China's Evolving Image in International Climate Negotiation

From Copenhagen to Paris

Gao Xiaosheng

Abstract: As the world's largest greenhouse gas emitter, China has been a key party in global climate negotiation. External perceptions of China's role in climate negotiation are significant for China's domestic policy-making process and international climate efforts. Based on the case studies of two most historic climate talks, the Copenhagen and Paris climate conferences, this article attempts to examine the evolution of external perceptions on China's role in international climate negotiation by three criteria: acceptability, credibility and constructiveness. The study shows that external perceptions of China's role in international climate talks have changed considerably since 2009. At the Copenhagen conference, China was regarded as a "dead weight" or even a "wrecker," though it managed to attain most of its negotiating goals. At the Paris conference, however,

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China was widely recognized as a global climate leader whose endeavor was indispensable for the conclusion of the *Paris Agreement*.

Keywords: China; climate change; *United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change* (UNFCCC); Copenhagen; *Paris Agreement*.

Climate change is regarded as one of the greatest challenges for humanity today. As declared in a document by the United Nations, to tackle the challenge, we need to “stabilize greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere at a level that would prevent dangerous anthropogenic interference with the climate system”.¹ In this regard, international climate negotiation is largely about how the international community should share the responsibility of reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

As the world’s largest greenhouse gas emitter and second largest economy, China’s role in international climate talks has been the topic of much debate over the past decade. In 2009, China was widely criticized by Western politicians and media after the United Nations (UN) climate change conference at Copenhagen failed to reach a post-2012 climate deal. As British Climate Change Secretary Edward Miliband wrote in *The Guardians*, China was trying to “hijack the UN climate summit” and “hold the world to ransom” to prevent a deal from being reached.² Six years later, however, China was hailed by the world for its great contribution to the conclusion of the *Paris Agreement*; some even began to regard China as a global climate leader.³ How should China’s role in international climate negotiation be assessed? Is it a “wrecker,” “dead weight,” or a true leader? How has China’s image in global climate governance evolved with time? Numerous studies have discussed China’s performance at the Copenhagen

¹United Nations, *United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change* (New York: The United Nations, 1992), Article 2.

²John Vidal, “Ed Miliband: China Tried to Hijack Copenhagen Climate Deal,” *The Guardian*, December 20, 2009, <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2009/dec/20/ed-miliband-china-copenhagen-summit>.

³Isabel Hilton *et al.*, “Is China a Leader or Dead Weight on Climate Change?” *China-File*, December 9, 2015, <http://www.chinafile.com/conversation/china-leader-or-laggard-climate-change>.

and Paris climate talks respectively⁴ and examined its changing positions.⁵ Nonetheless, little research has been done on the perception gap between China and the outside world or, to be more exact, China's evolving image from the Copenhagen conference to the Paris conference.

Based on the case studies of two most historic climate talks, the Copenhagen and Paris climate conferences held in 2009 and 2015 respectively, this article aims to explore the evolution of external perceptions on China's role in international climate negotiation. The article first establishes an analytical framework concerning China's image with three main criteria, namely acceptability, credibility and constructiveness. It then compares China's roles at the Copenhagen and Paris conferences according to the three criteria. It concludes by examining the main reasons for the change of external perceptions on China's role in global climate governance.

Assessing External Perceptions on China's Role

External perceptions are not necessarily identical with the reality. In terms of China's role in international climate talks, Western observers used to regard China as a "dead weight" for its unwillingness to accept quantified

⁴For a detailed assessment of China's performance at the Copenhagen and Paris conferences respectively, see Bjorn Conrad, "China in Copenhagen: Reconciling the 'Beijing Climate Revolution' and the 'Copenhagen Climate Obstinacy,'" *China Quarterly*, Vol. 210 (June 2012), pp. 435–455; Susanne Dröge and Gudrun Wacker, *China's Approach to International Climate Policy* (German Institute for International and Security Affairs, September 2014), https://www.swp-berlin.org/fileadmin/contents/products/comments/2014C40_dge_wkr.pdf; Peter Christoff, "Cold Climate in Copenhagen: China and the United States at COP15," *Environmental Politics*, Vol. 19, No. 4 (July 2010), pp. 637–656; Zhang Zhongxiang, *China's Role in Climate Change Negotiations: Perspectives for COP21* (Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, November 2015), <http://www.fes.de/cgi-bin/gbv.cgi?id=12072&ty=pdf>; Isabel Hilton *et al.*, "Is China a Leader or Dead Weight on Climate Change?"; and Anthony H. F. Li, "Hopes of Limiting Global Warming? China and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change," *China Perspectives*, No. 1 (March 2016), pp. 48–54.

⁵Huang Yanzhong, "China's New Rhetoric at COP21," Council on Foreign Relations, December 3, 2015, <https://www.cfr.org/blog/yanzhong-huang-chinas-new-rhetoric-cop21>; and Joseph Curtin, "Climate Hero or Villain? An Analysis of China's Plans for Low Carbon Transition," Institute for International and European Affairs, July 2015, http://www.iieta.com/event/archive_view7eb3.html.

emission reduction commitments at the early stage of global climate negotiation, despite the fact that China had made efforts in this regard. A sound analytical framework is necessary for assessing external perceptions on China's role. Unfortunately, such a framework or viable standards for assessment have been largely missing in existing literature.⁶ Therefore, this article begins by setting up three main criteria based on role theory and leadership theory.

The first criterion is acceptability. In international negotiation, acceptability of one's negotiating position by other parties reflects the role it plays in the matter under negotiation, which is also the case in climate negotiation. The expanding literature on leadership shows that acceptability of one party's negotiating position (or, using a more theoretical definition, goal attainment) is a vital sign of leadership.⁷ In China's case, acceptability refers to the extent to which China's negotiating position is accepted and becomes part of the final resolution. To assess China's goal attainment, this article examines the two official position documents released respectively by the Chinese government before the Copenhagen and Paris conferences were held: if most of China's goals in the position documents were reached, then it may be said that China was widely regarded as a leader in global climate

⁶See also Yan Bo, "China's Role in the Transformation of the Global Climate Change Regime," *Asia Dialogue*, April 15, 2013, <http://theasiadialogue.com/2013/04/15/chinas-role-in-the-transformation-of-global-climate-change-regime/>; Karl Hallding, Han Guoyi, and Marie Olsson, *A Balancing Act: China's Role in Climate Change* (Stockholm: Commission on Sustainable Development, 2009); Rafael Leal-Arcas, "The Role of the European Union and China in a Global Climate Change Negotiations: A Critical Analysis," *Journal of European Integration History*, Vol. 18, No. 1 (2012), pp. 67–81; and Pan Jiahua and Wang Mou, "Climate Regime Building in a Changing World and China's Role in Global Climate Governance," *Chinese Journal of Urban and Environmental Studies*, Vol. 2, No. 1 (June 2014).

