China’s “New Normal” in International Climate Change Negotiations

Assessing Chinese leadership and climate politics from Copenhagen to Paris

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Abstract:

Being the world’s largest greenhouse gas emitter and second largest economy, China’s role in international climate negotiations has been the topic of much heated debate over the past 10 years. However, few studies have sought to understand China’s role in the Global Environmental Governance and Chinese leadership therefore remains a lacuna in need of further investigation. This generates one central question: How does leadership theory bring insight into China’s role in the international climate change negotiations? The research is designed as a qualitative case study, applying an analytical framework by Young (1991). A content analysis in conjunction with the analytical framework is applied to policy documents, speeches and official reports produced by the Chinese Government, UNFCCC and IISD as a way to understand China’s negotiation strategies and climate change goals. The findings suggest that China has shown weak leadership during the climate summit in 2009, since there was a huge lack of leadership capabilities applied in their negotiation strategies. However, in 2015 China met all leadership indicators to a certain degree and can therefore be seen to have exercised strong leadership capabilities. It can therefore be argued, that China has become a leading actor in the climate change regime due to their shift in negotiation approach from 2009 to 2015, through their influence and position in shaping the global climate change agenda.

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List of Abbreviations

ASEAN - Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, and Thailand

AU – African Union

BASIC - Brazil, South Africa, India, China

BRICS - Brazil, Russia, India and China

CBDR – Common But Differentiated Responsibilities

IISD - International Institute for Sustainable Development

INDC – Intended Nationally Determined Contributions

ISDR – International Society for Disaster Reduction

IR – International Relations

MOFAC – Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China

NAMA – Nationally Appropriate Mitigation Actions

UN – United Nations

UNDP – United Nations Development Programme

UNFCCC – United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change

UNCTAD - United Nations Conference on Trade and Development

US – United States
1. Introduction

Climate change is perceived as one of the biggest challenges for humanity today. As stated by the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), in order to tackle the challenge, we all need to “stabilize greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere at a level that would prevent dangerous anthropogenic interference with the climate system” (UNFCCC, 2019). In this regard, international climate change negotiations are mainly about how the international society should share the responsibility of decreasing greenhouse gas emissions. Being the world’s largest greenhouse gas emitter and second largest economy, China’s role in international climate negotiations has been the topic of much heated debate over the past 10 years.

In 2009, China was generally criticized by Western countries after the UNFCCC climate change conference in Copenhagen due to the failure of reaching a climate deal (Vidal et al. 2009). However, six years later China was saluted by the world for its great involvement and contribution to the conclusion of the Paris Agreement; some even started to declare China as a new global leader in climate change (Xiaosheng, 2018). Numerous studies have discussed China’s role in the climate change negotiations and examined its changing positions. Nonetheless, little research has been done on the leadership aspect, to be more exact, if China can be seen as a leader in the international climate change regime.

1.1 Research problem, Research Aim, and Research Question

China's economy has faced 30 years of rapid growth, making it one the fastest developing economies (WB, 2019). Except, with this major economic increase, China has had extreme environmental consequences such as air pollution and resource depletion (Harris et al. 2005:25). Being the largest emitter in the world, China has a vital position when it comes to the united effort to combat climate change and generates a demanding challenge to investigate the unique characteristics of Chinese environmental policies. This creates a need to identify the role of China in international climate negotiations and their environmental strategies both nationally and globally. Which generates one central question: How does leadership theory bring insight into China’s role in the international climate change negotiations?

Before 2015, China has consistently gone against having a global environmental governance and instead advocated for domestic climate regulations (Hilton et al. 2017:52). And despite initiatives to reduce non-renewable energy, Chinese negotiators at COP15 were careful not to link domestic
climate action to any presumptions of international commitment (Hilton et al. 2017:48-49). This stands in great contrast to COP21 where China was, for the first time, ready to commit to an absolute cap on emissions subject to international reporting, verification and measurement. Following this political success of COP21, which differentiated highly from the diplomatic failure in Copenhagen in 2009. Contributing to this accomplishment was China’s emergence as a leading party in the climate change negotiations and China presented a new-found dedication to become a leader in the climate change regime. With this study, I aim to examine China’s role in the international climate regime focusing on the cases of COP15 and COP21 in order to determine if China has changed their role from a peripheral position to a leadership role.

In regard to earlier work, many scholars within the field of International Relations (IR) have provided many important insights for understanding global climate change leadership and the individual leadership roles of specific states in shaping negotiation outcomes (Christoff, 2010, Karlsson et al. 2012). However, with some exceptions, the vast majority of the most recent climate leadership research has disproportionately focused on various aspects of the European Union (EU) and the United States (US) climate leadership (Karlsson et al. 2018, Parker et al. 2017). Chinese leadership in this area remains a lacuna, in need of further investigation. From this, I argue that China has become a leading actor in the climate change regime and specifically during climate change negotiations, through their influence and position in shaping the global climate change agenda. Thus, this study seeks to analyze China’s leadership role, during the climate change negotiations in Copenhagen and in Paris.

1.2 Relevance, Delimitations, and Conceptual Overview

As climate change challenges surpass national borders, they have become an important priority of international politics. Within the field of IR, numerous scholars have investigated the development in China’s environmental politics and is generating much serious debate around it. The case of China was selected because of China being the world’s largest greenhouse gas emitter and it is one of the key actors that has both responsibility and capabilities in effectively addressing climate challenges (Harris et al. 2005:24).

With the empirical case of China, I will aim to contribute to the field of leadership and specifically leadership theory, by adding new data and bringing in a new perspective advancing the theory. This thesis supports further studies within the field of leadership in IR and encourages to continue examining China’s role. However, the purpose of this specific research project will be limited to
examine the leadership styles applied by China during the UNFCCC conferences in 2009 and 2015 due to the established time-frame.

To this end, the study draws upon the methodological-analytical framework presented by Young (1991) and makes use of the methodological underpinnings of a content analysis. This framework will be further elaborated in the upcoming chapters. In what follows, this thesis will start with a literature review, engaging in the research in regard to the changing role of China in the international arena and their changing climate change policy-making. However, exploring China’s leadership role in climate change negotiations has only recently been prioritized by IR scholars and has therefore not been researched extensively. The aim of this literature review is hence to provide an overview of approaches to produce research in the field of leadership and engage with scholars who can aid in exploring China’s role in international climate negotiations.

2. Literature Review

As explained in the introduction, I will start with the literature review, which will be divided into four issues in order to clarify the empirical and theoretical debates. This paper will begin with a theoretical discussion, focusing on the main theorists of leadership theory such as Young (1991), Underdal (1994) and Malnes (1995). This is due to the main focus of this thesis, being primarily centered around the theoretical debate, with the research question: How does leadership theory bring insight into China’s role in the international climate change negotiations? It is therefore crucial to clarify the foundations of leadership theory, in order to understand the second issue, which brings up the debates and scholarly work concerning leadership in the global climate regime. Hereafter studies in regard to China’s increasing involvement and influence in the international system will be presented. This is in connection to the last issue, being China’s changing position towards a multilateral response to global warming and their “New Normal” in the international climate change negotiations. Leading to the first part of this chapter, focusing on the theory of leadership arising from the field within IR and subfield of diplomacy.

2.1 Leadership Theory

Leadership is not a phenomenon, which has attracted a huge amount of interest in the discipline of IR. To simplify the literature, scholars have mainly approached it from the state level of analysis namely; powerful states. From this starting point originates a tradition of testing how much leadership
can be stretched in relation to power. Meaning that with power comes often an increased possibility to lead. (Andresen et al. 2002:43-44). Most IR investigations of leadership, however, assume both that power is an important basis for leadership and that the relationship is complex. Yet, scholars such as Underdal (1994) have made pioneering contributions in order to define and understand leadership as a way of scrutinizing the successes or failures of international negotiations. When confronting complex transnational problems in which the stakes are high, and solutions can be blocked by collective action problems, leadership is essential (Underdal, 1994:178). Underdal also defines leadership as an actor directing the actions of other actors in order to achieve certain interest. Moreover, argues that leadership can be important by providing a model other may want to follow and creating initiatives that might persuade others to follow (Underdal, 1994:175). However, before understanding the types of leadership we need to assess the influential factors which can be referred to as fixed parameters in the negotiation scene (Malnes, 1995:99-100).

Malnes (1995) starts his research by focusing on the basic parameters of negotiations and makes a distinction between agents and leaders, by asking the question what a leader is. He argues, a leader differs from an agent in the way that leaders do not see parameters as fixed constraints and will try to alter them in order to gain a specific outcome. And an agent will stay within the fixed parameters. He also states that factors such as the institutional setting, substance, interest, beliefs, risks and time are factors determining the type and role of leadership. Young (1991) on the other hand, mainly focuses his research on the different types of leadership. He argues that leadership must be approached in behavioral terms by focusing on the role played by leadership which can take different forms (Young, 1991:285-286). An important article in this tradition, cited by several contributors to this issue is Young’s article “Political Leadership and Regime Formation”. Young distinguishes between three modes of leadership: structural, entrepreneurial, and intellectual.

