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Regional Realities, Global Dilemmas:

Rethinking Legislative Strategies

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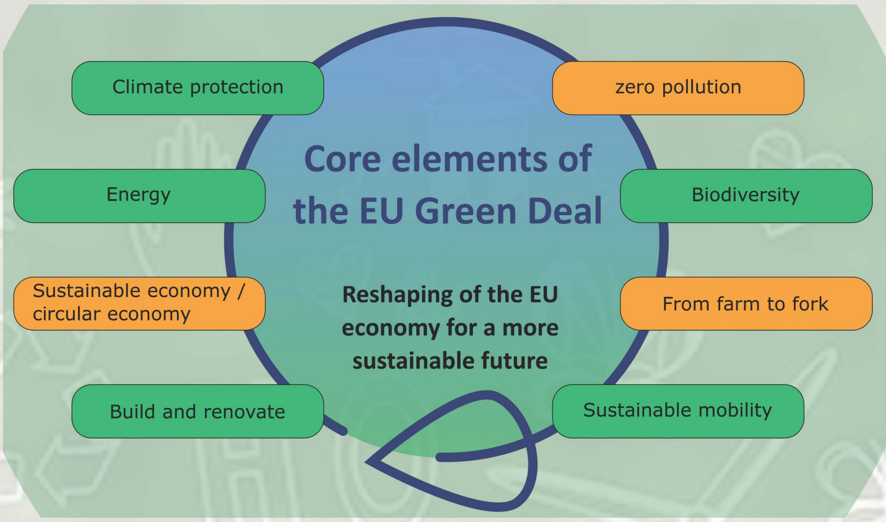
In our contemporary era, marked by intricate global interdependencies and pressing planetary challenges, the shortcomings of regional legislation in effectively addressing issues of global significance have become increasingly evident. This essay critically assesses the limitations of regional initiatives through a detailed examination of a pertinent case study: the European Green Deal (EGD), adopted by the European (EU) Commission and subsequently ratified by the EU Parliament in 2019. By scrutinizing the norms outlined in the EGD and their outcomes, it is possible to evaluate the inherent deficiencies of regional approaches and emphasize the necessity for comprehensive global cooperation in addressing multifaceted global issues.

The European Green Deal: A Case Study

The EGD represents a comprehensive framework aimed at combating climate change, enhancing environmental sustainability, and promoting a green transition within the EU. At its core, the EGD establishes ambitious targets and regulatory measures intended to reduce carbon emissions, encourage sustainable mobility and renewable energy sources, foster sustainable economic growth, preserve biodiversity, and transform the food manufacturing, processing, retailing, and packaging sectors (Stacy, 2023). However, upon closer examination, it becomes evident that the effectiveness of the EGD is compromised by its regional focus and limited scope. Comprising various directives that impact the economies of member states and the livelihoods and well-being of ordinary citizens, the EGD imposes, for instance, a phase-out of internal combustion engine vehicles by 2035 and advocates for the adoption of electric vehicles (EVs), disregarding the adverse repercussions on the automotive industry. It has been estimated that European car manufacturers such as Mercedes, Ferrari, Maserati, Renault, and BMW may need to cut as many as 10 million jobs due to the drastic changes and the constrained timeframe (Ippolito, 2023). Moreover, despite the environmental benefits associated with electric vehicles, factors such as their price, insurance and maintenance costs, the lack of infrastructure, and the absence of significant financial incentives from public institutions have led the majority of the general populace to reject purchasing EVs, thus hindering the attainment of the specified targets (Longhin, 2024).

The EGD enforces stringent regulations across various sectors, including agriculture and construction. Presently, farmers hailing from France, Germany, Belgium, Poland, Romania, Italy, the Netherlands, Bulgaria, and Spain are staging protests in Brussels, the headquarters of the EU Commission, citing concerns about their future livelihoods. EU directives on agriculture significantly affect the well-being of farmers within the EU. They are compelled to reduce their production output, relinquish land for the installation of wind turbines and photovoltaic systems, and decrease livestock numbers due to EU green policies, which assert that animals generate excessive gas pollution. In Italy and the Netherlands alone, it is estimated that around 800,000 cows will need to be culled within the next three years to mitigate methane emissions. EU farmers are apprehensive that such measures may lead to the loss



of millions of jobs and a substantial decline in meat production, consequently impacting their income. They contend that these green initiatives will primarily benefit competitors from non-EU countries, which are not bound by the same rigorous constraints and standards. The swift implementation of rigorous environmental regulations within a restricted timeframe poses a potential threat to the EU agricultural sector and its competitive advantage in the global market (Paolini, 2024).

