

TALLINN UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY

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**FROM BYSTANDER TO WORLD LEADER?  
ATTITUDE CHANGES IN CHINA'S ENVIRONMENTAL  
POLICY DISCOURSE**

Master's thesis

Supervisor: Professor Peeter Mürsepp

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I have written the Master's thesis independently

All works and major viewpoints of the other authors, data from other sources of literature and elsewhere used for writing this paper have been referenced.

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## **ABSTRACT**

It is no news that global environmental problems have become one of the most urgent international issues getting priority by the policy makers. As the United Nations have recognized - climate change is a global problem which further indicates that it will need a global solution, recognized and respected by all. As world's largest emitter and second largest economy China now has the power to change the course of climate change mitigation and adaptation. It has historically been perceived that China is somewhat uninterested in having influence on a global level but this thesis brings new insight into the matter.

The objective of this thesis was to analyze how China's opinions over environmental policies have changed during the past decade and to further investigate whether it is possible to make assumptions on success of future intergovernmental cooperation on environmental matters from these opinion changes.

The thesis process started with analyzing the historical steps of Chinese environmental policy making and finding a theory to describe the general logic of state behavior when constructing environmental policies. Furthermore, the purpose was to clarify the main constructions of the currently existing climate agreements. The present state of China's international involvement in the climate change matters was investigated by opinion changes during the past decade.

The research part of the thesis was implemented by qualitative analysis of High-Level Segment Statements made by Group of 77 and China at Conferences of Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change between the years 2007-2016. Additionally, news reports and other researches on the topics of Chinese development and climate change mitigation have been supporting the execution of the thesis and the aim to get a comprehensive overall picture of the topic. The analysis has moreover been influenced by the student's own experiences and empirical research conducted during the time lived in People's Republic of China.

On the basis of the study it can be stated that China's opinions towards climate change issues have been somewhat fluctuating. Environmental negotiations concerning climate change and emission reductions have historically presented to be challenging but fortunately with the support of China and so many other states a new climate change agreement was agreed upon in 2015.

**Keywords:** China's environmental discourse, Climate Change, UNFCCC, High-level Segment Statements

## FOREWORDS

“I don’t understand why when we destroy something created by man we call it vandalism, but when we destroy something created by nature we call it progress” Ed Begley, Jr.

When I first read this aphorism it really made me think of development. The development that we have been able to recognize during the past few decades on so many levels. And not only how everything has positively advanced but also how many aspects have seen a decline because of the behavior of us, humans.

The years I have spent studying the behavior of states in our anarchistic world order have made me realize how I actually know so little about so many things. I have had a privileged possibility to visit many amazing places and travel around our beautiful planet but this has made me recognize even better how it as a tourist and student is impossible to grasp a genuine understanding of other cultures - which in my opinion comprise the foundation for state actions. Hence, I decided that I really want to get in touch with the unfamiliar and chose to take a leap to the unknown and move to China. I wished it would make me a better IR student and give me a level of knowledge that is just impossible to get from reading books. I have to say that the time I spent in China really shook my perception of our world. Since my time in the country of pandas and dragons was fairly short I cannot really say I would even now fully understand the culture. But I can still say that I now have through my own eyes and lungs experienced how we human beings are able to in such a short period of time destroy the elements that actually make it possible for us to live – air, water, farming land etc. This is of course not alone a problem in China but all-over our planet. Why have we driven ourselves into this ditch?

It seems like the steps we have perceived as development are actually regression. Borrowing the world of thought of indigenous people; do we have to tear down all trees, pollute all rivers and catch the last fish before we understand that we cannot eat money?

I would like to dedicate this thesis to all like-minded environmentally conscious optimists who will never stop fighting for the causes important to them.

## LIST OF ABBRIVATIONS AND TERMS

ADP	Ad hoc Working Group on the Durban Platform for Enhanced Action
Agreement	Paris Agreement
Annex I Parties	Industrialized countries listed in Annex I to the Convention
AWG-KP	Ad hoc Working Group on further commitments for Annex I Parties under the Kyoto Protocol
AWG-LCA	Ad hoc Working Group on Long-term Cooperative Action under the Convention
CDM	Clean Development Mechanism
CMA	Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Paris Agreement
CMP	Conference of the Parties serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol
Convention	see UNFCCC
COP	Conference of the Parties
CO <sub>2</sub>	Carbon Dioxide
GHGs	Greenhouse gases
Group of 77 and China	G-77 and China is a negotiating alliance consisting of 131 developing countries focusing on various topics
INDC	Intended Nationally Determined Contributions
IPCC	Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
IR	International Relations
NDRC	National Development and Reform Commission (in China)
Party	A state that has signed a treaty and that has entered into force for it
Protocol	Kyoto Protocol
SBI	Subsidiary Body for Implementation
UN	United Nations
UNEP	United Nations Environment Program
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
WMO	World Meteorological Organization

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## INTRODUCTION

The interest towards environmental matters has grown exponentially within the past decades and sustainable development can be regarded as a megatrend of our time. Today's world has to accept that these changes in human interests will adjust the way International Relations should be researched and understood. The Westphalian world view have been challenged with collaborations and institutions like the European Union and is tested even further when issues like the climate change, accepts no artificial state borders. It is important to understand this way of development and it should therefore be more intensively studied. As we have recognized, the humans have the power to destroy the environment but fortunately they also have the possibility and supremacy to protect it (Glazebrook 2013, 85). Even though we can note that a commonly accepted new world order with deeply integrated cooperation is under creation it is still evident that states are highly concerned about their national interests. Therefore, a balance between well-established cooperation and respect of sovereignty should be found on the most important current issues.

This thesis will thus focus on climate change as a political process within the People's Republic of China's environmental diplomacy. As Stern (2009) states in his publication '*A blueprint for a safer planet*' "Unless a deal is truly global it cannot work" we can fortunately recognize that the policymakers have finally come to the same conclusion. From the prevailing situation it can be understood how vital the negotiations for a strong global climate agreement is. Noting Stern (2009, 4), a global deal must be effective in a way that it cuts back emissions to the required levels while keeping costs down and doing it by being fair towards states in a way that the developed nations – the problem creators - will carry the heavier burden. At the same time looking forward, however, since it will in the future be the currently developing countries that will be responsible for most of the growth of emissions. Because of this expected development in coming years this study reflects the views of the developing country which has already surpassed all developed states as the largest emitter in the world.

Climate change raises the collective goods problem which may to some extent be considered as the underlying notion in the analysis of China's behavior within the international environmental governance. The main issue for both the developed countries as well as for the developing countries have been to find the level of responsibility they are able to accept in the climate change combat. This is comprised in the United Nations Framework Convention on

Climate Change's concept of "common but differentiated responsibilities" that is regularly visited in this study context.

To be able to answer the research question 'How have China's opinions over environmental policies changed during the past decade?' and to make some assumptions about which way the society is taking its next steps in the climate change combat, it seems evident that elaboration of a decent research method is needed. Thus, the research is conducted upon an analysis of statements made during ten years of United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change Conferences. Since these Conferences comprehend hundreds of statements the research is narrowed down to the statements made by and on behalf of China at the joint High-Level Segments. These statements were chosen as the research base because during these particular plenary meetings the highest Party representatives have the opportunity to express opinions on what should be the next focus points, steps and achievements of the global climate change regime. Consequently these statements can be considered as presenting the main current interests and opinion changes within the state's national policies.

In addition to the main research question this thesis will try to answer the sub-question 'Are we able to expect that these developments within China's opinions over environmental policies have an impact on the success of the newest international climate change agreement and if, how?' by elaborating the research results to the main question. That is to say, the research results are analyzed so that essential information is deducted to answer the research questions and support the conclusion. Also, possible external influencers are taken into account to get a comprehensive overview about the current environmental world order.

This thesis is divided into two main parts. The first part includes the methodological and theoretical chapters that explain the objective of the research and defines the research questions. The 'Methodology' chapter explains how the study will be conducted and by which means the research results are analyzed. The 'Background' chapter introduces the theory and background information for the subjects of interest to familiarize the reader with the first steps in the development of environmental policies as well as explain the main notions behind the Kyoto Protocol and The Paris Agreement. It will further dig into the environmental politics of China and the sub-fields of economics, security and foreign policy, that are considered shaping China's opinions over climate change matters.

The second part of the thesis comprises the chapters concluding research results, discussion and conclusion. The 'Research results' chapter tries to arrange the studied statements



in a way that makes the further analysis possible. The 'Discussion' chapter then tries to answer the research questions asked. In the last chapter of the second part of the thesis the research objectives and findings are concluded.

# 1. OBJECTIVE AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

For years, China has been called the “rising power” and not without reason. China’s extraordinarily fast economic growth has made it a substantial player in the market driven world and at the same time shaken the existing world order. Unfortunately this strive for economic growth has had a dreadful social cost by unleashing health hazards that are taking lives of hundreds of thousands citizens every year. That is to say, the fight of prioritizing economic growth and free market capitalism over sustainable development and healthy environment has taken its toll. These catastrophic proceedings will evidently drive the country into a vicious circle since the economic growth demands healthy workers who on the contrary are being seriously harmed by the current measures the economic growth has taken. Because of these reasons it is now interesting to study how China has recognized this problem and is further trying to tackle these environmental threats. To make the research more easily comprehended the main environmental issues comprised in this study are limited to climate change and the international measures taken to control it. Thus, the study is leaving other environmental problems unanswered and is not either taking a stand in the scientific matters over climate change issues. Meaning e.g. that the study is not investigating whether the limitations of the Paris Agreement will actually keep the temperature from rising with the 2 percentage or which emissions are the once making the pollution unbearable.

To investigate the problems this research is interested in answering, this thesis will focus on one main research question and one sub-question that is attempted to be answered through the conclusions for the main question. With the main research question we want to get an overview on how China has developed its opinions what it comes to climate change issues. Thus the question is compiled as following;

1. How have China’s opinions over environmental policies changed during the past decade?

Through the answers to the main question this study is further trying to evolve the analysis and thinking process to investigate whether some additional conclusions of the answers might be drawn when analyzing the potential success of the Paris Agreement. Hence we may ask;

2. Are we able to expect that these developments within China's opinions over environmental policies have an impact on the success of the newest international climate change agreement and if, how?

