China's Leadership Role(s) in Climate Change Negotiations Post-Paris: A Behavioral Analysis

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Abstract

This research has examined the leadership role(s) of China in multilateral climate change negotiations since the Paris agreement. China was regarded as a pivotal actor in the Paris negotiations and, therefore, seen as a potential leader in this climate change regime. The aim of this research has been to determine whether China can be considered a legitimate leader and to investigate how they exercise leadership. By analyzing the behavior and actions of China through the lens of two leadership models, this research concluded that China is not a legitimate leader in the climate change regime. The reason for this is that China is not a reliable instrumental or directional leader. As a result, China has not acquired consent from the developed countries in the negotiations. China does, however, assume another leadership role. The actor is a consistent ideational, instrumental, and structural leader in the group of developing countries. China provides positive incentives to these countries, unites their demands, and defends their interests. One of China's aims is to grant flexibility and sovereignty to these weaker actors and empower them. This demonstrates that China is aiming to support the developing countries and acquire their consent. Therefore, the purpose of this leadership role is to realize win-win outcomes. However, it is also likely that China aims to gain influence and promote a positive image of itself. In the end, China remains a pivotal and decisive actor in the climate change regime.

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1. *Introduction*

The global issue of climate change that humanity is currently confronted with is regarded as one of the greatest challenges that we are facing. To tackle this complex global issue, the United Nations (UN) has declared that we are required to "stabilize greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere at a level that would prevent dangerous anthropogenic interference with the climate system" (UN, 1992, p. 4). To stabilize greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere, all the countries in the world ought to work together. However, not every country emits the same amount of greenhouse gasses or has the same economic resources to mitigate the effects of climate change effectively (UN, 2020). The interests between countries diverge significantly and, therefore, to agree on how to share the burden of reducing the global emissions of greenhouse gasses, the international community is required to engage in long-term negotiations. These negotiations take place within an institutional regime. The task of the participants in the regime is to distribute the burden fairly between the countries. Actors have, however, significantly different interpretations of what this means. For instance, in the climate change regime, the interests of the groups of developing and developed countries are often opposed as their economic positions and history are dramatically different. Many countries also aim to freeride on the efforts of others. Because of the presence of these collective action problems, the demand for leadership is omnipresent.

A leader or a group of leaders can instill confidence in other countries to trust in the process of the negotiations and, consequently, reduce the difficulty of reaching agreements on how to share the burden. Furthermore, a leader can also encourage other actors, in various ways, to develop more ambitious goals (Parker and Karlsson, 2010). Therefore, a leader can be instrumental in brokering deals between different groups. Leadership can thus guide the process of the negotiations and reduce the collective action problems that are present. That is why this research studies this phenomenon in the climate change regime. However, to research this concept, it has to be defined. This research discusses the definition of leadership extensively in its theoretical framework, but to understand what is meant by leadership before that chapter, the full definition that is used is presented. Leadership is defined in this research as: "a process of interaction whereby one or more actors exercise asymmetric influence in attracting or negotiating the consent or acquiescence of other parties, in ways that facilitate collective action towards the achievement of a common purpose" (Eckersley, 2020, p. 4).

Leadership has historically been taken by the countries that carry the largest responsibility in mitigating the effects of climate change. The actors with the most responsibility are those that are the largest emitters of greenhouse gasses in the world. At the time of the Paris negotiations, three actors, the European Union (EU), the United States (US), and China, accounted for more than 40% of the annual share of global greenhouse gas emissions (Eckersley, 2020). All of these actors also possess an abundance of economic resources and political capital. Because of this, they are all able to exert significant influence in climate change negotiations and take a leadership position. However, these

actors also have diverging interests and stem from different parts of the world (Eckersley. 2020). Therefore, leadership in the climate change regime has been fragmented and lacking. To understand the extent of this problem, the history of the leadership landscape in the climate change regime will be briefly explained.

In the early phases of this international regime, the EU and the US were considered key players. In 1997, at the Kyoto negotiations, the expectation was that the EU and the US would collectively develop a vision for the first binding agreement in the climate change regime (Oberthur, 2009). However, their visions and preferences clashed significantly. The US, for example, insisted on including clauses into the agreement that would introduce flexible implementation mechanisms to allow countries to deviate from the set targets. These were fiercely opposed by the EU (Van Schaik and Schunz, 2012). This clash in visions led to an agreement that was predominantly created by the US. They were the key architect of the Kyoto Protocol and also carried the most influence in the negotiations (Savorskaya, 2016). This illustrates the fragmentation between the actors that are in the position to lead. However, fragmentation was not the only problem that plagued the Kyoto Protocol as the US did not ratify the agreement after playing a crucial role in developing it. This demonstrated a clear lack of leadership as the US did not commit to the common purpose. As a result, the EU took over the reins. This actor negotiated with other key actors to ratify the agreement and let the Kyoto Protocol enter into force (Savorskaya, 2016). The EU was prepared to make major concessions, such as relaxing the accounting rules, to convince other actors to ratify the agreement (Savorskaya, 2016). Finally, in 2005, after many negotiations, Russia ratified the agreement and the Kyoto Protocol entered into force. This demonstrates that the EU was committed to the common purpose and did take a leadership role. However, mainly due to their normative aspirations, the EU never assumed a fully-fledged leadership role in the years after the Kyoto Protocol entered into force (Elgström and Smith, 2006; Bäckstrand and Elgström, 2013).

In 2009, negotiations in Copenhagen at the 15th Conference Of the Parties (COP) were expected to lead to a new binding agreement. At this conference, the EU and the US were, again, expected to take leadership and be instrumental in realizing an agreement. However, China's economic rise had meant that they were now also one of the actors in a key position to lead. This complicated the leadership landscape. In the negotiations, the US took a central leadership position and placed the EU on the sidelines as they were not willing to make significant concessions in their ambitions (Savorskaya, 2016). As the EU and the US clashed, an agreement with binding conditions was never reached at COP 15. In the end, the US forged an official text with a group of emerging economies, including China, in minilateral meetings, to conclude the negotiations 'successfully' (Curtin, 2010). The EU and other actors described these minilateral meetings as an aberration and were critical of the behavior of the US and China (Parker and Karlsson, 2018). China was described by other participants as an 'obstructor' and a 'wrecker' as they had consistently blocked proposals (Gao, 2018). This demonstrates that fragmentation in the leadership landscape worsened.

After this debacle in Copenhagen, the international climate change regime had set its sights on a new binding agreement to be reached in Paris at COP 21. At these negotiations, the three key actors did cooperate constructively to develop a vision for an agreement and were instrumental in brokering deals between groups with different interests (Eckersley, 2020)). In the end, 195 countries adopted a historic agreement that has set ambitious goals that commit countries to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions. The EU and the US aligned their visions and nurtured this ambitious agreement. China was regarded as a constructive co-operator that helped to broker important deals between the group of developing and developed countries (Hilton and Kerr, 2017). Therefore, the uncooperative and fragmented nature of climate change leadership dissipated.

The expectation and hope from the participants at these negotiations were that these three actors would strengthen their ties and lead the regime collectively (Eckersley, 2020). However, only a year after the Paris agreement, the US vowed to withdraw from the agreement. This announcement renewed fragmentation in the leadership landscape. It also confirmed the perception of this actor as an unreliable leader due to its volatile foreign policy and its inability to implement its promises domestically (Macneil and Paterson, 2019; Duggan and Hodzi, 2018). The EU demonstrated a willingness to take a stronger leadership position in the climate change regime in the absence of the US. However, the EU is perceived as a part of the shared leadership equilibrium, and, not as a unilateral leader because of normative considerations, incoherent foreign policy, and internal divisions (Savorskaya, 2016; Parker and Karlsson, 2016; Hurri, 2020). China did not demonstrate the same desire to take a stronger and unilateral leadership position (Eckersley, 2020). However, many participants in the climate change regime did start viewing China as a potential global leader in the climate change regime due to their domestic initiatives and their actions in Paris (Gao, 2018).

The perception of China has thus changed significantly as they went from being viewed as a 'wrecker' at the Copenhagen negotiations to a constructive co-operator that closed the gap between the developing and developed countries at the Paris negotiations. China is, therefore, unmistakably, part of the leadership equilibrium in the climate change regime since the Paris negotiations. However, as the EU and the US are occupied with internal struggles and ineffective foreign policy, the leadership landscape is arguably more fragmented than ever (Hurri, 2020). The eyes are, therefore, on China and the question is whether they have used this opportunity to take a more decisive leadership position in the climate change regime. To find out whether China has continued in a facilitator role or has taken a more definitive leadership role, this research investigates how China has exercised leadership in the climate change regime since the Paris agreement. Therefore, this research asks the following question:

'Which leadership role(s) has China assumed in climate change negotiations after the Paris agreement?'

This research can not only find out, by answering this question, which role(s) China has assumed in the climate change regime but also how these roles have changed throughout the four negotiations that are

analyzed. To obtain these answers, an empirical analysis will be carried out through the lens of two theoretical leadership models. Therefore, this research is heavily theoretically oriented. The result of this is that the leadership position of China is examined in isolation from their other foreign policy actions. However, although, the analysis is isolated, the results from this research must be put in the context of China's behavior on the international stage. This is because the purpose of this behavior is likely connected. Therefore, this research highlights China's international positions and the objective that they seek.

In recent times, China's foreign policy has been increasingly described as aggressive and assertive (Bishop, 2020; Shullman, 2019). The reason why commentators make this argument is because China has strengthened their claim in the South China sea, reignited a dispute with Japan about Japanese-controlled islands, engaged in a clash with India about the Himalayas, became more fierce on the Taiwan issue by sending warplanes across the Taiwan strait, defended Huawei espionage claims fiercely, took on Western critics with a diplomatic offensive, and have cracked down on Hongkong by enacting a National Security Law (Bishop, 2020). China is increasingly criticized by Western countries because of these actions. At the same time, China is engaged in spreading its influence and securing allies through the use of soft power (Shullman, 2019). They are using their economic and diplomatic resources to gain influence and find allies. The red line that runs through these aggressive actions and soft power campaigns is China's aim for control and power. One of the most impactful examples of how China aims to influence other countries through soft power is the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). Through this project, China invests in the infrastructure of developing countries. In addition to these massive investments, China presents a positive story about itself to these countries (Yagci, 2018). The Chinese Communist Party that rules China has acknowledged that a positive perception of China heads off criticism and pushes the country forward (Shullman, 2019). China's biggest tool is thus its information campaigns and its economic resources. Through these instruments and the aforementioned contentious foreign policy actions, China aims to increase its influence and gain control. The implication that this has on this research is that it has to be taken into account that the actions by China are likely driven by their aim for power and control. China aims to present a positive image of themselves to fend off criticism for their aggressive policies. The results of this research will be presented with this in mind

1.1. *Relevance*

This research aims to be relevant to the scientific literature. The way that this research is able to be relevant is by tying it to the existing theoretical literature (Lehnert et al., 2007). Therefore, this research uses two models that are based upon or replicated from the existing literature. By testing two leadership models, this research can contribute to the understanding that the literature has of leadership in the climate change regime. The existing concepts that define leadership are tested to determine to what extent they are suitable to this case. The result of this is that the conceptualization of leadership and the

models can be refined. The findings either strengthen or weaken the validity of these existing concepts. Furthermore, this research also aims to fill a gap in the literature. The case of Chinese leadership has not been widely tested and the models that this research uses have also not yet been applied widely. Therefore, this research adds a significant case to the literature that will contribute to what we know about Chinese leadership and its characteristics. Finally, this research also aims to stimulate theoretical innovation. By using two models that have not been used together before, the results may point the literature towards a new model that could be used. The elements from the different models can be synthesized if they successfully act in complement to each other. This is how this research aims to be relevant to the scientific literature.

The academic relevance of this research is of significant importance, however, this research also aims to be relevant to the general public. To gather why the public should care about this phenomenon and this research, it is necessary to ask questions about who is affected by this phenomenon and to what evaluative standard the impact can be measured (Lehnert et al., 2007). The people who are affected by this phenomenon are individuals all around the world. Climate change mitigation is truly a global public good and, therefore, affects everyone. You can be directly affected by the current changes in the climate or you will feel the external effects of climate change in the future. These effects can be reduced by the actions that country's take around the world. In the climate change regime, decisions are made on what countries are obligated to do. China holds significant amounts of influence in these negotiations and, is able to determine the outcome. Therefore, the role that China assumes in climate change negotiations is of enormous relevance. China's influence is also able to impact to what extent other actors are committed to implementing the agreements. The behavior of China is thus likely to directly impact how climate change will affect you in the future. The results of this research will help to understand the position of China in these negotiations. These findings will, therefore, hopefully, stimulate other parties to foster connections with China. In the end, this research can be used to stimulate cooperation and to achieve the ambitious goals that we have set for ourselves to protect our planet and species.

