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International joint ventures to shape policies promoting technology cooperation on ultra-supercritical coal plants in china: a multi-staged analysis of lobbying

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With a decade away from fulfilling China's promises in the Paris Climate Conference, the country is embracing low carbon transition. Beijing pledged to reduce carbon emissions per unit of GDP by 60-65% from 2005 levels by 2030. Due to certain social-economic factors, such as resources endowment and cost-effectiveness, Chinese electricity suppliers may not easily avoid reliance on coal as the biggest energy source and completely switch to renewable power. In such a transitional period, upgrading to an advanced power generation system for existing coal-fired plants seems a more realistic task, which requires a higher level of technology capabilities. International technology cooperation on Ultra-supercritical Power Generation (USPG) may help to deliver the transformation.

International joint ventures (IJVs) are often seen as efficient vehicles to achieve the cooperation, however, people often neglect that IJVs also could be stakeholders to shape policies in this regard. Although the prevailing view often stresses the role of parent companies usually multinational corporations (MNCs) as influential policy negotiators, this project believes IJVs have independent values and strategies. This presentation will address how IJVs shape the Chinese local policies promoting technology cooperation on USPG and how they seek support from other stakeholders to achieve this.

Based on interviews and focus groups with key experts, managers and local policy-makers, this case study compares three IJVs in China supplying USPG equipment. It conducts an interdisciplinary study which integrates the lobbying process with multi-staged analysis of low carbon technology cooperation, targeting infrastructure, learning and institutional barriers. The results show that IJVs often lobby policy-makers with policy suggestions or technical standards according to the practical needs of different cooperation stages. Further, it flexibly coordinates MNCs and universities to offer networking support and endorsement, which plus localised innovation and contribution that IJVs make to the local economy, are the key to lobbying success.

Keywords: International Joint Venture, Technology Transfer/Cooperation, Lobbying, Ultra-supercritical Power Generation System