The assumption is that China has through its own extensive development and globalization introduced by the country's new generations understood that it now has the possibility to rise as a world leader on any politic or economic stage by reasons of its size as the most populated country in the world and the size of its economy. Also the instabilities in the western society's construction and the extensive human rights are viewed as weaknesses by the Chinese and gives them confidence in introducing their own worldviews to the western states. The most important notion is though that China has finally understood how its own nation is severely affected by climate change and other natural tragedies brought by environmental degradation and is therefore now less reluctant in participating in binding emission reduction agreements.

As the research methodology this thesis is going to use discourse analysis and qualitative analysis of documents. The research methods are more extensively explained in the next chapter 'Methodology' but to support the readers understanding of the way of Chinese thinking and behavior the underlying reason for the method choices are shortly reviewed here. That is to say, the reason why this thesis is analyzing the development trend within China's environmental policy through deviation in statements and intended political processes rather than actual development on the ground is because of the following reasons;

- I. As of being a country known for its restricted freedom of speech it is highly interesting to research whether the statements made by the country are going to keep a neutral somewhat bland base throughout the investigation period or can there actually be noticed some essential attitude or position changes to one way or another
- II. Since China has always had a strong feeling of sovereignty and considered national politics something that is not to be interfered with by outsiders it can also be considered as a somewhat difficult research subject. In other words the statistical information and data of field developments presented by Chinese officials cannot always be con-

sidered reliable and therefore making a research based on this kind of possibly tampered material might end up untrustworthy.

Because of these reasons and under the circumstances that they create it was considered that the best way to compile this research was through statements that were presented in the international setting of the United Nations framework.

## 2. METHODOLOGY

This chapter focuses on carefully explaining the methodology used in this thesis to examine the research question of China's attitude alteration towards climate change mitigation and actions.

Often within a state's borders many agencies, regulatory bodies and subnational units develop their own international policies and relationships, breaking the monopoly of foreign and defense ministries (Jayasuriya 2001). However in the case of China this does not seem as evident since the state's history of strong central power. The more problematic fact comes to China's representation in the UN's environmental operation setting since the country has mostly been associated with the Group of 77 and therefor China's own opinions have been somewhat hard to be segregated.

The 'collective goods problem' explained in the next chapter will help analyzing, describing and predicting China's environmental doings in the international system. The extensive school of IR has also produced numerous other theoretical approaches for understanding international environmental politics (O'Neill 2009, 8) and states' foreign policy creation but in this thesis the collective goods problem is expected to best explain how state behavior is hard to be predicted when making universal environmental agreements. Like uttered before, the main underlying concept to be researched is change within the environmental policy discourse and the problem of collective goods seems to explain this change to some extent. Developmental change within the subject of opinions can often be considered random rather than constant (Plewis 1985, 2-3) which is also expected to be the case in this study.

As the main research method this paper is going to use qualitative document analysis. Because the objective of the thesis is to understand the changes within China's behavior and opinion fluctuation in the international environmental governance, reviewing the historical changes is considered essential. Verbal accounts from heads of states and other politicians constitute an important source of knowledge when making scientific research in international relations (Pennings et al. 1999, 76). Therefore analyzing China's key environmental statements seem as the best suited methodological approach to the issue. To enhance the validity of the process - primary sources are used as the research data.

Since analyzing statements in a qualitative way requires sturdiness this research is leaning on a well-established technique where interpretation is made by "objectively and sys-

tematically identifying specified characteristics of message” (Holsti 1969, 14). Advantages of using the document analysis method, is the methods ability to track change and development as well as being efficient, since data collection is rather turned to data selection (Bowen 2009, 30-1). This implies that the method is more time efficient when the research data is already available and does not have to be collected during the research process. What enhances the reliability of the method is that documents are unaffected of the research process contra to many methods where the researcher might affect the observation process. As the best way of getting the intended outcome of this statement research is to analyze the attitude changes in the speeches because they will tell us which way China is going, as ‘does the country seem more positively positioned towards combating climate change issues within the UN framework in the latter statements than the first ones?’.

The main primary sources used in compiling this research were the High-Level Segment Statements made by Group of 77 and China at the COP meetings between years 2007-2016. Also China’s possible own national statements that were made during the same meetings were analyzed if they were to be found. Furthermore, news reports and other researches on the topics of Chinese development and climate change mitigation have been supporting the aim to get a comprehensive overall picture of the topic. The analysis has moreover been influenced by the authors own experiences and empirical research conducted during the time lived in the People’s Republic of China.

Most of the statements used in the research were found on the ‘United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change’ web page and the Group of 77’s own web page. When the Chinese delegation had made an additional national statement at the High-Level Segment - also that speech was usually found on the UNFCCC web page. These High-Level Segment statements were chosen as the research base because the statements are made in plenaries that are attended by the heads of delegations. In other words the statements are made by Heads of State, Heads of Government or by whoever is the highest state representative present at the Conference and may therefore be adopted as the ultimate position that the state has on the subject at that time.

Some reliability and validity issues can be considered have risen from the fact that a few statements could not be found nor linguistically understood during the document gathering process. For example the COP 18 High-level statement made by Algeria’s Minister of Land Planning, Environment and City Mr. Amara Benyounès could only be found in Arabic

and because of the researchers lack of knowledge of the Arabic language the statement could therefore not been analyzed in this study. Also the fact that one statement was made in Spanish and had to be partly translated by the help of [translate.google.com](https://www.google.com/translate) means that it is not perceived in the exact same way it would be in the original language which might further bring some deviation to the research results.

After trying to find answers to the main research question ‘How have China’s opinions over environmental policies changed during the past decade?’ the paper will try to further be able to examine the possible support that the change of attitude of the Chinese environmental policy might have on the future success of the Paris Agreement. To have some support in studying the sub-question ‘Are we able to expect that these developments within China’s opinions over environmental policies have an impact on the success of the newest international climate change agreement and if, how?’ this study is also going to subtly observe the *foreign policy* sub-field of international relations. Here the concept of foreign policy is perceived as interdependent states’ –which are being the main actors within the international system – certain way of behavior towards each other. Why this is an important matter in this study is because of the need to analyze whether other major states’ behavior will have an impact on China’s own manners. In effort to make the analysis better comprehended the study is limited to evaluate bilateral foreign policy relations between China and USA. The reason why US is perceived as the most important state to be reflected in this study will be better explained in the chapter ‘Environment and China- US relations’. However, to better capture the scope of foreign policy in the subsequent China-US analysis the notion of foreign policy could already shortly be described here. This study views foreign policy as being an official activity formulated and applied by approved state representatives towards outside environment of that state i.e. into the global system (Tayfur 1994, 117 & Russet, Starr 1985, 191). According to this approach every state has its own unique foreign policy because of its diverse cultural and historical background and can therefore not be explored with same lenses than other states (Tayfur 1994, 125-6) which rises the interest in this study to examine whether the policy and opinion changes within China’s government could by itself have some impact on the success of the Paris Agreement or is it still somewhat arrogant to think that China solely could have a clear effect on the success of one global agreement.

### **3. BACKGROUND**

“We are the first generation to feel the sting of climate change, and we are the last generation that can do something about it.” - Jay Inslee

It is no news that global environmental problems have become one of the most urgent international issues that should get top priority by the policy makers. Much of these problems can be blamed on the industrialized states which can be counted as the main consumers of the planet's resources. Many of these states have fortunately understood that they are obligated to fight against environmental polluting while some of the states are still in the blooming face of their industrialization and trying to understate the consequences of their actions. Already in the beginning of the 90's Hurrell and Kingsbury (1992, 1) raised an essential political question concerning environmental matters; can a fragmented and often highly conflictual political system made up of over 170 sovereign states and numerous other actors achieve the high (and historically unprecedented) levels of cooperation and policy coordination needed to manage environmental problems on a global scale?

As the United Nations have recognized and stated the climate change is a global problem which further indicated that it will need a global solution, recognized and respected by all. When all the states recognize the issues being crucial it will become easier to get closer political cooperation among the governments. The issues which have and will further rise from cooperation are about the financial support and international policies and laws as well as the operations of international organizations in the area.

This chapter will study and discuss the most important underlying elements and theoretical framework in understanding the boost of change in China's environmental discourse. These elements are considered to include economic and social features as well as components from the earlier mentioned foreign policy.

Globalization, population growth, economic and social development, natural resource exploitation and scarcity, climate change and urbanization are external drivers in the world today. In the era marked by the central role played by humankind in geology and ecology, global sustainability appears as a civilizational imperative. (Pereira 2015, 194). One of the essential features in sustainable development is to find a universally accepted way of keeping the environment healthy and safe. As the following overview and the latter research of the



past climate change conferences will show, environmental negotiations concerning emission reductions have historically presented to be challenging.

International environmental politics tend to create collective goods problems. As mentioned before the natural environment is a collective good that should be a right for everybody to enjoy but the problem rising is thence how responsibilities over providing this good should be distributed among states. The technical, political, scientific and ethical characteristics over managing the environment can be considered complex, contrary to the elementary features of states' interests. (Goldstein and Pevehouse 2014, 387). In other words, how do we generate an ultimate agreement on a global level while every state will strive for minimizing their own contributions to achieving the common good? The question of shared interests – i.e. 'collective goods problem' is a frequently studied dilemma within the school of International Relations and also one of the main underlying characteristics of interest in this study.

One of the principals that portrays chances for success of globally made decisions is the impartial distribution of dominance within a group so that it may be accepted by all group participants. On the international relations stage we can recognize that there have been and still are some states that can be considered as having a greater influence in intergovernmental decision making. Since states differ in size, prosperity, level of development etc. this can be considered as a natural stance, thus the importance of trying to make all states equal with same responsibilities and advantages is not really the interest to be achieved. The objective is rather to find a commonly unbiased ground where all states are happy with the position and influence they have within the group and decision-making.

