

“Federalism and Climate Change: towards a European and Global Green Deal”¹

The main goal of Federalism is to archive global peace, but there cannot be peace without a habitable planet. In addition, peace is not just the absence of conflict, but a harmonious “living together” in a multi-ethnic, multi-cultural, cosmopolitan society.

Thus, political federalism aims to achieve civil and international peace. However, we can also see environmentalism as a way of achieving peace between humankind and the planet, by stopping the human aggression on Earth. This implies reversing climate change, cleaning the air and waterways, and preserving biodiversity. Therefore, in terms of their respective goals, there is an interesting link between federalism and environmentalism.

According to the EU program Copernicus, June 2019 was the warmest June ever registered: temperatures have been 2 degrees above of normal. Not surprisingly, the latest heat waves (in July 2019 Brussels experienced 41 degrees..!) have coincided with the news that CO2 emissions are at a record high.

It is imperative to move fast to climate neutrality at the global level. According to the United Nations, there are only 10 years left to act: 2030 will be too late. Since global warming is by definition a cross-border, transnational issue, it requires regional and global governance.

Thus, Federalism also offers a solution for this civilizational challenge: national governments alone cannot tackle it. Only voluntary cooperation among nations will not be enough, as the Kyoto Protocol or the Paris agreement, with Trump`s USA getting prepared to betray, have shown.

That is why we have, in the field of climate change, or better said, climatic crisis, to go beyond cooperation into integration: The Federalist solution. Only if Nation States pool together the resources and the decisions would we be able to save the Planet.

The president-elect of the European Commission, Ursula Von der Leyen, declared her determination to make the Union climate neutral by 2050. Therefore, she has proposed a number of measures: a Green Deal for Europe composed of a 10 year Transitional Plan for the Industry, a European Bank for Climate, the introduction of a Carbon Border Tax, and the extension of the Emissions Trading System. The aim is to reduce emissions by at least 50% by 2030.

This Green Deal, that goes back to the New Deal 4 Europe proposal launched in 2014 by several European federalist organizations² under the leadership of Lucio Levi, has been endorsed by progressives in the US (Representative Ocasio-Cortez), and in Europe (Nouvelle Donne in France, the Spanish Socialists³, Diem25), and now it is official policy of the European Commission.

¹ This is the corrected and improved version of the lecture delivered at the “Climate Democracy & Justice Training & Summit”, in Epirus (Greece), on 26 July 2019, see: <https://cuncr.org/research-seminars/international-environmental-laws-and-climate-change/climate-democracy-justice-training-summit/> [acceded on 22/09/2019].

² See <http://www.newdeal4europe.eu/en/> [acceded on 22/09/2019].

³ See <https://www.psoe.es/media-content/2019/05/20190506-Programa-PSOE-elecciones-europeas-26M.pdf> [acceded on 22/09/2019].

Such a plan makes a lot of sense from a number of perspectives. First, carbon neutrality is a survival imperative. Second, it provides incentives to advance our technological development. Third, it is a source of investment, economic growth, and jobs.

Let's not forget that the European economy is not operating at full employment. Growth is rather low, like inflation. Therefore, we need to find new sources of growth that is less intensive in producing non-durable goods.

We can scale-up our investments in clean, renewable energy, bio-industries, electric cars and batteries, public rail transportation, house insulation, carbon capture and storage, and recycling, all of which will boost the gross national product and employment. This is fundamental for the survival of liberal democracy and European integration, since joblessness, poverty and economic inequality foster national-populism and xenophobia.

The Green Deal makes also a lot of sense from a financial point of view. In order to finance the ecological transition in Europe we need a minimum of 300 billion euros per year (as estimated by the EU Commission), and 1 trillion (as estimated by the European Court of Auditors). It is a lot of money. Nevertheless, the official interest rate in the Eurozone is 0 per cent. Thus, it makes a lot of (financial) sense to launch a large issuance of long term Green Bonds by the European Union through the European Investment Bank (EIB)⁴, which could in turn -most of them- be bought by the European Central Bank, who in September 2019 resumed its Asset Purchase Program in order to avoid deflationary tendencies. Then, the EIB or the new European Climate Bank could lend at very low rates to Member States in order to finance massive investments in energy efficiency and building insulation, as proposed by Pierre Larrourou and its *Pacte Finance Climat*⁵.

Beyond Europe, we need to promote regional integration in all continents in order to develop the carbon neutrality agenda not just on voluntary cooperation basis, as well as managing many other transnational issues such as migration, international development, and global inequalities.

These regional blocs could one day conform the world federation: Mercosur/CELAC, African Union, ASEAN, etc. These regional organizations should become more politically integrated and be able to set similar climate goals as the ones proposed by the European Commission for the European Union.

This action at the continental level should be replicated at the global level. Beyond the Paris Accord, which is just the bare minimum (holding the increase in temperature below 2 degrees Celsius), and even the 2030 SDGs, I think we need a climate neutral planet goal and a Global Green Deal sponsored by the UN. On 22 July 2019, Secretary General Guterres called all Member States to commit to carbon neutrality by 2050, and on the 23 September 2019 he convened in New York the Climate Action Summit.

But again, only intergovernmental cooperation will not be enough to achieve it. We need a more political United Nations. First and foremost, we need to set up the United Nations Parliamentary Assembly (UNPA), as proposed by Andreas Bummel and Jo Leinen⁶, and the World Federalist

⁴ See <https://www.psoe.es/media-content/2019/05/12medidaseuropasocial.pdf> [accessed on 22/09/2019].

⁵ See <https://www.pacte-climat.eu/en/> [accessed on 22/09/2019].

⁶ See <https://en.unpacampaign.org/> [accessed on 22/09/2019].

Movement overall. We should also call for the long overdue review of the UN Charter, as proposed by Shahr-Yar Mahmoud Sharei⁷.

One can imagine such a body agreeing faster to an ambitious and binding climate agenda than the UN General Assembly. Even if the UNPA resolutions were not binding at first, they could contribute to move a global, progressive, agenda forward.

My party, the Spanish Worker's Socialist Party (PSOE), supports both the Green Deal and the UNPA. I believe that the EU should make regional integration in other continents, and the creation of the UNPA, key elements of its foreign policy, alongside its commitment to carbon neutrality at the global level. The European Parliament has endorsed the UNPA in several resolutions. Now it is the turn of the European Commission.

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⁷ See <https://cuncr.org/research/book-review-global-commentary-and-forum/upholding-the-san-francisco-promise-the-roadmap-to-a-constitutionalised-united-nations/> [accessed on 22/09/2019].