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# **The global climate governance: a comparative study between the EU and China**

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**Cao Hui**

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Comparative experiences and  
contributions to global governance  
in the fields of climate change, trade  
and competition



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**The global climate governance: a comparative study  
between the EU and China**

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# Introduction

Climate changes have had widespread impacts on human and natural systems.<sup>1</sup> Climate change has become the core issue in the political agenda in the last two decades.<sup>2</sup> The consensus of the international community is to find a solution through collective actions. This is an essential path to deal with global warming. In this regard, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (“UNFCCC”) is the main platform for international negotiations to take place, in order for nations to reach an agreement to carry out collective actions. Nevertheless, differences have appeared regarding the understanding of “who, what, how and which” activities to carry out. The Paris Agreement reached at the end of 2015 has offered a practical and legally-binding platform for global climate governance ever since.

## 1. The view of China towards global climate governance

For years, in accordance with the principles of equity and common but differentiated responsibilities (“CBDR”) and respective capabilities, the Parties to the UNFCCC have been working on to enhance cooperation and have achieved positive progress in the implementation under the UNFCCC.

Over the past 25 years, China’s position in international climate negotiations has changed steadily. China has fully involved in international climate negotiations since the early 1990s. China’s action demonstrates her stance towards global climate governance. In the course of continuous participation in international climate negotiations, China has gradually formed a basic global climate concept which includes five principles. These principles are: adhere to the CBDR principle, adhere to the basic framework of the UNFCCC and Kyoto Protocol, strictly follow the Bali Road Map; adhere to the principle of coordinating issues of mitigation, adaptation, finance and technology; adhere to sustainable development; adhere to the principle that the UN leading climate change negotiations as well as the consensus-style decision-making mechanism.<sup>3</sup>

The Chinese government has changed its position from “being impossible of cutting Green-House Gas (“GHG”) emissions before reaching to the middle-income country”<sup>4</sup> to deliver its “intended national determined contributions” (“INDCs”) in 2015. The commitment on INDCs refers that China’s GHG emission will peak around 2030, and will lower carbon dioxide emissions per unit of gross domestic product (“GDP”) by 60% to 65% as well as increase the forest stock volume by around 4.5 billion cubic meters in 2030 from 2005 levels.<sup>5</sup> As remarks addressed by President Xi Jinping at COP21 in Paris, China believes in “求同存异, 聚同化异”, which means to agree in disagree and to gather common interests in differences. China’s view on global climate governance is that there should be no zero-sum game at international negotiations.

Sophie Kalantzakos argues, “China’s actions on climate change in terms of mitigating greenhouse gas emissions and enhancing climate resilience is not only driven by the domestic needs for sustainable development in ensuring its economic security, energy security, ecological security, food security as well as the safety of people’s life and property and to achieve sustainable development, but also driven by its sense of responsibility to fully engage with global governance, and to forge a community of shared destiny for humankind as well as to promote common development for all human beings.”<sup>6</sup>

The increased willingness of China’s central government and its cooperative capacity are the main factors that make the transition possible. The actions carried out by China’s active participation in the global climate governance are reflected in three aspects. Firstly, in terms of involving with international institutions, China’s position has moved from being suspicious to positively supporting, particularly the

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1 Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (2014). p.2; Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (2010). p. 4.

2 Giddens (2011). p. 3.

3 GOV.cn (2011).The State Council Information Office of the People’s Republic of China (2011). Part 8. para.2.

4 Zhuang (2008). p. 9.

5 UNFCCC (2015a).

6 Kalantzakos (2017). p. 80.

Clean Development Mechanism (“CDM”) of the Kyoto Protocol (“KP”). Until 2015, China has over 270 projects registered under the UNFCCC’s CDM mechanism.<sup>7</sup>

Secondly, in terms of climate finance and technology transfer, China has innovatively proposed to set up a South-to-South Cooperative Mechanism under the United Nations framework which aims to promote financial cooperation and technological diffusion between developing countries. In the COP15 Copenhagen climate conference, the Chinese government claimed that it would not compete with countries from the Alliance of Small Islands States (“AOSIS”) or least developed countries to apply climate funds. On the contrary, China will actively help these countries to develop their actions with her financial support.