1.2. *Readers Guide*

This introduction is followed by a brief literature review to explain what the existing literature has written about this topic. After this, a theoretical framework is created to examine this case of Chinese leadership in the climate change regimes. In this theoretical framework, the definition of leadership is discussed, two models are explained, and the elements that will be measured are operationalized. Thereafter, the methodology and research design of this research are discussed to highlight the choices that this research has made. After this, the results of the analysis are presented and will highlight the behavior and actions of China at the multilateral climate change negotiations after the Paris agreement. These results are, subsequently, discussed and interpreted to find answers to the questions that this research has asked. After this, the theoretical and substantive implications of the results are reflected

upon. Finally, this thesis is concluded by answering the research question, summarizing the results, and recommending further research on this topic.

2. *Literature Review*

The following chapter will present an overview of the available knowledge on the topic that this research aspires to study. A brief literature review is conducted to gain an understanding of what previous research has said on leadership in the international (climate) regime(s) and on China's emerging role in these communities. The result of the literature review should provide this research with an overview of the different strands of research in the field and a gap in the existing literature. First, an outline of existing research strands on leadership in international regimes is presented.

2.1. *Leadership in International Regimes*

The research on leadership in international regimes can be divided into two groups. The first branch of literature, that has been researched most extensively, is focused on the actors exercising and providing leadership. This is the supply side of leadership. The second strand concentrates on the recognition of leadership, the demand side. These two aspects combine to capture the concept of leadership. Research on the supply side of the leadership equation has primarily studied how leaders use different modes of behavior to influence other actors. In the early work on leadership in the international sphere, it was often assumed that the leader (the hegemon) would predominantly coerce the other actors to change their behavior (Eckersley, 2020). However, the key findings from major authors in this field have demonstrated that contemporary leaders use various modes of behavior to influence other actors (Parker and Karlsson, 2014; Gupta and Grubb, 2000; Bäckstrand and Elgström, 2013). The research on the supply side has been predominantly focused on the environmental/climate change regime. During the 2000s and 2010s, this strand of the literature concentrated primarily on the leadership role of the EU in the climate change regime. A few articles have examined the role of the US, however, this is minor compared to the swath of literature on the leadership of the EU (Parker and Karlsson, 2014). The other strand of research, that concentrates on the demand aspect of leadership, is limited compared to the research on the supply side. The reason for this is that it is difficult to obtain accurate data on how other actors perceive a potential leader. Because of the lack of research on this aspect, Parker et al. (2015), conducted surveys at multiple COP's to gather accurate data. Based on the results of these surveys, Parker and Karlsson (2016, 2018) studied the perception that participants have of the EU and the US and to what extent these leaders attained their goals in climate change negotiations. These two studies will be highlighted to illustrate the type of research in this field.

In Parker and Karlsson's (2016) examination of the leadership role of the EU, the authors found that between 2007 and 2010 the recognition of the EU as a leader declined sharply. The demand for their leadership decreased. However, in the subsequent years leading up to the Paris negotiations, the demand for their leadership increased again. The author's found that the decline in leadership recognition was primarily because, between 2007 and 2010, the EU did not aim to share leadership with the US and China as their ambitions clashed. This changed in the run-up to the Paris negotiations as

they opted to cooperate with these actors and make concessions. Therefore, the recognition of their leadership potential increased. However, in the analysis of the goal attainment of the EU, the authors concluded that the EU's aspirations were hindered because of their ineffective foreign policy and their internal divisions (Parker and Karlsson, 2016).

In the examination of the leadership role of the US in climate change negotiations, Parker and Karlsson (2018) found that recognition of the US as a climate leader peaked at the Copenhagen and Paris conferences. The authors demonstrate that the US firmly left its imprints on these negotiations and attained a majority of its goals. The weaker actors in these negotiations acknowledged that the US accommodated their concerns and that, therefore, deals were able to be made. However, while the participants at these COP's recognized the 'peaks' of leadership by the US, they also acknowledged that the US is an unreliable leader. These actors question whether the US can deliver on its promises domestically. The researchers also found that the recognition of US leadership declined when they were hesitant to share the leadership stage with the EU and China (Parker and Karlsson, 2018). Therefore, both studies demonstrate that the participants in COP's demand shared/collective leadership. Furthermore, the studies show that the bids of leadership from the US and the EU are hindered by their internal struggles.

2.2. *China's Role in International Regimes*

Research on China's leadership in international regimes was limited for a long time as the country kept a low profile in the late 2000s and early 2010s. China did not desire a leadership position in the existing multilateral regimes at that time (Nordin and Weismann, 2018; Eckersley, 2020). However, research by Zhang (2017) argues that since 2012, China has taken more assertive international action and aims to carry a responsibility to provide international public goods. China's central ambition has been to increase public diplomacy to provide positive incentives and connect countries more efficiently. Zhang (2017) argues that ecological concerns (climate change) were one of the central motivations for China to take a more assertive position in international regimes. One of the other motivations was the fear of China to be swept under the anti-globalization movement. Therefore, Zhang (2017) argues that China aims to drive themselves and others along the track of global leadership. Shullman (2019) would contend that China's expansion into global governance is also driven by its aim to gain control and influence.

China's more assertive position in international relations is illustrated by its Belt and Road Initiative. This is how China aims to take responsibility and provide public goods. The initiative aims to connect China with Africa and Europe to stimulate trade and investment. However, Chaisse and Matsushita (2018) argue that this project primarily aims at spreading the economic model that China has pursued and establish the position of China as an economic and political superpower. It can be argued that this is their road to hegemony. The core tenet of the project is to invest heavily into infrastructure, roads, ports, and railways abroad and at home to accelerate industrial development

(Nordin and Weismann, 2018). Another part of the BRI is to promote the 'China story'. This means pushing a story that builds a positive image of the country. Therefore, the BRI is a way for China to spread its influence and promote its position in global governance. An example of a project within the BRI is described by Benabdallah (2019). This author explains that China provides training to African journalists to socialize them to the norms and values of China. Through these types of soft power tools and the economic power vested in the BRI, China has risen to a powerful position in global governance with significant influence over weaker actors.

The BRI is not the only way how China establishes its position in global governance. The country also aims to cooperate with like-minded countries to gain influence. For instance, the BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa) group has managed a level of cooperation that has trumped the expectations of many countries. Downie and Williams (2018) argue that this group exerts significant influence on weaker actors and has a powerful position in global governance. Their article also argues that this group can gain influence in the climate change regime if it scales up cooperation on the energy front. China's role in the group of BRICS and the BRI demonstrate how they aim to exercise influence outside of the established multilateral structures. However, Cooper and Zhang (2018), describe how China exercises dualistic leadership. These authors explain that China exercises its influence inside and outside the established multilateral institutions. They demonstrate this by comparing China's contribution to the G20 forum and UN frameworks with their role in the creation of the BRI and the Asian Investment Bank. Cooper and Zhang (2018) conclude that dualism is representative of China's leadership in the 21st century. Although China's status in global governance has been solidified, their rise also knows its limitations. Pu (2018) and Wang (2018) argue that the uncertainty of domestic politics and internal expectations are factors that could hinder the aspiration of Chinese leadership in global governance. These authors also contend that the degree to which China exercises leadership is contingent on the leadership behavior of the US and the EU. Therefore, they argue that China primarily aims to facilitate collective leadership and does not desire to take a unilateral global leadership position. To conclude, these articles have highlighted what China aims for and how they gain and exercise influence. As China has established itself through the BRI, cooperation with the BRICS, and their contribution to existing regimes, they have also taken a more assertive role in the climate change regime. Research that has focused on China's role in this regime will now be reviewed.

A starting point is a work by Harnisch et al. (2015) that has analyzed the role of China in international climate governance. The central finding of the authors is that the role China aspires to assume on the international stage is largely based on domestic and external expectations of what China should do. These authors argue that this dynamic is significantly more present in the case of China compared to that of the US or the EU. Research by Hilton and Kerr (2017) has aimed to build upon this work by Harnisch et al. (2015) by examining the reasons why China was willing to contribute more positively in the Paris negotiations. They argue that the key driver of China's emerging role in the climate change regime is the 'new normal' model of economic development that China has embraced

since 2010. This new model emphasizes a more balanced economy with a focus on innovation and low-carbon technologies. Because of this new focus, a way was paved for China to rethink its position in climate change negotiations. As a result, China assumed a facilitative role and closely cooperated with the US and the EU to reach a historic climate agreement in 2015. Eckersley (2020) aimed to add to this examination of China's role by analyzing their leadership role vis-à-vis the US during the Paris climate negotiations through a refined theoretical scope. This author found that there were significant moments of shared leadership between China and the US, exemplified by their joint press conferences. However, Eckersley (2020) also found that the US exercised instrumental and transactional leadership, bringing the significant parties together to reach an agreement, while China acted as a defensive co-operator and facilitated leadership. Furthermore, Eckersley (2020) concludes that despite increasingly larger external expectations of China, they do not perceive themselves as having to act as a unilateral leader in the climate change regime. They aim to merely facilitative collective leadership. These three studies demonstrate the dynamics that drive China's leadership and what role China has taken recently.

The final articles that are included in this literature review focus on how China and their leadership is perceived by other actors in the climate change regime. Gao (2018) has analyzed the evolution of the external recognition of China's leadership role in climate change negotiations. This author demonstrated that the external perception of China's leadership has changed significantly since 2009. China was viewed as an 'obstructor' and as a 'wrecker' at the Copenhagen negotiations. This is in stark contrast to the Paris conference where China was viewed as a potential global climate leader that worked constructively with the other actors to reach an agreement. A recent study aimed to expand on this analysis by studying the external recognition of China's leadership after the US withdrawal of the Paris agreement. Hurri (2020) found, through utilizing constructivist role theory, that external expectations of China are growing as they are the largest emitter of greenhouse gasses in the world. The developed countries view China as an increasingly pivotal player as its contributions to the negotiations are decisive for the outcome. However, they do not view China as a climate change leader. They only acknowledge the potential for China to be a structural leader for developing countries. Hurri (2020) concludes that there might be role conflict in the future and that the EU and the US need to rethink their leadership role to include China into the picture. China's influence and recognition are growing and they are a pivotal player that can take a leadership role.

The research on China that has been discussed has demonstrated that China has expanded its leadership position in global governance through the BRI, cooperation with the BRICS, and its activity in existing multilateral regimes. However, not a lot is known about how China exercises its leadership in this position. Therefore, this research aims to fill a gap by researching how China has exercised leadership and which role(s) they have assumed. Furthermore, to research unexplored territory, this thesis examines the leadership role(s) of China in climate change negotiations after the Paris agreement. Only the research by Hurri (2020) has focused on this time period and this author only examined the demand-aspect of leadership. Therefore, this research will analyze the behavior and actions of China in

the four COP's after the Paris agreement to add knowledge to this field about the leadership role(s) that China assumes.

3. *Theoretical Framework*

This research is required to build upon established theory to enhance the credibility of the results. Therefore, in this chapter of the research, a theoretical framework is created to support the analysis. The theoretical framework includes an extensive discussion of the definition of leadership, an explanation of the two models that are used, and at the end of this chapter, the theoretical elements are operationalized into observable propositions. To start, the concept of leadership is discussed and defined.

3.1. *Definition of Leadership*

The words 'leadership' and 'leader' can mean a variety of different things depending on the context. The term can be used to describe dictators, democratically elected leaders, frontrunners in a race, and pioneers in a specific field. Similarly, the term also has a host of different meanings in the academic literature on leadership in international regimes. Therefore, to pick a suitable definition for this research, it is imperative that the different definitions of leadership are reviewed. The definitions that have been created in this field can be grouped into two distinctive tracks of research (Eckersley, 2020). The first track of research has defined leadership through the lens of hegemony. In this track, hegemonic leadership is explained through classic international relations approaches. The second track includes research that is focused on leadership in diplomatic regimes. Both of these tracks will be discussed to examine which definition is most suitable to use in this research.

3.2. *Hegemonic Leadership*

This first track of research has aimed to define leadership through interrelating it with the concept of hegemony. The research in this track stems from the different schools of thought within international relations (Eckersley, 2020). These have all defined hegemony as leadership. Therefore, to understand how the definition of leadership evolved, this research aims to examine the literature on hegemony.