⁷For a detailed discussion on the leadership theory, see Arid Underdal, "Leadership Theory: Rediscovering the Arts of Management," in I. William Zartman, ed., *International Multilateral Negotiation: Approaches to the Management of Complexity* (San Francisco: Jossey Bass Publishers, 1994), pp. 178–197; Joyeeta Gupta and Michael Grubb, "Leadership: Theory and Methodology," in Joyeeta Gupta and Michael Grubb, eds., *Climate Change and European Leadership: A Sustainable Role for Europe?* (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2000), pp. 15–24; Tora Skodvin and Steinar Andresen, "Part One: Negotiating International Environmental Regimes: Leadership Revisited," *Global Environmental Politics*, Vol. 6, No. 3 (2006), pp. 13–27; and Stefan Schirm, "Leaders in Need of Followers: Emerging Powers in Global Governance," *European Journal of International Relations*, Vol. 16, No. 2 (2010), pp. 197–221.

negotiation; otherwise, it means that China's role was perceived as generally negative.

China and the outside world often have different views on China's role in climate negotiation.

Second, we need to examine credibility. Credibility basically means that others believe you will do what you say you will do, which is one of the most important elements for success in international negotiation. In climate negotiation, credibility of a party's climate commitments usually influences the next step(s) of other negotiating parties. For instance, the United States refused to make

commitments at the early stage of climate negotiation because it thought China would not make any concrete commitments. Given the fact that China has become the world's largest greenhouse gas emitter and second largest economy, the credibility of China's commitments in climate negotiation will not only influence other parties' negotiating positions and follow-up actions, but also shape their perceptions on China's role in global climate governance. If China's climate commitments are considered credible and followed up upon by other parties, then it can be regarded as a leader in climate negotiation.

Constructiveness should also be taken into consideration in assessing China's role. Undoubtedly, the selection of negotiating strategies plays a vital part to one's success in international negotiation. In climate negotiation, constructiveness means the extent to which others believe that a party has facilitated a strong climate agreement by suggesting new solutions or proposals, especially when the negotiation falls into a deadlock. Usually, external perceptions of China's constructiveness are based on whether China adopts a strong yet flexible negotiating strategy in order to push the negotiation forward.

According to the above criteria, the following sections will assess China's evolving image from the Copenhagen conference to the Paris conference, and further analyze why there exists a perception gap between China and the outside world. Three types of literature are used here. The first consists of official documents, which include statements, speeches and declarations from major negotiating parties — namely, the United States, European Union (EU), Japan and India — in climate negotiation. The second includes comments and analyses from scholars, leading environmental

non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and think tanks. The third are major newspaper articles covering the two climate conferences from the United Kingdom (*The Guardian*), the United States (*The New York Times*), Japan (*The Japan Times*) and India (*Times of India*).

A “Dead Weight” at the Copenhagen Conference?

The Copenhagen climate conference took place on December 7–19, 2009. It marked the culmination of a two-year negotiating process to enhance international climate efforts under the Bali Roadmap launched in December 2007. It was the largest summit in the process of combating climate change at the time. According to *Earth Negotiations Bulletin* published by the Institute for Sustainable Development, 115 world leaders attended the conference and more than 40,000 people representing governments, international organizations and the media applied for accreditation.⁸ Negotiations at Copenhagen ensued at three levels. The first was negotiation among senior officials under the *United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change* (UNFCCC) and the *Kyoto Protocol* during the first week. Then came the second level, the “high-segment” which involved ministers from all parties. The third was a summit among heads of state and government to make final decisions. In addition, the presiding Danish Prime Minister convened an informal summit during the last few days, trying to settle a deal that would become the main outcome of the conference — the *Copenhagen Accord*.

As declared in the official position document released by the National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC), China’s aim at Copenhagen was to enhance the fully effective and sustainable implementation of the UNFCCC and the *Kyoto Protocol*, focusing on making concrete arrangements for mitigation, adaptation, technology transfer and financial support.⁹ Accordingly, China had three specific goals: on mitigation, China

⁸International Institute for Sustainable Development, “Summary of the Copenhagen Climate Change Conference: 7–19 December 2009,” *Earth Negotiations Bulletin*, Vol. 12, No. 459 (December 2009), p. 1.

⁹National Development and Reform Commission, “Implementation of the Bali Roadmap: China’s Position on the Copenhagen Climate Change Conference,” May 20, 2009, http://en.ndrc.gov.cn/newsrelease/200905/t20090521_280382.html. Last accessed on 17 November 2016.

maintained that the Copenhagen conference should further lay out quantified emission reduction targets for developed countries under the *Kyoto Protocol's* second commitment period; the developed countries as a whole should reduce their 2020 gross greenhouse gas emission by at least 40 percent compared with the level in 1990. With regard to supporting developing countries against climate change, China proposed that the conference establish an appropriate mechanism to match Nationally Appropriate Mitigation Actions (NAMAs) with technological, financial and capacity-building support; most importantly, developed countries should provide new, additional, adequate and predictable financial resources. In terms of NAMAs by developing countries, China suggested that they should be supported and enabled by developed countries in a measurable, reportable, and verifiable way, for they are completely different in nature from international legal-binding commitments made by developed countries and should accord with developing countries' actual conditions.

China's position was largely endorsed by the *Copenhagen Accord*.

Eventually, China achieved most of its goals in Copenhagen. According to the *Copenhagen Accord* reached in 2009, developed countries committed to implementing, either individually or jointly, quantified emission targets for 2020, though the specific targets would be decided later as the *Copenhagen*

Accord's Appendix I to be submitted by January 31, 2010.¹⁰ Moreover, all parties agreed that additional, predictable and adequate support in technology, finance and capacity-building would be provided for developing countries to facilitate their mitigating efforts. To be more specific, developed countries committed collectively US\$30 billion from 2010 to 2012 and \$100 billion a year by 2020. It was also decided by the *Copenhagen Accord* to establish the Green Climate Fund (GCF) as an operating entity of the financial mechanism of the Accord and for accelerating technological development and transfer. In addition, the *Copenhagen Accord* endorsed China's negotiating position on NAMAs, agreeing that mitigation actions taken by developing countries would be subject to their domestic

¹⁰UNFCCC, "Report of the Conference of the Parties on Its Fifteenth session, Held in Copenhagen from 7 to 19 December 2009 (Addendum), Part Two: Action Taken by the Conference of the Parties at Its Fifteenth Session," FCCC/CP/2009/11/Add.1, 30 March 2010.

measurement, reporting and verification; developed countries accepted the provisions for international consultation and analysis on the precondition that national sovereignty is respected. In this sense, some scholars claimed that the contents of the final agreement at Copenhagen were mainly determined by the United States, China and other BASIC countries (a loose block among the four major developing countries including Brazil, South Africa, India and China).¹¹

Like other developing countries, China has had no obligation to commit to climate targets. Yet Chinese President Hu Jintao declared China's climate commitments at the opening session of the UN climate summit in September 2009, manifesting China's strong resolution in shouldering responsibilities in global climate governance.¹² Indeed, China had finalized its climate commitments to the Copenhagen conference two weeks before it was held, including cutting its carbon dioxide (CO₂) emission per unit of GDP by 40 to 45 percent by 2020 compared with the 2005 level, increasing the share of non-fossil fuels in its primary energy consumption to around 15 percent by 2020, as well as enhancing its forest coverage by 40 million hectares and forest stock volume by 1.3 billion cubic meters by 2020.¹³

China's declaration of mid-term 2020 climate commitments aroused heated discussion in the international community. At the official level, all major negotiating parties welcomed China's decision and commitments, though the responses to China's climate targets were complex and mixed. For example, the United States was divided on China's 2020 carbon intensity target. President Obama lauded China's commitments as "ambitious"

¹¹Joseph Curtin, *The Copenhagen Conference: How Should the EU Respond?* (Dublin: Institute of International and European Affairs, January 2010); Louise van Schaik and Simon Schunz, "Explaining EU Activism and Impact in Global Climate Politics: Is the Union a Norm- or Interest-Driven Actor?," *Journal of Common Market Studies*, Vol. 50, No. 1 (2012), pp. 169–186.