Another characteristic making a difference what it comes to states' cooperation in environmental matters is *reciprocity* that can be considered as one of the solving principals to the collective goods problem. The basis for international organizations and the UN – as mentioned in the UN Charter article 2 paragraph 1 (1945) - is the equality of all the member states. History have although shown that there is a severe difference between charters and actual practices among states performing international affairs (Magbadelo 2012, 323). What it comes to the subject of climate change the issue have for several decades been about the fair reciprocity. A good example is the United States of America that never ratified the Kyoto protocol most likely because they thought of it being unevenly elaborated what it came to fair reciprocity among states. USA actually had a fair point in thinking thus since after the creation and ratification of the Kyoto Protocol by other states, China surpassed USA as the largest

greenhouse gas emitter in the world and should therefore also be recognized as a vital participant in further binding environmental agreements. Mutually the developing countries have been blaming the developed countries of unfairness over the matter since the beneficiaries of the activities that started the escalation of GHG emissions and the rising of the temperature on our planet should undoubtedly also be taking the major responsibility for it. The clear outcome of this dilemma is that an effective, global climate agreement could not be developed before the issue of fair reciprocity in the distribution of the responsibilities and costs of negotiations and actions has been resolved (Page 2007, 230).

What it comes to dealing with the collective goods problem in global environmental politics the first issue is the large amount of actors since collective goods are of course more easily managed in small collectives where cheating and mismanaging of responsibilities is more easily recognized (Goldstein and Pevehouse 2014, 388). Accordingly, a collective which comprise the entire planet is challenging to be supervised. Advocating Goldstein and Pevehouse (2014, 392), for individual states the cost and benefit balance is highly unproportioned since the efforts on emission restrictions by one state might have minor effects on the long-term result if other states dismiss to do their share. They present the following triple dilemma on global warming for states:

1. Predictable short-term costs to gain unpredictable long-term benefits
2. Specific industry workers might end up paying for the costs, while the benefits are shared by a larger crowd
3. Collective goods dilemma between states; benefits are common in the international community but the costs must be paid by every state alone.

This threefold problem together with other thoughts will present the underlying implications throughout the investigation and analysis in this research. In addition this is an interesting topic because as mentioned before, environmental issues agitate the globally recognized status of sovereign states in the means that environmental degradation, pollution and GHG's do presumably not stay within only one state's borders. As President Barack Obama said in his speech at the UN Climate Summit 2014 " ... no nation is immune ... we have to work together as a global community to tackle this global threat before it's too late ...".

The earlier environmental agreements were based on the assumption that the world is divided into two parts. The rich developed countries in the west/north sphere and the poor developing countries in the east/south. This is however not a correct division in today's international system. The growth of emerging states, such as China, with their increasing economies and rapidly growing population will require them to take a more intense stance to the environmental mitigations. Since China surpassed USA as the largest energy consumer and GHG polluter it would not continue to be sustainable to let the country get away with no commitments to the wellbeing of our planet. It has been thought that China's emission per capita ratio is still far behind from western states but according to Olivier et al. (2014, 4), the Chinese per capita emissions (7.4 t/cap) already surpassed per capita emissions in the EU (7.3 t/cap) in 2013 (the US with its 16.6 t/cap is still way ahead) which implicates that its status as a developing country is mercurial. The environmental issues in China will be further discussed at the end of this chapter but what can at this point be mentioned about the country's development is that the inequality and imbalance of economic wealth, pollution and general living standards between the different geographic areas is highly alarming.

In the trying to understand the research material it is essential to have a good background to the topics discussed in the statements. Therefore, this chapter is continuing by analyzing the most important previous developments in the international environmental governance as well and China's most important aspects affecting its position in the climate change combat.

### **3.1. Development of environmental policies**

At present we could say that the variety of actors contributing to the climate change issues is enormous. Multi-national corporations, non-governmental organizations, activist groups and individuals all have their impact in making new regulations on how our planet's resources should be used and protected. Even though these actors are vital for the success of keeping the common good – our planet – healthy and prosperous, this paper is mainly going to study the actions taken within the United Nations framework on the field of global environmental governance.

In understanding the contemporary intergovernmental environmental agreements we should take a step back and investigate the phases leading to the elaboration of the latest UN environmental agreement – the Paris Agreement. Since one of the interests of this research is in the success prospects of the Paris Agreement this chapter is going to briefly introduce the major steps leading to this particular agreement and then explain the main features of the agreement more comprehensively.

United Nations' interest over environment rose in the latter part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century when the scientific concerns over climate change and rising CO<sub>2</sub> concentrations in the atmosphere had been systematically proven. UN's first conference on human environment was held in Stockholm in 1972 and as an outcome the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) was established to become a global environmental leader and encourage partnership in caring for the environment and sustainable development (UNEP Overview of the organization). In 1988 at the Canadian hosted grand environmental conference the desire and need for a climate convention was for the first time brought up (Johnson 2012, 82). Hence at the end of the year also the UN General Assembly recognized that "... climate change affects humanity as a whole and should be confronted within a global framework so as to take into account the vital interests of all mankind ... " (General Assembly A/RES/43/53).

In addition in 1988 UNEP and World Meteorological Organization (WMO) decided to set up an Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) that would provide policymakers a scientific basis on impacts of climate change and options for adaptation and mitigation (IPCC Factsheet). At this time the climate issue was still not considered as a priority by politicians but the movement to the right direction was on its way.

After a couple years of discussions the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, also referred to as UNFCCC or the Convention, was adopted in 1992 and entered into force in 1994. Already in the first meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP) to the Convention it was decided that a legal instrument for enclosing additional commitments for developed countries was needed (Bodansky 2001, 34-5).

Thus, in 1997 the Kyoto Protocol was adopted. It took seven years before it had enough ratifies to enter into force and even then some of the major emitting states either didn't ratify it or weren't legally-bound to the emission reduction targets since the targets only include developed countries. The developed countries agreed to individual GHG emission reduction targets under the Protocol, which was specifically drafted to operationalize the Con-

vention. Since the Protocol's entry into force, Conferences of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol (CMP) have been held together with the COP meetings to review the implementation of the Kyoto Protocol (UNFCCC Understanding of the Climate Change Regime).

The Copenhagen Conference in 2009 was projected to generate a more efficient climate treaty as a successor for the Kyoto Protocol but failed in its mission and made the sceptics believe that joint environmental cooperation had come to an end. Fortunately six years later at the COP 21 in Paris the hopes for a continuing multilateral cooperation emerged when the negotiations took a 'bottom-up' approach in the new protocol making. The adopted Paris Agreement is considered being a new generation of environmental policy making as it focuses on the individual domestic pledges rather than forcing all countries in the same mould.

### **3.2. Kyoto Protocol**

The Kyoto Protocol is an internationally binding agreement connected to the UNFCCC, which obligates its Parties by binding emission reduction targets. The Protocol was adopted in Kyoto, Japan, in December 1997 and came into effect on 16<sup>th</sup> of February 2005. More detailed rules and requirements for the implementation of the Protocol were formally adopted by the first Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol session in Montreal, Canada, in December 2005. Since the details were negotiated already in 2001 in Marrakesh, Morocco, they are referred to as the "Marrakesh Accords".

The Kyoto Protocol aims to find concrete solutions on how to achieve the objective of the Convention to stabilize greenhouse gas concentration in the atmosphere to a level that prevent danger to the humankind and the prevailing climate system.

As in the Convention, the developed countries are referred to in the Protocol as 'Annex I Parties' and are issued a larger responsibility under the principle of "common but differentiated responsibilities" (Kyoto Protocol Article 10). The first commitment period for the Protocol was from 2008 until 2012.

The main obligation under the Protocol requires each Annex I Party to, "individually or jointly", ensure that their total amount of GHG emissions do not exceed the assigned amounts listed in the Annex B to the Kyoto Protocol (Kyoto Protocol Article 3 Paragraph 1).

The actual emissions have to therefore be monitored and exact accounts kept by the Registry systems.

Under the Kyoto Protocol, parties are expected to try to meet their emission reduction targets primarily through national measures, but since this is not always a possibility the Protocol developed supplementary means to meet the targets. These three market-based instruments are called the 'Kyoto mechanisms'.

The Kyoto Mechanisms were among other things established to increase the interest and investments towards clean technology and hence encourage reducing greenhouse-gas emission cuts among member states. The functions of the mechanisms shortly explained:

1. Joint implementation (JI) (Article 6)

The Joint implementation is a project-based mechanism under the Article 6 of the Protocol by which one Annex I Party may invest in a project that reduces emissions in another Annex I Party state and hence receive emission reduction credits.

2. Clean development mechanism (Article 12)

The Clean development mechanism that was elaborated under Article 12 of the Protocol is also a project-based tool but unlike the other two mechanisms, this generates new Kyoto units. CDM credits are generated from emission reduction as well as reforestation projects conducted in developing countries.

3. International emissions trading (Article 17)

Under the emission trading mechanism Annex I Parties may acquire and transfer Kyoto units between each other.

The United Nations Climate Change Secretariat in Germany keeps a log of the transactions to be able to verify that the trades are consistent with the rules of the Protocol (UNFCCC The Secretariat). Parties are helping the process by doing national reporting of the transactions on a frequent basis through submission of annual emission inventories under the Protocol.

When the first commitment period to the Protocol was coming to an end the CMP 8 met in Doha, Qatar, on 8<sup>th</sup> of December 2012, to adopt the *Doha Amendment* to the Kyoto

Protocol. The amendment included a second commitment period to the Kyoto Protocol from 2013 to 2020, in addition to some other alterations to several articles, including a new list of GHGs to be reported (Doha Amendment). The unfortunate part is that less than half of the original Parties to the Kyoto Protocol have ratified the amendments.