During 2010-2012, the Chinese government and companies have invested in more than 100 hydropower stations, solar power stations as well as agricultural pilot projects.<sup>8</sup> In 2014, China committed to mobilize \$5 billion dollars to Caribbean and Latin American countries supporting bilateral cooperation in the section of energy, hi-technology and sustainable development.<sup>9</sup> In 2015, China announced to pool 20-billion-yuan (about 3-billion-U.S. dollars) establishing the “China South-South Climate Cooperation Fund” to help other developing countries combat climate change.<sup>10</sup>

Thirdly, at the domestic level, the results from the international negotiations have positively pushed Chinese internal climate law-making into a fast track. Since 2005, the Chinese government consistently adopted relating policies to control carbon emissions by adjusting the industrial structure and energy mix, improving energy efficiency as well as increasing carbon credits.

To accomplish low carbon goals, China adopted a range of major policy measures to mitigate and adapt to climate change during the 11th Five-Year Plan (2006-2010) period, and has achieved remarkable results. The Outline of the 12<sup>th</sup> Five-Year Plan for National Economic and Social Development released in 2011 which established the policy orientation of promoting green and low-carbon development, and clearly set the objectives and tasks of addressing climate change for the next five years.<sup>11</sup>

The Chinese government constantly sets strong ecological and economic targets by addressing climate change into its mid-and long-term planning for economic and social development as a major issue concerning its overall economic and social development.<sup>12</sup> These policies include, such as, the National Program on Climate Change, the Work Plan for Controlling Greenhouse Gas Emissions during the 12th Five-Year Plan Period, the Comprehensive Work Plan for Energy Conservation and Emission Reduction for the 12th Five Year Plan Period, the 12th Five Year Plan for Energy Conservation and Emission Reduction, the 2014-2015 Action Plan for Energy Conservation, Emission Reduction and Low-Carbon Development, and the National Plan on Climate Change (2014-2020). In 2014, China adopted the “Environmental Protection Act”. The pass of the Act has shown China’s dramatic change in environmental law-making. The Act has set a strict legislative system toward those who pollute the environment.<sup>13</sup>

Besides, China has viciously been promoting renewable energy. China is already the world’s leading country both in energy saving and in the use of new and renewable energy.<sup>14</sup> In 2014, the energy consumption and the emission of carbon dioxide per unit of the GDP decreased by 29.9 percent and 33.8 percent respectively, compared to the 2005 levels.<sup>15</sup> In 2018, China accounted for one-third of global wind power capacity and one-third of global solar PV capacity.<sup>16</sup> According to the International Energy Agency,

7 UNFCCC (2019).

8 China.org.cn (2011).

9 Xinhua Net (2014).

10 China.org.cn (2015a); China Meteorological Administration (2015).

11 China’s National Energy Administration (2012); The State Council Information Office of the People’s Republic of China (2011). Part “Forward”.

12 Cao (2018). p. 4.

13 Chinese Government Legal Information Net (2014).

14 Finamore (2020). p. 4.

15 China.org.cn (2015a); China.org.cn (2015b).

16 Renewable Energy World (2019).

during the period of 2019-2024, China will account for 40% of global renewable capacity expansion over the forecast period. The higher forecast figure for China is because of improved system integration, lower curtailment rates and enhanced competitiveness of both solar PV and onshore wind. It is expected that China will account for almost half of global distributed PV growth, and will overtake the EU to become the world leader in installed capacity as early as 2021.<sup>17</sup>

China has put other enabling policies and measures to support the development of renewable energy. These include ongoing power sector reforms, the construction of the world's largest ultra-high voltage transmission network, promotion of distributed energy and microgrids, support for the development of energy storage technologies, a national carbon market and measures to reduce the country's reliance on coal.<sup>18</sup>