In the school of structural realism, leadership was defined by the ability of the hegemon to use coercion, threats, and bribery, to alter the behavior of other actors. The aim of leadership is, therefore, to force other actors to align their preferences with the goals of the hegemon (Eckersley, 2020). As a result, the demands of the hegemon can be carried out. The problem with this notion of leadership is that the possible outcome is domination or dictatorship. This research views domination as the antithesis to contemporary leadership as complex and universal problems, such as climate change, cannot be reduced by forcing other actors to change their behavior (Gupta and Grubb, 2000). This definition of leadership is, therefore, also not commonly used as a tool for leadership analysis (Eckersley, 2020). A second approach stems from the Gramscian school of thought. Cox (1983) has defined leadership by the ability of a hegemon, as the cultural, ideological, and economic leader, to change the preferences and behaviors of other states (allied or subaltern) through a mixture of consent and coercion. In this

conceptualization, the hegemon aims to influence the behavior of other actors by acquiring consent through socialization or by coercion, when necessary. Coercion is necessary when other actors resist the solutions that are on the table. Cox (1983, p. 164) puts it in the following way: "To the extent that the consensual aspect of power is in the forefront, hegemony prevails. Coercion is always latent but is only applied in marginal, deviant cases. Hegemony is enough to ensure conformity of behavior in most people most of the time". Therefore, a combination of socialization and coercion is used to acquire consent and change the preferences of others. As a result, the legitimacy and effectiveness of leadership can be evaluated by the ability of the hegemon to align the preferences of all the actors (Cox, 1983). This notion of leadership by Cox (1983) is more nuanced and offers a prospect of leadership that is more open to cooperation and voluntary consent. Therefore, domination or dictatorship cannot be the goal of leadership in this notion. Because of this, the definition can be used as a tool for analysis.

However, this notion will not be used in this research. The reason for this is that the climate change issue is complex, universal, and long-term. These characteristics are not well-suited to leadership by the hegemon as they are primarily self-interested and as their cycles of leadership are often limited (Gupta and Grubb, 2000). Furthermore, it is also unclear whether the concept of a 'hegemon' is even applicable to this current time period. Therefore, Eckersley (2020) suggests that using this notion of leadership is problematic.

3.3. *Diplomatic Leadership*

The second track of research that has aimed to define leadership moved beyond the notion of hegemony as globalization emerged. Keohane and Nye (2001) recognized that globalization led to increasing interconnectedness and mutual interdependence between countries. Because of this, they argued that the exercise of leadership should be focused on stimulating cooperation between countries, in contrast to coercing others. Therefore, diplomatic leadership grew in importance. Researchers created multiple notions of diplomatic leadership that will be subsequently discussed to arrive at a final definition of leadership that will be used in this research.

The notions of leadership that will be discussed all stem from the same concept of substantive leadership. The idea behind this concept is that an actor's leadership is defined by their ability to exercise their political agency to change the behavior of other actors. The leaders carry asymmetric political and economic influence, and, therefore, they are able to sway the preferences of other actors (Eckersley, 2020). The first major contribution to this field was made by Oran Young (1991). The work of this author on diplomatic leadership is considered a classic and functions as the starting point of almost every analysis on leadership. Young (1991) used the notion of substantive leadership to focus on individual diplomacy in negotiations. This author created the following definition of leadership: "leadership is the actions of individuals who endeavor to solve or circumvent the collective action problems that plague efforts of parties seeking to reap joint gains" (Young, 1991, p. 285). This definition is evidently connected to the concept of substantive leadership as it accentuates the political agency of

the individual actors in negotiations. The definition also includes an emphasis on solving collective action problems to reap joint gains. Therefore, the purpose of leadership is stated. The problem with this notion of leadership is the explicit focus on the actions of individuals. t' Hart and Rhodes (2014) have concluded that a focus on individuals is something of the past. Leadership is a process of interaction between leaders, participants, and institutions. This research agrees with this argument and, therefore, Young's definition is not used in this research. The second major contribution to this field is written by Arid Underdal (1994). Underdal (1994) contributed to the work of Young by adding emphasis to the demand side of leadership. Underdal (1994, p. 181) stated that the strength of any leadership position is "a function of the supply and the demand for leadership services". Although this author emphasized both these aspects, Underdal's (1994) definition of leadership did not include both of them. The author defined leadership in the following way: "leadership is an asymmetrical relationship of influence, where one actor guides or directs the behavior of others towards a certain goal over a certain period of time" (Underdal's (1994, p. 178). This definition solely emphasizes the provision of leadership through a relation of asymmetric influence. Therefore, the condition on which leadership is exercised is stated in this definition. The purpose of leadership, however, remains vague in this definition by Underdal (1994). This is in contrast to the former definition given by Young (1991). However, this research argues that an emphasis on purpose is essential. Therefore, this definition of leadership by Underdal (1994) is also not used in this research.

A subsequent notion of leadership was created by John Ikenberry. This author defined leadership as "the use of power to orchestrate the actions of a group towards a collective end" (Ikenberry, 1996, p. 388). Ikenberry (1996) argues that power and purpose are two necessary and essential elements. The emphasis on power resembles the notion of asymmetric influence in the definition given by Underdal and the emphasis on purpose resembles the notion of collective action in the definition given by Young. Therefore, this research agrees with Ikenberry (1996) that power and purpose are the two central elements in a definition of leadership. However, Eckersley (2020), who recently reviewed the definition of leadership, argues that one crucial element is missing. This author argues that a definition of leadership should include an emphasis on the 'demand' side of leadership. Underdal previously recognized the importance of this element, however, did not adopt it in his definition of leadership. Eckersley (2020) argues that it is an essential element as leaders cannot guide the behavior of other actors effectively if their leadership is not recognized or consented to by other actors. Moreover, Eckersley (2020) also argues that it is difficult to make a distinction between 'leadership' and 'success in bargaining' when this aspect is not included in the definition. This research agrees with this reasoning, and therefore, adapts the definition given by Eckersley (2020, p. 4): "leadership is a process of interaction whereby one or more actors exercise asymmetric influence in attracting or negotiating the consent or acquiescence of other parties, in ways that facilitate collective action towards the achievement of a common purpose". This definition includes the elements of 'asymmetric influence' and 'facilitating collective action' that were originally emphasized by Underdal

and Young. Therefore, power and purpose remain essential elements as Ikenberry (1996) argued. The addition that Eckersley has made is the explicit emphasis on the attraction of consent of other parties. Furthermore, this definition also opens up the possibility for shared or collective leadership by multiple actors. Therefore, the definition includes all the aspects that this research deems important. This definition will be used to analyze the leadership role(s) that China has assumed.

3.4.   *Theoretical Leadership Models*

To examine the leadership role(s) of China in climate change negotiations, this research aims to use two models through which leadership is viewed. These models include characteristics, behaviors, and styles, that reflect leadership. The first model that this research will use has been created based upon the definition of leadership given by Eckersley (2020). This model will be called the *conventional leadership model* in this research as the two elements in this model are conventionally used to analyze how a leader exercises leadership and whether they are a legitimate and effective leader. This means that if China consistently displays these necessary elements, that it can be regarded as a legitimate leader in the climate change regime. The second model that is used in this research is called the *facilitative leadership model.* This is an existing model that is based upon Chinese leadership behavior. The model includes four elements that examine the style, purpose, and mode of leadership. The elements from both models will be extensively discussed. First, the conventional leadership model is introduced.

3.5.   *Conventional Leadership Model*

This model includes two components. The first element is 'the exercise of asymmetric influence in attracting or negotiating the consent or acquiescence of other parties' This element allows this research to examine the leadership role(s) that China has assumed and the consent that they have acquired. The second element is the 'facilitation of collective action towards the common purpose'. This element allows this research to investigate the purpose of leadership. As a result, this research can examine whether the leader is legitimate. Both these elements will be subsequently discussed.

Exercising asymmetric influence to attract consent

To exercise leadership an actor has to possess asymmetric influence. This influence is gained by obtaining political, capital, and moral power. If an actor has obtained this power, they can exercise their influence in different ways. This is what will be explored in this section. The aim of exercising this influence remains the same. The leader aims to acquire the consent of others actors. With consent from participants in an international regime, the leader is able to realize more effective leadership. As a result, the leader can align the preferences of the actors, reduce collective action problems, and work towards the common purpose. Because the goal remains the same, this section solely pays attention to how leaders exercise asymmetric influence. The different ways of how leaders exercise their asymmetric influence are called *the modes of leadership*.

Early research on leadership did not examine modes of leadership as they were mostly concerned about whether an actor had displayed successful leadership. Researchers relied on post hoc reasoning to determine whether leadership was displayed (Young, 1991). If negotiations had a successful outcome, it was assumed that the actor with asymmetric influence was instrumental in achieving this outcome and, therefore, a leader. In response to this simple analysis, Oran Young proposed a new analytical framework that examined how leaders exercised asymmetric influence. By using this framework, researchers can observe how and whether actors displayed leadership. This framework includes three different modes of leadership that can be analyzed to conclude which role(s) an actor has assumed in multilateral negotiations. Young (1991) has distinguished between the following modes of leadership: structural, intellectual, and entrepreneurial leadership. Underdal (1994) refined this framework and proposed three different modes of leadership: coercive, unilateral, and instrumental leadership. The leadership modes are called differently by the two authors, however, they overlap significantly. For example, what Underdal (1994) has called coercive leadership is similar to structural leadership in the classification by Young (1991). Ikenberry (1996) also proposed three modes of leadership: structural, institutional, and situational leadership. These latter modes of leadership are unique to Ikenberry's framework. Finally, Nye (2008), proposed two modes of leadership: transformational and transactional leadership. This demonstrates that there are many different modes of leadership created by the key authors in this field. However, not every mode of leadership is suitable to be used for analysis in this research. For example, institutional and situational leadership are modes that are primarily exercised in the early phases of international regimes to guide the building of institutional structures (Gupta and Grubb, 2000). Furthermore, many of these modes of leadership overlap and have similar descriptions. Therefore, Parker and Karlsson (2014) have proposed a set of four leadership modes that include the most common ways of how a leader exercises their asymmetric influence in international regimes. This set will be used in this research to examine which leadership role(s) China has exercised. The four modes will now be discussed separately.

Structural leadership

The first mode of leadership that is discussed is what Young (1991) has referred to as structural leadership and what Underdal (1994) has called coercive leadership. Transactional leadership, which was devised by Nye (2008), is also closely connected to this concept. Structural leadership is providing positive or negative incentives to other actors to attract their consent. The ability to provide these incentives is dependent on the extent of the economic, political, and moral resources that the leader possesses. The weight that the leader holds in respect to the specific problem is also of significant relevance (Parker and Karlsson, 2014; Gupta and Grubb, 2000). A leader can provide positive incentives by, for example, offering financial support to other actors. However, a leader can also aim to threaten or bribe other actors. This would be a provision of negative incentives to coerce others. Therefore, a structural leader aims to alter the pay-offs that are connected to the different outcomes in

negotiations by deploying sticks and carrots (Bäckstrand and Elgström, 2013). As a result, the structural leader is able to establish their position in the international regime and make their voice heard (Young, 1991; Underdal, 1994).

Instrumental leadership

The second mode of leadership that is exercised is instrumental leadership. This mode of leadership is also referred to as entrepreneurial leadership by Young (1991). Gupta and Grubb (2000, p. 19) broadly define this mode of leadership as "the exercise of skill in negotiations". Young (1991, p. 293) contends that an instrumental leader is an actor that is skilled in negotiations and seeks to "put together deals that would otherwise elude participants". Therefore, a leader exercises their influence to build consensus and coalitions between actors that have opposing interests. The skill in building these coalitions lies in the ability of the leader to make the right compromises and concessions at the right time. As a result, a skilled leader is able to build coalitions to broker deals between groups that hold fundamentally different preferences. This would be a sign of an effective leader as they have used their diplomatic and political capital to change the preferences of other actors (Gupta and Grubb, 2000).

Directional leadership

The third mode of leadership through which asymmetric influence is exercised is directional leadership. This is what Underdal (1994) has referred to as unilateral leadership. Gupta and Grubb (2000, p. 20) have defined this mode of leadership as "taking internal and external initiatives that seek to influence the perception of other countries as to what is desirable and possible". In exercising directional leadership, leaders aim to acquire the consent of the other participants through leading by example. The directional leader aims to change the outlook of the other actors by demonstrating the feasibility, value, and superiority of a policy solution (Parker and Karlsson, 2014). This mode of leadership holds particular importance in the climate change regime as the impact of policy solutions is uncertain. This uncertainty can be removed through a leader taking experimental initiatives (Gupta and Grubb, 2000).