¹²"Join Hands to Address Climate Challenge," Statement by Hu Jintao at the Opening Plenary Session of the United Nations Summit on Climate Change, New York, September 22, 2009, http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/topics_665678/hujintaoG20fenghui_665788/t606275.shtml. Last accessed on 12 December 2016.

¹³"Guowuyuan changwuhuiyi yanjiujueding woguo kongzhi wenshiqiti paifangbiaozhun [Meeting of the Standing Committee of the State Council Decides China's Greenhouse Gas Emission Reduction Targets]," Central Government of the People's Republic of China, November 26, 2009, http://www.gov.cn/ldhd/2009-11/26/content_1474016.htm.

and "impressive" when meeting with Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao on the final day of the Copenhagen conference.¹⁴ But some top U.S. officials regarded those targets as "disappointing" and questioned in private the reliability of China's reporting methods, suggesting that international monitoring would be necessary.¹⁵ The EU welcomed and appreciated the decision by China to set quantified national targets to limit the carbon intensity of its economy, as well as other numerical targets and policy measures to address climate change.¹⁶ As Serge Abou, the EU ambassador to China, said openly, China's emission reduction efforts and targets set a good example for the international community.¹⁷ Nevertheless, the EU in general complained that China's targets were not concrete and strong enough.¹⁸ Similarly, Japan was not satisfied with China's targets and demanded that "all [major] emitting nations, including the United States, China and other emerging economies, set out ambitious emissions reduction targets and actions, and commit themselves internationally."¹⁹ By contrast, Russia and India spoke highly of China's commitments. For instance, Alexei Kokorin, a Russian negotiator during the talks on the *Kyoto Protocol*, lauded China's announcement to reduce the carbon emissions per

¹⁴"Wenjiabao zongli huijian meiguozongtong aobama [Premier Wen Jiabao Meets with U.S. President Barack Obama]," Xinhua News, December 19, 2009.

¹⁵John M. Broder and James Kanter, "China and U.S. Hit Strident Impasse at Climate Talks," *The New York Times*, December 14, 2009; and Peter Christoff, "Cold Climate in Copenhagen: China and the United States at COP15," *Environmental Politics*, Vol. 19, No. 4 (July 2010), p. 644.

¹⁶Council of the European Union, "Joint Statement of the 12th EU-China Summit, Nanjing, China, 30 November 2009," November 30, 2009, <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms.Data/docs/pressdata/en/er/111567.pdf>; and European Commission, "Copenhagen Conference Must Produce Global, Ambitious and Comprehensive Agreement to Avert Dangerous Climate Change," December 2, 2009, <https://www.europeanlawmonitor.org/latest-eu-news/copenhagen-conference-must-produce-global-ambitious-and-comprehensive-agreement-to-avert-dangerous-climate-change.html>.

¹⁷Niu Ruifei and Sun Guangyong, "Zhongguo gei guojishehui shulile haobangyang [China Sets a Good Example for International Community]," *People's Daily*, December 7, 2009.

¹⁸Third World Network, *Copenhagen News Updates and Climate Briefings* (Penang: Third World Network, 2010), p. 34.

¹⁹Japanese Foreign Minister Katsuya Okada's Remarks at the Second TICAD Ministerial Follow-up Meeting for the Session on "Addressing Climate Change Issues," Arusha, Tanzania, May 3, 2010.

unit of GDP by 40 to 45 percent by 2020 from the 2005 level;²⁰ Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh also said in a speech that "India, China and many other developing countries have all responded with significant voluntary goals and specific plans on emission intensity reduction."²¹

Within academia, comments and analysis from scholars on China's climate commitments were cautiously optimistic. Martin Khor, Executive Director of the South Center based in Geneva, commented that China's target was an ambitious one, committing even more than what developed countries had achieved in the preceding years.²² Collaborative research conducted by Australian and U.S. scholars also indicated that China's intensity target would result in substantial intensity reductions relative to the baseline (18 percent), on par with the 20 percent intensity reductions of developed countries, which meant that China had made ambitious climate commitments nearly comparable to those made by developed countries.²³ However, other scholars from major developed countries, especially the United States, criticized China's climate commitments at Copenhagen. For example, Michael A. Levi of the Council on Foreign Relations (CFR) maintained that China's climate target was disappointing, claiming that "China needed to raise its level of ambition because the U.S. Department of Energy estimated that existing Chinese policies would already cut carbon intensity by 45 to 46 percent."²⁴ Antony Froggatt, a senior fellow at the Chatham House in the United Kingdom (UK) considered the announcement as a welcome signal of China's continuing commitment, while

²⁰"Russian Climate Expert Praises China's Emissions Cut Goal," *China Daily*, December 3, 2009.

²¹Press Information Bureau, "PM's Address at the 11th Delhi Sustainable Development Summit," Prime Minister's Office, Government of India, February 3, 2011, <http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=69540>.

²²Martin Khor, "Deadlock at Copenhagen Climate Talks at Half Way Mark," Global Policy Forum, December 14, 2009, <https://www.globalpolicy.org/social-and-economic-policy/the-environment/climate-change/48561-deadlock-at-copenhagen-at-half-way-mark.html>.

²³Warwick J. McKibbin *et al.*, *Comparing Climate Commitments: A Model-Based Analysis of the Copenhagen Accord* (Cambridge: Harvard Project on International Climate Agreements, June 2010), p. 22.

²⁴Edward Wong and Teith Bradsher, "China Joins U.S. in Pledge of Hard Targets on Emissions," *The New York Times*, November 27, 2009, <https://www.nytimes.com/2009/11/27/science/earth/27climate.html>.

he pointed out that a low carbon pathway for China would mean reducing carbon intensity by around 55 percent by 2020 and thus China needed to go further.²⁵

Responses of the Western media to China's climate commitments were comparatively negative. *The New York Times* reported that the timing of China's announcement was coincidental with American decisions, and therefore hinted that it was a result of the U.S. pressure rather than a declaration of China's ambition.²⁶ When China declared its first commitment on climate targets, *The Guardian* wrote that "Chinese President Hu Jintao today broke new ground in his nation's action on climate change, but failed to deliver measures that would significantly stir up the stagnant negotiations towards an international treaty to fight global warming."²⁷ *The Washington Post* commented that "[The] State Council's announcement that China will cut its carbon output relative to economic growth, using 2005 as a baseline, fell short of the 50 or 55 percent cut many world leaders had hoped Beijing would make."²⁸ *The Japan Times* was also doubtful about China's climate commitments, saying that "it's not clear, however, how this cut would be quantified and would mean for opponents of Obama's target."²⁹

On December 19, 2009, the Copenhagen climate conference arrived at the *Copenhagen Accord*, an arrangement for post-2020 global climate governance. Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao and other Chinese negotiators actively engaged themselves during the whole process. Premier Wen not only declared China's negotiating position, calling for all parties to reach consensus and strengthen cooperation on combating climate change, but he

²⁵Antony Froggatt, "China Sets New 'Carbon Intensity' Target," Royal Institute of International Affairs, November 27, 2009, <https://www.chathamhouse.org/media/comment/view/163593>.