Another important feature of the Kyoto Protocol is its strive to offer countries green technologies and other means to assist signatories in adapting and increasing tolerance to climate change. The Adaptation Fund was established to finance adaptation projects for KP Parties that are particularly vulnerable to effects of climate change (UNFCCC Adaption Fund decision 1/CMP.3 2007, 3).

The Kyoto Protocol is considered as the first concrete step toward a global climate agreement that thrived towards tangible emission reductions and stabilizing of greenhouse gases. The compilation process of the Kyoto Protocol also showed a way how to construct an across-the-board agreement and the process and its outcome has been reflected in the creation of further agreements.

### **3.3. Paris Agreement**

In December 2011, the Ad Hoc Working Group on the Durban Platform for Enhanced Action (ADP) was established by the COP decision 1/CP.17 to develop another protocol with legal force under the Convention, to be applicable to all Parties (UNFCCC/CP/2011/9/Add.1). This legal instrument was later adopted in COP 21 meeting in Paris, France, in 2015 and can be considered the first environmental agreement that concludes and expects all nations to take actions towards the common cause in combating and adapting to climate change. The principle of common but differentiated responsibilities can still be reflected since the developing countries will continue to get support in the process by the developed countries.

The Article 2 of the Paris Climate Change Agreement defines the main purposes as follows:

- a. Holding the increase in the global average temperature to well below 2 °C above pre-industrial levels and pursuing efforts to limit the temperature increase to 1.5 °C above pre-industrial levels, recognizing that this would significantly reduce the risks and impacts of climate change;

- b. Increasing the ability to adapt to the adverse impacts of climate change and foster climate resilience and low greenhouse gas emissions development, in a manner that does not threaten food production; and
- c. Making finance flows consistent with a pathway towards low greenhouse gas emissions and climate-resilient development.

The means by how these goals are meant to be achieved include green technology development and financial resource distribution to the developing countries as well as improving the capacity and ability of developing country Parties to implement adaptation and further mitigation actions based on national needs. In addition to the new emphasis on recognizing the need for adaptation and increasing adaptive capacity the agreement also emphasizes an improved transparency framework “In order to build mutual trust and confidence and to promote effective implementation ...” (Paris Agreement Article 13 Paragraph 1)

The Paris Agreement can be considered as a ‘bottom-up’ approach contrariwise to the previous agreements. Each Party to the Agreement is required to prepare, communicate and maintain their “nationally determined contributions” (NDCs) within a five year cycle. In these pledges the parties shall transparently tell about their national long-term GHG emission reduction strategies. This can be considered as a more liberal approach to tackle the problem and therefore making states less reluctant in taking own actions. However, the system of NDCs brings some uncertainties in being thin on content and as also Victor and Leape (2015, 440) have noticed the industry has been mostly absent from the practice. The system of countries being accountable of initiating their future contributions might end up giving the free pass card to states.

A success that should be raised is that the Ad Hoc Working Group on the Durban Platform for Enhanced Action (ADP) essentially defined a starting point for ‘dangerous’ climate change (2°C above pre-industrial levels) that later was accepted by all members in the Paris Agreement. This was an important achievement on outlining the targets of the new climate change mitigations, since back in 1992, the world agreed to “prevent dangerous anthropogenic interference with the climate system” by adopting the Convention (Lewis 2016, 283) but what this “dangerous anthropogenic interference” actually included was not further specified. Yet, what has been distressing to note is that UN Environment Program’s “Emissions Gap Report” from 2016 asserts that even though all countries would comply with their Nationally



Determined Contributions the world would still heat up more than 3 degrees Celsius (2016, 18) which is over 1 degree more than the Paris Agreement targets.

The Agreement entered into force 4<sup>th</sup> of November 2016, a month after the ratifies covered the minimum of 55 Parties to the Convention accounting in total for at least an estimated 55 % of the total global GHG emissions. The final push towards approval can be considered done by the formal and almost simultaneous ratification of the Agreement by China's President Xi Jinping and USA's President Barack Obama since these countries together account for a considerable percentage of the emission target that had to be reached.

### **3.4. Environmental issues in China**

It has historically been perceived that China is somewhat uninterested in having influence on a global level but this paper brings new insight into the matter. China has taken steps into the spotlight and now the new government in the previous 'de facto' hegemon USA is making room for China to show its leadership capabilities in the international environmental governance. Environmental protection has been discussed in China for more than 30 years but the level of financial support and efficient implementation of the environmental laws has been somewhat ambiguous in the past.

One of China's most prominent environmental activist, Pan Yue, was in the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century worried about how China's quantity-based approach to economic and political growth lead the country to waste resources and made irrevocable environmental damage (Kuhn, 2004). China together with India are already accounted for 70 percentage in global energy demand and the consumption is predicted to double in the next fifteen years (Srinivasan 2015, 34).

To understand China's way of practicing we should dig into the origins of the states trade liberalization reforms in the 1980s when China started to get involved in global interstate politics and international organizations concerning trade and technology. This involvement was later extended into multilateral institutions concerned in environmental protection. (Kim 1994, 401-34). At this time China understood that being involved on a larger scale did necessarily not have to be seen as a threat nor seen as of a punishment to the state's existent (Swaine 2004, 72). On a national level the first trial implementation on Environmental Protec-

tion Law was passed already in 1979 resulting in requirements to protect the natural environment in the 1982 Constitution. Continuing later on passing special laws on Water Pollution Prevention and Control, Air Pollution Prevention and Control, Water and Soil Conservation, Solid Waste, Energy Conservation, Land Management and Clean Production Promotion that established pollution regulations in China's 10 most important cities. (Chow 2013, 4 and Dong 2017, 39).

Followed by several UN Conferences and reports China has announced its own strategic policies on environment and development as well as setting out agendas and green projects. In 2005 the "*Decision on Enhancing Scientific Development and Environmental Protection*" proposed for the first time that in some region "Environmental Protection should be prioritized ... and development should be optimized, controlled or prohibited" i.e. it granted that healthy environment should triumph over economic growth (Zhang et al. 2007, 2).

As noticed, China is not lacking of effort in delivering laws and standards on the environment, in addition when China's legislature, the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress in 2014 adopted major amendments to the Environmental Protection Law it was revised to as being "The Strictest Environmental Law in the World" (Xinhua News 2014) but the problem is that the extremely fast social-economic transformation would prerequisite for a more rapid pace of implementation of the extensive legislations (Dong 2017, 40).

The National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC) has as one of its main functions "To organize the formulation of key strategies, plans and policies in addressing climate change; to take the lead with related ministries in attending international negotiations of climate change; to undertake relevant work in regard to the fulfillment of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change at national level." (Main Functions of the NDRC). As of being the main body to undertake the responsibilities over climate issues in China this thesis will study some of the statements made by the NDRC's previous vice-chairman at the COP joint High-Level Segments to get a comprehensive look into the development of Chinese climate actions.

At the turn of the millennium, China's economy was booming due to energy-intensive heavy industry investments and exports and the average GDP growth was 10.5% each year which brought with it high extent CO<sub>2</sub> emissions (Hilton, Kerr 2017, 50). During this period China fortunately also customized a stronger foundation to its domestic climate policy, but on the international stage the country was not willing to pledge to any global climate agreements

that threatened its energy intensive growth model (Ibid.). Therefore, China was enthusiastic about keeping its place in the non-Annex I category of the Convention because this would guarantee it getting away with binding emission targets so it could instead freely continue on the path that it had chosen as the bottom line – economical splendor. The country found its position justified because of the low level of GDP per capita but controversially the annual double digits GDP growth levels (Hilton, I and Kerr 2017, 50) could be considered as leading to unsustainable development.

Although China and the western countries are being divided into separate categories by UN both groups have similar values and desires when it comes to a world order based on prosperity, peace and respect for self-determination as well as the aspiration for minimizing the environmental degradation (Xiaotong 2015, 186-87). Only the ambition levels to achieve these desired values and sustainability have varied greatly.

Belis et.al (2014, 1) and Schneider (2007, 14) theorizes that one of the reasons for recent greater interest in environmental protection have been the UN Clean Development Mechanism that has contributed to the socialization-related phenomena such as bringing attentiveness to the climate change and the problems caused by it. In addition, by selling the credits accumulated through the mechanism, China has achieved further economic profits. Also the UNFCCC Secretariat has reported that the projects conducted under the mechanism have initiated sustainable development on a national and local level. This can be recognized by the figures gathered since the launch of the mechanism in 2001 by the Executive Board in the opening meeting held in Marrakech. At the beginning of March 2017, already 6914 projects in Asian and Pacific countries have been registered by the mechanisms' Executive Board, of which China alone hosts 56 % (UNEP Introduction to the CDM 2005, 11 and UNEP DTU).

The following timeline indicates China's most important environmental policies that were discussed in this chapter, as well as its actions in climate change mitigation.

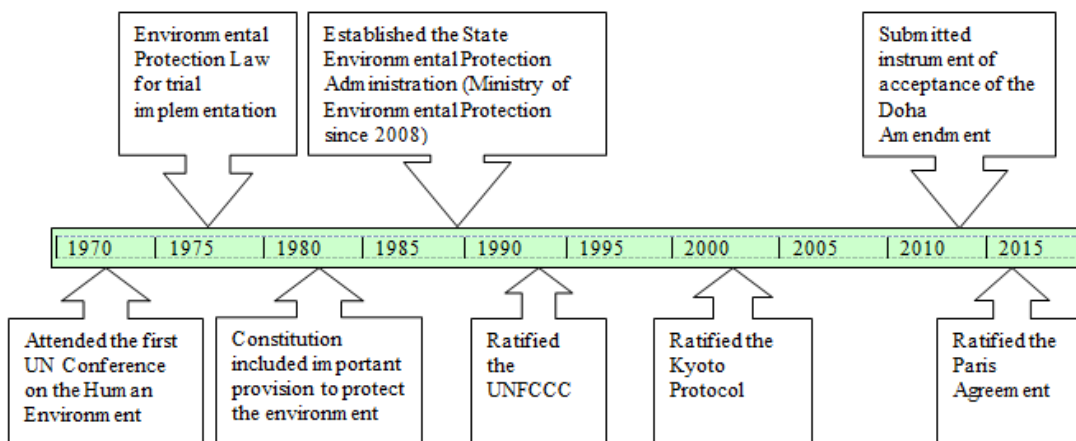


Figure 1. Timeline of China’s climate policies

### 3.4.1. Environment and economy

To better understand why China, and other countries per se, make the decisions and policies they do we should also take the discipline of economics into account. This is important in the way that a huge part of the society’s construction is dependent on economics. It is even often said that trade between states could be a good measure of the overall international relations between them. As Coppola et al. (1997, 398) defines, the functioning of the political system is dependent on the ways that the society has organized the economic relationship among its residents, government and institutions. Since China’s attendance in the 1972 held United Nations Conference on the Human Environment and the beginning of the country’s economic reform around 1980s, the government has declared attention to environmental problems.

