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## The People's Republic Of China And Climate Change: Strategic Priorities And Policy Orientations

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### Abstract

With the world grappling with the pressing issues brought on by climate change, the major nations' influence over environmental policy is becoming increasingly important. China is the most populous country in the world and a prominent actor in international affairs; its views and actions on climate change have a big impact worldwide.

The research illuminates China's developing position concerning climate change adaptation and mitigation by comprehensively examining pivotal records, official declarations, and contemporary policy measures. This paper evaluates China's adherence to global climate accords, including the Paris Agreement, and tracks its advancement in fulfilling its climate-related objectives. It also looks at the domestic policy environment, considering how China's policy framework balances environmental sustainability, energy security, and economic development.

This research advances knowledge of the changing dynamics of global climate governance by clarifying China's strategic aims and policy orientations in the context of climate change. This analysis is invaluable for policymakers, scholars, and stakeholders interested in the junction between China's strategic aims and climate change imperatives.

Keywords: Climate Change, People's Republic of China, Paris Agreement, Xi Jinping.

## Introduction

### **(Climate change as a severe threat to all humanity)**

Growth in humanity and sustenance are impacted by climate change. Human activity has been the primary cause of global climate change since the dawn of the Industrial Revolution. This includes the accumulated carbon dioxide emissions from developed countries' intensive use of fossil fuels, which seriously threaten ecosystem security and global socioeconomic growth, particularly in developing economies.

Taking action against climate change is a shared common good. It exhorts the global community to band together, collaborate, and work towards addressing climate change within the framework of sustainable development, adhering to the path of low-carbon and green growth, encouraging the creation of a community with a shared future for all people, and collaboratively creating a clean and lovely earth home. The worldwide outbreak of COVID-19 in 2020 serves as yet another reminder that humanity requires a self-revolution to confront shared non-traditional security threats like major transmissible diseases and changing climates. International collaboration and solidarity are essential in this regard.

## International Efforts

### **(Green and low-carbon transformation has become a general trend of global development)**

The Paris Agreement was adopted in 2015 at the 21st Conference of Parties (COP21) of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). It aims to keep global warming below 2, ideally to 1.5 degrees Celsius, relative to pre-industrial levels. It outlines the long-term goals and institutional framework for combating global warming. It clarifies the future transition to a low-carbon, green economy, which will require international cooperation. China has actively promoted reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions in international shipping and aviation, which the international community has widely acknowledged and greatly appreciated. China has made historical and fundamental contributions to this regard, entering into force and implementing the Paris Agreement (International Energy Agency, 2022).

### Saihanba: China's Green Miracle



**Figure. Before and after the implementation of Saihanba Afforestation Project**

In 1962, the first group of afforestation teams entered Saihanba, unveiling the legend of afforestation through three generations. Saihanba has been altered from inaccessible wasteland to a "natural oxygen bar" with a forest coverage rate of 80%, as well as 1.12 million mu (about 74,667 hectares) of woodland and 200,000 mu (about 13,333 hectare) of meadow. Forest ecosystems in Saihanba contribute to water conservation, water purification (137 million m<sup>3</sup>), carbon sequestration (747,000 tons), and oxygen release (545,000 tons) every year. President Xi Jinping stated that we must adhere to the concept of green development, carry forward the spirit of Saihanba, and persevere in advancing the construction of ecological civilization. Through work from generation to generation, we will strive to form a new pattern of harmonious development between man and nature, and create a more beautiful environment with blue skies, lush mountains, and lucid waters for future generations. (Image source: China News Service)

**Figure:1. Saihanba: China's Green Miracle Source:(Christophersen & Li, 2019)**

## Chinese Efforts

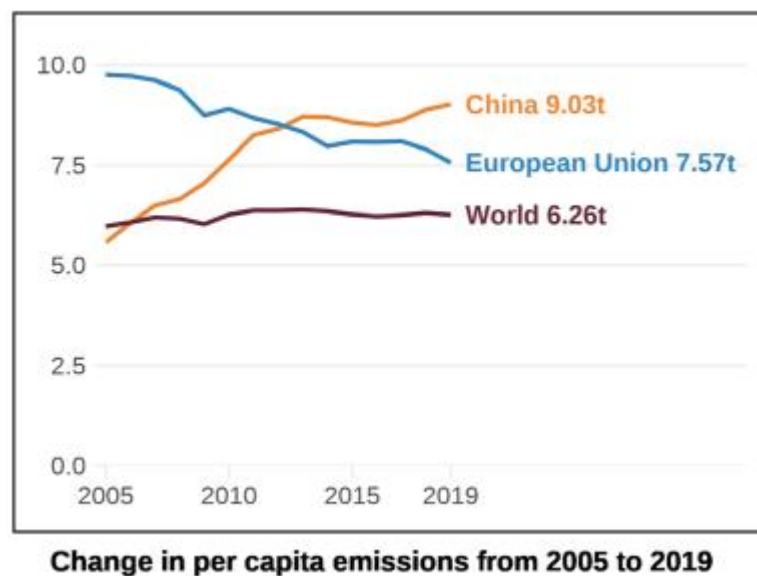
### (China's Philosophy and Goals on Addressing the Climate Change)

