bribing these nations to take part is counterproductive

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**Björn Lomborg**

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This December, global leaders will meet in [Copenhagen](#) to negotiate a new [climate change](#) pact to reduce [carbon emissions](#). Yet, the way that it has been set up, it will inevitably fail. The best hope is that we use this lesson finally to deal with this issue in a smarter fashion.

The United States has made it clear that developing countries must sign up to substantial reductions in carbon emissions in Copenhagen. Developing nations – especially [China](#) and [India](#) – will be the main greenhouse gas emitters of the 21st century – but were exempted from the Kyoto protocol because they emitted so little during the west's industrialisation period. Europe, too, has grudgingly accepted that without developing nations' participation, rich nations' cuts will have little impact.

Some would have us believe that getting China and India on board will be easy. According to former US vice president [Al Gore](#), developing countries that were once reluctant to join in the first phases of a global response to the climate crisis have themselves now become leaders in demanding action and in taking bold steps on their own initiatives.

But Gore's fellow Nobel laureate, Rajendra Pachauri, the chair of the United Nations' [Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change](#), is not so sure. He recently told an Indian audience, "of course, the developing countries will be exempted from any such restrictions, but the developed countries will certainly have to cut down on emissions".

It is likely that Pachauri is right and Gore is wrong: neither China nor India will commit to significant cuts without a massive payoff.

Their reasons are entirely understandable. The biggest factor is the massive cost and the tiny reward. Reducing emissions is the only response to climate change that environmental campaigners talk about, despite the fact that repeated attempts to do so – in Rio in 1992 and in Kyoto in 1997 – failed to make a dent in emission levels.

Some believe that past agreements did not go far enough, but Kyoto actually turned out to be overly ambitious. Ninety-five per cent of its envisioned cuts never happened. Yet, even if Kyoto were fully implemented throughout this century, it would reduce temperatures by an insignificant 0.3F (0.2C), at an annual cost of \$180bn.

China and India are enjoying swift growth that is helping millions of people lift themselves out of poverty. India's external affairs [Minister Pranab Mukherjee](#) recently said, "India is very concerned about climate change, but we have to see the issue in the perspective of our imperative to remove poverty so that all Indians can live a life of dignity."

And Chinese premier [Wen Jiabao](#) recently said, "it's difficult for China to take quantified emission reduction quotas at the Copenhagen conference, because this country is still at an early stage of development. Europe started its industrialisation several hundred years ago, but for China, it has only been dozens of years."

Some environmental campaigners argue that, given the effects of global warming, every nation must act. But if one takes a closer look at China, this argument disintegrates.

Climate models show that for at least the rest of this century, China will actually benefit from global warming. Warmer temperatures will boost agricultural production and improve health. The number

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of lives lost in heatwaves will increase, but the number of deaths saved in winter will grow much more rapidly: warming will have a more dramatic effect on minimum temperatures in winter than on maximum temperatures in summer.

There are few arguments for China and India to commit to carbon caps – and compelling reasons for them to resist pressure to do so.

Kyoto's successor will not be successful unless China and India are somehow included. To achieve that, the EU has made the inevitable, almost ridiculous, proposal of bribing developing nations to take part – at a cost of £175bn annually by 2020.

In the midst of a financial crisis, it seems unbelievable that European citizens will bear the financial burden of paying off China and India. The sadder thing, though, is that this money would be spent on methane collection from waste dumps in developing nations, instead of on helping those countries' citizens deal with more pressing concerns like health and education.

There is an alternative to spending so much to achieve so little. Cutting carbon still costs a lot more than the good that it produces. We need to make emission cuts much cheaper so that countries like China and India can afford to help the environment. This means that we need to invest much more in research and development aimed at developing low-carbon energy.

If every country committed to spending 0.05% of its GDP exploring non-carbon-emitting energy technologies, this would translate into \$25bn per year, or 10 times more than what the world spends now. Yet, the total also would be seven times cheaper than the Kyoto protocol, and many times cheaper than the Copenhagen protocol is likely to be. It would ensure that richer nations pay more, taking much of the political heat from the debate.

Decades of talks have failed to make any impact on carbon emissions. Expecting China and India to make massive emission cuts for little benefit puts the Copenhagen meeting on a sure path to being another lost opportunity. Yet, at the same time, the Chinese and Indian challenge could be the impetus we need to change direction, end our obsession with reducing emissions, and focus instead on research and development, which would be smarter and cheaper – and would actually make a difference.

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