As what it comes to the economic point of view, protection of the environment can according to Chow (2013, 4-5) be viewed “as the government’s attempt to correct a major market failure” that occurs when natural resources that are freely available for everybody are “underpriced and overused because users often do not pay the hidden costs of using them”. This is to say, the exploitation of natural resources is hard to be supervised and the right market price for collective goods is almost impossible to achieve.

Another notice about why the economy and the analyze of free trade are important is that they have a huge impact on environment since during the past years a large amount of

trade disputes and new international processes have concerned environmental protection. The conflict may be more in depth expressed by quoting Francioni (2001, 2) "... the conflicts are rooted in the increased substantive impact that international commitments to trade liberalization generate on traditional spheres of domestic regulation and national public policy. The pervasive effects of international trade law in these spheres erode the ability of national authorities and their civil societies to maintain control over traditional non-economic values such as the environment, human health and social standards." It may therefore be observed that the opening up of the economy and the allowance of more liberal international trade agreements might accelerate climate change and environmental degradation. Apparently, when making new trade agreements with different states the strictness of existing environmental laws in the region have seemed to be of minor importance compared to the wage differences and possibilities to new markets. Therefore the fear of strong environmental standards discouraging investments appears not to be reasoned most of the time (Goodstein 2011, 471). This can of course be considered as a negative thing since it reveals that the interest towards environmental preservation is of small interest to many investors. As a result, foreign investments can be considered hazardous since the ultimate aim of getting high profits could end up in the ambition to get them at any cost. It could in turn be argued, however, that if these foreign investments come from states, multinational corporations or individuals who are interested in sustainable development and environmental matters these investments might actually improve environmentally friendly development in the country.

Even so, one viewpoint is that the prevalent global state system with its capitalist thinking is one of the problems that need to be challenged to overcome some of the environmental issues since capitalism tend to produce relationships deeply damaging to the nature (Baylis et al. 2014, 353). One of the earlier problems was that the 'General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade' (GATT) (which can be considered largely shaping the international market trends) did not contain any specific reference to the protection of environment but rather encouraged the partners to "full use of the resources of the world" (Francioni 2001, 4).

The humongous amount of households and people in China can indirectly be considered as the largest concern what it comes to energy consumption and the generated CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. Most of the harmful GHG emissions are generated by human behavior and for China this is growing into a major problem. The consumption behavior of the expanding middle class is certainly going to define the status of the environmental degradation in the future.

### **3.4.2. Environment, human rights and security**

When making policies and laws, the international arena have been focusing on the protection of vulnerable human beings through development of international agreements and conventions focusing on the protections of human life. As discovered in the previous chapters the issue that has only recently been recognized is that the condition of the nature has an enormous impact on the protection of human life. Since deaths and illnesses due to poor environmental preservation are often indirect and therefore not as easily noticed as e.g. deaths due military actions, it has not been a priority for policy makers until now.

The third generation Human Rights, the right to a healthy environment and the right to natural resources are considered to include the right to water and air free of pollution. But these rights should be further expand to meet the changing circumstances in the contemporary world. Basically it could be said that introduction of some specific and trivial new environmental laws is not desirable but a right to an environment of quality could be regarded as one of the foundations on which many of the other rights should and will at the end depend (Glazebrook 2013, 86-89).

One of the characters that differentiate China from other countries is how their national political methods affect the nation's acceptance of international policymaking procedures. Like Coppola at al. (1997, 396) defines, participation in the political processes is a key element of justice. Within the United Nations decision making 'machine' the involvement of a bigger crowd and principle of democracy in policy making may be considered fairly different from the Chinese way of non-democratic authorities taking the decision. This might be a default that has made the Chinese compliance to common agreements hard.

What can be concluded from international laws is that states are basically subject to duties not to injure the environment of other states but the extent of this duty is quite hard to comprehend and needs to be elaborated.

Another issue affiliated with both environmental questions and human rights is state security that has been brought up in the UN Security Council's discussions. Also at the World Economic Forums' the major topics have been about climate change generated issues such as global food security and environment and natural resource security. In the newest World Economic Forum Global Risk Report (2017) the figure for evolving risk landscape shows that

“extreme weather events” are considered as the number one risk in terms of likelihood and other three environmental risks are within the top five of global risks in terms of impact. In year 2016 (Ibid) the “failure of climate change mitigation and adaption” was considered as the biggest risk in terms of impact to our planet but has been dropped to place five assumingly due to the successful ratification of the Paris Agreement.

The world is through changes in the natural environment being shaped on the political sphere. The largest security threats used to be about state rivalry and military power but have during the past decades shifted to a concern about securing healthy and safe living conditions. Therefore environmental security extends the concept of security by recognizing and accepting risks posed by change in the natural environment to the things that people value (Barnett 2010 cited by Pereira 2015, 195) and require to live.

Even though Aldecoa and Keating (1999) argue that state decentralization has promoted *paradiplomacy* by regional governments, making these agencies quasi-autonomous in the field of foreign policy the argument cannot be concerned entirely valid what it comes to the environmental foreign policy actions taken by China. Because as a result of centuries of instability in the country, the principle of protecting the national independence has stayed a prevalent feature for China and other rising powers (Flemes 2013, 1016–17) which denotes the strict management of all political actions.

### **3.4.3. Environment and China- US relations**

China and USA are the two largest current economies and greenhouse gas emitters. The states have closely connected economies and compete for geostrategic power (Reed 2014, 309) on both global level (e.g. climate issues) and regional level (e.g. South China Sea dispute). US is concerned about how China’s economic, political and military upsurge enables them to have a great influence in regions with valuable natural resource, which further might trigger new conflicts between the two superpowers (Hendrix, Noland 2014 and Pereira 2015, 200). Hence, their mutual and differing views over climate change issues should be briefly discussed to get an understanding of the possible prospects in the shaping of the future international environmental governance.

According to Grubb et al. (2015 cited by Hilton and Kerr 2017, 50) the US conservative party believed that China was getting away with growing its emissions, meanwhile the

shifting of an unfair burden on the US intensified climate skepticism and brought a greater opposition to enhanced climate mitigation. Controversially, the US wish that China should also cut its emissions was perceived by China as US's determination to slow its economic development. In addition, the fact that China opposed international inspections was a position non-acceptable to the United States. This confrontation was seen as one of the major issues for mitigation failure in COP 15 in Copenhagen 2009.

Yet in November 2014 China and USA announced that they had through bilateral dialogue come to individual emission reduction targets (The White House Press Secretary 2014). The joint announcement demonstrated considerable leadership and could be perceived as an important move before the Lima COP 20 conference and an affirming step toward a global environmental agreement at the COP negotiations in Paris.

One event that can be brought up from the Paris Climate Conference defining the states' domestic policies and bilateral relations is within the last few hours' emerged negotiation about linguistic details. The United States wanted the verb "shall" in a key item in the text about developed nations' mitigation targets to be changes to "should", because the verb "shall" implied a legal obligation and would have needed ratification from the US Congress (Lan and Pan 2015). According to Chinese delegate the word "shall", would have been appreciated since it implicates stronger commitment to the objectives but fortunately the disagreement over the word was not one to bring down the entire Agreement.

The United States' more positive stance towards climate change actions and the settlement of the Paris Agreement was made possible thanks to the Democratic Party President. During the Obama administration both state governments laid a highlighted importance on the climate issues and cooperation in this context. The special representative for climate change at the US State Department, Todd Stern, described China as "really at this point a core partner of ours ... nobody closer that we work with than China" (Lan and Pan 2015).

Unfortunately, in 2017 the US administration was re-arranged when Donald Trump was inaugurated as president. This brought many concerns to the international environmental community since Trump declared himself as an anti-environmentalist during his presidential campaign.



#### **3.4.4. The Group of 77 and China**

The last concept visited in this background chapter is the framework of the Group of 77 and the notion why it is important to this thesis. What it comes to the statements researched in the next chapter China is associated with the Group of 77 and embodied by its various representatives. The Group of 77 was established by the “Joint Declaration of the Seventy-Seven Developing Countries” at the end of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development in 1964 (About the group of 77). The aim of the Group is to provide a stronger collective through which they promote South-South cooperation and make it easier for poor and developing states to enhance their will within the UN system (Ibid). In the statements investigated in this paper China is allied with the Group due to their similar positions in the climate change mitigation and the common status of being Non-Annex I countries. The Group has grown to comprise 134 states since its establishment but because of the historical importance the Group’s name has not been changed.

## **4. RESEARCH RESULTS**

To get an extended understanding of the research results and answer the research questions in the next chapter ‘Discussion’ this section is going to individually study and analyze the developments in each Conference of Parties’ statement made at the joint High-Level Segments between the years 2007 and 2016.

To enhance the research validity the study of the statements is first explaining the overall construction of the statements and then further analyze the meaning. This way of approach is inspired by Ledin’s and Moberg’s (2010, 161) text analysis method where the analysis of the communication situation is followed by a deeper analysis of the theme, scopes, perspectives and finally the implications concluded by the researcher.