Ideational leadership

The fourth mode of leadership that is exercised is idea-based/ideational leadership. This mode of leadership is what Young (1991) referred to as intellectual leadership. Ideational leaders aim to alter the preferences of other actors by pushing distinct narratives and promoting proposals (Parker and Karlsson, 2014). By naming other actors and framing problems and solutions, the ideational leader, aims to alter the perceptions that participants hold. Most often, this actor illustrates the failures of the current situation and produces new knowledge. To add credibility to that narrative, the leader makes proposals that accompany the narrative that is pushed (Parker and Karlsson, 2010). Through this mechanism, the perception and preferences that actors hold can be changed. As a result, the leader can acquire consent. This mode of leadership is closely connected to the aforementioned mode of instrumental leadership.

Both modes of leadership are concerned with convincing others through using rhetorical and practical skills in negotiations. However, the distinction between the two modes of leadership is that ideational leadership is primarily concerned with changing the perception of other participants through agenda-setting efforts, while instrumental leadership is more concerned with building coalitions and consensus to align the preferences of others (Gupta and Grubb, 2000).

Facilitation of collective action to achieve the common purpose

The second element of the conventional leadership model aims to investigate the purpose of the leader. However, not all researchers place the same importance on this element. For example, the leadership definition of Nye (2008) states that leadership entails mobilizing other actors for a 'certain purpose'. As no specific purpose is emphasized, this suggests that it is not as relevant to the effectiveness or legitimacy of the leader. Saul and Seidel (2011) agree with this notion as they argue that the objective of the leader is not relevant as long as they are committed to solving collective action problems. However, it can be argued that collective action problems can also be solved to solely facilitate the interests of the leader. In contrast to Saul and Seidel (2011), Underdal (1994) and Young (1991) put significant emphasis on the purpose of leadership. These authors argue that the objective of leadership should be connected to "the collective pursuit of some common good or joint purpose" (Underdal, 1994, p. 178). This argument is rooted in the belief that norms and values play a significant role in the exercise of leadership. Parker et al. (2015) proved the significance of this belief by demonstrating that the number one driver for recognition of leadership, in the climate change regime, was the demonstration of the commitment to the common purpose by the leader. The participants believe that leadership is more effective and ethical if this is the objective of the leader. The leader should aim to demonstrate their commitment to the common purpose by reducing collective action problems to reach durable and universal agreements. This means an agreement that contributes to reducing greenhouse gas emissions to levels that are considered safe by the UN and that includes all the actors in the negotiations (Eckersley, 2020). Based upon the research by Parker et al (2015), this research also aims to investigate the commitment to the common purpose. The results of this examination will reveal the extent to which the leader is legitimate and effective. A leader that is solely concerned with protecting their own interests cannot be effective and is not regarded as legitimate. Therefore, it is of importance to investigate this element alongside the exercise of asymmetric influence in the conventional leadership model.

3.6.   *Facilitative Leadership Model*

The second model that is used in this research consists of elements that are partially selected based upon contemporary research on the characteristics of leadership in global governance. This group of research has argued that unilateral leadership is not a realistic pursuit anymore (Wæver, 2017). It is argued that

states, even if they have regional or global power and carry asymmetric influence, are not able to alter the preferences of other actors unilaterally. The reason for this is that power is spread out more evenly between different actors and that there is a battleground for influence. Therefore, Wæver (2017) argues that collective leadership by key actors should be exercised to take on complex issues, such as climate change. Morton (2017) has also called for a renewed form of leadership. This author argues, similar to Wæver, that asymmetric influence does not always translate into the ability to set the rules. Participants in international regimes do not consent to the demands of the leader if they are not willing to include weaker actors and cooperate. This attitude is particularly present in climate change negotiations because of the complexity and universality of the problem. Weaker and poorer countries should be a significant part of the solution. Therefore, Morton (2017) argues that leadership should be based on empowerment and stewardship. These values are widely accepted as necessary elements of contemporary leadership (Wæver, 2017). Based on this research and empirical analysis of Chinese leadership behavior, Chen et al. (2018) developed a model of leadership that includes four elements. These components will help this research to understand which leadership role(s) China has assumed and what their purpose is. These elements investigate the style, purpose, and mode of leadership.

Collective leadership

The first element in this model is collective leadership. Chen et al. (2018) argue that common goals should be achieved through collective action by key actors in global governance. The key actors in international regimes inevitably share a leadership stage, however, they should cooperate more intensively and pursue the same goals. The distinction between shared and collective leadership is that the latter means that the involved actors share the same aim. Collective leadership can be expressed through joint press statements or by joint proposals. In the development of a collective leadership equilibrium, individual actors should also express their desire for collective action to show their willingness to cooperate. This means that a leader can also individually take a role that facilitates collective leadership.

Win-win outcomes

The second element in this model investigates the purpose that the leader should have. Chen et al. (2018) argue strongly that the purpose of leadership should not be to protect the self-interest of the leader. These authors stress that that previous leadership by the US and the EU primarily served the leader's own interest. They only promoted collective goals to establish a powerful political status for themselves. Therefore, in this model based on Chinese leadership, the purpose of leadership should be to realize win-win outcomes. These outcomes are described as results that benefit and are accepted by the different groups of actors in international regimes. Therefore, a leader aims to facilitate and propose win-win outcomes

Attraction

The third element in this model is attraction. This element can be described as a mode of leadership. Chen et al. (2018) explain that a leader should exercise their asymmetric influence to attract others. The mechanism through which this should happen consists of offering access to economic markets or demonstrating a commitment to multilateral institutions. If the leader is successful in attracting others, they can acquire their consent and change their perceptions and preferences.

Empowerment

The fourth element in this model is empowerment. This element describes the style of leadership that an actor with hierarchical authority should embrace. Chen et al. (2018) argue that a leader should assume a role where they aim to empower weaker actors and not impose standards and exploit them. This means that a leader should respect the differences in economic development and history between actors. Moreover, they should also respect the sovereignty of every actor. Therefore, the leader should not aim to impose common methods or tools upon weaker actors. In contrast, they should aim to strengthen the capacity of weaker actors. By strengthening their capacity, every actor can deal with the issues they face by using their own methods and tools. This provides these weaker actors with flexibility and sovereignty. Chen et al. (2018) argue that the US and the EU have tried to solve global and regional issues by promoting and imposing the Western economic and political system upon other countries. These authors believe that Western leadership relied too heavily on promoting democracy and capitalism to solve problems and failed to recognize the principles of sovereignty. Therefore, these authors emphasize the importance of empowering weaker actors. Investigating this component will reveal whether China's leadership is driven by empowerment.
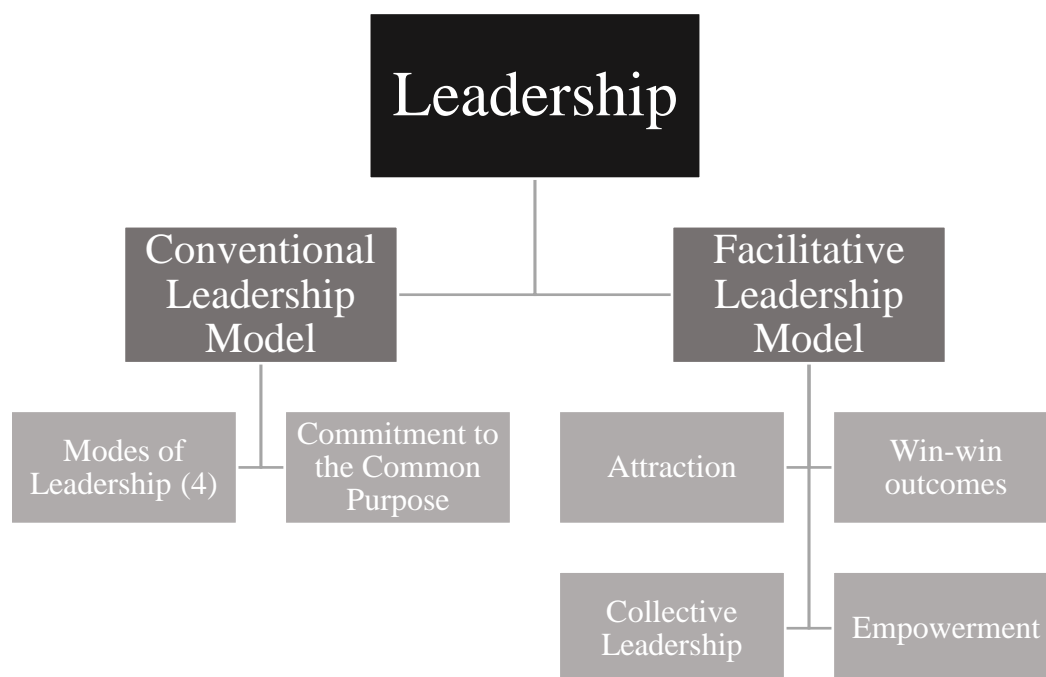
3.7. *Operationalization*

This research will use the elements from the two previously described models to answer the research question. To find out which role(s) China has assumed, this research investigates the modes of leadership and several elements from the facilitative model. Furthermore, to observe whether China is a legitimate and effective leader in the climate change regime, the purpose of leadership and the extent to which consent is attracted is investigated. This latter aspect, consent, is investigated through examining secondary data. The reason for this is that the scope and resources of this research are limited. However, the other nine elements from the two models will be tested empirically. These two models and their elements can be found in Figure 1 below, which illustrates the framework that this research uses to measure leadership. The conventional leadership model includes five elements: the four modes of leadership (asymmetric influence) and the commitment to the common purpose. The expectation for this model is, based on previous research, that multiple modes of leadership, instead of solely one, will consistently be displayed to guide the behavior of other actors and acquire their consent (Parker and Karlsson, 2014). The facilitative leadership model includes four elements: collective leadership, win-

win outcomes, attraction, and empowerment. This research expects that these components are highly congruent with this case as the model is partially based upon Chinese leadership behavior (Chen et al., 2018). Furthermore, some of the elements in the two different models overlap. For example, structural leadership and attraction are two elements that are closely connected. Both of these elements describe how leaders use positive incentives to attract other actors. Furthermore, two components measure the purpose of leadership: win-win outcomes and the commitment to the common purpose. Both these elements stress that the purpose of the leader should not be to protect their own interest. But, there are nuanced differences between the two elements that can be observed in the operationalization.

Figure 1

Leadership Models Diagram

The nine elements are operationalized as they are measured in the empirical analysis of this research. They are placed in categories to structure the operationalization and the results. The first category includes the five modes of leadership from the two different models. The second category consists of the two elements from both models that investigate the purpose of leadership. After this, the third category includes the two elements from the facilitative model that examine leadership style. The elements are put in these categories to allow for clear-cut comparisons.

The operationalization of these elements is executed in Table 1 below. For every element, two criteria are created to measure whether the element is present or not in the behavior of China. The criteria are made into observable propositions. These have been created based upon the discussion of these elements in the previous sections. The authors that are referenced in these discussions did not explicitly create these criteria to measure two levels of presence, however, they have provided detailed

descriptions of what the elements entail in regards to the behavior of the leader. Therefore, this research has used these descriptions to form observable propositions that can be measured.

Table 1

Operationalization of Leadership Elements

Categories	Components	Yes	No
Modes of leadership			
	Structural leadership (Parker and Karlsson, 2014)	Provision of positive or negative incentives	No provision of incentives
	Instrumental leadership (Gupta and Grubb, 2000)	Building consensus and coalitions to broker deals	Blocking proposals and obstructing negotiations
	Idea-based leadership (Parker and Karlsson, 2010)	Pushing a narrative and proposing new solutions	Following existing narrative and holding a reactive attitude
	Directional leadership (Gupta and Grubb, 2000)	Taking internal and external initiatives to demonstrate policy solutions	Taking counterproductive internal and external initiatives
	Attraction' (Chen et al., 2018)	Attracting other actors through offering market access or by demonstrating commitment to multilateral institutions	Not offering market access or demonstrating commitment to multilateral institutions to attract others
Objectives			
	Commitment to the common purpose (Eckersley, 2020)	Facilitating collective action to reach a universal and durable agreement	Blocking proposals for a durable and universal agreement to protect self-interest
	Win-win outcomes (Chen et al., 2018)	Proposing or aiming for outcomes that are accepted by the different groups of actors	Proposing outcomes that only benefit and are only accepted by the leader and like-minded actors
Style			
	Empowerment (Chen et al., 2018)	Empowering weaker countries by advocating for flexibility and sovereignty	Inhibit weaker countries by advocating for common methods and tools
	Collective leadership (Chen et al., 2018; Wæver, 2017)	Expressing the aim for, or exercising, collective leadership	Expressing the aim for unilateral leadership

4. *Methodology*

In the following chapter, the approach that this research has taken to examine leadership is explained. After this, the research design and the methods that have been used are discussed. At the end of this chapter, the reliability and validity of this design are reviewed. First, the general approach is discussed.