²⁶Wong and Bradsher, "China Joins U.S. in Pledge of Hard Targets on Emissions."

²⁷Damian Carrington, "China Makes Its First Commitment to Climate Change Targets," *The Guardian*, September 22, 2009, <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2009/sep/22/hu-jintao-new-york1>.

²⁸Juliet Eilperin, "China Says It Will Cut Its Carbon Emissions by Up to 45 Percent by 2020," *The Washington Post*, November 27, 2009, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/11/26/AR2009112600519.html>.

²⁹Eric Johnston, "COP15 Hinges on Senate, China," *The Japan Times*, November 27, 2009, <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2009/11/27/national/cop15-hinges-on-senate-china/>.

also strove to tackle various dilemmas in negotiation with utmost political willingness and patience. Still, China received mixed comments on its negotiating strategy in Copenhagen.

Officials from the United States tended to criticize China's unconstructive role at the Copenhagen conference. As Chief U.S. Climate negotiator Todd Stern mentioned,

Ambitious as they were, China's commitments at Copenhagen failed to satisfy developed countries.

Statements we have seen from Chinado evince a desire to limit the impact of the [Copenhagen] accord, assuring that it is not treated as an operational document and that negotiations going forward are based solely on the [ad hoc working groups], rather than on the accord, except perhaps where specific provisions of the accord are viewed favorably.³⁰

The U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton also wrote in her memoir *Hard Choices* that the purpose of China at Copenhagen was to isolate the United States by bringing together countries like India, Brazil and South Africa on its side.³¹ U.S. President Obama hinted that China was to blame for the lack of a substantial deal.³²

The EU was quite divided on China's role at Copenhagen. As mentioned before, British Climate Change Secretary Edward Miliband accused China, Sudan, Bolivia and other left-wing Latin American countries of trying to prevent a deal being reached.³³ However, Anders Fogh Rasmussen, Danish Prime Minister who hosted the Copenhagen climate conference, thanked Premier Wen for his constructive proposal and said

³⁰Brian Spak, "The Success of Copenhagen Accord and the Failure of the Copenhagen Conference," April 22, 2010, pp. 3–4, <https://www.american.edu/sis/gep/upload/Brian-Spak-SRP-Copenhagen-Success-and-Failure.pdf>.

³¹"How Obama, Clinton Crashed a 'Secret' Meet between China, India," The First Post, June 11, 2014. <http://www.firstpost.com/world/how-obama-clinton-crashed-a-secret-meet-between-china-india-1565611.html>.

³²John Vidal *et al.*, "Low Targets, Goals Dropped: Copenhagen Ends in Failure," *The Guardian*, December 19, 2009, <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2009/dec/18/copenhagen-deal>.

³³Vidal, "Ed Miliband: China Tried to Hijack Copenhagen Climate Deal."

that the climate conference would achieve a success if all other leaders could work as vigorously as Premier Wen did.³⁴ Jose Manuel Barroso, President of the European Commission called for both China and the United States to contribute more to a successful outcome at the High-level Segment of the Copenhagen conference.³⁵

In comparison, large developing countries such as India and Brazil regarded China's negotiating strategy at Copenhagen rather favorably. When Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh spoke at the 10th Indian sustainable development summit, he claimed that the aim of the summit was to continue the constructive role played by China, Brazil, India and South Africa at the Copenhagen climate conference, which suggested that India regarded China as a constructive player at Copenhagen.³⁶

Scholars from developed and developing countries were also divided on China's negotiating strategy at Copenhagen. Most scholars from the United States and Europe observed that China was very assertive at the Copenhagen conference, and that the conference was largely a failure due to the fundamentally different and uncompromising positions of China and the United States during the talks.³⁷ Nevertheless, there were some U.S.

³⁴Zhao Cheng, Tian Fan, and Wei Dongze, "Premier Wen Jiabao at the Copenhagen Climate Change Conference: Verdant Mountains Cannot Stop Water Flowing; Eastward the River Keeps on Going," Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, December 24, 2009, <http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/ce/cgvienna/eng/xw/t648555.htm>.

³⁵José Manuel Durão Barroso, "Statement of President Barroso at UN High Level Segment," European Commission, December 16, 2009, http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_SPEECH-09-583_en.htm?locale=en.

³⁶Indian Prime Minister's Office, "PM's Address at the Inauguration of the 10th Delhi Sustainable Development Summit," February 5, 2010, <http://pib.nic.in/newsite/erelcontent.aspx?relid=57633>.

³⁷Daniel Bodansky, "The International Climate Change Regime: The Road from Copenhagen," Harvard Project on International Climate Agreements, October 2010, <https://www.belfercenter.org/sites/default/files/legacy/files/Bodansky-VP-October-2010-3.pdf>; Daniel Bodansky, "The Copenhagen Climate Change Conference: A Post-Mortem," February 12, 2010, p. 10, http://www.fao.org/fileadmin/user_upload/rome2007/docs/Copenhagen_Climate_Change.pdf; Stephen Minas, "Crossing the River — China in the International Climate Change Negotiations," Foreign Policy Centre, January 24, 2011, <https://fpc.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2011/01/1315.pdf>; and Gary Clyde Hufbauer and Kim Jisun, "After the Flop in Copenhagen," Peterson Institute for International Economics, March 2010, <https://piie.com/sites/default/files/publications/pb/pb10-04.pdf>.

scholars who argued that China demonstrated a more active stance at Copenhagen than the past. For example, Elliot Dringer, Vice President for International Strategies at the Pew Center on Global Climate Change (now renamed as Center for Climate and Energy Solution), believed that the *Copenhagen Accord* would for the first time secure political pledges from all major economies to curb their emissions, which represented real efforts from China and other major developing countries.³⁸ Scholars from developing countries generally praised China's constructive negotiating strategy at Copenhagen. For instance, Dhanansree Jayaram from Indian Manipal University maintained that the BASIC countries exhibited more geopolitical power and made their demands largely met at Copenhagen under the leadership of Chinese delegates.³⁹ Martin Khor argued that there was indeed a "hijacker" at Copenhagen — not China, but Denmark; indeed, China's efforts kept the climate negotiations under a multilateral framework.⁴⁰

Perceptions of foreign media on China's strategy were also divergent between developed and developing countries. *The Guardian* not only expressed its disappointment at Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao rather than President Hu Jintao attending the Copenhagen conference, but it also claimed that China's primary goal was to block any proposal that would undermine its "capacity to expand."⁴¹ *The New York Times* reported that China had impeded progress in the Copenhagen conference throughout the week by raising one technical objection after another to the basic

³⁸Bill Dawson, "Copenhagen Accord: Now What?" Texas Climate News, December 23, 2009, <http://texasclimatenews.org/?p=105>.