China, home to up to 1.4 billion people, is a developing nation. It is dealing with several issues, such as environmental preservation, economic growth, and improving people's standard of living, in addition to the obvious paradox of uneven and insufficient progress. China is negatively impacted by climate change. Climate change has negatively impacted China's ecological environment and socioeconomic growth, which has already raised significant risks to the country's supply of food, water, energy, ecology, urban operations, and people's safety and property.

According to the Chinese government, nature-based solutions are critical in lowering greenhouse gas emissions, enhancing climate resilience, and promoting sustainable development. For instance, China has developed and implemented an ecological red-line policy. The departments involved have collaborated horizontally and vertically to strictly control and protect areas with important ecological functions like biodiversity maintenance, wind prevention, sand fixation, environmental sensitivity, and vulnerability to rocky and land desertification. This has been accomplished by scientifically drawing and implementing ecological red lines effectively. Thus far, the Yangtze River Economic Belt and the Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei provinces have ecological red lines. China has been making great efforts to ensure ecological functions, enhance environmental quality, and mitigate the effects of climate change (International Energy Agency, 2022).

The State Council led developing nations in publishing the National Climate Change Programme in 2007 when it established the National Leading Group on Climate Change, Energy Conservation, and Emission Reduction, which the Premier of the State Council chairs. China has reduced carbon dioxide emissions per unit of GDP, a binding target in its five-year plans for national economic and social development since the 12th Five-Year Plan that broke down the national carbon intensity reduction target into smaller goals that local governments could implement first. China announced its Nationally Appropriate Mitigation 6 Actions to the international community in 2009 and plans to complete them by 2020 (National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC), n.d.).

China's long-term low-emission development strategy was largely shaped by the 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China (CPC), which proposed in 2017 to create a great modern socialist nation that is strong, democratic, prosperous, harmonious, and beautiful by the middle of this century. In a solemn address to the general debate of the 75th session of the UN General Assembly on September 22, 2020, Chinese President Xi Jinping declared that his country would increase its Intended Nationally Determined Contributions by implementing more stringent policies and initiatives to peak carbon dioxide emissions before 2030 and reach carbon neutrality by the end of 2060 (Department of Resource Conservation and Environmental Protection, 2021).



**Figure 2. Changes in per capita emissions**

**Source: EPRS | European Parliamentary Research Service**

The Chinese government has executed China's Mid-Century, Long-Term Low Greenhouse Gas Emission Development Strategy, guided by Xi Jinping's Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics in the New Era and the new development philosophy of innovative, coordinated, green, and open for the benefit of all. The strategy is based on national conditions and future development plans, and it has involved extensive research, demonstration, and gathering feedback from all relevant parties. In addition to outlining the ideas and suggestions for advancing global climate governance, the Low-Emission Growth Strategy lays forth the

fundamental concepts, strategic vision, strategic goals, and policy advice for China's long-term low-emission growth.

## Achievements of the Party

### (China's positive contributions to combating the global climate change)

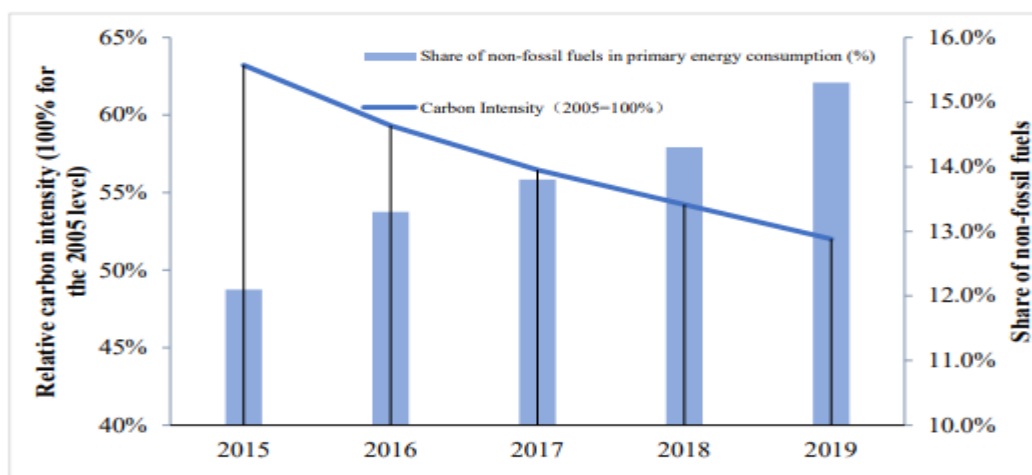
With 12.7 billion tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent (CO<sub>2</sub>e) in 2019 and a 26% share of global GHG emissions, China is the world's greatest emitter of greenhouse gases (GHGs). China's consumption-based emissions, when accounted for foreign trade, are about 10% lower. China's greenhouse gas emissions increased by 75% between 2005 and 2019 due to rapid economic expansion and rising energy use (Erbach & Jochheim, 2022).

