TWENTY-SIXTH AUSTRALIA-JAPAN RELATIONS ESSAY CONTEST 2008

Monika Holmwood

GLOBAL WARMING: AUSTRALIA AND JAPAN-READY FOR THE CHALLENGE

The issue of climate change is affecting the earth as a whole. Discuss ways that Australia and Japan can work towards finding solutions to this worldwide problem.

As members of the international community, Japan and Australia have both already contributed significant resources and time at a unilateral and multilateral level to reducing the problem of climate change. Both countries believe in the three broad goals of the United Nations Framework Convention of Climate Change (UNFCCC); that greenhouse gas emissions and concentrations, and global temperature should be stabilised.[1] Japan and Australia believe there should be a global plan to deal with climate change[2] and that Pacific alliances would not only support this plan[3], but form part of the solution. With no real body to enforce international treaties, a bilateral environmental partnership between Australia and Japan could strengthen each country's resolve to carry out their international responsibilities, whilst provide a structure for resolving issues relating to climate change. Japan and Australia have a strong history of political partnerships, which began in the 1950's and were strengthened in 1976 by the creation of the Basic Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation.[4] In 1992, Japan's Director-General of Economic Affairs wrote that Australia was the only country that could be Japan's real partner in an Asia Pacific regional alliance because of shared democratic values, market economies, approach to free trade, and common political and security interests.[5] It would be beneficial for each country and the world to extend this partnership to climate change. In 2008, Australian Prime Minister Kevin Rudd strengthened ties further during his June visit to Tokyo, Kyoto, Hiroshima, and Nagasaki.[6] With the Kyoto Protocol due to expire in 2012, there is no better time than in the crucial lead up to the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen 2009, for Japan and Australia to extend their economic, political, social, and defence partnerships to climate change.

Having established that links between Japan and Australia are more than sufficient to extend to climate change, existing environmental initiatives should be acknowledged, so they can be built upon. In 1995, the Joint Declaration on the Australia-Japan Partnership was made.[7] Of environmental note are the considerations on energy and nuclear power. Although the document is dated, it acknowledges the 'central importance of the minerals and energy trade to both Australia and Japan', the need for

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[1] R. Henson 2006, *The Rough Guide to Climate Change*, Penguin, Italy, p262.
[2] A. Downer 2002, 'Joint media release from the Minister for Environment and Heritage, and the Minister for Foreign Affairs', 15 August, www.ea.gov.au.
[3] R. Henson, op-cit., p280.
[4] A. Rix, 1999, *The Australian-Japan Political Alignment*, Routledge, USA, p61.
[5] Ibid, p117.
[6] P. Alford 2008, 'Rudd puts soothed Tokyo in the picture', *The Weekend Australian*, 14-15th June, p20.
[7] Partnership Agenda Between Australia and Japan, Australia's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, http://www.dfat.gov.au/geo/japan/partnership_agenda.html , last updated 10.07.08.

'mitigating environmental impacts', and the 'growing importance of nuclear energy'. The environmental considerations were that the two Governments would exchange perspectives and cooperate on approaches including greenhouse gas emissions, outcomes of UN Environmental Program (UNEP) decisions, biological diversity matters, protection of coral reefs, and promoting environmental education in the Asia-Pacific Region.[8] This cooperative spirit goes a long way to finding a solution to the global problem of climate change. The Japan-Australia Practical Collaboration on Climate Change (2002) cemented cooperation on climate change, energy, technologies and greenhouse sinks.[9] This was followed by Japan and Australia joint-hosting two events, the Fourteenth Asia-Pacific Seminar on Climate Change and the Asia Pacific Network on Global Change Research (2004).[10] Although the above measures may appear extensive, climate change relationships between Japan and Australia are yet to be maximised.

One of the major areas Japan and Australia could collaborate on to finding further solutions to climate change is Carbon Trading. Carbon dioxide is the biggest culprit when it comes to climate change.[11] Carbon Trading schemes have potential at an international, regional, and local level. They involve creating a cap on greenhouse gas emissions. Greenhouse gas emitters (regions, countries, companies, consumers) are then given limits (that can be traded) on the levels of greenhouse gases they can emit. Many developed nations are bound to an international Carbon Trading system, and some nations have developed domestic ones. Japan is due to begin a Carbon Trading trial in October 2008, with Prime Minister Yasuo Fukuda saying, "Japan should take a lead in building a low carbon society. This is the first concrete step towards that." Implementing emissions trading represents a significant effort in the solution to climate change. Australia is lagging behind Japan, with Prime Minister Kevin Rudd announcing after the Garnaut Review that an emissions trading scheme will be in place by 2010.[12] Japan and Australia could work together to reaffirm the importance of implementing and carrying out the Carbon Trading scheme. Japan could share the results of their trial, and encourage Australia to rethink their starting date. The most pressing issue is that Japan and Australia take a united stance on the importance of implementing Carbon Trading at a domestic level so that other nations can see the difference Carbon Trading makes as part of the solution to climate change.

Another problem catalyzing climate change is the destruction of carbon sinks.[13] The widespread cull of forests has led to less carbon dioxide being absorbed from the atmosphere resulting in a higher concentration of greenhouse gases. Japan's forestry resources appear substantial, as 67% of land is forest.[14] However, the Forestry Agency of Japan has promoted monotypic reforestation such as cedar, cyprus, and larch. Additionally, Japan is the world's largest importer of world market wood,

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[8] Ibid

[9] Japan-Australia Practical Collaboration on Climate Change, Australian Government's Department of Climate Change, http://www.climatechange.gov.au/international/partnerships/japan.html, last updated 9.08.08.

[10] Ibid.

[11] R. Henson, op-cit., p121.