### **4.1. Studying the Conference of Party statements**

The UNFCCC Conference of Parties are held once a year in diverse cities on different continents. During the high-level segment, each Party’s Head of State or Head of Government (or other Party representative) will have the opportunity to address the plenary by making a national statement. The oral statements are to be kept within a three-minute timeframe and the full version of the national statements will be posted on the UNFCCC website.

The following table shows which country was representing G-77 and China during the Conference of Parties to the UNFCCC, Kyoto Protocol and Paris Agreement. The table also displays the Conferences during which the Chinese delegation delivered an additional national statement that is included in the research results.

Table 1. Conference of Parties to the United Nation Framework Convention on Climate Change

Year	Number of COP/ CMP/CMA	Location	G-77 and China representative	Research includes China's national statement
2007	13/3	Bali, Indonesia	Pakistan	No
2008	14/4	Poznan, Poland	Antigua and Barbuda	Yes
2009	15/5	Copenhagen, Denmark	Sudan	No
2010	16/6	Cancun, Mexico	Yemen	Yes
2011	17/7	Durban, South Africa	Argentina	Yes
2012	18/8	Doha, Qatar	Algeria	No
2013	19/9	Warsaw, Poland	Fiji	Yes
2014	20/10	Lima, Peru	Bolivia	No
2015	21/11	Paris, France	South Africa	No
2016	22/12/1	Marrakech, Morocco	Thailand	Yes

The statements by G-77 and China follow a somewhat similar structure every year. The statements begin with thanking the organizing country and showing appreciation of being honored the possibility to speak on behalf of the G-77 and China. The speech is considered to be delivered for the COP President since throughout the speech every new topic is remarked by the gesture 'Mrs. / Mr. President'. After the oral statement is delivered the Party has the possibility of submitting a written sample of the statement to the UNFCCC Secretariat and they will upload the on the average 2-8 page long statement for the general public. Since video streams of most of the orally delivered speeches could not be found on the internet this research has been conducted on the basis of the written statements.

As a further background to the following analysis of the Chinese position in the UNFCCC Conference of Parties, it has to be mentioned that before year 2007 most of the developing countries, including China, were positioned to decisively oppose all potential emission limitations assigned to them in the future and wanted to set this as a condition into the Convention (Korhola 2014, 61-2).

#### **4.1.1. Analysis of the Statements**

The COP 13 took place in December 2007 in Bali. In the statement by Pakistan's UN Ambassador Mr. Munir Akram, for the Group of 77 and China, he wished to call upon all remaining member states to ratify and implement the UNFCCC and the Kyoto Protocol. The Group also wanted to already devote importance in the Kyoto Protocol's second commitment period and make it known that the priority for the developing countries would be economic and social development and that climate change measures should assist in this intention rather than obstruct it. Mr. Akram mentioned how the transfer of environmentally sustainable technology innovations to poor countries through effective mechanisms sustained by financial resources provided by developed countries is vital to the developing countries to tackle environmental challenges in the future. This can be considered ironical since technology development is also by developed countries reflected to be one of the basic units in the future climate change governance but still they were slow to take action. He also revealed the Group's disappointment over the extensively tiring means they had to take to restore the subject on the SBI agenda. The Group restated that the Convention and its Kyoto Protocol, is still to be endured as the base for further multilateral cooperation in combating climate change. At the end of the speech Mr. Akram highlighted his own country as of being an insignificant emitter what it comes to the 'emitted GHGs per person' –ratio but that it is still suffering from tremendous negative impacts of the by climate change caused environmental degradation.

In the statement the phrases “disappointed”, “no progress” and other negative words were visited fairly often. The Group felt like it has not been heard nor understood by the developed countries. Hence, the Group expressed that “flexibility will be required from all sides” and surprisingly uttered that climate change should rather be seen as a “climate opportunity”. As the mediated results of the UNFCCC and the KP were so favorable for the developing countries they wanted to assure that these should not be replaced by less adequate instruments but remain as the main multilateral framework for further decisions and actions.

In COP 14 the statement on behalf of China and G-77 was made by Antigua and Barbuda. The UN Ambassador Dr. John W. Ashe considered the Bali decisions and achievements to be important to revisit. The Group expressed its anticipation for hearing clear statement from the Annex I group made in conjunction about certain percentage reductions. The feel of absence of a radical change in approach to confidence building was desired by the Group to

get confidence that the targets of the Bali Action Plan and other internationally agreed development goals would be achieved. Also the Group's desire to start discussing Annex I Parties beyond 2012 commitments was already being lift up on the table. Dr. Ashe stated that "none of these expectations has been met" when he was talking about the financial mechanism and technology transfer, operationalizing of Adaptation Fund and consultative group mandate renewals.

In addition to the common statement also China's Minister and Vice-chairman of the National Development and Reform Commission Xie Zhenhua made his own High-Level Segment speech where he announced China's ambitious steps towards environmentally sustainable development. In 2007 the country issued a Climate Change Program and released a White Paper on "Policies and Actions for Addressing Climate Change". Again, in Xie's statement the importance of sticking to the principles of the Convention and Kyoto Protocol was brought up. China stated that "the international climate negotiations have reached a critical stage" and that the COP 14 is an important midterm stop on the way to a new global climate change agreement in Copenhagen. One interesting proposition that has not been lift up in other statements was about how countries should not get environmentally paralyzed in front of the ongoing financial crisis. China asked for developed countries not to make the financial crisis an excuse for not committing to the Convention and financial aid plans under Kyoto Protocol because "... compared with that crisis, climate change is presenting us with a far more severe and long-lasting challenge". Xie's concern about the financial crisis taking the attention away from the "real crisis" seemed rather controversial. China has for so many years struggled with environmental issues because of their urge for an economic upsurge but is now wishing for other states not to pursue the same path.

The Group statement seemed well compiled and it was therefore easy to understand. During COP 14 China continued on the same track of not accepting any binding emission reductions but insisting that the developed countries would not abandon their commitments taken under Kyoto Protocol of economic assistance and adaptation aid to the developing countries.

In the joint High-level statement China and G-77 was represented by Sudan which announced their dissatisfaction over Annex-I parties' behavior and insisted them to pledge to a second commitment period (beyond 2012) under the Kyoto Protocol. The Group 77 and China stated that they would oppose any agreement in Copenhagen that made the obligations of developed states under the Kyoto Protocol obsolete. In the statement the Sudanese delegation

also expressed their opinion that the high-level consultations lacked appropriately targeted discussions.

The statement made by the Sudanese delegation on the behalf of G-77 and China in COP 15 seemed again to have a somewhat negative attitude and brought up several grievances. Already at this point China seemed to have taken a standpoint to support a bottom-up based agreement that had been customized over the two previous COPs. This meant that the fear of some other states over the possibility of that the failed negotiations in Copenhagen could mean that the United Nations' road had come to an end did not be a big concern within the Chinese delegation. The interesting part of the meeting was that China refused to accompany a deal with targets for industrialized countries (Lynas 2009). The probable reason for this was that China knew how it was going to excessively bolster its own coal consumption and development and therefore of being afraid that this would make other states to push it in the same binding agreement other industrialized countries had signed. Another thing that seemed odd was the fact that China did not seem at all serious in trying to cooperate or show respect towards other countries during this conference. It could almost be said that the Chinese delegation behaved like a child with opposing everything without good reasoning.

Hence, the negotiations for the next major environmental treaty after the Kyoto Protocol that was expected to be delivered in COP 15 in Copenhagen failed dramatically. One of the contributors to the failure can under the circumstances be considered to be the poor Chinese diplomacy. The Chinese premier, Wen Jiabao sent a second level officer to the top closed door meeting with world leaders like US president and UN secretary-general, instead of attending the meeting himself. China also contributed in making the deal even more abstract by asking to replace tangible emission peaking year to a wording of "as soon as possible". This is still the case today - after the Paris Agreement - as the peaking target for China. As also Lynas (2009) noticed, the country had easy to represent this kind of undiplomatic and rigid behavior since it was in no need for making a new climate deal and feared for the possible consequences an agreement by the developed countries would cause it in the future.

At the 16<sup>th</sup> Conference of Parties the Group's statement mentioned again how the mandate of the Bali Roadmap should finally be fulfilled. Head of Delegation of the Republic of Yemen Mr. Abdulrahman Fadel Al-Eryani also stressed the importance of AWG-KP's results to be delivered at the conference and AWG-LCA's work to be continued. The Group highlighted that for them the adaptation efforts are as important as mitigation and should

therefore be institutionalized (later established as Cancun Adaptation Framework). In China's own statement NDRC's Chairman Xie Zhenhua pledged that "China will continue to follow the path of sustainable development and will never repeat the old path taken by developed countries in their industrialization process, which emitted greenhouse gases in an unchecked manner". This proclamation could be perceived somewhat arrogant since less than a decade after the speech China's emissions are rocket high (and rising), even on the per capita level. China perceived previous COP meeting in Copenhagen successful enough to mention it in the statement as to have enhanced the joint global action and consensus among the parties. One of the standpoints for China was about how the political will should now be changed to "tangible actions", as with different words expressed in all the previous COP statements. The targets are perceived to be achieved by "... principles of party-driven, transparency, inclusiveness and consensus through consultation...".

It was interesting to see how the Group statement also took political position by stating its desire to repeat the necessity of Palestine's effective participation in the UNFCCC process to have the right of access to funding from different climate change sources. At this time Palestine only had a position as "observer" rather than Party since its statehood was only in 2012 recognized by the United Nation. Later in 2015 it finally did deposit its instrument of accession to the Convention to become a Party of the UNFCCC in March 2016. Why this topic may have been considered important is that US financial aid is considered a vital part of many funds established under the Convention and hence important source for many developing countries but it actually has a policy about giving financial aid to organizations accepting Palestine as a Party members; "PROHIBITION.—No funds authorized to be appropriated by this Act or any other Act shall be available for the United Nations or any specialized agency thereof which accords the Palestine Liberation Organization the same standing as member states." (Public Law 101-246—Feb. 16, 1990).