Over the past fifteen years, as solar and wind power have grown exponentially, China has adopted an increasingly ambitious series of renewable energy targets. The country has already exceeded its 2020 installed capacity targets for wind (210 gigawatts, GW) and solar (150 GW). Under the Paris Agreement, China pledged by 2030 to increase the share of non-fossil energy to 20 per cent of its energy mix, reduce its carbon intensity 60 to 65 per cent below its 2005 level.<sup>19</sup>

During the period of 2010-2019, China has committed 758 billion US dollars in renewables capacity (excluding large hydropower), followed far behind by the US at 356 billion USD and Japan at 202 billion USD.<sup>20</sup>

China has not only improved her willingness in GHG emission control, but also increased her internationally cooperative capacity. Since 2017, the Chinese government has taken a series of actions in adjusting the industrial structure, optimizing the energy mix, conserving energy and improving energy efficiency, controlling greenhouse gas emissions from non-energy activities, and increasing carbon sinks, and achieved positive results. In 2018, China's carbon intensity was cumulatively reduced by 45.8 percent compared to 2005, exceeding the target of a 40-45 percent reduction by 2020.<sup>21</sup>

## 2. The view of the EU towards global climate governance

### 2.1. Historical overviews on the EU's climate change policy

The European Union ("EU") did not start to develop its climate change policy until the beginning of 1990s. The European Council for the first time with EU leaders called for "targets and strategies" to be agreed for limiting GHG emissions. Due to the lack of specific distribution of "burden share" and implementing measurement, the Council of Ministers ("the Council") failed to achieve its goal in 1990. Oberthür and Kelly argue that the substantial disagreement persisted on the need and content of common measures to implement the Community's emission stabilization commitment at the European level.<sup>22</sup> In 1992, a proposed CO<sub>2</sub>/energy tax bill by the European Commission to the Council was blocked by the member states on the ground that a fiscal measure requires unanimous agreement of the member states, according to Article 130s of the Treaty establishing the European Community ("EC Treaty"). Although the Council passed the Directive 93/76/EEC ("SAVE") and Decision 93/389/EEC to its member states to establish a programme limiting and monitoring the CO<sub>2</sub> and GHG emissions, these legislations however did not contain commitments for individual Member States.

Not until the preparation for the KP, as a first significant step in June 1996, the EU Council of Environment Ministers established the objective that 'global average temperatures should not exceed two degrees

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17 International Energy Agency (2019). "Executive Summary", p. 3.

18 Ministry of Ecology and Environment of the People's Republic of China (2019). Part 1-4.

19 Finamore (2020). p. 5.

20 Frankfurt School-UNEP Centre/BNEF (2019). p. 12.

21 Ministry of Ecology and Environment of People of Republic of China (2019), p. 1.

22 Oberthür and Kelly (2008). pp. 39-40.



above pre-industrial level'.<sup>23</sup> Ever since then, this objective has continuously guided EU (external) climate policy. The EU finally agreed on a common proposal that industrialized countries reduce their emissions of the three main GHGs by 15 per cent by 2010. For the first time, the Council has agreed on a “burden sharing agreement” among its 15 Member States.<sup>24</sup>

The KP did not just about establishing a set of targets for industrialized countries to limit and reduce their emissions of a basket of GHGs during the commitment period 2008-2012 compared to 1990, but also to create a number of market –based mechanism for implementing these targets, including international emissions trading, the Clean Development Mechanism (“CDM”) and Joint Implementation (“JI”).<sup>25</sup>

Internally, with the pilot operation of the EU emission trading scheme (“EU-ETS”) in 2005, the EU has pushed its GHG reductions forward into a market-based instrument, and eventually has adopted the Directive 2008/1010/EU. In other words, the EU has been taking its legally binding measures on 20 per cent reduction target even without an international agreement before the Paris Agreement reached in 2015.