³⁹Dhanasree Jayaram, "A Shift in the Agenda for China and India: Geopolitical Implications for Future Climate Governance," *Carbon and Climate Law Review*, No. 3 (2015), p. 220.

⁴⁰Martin Khor, "Blame Denmark, Not China, for Copenhagen Failure," *The Guardian*, December 28, 2009, <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/cif-green/2009/dec/28/copenhagen-denmark-china>.

⁴¹Jonathan Watts, "Copenhagen Conference: Chinese PM Wen Jiabao to Attend Climate Talks," *The Guardian*, November 26, 2009, <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2009/nov/26/wen-jiabao-china-copenhagen-conference>; Jonathan Watts, "Copenhagen Summit: China's Quiet Satisfaction at Tough Tactics and Goalless Draw," *The Guardian*, December 20, 2009, <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2009/dec/20/copenhagen-climate-summit-china-reaction>.

negotiating text.⁴² *The Washington Post* commended China's agreement to accept conditioned measurement, reporting and verification as a positive step, but it added that China's action might be intended to send the message that Copenhagen needed China more than China needed Copenhagen due to its confrontational remarks about the U.S. position and its balking at international monitoring.⁴³ In contrast, news coverage from major developing countries was generally positive on China's performance at Copenhagen. For example, many Indian newspapers reported that China communicated actively with other negotiating parties and played a key role in concluding the historic climate deal at Copenhagen, and thus strongly defended the common interests of developing countries.⁴⁴

In short, external perceptions of China's role at the Copenhagen climate conference were quite complex. Despite the unfavorable negotiating situation, China managed to reach most of its goals set prior to the conference and manifested much leadership in global climate negotiation. However, China's climate commitments at Copenhagen were generally considered as insincere and weak by government officials, scholars and the media from major developed countries, while developing countries tended to applaud China's indispensable role in the conclusion of the *Copenhagen Accord*.

A Recognized Leader at the Paris Conference

The Paris climate conference held in late 2015 is widely regarded as a milestone in global climate governance. Compared with the Copenhagen conference, the Paris climate negotiation sealed a deal for the post-2020 era,

⁴²John M. Brode, "Poor and Emerging States Stall Climate Negotiations," *The New York Times*, December 16, 2009, <https://www.nytimes.com/2009/12/17/science/earth/17climate.html>.

⁴³David A. Fahrenthold, "Eight New Questions about the Last Day of Climate Talks in Copenhagen," *The Washington Post*, December 18, 2009; and "One Cheer for Copenhagen," *The Washington Post*, December 20, 2009, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/12/19/AR2009121902333.html>.

⁴⁴Xinhua News Agency, "Guojishehui pingjia zhongguo zai gebenhagenhuiyi shang de lichang he zuoyong [International Community Speaks Highly of China's Negotiating Position and Role at Copenhagen]," *Economic Daily*, December 31, 2009.

charting a fundamentally new course for the two-decade-long global climate efforts. The *Paris Agreement*, the most important achievement made at the conference, ended the divergence between developed and developing countries and put all parties under one roof, requiring them to report regularly on their emissions and climate efforts for international review.⁴⁵

As shown in an official document entitled *Enhance Actions on Climate Change: China's Intended Nationally Determined Contributions* issued on June 30, 2015,⁴⁶ as well as Chinese President Xi Jinping's speech at the opening ceremony of the Paris climate conference,⁴⁷ China had five major proposals to make at the Paris conference: (1) The post-2020 climate agreement should be legally binding — it could take the form of a core agreement plus other conference of the parties (COP) decisions, with mitigation, adaptation, finance, technology development and transfer, capacity-building support, as well as transparency of action reflected in the core agreement, and relevant technical details and procedural rules elaborated in the COP decisions. (2) The agreement should push all parties to formulate and implement programs and measures to reduce or limit greenhouse gas emissions for the 2020–2030 period, clarifying that developed countries would undertake quantified economy-wide absolute emission reduction targets by 2030, while developing countries undertake diversifying and enhanced mitigation actions with support from developed countries. (3) The agreement should emphasize and enhance international cooperation on adaptation, establishing a subsidiary body on climate adaptation as well as strengthening the Warsaw International Mechanism on Loss and Damage. (4) New, additional, adequate, predictable and sustainable financial support for developing countries should be provided. The scale of financing should increase yearly, starting from US\$100 billion per year from 2020 with the

⁴⁵International Institute for Sustainable Development, "Summary of the Paris Climate Change Conference: 29 November–13 December 2015"; and C2ES, *Outcomes of the U.N. Climate Change Conference in Paris* (Arlington: Center for Climate and Energy Solutions, December 2015).

⁴⁶"Enhanced Actions on Climate Change: China's Intended Nationally Determined Contributions," Xinhua News, June 30, 2015, http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/china/2015-06/30/c_134369837.htm.

⁴⁷"Work Together to Build a Win-Win, Equitable and Balanced Governance Mechanism on Climate Change," Ministry of Foreign Affairs of People's Republic of China, November 30, 2015, http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/wjdt_665385/zyh_665391/t1321560.shtml.

Green Climate Fund as its major operating entity. (5) The agreement should improve the transparency of enhanced actions of all parties in a way that is non-intrusive, non-punitive and respecting national sovereignty.

China achieved most of its goals in negotiation of the *Paris Agreement*.

Overall, the *Paris Agreement* as the final climate deal reached by all parties accepted most of China's proposals, with some exceptions.⁴⁸ On mitigation, the Agreement requires developed countries to continue taking the lead by undertaking economy-wide absolute emission reduction targets,

while developing countries are encouraged to work, over time, toward economy-wide emission reduction or limitation targets in accordance with their respective national circumstances. Though China failed to achieve the goal to have developed countries clarify their 2030 objectives and commitments, the parties to the *Paris Agreement* decided to consider common time frames for nationally determined contributions (NDCs).

On adaptation, China's position was fully adopted. The *Paris Agreement* not only decided to enhance and strengthen the Warsaw International Mechanism for Loss and Damage and subject it to the authority and guidance of the COP, but also clarified the fields in which to strengthen international adaptation cooperation.

As for financing, there was no specific road map for post-2020 climate efforts. Yet developed countries agreed to take the lead, mobilizing larger scale of financing than before while maintaining a balance between mitigation and adaptation.

In addition, the *Paris Agreement* accepted China's position on transparency and decided to establish an enhanced transparency framework for action and support under the UNFCCC with built-in flexibility, encouraging transparency in a facilitating, non-intrusive, and non-punitive manner, while respecting national sovereignty and avoiding undue burdens placed on any party. Indeed, China played such an active role at the Paris conference and achieved so many of its goals that it was perceived even by

⁴⁸Conference of the Parties, *Report of the Conference of the Parties on Its Twenty-first Session, Held in Paris from 30 November to 13 December 2015, Addendum (Part Two): Action Taken by the Conference of the Parties at its Twenty-first Session*, FCCC/CP/2015/10/Add.1, January 29, 2016.

developed countries as a leader in international efforts to combat climate change and no longer a “dead weight.”