The COP 17 took place in Durban 2011 and China together with G-77 was represented by Argentina. The statement took developed country actions under inspection with the conclusion that they needed to raise the level of ambition in line with the historically settled responsibilities over the cause of climate change acceleration. The developed countries were asked to show leadership in the process and one of the ways to best demonstrate the commitment was according to the statement to undertake the second binding commitment period under the Kyoto Protocol. The developing countries proclaimed to be willing to take further ef-

forts in climate change combating but only after proper fulfilment of the developed countries' promises to adapt financial mechanisms and structures helping the countries in mitigation and other actions. From China's own amplifying statement made by Xie Zhenhua the interesting part was that he introduced the country's national targets for coming years (e.g. including forest stock increase efforts) and told at the end that all the targets were binding.

It's interesting how China bragged about nationally made binding targets though the interest for complying with binding targets on an international level still seemed unreachable at this point. The question of lacking punishment mechanisms on an anarchistic world system-level are here taken to a national tier. Is the Chinese government going to discipline itself if it misses the binding targets or what was the point of the uttering? Of course a speech like this is characterizing China's overall perception of itself quite well. The state again tries to show the outside world how good it is by being able to restrain itself and making binding targets but since obtaining objective information from the state is almost impossible it is hard to analyze that facts.

Fiji's statement on behalf of the G-77 and China in the 19<sup>th</sup> Conference of Parties was somewhat more striking than the speeches made in the previous years. Minister Dr. Jiko Luveni started the speech by acknowledging how the Conference was historic but in a highly dissatisfactory way. The Group had concluded that the COP held in Warsaw was going to be the first where the commitments of mitigation by Annex I Parties was going to be lower at the end of the Conference than in the beginning. Dr. Luveni continued to speak about how disappointed the Group was to see the developed countries shirk their leadership and other responsibilities. Both the G-77 statement and China's own statement delivered once again by Mr. Xie Zhenhua mentioned how the Warsaw COP was expected to be a Conference of *Implementation*. The Group anticipated the previous COP decisions from Bali (such as Bali Action Plan), Cancun, Durban and Doha to be finally fulfilled. Yet again having the financial commitments by developed countries as the key provision. In his own High Level Segment speech Mr. Xie expressed China's continued contribution to common goals thru greater action by all states still bearing in mind the common but differentiated responsibilities. Both statements lifted up the importance of well-planned future negotiations to ensure a new climate agreement in 2015. Dr. Luveni was though concerned in her speech that the outcome in 2015 agreement would shift the responsibility from developed countries to developing countries.



As the main outcome of the Conference of Parties in Warsaw, China wanted to confirm that a new major environmental agreement was going to be concluded at the COP 21 in Paris. But one of the frequent concerns for the Chinese government was the questions of “how the agreement in Paris can be compiled in a way that distinguish between responsibilities of developed and developing countries with both parties still being committed and pleased with the outcome”. It was still comforting to notice how China was not too reluctant of the idea of signing a new climate agreement where it might have to take some responsibilities itself.

In the last Conference of Parties before the expected new climate agreement China and G-77 was represented by Bolivia. In his speech the President of Bolivia Evo Morales asked for the countries of the world to think of the protection of life and land rather than the market, profit and capitalism when making the next climate agreement. The new agreement should address all the elements of the Convention and be made with an ‘anti-colonialist’ vision, in thinking of the indigenous people. President Morales accused the developed countries of stealing the opportunities from poor countries to develop in peace, of lying about being committed to something and then doing something else and being ‘lazy’ in the way that they would not want to increase their ambitions in emission reductions. He seemed to be against the kind of agreement where emission reductions were voluntary because this appeared like another tactic to avoid historical responsibilities. According to the president the main obstacles in combating climate change were; financial distortion, war policies of great powers and exacerbated industrialization caused by excessive consumption. At the end of his speech he even proposed that an international tribunal for climate justice should be created.

The COP 20 speech can be considered the most personal of all the statements analyzed in this study. Being known as a representative of the native peasant population Morales spoke a lot about the ingenious people of Bolivia and how climate change should be combated with accordance to the principles and values of their great-grandparents. The speech stressed an anti-capitalist view which can be considered expected of a socialist leader but the feel of rage and extensive blame on developed countries of being irresponsible liars seemed quite hostile. Since the Chinese culture contains similar features of ancestor worship the country could in this way consent to the statement but the fact that China’s own national consumption patterns are starting slowly to simulate the ones of western the consent could also be seen as hypocrite. Therefore at this point it can already be said that the fact of China still being positioned with the Group of 77 seem quite odd. The statements view of concentrated focus on the most vul-

nerable individuals is something that China actually might agree to but the state's actions are not upholding.

The Conference of Parties in 2015 agreed on the first globally binding agreement to combat climate change. The statement on behalf of G-77 and China was delivered by a proxy to South Africa's Minister of International Relations and Cooperation, Ms. Maite Nkoana-Mashabane. The first interesting fact to be manifested was how the Group actually represents 85% of the entire world's population and is therefore expecting to be heard. The speech assures that the Group is more united than ever before, evidenced by the fact that almost all developing countries had submitted their INDCs at the time of the speech. Yet again the Convention is mentioned as being the expected ultimate starting point for all further multilateral agreements and developed countries are encouraged to take actions as soon as possible instead of waiting to the post-2020 period. Also the promise of US\$100 billion financial aid from Annex I and Annex II countries to developing countries was expected to be delivered and the amount increased in the future.

China's President Xi Jinping had made the national statement already earlier, during the Leaders Event and was therefore by the decisions of the COP/CMP Bureau encouraged together with other states to refrain from making another national statement at the High-Level Segment.

The last statement analyzed in this thesis is the one made at COP 22 as the aftermath of the Paris Conference. In the joint High-Level Segment statement made by Thailand on behalf of G-77 and China, Mr. Surasak Karnjanarat, Minister of Natural Resources and Environment of Thailand wished that the tactful balance that was achieved in Paris between the Parties was going to be well-maintained and preserved. The continuum topics of financial aid from developed countries, capacity-building support, common but differentiated responsibilities and enhanced pre-2020 ambitions (by e.g. ratification of the Doha Amendments) were again laid on the table. For the Group, adaptation was expressed to remain as a priority.

China was again represented by Mr. Xie Zhenhua, The Special Representative on Climate Change Affairs at the NDRC. Crucial point in also his speech was about starting the implementation of the package. He stated that the Marrakech COP 22 meeting is an important occasion to celebrate the mile-stone achievement made in the previous Conference and start planning for the future. The speed of which the Agreement was ratified and entered into force was not only a miracle in the global governance but also a reflection of the strong desire for

an international awakening in taking actions towards sustainable development. Mr. Xie Zhenhua expressed several times how China is now committed to join all parties in building mutual trust. Also China like the other Group of 77 members wished to see ratification of the Doha Amendments to the second commitment period to the Kyoto Protocol and expresses that the developed countries must revisit their commitments toward the developing countries in the field of finance, technology and capacity building. Since China had already in 2014 submitted its instrument of acceptance of the Doha amendment this can be considered an important issue for the state. The developing countries should also deliver as soon as possible the post 2020 financial commitments. In order to implement the state NDC, China has set the binding target of 18 per cent reduction of CO<sub>2</sub> emission per GDP unit for the time period of 2015-2020 and to prepare for the peaking of emissions around 2030 (but the level for emissions at this point have not been expressed). In 2017 China launches a carbon emission trading market. China is ready to work with other parties to create a fair effective and win-win global climate regime.

## 5. DISCUSSION

What can be concluded from the research of the statements and the overall study of the topic of Chinese interests in climate change and emission reduction?

The first round of reading focused on providing an understanding of the overall structure of the statements and extract the main concerns and substance. This brought up the thought of how the failure of the international community to address environmental problems has raised questions whether new institutions for negotiation and administration are needed.

It needs to be recognize that the traditional relations between states are fluctuating and according to what we have lately been witnessing the current world order might change just in a matter of months or even days. Since the threats against humanity are evolving from traditional wars to global natural instability the states are being forced to find ways to work together on the basis of collective efforts. The international system that is based on the Westphalian logic is all the time more questionable. As an everyday example can be raised the substantial use of digital technologies and social media that allow individuals and NGO to communicate using uncontrollable means by governments. Though, when you further think about it, the ultimately authoritarian and monitoring countries such as China with its strict internet policies are actually by means of their national economic growth taking position on the top of the world governance hierarchy ladder and might bring the world order a step back from globalization, closer to the former position of independent states. The money rules so to say.

The poorest developing countries are lacking the possibilities of guaranteeing basic human needs because of the current state of our planet's environment and the developed countries are noticing climate change impacts on the level that interfere with their national economic development.

In general it feels like the statements were quite controversial year after year. It could have been expected that there would have been a common thread for the yearly development in the statements but some of the earlier years China seemed to think that climate change issues are the most important ones to get priority and then a couple of years later they seemed to be uninterested of the topic.

It may be analyzed that the objective for China's reluctant behavior in the outset of climate change negotiations in the beginning of UNFCCC trajectory depended on the fact that it knew how its coal-driven economical rise was taking it towards becoming one of the major

emitters and hence making it an object of global observation. China surmised that ending up under this international supervision would further lead it to be expected to take part in the mitigated binding climate treaties. However, during the latter years observed in this study of the statements there can be seen an attitude alteration in China's expectations over whom should take responsibility for emission reductions in the future. China has now accepted to become an equal Party to a climate change agreement which did not seem like an alternative for it in the beginning.

Somewhat interesting was also to recognize the attitude duplicity over the financial issues. For instance in the COP 14 China urged the developed countries not to be overwhelmed by their hard economic times during the ongoing financial crisis but at the same time they themselves were not ready to take any actual commitments on the account of economic slow-down.

