


Chapter 5

China's Ecological Civilization:

An Effective Instrument for Solving Energy Challenges and Climate Change Complications

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ABSTRACT

China faces its own complications in adapting to the new realities in the energy sector. The distinct strategic vision of the country was boosted by an on-target assortment of practical tools for energy readjustment. The motivation to transform the national energy mix triggered the efforts to join the global trend for advancement in green energy. In the light of these issues, the paper explores the principal dimensions of the integration of the green pillar in the energy strategy and policy of PRC, in order to evaluate their repercussions in the domestic and the international realm. The research showcases the essence of the promoted concept for “ecological civilization”, defined by many experts as a form of sustainable development with Chinese characteristics, and its role in the rise of the country as a renewable energy superpower. The study is oriented towards outlining the main dimensions of the metamorphoses in the Asian country's energy policy and presenting its potential for the use of renewable energy to generate green growth.

DOI: 10.4018/979-8-3373-1310-8.ch005

INTRODUCTION

The global energy landscape has been marked in recent decades by major changes, induced by sector-specific processes with their distinctive endogenous and exogenous dynamics. This industry, which is vital to the functioning of all countries and societies, had to go through a number of struggles in relation to the challenges generated by the reduction of the fossil fuel reserves, provoking an escalation of competition between buyers of energy resources on the global markets. The transformations were additionally intensified by the intervention of the newly emerging “resource hungry” countries, especially in Asia, where their economic performance remodeled the design of several supply chains. As a result of the inconstant conditions and the altering order, achieving and safeguarding energy security has been elevated to the status of a fundamental foreign policy goal. In this perplexing situation, discussions on the risks of militarization of energy policy have come to the top of the political agenda. The ghost of mushrooming conflicts, and in this context of energy wars, was far from being the only one hovering in the public domain in terms of predicted future disasters.

Furthermore, the threatening levels of the negative impact of the ecological footprint of human activities, including the extraction and consumption of energy resources, emerged as no less alarming with regard to the loss of natural capital and the shrinking opportunities for its restoration. These concerns brought about increasing calls for transformations in the public perceptions with regard to the practices, according to which the use of energy resources is managed, both for the needs of the economy and in our daily activities. In this fashion, the signals for the accelerating destruction of the biosphere have stimulated the urge for a shift towards new energy paradigm on international level. The search for alternatives to fossil fuels placed special emphasis on renewable energy and green technologies. On the one hand, focusing public attention on them was logical in the context of the issues of environmental protection, limiting climate change and achieving sustainable development. On the other hand, however, the necessity and existence of an international consensus on the imperative for their launch were questioned. Gradually, they succeeded in overcoming the label of fashionable trend and proved their qualities as widely embraced tools for solving existing problems.

The unfolding debate on the search for a panacea in the energy sector had its reasonable supplement. It was also necessary to find mechanisms to overcome the damages caused by the financial and economic crisis of 2007-2008. The European Union used the situation, in order to promote the green technologies and to generate profits on this base. In due time, the potential of this instrument has been recognized by other actors on the international scene. The picture of investment activity for renewables has progressively started to change, adding new agents in the competition

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