The perception change of the outside world on China was mainly due to China's changing attitude and actions. In the run-up to Paris, China established its climate commitments for the post-2020 era earlier than usual. On November 12, 2014, China announced, for the first time, its 2030 climate target in the “U.S.-China Joint Announcement on Climate Change.”⁴⁹ Seven months later, China finalized its commitments to Paris climate talks by submitting its INDCs on June 30, 2015.⁵⁰ China's climate commitments for Paris consisted of four aspects: first, to achieve the peaking of CO₂ emission around 2030 and make best efforts to peak at an earlier time; second, to lower CO₂ emissions per unit of GDP by 60 to 65 percent from the 2005 level; third, to increase the share of non-fossil fuels in primary energy consumption to around 20 percent; and finally, to increase the forest stock volume by around 4.5 billion cubic meters on the 2005 level. Moreover, President Xi pledged to set up an Assistance Fund for South-South Cooperation and 10 pilot low-carbon industrial parks as well as 100 mitigation and adaptation programs to support other developing countries, in addition to 1,000 training opportunities on climate change.⁵¹

China's climate commitments for post-2020 agreement received quite positive responses from major negotiating parties. U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry spoke highly of China's 2030 climate commitments in a speech at the Paris climate conference, saying that the United States and China had come together to announce their respective, ambitious post-2020 mitigation commitments, which was proof that the roadblocks that hit against climate efforts for decades could be removed.⁵² Todd D. Stern, U.S. special envoy for climate change, hailed China's declaration of setting up a US\$3 billion

⁴⁹Office of the Press Secretary, “U.S.-China Joint Announcement on Climate Change,” The White House, November 12, 2014, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2014/11/11/us-china-joint-announcement-climate-change>.

⁵⁰“Enhanced Actions on Climate Change: China's Intended Nationally Determined Contributions.”

⁵¹“Work Together to Build a Win-Win, Equitable and Balanced Governance Mechanism on Climate Change.”

⁵²John Kerry, “Remarks on COP21 and Action beyond Paris,” U.S. Department of State, December 9, 2015, <https://2009-2017.state.gov/secretary/remarks/2015/12/250502.htm>.

South-South Fund as part of climate change funding which he thought was "great" and "impressive."⁵³

Although the EU believed China could make further contribution and tended to regard China's INDCs as a starting point,⁵⁴ it expressed similar appreciation of China's commitments. Van Rompuy, President of the European Council, and Jean-Claude Juncker, President of the European Commission, issued a joint statement on the day that China and the United States released their 2030 climate targets, pointing out that the two countries' actions would increase and maintain other parties' ambitions against climate change.⁵⁵ Laurent Fabius, French Foreign Minister and President of the Paris climate conference, also declared that the China-U.S. joint declaration on post-2020 climate efforts would push other parties to join in international efforts against climate change.⁵⁶ In contrast to the fierce criticism of China from Edward Miliband at Copenhagen, the new British Energy and Climate Secretary Edward Davey regarded the U.S.-China joint climate commitments as a sign of the two economic giants being really serious about reaching a global accord at Paris.⁵⁷ In the meantime, India, Australia and other parties also gave much applause to China's 2030 commitments.

⁵³"COP21 Press Availability with Special Envoy Todd Stern," U.S. Department of Stated, December 2, 2015, <https://2009-2017.state.gov/s/climate/releases/2015/250305.htm>.

⁵⁴For instance, EU Climate and Energy Commissioner Miguel Arias Cañete claimed in his speech at the signing ceremony for the *Paris Agreement* that emerging economies including China had a duty to contribute more as they continued to develop. See "EU Climate and Energy Commissioner Miguel Arias Cañete at the UN Signature Ceremony for the Paris Agreement New York," European Commission, April 22, 2016, http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_SPEECH-16-1533_en.htm.

⁵⁵Xu Jiao, "Quanjie reyi zhongmei qihoubianhua lianheshengming [Joint U.S.-China Climate Statement Sparks Global Responses]," *China Energy News*, November 17, 2014, p. 5.

⁵⁶Liu Hongyu, "Guojishehui jijipingjia zhongmei yingdui qihoubianhua lianheshengming [International Community Makes Positive Assessment of U.S.-China Joint Announcement on Climate Change]," *China Radio International*, November 13, 2016, <http://news.cri.cn/gb/42071/2014/11/13/5931s4762696.htm>.

⁵⁷"Guojishehui reyi zhongmei xieshouyingdui qihoubianhua [International Community Actively Responds to China-US Joint Cooperation to Combat Climate Change]," *People's Daily*, November 13, 2016, <http://world.people.com.cn/n/2014/1113/c157278-26017497.html>.

Compared with the Copenhagen conference, perceptions of international scholars on China's post-2020 climate targets and commitments had more common ground and were much more positive. U.S. scholars regarded China's commitments as fundamental changes of China's climate policy and a great progress of global climate governance beyond 2020, although some maintained that China's 2030 climate targets were not ambitious enough. As experts from the World Resources Institute (WRI), a U.S.-based think tank, commented,

*China's post-2020 climate commitments were arguably one of the most anticipated climate announcements of the year. While China's INDCs are welcome[d] developments that help build momentum for a new international climate agreement, there are still opportunities for the country to go further this year and harness more of the benefits that stem from decarbonization.*⁵⁸

Elizabeth Economy, Director for Asia Studies at the CFR, considered China as being off to a good start on the policy front by establishing a number of clear objectives, but still doubted the likely efficacy of China's efforts.⁵⁹ Scholars from the EU, India and Australia were generally more optimistic. For example, Thomas Spencer and Xin Wang from the Institute for Sustainable Development and International Relations in France thought that China's 2030 INDCs did represent an acceleration and strengthening of China's previous pledge under the 2009 *Copenhagen Accord* and *Cancun Agreement*.⁶⁰ Sudheendra Kulkarni, Chairman of the Observer Research Foundation (ORF) in India, said that the commitments the Chinese President made at the opening ceremony of the Paris climate conference was "forward" and "practical," and that China had kept its

⁵⁸Taryn Fransen, Song Ranping, Fred Stolle, and Geoffrey Henderson, "A Closer Look at China's New Climate Plan," World Resources Institute, July 2, 2015, <http://www.wri.org/blog/2015/07/closer-look-chinas-new-climate-plan-indc>.

⁵⁹Elizabeth C. Economy, "China and Climate Change: Three Things to Watch after Paris," *The Diplomat*, December 15, 2015, <https://thediplomat.com/2015/12/china-and-climate-change-three-things-to-watch-after-paris/>.