The Union has since gradually undertaken a series of steps to design a regional regulatory regime on climate change policy. The 2007/2008 climate/energy package comprises a range of legislative measures that lifts the communitarisation of policies in the field to an unprecedented level. On one hand, the EU is formulating its internal climate policy to achieve a common position; on the other hand, the EU is exerting its influence to other international actors through a marketable instrument, for instance, the EU-ETS.<sup>26</sup>

At the international level, since the 1990s, the EU has been playing an important role trying to reach an international binding agreement to reduce GHG emissions to a certain level. For example, ratifying the KP has challenged major actors’ position in international negotiations and its domestic politics. Following the U.S withdrawal from the KP in 2001, the EU has taken a leading diplomatic role in convincing other actors to ratify the-KP. However, Schunz, Happaerts and Van den Brande point out, “the EU has not always been the effective foreign policy player in the international climate policy arena that it desired to be”.<sup>27</sup> The European Parliament has complained that the Copenhagen Summit in 2009 was a disaster for the EU ‘not speaking in one voice in the international climate negotiation’.<sup>28</sup>

## 2.2. EU on global climate governance

Similar to China, the EU has changed her stance on international climate negotiations. Before 2005, in order to make the deal of the KP, the EU was in support of most of developing countries who firmly stand on CBDR-principle. However, due to the implementation of the EU-ETS in 2005, the EU has shown its ‘polluter paying’ principle for including more sectors into the EU-ETS. The Council approves the revision of EU Directive of setting road tolls for heavy goods vehicles as well as the maritime sector. Ever since then, the EU implements EU-ETS policy internally as well as promotes of reaching a globally legally-binding agreement at international arena by loosening its stance on CBDR principle.<sup>29</sup>

Bergamaschi and Sartori argue, that the establishment of EU’s leadership has been built on raising its CO<sub>2</sub> target and strengthening its norms.<sup>30</sup> The EU seized the “opportunity window” when the U.S withdrew from the KP in 2000, and turned the pressure of implementing the KP into the motive for building internal

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23 Council of European Union (1996).

24 Council of European Union (1997); Oberthür and Pallemmaerts (eds.) (2010). pp. 30-33.

25 Oberthür and Pallemmaerts (eds.) (2010). pp. 34-35.

26 Cao (2012). Chapter 4.

27 Schunz, Happaerts and Van den Brande (2009). p. 3.

28 European Parliament (2010). p. 1.

29 European Commission (2015). COM (2015) 81 final, pp. 8-9.

30 Bergamaschi and Sartori (2018). p. 4.

institutions and the rule of law regarding climate and energy.<sup>31</sup> Since then, the EU-ETS has become the core of the Union, and furtherly consolidated the climate\energy into EU ideas on global governance.

In terms of climate diplomacy, the EU integrates its internal climate policy into its foreign aid and development policies, and adopts bilateral and multilateral channels under the framework of foreign aid to promote the EU's concept of climate governance through cooperation in climate-related projects. For example, the EU has launched series of multilateral cooperation with international organizations fighting against problems caused by climate change. The international organizations include the food and agriculture organization in the United Nations, the United Nations Environment Programme, the African Union and the Latin American Development Bank etc. For instance, The European Union has committed to joint the UN's Sustainable Energy for ALL initiative ("SE4ALL") to help 500 million people to access sustainable energy by 2030.<sup>32</sup> The European Bank for Reconstruction and Development ("EBRD") has partnered with the EU's Climate Investment Fund ("CIF"), and developed a multilateral banking mechanism that provides grants, low-interest loans, risky mitigation tools and other financial leverage to support local climate change-related projects in developing countries.<sup>33</sup> During the years 2014-2018, the EBRD invested nearly 7.9 billion euros in 183 projects carried out in 34 countries and related to energy sectors.<sup>34</sup> About 84% of the total of these projects are implemented by the EBRD's "Green Economic Transition Approach".<sup>35</sup> By using this approach, EBRD's 107 operations have contributed to a cumulative expected annual emissions reduction of more than 15,000 ktCO<sub>2</sub>e/year.<sup>36</sup> In 2020, the Commission and the EBRD are increasing support for renewables and other green investments in its Partnership countries such as Egypt, Morocco, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine. The EU will provide 61.3m in grants to support three EBRD projects to help businesses in these markets invest in energy efficiency, cut emissions, introduce green technologies, support the circular economy as well as improve legal frameworks for clean energy investments.<sup>37</sup>

