

Shared Leadership for Climate Protection?

China is implementing the standards of developed countries into the realities of developing countries – within 30 years

BY WANG YIWEI AND CHEN CHAO

China's per capita emissions are relatively low and even lower if calculated in cumulative terms. A significant share of these fall in the category of subsistence emissions, necessary for securing people's basic needs. In China, there are still over 600 million people with a monthly income of barely 1,000 yuan (€135), while the country goes through a modernization process that is characterized by industrialization and urbanization.

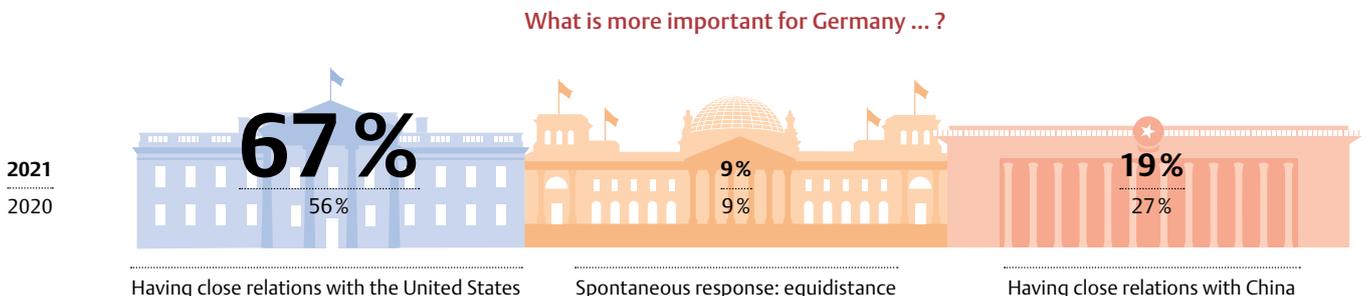
Carbon neutrality before 2060

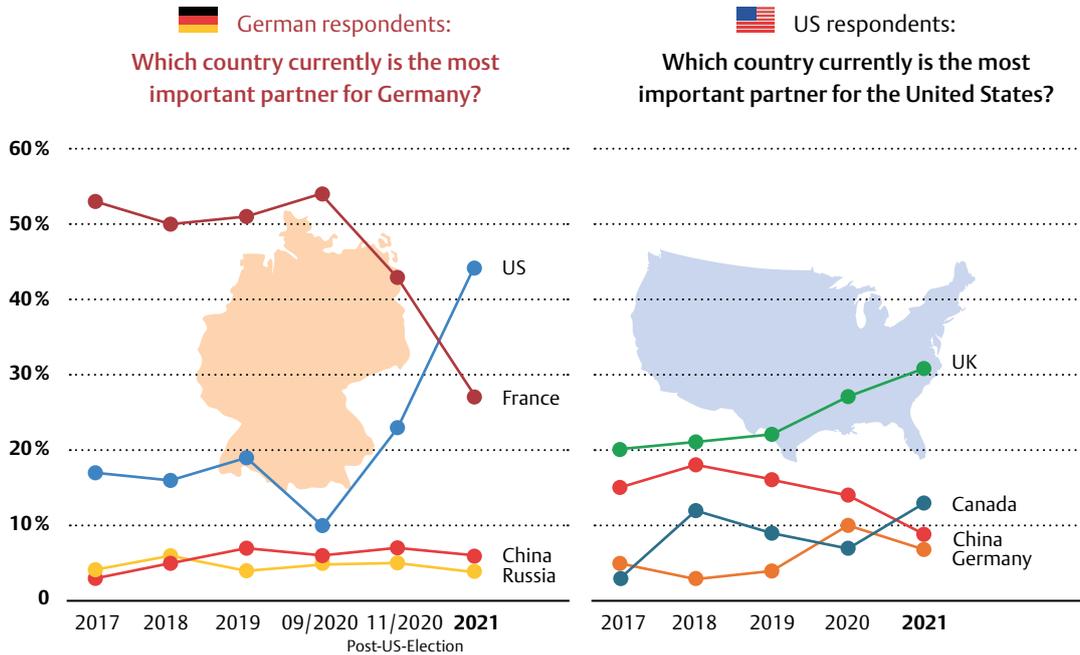
As President Xi Jinping emphasized at the 75th session of the UN General Assembly in September 2020, China aims to reach its carbon peak before 2030 and achieve carbon neutrality before 2060. The country's climate commitments now require it to make this transition within 30 years. By com-

parison, most developed countries had 60 years to go down this road. But, based on previous experiences, we can expect China to reach this goal ahead of schedule.

To pursue green development, China's government announced the 14th Five-Year Plan in March 2021, which includes energy and climate goals for 2021–25. The Leading Group on Carbon Peak and Carbon Neutrality, an entity attached to the National Development and Reform Commission, will turn these goals into action plans and targets at the provincial and industry level. This will be done by applying China's '1+N' policy system, in which '1' stands for the general guideline and 'N' refers to the action plans for different sectors.

The huge sacrifice China is making to fulfil its commitments demonstrates its determination and devotion to solving humanity's most crucial issue – the climate crisis. In this process, it perceives





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itself as a converter, implementing the standards of developed countries into the realities of developing countries.

China has always valued harmony between humans and nature. This commitment is deeply connected to an understanding that the whole society must be mobilized for the national effort of climate protection. This year's survey results of *The Berlin Pulse* show that Germans have become more sceptical of China, but as a human community we share the same future.

Trilateral interaction to tackle the climate crisis

China, the European Union and the United States also shared leadership in the negotiation and enforcement of the Paris Climate Agreement. However, the situation changed dramatically during the Trump administration, exacerbating a leadership deficit in global climate governance and making the previous model of collective leadership difficult to pursue. President Joe Biden has focused his climate policies so far around new-energy firms,

which is why conflicts among domestic interest groups will hinder the United States in achieving great changes.

Climate change will remain an important issue for the trilateral interaction between China, the European Union and the United States. And there is huge scope for practical cooperation on global environmental governance. In addition, the European and US experience on modes of production and transport and the way their energy sector is structured are of great interest and value for China on its path to tackling climate change. In taking this path, China will follow the President Xi's Thought on Ecological Civilization to build a shared future for all life on earth, lead climate action and share responsibilities in international activities for the progress of humanity.

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