Young, Underdal and Malnes have all contributed significantly to the discussions on leadership, however I have also chosen to include the research by Karlsson et al. (2018) and Parker et al. (2017) since they built on the work by Young, Underdal and Malnes, moreover brings in a new important perspective on the categorization of leadership modes. Karlsson et al. (2018) and Parker et al. (2017) assesses the EU and the US’s global climate change leadership from Copenhagen to the Paris Agreement, examining their role and scrutinizing to what extent their negotiation objectives has been achieved. In their research they use Young’s leadership modes as a way to analyze the US and EU role in climate negotiations and argue for why they can be seen as leaders in the climate regime. However, their literature has also specified a new mode of leadership referred to as ideational, which
aids in exploring the role of China in climate change negotiations. Since the modes of leadership are a crucial part of the analytical framework, these will be explained in more detail in the next chapter in order to be used as key indicators for the analysis. Therefore, it will for now be sufficient to say that the four modes of leadership will not only help to analyze the roles leaders play in institutional bargaining, but it will also open up opportunities for further research within the field of IR. With the crucial understanding of leadership theory, I will now turn to the next part of the literature review focused on leadership in Global Environmental Governance. This part brings up the empirical discussions in regard to leadership in the international system with special attention towards the global climate regime.

2.2 Leadership in Global Environmental Governance

Ever since the 1996 Kyoto Conference, through the 2009 Copenhagen Summit and until the highly anticipated Paris conference on sustainable development held in 2015, the question of how to address the challenges relating to global environmental change has been at the core of negotiations. However, despite more than 100 environmental treaties that have been developed the last 40 years, anthropogenic factors are still the major drivers of global environmental change. Scientists argue that if the human-induced pressures on the environment continue in the same pace, it would trigger abrupt or irreversible environmental change with extreme consequences (Rockström et al. 2009). According to Biermann et al. (2012), such development requires fundamental reorientation and reconstruction of national and international institutions toward more effective and legitimate global environmental governance and planetary leadership (Biermann et al. 2012:53).

In the field of IR, leadership in Global Environmental Governance is a familiar but under-researched concept. People often leave it out as it is a conflicted area. In the meantime, the existing literature on leadership in international affairs is mostly based on American experience. The long-held Western centric worldview leads some observers to downgrade not only the role non-Western actors played in the past and are playing in contemporary international affairs, but also a vital role they are likely to play in the future. In fact, international leadership needs to be more carefully examined and needs to include the experience of other states and regions, in order to create a more balanced and nuanced concept.

Pang Zhongying and Hongying Wang (2013) argue that as long as an actor initiates, supports, or pushes for a motion and thus becomes an initiator, supporter or accelerator of an international collective action it is playing a leadership role. International leadership organizes, shapes, or guides
international relations. For Pang, leadership is the key to any successful multilateralism. Ineffective multilateralism often results from the lack of international or multilateral leadership. With a new configuration of world power in place, what is needed is a new post-American hegemony international leadership structure (Zhongying et al. 2013:1195). This is a shared or collective international leadership. As the international system becomes more complex with increasing actors and challenges, multilateralism might not work even if a dominant power, for example, the US wanted to go back to multilateralism with itself as the leader. In this century, a strong collective international leadership is much needed for an effective multilateralism while China, a major stakeholder in global governance, can play a key role in the process (Zhongying et al. 2013:1203).

Chen Qi and Guan Chuanjing (2015) have studied the issue of leadership in the design of international institutions. They define leadership as the ability of a state or a group of states to coordinate and shape collective action in international affairs. Moreover, they highlight the importance of leadership and argues that in order to initiate and maintain activities in an institutional design, strong leadership will be needed (Qi et al. 2015:6). They believe that leadership exists in the process of guiding, coordinating and shaping collective actions in global affairs. The ways of exercising leadership include using coercion, setting agenda, and shaping ideas with use of strategies such as initiating a motion, pointing to the goal, making rules, coordinating different interests and bearing organizational costs (Qi et al. 2015:20). There are three key elements for a state to exercise leadership, namely, it must have the will, power and action to lead. These insights provide some useful ideas for this study to examine what kind of role China played in the international climate change negotiations in Copenhagen and Paris.

As pointed out by Malnes (1995), a leading actor is often not appointed, and leadership should be understood more in terms of practice than status: it is the exercise of leadership that is the most definitive aspects. Leadership grows, and, for the purpose of this study, is exercised within an organizational context. Malnes states, that leadership takes shape in a process of working together for a shared goal which often is mutually beneficial, or in which other actors benefit even more or more visibly than does the provider of the public goods (Malnes, 1995:91). When something has happened, a leader is that person others turn to for assistance or advice and a leader may become a center for collective action. Malnes also argues, that when leaders enjoy a high status, they often offer resources that can be shared by others. Furthermore, with a leader in place the partners may bandwagon on the leader for their own benefit. This will mainly be permitted by the leader, as a way to win the hearts and minds of the other actors. Based on the accumulation of trust, credit or even reliance leadership
grows throughout the process, even to such a degree that the leading player is in a position to give the directions to others (Malnes, 1995:95).

In this section of leadership in global environmental governance, we have gotten an insight into the discussions concerning how leadership can be formed within an institutional setting and the importance of leadership for an effective multilateral response. Understanding leadership is highly important for the purpose of this thesis, however, with China as the main focus the next section will now turn to a specific focus on China’s new role in the international arena. This is to clarify China’s international position and development through the last couple of decades.

2.3 Hesitant adaption: China’s new role in global politics

For centuries China has played a peripheral role and has been usually shy to behave as if it possesses leadership, which has primarily been due to its restrained culture not seeking leadership positions. Several scholars have therefore in the past explained China’s behavior as often being low profiled in rhetoric and laying emphasis on forming partnerships with other countries (Xuetong, 2014:155). However, in the last decade the literature explaining China’s position shows a great deal of transformation and rising Chinese influence in the international arena. Scholars in the field of IR, such as Gao Xiaosheng (2018) and Yan Xuetong (2014) argue that China’s behavior has changed in the last couple of years and China is now strategically pursuing a greater role in the international stage (Xiaosheng, 2018:231). Furthermore, has changed from having a low profile to be striving for achievement in the international arena (Xuetong, 2014:180). This leads to the second part of the literature review; engaging more deeply in the empirical discussions concerning China’s changing role in the international system.

The development of China, according to Malesky and London (2014), has been more extreme and rapid than most of its neighboring countries and China’s growth is “among the most rapid in modern history” (Malesky et al. 2014:396). In addition to its status as the world’s second largest economy China is also the world’s greatest export economy and has been predicted to be the next great superpower (Malesky et al. 2014:410).

The rise of China has triggered a broad debate among academics, policy makers and the public. The economic fallout from the global financial crisis has enhanced the intensity to the question of how China’s growing role in world politics will affect the current international political and economic order (Breslin, 2007:5). For Europe and the US earlier debates concerned whether to constrain or to involve the emerging superpower, have become outdated. This has been due to more than three
decades of high-level economic growth, social change and the modernization of its one-party state, with the result that China has nowadays moved to the center stage of the new global order (Breslin, 2007:5).

Despite many negative views toward the rise of China, Hai Yang (2016) argues that many of China’s neighboring countries, are beginning to accept and accommodate China's rise. Brazil, Australia, African states and other natural resource rich countries, for example, welcome China's rise and see it as an opportunity rather than a threat (Yang, 2016:755). Likewise, industrialized countries such as Japan and western states are very dependent on China’s economy and are greatly in need of their huge market in order to boost their own exports. Politically speaking, according to Yang, some countries are also pleased with the rise of China because there is a balance of power between China and the US (Yang, 2016:758). Simply put, with their rapid economic expansion and increased political influence, China has become the only country in Asia and probably the world that could challenge or compete with the US both economically and politically.

Zhang Yanbing and Andrew Cooper (2017) has, however, offered a more distinct and conflicted picture of Chinese leadership, which has been mainly focused on international oriented institutions and organizations. Their key argument is that China has practiced for decades a dualistic strategy as both insider and outsider in the international system. China have advantageously chosen to become a core member of the G20 and at the same time actively been creating and becoming a member of a number of parallel non-Western institutions such as the BRICS (Yanbing et al. 2017:32). This dualism has been a strategic move from China and serves a number of purposes which includes both international and domestic advantages. However, it also creates questions in regard to what kind of leadership that China will offer in the international system. Finally, Per Meilstrup (2010) round off the third issue with an article pointing into the future. He argues that the consequences of China standing outside the global political processes and especially outside a multilateral effort to combat climate change would be more severe than China being a part of the negotiations and international political stage (Meilstrup, 2010). Having clarified some of the empirical discussions concerning China’s changing role in the international stage, this literature now turns to a more specific focus regarding China’s stance in the international climate regime.

