

*Looking Ahead*

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## A New Approach on Climate Change?

November 2005 will be a busy month for those interested in international discussions on climate change. The month will start with the latest G8 summit on climate change in Bahrain and end with the eleventh Conference of the Parties to the 1992 U.N. climate change treaty. If past is precedent, these meetings will produce more hot air than substantive progress.

The middle of the month, though, will bring something new: The first meeting of the Asia-Pacific Partnership for Clean Development and Climate (APP). This partnership, which was announced in July, brings together the United States, Australia, China, India, Japan, and South Korea—countries that account for about half the world's population and that reportedly produce about half the planet's greenhouse gas emissions.

The APP marks the beginning of a new paradigm for international climate discussions. Even though most participating nations went to some lengths to stress that the APP would not affect their obligations under the Kyoto Protocol, it is clear that the new pact is a repudiation of what might be called the “Kyoto mentality”—the untenable notion that grave economic sacrifice can lead to environmental salvation. Kyoto's three main features were drastic emissions reductions for industrialized countries (while ignoring developing nations like China and India), a deeply flawed emissions-trading scheme, and the oft-ignored growth of a massive and slow-moving bureaucracy more interested in process than results. By contrast, the APP approach emphasizes economic growth and technological advancement as key to reducing atmospheric emissions. The pact won't require limits on emissions, but will instead involve collaboration on the development and deployment of cleaner and more efficient technologies and energy sources, including clean coal, civilian nuclear power, and renewable sources of energy. Central to the APP's work will be sharing clean and affordable energy technologies with poor countries.

The international bureaucrats and activists who have staked their careers on Kyoto will likely condemn the APP in the coming months, failing to see its true significance: The APP marks the real end of Kyoto and the decisive shifting of leadership on climate change away from Europe. It is now the United States and its partners, working toward realistic results, that will drive the climate change debate.

Shrewder leaders, though, have already caught on. Tony Blair, for instance, has long been a staunch supporter of Kyoto, and his government's first reaction to the creation of the APP was to insist that Kyoto still “represents a historic first step” that “needs to be built on.” But by September, he changed his tune, explaining with “brutal honesty” that “no country is going to cut its growth or consumption substantially in light of a long-term environmental problem” and calling on countries to “work together cooperatively to deal with this problem in a way that allows us to develop the science and technology in a beneficial way.” That's the APP approach, that's the right approach, and we hope it's an approach other world leaders will soon embrace.