4.1. *The Approach*

This research has aimed to examine the leadership of China through executing a behavioral analysis. The rhetoric, behavior, and actions of China have been analyzed through the lens of nine elements from two leadership models. These aspects of China's leadership have been examined by engaging in desk research. This entails that the research uses data that has been produced by other researchers, institutions, or governments (van Thiel, 2014). Because of this, the research approach is cost-effective and efficient. Furthermore, this approach is also effective in describing and analyzing developments over time (van Thiel, 2014). Because of these reasons, the approach is suitable for this thesis. However, by using this approach, a wealth of information is opened up to the researcher. Therefore, it is necessary that the collected data is concretely specified. This also requires the researcher to elaborate on their data collection choices.

Different types of data were used in this research and have served various purposes. To gather background information on this topic and case, academic literature and industry reports were consulted primarily. To explore the theoretical basis of this research, existing theoretical and empirical literature on leadership was used. In contrast, the data collected for the empirical analysis stems predominantly from primary sources. The selection of the primary sources is based upon the reputation, availability, and content of the sources. All the sources that have been compiled focus on the climate change negotiations between 2016 and 2019 (COP 22, 23, 24, and 25). A few of these sources were key in providing this research with the required data: Earth Negotiations Bulletin (ENB) reports (ENB is an independent service that has been covering multilateral climate negotiations within the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) since 1995); newspaper articles from reputable outlets (Xinhua, China Daily, Financial Times); and Carbon Brief COP reports. These sources were key as they provided this research with a clear description of what happened in the negotiations and what the role of China was. By using these sources, the elements from the models could be examined.

4.2. *Research Design*

This section aims to answer how this research has used a behavioral analysis approach to answer the research question. A research design was created to lay out the steps that are necessary to take to find an answer to the research questions. The research design includes multiple steps and is modeled after a congruence analysis design. The first step, after creating a theoretical framework that includes propositions that can be measured (Table 1), is to systematically collect data from the primary sources

to derive a concrete set of behavioral observations (Blatter and Haverland, 2014). These observations are obtained by coding the data sources based upon the categories and elements that are laid out in Table 1. The second step is to compare these behavioral observations with the criteria that have been created. By executing this comparison, the researcher is able to determine whether the element is present or not. This step is executed for every element in every COP that is analyzed. The four negotiations are analyzed separately to observe differences in the behavior of China throughout the four years more easily. The third step consists of synthesizing the results from the four different COP's. This will allow this research to observe to what extent the elements were consistently present throughout the four conferences. In this step, the extent to which consent has been acquired is also controlled. After these three steps are completed, this research is able to understand which leadership role(s) China has assumed and whether they can be regarded as a legitimate and effective leader in the climate change regime.

4.3. *Reliability and Validity*

This research has aimed to investigate a complex role in an international regime through using a behavioral analysis-based research design. To confirm that this design allows this research to accurately study leadership role(s), this section reviews the reliability and validity of the design. First, the reliability of this design is assessed. The extent to which this research design is reliable is dependent on the comprehensiveness of the design and the sources that were used in this research. To enhance the reliability of the design, this research has used simple and clear criteria as benchmarks for the analysis. Because of this, another researcher can use Table 1 and obtain similar outcomes. Furthermore, the elements that are described in Table 1 are also robust and possess high concept validity. This is because these elements have either been used extensively by previous researchers and have, therefore, been constantly refined (e.g. Parker and Karlsson, 2014, 2016, 2018; Bäckstrand and Elgström, 2013), or the elements have been produced based upon empirical research that has extensively reviewed the characteristics of contemporary leadership. Therefore, these elements accurately measure leadership. To further enhance the reliability of this research design, this research has used data from reputable sources. One of these sources is the Earth Negotiations Bulletin, which has been extensively used by other researchers (Eckersley, 2020; Parker and Karlsson, 2014, 2016; Gupta and Grubb, 2000). Finally, to enhance reliability, the biases of the researcher should also be reduced. In this research, the confirmation bias of the researcher has been reduced by using two leadership models. This is because when a researcher only uses one model it is more likely that they will search for evidence that confirms this model (Blatter and Haverland, 2014). However, when a researcher is using two models, they are occupied with examining elements that would possibly change the results and add to the results of the other model. Therefore, their bias to find evidence for one specific result is reduced. This enhances the credibility and reliability of the results.

The second aspect that is required to be assessed is the external validity of this research design. This means that this research should review to what extent the results can be generalized. Because this research is specifically focused on one single case, the level of external validity is inherently low. This research has an exclusive focus on the role of China, and, therefore, the results cannot be extended to determine the role(s) of other actors. All the findings of this research solely reflect how China displays leadership. However, external validity has still been achieved in this research design through selecting the case and models that have been used. Chinese leadership in the climate change regime has not yet been studied with the two models that this research uses, and, therefore, this research is able to generalize the results to the theoretical literature. The scope of the conventional leadership model can be refined by comparing the results of the examination of the two models. The two frameworks propose characteristics of leadership that are significantly different from each other. Therefore, by comparing the applicability of the two models, this research can assess and refine the scope of the conventional model. Furthermore, as the facilitative leadership model is based upon Chinese behavior and contemporary research, its fit can be tested independently from the other model. The extent to which the elements in the model apply to this case determines the scope of this model. Therefore, this research is able to theoretically generalize its results.

The third aspect that is required to be assessed is internal validity. The level of internal validity of the research design is dependent on the extent to which the elements that have been used reflect the concept of leadership (Blatter and Haverland, 2014). To verify that the relationship between the elements and the key concept in this research is accurate, this research has carefully selected the theoretical elements. As mentioned, the elements in the conventional leadership model have been widely used in previous research and have been constantly refined. Therefore, the level of the concept validity of these elements is high. They accurately represent characteristics of leadership. The elements in the facilitative leadership model have not yet been widely tested, however, they are created based upon empirical analysis of Chinese leadership behavior in global governance and on research on contemporary leadership. Therefore, these elements accurately reflect Chinese leadership characteristics. Furthermore, by using two models of leadership, two different conceptualizations are measured. The result of this is that there is a wider variety of components that reflect leadership. This means that the relationship between all the different elements and the concept of leadership is likely stronger. Thus, the internal validity of this research design is enhanced by using established elements and models.

5. *Results*

In this chapter, the results from the behavioral analysis of China's actions, rhetoric, and behavior, in climate change negotiations after the Paris agreement are presented. As the previously described elements have been investigated, the results present whether the elements were visible or not in the behavior of China. All the elements are discussed one by one, for all four negotiations that are analyzed. The raw reasoning behind the results can be found in the filled-in tables of the different negotiations in Appendix A. At the end of this chapter, an synthesis of the results is created to observe how consistent the different elements of leadership were present in China's behavior throughout the four negotiations. However, before the results are presented, this research aims to highlight the context in which these four COP's took place. Although they are analyzed separately, the focus of the negotiations is similar and there are overlapping aims.

The four negotiations that are analyzed took place after the Paris agreement was ratified. This means that these conferences were all focused on the operationalization of this agreement. Therefore, the negotiations were aimed at reaching agreements on how to implement the Paris agreement (Timperley, 2017). The result of this is that these negotiations are more technical in nature than the COP's that happened before the Paris agreement. However, these negotiations remain of crucial importance as the Paris agreement cannot be effective if there is no agreement on the rules that guide the implementation and the evaluation. Therefore, a deadline was set at the end of COP 24, in 2018, to finalize the implementation scheme and its guidelines. This demonstrates the pressure that was on these negotiations. To illustrate which issues were discussed at these negotiations, this research presents the following examples: reporting requirements; transparency in reporting; financing for developing countries; loss and damages; capacity building in developing countries (Sommerholt, 2017). Countries are significantly divided on these issues as they are contentious and controversial. Finally, alongside these complicated issues, the problem of the US withdrawal from the Paris agreement runs through all these negotiations. This has also impacted the negotiations significantly. The results from the analysis of these conferences will now be presented.

5.1. *COP 22*

COP 22 was held in Marrakesh, Morocco. This was the first conference after the Paris agreement was ratified. Therefore, a light mood characterized this COP. But, a large group of countries pressed to prioritize the issue of financing. These concerns were echoed by the Moroccan presidency as they felt that they were representing the poor African countries (Sommerholt, 2017). This issue came to the forefront in this negotiation and was highlighted during the analysis. The results of the examination of the modes of leadership exercised by China are presented first.

Structural leadership

As financing was a key issue at this COP after the ratification of the Paris agreement, China promoted its pledge to set up a South-South cooperation fund. With the use of this fund, China aims to support developing countries in adapting to and mitigating the effects of climate change. The country has pledged to contribute more than three billion dollars to the fund (China Daily, 2016). Additionally, China promoted the unconditional aid that it gives to many developing countries. This aid can be used to mitigate the effects of climate change and is, therefore, another example of a positive inducement (Qi and Zhu, 2016). On top of this, China had pledged to set up, 10 programs to build low-carbon demonstration zones, 100 projects to cope with climate change, and 1000 training places in China for developing countries (China Daily, 2016). These are three examples of positive incentives that China has pledged to provide. Therefore, China exercised structural leadership at this COP.

Instrumental leadership

China came into this COP after being one of the first countries to ratify the Paris agreement. One of the reasons that many developing countries and China ratified the agreement immediately was because the agreement includes commitments to financing for developing countries (Schulz et al., 2016). To ensure that developing countries would receive this financing sooner rather than later, China turned its attention to this issue and backed the claims of these actors for enhanced financing from developed countries (Sommerholt, 2017). To support the developing countries, China used its influence to build a coalition that strengthened the bargaining power of this group of countries. As a result, China contributed significantly to brokering a deal between this coalition and the group of developed countries on financing and capacity building (Sommerholt, 2017). These actions demonstrate that China exercised instrumental leadership at COP 22.

Ideational leadership

China also demonstrated its support for the developing countries in its rhetoric. In public statements, China urged the developed countries to fulfill their pre-2020 goals, which stem from the agreements in the Kyoto Protocol, before starting to ask for demands from developing countries (China Daily, 2016). China also pushed a narrative that pressed the developed countries to enhance their financing. The aim of China is to alter the perception of the participants in the negotiations on how the responsibility between countries is divided. Therefore, Chinese representatives at COP 22 argue that China is able to propose solutions that benefit all participants and divide responsibilities fairly (Xinhua, 2016). These statements demonstrate the ideational leadership that China exercises.

Directional leadership

China's support for the developing countries at the negotiation is also connected to their status as a role model for these actors. In 2016, this status was enhanced because of China's financial pledges and their

fast ratification of the Paris agreement (Xinhua, 2016). China also, reportedly, invested more than 100 million dollars in renewable energies in 2016 alone (Hilton, 2016). All these actions demonstrate that China is taking the initiative to lead by example. Because of this, China is exercising directional leadership.

Commitment to the common purpose

China is supporting developing countries, brokering deals between groups that are fundamentally opposed to each other, and was one of the first countries to ratify the Paris agreement. All these actions demonstrate China's commitment to facilitating collective action and reaching durable agreements that will help to achieve the goal of the international community. China's representatives also argue that the purpose of China's action in the climate change regime is to make a large contribution to the challenge. They state that China does this as a country that carries responsibility (Xinhua, 2016). President Xi of China affirmed this sentiment as China provided political support for the Paris agreement at the 2016 G20 conference. The president stated that China aims to "help build a global climate-governing mechanism featuring cooperation, win-win results, reason, and justice" (Xinhua, 2016, p. n.a.). This demonstrates that commitment to the common purpose is present in the behavior of China

Win-win outcomes

The quote that is presented in the previous section demonstrates China's aim for win-win outcomes. The Chinese representatives also argue that they can make proposals that benefit all actors and result in win-win outcomes (Xinhua, 2016). However, at these negotiations, China did not make a (significant) proposal that would allow for win-win results. But, they did contribute to brokering a deal on financing that was accepted by both parties. Therefore, because they facilitated collective action and demonstrated their desire for win-win results, this element was present in China's behavior. There is also no evidence that China takes action to primarily protect its own interests.