⁶⁰Thomas Spencer and Wang Xin, *China's INDC: A First Analysis* (Institute for Sustainable Development and International Relations, June 30, 2015).

promise on climate change.⁶¹ Simon Bradshaw at Oxfam Australia also commented that "China's far reaching goals are breaking new ground and vital to global efforts on tackling climate change."⁶²

International media also changed its tone on China's climate commitments over time. When China put forward its mid-term 2020 climate commitments before Copenhagen, there were many negative and doubtful reports from such media as *The New York Times* and *The Guardian*. At the Paris conference, however, *The New York Times* reported that it was the first time that Beijing had formally proposed a time frame and put much hope in China adopting more stringent goal to reduce emissions.⁶³ *The Washington Post* described China as an emerging leader in climate governance and quoted many positive comments to show the significance of China's post-2020 climate commitments.⁶⁴ Even *The Guardian*, one of the most vociferous critics of China during the Copenhagen conference in 2009, adopted a positive tone on China's INDCs.⁶⁵ *The Japan Times* also wrote that "an encouraging sign is that China and the United States, the world's largest and second largest emitters, jointly announced in November their plans to cut the greenhouse gas output."⁶⁶ Comments from the media in major developing countries were even

⁶¹"Haizwai zhuanjiaxuezhel jijipingjia xijinpingzhuxi zai baliqihoubianhuadahui shang de jianghua [Overseas Experts and Scholars Positively Comment on Chinese President Xi Jinping's Speech at the Opening Ceremony of the UN Paris Climate Conference]," Xinhua News, December 2, 2015, http://www.xinhuanet.com/world/2015-12/02/c_1117333062.htm.

⁶²"China's Ambitious Contribution to Tackling Climate Change Turns Up the Heat on Australian Government," Oxfam Australia, July 1, 2015, <https://www.oxfam.org.au/media/2015/07/chinas-ambitious-contribution-to-tackling-climate-change-turns-up-the-heat-on-australian-government/>.

⁶³Chris Buckley, "China Pledges to Halt Growth of Carbon Emissions in Climate Plan," *The New York Times*, June 30, 2015, <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/07/01/world/asia/china-carbon-emissions-climate-change.html>.

⁶⁴Simon Denyer, "China Tries to Recast Itself as a Global Leader in Climate-change Fight," *The Washington Post*, November 2, 2015, https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2015/11/02/china-tries-to-recast-itself-as-a-global-leader-in-climate-change-fight/?utm_term=.e2dd993169f1.

⁶⁵Jennifer Duggan, "China Makes Carbon Pledge Ahead of Paris Climate Change Summit," *The Guardian*, June 30, 2015, <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2015/jun/30/china-carbon-emissions-2030-premier-li-keqiang-un-paris-climate-change-summit>.

⁶⁶"Proactive Emissions Plan Needed," *The Japan Times*, January 10, 2015, <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/opinion/2015/01/10/editorials/proactive-emissions-plan-needed/>.

more positive. For instance, India's *The Hindu* and *Times of India* both noted that "China has won plaudits with its pledge to peak coal 2020," which was "something that India cannot duplicate."⁶⁷

In fact, China has taken a different negotiating strategy since post-2020 climate negotiations started in 2012. China used to postpone declaring its negotiating stances to the last minute. In the run-up to the Paris climate conference, however, China clarified its 2030 climate commitments in the "U.S.-China Joint Announcement" more than one year before the Paris talks began, and it submitted its INDCs five months before the conference. China also actively engaged itself in bilateral climate diplomacy and announced bilateral climate statements with major parties to generate momentum for Paris.⁶⁸ Moreover, China made other new commitments and suggestions to Paris climate talks in the "U.S.-China Presidential Statement on Climate Change" in September 2015 and President Xi's speech at the opening ceremony of the Paris conference, among which the establishment of the South-South Fund and initiation of a nationwide emission trading scheme in 2017 attracted most attention.⁶⁹

As a result, leaders from all major parties acclaimed China's negotiating strategy and contributions at Paris. U.S. President Obama

Successful cooperation with the U.S. helped consolidate China's leading role in climate negotiation.

⁶⁷"Policy Alert: We Have a Climate Deal: India and China React to the Paris Agreement," Rising Powers Initiative, <https://www.risingpowersinitiative.org/we-have-a-climate-deal-india-and-china-react-to-the-paris-agreement/>.

⁶⁸Bilateral climate announcements between China and major negotiating parties before Paris include: "U.S.-China Joint Presidential Statement on Climate Change (September 25, 2015)"; "U.S.-China Joint Announcement on Climate Change (November 12, 2014)"; "Joint Statement on Climate Change between the Government of PRC and the Government of the Federation Republic of Brazil (May 19, 2015)"; "Joint Statement on Climate Change between India and China (May 15, 2015)"; "China and France's Joint Presidential Statement on Climate Change (November 2, 2015)"; "UK/PRC Joint Climate Change Statement (June 17, 2014)"; and "EU-China Joint Statement on Climate Change (June 29, 2015)."

⁶⁹Office of the Press Secretary, "U.S.-China Joint Presidential Statement on Climate Change," The White House, March 31, 2016, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2016/03/31/us-china-joint-presidential-statement-climate-change>; and "Work Together to Build a Win-Win, Equitable and Balanced Governance Mechanism on Climate Change."

emphasized many times the significance of successful U.S.-China climate policy coordination to the conclusion of the *Paris Agreement*.⁷⁰ The U.S. State Department commented that the U.S.-China climate leadership was a major contributor to the success of Paris talks.⁷¹ On January 27, 2016, when meeting with President Xi in Beijing, U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry said that China's efforts on climate change were "historic" and that President Xi made a key decision with President Obama that changed the whole climate debate.⁷²

The EU also considered China as a constructive player at Paris. In his address to the Annual EU Ambassadors' Conference, President of the European Council Donald Tusk said that the EU-China Summit generated political will to reach an ambitious global climate agreement in Paris.⁷³ Former French Prime Minister Jean-Pierre Raffarin told *People's Daily* that President Xi's speech in Paris showed the fact that China had been a model in international efforts to combat climate change.⁷⁴ Even Japanese negotiators expressed confidence in China. When meeting with China's Special Envoy on Climate Change Xie Zhenhua during the Paris conference, Japanese Environment Minister Tamayo Marukawa told reporters that "I was

⁷⁰Julie Makinen and Chris Megerian, "China, U.S. Relationship Key in Climate Agreement," *Los Angeles Times*, December 13, 2015, <http://www.latimes.com/world/asia/la-fg-china-u-s-climate-20151213-story.html>; and "Behind China's Evolution from Climate Deal Holdout to Leader," *Bloomberg*, November 30, 2015, <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2015-11-30/behind-china-s-evolution-from-climate-deal-holdout-to-leader>.

⁷¹Office of the Spokesperson, "Climate Change and Clean Energy at the 2016 U.S.-China Strategic and Economic Dialogue," U.S. Department of State, June 8, 2016, <https://2009-2017.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2016/06/258178.htm>.

⁷²John Kerry, "Remarks with Chinese President Xi before Their Meeting," U.S. Department of State, January 27, 2016, <https://2009-2017.state.gov/secretary/remarks/2016/01/251716.htm>.

⁷³Donald Tusk, "Address by President Donald Tusk at the Annual EU Ambassadors' Conference," European Council, September 3, 2015, <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2015/09/03/tusk-conference-eu-ambassadors/>.

