

Analysing the Renewable Energy Integration Paradigm in the Post-COVID-19 Era: An Examination of the Upcoming Energy Law of China

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Abstract : The declared transformation towards a 'new electricity system dominated by renewable energy' by China requires a cleaner electricity consumption mix with high shares of renewable energy sourced-electricity (RES-E). Unfortunately, integration of RES-E into Chinese electricity markets remains a problem pending more robust legal support, evidenced by the curtailment of wind and solar power as a consequence of integration constraints. The upcoming energy law of the PRC (energy law) is expected to provide such long-awaited support and coordinate the existing diverse sector-specific laws to deal with the weak implementation that dampening the delivery of their desired regulatory effects. However, in the shadow of the COVID-19 crisis, it remains uncertain how this new energy law brings synergies to RES-E integration, mindful of the significant impacts of the pandemic. Through the theoretical lens of the interplay between China's electricity reform and legislative development, the present paper investigates whether there is a paradigm shift in energy law regarding renewable energy integration compared with the existing sector-specific energy laws. It examines the 2020 draft for comments on the energy law and analyses its relationship with sector-specific energy laws focusing on RES-E integration. The comparison is drawn upon five key aspects of the RES-E integration issue, including the status of renewables, marketisation, incentive schemes, consumption mechanisms, access to power grids, and dispatching. The analysis shows that it is reasonable to expect a more open and well-organized electricity market enabling absorption of high shares of RES-E. The present paper concludes that a period of prosperous development of RES-E in the post-COVID-19 era can be anticipated with the legal support by the upcoming energy law. It contributes to understanding the signals China is sending regarding the transition towards a cleaner energy future.

Keywords : energy law, energy transition, electricity market reform, renewable energy integration

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