2.4 China’s “New Normal” in the International Climate Regime

In international climate change negotiations, China’s role has been an issue of constant concern. Specifically, the lack of quantitative, absolute emissions commitments from China has been the focus
(Dong, 2017:32). In line with changing domestic and international contexts, Liang Dong (2017) emphasizes that China is recalibrating its position and strategy. Thus, he argues that China’s participation in international climate change negotiations has evolved from playing a minor role to slowly moving to a leader position (Dong, 2017:37).

Literature that has currently been produced in the problem-area of climate changes and China’s rising power, recognizes and illustrates the serious circumstances and debates which the situation of China’s rising economy has generated in the climate change regime. The articles chosen acknowledge the fact that a U.S. withdrawal has created a leadership vacuum and that China is in the lead to take over (Belis et al. 2015:205). However, by reviewing research and journals regarding China’s role, there can be found two essential positions. The first position I am using to clarify the debate concerns a stand point from the scholar Hilton et al. (2017) who examines what changed between 2009 and 2015 such that China was able to play a more leading role in the global climate regime. She argues that, in accordance to her research, the consequence of a US withdrawal has led to a Chinese leadership which will provide the future climate agreements with an increased Chinese influence on the environment (Hilton et al. 2017:55). Furthermore, she also specifies in her research that China has been able to play a more crucial role in the global climate regime. She argues that a key driver of change was China’s transition to a ‘New Normal’ model of economic development. In the 12th Five Year Plan Period, China’s economic policy prioritized a transition from energy-intensive growth to a more balanced economy characterized by slower growth and a focus on innovation and low-carbon technologies. This shift gave China the chance to re-formulate its main concerns in international climate negotiations and laid the path for more climate cooperation with the US, the lack of which had been a major roadblock to success in Copenhagen. Christoff (2010) also researches how China as a leader for the climate regime can improve the decrease of pollution and claims that the US solitary accounts for international emissions is declining, not growing. He argues that China has been a leading party since COP15 in Copenhagen and that China’s position as a developing country has provided China with the leading role of representing the global south in the climate change regime (Christoff, 2010:645-646).

Belis et al. (2015), on the other hand, emphasize that it is the different projections of future climate change consequences that lead to diverging positions between the major players and not about power capabilities. Arguing that China’s economic status is influential in their position in the international arena. However, China has yet to make any concrete actions towards environmental policies and can therefore arguably not be seen as a leader in the climate change regime (Belis et al. 2015:204). They
also point out that with China’s growing domestic and global economic activities and its increasing emissions profile, China is subject to internal and external stresses. China’s negotiating stance is in part conditioned by the demands and pressures for internal development and is therefore not inspired by China itself to be a leader in international climate negotiations.

While the majority of most climate leadership scholarship has previously focused on various aspects of EU and US leadership, China has started to gain a lot of attention in the climate change regime (Karlsson et al. 2018:519, Parker et al. 2017:239). China’s emerging position in the international arena, several scholars have started recognizing China as an upcoming climate leader. As this literature review reveals, China has gained a higher position in the international arena and scholars such as Karlsson et al. have investigated China’s recognition as a leader. He argues that, since 2009, China has provided a vision for climate change agreements, signaled its own commitment and helped with establishing cooperation through bilateral partnerships (Karlsson et al. 2018:523). Hence, China can be seen as a new leader in the climate regime due to its influence and recognition as a leader. And with this in mind, I will now turn to the methodology chapter building on the empirical and theoretical discussion highlighted in the literature review.

3. Methodology

The literature review shows a variety of scholars with different aims but Chinese leadership in the area of climate change negotiations remains a lacuna in need of further investigation. In order to address this gap, I will identify the climate change goals and the leadership strategies pursued by China at the selected UNFCCC negotiations. Hereafter, I will evaluate their leadership strategies and examine to what extent China succeeded in achieving its objectives in the deals reached in Copenhagen and Paris. Conclusively, I will compare the two analysis’s in order to answer the research question; How does leadership theory bring insight into China’s role in the international climate change negotiations?

Having established the central aims for this chapter, I will now turn to an in-depth outline for the proposed methodology.

3.1 Analytical Framework

In this section I seek to understand the methodological-analytical framework presented by Young (1991) analyzing leadership by the use of four leadership modes. Young’s approach will be explained
and discussed in detail in order to understand why this particular analytical model has been preferred. Moreover, establish some clarifications on what is commonly known to determine being a leader.

As explained above, this study seeks to uncover China’s role in climate change negotiations. This thesis argues for the application of an existing analytical framework to the case of China in order to build and support existing literature in the field of leadership in climate change negotiations. Bringing in the case of China will not only provide new important insights into the arena of leadership, but also expand on the concept of leadership whereas IR scholars are mainly focusing on actors such as the EU and the US. The study of China’s role within climate change negotiations will be carried out as a qualitative case study. The study will use the methodological-analytical framework presented by Young (1991) analyzing leadership by the use of four leadership modes. The analytical framework for understanding modes of leadership is, as mentioned, adapted from the literature on EU and US leadership in climate negotiations which is built upon Young’s research (Parker et al. 2017 & Karlsson et al. 2018). This specific analytical framework has been chosen, due to its relevance in assessing and determining roles in the international arena. I argue that it is most suitable for this case, because of its previous applications to the EU and the US. Not only does it bring in new perspectives, but it also fulfills the lack of focus on China as a leader in the world stage, where the primary focus has been on western states.

The study takes on an ideographic approach to social research. Furthermore, a deductive approach will be applied which is aimed at testing the theory set out in the previous section in the theoretical framework. This study aims to analyze the selected COP’s in an in-depth manner which highlights the applied leadership styles and climate actions by China. The level of analysis in this study is state-centered. Therefore, I will aim to focus mainly on government official’s statements and remark and furthermore official reports and negotiation summaries by the UNFCCC and the IISD, which will be explained in detail later on.

The ambition of this thesis is to find out if China can indeed be identified as a leader in international climate change negotiations. To find out if this is the case, this paper will analyze China’s position and behavior during two conferences of the UNFCCC that have been crucial for the UNFCCC, namely the COP15 in Copenhagen in 2009 and the COP21 in Paris in 2015. As previous research suggests in the literature review, the COP15 and COP21 have been two of the most significant climate summits in the international climate regime and specifically China has received a lot of attention.
In order to uncover China’s negotiation strategies I will examine China’s behavior and role during the UNFCCC conferences. The next section will therefore provide a detailed clarification of the different leadership styles, in order to, find and highlight the key indicators for analyzing the two climate change summits. Furthermore, details how I will examine China’s climate change goals and the leadership strategies deployed to meet those objectives.

3.1.1 Modes of leadership

As explained in the first section of the literature review, several scholars have engaged in the literature on leadership theory. Although, most scholars use different framings for the same leadership modes, this study will be focused on the three main theorists discussed in the literature review, namely Young, Underdal and Malnes. There are as previously mentioned three different modes of leadership, however, Karlsson has developed a fourth namely; ideational which will also be included in the analysis due to its relevance and previous applications in cases such as the EU and the US.

The four modes of leadership are; directional, structural, ideational and instrumental. While clarifying the definitions of each mode, in each definition the main parts of the concepts are highlighted in the end. This is in order to establish the two key indicators, which will support the establishment of the questions later on in the methodology section.

*Structural leadership* can mainly be understood as an actor’s capabilities to provide resources in order to reach certain interests, additionally showing the ability in exerting coercive actions (Young, 1991:288, Underdal, 1994:185). With this understanding, it can be divided in to two parts and shortened as; ability to provide resources and exercise coercive actions. *Directional leadership* can be clarified as an actor showing commitment to lead by example and be the first to make a stance or be the lead initiator of a certain action (Underdal, 1994:183). This can be shortened as, the ability to lead by example and make the first move, which are the main points for directional leadership. *Instrumental leadership* points to an actor’s ability to shape unions and build connections which are crucial to create and produce agreements. Moreover, being a good negotiator when political disputes arise (Malnes, 1995:89). Instrumental leadership can be shortened as; the power to gather actors and the ability to act as a broker to bridge problems in the negotiations. *Ideational leadership* can be described as an actor’s ability to provide new innovative ideas and solutions, moreover propose and promote joint solutions (Karlsson et al. 2018:178). This leadership mode can therefore be shortened as; the ability to provide new ideas and solutions, moreover make proposals on joint solutions.
With these explanations of the modes of leadership and having highlighted the essential aspects of each mode, I will now turn to the operationalization part of the method chapter.