The EGD mandates the enhancement of existing residential properties to improve their energy efficiency, sustainability, and overall performance. This initiative entails the implementation of various measures, including thermal insulation, energy-efficient windows and doors, renewable energy systems, and smart technologies. The EU Directive known as the “Energy Performance of Buildings” aims to reduce energy consumption in private buildings, decrease carbon emissions, and contribute to a more sustainable and environmentally friendly housing sector. Its overarching goal is to achieve energy efficiency in the real estate sector by 2030 and attain zero CO2 emissions by 2050. Estimates from experts suggest that the cost of retrofitting a 100-square-meter apartment may range from 55,000 to 80,000 euros per single family (Landolfi, 2024). Moreover, individuals

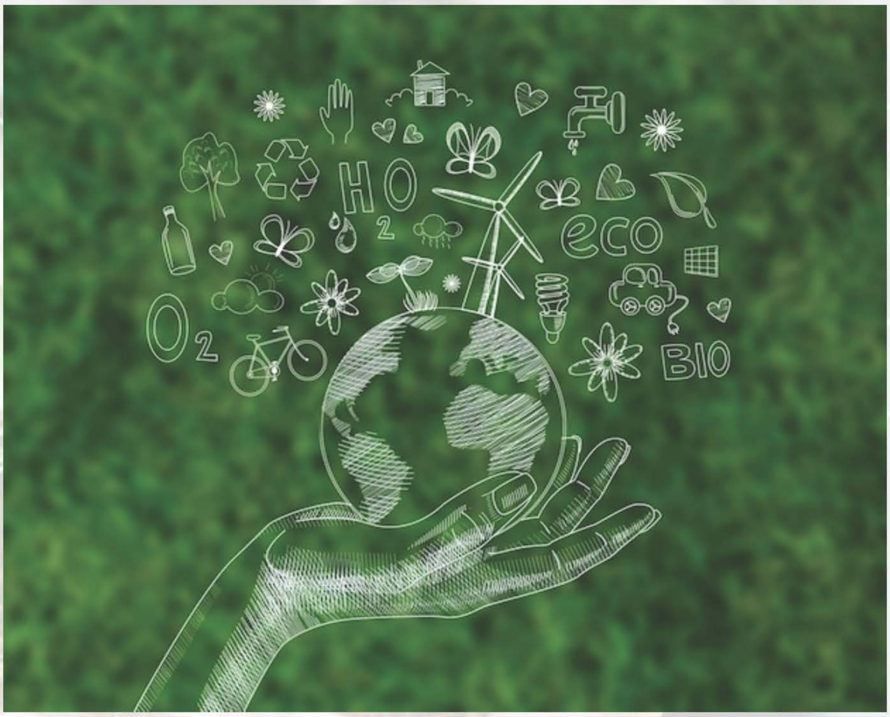
unable to bear the substantial costs required for energy requalification interventions mandated by the legislation are likely to witness a significant depreciation in the value of their so-called "energy-intensive" properties. Effectively, the EU Directive “Energy Performance of Buildings” imposes a de facto new property tax on small homeowners, while simultaneously providing favorable conditions for credit institutions and large real estate investment groups seeking to acquire properties for sale across Europe. All this is justified under the pretext of advancing environmental sustainability (Di Bartolo, 2024).

The implementation of the European Green Deal carries significant financial implications that are poised to exert profound repercussions on the well-being of ordinary citizens across the European Union. The magnitude of the costs associated with the EGD is staggering, and their impact on the populace’s economic standing is imminent. This dire forecast is compounded by the redirection of public funds initially earmarked for the EGD toward supporting military efforts in Ukraine. When the EU Commission approved the EGD in 2019, it allocated more than one trillion euros of public investments through the EU budget and the European Bank to alleviate the burden on their citizens. However, after the eruption of the war between Russia and Ukraine on February 24, 2022, the EU Commission, with a controversial political decision, decided to redirect these funds to support Ukraine militarily. From that date until today, the EU has spent more than two trillion euros on weaponry. Due to excessive spending on armaments, the EU is currently experiencing a shortage of resources for the European Green Deal and its domestic economy. This means that citizens alone must bear the costs of the green transition (Genovese, 2023). The reallocation of these funds, which were originally intended to bolster sustainability initiatives and mitigate environmental degradation, signifies a palpable setback for the EU’s green agenda. Consequently, the depletion of resources earmarked for environmental initiatives underscores the heightened financial strain on EU citizens, who now face the grim reality of zeroed public investment in crucial sectors such as renewable energy, infrastructure, and sustainable development. Moreover, the stringent regulatory framework outlined by the EGD is poised to usher in seismic shifts across various sectors, including automotive and agriculture, thereby precipitating substantial disruptions to established economic paradigms. Industries reliant on traditional practices face an uphill battle in complying with the stringent emissions standards and sustainability benchmarks mandated by the EGD, potentially leading to widespread job losses, diminished competitiveness, and economic instability. Thus, the far-reaching ramifications of the EGD extend beyond environmental stewardship to encompass profound socio-economic implications that threaten to exacerbate inequalities and imperil the economic well-being of EU member states and their citizens (Boero, 2024). While the EGD imposes stringent regulations on various sectors to mitigate carbon emissions, its impact is

mitigated by the lack of synchronized global action. While EU member states may adhere to stringent environmental standards, the carbon emissions of nations outside the EU continue unabated, undermining the efficacy of regional efforts in addressing climate change.

