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Working Group on Environment

A Vision of European Green Diplomacy

**Raul Fretes
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Introduction

Since the second half of the 2000s, the European Union (EU) dialogue on climate change has gained increasing importance. This has led the EU to set the 20/20/20 targets by 2020, a series of packages that seek to cut greenhouse gas emission (GHG), increase renewable energy usage, and improve energy usage efficiency through laws and legislation¹. Following the Paris Agreement in 2015, it was updated to reach the global 1.5C. degree target (EU Commission 2020). Yet, this prospect has been undermined and began to become difficult to foresee with the withdrawal of the US government, the second largest GHG emitter, from the Paris Agreement. Alongside the BREXIT negotiations - which had certain ramifications for the EU's climate policy and the global climate diplomacy outlook. Undoubtedly, one of the necessary conditions to achieve this goal is to proliferate greater cooperation among nations, especially the major emitters, through the EU's climate diplomacy.

Despite these setbacks, the EU has followed through with its objectives, and doubled down on the matter, setting a landmark goal in 2019 to become the first carbon-neutral continent by 2050 through the proposal of a new European Green Deal (EGD).

Why is the EGD important to the EU?

The EGD is an ambitious plan that involves an ambitious number of policy areas and sectors and the idea of building a European Green Deal Diplomacy to turn the EU into a "*global leader*" by promoting sustainable development (EU Commission 2020; Petri, F. 2020). At its core, the EGD seeks to focus on international climate negotiation. Strengthening EU's GDD with Member States (MS), inducing partners to act and ensure in bilateral policy actions, and reinforcing the Green Agenda for the Balkan MS, and key foreign partners like China (Petri, F. 2020).

The implementation of the EGD, alongside China's 14th Five Year Plan (FYP) for 2021-25, are set to potentially determine whether this transition is accelerating or not. Possibly setting a bar for further global ion for key socioeconomics, including climate change and green development. Although the full outline of the plan is expected in March 2021 (and special plans afterwards), the outcome is expected to lean Clique aqui para inserir texto.towards the promotion of decarbonization and technological innovation. However, there seems to be a lack of ambitious climate actions from China, and a certain level of compliance from the EU's on the matter (Craw, M. 2020).

European or external issues?

The EGD is a carefully strategic plan for the future of Europe. However, it has the risk of becoming a set of empty promises that will harm EU's role, as many Member Stats (MS) have failed to achieve their GHG reduction goals, only accomplishing it by the socio-economic havoc wrought by the coronavirus pandemic (World Economic Forum 2020; Liu, Z., Ciais, P., Deng, Z. *et al.* 2020).

EU's climate diplomacy with its MS has run into problems. Existing headers of state in of Eastern European MS (e.g. Czech Republic, Poland, and Hungary) have threatened to wreck EU's Green Deal to push climate neutrality by 2050 back in 2019 (Zsiros, S. 2019)). Recently, Poland and Hungary, countries with raising nationalist-base governments, are following these footsteps and have utilized the power bestowed by the

¹ DIRECTIVE 2009/28/EC OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL of 23 April 2009

EU's Rule of Law to veto the Covid-19 Recovery, of which a part will be allocated towards sustainable development of the MS (EU Commission 2020; Zsrios, S. & Gill, J. 2020). These internal issues make the EU's MS an easy target of China's "*mask diplomacy*". Posing Beijing as rescuer of helpless EU member states by giving away medical supplies, intending to promote governance influence, amid intra-European tensions around the rule of law and the rise of populist ideologies. (Leggeri, A. 2020).

Why are non-European partners important?

Raising national like China are key collaborator and partner in tackling global climate change (EU 2020). As seem during the 22nd Bilateral Summit in June 2020, where they addressed measures to handle the COVID-19 pandemic, economic recovery, trade, climate change, and the SDGs, and to bolster bilateral relations, and other regional and international issues. Despite commitments to climate cooperation seemed to be the priority, tensions over economic competitiveness, market access, and human rights have been a key issue that has spilled over these talks, putting at risk systemic rivalries, and domestic interests in a post-covid-19 recovery. Furthermore, China's FYP green trajectory comes with both opportunities and challenges for European actors. While a trend towards a concerted push for sustainability policies, the lack of forceful sectoral and local-level incentives leaves China with a mixed track record on sustainability. Although the image of international cooperation for the greater good of mitigating global warming is urgently needed, they should be aware of their investments in carbon-heavy infrastructure. Yet, they believe that the competition for green tech and manufacturing processes will be impactful to impulse change, as failure to do so could instigate disputes that may slow down sustainable incentives (Craw, M. 2020).

The EU has urged China to take these engagements serious but to also pledge to peak its global warming emissions by 2025, commit to climate neutrality "*as soon as possible after 2050*". As to support sustainable development, especially in African Nations², like Zimbabwe, that receive Chinese bonds for developing a giant coal-power plants (Bloomberg, 2020; Simon, F. 2020 ISSD 2020) which contradicts China's "*Green Belt and Road*" plan.

Empowering our pathway

Amidst the current global crisis, the EU has the responsibility to act as a global player and can adjust its foreign policy in line with the fight against climate change (and Covid-19) requires developing, implementing, and nurturing both old and new alliances. As the EU's advantage lies in its ability to resolve controversial issues through dialogue and negotiations. This is increasingly important in solving global challenges confronting the world today that require multilateral effort. Nevertheless, the EU should not "settle down" with the responses and actions given by its partners and should seek continue with their vision and objectives. Failing to do so might cause other nations to turn an eye to the EU's message of unity and sustainable development or even worse, abandoning its vision all together. Therefore, EU institutions and MS should recognize they have a critical impact on all global aspects regarding its vision and objectives.

² China has led an investment of 4.2 billion dollar towards a giant coal-power plant near the world's biggest man-made reservoir for energy plans, as well as at least 13 coal projects across the continent with another nine in the pipeline. Since 2000, China has supplied up to \$51.8 billion of finance for coal projects globally (Bloomberg, 2020; Simon, F. 2020; ISSD 2020).

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