

SUMMARY

The Global Warming Prevention Framework Agreement and International Relations among Australia, China and Japan

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The Kyoto Protocol continues to provide a binding framework for global warming prevention. However, it will be supplanted by the Paris Agreement in 2020. Unlike the Kyoto Protocol, where only developed countries take responsibility for reductions in greenhouse gas emissions, the Paris Agreement involves all countries who have signed the accord. Following the Paris Agreement, it has been agreed that global warming will be kept within a 2°C increase from pre-industrial levels.

In this paper, the implications of this policy reform on Japan, China and Australia are discussed. Utilizing the “Clean Development Mechanism” (CDM) in the Kyoto Protocol, many Japanese firms have used foreign direct investments (FDI) to conduct reforestation in areas outside Japan in order to offset emissions produced by Japan. Although this mechanism might be weakened by the Paris Agreement, the contribution to reforestation by Japanese firms using FDIs have not always been significant as they were oriented towards business interests rather than environmental goals. Most of these FDIs were carried out by electrical power companies, trading firms, paper manufacturing companies and companies using paper. In addition, the newly planted trees tended to be cut down every 7 years for chip pulp used in paper production which was then exported by Japanese firms. Trees can only effectively absorb CO₂ when they are grown for longer terms. Therefore, these Japanese FDI projects can be viewed with suspicion in regards to reducing CO₂ emissions.

In addition, the expected shift from nuclear power to thermal power in Japan following the 2011 Fukushima Disaster will likely mean uranium imports from Australia will shrink in favor of coal. This will not only impact the Australian economy but may also have negative effects on Japan’s attempts to decrease greenhouse gas emissions.

Both Japan and Australia had failed to ratify the Paris agreement before its implementation although they signed it afterwards. This has substantially weakened their negotiation powers with regards to climate change. However, Chinese leadership on climate change has continued to strengthen, particularly after President Donald Trump announced the USA’s withdrawal from the Paris Agreement and TPP and the EU’s instability following Brexit.