Although suffered a setback in Copenhagen in 2009, the EU soften its position on emission cutting target internally, and added its desire for a new legally-binding agreement at the international level.<sup>38</sup> The EU-ETS has become the core of EU's climate governance. After the Copenhagen's failure, the EU has vigorously promoted climate diplomacy in its external policies. Non-governmental organizations have also become an instrument for the EU to export its ideology in global climate governance. The report from the International Institute of Sustainable Development points that, "the Cartagena Dialogue for Progressive Action is an example which the EU plays a key role to bridge developing groups and the developed countries, such as parachute groups."<sup>39</sup> Through its climate diplomacy, the EU has successfully regained a leading role in international climate negotiations, and power in agenda-setting. This kind of soft power has helped the EU to materialize the Paris Agreement in COP 21 in 2015.

The new Green Deal will be the core of EU's growth strategy. In 2020, the new European Commission led by Ursula von der Leyen has presented the European Green Deal, which is a roadmap for making EU's economy sustainable by turning climate and environmental challenges into opportunities across all policy areas and making the transition just and inclusive for all.<sup>40</sup>

The European Green Deal covers all sectors of the economy, notably transport, energy, agriculture, buildings, and industries such as steel, cement, ICT, textiles and chemicals.<sup>41</sup> It is "to set into legislation the

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31 Cao (2012). pp. 104-105.

32 European Commission (2014). p. 6.

33 European Bank for Restructure and Development (2015). p. 7.

34 European Bank for Restructure and Development (2018). p. 6.

35 Ibid.

36 European Bank for Restructure and Development (2018). p. 2.

37 Renew.BIZ (2020).

38 Groen, Niemann and Oberthür (2012). p. 182.

39 International Institute for Sustainable Development (2014).

40 European Commission (2019a). COM (2019) 640 final. pp. 2-3.

41 European Commission (2019b). Press release.

political ambition of being the world's first climate neutral continent by 2050, the Commission will present within 100 days the first 'European Climate Law'. To reach EU's climate and environmental ambition, the Commission will also present the Biodiversity Strategy for 2030, the new Industrial Strategy and Circular Economy Action Plan, the Farm to Fork Strategy for sustainable food and proposals for pollution-free Europe. Work will immediately start for upping Europe's 2030 emissions targets, setting a realistic path to the 2050 goal".<sup>42</sup>

Meeting the objectives of the European Green Deal will require significant investment. Achieving the current 2030 climate and energy targets is estimated to require 260 billion of additional annual investment, representing about 1.5% of 2018 GDP. This investment will need the mobilization of the public and private sectors. The Commission will present in early 2020 a Sustainable Europe Investment Plan to help meeting investment needs. "At least 25% of the EU's long-term budget should be dedicated to climate action, and the European Investment Bank, Europe's climate bank, will provide further support. For the private sector to contribute to financing the green transition, the Commission will present a Green Financing Strategy in 2020."<sup>43</sup>

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic started in March 2020, the EU has launched an ambitious recovery plan. The green investments and transition in the post pandemic era are still sitting as the EU's political priority in the plan.<sup>44</sup>

In brief, the EU's global climate governance could be summarized as that it upholds below two degree C temperature global goal, sets up a legally-binding global emission-cutting agreement, implements the Paris Agreement which staples the INDCs between countries and it should be compatible, adapting a transparent mechanism in surveillance of country's activities relating mitigation and adaptation.

## 2.3. Rationale behind the EU's role on climate governance

The competition of making a standardised policy in the international regime, such as an instrument for market-based emission trading has been a factor for the EU to step forward after signing the KP.<sup>45</sup> However, the pressure of ratifying the KP has pushed the EU's Member States into a fast-track of law-making at the European level. This has a direct impact on Member States' domestic policy making.