3.1.2 Operationalization

Having defined and clarified the modes of leadership, the questions can be constructed. The questions are constructed as a measuring tool and supports the research by identifying what to look for when initiating the content analysis. When constructing the questions, it is important to cover all aspects of the four modes of leadership, which is why I have constructed two questions for each leadership mode. The definitions of each leadership mode explained in the previous section, has highlighted two key sentences for each mode and hence been divided into two questions.

**Directional leadership**

*Q1) Are there aims to lead by example indicated by China?*

*Q2) Are there actions showing China being the driving force for ambitious results?*

**Structural leadership**

*Q1) Are there efforts showing China is exercising coercive action to achieve their own interest?*

*Q2) Are there examples of China’s capability to offer resources?*

**Ideational leadership**

*Q1) Are there any proposals on joint solutions to collective problems suggested by China?*

*Q2) Are China presenting any new innovative solutions and ideas?*

**Instrumental leadership**

*Q1) Are there any examples of China gathering actors to cooperate on climate disputes?*

*Q2) Are there any examples of China being the broker to bridge problems?*

The analysis will with these questions, focus on identifying each mode and in regard to the literature review it can be anticipated that China will show very limited leadership capabilities in 2009, whereas in 2015 China is expected to show increased leadership capabilities. Moreover, changes in China’s leadership style is also highly predictable due to previous scholars arguing China’s “New Normal” in the climate change negotiations has changed their role. Which is why, the analysis will not only bring in new material for understanding China’s role during the climate negotiations, but also refer back to previous research in the literature review.
The analysis will be structured into two parts, first analyzing the Climate Summit in Copenhagen 2009 and hereafter the Climate Summit in Paris 2015. As for the structure of the analysis, I have divided it into two parts for the readers convenience, in order to make it easy to follow the steps of assessments and to fully understand the findings from the materials. Moreover, gain a deeper understanding of the two COP’s. Furthermore, I have decided to start the analysis by introducing the main points from the COP’s and the most important observations through the individual assessments and analysis of the material. This is to make sure that the analysis covers all of the material and will highlight both if the questions has been completed or not. Hereafter, a more in-depth analysis in relation to the individual questions connecting to both the chosen material and the literature review will be made.

When conducting the content analysis, the material will be reviewed in-depth and in order to avoid for the material being pressed into the analytical model, the findings from the material will be critically discussed and assessed independently. Furthermore, the findings will be systematically presented through a table, whereas the existence of each mode of leadership will show if they have been completed or not.

Table 1.

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<th>COP15</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Directional leadership</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Structural leadership</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Ideational leadership</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Instrumental leadership</strong></td>
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The table includes three categories of measurement in order to determine if the leadership style has been met or not. The three categories are: 1. Completely 2. Partially 3. Incomplete. These categorizations will not only provide the reader with a clear understanding of the findings in the
analysis, but also classify when a leadership mode has been discovered in the material. Which leads to the next section of the method chapter, focusing on the material for the analysis.

### 3.2 Material

As can be read in the overview in appendix 1, the three speeches are by Premier Wen Jiabao, President Hu Jintao and President Xi Jinping in the years of 2009 and 2015. The two first speeches have been selected due to their importance in the climate change negotiations in the year 2009. Furthermore, it has to be mentioned that President Hu Jintao were primarily absent from the negotiations, which is the reason for also including the speech by Wen Jiabao whom served as a stand-in for the president at the given time. However, in 2015 President Xi Jinping was present at the negotiations. Moreover, I will also examine the reports summarizing the negotiations, referred to as Earth Negotiations Bulletin Final for both COP15 and COP21. Additionally, China’s White Paper Reports (WPR) that highlight their climate goals for 2009 and 2015 and conclusively the final documents produced in the end at each COP, namely the Copenhagen Accord and the Paris Agreement collected from the UNFCCC. All material are primary sources, since it is all collected directly from the Chinese governmental webpage, the UNFCCC’s webpage, whom arranged the climate change conference and the IISD’s webpage, whom produced the official final reports and summaries of the negotiations. Furthermore, the analysis will refer back to the aforementioned relevant literature as it will provide insight into the findings. As stated previously during the analytical framework, the indicators have been divided into two questions which is why I have chosen both official reports and statements in order to answer the questions when analyzing the material. Now leading to the analysis of COP15 and later on COP21.
4. Analysis

The methodology has provided with an in-depth understanding of the analytical-framework that will be applied to the cases of COP15 and COP21, moreover has established the key indicators in order to analyze the chosen material. As the findings of the literature review has shown that China’s role in the Global Environmental Governance remains an under investigated area. I will with this analysis aim to address this gap, by determining the climate change goals and the leadership strategies practiced by China at the chosen UNFCCC negotiations. Henceforward, I will assess their strategies and scrutinize to what extent China has achieved its interests in the deals reached. This is to answer the main research question; How does leadership theory bring insight into China’s role in the international climate change negotiations?

With this in mind, I will now start with the first COP15, analyzing the materials selected in the method section and aim to answer the established questions.

4.1 COP15

The Copenhagen climate conference took place on December 7 - 19, 2009. The aim for the conference was to substitute the Kyoto Protocol for a new legally binding agreement with expectations of involving all countries around the world (UNFCCC, 2019). The COP15 assembled thousands of people from both NGO’s, IGO’s, government officials, the media and UN bodies (IISD, 2015). However, the COP15 did not succeed in producing a top-down legal instrument, instead it resulted with the Copenhagen Accord that included a bottom-up approach and was not legally binding (IISD, 2015).

According to the ENB COP15, the questions to solve for the conference were; if the Kyoto Protocol should be extended with a legally binding agreement for all countries both developing and developed, how high the mitigation targets should be, what kind of commitments from the developing countries there should be and lastly what the adaptation funding for developed countries should be. This summarizes the central discussions during the COP15 and lays the foundation for analyzing China’s negotiation strategies using the modes of leadership, starting with directional leadership.
4.1.1 Directional

Q1) Are there aims to lead by example indicated by China?

When it comes to leading by example, we are specifically looking for examples where China has been either clearly stating that they want to be the leading example for other countries or extraordinary initiatives showing that China has pursued to be the leading actor.

As stated in the literature review, Xuetong (2014) argues that China’s behavior has drastically changed in the previous years and that China is now pursuing a greater role in the international arena. This argument can definitely be seen in line with the speech presented by Premier Wen Jiabao. In November 2009, just ahead of the UNFCCC Copenhagen Climate Change Conference, then Premier Wen Jiabao announced the center piece of China’s climate change policy; an unconditional commitment to cut its emissions per unit of GDP 40-45 per cent from 2005 to 2020 (Jiabao, 2009). This can be seen as the first signs of aims to lead by example. Other cases of leading by example are identified in the data where China pledged to increase the contribution of non-fossil energy to 15 percent of the energy mix by 2020 (Jiabao, 2009). To give effect to China’s commitments Jiabao also stated that the current 12th Five Year Plan was the first plan to set a carbon intensity target.

Subsequently, the Government announced in their WPR, a series of measures to help meet these commitments. These included: pilot emissions trading schemes, energy and coal consumption caps and support for smart grids and electric vehicles (WPR, 2009). However, these commitments can be seen more in fulfillment of ideational leadership by presenting new solutions, which is not the requirement for directional leadership. While China was one of the first developing countries to implement carbon intensity targets in their national commitments, they are not the first country to commit to cut its emissions, nor to increase contribution of non-fossil fuels. However, due to their status as a developing country and being the first developing country to set a carbon intensity target, China can arguably be seen as aiming to be a leading example for the developing countries. Hence, the requirements for question one has been completed. Leading to question two of directional leadership.

Q2) Are there actions showing China being the driving force for ambitious results?

When looking for examples of being the driving force for ambitious results, it is important to consider that being the driving force should be understood as being the one pushing for exceptional high environmental aims. On one hand, Belis et al. has argued that China has yet to make any concrete actions towards environmental policies and can therefore arguably not be seen as a leader in the
climate change regime. But on the other hand, it has to mentioned that like other developing countries China has had no obligation to commit to climate targets, due to their developing state.

