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Picture by Rosângela Fidelis

CHINA GOES GREEN IN A GLOBALIZING WORLD
Features, evolution and challenges of “Ecological Civilization”

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As a country with most population, China is facing with developing economy and environmental protection; environmental pollution and ecological degradation have become to be severe problems and further affected national economy and people’s health during the last 30 years. The initial phase of the century has been the crucial stage for China’s efforts towards improving economic development, intensifying environment conservation, and controlling ecological degradation. Then, country has prioritized measures, laws and policies for developing renewable energy, especially solar and wind. China has also embraced the ‘green growth’ approach for responding to the challenges of climate change. These efforts have yielded results and China has emerged as a world leader in renewable energy. However, there is still a long way to go. The 14th five-year plan (2021-2025) seems to be critical for accelerating the energy transition, including setting a cap on coal in the national energy-transition strategy. It is expecting to drive decarbonization and indigenous tech innovation, however, without proposing overly ambitious climate actions; during the the United Nations General Assembly in September China’s party and state leader Xi Jinping declared a carbon-neutral China by 2060. The country’s leadership has played a hugely important role in putting in motion changes to domestic policy, and this has gradually introduced a vision of ‘ecological civilisation’ (生态文明;

shēngtài wénmíng) in which conservation of nature guides the continued development of the country. To reach the goals Beijing is using a variety of tools in order to stimulate industrial greening: these including incentives, local clustering and green funding as well. In order to improve China's sustainable industry transformation, the government also engages in priority procurement of green products and services. By the end of 2018, more than 90 percent of products acquired by the bureaucracy were considered energy-efficient and environment-friendly. The framework for green factories was largely completed in 2019, and hundreds more standards are in the making, nevertheless resource utilization in the manufacturing sector is still far below world-class efficiency levels. China's environmental policy trajectory shows opportunities and challenges also for western actors: international cooperation for mitigating global warming is urgently needed and, at the same time, competition for green tech and manufacturing process must be carefully managed.