At the European level, a legally agreement binding on GHG emissions reduction was preferred by cross parties and countries due to the preparation of the Kyoto COP in 1995 for the first time at the European level. By the time being, the EU internal climate policy making has followed the unique qualified majority voting on co-decision procedure rules, which the EU institutions have abilities to bypass the national legislative procedures, and make the institutionalised framework on climate issues at the European level. The Commission, the Council and the Parliament as well as leading Member States, have been acting entrepreneurs to enlist the climate policy into top political agendas in the sense of speeding up the legislative process.<sup>46</sup> Additionally, the internal financial arrangement and differentiated target-sharing agreement guaranteed that all of Member States are in favour of the legally-binding of GHG emissions reduction. Based on the common position of emissions reduction target, the EU has achieved a leading role in the international climate negotiations since the KP.

At the international level, the rationality of the EU is self-interested and self-driven, but not necessarily be unitary. The EU's interest is based on the perception of an increasing threat caused by the global climate change and the belief in the IPCC scientific reports, the EU and its Member States are in favour of establishing an international cooperation (UNFCCC) on the legally-binding regime (such as the KP). The idea of the KP is that the regime can reduce uncertainties caused by defection (unlimited emissions)

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42 European Commission (2019c). Press release.

43 Battery 2030 (2019).

44 Von der Leyen (2020).

45 Cao (2012). p. 108.

46 Cao (2012). p. 109.

and asymmetrical problems (monitoring and transparency), and converge the expectation (reducing the GHG emissions). The game theoretical model portrays that the EU's strategic choice on international climate negotiations is more alike Stag Hunt, but not quietly since it is still in the game of KP while the U.S' withdrawal in 2001. With the development of the EU-ETS since 2005, the EU's strategy is more alike of choosing the Prisoners Dilemma, who is insisting on the 'polluter pays' principle rather than upholding the KP's CBDR principle. The EU-wide legally binding on GHG reductions has made the EU and the Member States being in favour of having the compulsory emission reductions target for others under the KP which is based on different historical industrial developing stages. However, the implementation of the EU-ETS has driven the EU to push a market-based instrument combating the GHG emission reduction in the international organisation whoever it comes.<sup>47</sup>

The EU's strategy of being a leader to ratify the KP was a rational behaviour to reach a consensus without an hegemonic power at the international level. Having a flexible mechanism and insisting on the CBDR principle has shown that the EU chooses both stag-hunting and persuasion strategy as a means to convincing its industrial counterparts in the Annex I and developing countries in the Non-Annex I. Besides, the commitments to mobilize financial aids and to provide technological assistance has its strategic importance for the EU's climate diplomacy and economic cooperation with developing countries in future. However, following the implementation of the EU-ETS, the EU is more likely to choose the Prisoners' Dilemma by employing the market-based instrument to including international aviation industry into its emission regulating regime, although it has caused international political and economic disputes, mainly between the U.S, China and Russia.

### 3. The conflicts and cooperation between the EU and China

The main difference between the EU and China is due to their different understandings regarding the CBDR principle. As the Chinese government has stressed, the implementation of the Paris Agreement shall reflect the principle. However, the EU reckons that the Paris Agreement is the first step to reach a global emission-cutting legally-binding agreement. The Agreement has set up a surveillance mechanism to monitor committed countries' mitigation or adaptation activities.<sup>48</sup> The reporting and reviewing system will be adopted by all parties who ratify the Paris Agreement in the near future.<sup>49</sup>

The main conflicts have arisen in the aviation industry in 2009 after EU started to charge non-EU airline companies for carbon emissions, causing a political dispute more than just a climate problem. Not until March 2011, the China Air Transport Association ("CATA") made an official statement to claim that it is against the inclusion of the aviation industry into the EU-ETS.<sup>50</sup> In its statement, CATA claimed that EU's regulation including all flights in and from the EU violates the CBDR principle followed by the international community on the climate change issue. The EU's unilateral action is not only against the rules of the Chicago Convention, but also adds global transaction costs for the aviation industry when combating carbon emission reduction.

The conflict mirrors the different interpretations of the CBDR principle between the EU and China. This divergence is contrary to promote cooperation between both sides.