In the material it shows several examples of China committing to ambitious targets. As an example, Chinese President Hu Jintao declared China’s climate commitments at the opening session of the UN climate summit in 2009, manifesting China’s strong resolution in shouldering responsibilities in global climate governance (Jintao, 2009). Moreover, China had finalized its climate commitments to the Copenhagen conference two weeks before it was held, including commitments to cut its CO₂ emission per unit of GDP by 40 to 45 percent by 2020 compared with the 2005 level. Moreover, increasing the share of non-fossil fuels in its primary energy consumption to around 15 percent by 2020, as well as enhancing its forest coverage by 40 million hectares and forest stock volume by 1.3 billion cubic meters by 2020 (Jintao, 2009). President Hu Jintou shows strong ambition for results and can be seen as a driving force due to China’s efforts of finalizing their commitments two weeks prior to the COP. However, it can also be argued that China did not act as a driving force for ambitious results due to the emphasis in the ENB, where developed countries are the ones with the main responsibility. Jintao also stresses in his speech that it is crucial to give full attention towards the development stage and basic needs of developing countries in addressing climate change. For developing countries, the top priority now is to grow their economy, eradicate poverty and improve livelihood (Jintao, 2009).

With this response China cannot be seen as the driving force and is therefore not fulfilling the requirements for this question. The priority of economic growth and development contradicts the priority of climate actions and the emphasis on being a developed country allows China not to have any obligation to achieve their ambitions. China was highly criticized by the international community due to its lack of commitment to ambitious results and Premier Wen Jiabao responded to this. Stating that China's climate efforts do not pale in comparison with those of any developed nation (Jiabao, 2014). Although Jiabao specifies China’s ambitious initiatives, it does not fulfill the requirements for directional leadership due to its resistance during the negotiations and their objection to a legal binding agreement.

4.1.2 Structural

Q1) Are there efforts showing China is exercising coercive action to achieve their own interest?

Structural leadership entails as the first question states, that an actor uses coercive action in order to achieve their interest. Before assessing the material and look for coercive actions, it is essential to
understand what coercive action means. As described by Young, structural leadership is mainly about “sticks and carrots”, or threats and promises and its success depends on the different power capabilities at the disposal of the agent (Young, 1991). Coercive action can therefore be understood both negatively and positively with either the use of threats or promises.

When analyzing all the material and data collection, the use of threats was nowhere to be found. This can be due to the use of threats being highly unlikely in international negotiations or diplomatic matters. But there can be found several examples of promises in order to achieve certain interest, as an example; Hu Jintao highlights in his speech that China promises to accomplish four climate actions. First, he states that China will intensify their effort to conserve energy and improve energy efficiency. As a second promise he mentions that China will actively develop renewable energy and nuclear energy. Third, Jintao says that they will increase forest carbon sink and fourth;

“we will step up effort to develop green economy, low-carbon economy and circular economy, and enhance research, development and dissemination of climate-friendly technologies (Jintao, 2009).”

However, Hu Jintao also highlights China’s position as a developing country and implies further in his speech, that developed countries are supposed to be the major contributor. He stretches that China still lags behind more than 100 countries in terms of per capita GDP and it remains the biggest developing country in the world. Therefore, China’s promises only to make climate actions if developed countries take the biggest responsibility and provide China with support. Moreover, China wants to make their own climate goals in accordance to their national situation. As an example, Jintao states that developed countries should fulfill the task of emission reduction set in the Kyoto Protocol and continue to undertake substantial midterm quantified emission reduction targets. Furthermore, support developing countries in countering climate change challenges. Jintao also emphasizes “the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities”, which also reflects China’s main interest of a bottom-up approach and differentiated climate obligations. These interests were all included in the Copenhagen Accord, and China can therefore be seen successful in achieving their interest by promising to commit to certain targets. Referring back to Young’s definition concerning coercive action, question one can be seen as completed and this leads to the second questions of structural leadership.
Q2) Are there examples of China’s capability to offer resources?

As stated in the literature review by Malnes (1995), when leaders enjoy a high status, they often offer resources that can be shared by others. This obliges to the second question of structural leadership, which includes the capabilities to offer resources. When looking for examples of capabilities to offer resources, what is meant is China’s capacity to provide the resources for their committed targets.

In terms of structural leadership China, with the size of its market and its position in the global economy, are well-endowed to offer economic, technological, and diplomatic incentives, but has demonstrated only limited structural leadership. For example, in the ENB China would not commit to mandatory finance commitments in Copenhagen and other countries have criticized the actual amount of support mobilized by China. Although, Jintao stated in his speech that China will continue to support small island states, the least developed countries, landlocked countries and the African continent in better adapting to climate change. Moreover, China has made recommendations for financing adaptation, energy investment, and support for developing countries by calling for a Green Climate Fund (GCF) to be mobilized by 2020. Furthermore, Jintao also stretches that China will attempt to increase the share of non-fossil fuels in primary energy consumption to around 15 percent by 2020. He also states that;

“China will endeavor to cut carbon dioxide emissions per unit of GDP by a notable margin by 2020 from the 2005 level” (Jintao, 2009).

China has hereafter made an official contract with the UNFCCC Secretariat signed by Su Wei, Director General, where China’s autonomous domestic mitigation actions are being stated. The WPR also shows great capabilities to offer resources such as, pilot emissions trading schemes and funding for the GCF. However, as mentioned previously, the actual offers of resources for international climate initiatives were absent in the final accord.

Despite of China’s position as a developing country, the indicators of the first question for structural leadership were very visible in the data, with China achieving their interest. The material shows several examples of China having the capabilities to provide resources, however, they are lacking to offer their resources for the international community. Furthermore, it has to be noted that they did not only show capabilities to offer resources, but they also achieved their interest by promising to commit to certain climate goals. Therefore, it can be claimed in accordance to China’s structural leadership abilities that they indeed showed great success in that specific leadership mode.
China demonstrates a clear capability to offer resources, and with their commitments, moreover their succession in achieving their interest it can claimed that China has shown strong structural leadership during COP15.

4.1.3 Ideational

Q1) Are there any proposals on joint solutions to collective problems suggested by China?

Ideational leadership refers mainly to the proposals of joint solutions and the presentation of new innovative ideas. When looking for proposals on joint solutions, we are looking for specific statements or initiatives where China has proposed multilateral responses to global challenges.

As mentioned in the literature review, China has been a “new” leading figure for the developing community with their own status being qualified as a developing country. When it comes to the question concerning the proposals on joint solutions to collective problems, the report from IISD (2009) shows many examples of China’s dedication to be a spokesman for the developing countries and hereby makes several proposals which does not compromise the interest of economic development.

This can also be confirmed in the findings from the ENB report, where China spoke on behalf of the G77 (ENB, 2009). During the negotiations, China exerted a leadership position in demanding climate finance from developed countries (ENB, 2009). The ENB document specifically points out how China in the negotiations represented itself as demanding transparency, respecting CBDR, extend the Kyoto Protocol and championing that all states should be included in the UNFCCC negotiations (IISD, 2009). Additionally, when looking at the ENB report, it can be seen that China from the beginning of the negotiations has been a leading part in promoting collaboration on sustainable development focusing on developing countries. China proposed several collaboration agreements both with the IISD and the AU, which led to increased cooperation on environmental issues. Furthermore, China established multiple partnerships, which both increased the support for the developing communities but also expanded the environmental support through the whole African continent (ENB, 2009). Besides, the proposed collaboration agreements, the WPR also shows several other cases where China has made proposals on joint solutions. As an example, they proposed the creation of the GCF in order to strengthen climate initiatives in developing areas.

These examples from the ENB, IISD and WPR, shows several cases where the requirements for ideational leadership has been completed. Leading to the next question for ideational leadership.
Q2) Are China presenting any new innovative solutions and ideas?

The presentation of new innovative solutions and ideas are an important factor for establishing ideational leadership. When looking for these indicators in the materials, the example of the project: Awareness and Preparedness for Emergencies at Local Level (APELL) with the UN Environmental Programme has been found in the WPR (2009) document. This project was one of the first, which has included the management of chemicals, where the focus has been laid on the promotion of safer production. However, this idea was mainly initiated by UNEP and China can therefore not be seen as the one presenting the solution alone.

As stated in the material, China was in 2009 the largest single country investor in both new renewable energy capacity and total capacity (WPR, 2009). Regardless of whether it meets the goals set out in the 12th Five Year Plan, however, China has made significant national aims in reducing greenhouse gas emissions. China has also developed a renewable energy industry that was non-existent a decade ago. Despite its great national initiatives, China held a fixed and conservative position in the negotiations and were not interested in presenting new solutions. In the aftermath of the COP15 in Copenhagen the literature review suggests that the outcome was to some extent blamed on China. And when analyzing the ENB, China vetoed several suggestions but also withdrew their own proposed national targets in the discussions (IISD, 2009). Furthermore, Chinese officials were absent at many negotiations which also showed China’s lack of interest and can explain the lack of solutions and ideas (IISD, 2009). This means that there were no new solutions or ideas brought to the table and the criteria for question two can therefore be declared as incomplete.

4.1.4 Instrumental

Q1) Are there any examples of China gathering actors to cooperate on climate disputes?