Empowerment

China's support for developing countries also translated into their desire to empower weaker actors. In China's opening statement at this COP, they stressed that the decision on the amount of flexibility granted to countries in terms of the methods and tools that they can use in implementing their Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) should be entirely country-driven (Schulz et al., 2016). With this statement, China aimed to remind the participants at this conference of the country-driven characteristic of the NDCs that are supposed to function as individual targets for the Paris agreement. This demonstrates China's focus on granting weaker actors sovereignty and flexibility. Moreover, China has built its arguments for flexibility on the principle of 'common goals, but differentiated responsibilities, that the UNFCCC upholds. China claims that this principle should be systematically embedded throughout the climate change regime to represent the interests of all participants (Schulz et al., 2016).

Furthermore, in line with this principle, China stated at this conference that they do not prefer common accounting and reporting rules in the stocktake of the progress towards the Paris targets (Xinhua, 2016). Finally, the following quote from Chinese representatives at COP 22, about the transparency framework for reporting, sums up China's desire to empower: "The transparency framework should be implemented in a facilitative, non-intrusive, non-punitive manner, respectful of national sovereignty and avoid placing undue burden on Parties" (Sommerholt, 2017, p. 27). This quote includes the most important elements from the description of the 'empowerment' element. Because of China's advocation for these aspects, their leadership style at COP 22 can be characterized by empowerment.

Collective leadership

Before COP 22, China and the US, jointly announced that they were ratifying the Paris agreement. At this announcement, the countries vowed to work together and include all participants in the negotiations to reach the common goal (Nikkei, 2016). However, after the US vowed to withdraw from the agreement, China and the EU enhanced their relationship at the conference. The two parties came closer together and agreed that they should aim to lead collectively in the absence of the US (Duggan and Hodzi, 2016). These two acts demonstrate that collective leadership is present in China's leadership style at COP 22.

5.2. *COP 23*

The 23rd Conference Of the Parties was held in Bonn under the presidency of Fiji, one of the small island nations. At this conference, there was a clear call to action from the weaker actors. This call was reinforced by the Fijian presidency as they emphasized the catastrophic impacts of climate change on island nations (Allan et al., 2017). Additionally, this was the first conference after the US officially withdrew from the Paris agreement. Therefore, the mood was more contentious at these negotiations compared to those at COP 22.

Structural leadership

China did not promote any new benefits or inducements at these negotiations. However, they renewed their pledge for financial support, via the South-South fund, to developing countries (Timperley, 2017). This demonstrates the continuation of structural leadership by China.

Instrumental leadership

As the deadline for an implementation scheme of the Paris agreement was nearing closer, the key issue discussed at this COP was the requirements for implementation and reporting. The group of developing countries was demanding a significant degree of flexibility on these requirements as they did not feel that common standards would be fair. China agreed with the sentiment of the developing countries and supported them. They used their influence to create a strong coalition of developing and emerging

economies. This strengthened the bargaining power of this group significantly (China Daily, 2017). As this group pled for flexibility, the group of developed countries was arguing in favor of common standards for all actors as this would distribute responsibility fairly. The developed countries were, therefore, not willing to significantly commit or compromise on this issue. As a result, a 'real' agreement was never reached at this COP (Timperley, 2017). The final text included a list of the preferences of every actor. This outcome, however, pleased China as they felt that they were effective in reaching an 'agreement' that reflected their preferences. Chinese representatives claimed that "China played a key role in bridging groups with completely different negotiation interests this year" (China Daily, 2017, p. n.a.). In contrast, the developed countries claimed that China blocked a possible agreement on requirements between the two groups of countries and renewed the bifurcation between them. The actions by China came as a shock to many countries, as they had hoped that the two key groups had moved beyond their stark bifurcation after the success in Paris. They expected China to act as a mediator between the two groups of countries and represent the interests of both (Malik, 2017). However, this was not the case at this COP as China did not broker a deal and took a hardline stance. Therefore, China exercised a lack of instrumental leadership. However, China did build a coalition to strengthen the bargaining power of the group of developing countries and negotiated their interests. There is thus an argument that China exercised instrumental leadership in the group of developing countries.

Ideational leadership

The rhetoric of China at this conference remained similar. The country urged developed countries to commit to financing and to fulfill their pre-2020 goals. However, unlike at COP 22, China made formal proposals to make the pledges from developed countries on financing and pre-2020 goals part of a package deal on the issue of the requirements (Malik, 2017). This proposal was, however, rejected. Therefore, China stated, at the end of the conference, that "the story of finance at this COP is an unhappy one." (Allan et al., 2017, p. 29). This demonstrates that China is pushing to change the narrative on this issue. However, in response to the rhetoric and actions by China, the developed countries claimed that China pushes this narrative to avoid taking up their fair share of the responsibility (Dröge and Rattani, 2018). This demonstrates that the ideational efforts by China do not resonate with the developed countries. However, China did exercise ideational leadership as they are engaged in agenda-setting efforts.

Directional leadership

Not only has China defended the interests of developing countries at this conference, but they also aim to be a role model for these countries. China aims to lead by example through, for instance, fulfilling its goals earlier than expected. At COP 23, China announced that it expected to exceed its 2020 emissions targets. The State Council Information Office reported that China's emissions per unit GDP

were set to be reduced by 18 percent between 2015 and 2020 (People's Daily Online, 2017). Furthermore, a report by the International Energy Agency (IEA), contended that China was the largest producer, consumer, and investor of renewable energy in the world. Moreover, the agency also claimed that China surpassed the US as the world's biggest market for electric vehicles in 2016. The report concluded that China is a key determinant behind the momentum of a low-carbon transition in developing countries (IEA, 2017). Because of these achievements, Constanze Haug, the head of the International Carbon Action Partnership, commented that China is a role model for other developing countries in how to mitigate the effects of climate change effectively (China Daily, 2017). These initiatives demonstrate that China is a role model for these countries and that they are leading by example. Therefore, China is exercising directional leadership.

Commitment to the common purpose

China remains steadfast in its support for developing countries. However, at this COP, the support did not result in an agreement that would facilitate the common purpose of the regime. In contrast, developed countries felt that China blocked an opportunity for progress towards a durable agreement. China claims that its actions were aimed at defending the interests of the developing countries by taking a hardline stance on the issue of requirements. The Chinese representatives at this COP stated that China's purpose is to take a certain degree of responsibility and support weaker actors through filling the financing gap (China Daily, 2017). However, from the results of this negotiation, it is clear that their actions did not result in a durable agreement. Therefore, the commitment of the common purpose by China was not present at this COP.

Win-win outcomes

As the proposals by China were not accepted by the group of developed countries, they cannot be characterized as win-win. Therefore, win-win outcomes were not present in the behavior of China at this COP.

Empowerment

Although China's behavior was regarded as obstructive at this COP, their aim to empower weaker actors remained visible. The country aimed to unite the demands of these countries, support them with financing, and act as a role model (Jing, 2017). China also took a hardline stance on the issues of requirements which reflects their adherence to the principle of 'common goals, but differentiated responsibilities'. The aim to grant flexibility and sovereignty to weaker actors was, therefore, clear in the behavior of China at this COP. Therefore, empowerment remains present in the leadership style of China

Collective leadership

China expressed its desire for the US to rejoin the Paris agreement at this COP. They state that they aim to share a leadership role with them (Xinhua, 2017). This demonstrates that collective leadership remains present in China's leadership style

5.3. *COP 24*

The 24th Conference Of the Parties was held in Katowice, Poland. The deadline for finalizing the implementation rulebook of the Paris agreement was set at the end of this COP. Therefore, this was a crucial negotiation where agreements on rules, requirements, reporting, and transparency were necessary to be made.

Structural leadership

China's support for developing countries continued. The country pledged to donate renewable energy facilities and climate change surveillance instruments to these countries. Additionally, China has proposed to share best practices with developing countries to intensify cooperation (Jing et al., 2018). This demonstrates that China is providing positive incentives and is, therefore, exercising structural leadership.

Instrumental leadership

At these negotiations, the pressure was on the key actors to facilitate agreements on the rulebook that would accompany the implementation of the Paris agreement. China expressed similar aims at this COP as they united the demands of the developing countries and advocated for flexibility in standards (Stefanini, 2018). However, in contrast to COP 23, China opened up to compromise and was willing to make concessions. China proposed a package agreement that contained a commitment of developing countries to adhere to common standards. However, the proposal also contained clauses that would leave room for developing countries to deviate from time requirements and methods that were set to be used for implementation and reporting. In the end, a slightly altered version of this proposal was accepted by both groups of countries (Hartzell, 2019; McGrath, 2018; Stefanini, 2018). Therefore, China was instrumental in brokering a deal between the different groups of countries.

Ideational leadership

China's rhetoric remained similar to what they pushed in the previous conferences. They urged the developed countries to take their fair share of the responsibility by committing to their pledges. At this COP, China also defended their own position by stating that "China is still a developing country and

shouldn't be considered one of the developed countries that have the obligation to offer more financial support to other developing countries in tackling climate change" (Liqiang, 2018, p. n.a.). This demonstrates a clear division between China and the developed countries. This division was not as strongly represented in the package agreement that China proposed, however, they maintained their advocacy for flexibility. Therefore, China is pushing the same narrative and promoting proposals that largely fit this rhetoric. Thus, China is exercising ideational leadership.

Directional leadership

Although China maintained its support for developing countries at this COP, its status as a role model diminished. The primary reason for this is that China's output of greenhouse gasses increased in 2017. China's emissions increased for the first time since 2014 as their economy was stagnating (Zhang, 2018). However, this happened in the same year when China sold more than one million electric cars, more than half of the world's total sales. They also announced that they reached their climate targets for 2020 in 2017 (Liqiang, 2018; Jing et al., 2018). These achievements demonstrate the positive initiatives China takes to lead by example. But, the emission output trend is a significant indicator for whether a country is able to lead directionally. Therefore, because China reversed its downward trend of emission output, it exercised a lack of directional leadership.

Commitment to the common purpose

China supported the developing countries at this COP and facilitated collective action by opening themselves up to compromise. As a result, they contributed significantly to brokering a deal between the two key groups that will help to achieve the common purpose. Therefore, commitment to the common purpose by China was significantly present at this COP.

Win-win outcomes

China proposed a package agreement at this COP, that was accepted by all parties after slight alterations were made to it (Hartzell, 2019). This demonstrates that China has facilitated win-win outcomes and is not primarily protecting its own interest. Therefore, win-win outcomes are present in the behavior of China.

Empowerment

As China advocated strongly for flexibility in their package agreement proposal at this COP, their aim to empower remained visible. In the end, the agreement did not completely reflect the principle of 'common goals, but differentiated responsibilities', but the inclusion of flexibility clauses can be regarded as a victory for China and the developing countries. Therefore, empowerment is present in China's leadership style.

Collective leadership

China and France, jointly, renewed their commitment to the Paris agreement at the G20 conference in 2018 (Jing et al., 2018). This demonstrates China's aim for collective leadership. Therefore, collective leadership remains present in China's leadership style.

5.4. *COP 25*

The final COP that is examined in this research was held in Madrid and presided over by Chile. At this conference, details for the implementation scheme of the Paris agreement were negotiated. But, there was also an outspoken focus on laying out future ambitions (Timperley, 2019).

Structural leadership

China did not promote any new projects or programs at this COP, however, the UN reported that China had become the key beneficiary of the UN environmental program (UNEP) in 2019. The United Nations also reported that they engaged in a partnership with China to develop programs that would support poor countries in Africa in adapting to and mitigating the effects of climate change. This partnership led to the creation of the International Green Development Coalition, which aims to stimulate countries to start or continue their low-carbon transition. The BRI is a significant part of this initiative (Kaneti, 2020). This news demonstrates that China is providing positive benefits and creating incentives. Therefore, China has exercised structural leadership.

Instrumental leadership

The key discussions at COP 25 were centered around future ambitions. A major proposal was introduced, by a group of developed countries, for the signatories of the Paris agreement to submit new plans and commit to more ambitious targets. These actors argued that the pressure is rising and that more ambitious action is necessary (McGrath, 2019). China, together with like-minded emerging economies, fiercely opposed this proposal. This group of actors argued that the development of new targets should not be mandatory or imposed upon weaker actors. They argue that if a country desires to set more ambitious aims, that they should do so on their own initiative. New plans should be country-driven and nationally determined (Timperley, 2019). The fierce response by this group of countries was driven by their anger with the developed countries for not fulfilling their pledges on financing and pre-2020 goals (Allan et al., 2019). Therefore, the proposal was blocked and the negotiations were significantly hampered. The developed countries were displeased and blamed China and the other emerging economies for this disruption (McGrath, 2019). However, not only the developed countries were angered by China's action, but also the group of developing countries. This group argued that China was right about demanding that new plans should be country-driven and nationally determined. However, they requested China to not make these demands a condition on which new proposals would hinge (Timperley, 2019). Because of this sentiment, China did not manage to include this group of

countries in their coalition that was formed to oppose this proposal. Furthermore, China also abandoned negotiations on technical reporting requirements and stayed on the sidelines for other discussions. Because of this, many sessions were postponed to the next COP (Evans and Gabbatiss, 2019; Dagnet et al., 2019). This obstructive behavior by China demonstrates that they exercised a lack of instrumental leadership. They actively blocked and disrupted the negotiations. Gupta (2019, p. n.a.), commented that China did no longer "feel the need to take leadership".