China's association with G-77 made the analysis somewhat difficult since other members of the Group can't really be placed in the same position as China. The positioning was to some extent correct during the years of the first analyzed statements but throughout the ten examined years China developed on many fields so remarkably fast that most of the other G-77 members have no common features with the state.

China has perhaps recently noticed that it has pointlessly been a timid bystander when important decisions were made on the climate change arena and has now understood to enforce its own national way of thinking. By this realization it might actually be able to shape the norms of environmental negotiations and take it closer to the eastern cerebration and turn the old western dominated world order upside down. Whether this is the way China is wanting to go is hard to say before it has established its secure position on the top.

One of the major topics for China seems to be keeping the division between developed and developing states and self remaining in the latter one what it comes to taking the responsibility of climate change in the first place. It seems obvious that even though the state would admit its responsibilities in further climate actions, it would never accept being responsible of the problem history wise. China and other developing countries have historically shoved responsibilities of mitigation efforts on the developed countries, such as USA. In other words, in agreement settling China has regularly been a cautious participant and therefore often taken the orientation of rather over-delivering on many of its promises.

After the failed negotiation attempts at the Copenhagen summit China's economic growth rate started slowing down and its leaders understood that the economy needed to be taken to another direction. Consequently China's role in COP 21 in Paris was constructive compared to the Copenhagen fiasco. The high energy consumption factories and business were reevaluated and adjust to an energy efficient and high technology direction. Also high quality product innovation within the state reached an advanced level. Since the prosperity building and sustainable development are important national targets for the government of China it has therefore understood that climate change can be viewed as a possibility rather than a threat. Even though China has to decrease the employment levels in the coal consuming heavy industry sectors it has at the same time the possibility for extensive growth in the green technology business. This policy reverse is already on its way.

Another event that might be a setback to the whole intergovernmental environment collaboration and its achievements is the January 2017 inauguration of the Republican Party candidate as the president of the USA. Since the importance of US- China relations was earlier discussed in this study we can conclude that the effects of the expected upcoming decisions by US president might have its impacts on China. The newly elected president have among other things expressed that "The concept of global warming was created by and for the Chinese in order to make U.S. manufacturing non-competitive" (Trump 2012). Still, President Xi Jinping has fortunately expressed China's commitment to the Paris Agreement and the states interests and intentions in continuing toward the already established climate targets (Xi's speech at the World Economic Forum in Davos 17.1.2017). Another comforting pledge was made by Xi's climate ambassador Xie Zhenhua who openly insinuated more cooperation with China and other states rather than trusting that US will be the only capable companion for PRC. Even though these statements from the top Chinese leaders were made recently, still some caution should be awaked in this contemporary instable world order. It may only be hoped for that China is already strong enough by itself and can presume taking steps towards the already agreed commitments even without the backing of US.

Reflecting to the collective goods problem the UNFCCC Parties have tried to solve it by establishing the idea of "Common but differentiated responsibility" where the developed counties being accountable for the climate change agitation also take more responsibility for combating it. In order to find balance and justice the idea is to, like also Coppola et al. (1997, 394) it express, strive for an accurate distribution of benefits and burdens which brings equity

to all. The problem of finding this balance is tough though, because of the reason that people tend to have easier to measure the costs of environmental protection than measure the benefits of it. It could be argued that most people are only concerned about issues that directly affect themselves.

### **Possible impacts on the success of the Paris Agreement**

Is it now possible to make further assumptions on the basis of this statement analysis? Can it be expected that the development in the opinions of China's climate change views will make the Paris Agreement more successful than its predecessors?

The best way to analyze how the Paris Agreement is going to change the perception of global environmental governance is to compare it to the formerly prevailing international climate agreement, the Kyoto Protocol. When analyzing the importance of the Paris Agreement and trying to understand why it might be a better approach to stabilize the greenhouse gas emissions than Kyoto Protocol - one important reason could be the unpredictable change in the international system. When the Kyoto Protocol was conducted in 1997, nobody had guessed that China's economic growth will stir industrial production out of Europe and the US. The emission share of Kyoto ratified Annex I countries was marginalized from 63% at the entry into force to 13–14% under the second commitment period of the Protocol. (Korhola 2014, 292). These kind of drastic events are now expected to be more easily recognized and therefore also more easily prepared to. It means that the new environmental agreements are based on different premises than the old agreements and are therefore also expected to perform better.

What can have been considered one of the biggest barriers for the success of Kyoto Protocol is the fact of voluntary compliance as no states can be forced into radically cut emissions. Consequently, it is also known that noncompulsory targets are rarely reached if nobody is reviewing and monitoring the actual outcomes. Therefore, the objectives of the 'bottom-up' mechanism that is audited thru the nationally determined contributions might be a welcomed approach to the issue.

The overall feel of the statements analyzed was that a shift in diplomatic position in international environmental negotiations is happening within the states. The new treaty has its strongpoints in the composition of comprehensive participation and solidarity.

The new practice of bottom-up diplomacy is a good way to go since it has been noticed that 'forced' central authoritarian way of practicing environmental policy has not been successful. But when the issues are approached from this angle the attention has to be adjusted on new tactics. As mentioned before, one of the driving decisions for the Paris Agreement was the 2013 in Warsaw initiated invite by Parties to each deliver an Intended Nationally Determined Contribution for the 2015 negotiations (UNFCCC/CP/2013/10/Add.1, at par. 2.). Now the nationally determined contributions need to be planned and implemented in an adequately ambitious and detailed way and the evaluation methods and arrangements need to be recognized and appreciated by all. In other words, what can be considered as an important next step now that the Paris Agreement have come into force is to make more strict and precise rules for the NDCs and their review.

What could be seen as another major strength of the Paris Agreement is that it does not force nations into compliance, but rather creates long desired confidence on transparency and achieving of common goals. Also, before there were not enough of advanced green technology that could help in omitting the coal but since we now are creating new technology in an extremely fast pace we should finally be able (at least in theory) to get to the common targets.



## CONCLUSION

Environmental issues are featured by the fact that they are rarely respecting the nation state borders. The natural flow of air and water through artificially created lines of demarcation is almost impossible to restrict. This problem therefore raises the transnational interest of regulating the quality of these freely moving natural resources. When it is recognize that the issue of environmental degradation and climate change is being common to us all, it may better be understood how these matters will affect the international relations and politics among countries.

Within the past decades the general worldview has drifted in the way that recognizes that the major common dangers are nowadays imposed by the natural environment rather than directly from e.g. other states' military actions. These environmental issues are for the most part affecting poor and developing countries which make the problem unequally balanced since most of the problems are originally caused by the actions taken by wealthy, industrialized countries.

This thesis wanted to examine how this unequal premise has shaped the opinions of the People's Republic of China over global environmental matters and climate change actions. China's extremely fast economic growth and its position as the most populated country in the world have brought with them substantive social problems through, inter alia, poor food security, water contamination, resource depletion, air pollutions and general environmental instability. Already hundreds of thousands of Chinese suffer from severe illnesses and premature deaths due to the environmental degradation and the amount of people getting sick is unfortunately predicted to increase on a yearly basis. Moreover, these health hazards are projected to propagate to neighboring countries due to the uncontrollable means of movement of natural resources.

The joint international prospect is to limit the actions that cause distress on the environment so that sustainable development can be achieved globally. But the problems rise when the amount of actions each state has to take to combat these issues is disclosed. This might be referred to as the collective goods problem. That is to say, without a central authority it is difficult to distribute the right amount of responsibility for climate change actions to each sovereign state. Viewed from the historical perspective the main responsibility should be shared among developed states, as was the basis of the United Nations Framework Conven-

tion on Climate Change and the Kyoto Protocol, but controversially, according to the levels of current emissions the responsibility should be transferred to the largest developing countries, such as China. The newest international environmental treaty, the Paris Agreement, has fortunately brought a commonly accepted middle ground to this issue with introducing the ‘bottom-up’ approach. The Paris Agreement stimulates the concept of ‘common but differentiated responsibilities’ by expecting states to frequently review their input to the shared climate change combat through delivering ‘Nationally Determined Contributions’ outlining individual state actions.

Since China is the world’s largest emitter it is evident that the position it takes in fighting climate change is essential to the rest of the world. Therefore, this study examined if the Chinese government’s environmental political discourse has experienced some noticeable changes during the past decade and whether these changes can be foreseen as making the new binding emission reduction agreement more successful than its predecessors. The study was conducted by the use of a discourse-historical analysis of official statements made at the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change Conferences over a time period of ten years.

The results showed somewhat noticeable opinion changes in the Conference of Party statements during the studied decade. Now that so many things have change in the course of the past years, China has begun to understand its potential to rise as an international leader in the global environmental governance. Before the turn of the past decade China was still pleading for developed states to take full responsibility for stopping climate change and further financially helping the developing countries in their adaption to the ongoing environmental turmoil. However, approaching the present day statements China started to accept national emission restrictions imposed from the outside. Hence, the climate change combat appears to have taken steps to the right direction. In addition, what has made China to step up even further into the spotlight, showing strong interest in taking the lead as the next global climate change decelerating governor is the election of the new US President. The inauguration of the Republican Party President Donald J. Trump has made the international society to presume United States withdrawal from the Paris Agreement as Trump promised during his election campaign, which will further make a leadership vacancy at the top of the climate change government.

Nonetheless, what can be seen as a truly prominent turn is that China seems to finally indeed desire actions to stop climate change, even without enforcement and external support. This further indicates that the success of the Paris Agreement is presumably not depending on Chinese environmental diplomacy but rather other external indicators.

## **FUTURE RESEARCH**

This research was conducted to give insight to China's opinion changes in environmental matters during the past decade. The qualitative statement analysis was chosen as the research method on the basis of, inter alia, time and resources limitations. Therefore, it would be interesting to make further research by answering the research questions through other methods to get a more comprehensive overview into the research subject.

In addition, the new logic of making international climate agreements in a 'bottom-up' manner demand new skills and approaches by politicians and academics to research the topic in the future. Also interdisciplinary research about how the new actions of governments will affect the perception of environmental protection in the future is needed.

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