When looking for examples of gathering actors to cooperate on climate disputes, it is crucial that China is the leading party. In the literature review, Yang (2016) argues that many of China’s neighboring countries, are beginning to accept and accommodate China's rise. They perceive China's increasing influence in the international arena as a positive development and see it as an advantage rather than a risk (Yang, 2016:755). Before the COP15 negotiations had even begun, China gathered several countries together and created the BASIC group in order to guarantee a beneficial deal both for the climate and for the developing countries. Early on, the BASIC showed great dedication in the negotiations and the COP15 was anticipated to create new carbon intensity goals (ENB, 2009).
In accordance to the IISD report and the WPR, China promised to cut their carbon intensity by approximately forty percent by 2020. The ENB, describes the BASICs policy proposals and how China had prepared a counter draft for BASIC. China argued on behalf of the BASIC to ensure for developing countries to be allowed to reduce emissions on their own terms and only to take national measurements, with no legally binding emissions (IISD, 2009). During the conference, Premier Jiabao met with the leaders of the other BASIC countries on multiple occasions, including Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva and South African President Jacob Zuma (Jiabao, 2009). Jiabao highlighted the point that, being big developing countries, the four countries had important common interests, shared positions and identical goals in tackling climate change. Premier Jiabao showed full understanding and sympathy to the leaders of these countries and gave staunch support to their legitimate demands (Jiabao, 2009). He also stated China's willingness to continue to provide them with support and assistance to the best of China's ability within the South-South cooperation framework and through bilateral channels (Jiabao, 2009). This gives a great example of China’s application of instrumental leadership, gathering multiple actors to cooperate on climate issues.

Q2) Are there any examples of China being the broker to bridge problems?

This question, as explained in the methodology, refers to examples of being a good negotiator whom can solve political disputes. However, it has to be mentioned that most negotiations happen prior to the summits, in order to agree on certain agenda items and the structure of the summit (IISD, 2009). Therefore, most problems will mainly arise behind closed doors and not for the public view. Taking this into account, the examples of being a broker has primarily been focused on public appearances and meetings prior to the COP, moreover the literature review.

Before going to Copenhagen, Premier Jiabao had dialogues with leaders of India, Brazil, South Africa, Ethiopia, Denmark, Germany and the United Kingdom and the Secretary-General of the UN for an in-depth exchange of views on matters of climate challenges (Jiabao, 2009). These conversations contributed to mutual understanding and effectively laid the groundwork for the conference. Upon his arrival in Copenhagen Premier Jiabao engaged in intensive shuttle diplomacy and talked to other participants. He made the case that, at this final moment of the conference, it was imperative for all countries to bear in mind the larger picture, proceed from the reality, accommodate each other's concerns and adhere to the principle of CBDR. He called on all parties to build consensus.
quickly in a spirit of seeking common ground while reserving differences and push forward in an effective way the negotiation process, thereby sending a message of hope and confidence to the world.

After the negotiations Premier Jiabao also stated that China made the utmost effort and tried every possible means to move forward the negotiations along the right track and played a critical role in the discussions (Jiabao, 2009). He points out that:

“It is fair to say that China, with its sincerity, resolve and confidence, made important contribution to strengthening international cooperation on climate change at Copenhagen, and displayed the image of a responsible big country committed to development and cooperation (Jiabao, 2009).”

It can be difficult to determine if China has fulfilled both questions under instrumental leadership, since it is factors for Q2 which mainly happens behind closed doors and are undocumented. However, what we can conclude is that China’s has been very instrumental in getting actors together and created several dialogues prior to the COP in order to set an agreed agenda and hence, make sure that there will be no disagreement during the negotiations.

4.1.5 Summary of the findings for COP15

Overall China achieved most of its goals in Copenhagen. According to the Copenhagen Accord reached in 2009 developed countries committed to implementing, quantified emission targets for 2020 (UNFCCC, 2009). It was also settled in the Copenhagen Accord to create an operating entity for the financial mechanism of the Accord and for fast-tracking technological development. In addition, the Copenhagen Accord recognized China’s negotiating position on NAMAs, deciding that mitigation initiatives taken by developing countries would be subject to their own domestic measurement, reporting and verification.

Table 2.

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<tr>
<td><strong>Directional leadership</strong></td>
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<td>Q1)</td>
<td>Complete</td>
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<td>Q2)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Structural leadership</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Q1)</td>
<td>Complete</td>
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<td>Q2)</td>
<td>Complete</td>
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Throughout analyzing COP15, the findings shows that directional leadership was both complete and incomplete, whereas structural leadership was complete and ideational leadership both incomplete and complete. However instrumental leadership was both complete and partially complete in China’s negotiating approach. The absence of directional leadership indicates that China lacked to be the driving force for ambitious results which is an important feature of being recognized as a leader. China did, however, indicate their aim for ambitious results. But their emphasis on being a developing country, where economic development should be first priority, contradicted their goals for having ambitious aims in a legally binding agreement with mandatory commitments. For the results of structural and ideational leadership China showed great abilities to provide resources indicating structural leadership and China proposed joint solutions to collective problems by proposing a GCF and being the leading party for a cooperation with the UNDP and the AU to improve environmental conditions in African countries, which demonstrated ideational leadership. But the lack of presenting new innovative solutions limited China’s ideational leadership, whereas under instrumental leadership China fulfilled most of the requirements and gathered actors to cooperate. For example, China was a part of creating the BASIC group and engaged in several diplomatic discussion before the summit. In conclusion, China can be seen from the table 2, to not have shown strong leadership capabilities since a lot of the modes were incomplete.

4.2 COP21

The Paris Conference took place from the 29th of November until the 13th of December 2015 with the aim to reach a settlement, which can replace the second period of the Kyoto Protocol ending 2020 (UNFCCC, 2015). The Conference accomplished that aim with the adaptation of the Paris Agreement. The Paris climate conference is widely regarded as a milestone in global climate governance. Compared with the Copenhagen conference, the Paris climate negotiation sealed a deal that has outlined a new course for the global climate efforts. The Paris Agreement, removed the

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<th>Ideational leadership</th>
<th>Q1) Complete</th>
<th>Q2) Incomplete</th>
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<tr>
<td>Instrumental leadership</td>
<td>Q1) Complete</td>
<td>Q2) Partially</td>
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separation between developed and developing countries, requiring everyone to report regularly on their emissions and climate efforts for international review (IISD, 2015).

According to Xiaosheng (2018), the central issues in the negotiations were if there should be a universal legal agreement applicable to all, what the mitigation commitments would be for each country and how to create a financial component to guarantee international solidarity for vulnerable countries (Xiaosheng, 2018:229). This summarizes the central discussions during the COP21 and provides the basis for analyzing China’s negotiation strategies using the modes of leadership, starting with directional leadership.

4.2.1 Directional

Q1. Are there aims to lead by example indicated by China?

As already clarified in the analysis of COP15, this question refers to statements or initiatives showing aims to lead by example. The literature review explains that China’s position shows a great deal of transformation and rising Chinese influence in the international arena. In the literature review Xiaosheng (2018) argues that China’s position has changed, and they are pursuing a greater role in the international stage (Xiaosheng, 2018:231). This can be linked to the findings in the opening speech, where Chinese President Xi Jinping made a special statement in publicly positioning China as taking a driving seat in combating climate change. Jinping said:

"Taking a driving seat in international cooperation to respond to climate change. China has become an important participant, contributor, and torch-bearer in the global endeavor for ecological civilization (Jinping, 2015)."

As shown in an official document entitled Enhance Actions on Climate Change: China’s INDC’s on June 30, 2015, (Xinua, 2015) as well as Chinese President Xi Jinping’s speech at the opening ceremony of the Paris climate conference (Jinping, 2015). Chinese INDC’s pledges to reduce CO2 per unit of GDP by 60-65% over the 2005 level. Thus, raise the share of non-fossil fuels in primary energy consumption to about 20% and increase forest stock by around 4.5 billion cubic meters over 2005 (Jinping, 2015). Consequently, China declared several actions to meet these commitments. These included: new installments of renewable energy systems, launching of pilot low-carbon projects and the Air Pollution Prevention Action Plan, which aims to reduce air pollution from coal-fired power plants, industrial pollution and vehicle emissions. Renewable energy is a significant
priority for China, due to the extreme consequences of their economic growth. Therefore, China with its installed capacity of renewable energy of 24% is the leading actor in terms of energy conservation and utilization of new and renewable energies (IISD, 2015). Subsequently, China can be seen as aiming to lead by example with their actions and initiatives, and the criteria for question one is therefore complete.

Q2) Are there actions showing China being the driving force for ambitious results?