[12] M. Franklin, 2008, 'PM vows to hit carbon deadline', *The Australian*, Monday June 30th, p1.

[13] R. Henson, op-cit., p89.

[14] P. Karan, 2005, *Japan in the 21st Century*, The University Press of Kentucky, Kentucky, US, p26.

consuming one third of logs exported from Malaysia and Russia, plywood from Indonesia, sawn wood from Chile, and woodchips from Australia, America, and Chile.[15] This dominance gives Japan the power to encourage stainable wood. A major problem is that much of the imported wood comes from South-East Asian temperate or tropical rainforests. Australia provides Japan with 7.7% of their wood, and should ensure that the supplied wood is sustainable. A solution could simply be to agree to a bilateral trade treaty. Australia is not without its own problems, with wood being importing from South East Asia. Again, an agreement between the two nations about only sourcing sustainable wood from this region would be invaluable to help combat climate change and set a global precedent.

A major contributor to greenhouse gas emissions is the combustion of petrol. It is believed that doubling vehicle economy and cutting the distance driven by each car in half will be necessary to aid in the stabilisation of greenhouse gas emissions[16]. Japan has a modern public transport system that efficiently serves the population of 127 million. Japan is the world leader in developing new environment-friendly technologies, such as developing more efficient vehicles, hybrid engines, and hydrogen fuel cells.[17] Meanwhile, Australia struggles with managing emissions from individual cars. The majority of households own at least one car and use it daily. Sydney and Melbourne aside, public transport networks are weak, particularly away from population centres. Hybrid cars have recently become available, and although prices are dropping, they are too expensive for most families[18]. The two models available, the Honda Civic Hybrid (AU$29 990), and the Toyota Prius (AU$36 500), are made by Japanese companies. These companies are working to develop technology further, with Rudd's 35 million dollar contribution to Japanese car manufacturers, announced in June 2008, aiding efforts. Japan and Australia should build on this starting point, further developing ways to share current technologies while offering incentives to keep developing new ones. Australia could provide Japan with other technology such as wind and solar. It is important that hybrid cars become as affordable as possible in Australia. Concurrent to the automotive partnership could be a renewable energy partnership.

The burning of coal contributes to approximately 50% of greenhouse gas emissions. Alternative energy sources such as wind, solar, hydro, tidal, geothermal, biomass, nuclear need to be maximized.[19] 'Renewables' account for only 5.9% of Australia's and 17% of Japan's energy sources, including nuclear.[20] While Australia's hydropower opportunities have mostly been taken, there is scope to expand wind, solar, and geothermal. Japan and Australia could create a renewable energy partnership, with Japan aiding Australia in developing geothermal energy, while Australia could help Japan develop wind and particularly solar energy. Each of these options are practical solutions to offset climate change. Japan has invested

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[15] Ibid, p27.
[16] R. Henson, op-cit., p267.
[17] Ibid, p303.
[18] Hybrid Cars, http://www.choice.com.au/viewArticle.aspx?id=104663&catId=100462&tid=100008&p=1&title=Hybrid+cars, Choice, last updated July 2008.
[19] R. Henson, op-cit., p294.
[20] P. Karan, 2005, *Japan in the 21st Century*, The University Press of Kentucky, Kentucky, US, p29.

predominantly in hydroelectric, wind and geothermal energy, possessing 52 wind farms. Both countries have potential to use wave power, though current technologies are expensive. In a further attempt to diversify energy, Japan has invested in nuclear, with 50 facilities producing 12.4%[21] of Japan's energy. Australia, the world's second largest supplier of uranium, supplies much of Japan's needs. In partnering with Japan in new uranium trade agreements, Australia can ensure that greenhouse gas emissions will be further reduced.

One of the initiatives created by the Kyoto Protocol is the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM). The CDM was first proposed by Brazil, and is an initiative where developed countries get credit for funding projects, such as reforestation or wind farms, that reduce emissions in developing countries.[22] There are currently more than 200 approved CDM projects mainly in Brazil, India, and China that will keep more than a billion tons of carbon dioxide out of the atmosphere by 2012. This is proving to be a workable solution to the worldwide problem of climate change. Being two of the most developed countries in the Asia-Pacific region, Australia and Japan have the unique opportunity to collaborate on CDM projects, helping other countries meet their climate goals. Target countries could include Bangladesh, Vietnam, Laos, Malaysia, Indonesia, and the Philippines. CDM mechanisms, such as funding solar powered houses in Bangladesh or reforestation in Malaysia are relatively simple ideas that provide a solution to reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Mechanisms could run parallel to the previously suggested partnerships between Australia and Japan.

There are countless possibilities available for Japan and Australia to collaborate to work towards finding solutions to climate change. The avenues for partnerships are already in existence. The most immediate partnership should involve the establishment of a Carbon Trading agreement, while any partnership that involves the trading of renewable energy technologies should be highly encouraged. Climate change has taken hundred of years to occur and will take generations to fix. The next generation should be included now. Australia and Japan could host annual environmental summits for young Japanese, Australian, and even Asian-Pacific representatives. Both Japan and Australia realize their international responsibility to combat climate change. The citizens of both nations are supportive of their government's climate change initiatives. An extensive environmental partnership between Japan and Australia would serve the purpose of standing united in the face of climate change and help persuade the rest of the Asia Pacific region and the world to join them. 'Mottainai' is a Japanese term which is a feeling of regret when an object or resource is not properly utilized. This concept can be extended to climate change. It would be wasteful for the relationship to be limited to the economic and political arena. As climate change continues to increase, the development of a climate change relationship between Japan and Australia is critical.

[21] Ibid.
[22] R. Henson, op-cit., p276

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