Ideational leadership

Although China lacked instrumental leadership at this COP, they pushed the same narrative. They urged the developed countries to take responsibility and commit to their pre-2020 goals and financing. China and the like-minded countries also promoted a new proposal that would make these commitments part of a formal deal to introduce an obligation on countries to develop more ambitious aims (Allan et al., 2019). This proposal was quickly rejected. China was angered and because of this they took aim at one of the key actors, the EU, by sending a clear message: "we need concrete actions instead of empty slogans" (Gupta, 2019, p. n.a.). This demonstrates that China pushes a narrative to change the perception of this actor. The rhetoric and the proposal demonstrate ideational leadership by China.

Directional leadership

China's status as a role model was also further damaged at this COP. This is because one of the domestic initiatives that China had taken was negatively highlighted. China vowed to create the largest carbon trading market in the world (Kaneti, 2020). This initiative was aimed at demonstrating the value of a large and efficient carbon market. However, at the negotiations, rules on carbon trading markets were a point of discussion. The main issue was whether emission units, which were obtained from previous reductions of emissions to meet the Kyoto targets, could be traded and counted as emission units to meet the targets of the Paris agreement (Timperley, 2019). Almost every actor at COP 25 was against this proposal as this would allow countries to 'double count' emission units. However, China, and like-minded emerging economies, were in favor of this proposal. The reason for this was that China holds a majority of the Kyoto credits. This stance by China was met with disregard as it demonstrated that China is willing to take counterproductive steps to benefit itself. (Evans and Gabbatiss, 2019). Thus, although China remains the largest investor in renewable energies in 2019 and took a globally leading position in green finance, they are not a directional leader (Kaneti, 2020).

Attraction

China's contributions to and partnership with the UN, described in the first paragraph of this section, demonstrate that China aims to show its commitment to multilateral institutions. It is likely that they aim to attract the consent of other countries through this mechanism. Therefore, attraction was present in the behavior of China at this COP.

Commitment to the common purpose

Not only did China not facilitate collective action at this COP, but they also disrupted it. China blocked the negotiations and hampered plans that would contribute to the achievement of the common purpose. They also demonstrated that they are not willing to contribute to durable agreements by advocating for 'double counting' emission units. These actions revealed that China's purpose is to protect its own interests. Therefore, there was a lack of commitment to the common purpose.

Win-win outcomes

Because the proposal by China to make the commitments by developed countries part of the deal on more ambitious plans were not accepted by either the developed countries or the developing countries, they demonstrated that they are primarily occupied with protecting their own interests. China did not facilitate win-win outcomes and blocked the negotiations. Therefore, this element is not present in the behavior of China at this COP.

Empowerment

China's rhetoric at this conference demonstrated that, although they obstruct negotiations, they aim to empower weaker actors. For instance, China opposed the proposal on future ambitions because of their belief that plans should be country-driven and nationally determined. These two elements demonstrate China's aim to grant weaker actors flexibility and sovereignty. Therefore, empowerment is present in the style of China's leadership.

5.5.   *Synthesis of Results (COP 22-25)*

In this section, the results are synthesized to observe how consistently China displayed the previously discussed leadership elements throughout the four COP's. This will allow this research to answer the research questions. Furthermore, in this section, it will be discussed to what extent consent was attracted by China in this period. This will help this research to find out whether China can be regarded as a legitimate leader. An overview of the results for every element in the four COP's can be found below in Table 2. The elements will be discussed one by one after this.

Table 2

Overview Results COP 22-25

Elements	COP 22	COP 23	COP 24	COP 25
Structural leadership	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Instrumental leadership	Yes	No	Yes	No
Ideational leadership	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Directional leadership	Yes	Yes	No	No
Attraction	No	No	No	Yes
Commitment to the common purpose	Yes	No	Yes	No
Win-win outcomes	Yes	No	Yes	No
Empowerment	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Collective leadership	Yes	Yes	Yes	No

Structural leadership

The exercise of structural leadership was consistently present throughout the four COP's. China demonstrated support for developing countries by providing positive incentives. They pledged three billion dollars to the South-South fund and developed significant programs, projects, and training. Therefore, China can be considered a structural leader in the climate change regime.

Instrumental leadership

Instrumental leadership was not consistently demonstrated by China. The extent to which China was instrumental in brokering deals and building coalitions fluctuated throughout the four COP's. At COP 22 and 24, China united the demands of the group of developing countries to broker significant deals. In contrast, at COP 23 and 25, China was actively blocking and disrupting the negotiations. Therefore, China is not a reliable instrumental leader in the climate change regime.

Ideational leadership

China consistently exercised ideational leadership in the climate change regime. China pushed the same narrative throughout the four COP's. They urged developed countries to honor their pledges and fulfill their pre-2020 goals. On some occasions, China tried to make these pledges part of the central issues at the conferences. This was often rejected, however, their aim to alter the perception and promote new solutions was clear throughout. Therefore, China is an ideational leader.

Directional leadership

The level of directional leadership decreased throughout the four COP's. China has taken many positive initiatives to lead by example and to demonstrate how a developing country can transition to a low-carbon economy. Because of this, they have been a role model for developing countries. However, as

their emission output increased in 2017 and 2018, their role as directional leader diminished. Therefore, China is not a consistent directional leader in the climate change regime.

Attraction

China's aim to attract others was not visible in the first three COP's. There was no indication that China is committed to multilateral institutions or offering market access. However, at COP 25, their strengthened partnership with the UN did demonstrate commitment. But, because their aim to attract was only visible in the analysis of COP 25, this research concludes that China does not lead through attraction.

Commitment to the common purpose

China's commitment to the common purpose fluctuated throughout the COP's. The country facilitated the interests of the climate change regime at COP 22 and 24 by pushing forward deals that contribute to achieving the common purpose. However, at COP 25, China primarily took action to protect their own interests or those of like-minded countries. Because of this, China's behavior did not consistently demonstrate a commitment to the common purpose.

Win-win outcomes

Similarly, win-win outcomes were not always present in China's behavior. China has promoted proposals at COP 22 and 24 that were accepted by both parties and, therefore, could be considered as win-win outcomes. However, on other occasions, China's proposals were staunchly rejected. Therefore, these proposals cannot be regarded as win-win. This element is not a consistent part of China's leadership behavior.

Empowerment

China's leadership style was consistently characterized by empowerment. The country has strongly advocated for flexibility and sovereignty throughout all four COP's. China has, time after time, emphasized the importance of country-driven methods and plans to implement the nationally determined contributions. Therefore, they aimed to grant weaker actors flexibility in how they would report and implement the Paris agreement targets. This demonstrated that China is a leader driven by empowerment.

Collective leadership

Collective leadership was also consistently present in China's leadership style. At COP 25, there was no sign of an aim for collective leadership. However, in every COP before this, China's aim for collective leadership was apparent through, for example, joint press conferences.

Consent

To complete the analysis, the extent to which consent has been acquired should be assessed. This will reveal to this research whether China can be regarded as a legitimate leader. In the first year after the conclusion of the Paris agreement, China was viewed as a potentially reliable leader by a majority of the participants at the COP (Duggan and Hodzi, 2016; Gao, 2018). The participants viewed China as an instrumental part of the collective leadership equilibrium with the EU and the US. This perception of China remained throughout the four negotiations, that are analyzed, as China is seen as a pivotal player. However, China is no longer regarded as being a (potential) unilateral global leader in the climate change regime by developed countries(Hurri, 2020). Other participants in the COP do view China as a structural leader for the developing countries. Therefore, it is acknowledged that China carries a lot of influence in the negotiations. Thus, China is not a legitimate leader as their leadership (potential) is not recognized and they have not attracted the consent of the developed countries. But, they remain a crucial actor in the leadership equilibrium because of their role in the group of developing countries.

6. *Discussion*

In this chapter, the results from the analysis are discussed and the research question is answered. After this, the theoretical and practical implications of the results are examined. Finally, the limitations of this research are reflected upon. First, the results are discussed and interpreted.

6.1. *Interpretations*

The results of this research indicate the roles which China has and has not assumed in climate change negotiations since the Paris agreement. A role that China has not fulfilled is that of a consistently legitimate leader in the climate change regime. The reason for this is that China was not able to acquire consent from the group of developed countries by exercising their asymmetric influence. This research considers it likely that the lack of instrumental leadership and commitment to the common purpose by China have affected the extent to which they have attracted consent. Moreover, China's proposals have also not always resulted in win-win outcomes. Therefore, this research concludes that China, in the four years after the Paris agreement, did not fulfill its potential to be a global (unilateral) leader in the climate change regime. However, although China has not assumed this role of global leader, they have assumed another leadership role throughout the conferences that were analyzed.

The role that China has assumed is that of a leader in the group of developing countries. China has exercised leadership that was predominantly directed towards this group of countries. The following five examples demonstrate the leadership roles that China has assumed in this group. First of all, China has consistently provided positive benefits to developing countries. This demonstrates that China aims to incentivize these countries to change their preferences. Secondly, China has consistently displayed ideational leadership. They pushed a narrative and promoted solutions that advocated for the demands of the developing countries and attacked the failures of the developed countries. Third, China is regarded as a role model by other developing countries in how to transition to a low-carbon economy. These weaker actors respect the initiatives that China takes and aims to learn from them. Fourth, China has been instrumental in the group of developing countries by uniting their demands and strengthening their bargaining power. China has defended the interest of these countries and brokered deals that benefited these actors. Even at COP 23, where, in the eyes of the developed countries, China blocked the negotiations, they were satisfied with the outcome as the preferences from the developing countries were included in the final text. Finally, China has defended the interests of the developing countries by strongly advocating for flexibility and sovereignty. China aims to support weaker actors by granting them flexibility in their responsibilities to evaluate the progress towards the Paris targets. These are five leadership roles that China has assumed and they are all connected by China's aim to support developing countries. Therefore, China has taken a definitive leadership position in the group of developing countries.

The purpose of this leadership role that China has assumed is to realize win-win outcomes. This is what China has stated in public speeches. Moreover, they have also confirmed that their purpose is to contribute to this international regime and act as a country of responsibility by filling the (financing) gap left by other actors. However, at COP 23 and 25, China did not realize win-win outcomes because their proposals were not accepted by the other parties. They have also obstructed and blocked negotiations. Therefore, a gap remains between China's aims and actions. However, this research also considers it likely that China has aimed to take a leadership role in this group of countries to spread their influence. As China exercises structural and ideational leadership in this group, they are able to promote a positive China story. This allows China to present a positive image of itself and gain influence to fend off criticism. Therefore, China may have dualistic aims in terms of its leadership.

Finally, the results have also demonstrated how the leadership role that China has assumed has developed over time. At the Paris negotiations, China acted as a constructive co-operator and facilitated agreements between the developing and developed countries. Because of this, they were regarded as a potential global climate leader. China continued to facilitate agreements at COP 22, however, at COP 23, the country blocked the negotiations to defend the interests of weaker actors. This shocked many participants as they had hoped that China and the group of developing countries had moved beyond the bifurcation. However, at the following negotiations, China, surprisingly, opened itself up to compromise and common standards. This demonstrated that China is able to assume the facilitator role. At COP 25, however, China reversed this trend and demonstrated that they are primarily occupied with protecting their own interests. They obstructed the negotiations significantly and took a hardline stance. This shows that the role of China in the climate change regime fluctuates significantly. However, what has remained steady is their leadership in the group of developing countries. Therefore, China remains a pivotal and decisive actor in the climate change regime.