In the run-up to Paris, China established its climate commitments for the post-2020 era earlier than any other developing country. On November 12, 2014, China announced, for the first time, its 2030 climate target in the “U.S.-China Joint Announcement on Climate Change” (MOFAC, 2015). Seven months later, China finalized its commitments to Paris climate talks by submitting its INDCs on June 30, 2015 (MOFAC, 2015). Furthermore, during the opening speech by the Chinese President Xi Jinping China can be seen acting as the driving force for ambitious results by highlighting in his speech that the Paris agreement should aid to meet the goals of the UNFCCC and plan the course for green development. The agreement should also follow the principles and rules set out in the UNFCCC and contribute to its full and effective implementation. Jinping further states:

“The agreement should put effective control on the increase of atmospheric concentration of greenhouse gases and set up incentive mechanisms to encourage countries to pursue green, circular and low-carbon development featuring both economic growth and an effective response to climate change”.

President Xi Jinping also says that the post-2020 climate agreement should be legally binding focusing on mitigation, adaptation, finance, technology development and transfer, capacity-building support, as well as transparency. Moreover, the agreement should push all parties to formulate and implement programs and measures to reduce or limit greenhouse gas emissions for the 2020–2030 period, clarifying that developed countries would undertake quantified economy-wide absolute emission reduction targets by 2030 while developing countries undertake diversifying and enhanced mitigation actions with support from developed countries. With Jinping’s direct statements concerning ambitious results and China’s leading attitude, it can be concluded in this section, that China did fulfill the criteria for question two in directional leadership.
4.2.2 Structural

Q1) Are there efforts showing China is exercising coercive action to achieve their own interest?

In contrast to the findings in the material from 2009, Chinese leadership appears to have taken a constructive approach at the Paris climate talks. As the literature informed, China continues to rise and is eager to be seen as a responsible international player contributing to the international agenda. As previously mentioned in the analysis, Young defined coercive action as the use of promises or threats during the negotiations. While analyzing the COP21 there can be found no attempts of threats, but the use of promises in order to achieve certain interests is a strong part of China’s negotiation strategy. China is the first developing country to have promised to put a cap on CO2 emissions. Not only that, China is already taking steps to use more clean energy and has invested more than 90 billion dollars in the renewable energy sector more than one quarter of the world in total. During COP21 China wanted to underline the principle of CBDR that underlies the principle of fairness and national contribution according to respective capabilities. Throughout the negotiations China maintained that developed countries should aim to make deeper cuts in carbon emissions and hereafter China will promise to aim to reduce their carbon emissions (IISD, 2015).

In addition, China also requested that developed countries would honor their pledges to climate finance and insisted that the agreement should uphold the principle of CBDR as extensively as possible. Likewise, China demanded for a bottom-up approach in which all climate aims should be decided and estimated nationally. This bottom-up approach was accepted and implemented in the Paris Agreement and they therefore promised to reduce their emissions. This can be seen as a coercive action because China promised to sign and commit to the Paris Agreement in order to achieve their interest in a bottom-up approach and specific attention towards CBDR. As structural leadership can be hard to determine it can be said that China has completely fulfilled the criteria for question one by making several promises in order to achieve their own interest.

Q2) Are there examples of China´s capability to offer resources?

According to Malesky et al. the development of China has been extremely fast and their growth has positioned them with one of the largest economies in the world (Malesky et al. 2014:396). In addition, China has also been positioned as the world’s greatest export economy, moreover been predicted to be the next great superpower (Malesky et al. 2014:410). This highly links to the findings in the speech by Chinese President Xi Jinping, where there can be found several examples of structural leadership.
As an example, Jinping explains China’s ability to provide resources and offers solutions in combating climate challenges. More specifically, Jinping announced the establishment of a South-South Climate Cooperation Fund. Furthermore, he says that China will launch cooperation projects to set up 10 pilot low-carbon industrial parks and start 100 mitigation and adaptation programs in other developing countries. Moreover, he will provide them with 1,000 training opportunities on climate change. All these initiatives show that China has strong capabilities to provide resources and is able to support other countries with environmental aid. By pledging to set up an Assistance Fund for South-South Cooperation China also shows initiatives to provide economic assistance and support to the emissions reduction activities of other developing countries.

As already determined in the analysis of COP15, in terms of structural leadership, China has a huge market, which has only expanded from 2009 to 2015. And China’s economic role has increased with the expansion of its market, moreover its role in the international system. Therefore, they are well-endowed to offer economic, technological, and diplomatic incentives, and has demonstrated several times at different occasions structural leadership. For example, China committed to mandatory finance commitments in Paris and developed countries have complimented the actual amount of support mobilized by China and the other developing countries. The criteria for question two is therefore completely met and it can be argued that China shows great structural leadership.

4.2.3 Ideational

Q1) Are there any proposals on joint solutions to collective problems suggested by China?

As stated by Karlsson et al. whom have investigated China’s recognition as a leader, he argues that China, since 2009, has provided a clear vision for climate change agreements, signaled its own commitment and helped with establishing cooperation through bilateral partnerships.

In the opening speech, the Chinese President Xi Jinping highlights China’s aims for the Paris Summit where China had five major proposals for joint solutions to the collective problem of climate change. These proposals were all initiated by China itself and all to some degree implemented in the Paris Agreement. As an example, China proposed the following:

“The agreement should emphasize and enhance international cooperation on adaptation, establishing a subsidiary body on climate adaptation as well as strengthening the Warsaw International Mechanism on Loss and Damage (Jinping, 2015)“.
Here Xi Jinping clarifies the importance of cooperation on adaption by proposing to establish a subsidiary body and strengthen the *Warsaw International Mechanism on Loss and Damage*. Furthermore, he also proposes to provide more financial support for developing countries specifying that developed countries should donate more to the GCF. He specifically states that;

“*New, additional, adequate, predictable and sustainable financial support for developing countries should be provided*” (Jinping, 2015).

Jinping also mentions the scale of financing should increase yearly, starting from US$ 100 billion per year from 2020 with the GCF as its major operating entity. He here proposes joint solutions to the problem of developing countries being in a developing stage. As previously mentioned in the methodology, ideational leadership is about the ability to propose joint solutions and presenting new ideas. Bringing in the proposal of increasing funds to developing countries in order to combat climate challenges, hereby fulfill the criteria for question one and China can therefore be seen as applying ideational leadership. The next question, however, is also highly important when discussing ideational leadership. Here the focus is on China presenting new innovative solutions and ideas.

**Q2) Are China presenting any new innovative solutions and ideas?**

Hilton et al. argues that a key driver of change was China’s transition to a ‘New Normal’ model of economic development. In the 12th Five Year Plan Period, China’s economic policy prioritized a transition from energy-intensive growth to a more balanced economy characterized by slower growth and a focus on innovation and low-carbon technologies, this provides us with an important understanding of China changing behavior leading up to the Paris summit.

Prior to Paris China concluded that it would be best to conclude a legally binding treaty and therefore pushed for a political agreement that would include the key aspects of a new architecture to address the problem of climate change. China’s leadership vision was an agreement, which included all countries and their significant emissions profiles, especially the emerging economies of the US, India, and Brazil. Chinese ideational leadership was expressed in pushing for the goal of legally symmetrical agreements, meaning that with the exception of the least developed countries all major emitters must have an obligation to act. This was a significant change from the summit in Copenhagen, however, China was still supportive of excluding developing countries from specific international commitments. China also arrived in Paris with ideas on what the content of an agreement
should contain, including specific GHG reduction targets as well as a vision for what the institutional
design principles should look like.

Furthermore, during the summit the president of China also proposed the development of a future
global governance model of win-win cooperation with each country making contribution to the best
of its ability; of the rule of law, fairness, and justice; and of inclusiveness, mutual learning, and
common development. Moreover, proposed the establishment of a community of common destiny
for all. Jinping also stated that China will, on the basis of technological and institutional innovation,
adopt new policy measures to improve industrial mix, build low-carbon energy system, develop green
building and low-carbon transportation and build a nation-wide carbon emission trading market so as
to foster a new pattern of modernization featuring harmony between man and nature (Jinping, 2015).

Such proposals can be showing how China is presenting new innovative solutions and ideas,
strongly indicating ideational leadership and all questions criteria to be me. With all criteria met for
ideational leadership, we now turn to look for instrumental leadership.

4.2.4 Instrumental

Q1) Are there any examples of China gathering actors to cooperate on climate disputes?

In the literature review, Yanbing et al. (2017) clarifies China’s strong position being a developing
and developed country. In Jinping’s speech to the summit he warned against a zero-sum mentality
and called on all countries, especially developed nations, to assume a shared responsibility for climate
change. Instrumental leadership has become a more prominent part of China’s strategy for pursuing
its goals after Copenhagen. China worked hard to form bilateral leadership alliances or coalitions
with the US and the EU. Jinping engaged in personal diplomacy to privately lobby the leaders of the
US and India to support a deal at COP21 in Paris, and, in the run-up to Paris, China invested their
time in improving cooperation with the US.

