

Focus: Current Status and Challenges of Climate Change Response (Summary)

Essay: The Current State and Challenges of Climate Change Responses

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Global warming and the consequent climate change are becoming increasingly severe. The international community has addressed climate change by concluding multiple international treaties, as a result of which the rise in global greenhouse gas emissions has begun to slow. To sufficiently mitigate the worsening impacts of climate change, however, global carbon dioxide emissions must be reduced to net zero by 2050, and there is currently no prospect of achieving this goal. As progress in negotiations among nations has stalled in recent years, initiatives by non-state actors such as companies and local governments have grown in importance. Although the political priority of climate change has declined due to instability in international politics, decarbonization efforts by non-state actors have not ceased. It is vital that climate change policy be discussed with the understanding that fostering domestic industries capable of rapidly developing renewable energy and other decarbonization technologies contributes to energy security, economic security and ultimately national security.

1 The Past, Present, and Future of US Climate Policy:

The Second Trump Administration's Anti-Decarbonization Policies and Their Prospects

Takahiro Ueno (R&D Manager, Security and Sustainability, and Senior Researcher, Socio-Economic Research Center, Central Research Institute of Electric Power Industry)

US climate change policies have varied by administration, alternating between Democratic administrations' emphasis on participating in international treaties and advancing domestic policies, and Republican administrations' tendency to move in the opposite direction. However, some legislative developments have been independent of the president's party affiliation: laws that partially contribute to reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions have been enacted with bipartisan support in Congress during Republican administrations, while bills imposing broad policy costs on energy use and GHG emissions have failed during Democratic administrations. Furthermore, US Supreme Court rulings have influenced administrations' regulation of GHG emissions. The second Donald Trump administration, which took office in 2025, significantly scaled back the decarbonization tax credits in the Inflation Reduction Act—which the previous Biden administration had enacted with Democratic support alone—and revoked the Obama-era “endangerment finding” that had served as the basis for emissions regulations. Internationally, it withdrew once again from the Paris Agreement and opted to withdraw from the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) to which the first Trump administration had remained a party. Future Supreme Court rulings will likely determine whether these second-term moves by Trump hinder subsequent administrations from rebuilding regulations or rejoining international treaties.

2 The Transformation of China's Engagement in the International Climate Change Regime: Strategic Realignment Amid US-China Tensions

Fang-ting Cheng (Research Fellow, Inter-Disciplinary Studies Center, Institute of Developing Economies, Japan External Trade Organization)

This paper aims to reexamine the transformation of China's engagement with the international climate change regime within the context of structural changes in the international environment brought about by the escalating US-China rivalry. Historically, China has participated in negotiations from the perspective of a developing country based on the principle of "common but differentiated responsibilities". As a major emitter, China has taken an active part in shaping international institutions since the Paris Agreement, but the intensification of US-China strategic competition and the rise of economic security concerns have narrowed the scope for climate cooperation in recent years. At the same time, China is advancing the development of its own institutional frameworks through collaboration with the Global South and South-South cooperation even while strengthening its own industrial advantages in renewable energy, electric vehicles, hydrogen and other sectors. These moves should not be viewed merely as a retreat from international cooperation, but rather as a reorganization of engagement in which competition and cooperation coexist. This paper provides an integrated analysis of trends in multilateral and bilateral climate-related institutional development at the international level and the implementation of domestic low-carbon and decarbonization policies, elucidating how China's climate change policies are strategically deployed in a confrontational environment. It then discusses the implications of these developments for the future of an increasingly fragmented international climate regime.

3 Latin American Climate Politics After COP30:

Can the Implementation Loops for Forests and Adaptation Drive Mitigation?

Shuichi Masukata (Associate Professor, Department of Political Science, Faculty of Law, Keio University)

This article treats COP30 not as the endpoint of consensus-building, but as a focal event in which "obstruction" (delay, dilution, and regression) and "counteraction" (institutionalization, social coalitions, and bargaining leverage) are simultaneously made visible. It asks whether the financial, institutional, and participatory frameworks formed around forests and adaptation, conceptualized here as "implementation loops," can spill over into the process management of transitions away from fossil fuel, or whether they instead function as a form of neutralization that justifies postponing mitigation.

By comparing Brazil, Chile, Colombia, and Venezuela from 2021 to 2026, the article shows that Brazil has made progress in forestry and climate finance, while resource interests remain closely connected to obstruction in the mitigation domain, resulting in competition between spillover and neutralization. Chile is characterized by a predominance of spillover through institutionalization and financial mechanisms; Colombia exhibits conditional spillover insofar as fiscal and security constraints can be alleviated; and Venezuela is dominated by exogenous constraints, making neutralization predominant.

The article concludes that the key to sustaining the multilateral climate regime lies in whether robust implementation loops established in areas where consensus is relatively attainable can be linked to domestic institutions and repurposed for managing mitigation processes.

4 Manifestations of Climate Change in Africa

Kazuyo Hanai (Project Assistant Professor, Institute for Future Initiatives [IFI], The University of Tokyo)

Focusing primarily on sub-Saharan Africa, this paper provides an overview of the impacts of climate change—including rising temperatures, changes in precipitation, and extreme events such as droughts

and floods—on the broader socioeconomic landscape and people’s livelihoods. Building on this, it discusses the effects of climate change on conflict based on a review of existing research. Agriculture in semi-arid regions, which relies on rain-fed farming and traditional knowledge, is particularly exposed and vulnerable to climate-related hazards. Widespread impacts such as food and water scarcity can lead to conflict risks by weakening states and societies, intensifying conflicts between farmers and pastoralists over land and water resources or causing land-related tensions due to migration. Both quantitative research and case studies raise concerns that climate change can act as a “risk multiplier” for conflict. This indicates the need, from the perspective of conflict prevention, not only to implement climate change mitigation and adaptation measures but also to adopt policies that improve socioeconomic vulnerability and strengthen conflict resolution systems.^{and}

5 An Evaluation of the ICJ’s Advisory Opinion on Climate Change

Tomoaki Nishimura (Professor, College of International Relations, Graduate School of International Relations, Ritsumeikan University)

This paper analyzes the content and significance of the advisory opinion on obligations of States in respect of climate change rendered by the International Court of Justice (ICJ) on 23 July 2025, taking into account the views of participating States and organizations as well as the separate opinions and declarations of several judges. The ICJ comprehensively examined States’ obligations concerning climate change not only under climate-related treaties but also under international law as a whole, including customary international law, human rights law, and the law of the sea, thereby confirming the applicability of due diligence and obligations of co-operation. The ICJ also clarified the legal nature of “Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs)” under the Paris Agreement and the interpretation of the “1.5°C target,” demonstrating that the discretion of the parties is subject to certain legal constraints. Furthermore, it recognized that breaches of these obligations may give rise to State responsibility and acknowledged their character as obligations *erga omnes*. This advisory opinion is of considerable significance in that it contributes to the systematization of climate change law and provides a legal foundation for international negotiations and domestic and international climate change litigation.