6.2. *Implications*

These previously described findings have multiple implications on the expectations that this research has set and on the results from previous research. First of all, this research expected that the four different modes of leadership, from the conventional leadership model, would all be exercised, in combination, to acquire consent and change the preferences of others. The findings have confirmed that China has exercised all the different modes of leadership to influence others. China has not aimed to coerce actors, and, has only socialized the preferences of others through structural, instrumental, ideational, and directional leadership. Secondly, the results from the examination of the conventional leadership model have significant implications for the research by Eckersley (2020). The reason for this is that results of the analysis of instrumental leadership, commitment to the common purpose, and the attraction of consent significantly overlap. This research considers it likely that the extent to which instrumental leadership is exercised determines the extent to which an actor is committed to the common purpose and the extent to which they attracted consent. This was visible in the results as the commitment

to the common purpose fluctuated throughout the COP's and as leadership recognition declined in this time period. Therefore, this research argues that these latter two elements are not crucial to the conceptualization of leadership. As a result, the definition of leadership by Eckersley (2020) can be called into question because these two elements are emphasized in their definition. Lastly, the results from the examination of the conventional leadership model also demonstrated the value of this model. The 'leadership modes' elements contributed significantly to answering the research question. Therefore, this framework, originally devised by Young (1991), should remain a starting point for every analysis of leadership in international regimes. Furthermore, the complete model was, in complement to the facilitative leadership model, successfully applied to this case. As a result, the scope of this model can be broadened to examine cases of Chinese leadership.

The results of this research have also indicated findings that have implications for the facilitative leadership model. This research expected that the four elements from the facilitative model, by Chen et al. (2018), would fit adequately with this case of leadership. However, the results have demonstrated that not all the elements were consistently present in the behavior of China. In contrast, only two elements, 'empowerment' and 'collective leadership', were consistently displayed by China. These elements did significantly contribute to answering the research question. The examination of these elements demonstrated what China aims for and which role China wants to assume in the climate change regime. As a result, the robustness of these elements has increased. They are highly congruent with the data, and, therefore their conceptual validity has been enhanced. The other two elements were only visible in the behavior of China on occasion. For instance, the 'attraction' element was only found in the behavior of China at COP 25. This demonstrates that either this characteristic of China's leadership is misplaced or that the description of the element is unclear. This research argues that the description of this element was too broad and vague to be accurately measured. Therefore, possible refinement of this element should be explored. This also demonstrates that the fit of this model with a case of Chinese leadership is not yet adequate.

Finally, some of the findings are in line with results from previous research. For instance, this research demonstrated that China's leadership style is consistently characterized by its aim for collective leadership. The result is in line with the findings of Wæver (2017), Eckersley (2020), and others, who found that China primarily desires to facilitate collective leadership. The findings of this research also demonstrated that China exercises dualistic leadership. China works constructively inside the established institutions, but, also aims to influence other countries through the BRI and other projects. This is in line with the results from Cooper and Zhang's (2018) research.

6.3.   *Limitations*

This research has presented multiple distinctive findings. However, the extent to which these findings are reliable and accurate is restricted by limitations. The largest limitation that this research has faced is that the primary data sources stem partly from Chinese media sources. These sources are used as they

provided this research with a detailed description of the behavior and actions of China. However, most of these sources are directly affiliated with the Chinese state. Therefore, they do not report the news independently or impartially. The consequence of this is that the reliability and accuracy of the data in these news reports are uncertain. This uncertainty is enhanced by the fact that China has admitted to publishing erroneous emissions data in the past (Hartzell, 2019). Because of this, the data from these sources cannot be unscrupulously trusted. Therefore, this research has used independent sources, such as Carbon Brief and the Earth Negotiations Bulletin, to enhance the reliability of the sources. When the sources reported contrasting stories, a value judgment between them was not made by this research. Instead, this research has aimed to report the behavior and actions of China as transparently as possible.

Furthermore, it is beyond the scope of this research to say anything about what China's leadership will look like in the future. This research has aimed to demonstrate which role(s) China has assumed. However, it is clear from the results that this role also fluctuates throughout the COP's. Therefore, these findings should not be read as predictions or observations from what China's role in the future of the climate change regime will be. Finally, the results from this research do not comprehensively demonstrate what has driven China's behavior in the climate change regime. The purpose of China's leadership has been examined, however, purely to observe whether China can be regarded as a legitimate leader. The analysis by this research on what has driven China to demonstrate this behavior has only been based upon previous research and has not been tested. Therefore, one should not derive any conclusions from this research about the drivers of China's actions in the climate change regime.

7. *Conclusion*

This research has aimed to examine which leadership role(s) China has assumed in multilateral climate change negotiations since the Paris agreement. At the negotiations in Paris, China acted as a constructive co-operator and facilitated important deals. They were regarded as a potential global leader in climate change. To understand what China's leadership role(s) have been after the successful conclusion of the Paris negotiations, this research has examined the behavior and actions of China in the subsequent conferences. Two leadership models were used to provide this research with a theoretical basis for the empirical analysis. The results of this analysis have, first, demonstrated that China does not assume the role of a consistently legitimate and effective leader in the climate change regime. The reason for this is that they have not attracted the consent of the developed countries. This is a result of their lack of instrumental leadership and commitment to the common purpose. However, the results have also demonstrated that China has assumed a leadership role in the group of developing countries. China has exercised consistent structural and ideational leadership to acquire the consent of this group of countries. These weaker actors also view China as a role model in how to go through a low-carbon transition. Furthermore, China has aimed to unite the demands in this group of countries and strengthen their bargaining power. Therefore, China defends the interests of these countries and advocates for flexibility and sovereignty. This has demonstrated China's aim to empower weaker actors. To summarize, China has assumed a leadership role in the group of developing countries to defend the interests of weaker actors. However, this research also considers it likely that China has assumed this position to gain influence over these countries. China aims to promote a positive image of itself and gain control over other actors to fend off criticism about their assertive foreign policy actions.

These findings provide this research with a basis for recommendations for further research. As this research has found that China occupied a leadership role in the group of developing countries, future research ought to examine this position more closely. A comprehensive study should be carried out, focused on the group of developing countries, to gain a more complete understanding of what exact role they assume and what the consequence of this is. Furthermore, what drives these actions by China should be researched more extensively. This research has only scratched the surface and a more comprehensive analysis, using international relations theories, could demonstrate the factors that push China's behavior in international regimes. Additionally, future research should also use the two leadership models that are used in this research to examine the leadership role(s) of China in other international regimes. This would help to understand China's leadership role in global governance and would demonstrate the consistency of the models. Finally, an analysis of China's leadership role vis-à-vis the EU and the US should be executed to understand the collective leadership dynamics in the climate change regime more accurately.

This research has, however, already filled a significant gap in the literature by examining China's behavior and actions in the COP's after the Paris agreement through the lens of two models.

The research has contributed to the academic literature by increasing the robustness of the conventional leadership model and by testing the new facilitative leadership model. Through the lens of these models, it was found that China remains a decisive actor in climate change negotiations and that they hold significant influence in the group of developing countries. This research has, therefore, helped to understand how China exercises leadership and what its aims are. Diplomats and negotiators can use this information to understand China's position and to build stronger relations where possible. This would help all the participants in the UNFCCC framework to reach durable and universal agreements that would lead to reducing greenhouse gas emissions to safe levels.

8. *Bibliography*

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9. *Appendix A*

Table 3 | *COP 22*

Categories	Components	Yes	No
Modes of leadership			
	Structural leadership	• 3$ billion pledge to South-South fund; additional aid to developing countries; 10,100,1000 program (China Daily, 2016)	
	Instrumental leadership	• Built consensus in group of developing countries to broker deals on climate financing and capacity (Sommerholt, 2017)	
	Idea-based leadership	• Pushed a narrative that called for the developed countries to honor their pledges and aim for solutions that match this narrative (China Daily, 2016; Xinhua, 2016)	
	Directional leadership	• One of the first to ratify the Paris agreement; large investments in renewable energies; described as role model for other developing countries (Xinhua, 2016; Sommerholt, 2017)	
	Leadership through 'attraction'		• No evidence of attracting other countries through offering access to market or by demonstrating commitment to multilateralism
Objectives			
	Commitment to the common purpose	• Brokering deals; supporting developing countries; quickly ratifying the Paris agreement; stating their aim to commit to the international regime and the purpose (Xinhua, 2016)	

	Win-win outcomes	• Proposed deals that were accepted by both parties; aim for win-win outcomes clearly in China's rhetoric (Xinhua, 2016)	
Style			
	Empowerment	• Rhetoric reflects aim for flexibility and sovereignty; commitment to principle of 'common goals, but differentiated responsibilities'; emphasizing country-driven plans and empowerment in public statements (Schulz et al., 2016; Sommerholt, 2017)	
	Collective leadership	• Joint press conference with US; reportedly strong partnership with EU (Nikkei, 2016; Duggan and Hodzi, 2016)	

Table 4 | *COP 23*

Categories	Components	Yes	No
Modes of leadership			
	Structural leadership	• Reaffirmed financial pledges to developing countries (Timperley, 2017)	
	Instrumental leadership		• China contributed to not obtaining a 'real' agreement; described as a blocker of the negotiations; took hardline stance to defend interests of developing countries (Timperley, 2017; China Daily, 2017; Malik, 2017)
	Idea-based leadership	• Urging developed countries to honor pledges again (distinct narrative); formed a proposal to include pledges into a package agreement (Malik, 2017)	
	Directional leadership	• Expected to exceed emission targets; described as a role model; biggest market for EV and largest producer, consumer, and investor of renewable energy (People's daily online, 2017; IEA, 2017; China Daily, 2017)	
	Leadership through 'attraction'		• No evidence of attracting other countries through offering access to market or by demonstrating commitment to multilateralism
Objectives			
	Commitment to the common purpose		• Primarily responsible for failure to reach real agreement; supported developing countries, but did not facilitate progress towards common purpose
	Win-win outcomes		• No evidence of an aim for win-win outcomes;

			group of developed countries did not find China's proposals acceptable
Style			
	Empowerment	• China defends interests of developing countries; supports them through fighting for flexibility and sovereignty; commits to principle (China Daily, 2017)	
	Collective leadership	• China expressed desire for US to rejoin Paris agreement and to share a leadership role (Xinhua, 2017)	

Table 5 | *COP 24*

Categories	Components	Yes	No
Modes of leadership			
	Structural leadership	• Pledged to donate renewable energy facilities and other instruments; proposed to share best practices (Jing et al., 2018)	
	Instrumental leadership	• Brokered deal to finalize agreement on requirements; built consensus in group of developing countries (Hartzell, 2019; McGrath, 2018)	
	Idea-based leadership	• Urged developed countries to take responsibility; proposal of package agreement that reflects this narrative on responsibility (Liqiang, 2018; Hartzell, 2019)	
	Directional leadership		• Reached emission targets early; large EV market; emission output increased for the first time in 3 years (decisive factor) (Zhang, 2018; Liqiang, 2018; Jing et al., 2018)
	Leadership through 'attraction'		• No evidence of attracting other countries through offering access to market or by demonstrating commitment to multilateralism
Objectives			
	Commitment to the common purpose	• Brokered important deal to facilitate progress to achieve the common purpose; supported developing countries	
	Win-win outcomes	• Proposal by China was positively received by both group; both groups compromised to finalize win-win outcome (Hartzell, 2019)	

Style			
	Empowerment	• China advocated for flexibility and sovereignty; package agreement was aimed to empower weaker actors	
	Collective leadership	• Joint press conference with France to renew commitment to Paris agreement (Jing et al., 2018)	

Table 6 | *COP 25*

Categories	Components	Yes	No
Modes of leadership			
	Structural leadership	• Partnership with UN to provide positive incentives to developing countries; financial commitment to UN (Kaneti, 2020)	
	Instrumental leadership		• Blocked proposals for more ambitious plans; passive in negotiations or abandoned them; built consensus with like-minded countries to form a block; stalled sessions (McGrath, 2019; Timperley, 2019; Evans and Gabbatiss, 2019)
	Idea-based leadership	• Pushed for developed countries to honor their pledges; attacked developed countries with rhetoric; China proposed (again) to make finance and pre-2020 goals part of an package agreement (Gupta, 2019; Allan et al., 2019)	
	Directional leadership		• Advocated for double counting emission units; largest investor in renewable energies; emission output rose again (Timperley, 2019; Evans and Gabbatiss, 2019; Kaneti, 2020)
	Leadership through 'attraction'	• Demonstrated commitment to the UN to attract other countries and secure allies (Kaneti, 2020)	
Objectives			
	Commitment to the common purpose		• Blocked and stalled negotiations; advocated for double counting of emissions; did not facilitate progress towards common purpose
	Win-win outcomes		• Proposals by China were not accepted by

			either party, only by like-minded emerging economies
Style			
	Empowerment	• Advocated for country-driven proposals and flexibility in new plans; proposals reflected the principle of 'common goals, but differentiated responsibilities' (Timperley, 2019)	
	Collective leadership		• No evidence of aim for or exercise of collective leadership