Prior to the Paris Conference, President Xi Jinping and President Barack Obama stood together in
Beijing to make a historic US-China Joint Announcement on Climate Change, emphasizing their
personal commitment to a successful climate agreement in Paris and marking a new era of multilateral
climate diplomacy as well as a new pillar in their bilateral relationship. In November 2014 China and
the US announced their respective post-2020 INDC’s in which they both pledged to increase ambition
over time. The purpose of the announcement was to:
“inject momentum into the global climate negotiations and inspire other countries to join in coming forward with ambitious actions” (MOFAC, 2015).

With their joint announcement of ambitious climate actions, Obama and Jinping sought to lead by example. Furthermore, in September 2015 the two leaders laid out a common vision for the Paris outcome during Jinping’s State Visit to Washington and also announced major domestic policy measures and cooperative initiatives to combat climate change, as well as significant progress on climate finance. China’s attempt to provide coordinated and joint leadership prior to Paris stands in contrast to the lack of cooperation and complicated relations in Copenhagen (Parker et al. 2012). Therefore, with China’s capacity to gather actors prior to the summit in Paris and their joint statements with the US, question one for instrumental leadership can be seen as fulfilled. Leading to question two, in regard to China acting as a broker.

Q2) Are there any examples of China being the broker to bridge problems?

Once again it is important to keep in mind that the bridging of problems usually happens before the COP. Therefore, as explained in the first analysis of COP15 when looking for these indicators it has to be mentioned that the analysis of China’s instrumental leadership will mainly be based on Chinese official statements and joint statements prior to the COP’s. As explained in the literature review, Yanbing et al. (2017) describes China’s dualistic strategy and points their research to globally oriented organizations. They argue that China has strategically aimed for a position, where they are a part of both sides namely the developed and developing countries. By becoming both a member of the G20 and creating several non-Western institutions like the BASIC (Yanbing et al. 2017:32)).

As mentioned in the first question of instrumental leadership, China’s intention to seal a meaningful deal in Paris actually became apparent in its climate diplomacy ahead of the conference. For example, China had engaged in a number of bilateral agreements on climate change and clean energy with Germany, the United Kingdom, France, India, and more importantly, the US. Given the previous standoffs between China and the US at COP 15, the Joint Announcement on Climate Change in November 2014 and the Joint Presidential Statement on Climate Change in November 2015 laid significant groundwork for the Paris talks. Their milestone cooperation was realized by a major shift in the domestic politics of the two countries in favor of carbon emission cuts.

This engagement can therefore also be seen as a broker to bridge problems. China’s discussion with several important players before the conference, was to make sure that problems would be
discussed and solved in advance, in order to faster produce an agreement. Furthermore, China’s position as both a developing and a developed country provides China with a great broker position. Being a part of the developing community and having important cooperation’s with the EU and US, gives China an important stance, since they have legitimacy in both sides and can bring both parts together. Therefore, China can indeed be seen as fulfilling the criteria for question two in instrumental leadership.

4.2.5 Summary of the findings for COP21

Overall the Paris Agreement established most of China’s proposals with some minor exceptions. On mitigation, the Agreement requires developed countries to continue taking the main responsibility by undertaking economy-wide absolute emission reduction targets. While developing countries are encouraged to aim toward economy-wide emission reduction or targets in compliance with their national economic situation. Furthermore, the Agreement acknowledged China’s position on transparency and decided to launch an enhanced transparency framework for action and support under the UNFCCC with built-in flexibility. Encouraging transparency in an assisting, non-intrusive, and non-punitive manner, while respecting national sovereignty.

Table 3.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>COP15</th>
<th>COP21</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Directional leadership</strong></td>
<td>Q1) Complete</td>
<td>Complete</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Q2) Incomplete</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Structural leadership</strong></td>
<td>Q1) Complete</td>
<td>Complete</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Q2) Complete</td>
<td>Complete</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ideational leadership</strong></td>
<td>Q1) Complete</td>
<td>Complete</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Q2) Incomplete</td>
<td>Complete</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Instrumental leadership</strong></td>
<td>Q1) Complete</td>
<td>Complete</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Q2) Partially</td>
<td>Complete</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Analyzing COP21, the findings show that China has fully implemented directional leadership in their negotiating approach which stands in high contrast to the findings in COP15. China established its climate commitments earlier than any other developing country and China’s president clearly states that China wishes to take a driving seat in international cooperation to respond to climate change.
Furthermore, the findings also indicate clearer evidence and remarks in regard to the other leadership modes. The use of promises in order to achieve certain interests is a strong part of China’s negotiation strategy and China also arrived in Paris with ideas on what the content of an agreement should contain. With these findings structural and ideational leadership is more evident in China negotiating approach in the COP21. As with COP15 China’s instrumental leadership is very visible also during COP21. China’s cooperating strategy is very obvious, however, China’s changing position in terms of their economic increase provides them with a greater broker role being both seen as a developing country and a developed country. In conclusion, China can be seen from the table 3, to have exerted strong leadership capabilities completing all modes.

5. Conclusion

As the world’s largest greenhouse gas emitter China is one of the key actors that has both responsibility and capabilities in effectively addressing climate challenges. This study set out from the beginning to identify the climate change goals and the leadership strategies pursued by China at the selected UNFCCC negotiations. Hereafter, it evaluated its leadership strategies and examined to what extent China succeeded in achieving its objectives in the deals reached in Copenhagen and Paris. Conclusively, summarized the two analysis’s in order to answer the research question; How does leadership theory bring insight into China’s role in the international climate change negotiations?

My main argument being that China has become a leading actor in the climate change regime and specifically during climate change negotiations through their influence and position in shaping the global climate change agenda.

5.1 Discussion of findings

With the use of Young’s analytical-framework, focused on how to assess leadership in international negotiations, this thesis has analyzed China’s role during COP15 and COP21.

As previous research suggested in the literature review, China’s role has changed from a peripheral position to a leadership role. This can be connected to the findings from this study, which shows great leader capabilities in the form of fulfilling the criteria of the four leadership modes in COP21. As the results reveal, China has changed their negotiation strategies quite significantly. Going from a more passive stance to a leading contributor. With regard to the research question; How does leadership theory bring insight into China’s role in the international climate change negotiations? Leadership
theory used in this study suggests that if an actor applies all leadership modes, strong leadership is furthered. Although, we can conclude from the findings that China has had a radical shift in their negotiation strategy from 2009 to 2015, China cannot be seen to have accomplished and fulfilled all leadership modes through both COP’s. When comparing the findings of the two COP’s, we can conclude that China has met very limited indicators in the leadership styles in Copenhagen resulting in weak leadership. Nevertheless, in Paris China met almost all leadership indicators and can therefore be seen to have exercised strong leadership. Thus, the analysis therefore supports my main argument that China has become a leading actor in the climate change regime due to its shift in negotiation approach from 2009 to 2015 by meeting almost all leadership indicators set out in the analytical framework by Young. What is interesting in these results, both found in the literature review and in the analysis of the material is China’s dualistic approach and their unchanged policy aims from Copenhagen to Paris. China might have changed their strategy with enhancing their position by the establishment of the BASIC and BRICS, moreover becoming a core member of the G20. However, their aims and policy interests have remained the same. Where several scholars believe China has changed their environmental strategies, the analysis together with leadership theory shows that China has only gained more political power in the form of resources and unions, while their aims has remained unchanged. Furthermore, the findings also show China’s level of goal achievement under both COP’s has been extremely high with most of their interest being implemented. More specifically, China was very successful in accomplishing their main policy aims of supporting CBDR and restrict international measurement, reporting and verification both at COP15 and COP21. The overall performance of China has had a huge effect on the outcomes of the two COP’s and this has supported their establishment of a greater leadership role within the UNFCCC. These results also reinforces my main argument, that China has become an leading actor in the international climate regime.

In conclusion, this thesis has aided to the research concerning climate leadership in the field of IR and has engaged in the understanding of China’s emerging role in the international arena. Moreover, contributed to the field of leadership and specifically leadership theory, by adding new data and bringing in the empirical case of China advancing the theory. However, further studies focusing on China’s recognition as a leader could also be explored since it is a factor that has purposely been left out due to the time-frame and the aim of applying the analytical-framework by Young.
6. Bibliography


Center for Climate and Energy Solutions. “*Comparison Table of Submitted INDC’s*“. Available online: [https://www.c2es.org/indc-comparison](https://www.c2es.org/indc-comparison) (Last accessed: 09/04/2019).


## 7. Appendix

### Appendix 1. Data collection

<table>
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<td>Speech</td>
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<td>Paris Agreement</td>
<td>2015/12/12</td>
<td>Report</td>
<td><a href="https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/english_paris_agreement.pdf">https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/english_paris_agreement.pdf</a></td>
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