Undoubtedly, the EGD has imposed a substantial economic burden on European citizens, contributing to increased stress and diminished economic well-being. It has been five years since the European Commission, under the leadership of Ursula Von Der Leyen, approved this comprehensive initiative. It is now pertinent to assess whether the efforts required by EU citizens and the economies of individual member states have yielded significant environmental results.

As per the Shell Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) Outlook 2024, global demand for LNG is projected to increase by 50% between now and 2040, primarily driven by Asian markets, with a peak anticipated during that decade. China, as the largest importer of LNG globally, is expected to contribute significantly to this growth, with global demand reaching 625-685 million tonnes per year by 2040, compared to the current volume of around 400 million tonnes. Additionally, under current policies, global demand for coal, oil, and gas is forecasted to peak by 2030. Consequently, the trajectory of global LNG demand poses a significant challenge to achieving the Earth's temperature goal of staying below 1.5 degrees Celsius, a key objective of both the EGD and the 2015 Paris Climate Agreement (Reynolds & Doleman, 2024).



The latest report from the World Meteorological Organization indicates that greenhouse gas concentrations have reached record levels, with no sign of abating. Global average concentrations of carbon dioxide (CO2), the primary greenhouse gas, surpassed pre-industrial era levels by 50% for the first time in 2022 and continued to rise in 2023. Methane concentrations also increased, and levels of nitrous oxide, another significant greenhouse gas, experienced their highest annual increase on record between 2021 and 2022. Furthermore, the report projects that the global surface temperature will rise by 1.8°C higher than the average for the years 1850-1900 between 2023 and 2027 (Taalas, 2023).

Conclusion

The limitations of regional legislation within the European Union in effectively addressing environmental concerns highlight the pressing necessity for global cooperation and concerted action. Climate change represents a pervasive global challenge that transcends national borders, necessitating collaborative endeavors on an international scale. While regional struggles may yield incremental advancements, the magnitude of the climate crisis necessitates a unified approach encompassing all nations. Central to this imperative is the principle of shared responsibility and differentiated obligations. Developed nations, given their historical emissions and greater resource endowments, shoulder a disproportionate burden in mitigating climate change and providing support to vulnerable communities disproportionately affected by its repercussions. Conversely, developing nations, while contributing to global emissions, require assistance and support to transition toward sustainable development pathways and adapt to the adverse impacts of climate change. This necessitates a shift in approach and mindset among world leaders, urging them to confront issues that transcend geographical boundaries. Regrettably, the adverse effects of globalization — such as human exploitation, environmental degradation, widening social disparities, loss of local identities, and the escalating influence of multinational corporations at the expense of national sovereignties and policies — perpetrated over the past years to enrich financial elites have prompted many nations to adopt isolationist stances, focusing solely on their individual interests (Magnani, 2024).

The approval of the European Green Deal by the EU Commission in 2019 highlights the acknowledgment of the inherent limitations of regional legislation in addressing overarching global environmental challenges such as greenhouse gas emissions and global warming. Despite its ambitious goals and comprehensive regulatory measures, the EGD operates within the confines of the EU's jurisdiction, recognizing that its impact on global environmental dynamics may be marginal at best. However, the decision to pursue the EGD must also be contextualized within the broader socio-political landscape, where instances of corruption within the EU Commission, such as the Qatargate, Chinagate, and most recently, the Mosca gate scandals, have raised doubts about the integrity of its decision- making processes. These revelations raise questions regarding the motivations behind the approval of the EGD, suggesting that it may have been driven not solely by a genuine commitment to safeguarding the Earth but also by corrupt practices and ulterior motives (Carretta, 2022; Tito, 2024). Despite these challenges, the EU Commission's decision to forge ahead with the EGD underscores a strategic approach aimed at leveraging regional influence, albeit within the shadow of corruption allegations, while recognizing the imperative of broader international cooperation to address global environmental challenges effectively. Undoubtedly, the limitations of regional legislation in addressing issues of global importance are underscored by the European Green Deal. While regional initiatives may embody commendable objectives, their efficacy is inherently constrained by the interconnectedness of global challenges and the imperative for collective action. To truly address issues such as climate change, nations must transcend narrow regional interests and embrace a collaborative, multilateral approach.

Similar considerations apply to the ethical governance of emerging technologies. On March 13, 2024, the EU Parliament approved the Artificial Intelligence (AI) Act aiming to regulate AI's utilization. Many contend that the EU AI Act is merely a political decision unable to interfere with AI's regulation and development and to produce substantial effects. Economic superpowers such as the USA and China are investing billions in AI, and the EU appears to overlook the rapid evolution of this new technology. Therefore, EU legislation, confined to a restricted geographical area, might become obsolete in a short time (Alfieri, 2024). Only through concerted global cooperation can meaningful progress be achieved in tackling the pressing challenges confronting humanity in the 21st century. Recalling the principle of interconnected collaboration (i.e., implying cooperation among various countries, each with its own agenda and perspectives) in this precise historical moment, marred by too many wars and serious geopolitical tensions, may appear utopian. Nonetheless, on certain issues concerning the survival of all humanity, close dialogue, even among adversaries, remains the only viable path to finding solutions of common interest.

References

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