⁷⁴Pei Guangjiang and Xing Xue, "Yingdui qihoubianhua shi quanqiuixing gonggongyiti: fang faguocongli falan [Climate Change is a Global Public Issue: Interview with Former French Prime Minister Raffarin]," *People's Daily*, December 9, 2015, p. 3.

able to confirm that China, too, has a strong will to aim for an agreement on the new global framework for combating climate change."⁷⁵

Naturally, voices from other developing countries such as India and South Africa were even more favorable. Shri Prakash Javadekar, India's top climate negotiator and Minister of State of the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, said that the BASIC group including China had played a proactive and constructive role in combating global climate change and in international climate negotiations, which led to the successful adoption of the *Paris Agreement*.⁷⁶

International analysts and scholars generally applauded China's performance at Paris climate talks and began to call it a climate leader. Andrew Steer, President of the WRI in the United States noted that "Presidents Obama and Xi are demonstrating courageous leadership on climate change. They're also laying the cornerstone for an ambitious climate agreement in Paris."⁷⁷ EU scholars maintained a similar tone. Sam Geall, executive editor of *China Dialogue* and a research fellow at the University of Sussex in the UK, said that a breakthrough had been on the cards since November 2014 when Obama and Xi jointly announced a "secretly negotiated agreement" to slash greenhouse gas emissions, and that the two countries really showed some leadership through the UN climate process.⁷⁸ Russian scholars at the Institute of Far Eastern Studies, Russian Academy of Sciences, said that

⁷⁵"Japan Climate Chief Marukawa Meets with China Minister, Ban in Paris, Backs Five-year Goal Review," *The Japan Times*, December 7, 2015, <http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2015/12/07/national/politics-diplomacy/japan-climate-chief-marukawa-meets-china-minister-ban-paris-backs-five-year-goal-review/>.

⁷⁶Press Information Bureau, "'Basic has Played a Proactive and Constructive Role in Combating Global Climate Change and International Climate Change Negotiations': Javadekar," Government of India, April 7, 2016, <http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=138685>.

⁷⁷Andrew Steer, "Statement: Joint U.S.-China Agreement Shows 'Courageous Leadership on Climate,'" World Resources Institute, September 25, 2015, <http://www.wri.org/news/2015/09/statement-joint-us-china-agreement-shows-%E2%80%9Ccourageous-leadership-climate%E2%80%9D9D>.

⁷⁸Tom Phillips, Fiona Harvey, and Alan Yuhas, "Breakthrough as US and China Agree to Ratify Paris Climate Deal," *The Guardian*, September 3, 2016, <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2016/sep/03/breakthrough-us-china-agree-ratify-paris-climate-change-deal>.

President Xi's presence at the Paris conference sent a signal to the world that China accorded special attention to the process of Paris climate talks.⁷⁹

Scholars in other major developing countries such as India and South Africa also lauded China's key role in concluding the *Paris Agreement*.

China's performance at Paris was key to its image as a climate leader.

International news coverage on China's climate negotiating strategy turned from criticism at Copenhagen into recognition at Paris. *The Washington Post* reported that China not only changed its stance on external monitoring of emission, but also made concessions on transparency and supported

France's suggestions of automatically updating emission targets every five years.⁸⁰ *The Los Angeles Times* commented after the conclusion of the *Paris conference* that "one thing was clear at the global climate change talks in Paris: China, once a dead weight, [had] emerged as a key player in the battle to help avert the worst effects of global warming."⁸¹ Media coverage from Europe was even more positive. *The Guardian* contended that the Chinese people cared more about climate than the British and said China could no longer be used as an excuse for inaction on climate change.⁸² *The Independent* said that China and the United States were key to reaching an agreement with 195 nations in Paris, where they set a 2030 deadline for emissions to stop rising and announced their "shared conviction that climate change was one of the greatest threats facing humanity."⁸³ Japanese media also recognized China's role at Paris, saying that President Xi's speech at Paris showed that China's attitude towards international climate

⁷⁹Pei Guangjiang et al., "Qihoubianhua balidahui qidai zhongguo shengyin [Paris Climate Change Conference Expects China's Voice]," *People's Daily*, December 29, 2015, <http://cpc.people.com.cn/n/2015/1129/c219372-27867805.html>.

⁸⁰Denyer, "China Tries to Recast Itself as a Global Leader in Climate-Change Fight."

⁸¹Makinen and Megerian, "China, U.S. Relationship Key in Climate Agreement."

⁸²George Monbiot, "Stop Using China as an Excuse for Inaction on Climate Change," *The Guardian*, June 12, 2015, <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/georgemonbiot/2015/jun/12/china-excuse-inaction-on-climate-change>.

⁸³Lizzie Dearden, "Paris Climate Change Agreement: China and US Ratify Deal as Barack Obama Hails 'Moment We Decided to Save Our Planet,'" *The Independent*, September 3, 2016, <https://www.independent.co.uk/environment/paris-climate-change-agreement-china-and-us-ratify-landmark-deal-to-fight-climate-change-a7223746.html>.

cooperation was more active and practical and demonstrated its great willingness to combat climate change.⁸⁴ News coverage by developing countries such as *Times of India* generally followed the same tone.

In contrast to Copenhagen, external perceptions of China's role at Paris were much more positive. China continued to be regarded as a climate leader in terms of goal attainment. Though there was still some disappointment about China's climate commitments, international leaders, scholars and the public media all recognized China's negotiating strategy and viewed China as a key player in the success of the Paris climate conference.

Conclusion

As the world's largest greenhouse gas emitter, China is one of the key actors that have both responsibility and capabilities in effectively addressing climate challenges. External perceptions of China's role in climate negotiations influence not only China's attitude towards international climate cooperation, but also its engagement in global climate efforts and interaction with other parties, which would lay the ground for improving the international climate regime.

External perceptions of China's role in international climate negotiation have been increasingly positive since the Copenhagen climate conference. Judged by goal attainment, China should be considered as a climate leader at both the Copenhagen and Paris conferences. In negotiating strategy, China was regarded as a "dead weight" or even a "wrecker" for its inflexible stances and strategy at Copenhagen, but as a key player in concluding the *Paris Agreement*. As to China's new climate commitments, there was more applause than criticism from international leaders, scholars and the media, although they also argued that China could do more in combating climate change. Therefore, it is too early to say that China has grown to be an indisputable global climate leader. Rather, it is more appropriate to

⁸⁴Gao Weidong et al., "Zhongguo dui qihouwenli hezuo jijitvushi: guojiyulun jijipingjia xijinpingshuixi zai qihoubianhua balidahui de zhongyaojianghua [China is Active and Practical in Climate Cooperation: International Community Positively Comments on President Xi Jinping's Speech at the Opening Ceremony of the UN Paris Climate Conference]," China Daily, December 2, 2015, http://cn.chinadaily.com.cn/blqh/2015-12/02/content_22606382.htm.

see China as a promoter or leader in the process of international climate negotiation.

Reasons behind the changing external perceptions on China's role in global climate governance are complex, yet the most important one is the shift of China's climate policy and strategy at both the domestic and international levels. Looking into the future, China's climate actions will continue to be the determining factor to its external image. Ratification of the *Paris Agreement* was a good start for China. However, with the United States withdrawing from the Agreement, China is faced with more opportunities and challenges ensuring the implementation of the *Paris Agreement*. It is the resolution, responsibility, wisdom, and especially stamina manifested by China in the following years that will test China's leadership in global climate governance.