In line with institutional building, the EU and China have set up a mechanism to communicate. Many climate-related projects have been carried out, such as the establishment of the "China-EU Institute for Clean and Renewable Energy",<sup>51</sup> the "UK-China (Guangdong) Carbon Capture and Storage Centre".<sup>52</sup> The

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47 Ibid.

48 UNFCCC (2015b). Part III; United Nations (2015). Article 13, pp. 16-17.

49 Pauw, Mbeva and Van Asselt (2019). p. 3.

50 China Aviation and Transport Association (2011).

51 China-EU Institute for Clean and Renewable Energy.

52 UK-China (Guangdong) Carbon Capture and Storage Centre.

EU is helping China to conduct a pilot program which aims to set up a national-wide carbon market. This significant program officially started in 2014, and China announced to start the national carbon market by the end of 2017.<sup>53</sup> The EU-China Joint Statement on Climate Change was delivered in 2015. In 2018, both sides reaffirmed the importance of combatting climate change and welcomed the adoption of the *Leaders' Statement on Climate Change and Clean Energy*,<sup>54</sup> and the *Memorandum of Understanding to Enhance Cooperation on Emissions Trading* between the European Commission and the Ministry of Ecology and Environment of China.<sup>55</sup> They committed to contributing actively to the conclusion of the Paris Agreement Work Programme at COP 24 in Katowice in 2018 in order to ensure full and effective implementation of the Paris Agreement.<sup>56</sup>

## Conclusion

Both China and the EU have been changing their views on global climate governance. China changed her position from “being impossible for China’s cutting GHG emissions before it reaches to the middle-developed country”<sup>57</sup> to deliver its INDCs in 2015. The EU changed her stance from insisting on the CBDR principle to gradually abandoning it, to formulating a legally-binding global agreement, saying the Paris Agreement.

During the certain period of time, the EU and China still coexist with conflicts and cooperation towards global climate governance. Their different interpretations regarding the CBDR principle under the UNFCCC has damaged the mutual trust between them at a certain level. On one hand, like other developed countries, the EU accuses the emerging countries, (including China) for “free riding” of public goods offered by the international climate negotiations; on the other hand, developing countries complain that the developed countries (including the EU) are downplaying their GHG emission cutting target as well as their contribution to climate financing.<sup>58</sup> Additionally, developing countries have stressed that they are short of resources and institutional capacity in order to meet the requirements for implementing the global rules on climate change.

However, in the last decade, the Chinese government has made significant developments regarding its willingness and its cooperative ability.<sup>59</sup> Due to being in different phases in terms of economic development, there remains a certain level of gap between China and the EU’s position in the global climate governance. The EU plays the leading role and has the power of agenda-setting in the global governance process. As a main emerging developing country and one of the biggest polluters, China will continually adapt mitigation and reduction policies addressing on climate change by enhancing mechanisms and capacities to effectively defend against related risks in key sectors, such as industry, agriculture, forestry and water resources. Through implementing proactive national strategies on climate change, promoting carbon emission trading market etc., China is putting its best efforts to gain trust from the international community. In reality, the EU and China will not be able to achieve the goal of decarbonized development in the global climate governance regime, if they don’t establish a solid and progressive cooperation in the future.

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53 Xinhua Net (2017).

54 EU-China Statement of “Leaders’ Statement on Climate Change and Clean Energy” (2018).

55 MoU (2018).

56 EU-China Joint Statement (2018). p. 9.

57 Zhuang (2008). p. 9.

58 International Institute for Sustainable Development (2009). p. 12.

59 Cao (2015). p. 57.

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**Abstract:** By comparing Chinese and European ideas and roles in the process of global climate governance, it is evidenced that both have changed after the ratification of the “Kyoto Protocol”. Although there is a serious divergence between China and the EU regarding their understandings of “the common but differentiated responsibility” principle, the space for cooperation between them is expanding, especially after the signature of the “Paris Agreement”. This result comes not only from China’s persistent improvement of its cooperative willingness and capacity, but also from the EU’s leading role in collaborating with emerging countries like China towards global climate governance, as well as its ambition at the domestic level, established in the European Green Deal.

**Keywords:** global climate governance, European Union, China.

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