China's land use, land-use change, and forestry (LULUCF) sector is a significant carbon sink, accounting for around 5% of the country's 2019 GHG emissions. Since 2005, China's LULUCF sink capacity has nearly doubled due to extensive reforestation and landscape restoration (Christophersen & Li, 2019).

China has accepted the Paris Agreement and is a signatory to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). It is included in the category of developing nations outside of Annex I of the treaty, which is subject to laxer regulations and is eligible for assistance from the industrialised nations included in Annex I. Parties' goals and pledges to combat climate change are outlined in the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), which are updated every five years.

Between 2005 and 2019, greenhouse gas emissions from manufacturing and construction increased by 43%, while emissions from industrial processes grew quickly by 121%. The combined GHG emissions from these industries are 32% of China's total emissions. The construction boom in China and the resulting cement output are linked to the significant increase in industrial process emissions.

Between 2005 and 2021, China's primary energy consumption nearly doubled—China's energy consumption. In 2021, gas accounted for 8.6%, oil for 19.4%, and coal for 54.7%. Because of the increase in energy demand, coal consumption increased by 55% even as its proportion decreased from 73% to 55%.



**Figure: 3. Changes in China's carbon intensity and its share of non-fossil fuels in primary energy consumption, 2015–2019 Source:(UNFCCC, n.d.-a)**

Ahead of COP26, in October 2021, China formally presented its revised Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) and mid-century long-term low greenhouse gas emission development strategy. It committed to peaking CO<sub>2</sub> emissions before 2030 and achieving carbon neutrality by 2060 (National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC), 2021). China plans to attain over 1200 GW of installed wind and solar power by 2030 and a reduction of over 65% from its 2005 carbon emissions level. By 2030, non-fossil fuels should account for 25% of primary energy consumption. By 2030, China's forest stock should have increased by 6 billion cubic metres from its 2005 level (Erbach & Jochheim, 2022; UNFCCC, n.d.-b).

## **Concluding Remarks**

### **(Foster a green, low-carbon and circular economic system)**

One of the direst challenges confronting humanity is climate change. Since the Industrial Revolution, human activity has significantly increased the concentration of greenhouse gases (GHGs) in the atmosphere. This is notably the case with carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) emissions from industrialised nations' extensive use of fossil fuels. The consequence has been an exacerbation of global climate change, which poses a danger to the security of the worldwide environment and the socioeconomic growth of developing nations. Man and nature form a community of life. One of the shared causes of the human race is addressing climate change. It calls for the international community to support multilateralism, work towards low-carbon and green development, and collaborate in creating a community that shares a future for all people (UNFCCC, n.d.-a).

As China's chairman, Xi Jinping, pointed out, combating climate change is a key component of global governance. Global efforts to combat climate change also act as a mirror, providing important insights for examining future forms of global governance and advancing the development of a global community with a shared future for all people. Additionally, he underlined that all nations must cooperate in implementing the Paris Agreement and taking decisive action, as it sets the overall course for the global green and low-carbon transformation.

China has consistently backed multilateralism and is prepared to keep stepping up its coordination and communication with all stakeholders on important issues like climate change to support the creation of a just, reasonable, cooperative, and win-win global climate governance system and contribute to the attainment of a higher standard of sustainable development on a worldwide scale.

China has increased its efforts in recent years to support low-carbon growth through proactive enhancement of climate resilience, efficient mitigation of GHG emissions, and ongoing system and mechanism improvement. China has also contributed positively to the Paris Agreement's completion and quick ratification and the discussions on the regulations governing the agreement's comprehensive and complete implementation. China has assumed a leading role in a global collaboration to address climate change, emerging as a significant player, contributor, and advocate for an ecological civilisation.

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