Horses for Courses: National strategies to control climate

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One of the most challenging aspects of mitigating carbon dioxide emissions is that the negotiations on future emissions reductions take place in an environment with almost 200 national actors who must agree on the path forward. Since the international goal will eventually be translated into national goals, the challenge of identifying technologies that can mitigate emissions becomes particularly challenging. Its nation has its own national circumstance that sets its starting point for mitigation. This starting point is a function of its degree of development, its energy and other natural resources, it historic pattern of energy development, its wealth and it ability to martial political will.

The peculiar character of the carbon dioxide problem, and the increasingly local nature of proposed solutions, such as renewable energy, suggests that national technology planning is a critical part of the path forward. For any given target any country can meet practically any goal, if the price were not important. Technology's primary role in the carbon dioxide emissions mitigation problem is to control the cost of meeting a goal. The costs are not just financial but also can represent significant social cost. While it has been frequently said, but not necessarily understood, that there is no 'silver bullet' technology for emissions mitigation, it is also true that each nation ill have its own optimum solution that will vary in technology and time of implementation.