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**The Ideology of the Chinese Communist Party behind Climate Change Coverage- A  
Framing Analysis of *People's Daily***

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**2022**

**Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy  
(PhD)**

**School of Social & Political Sciences**

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### **Author's declaration**

I declare that, except where explicit reference is made to the contribution of others, that this dissertation is the result of my own work and has not been submitted for any other degree at the University of Glasgow or any other institution.

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## **Abstract**

This research aims to understand the CCP's ideology as represented in climate coverage issued by *People's Daily*. Framing analysis is used to show how climate change is presented and interpreted, while social semiotics is used as an analytical approach to show climate change coverage reflects of the ruling class's interests and rights. In domestic terms, successful marketisation has enhanced the CCP's legitimacy in the short term, while resulting in environmental degradation. This has brought a legitimacy crisis to the CCP. Creating a positive image in mitigating climate change helps the CCP to respond to the legitimacy crisis. It also emphasises the party's ruling ability and enhances people's trust and dependence on the party. On the international level, the CCP is arguing for their legitimacy as well as trying to compete with capitalism by playing an active role in dealing with climate change. Climate change thus offers an opportunity for the CCP to demonstrate their ruling ability and demonstrate the superiority of socialism.

## **Key Words**

Climate change CCP Ideology *People's Daily*

## Contents

Acknowledgement .....	2
Author's declaration .....	3
Abstract.....	4
Contents .....	5
List of Figures.....	10
List of Tables.....	11
List of Abbreviations .....	12
Chapter 1 Introduction .....	14
1.1 Introduction.....	14
1.2 Ideology .....	15
1.3 Legitimacy and ideology.....	16
1.4 Legitimacy crisis of the CCP .....	17
1.5 A crisis is also an opportunity .....	18
1.6 The CCP's view on ideology .....	20
1.7 Climate Change communication.....	24
1.8 How to understand the CCP's ideology in climate change coverage.....	25
1.9 Domestic motivation for mitigating climate change.....	28
1.10 China's positive image in mitigating climate change.....	34
1.11 Solidarity of International community .....	37
1.12 International conflicts in mitigating climate change.....	39
1.13 Thesis outline .....	42
Chapter 2 Ideology and Legitimacy.....	45
2.1 Introduction.....	45
2.2 The party, state and society .....	46
2.3 Ideology .....	48
2.4 Marxist Theories of Ideology.....	49
2.4.1 Critical Conception of Ideology.....	49
2.4.2 The Materiality of Ideology .....	50
2.4.3 Natural or Positive Concepts of Ideology .....	51
2.5 Marxist Theories of Ideology in China .....	51
2.5.1 Dialectical Materialism and Stalinism .....	52
2.5.2 Humanist Marxism.....	53
2.5.3 The Nature of Ideology in Marxist Theory .....	53
2.6 Legitimation and Ideology .....	54
2.7 Ideology and Legitimation of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP).....	61
2.8 The Crisis of the CCP .....	65
2.9 The CCP's Response to the Crisis .....	66
2.9.1 Developing Marxism with Chinese Characteristics .....	66
2.9.2 Nationalism.....	69
2.9.3 Confucianism .....	69
2.10 Summary.....	70
Chapter 3 The Issue of Climate Change .....	71

3.1 Introduction.....	71
3.2 What is the Climate Change Issue?.....	71
3.3 Climate Change Governance .....	72
3.3.1 Deliberative Governance on Climate Change.....	73
3.3.2 Ecological Modernisation .....	74
3.4 CCP's Ideology on Climate Change .....	75
3.4.1 China's Climate Change Governance Institutions.....	75
3.4.2 CCP's Ideology on Climate Change .....	76
3.5 Legitimacy Crisis Caused by Climate Change.....	80
3.5.1 Economy .....	80
3.5.2 Energy .....	81
3.5.3 Environment.....	82
3.5.4 International Relationship .....	83
3.6 China's Propaganda System and Censorship .....	84
3.7 Climate Change Communication .....	86
3.8 Climate Change Communication in China .....	88
3.9 Research Questions.....	95
3.10 Summary.....	97
Chapter 4 Can Policy Solve the Climate Problem? .....	98
4.1 Introduction.....	98
4.2 The China Model .....	99
4.2.1 The China Model in Early Stages .....	99
4.2.2 The Green Development Model.....	101
4.2.3 Ecological Modernisation .....	103
4.3 Renewable Energy Institution and Governance.....	104
4.3.1 The Central Ministries .....	104
4.3.2 Conflicts in Renewable Energy Industry Development.....	105
4.3.3 The Power Struggle Between the Central Government and The Local Government.....	106
4.4 Other Factors Affecting Policies .....	107
4.4.1 Renewable Energy and Traditional Energy.....	107
4.4.2 Industrial Corporations .....	108
4.4.2.1 Corporations and Policymaking.....	108
4.4.2.2 Corporations and Local Government.....	110
4.5 Climate Change as A Shared Value.....	112
4.6 Policies Related to Climate Change at The Highest Level .....	112
4.7 FYPs and The Low-Carbon Transition .....	115
4.7.1 The 10th FYP (2001-2005) .....	116
4.7.2 The 11th FYP (2006-2010) .....	117
4.7.3 The 12th FYP (2011-2015) .....	119
4.7.4 The 13th FYP (2016-2020) .....	121
4.8 World Cooperation on Mitigating Climate Change and China's Low-Carbon Transition .....	122
4.9 Moving Forward .....	123
4.10 Summary.....	124
Chapter 5 Methodology .....	125

5.1 Introduction.....	125
5.2 Framing analysis.....	125
5.2.1 Framing effects .....	127
5.2.2 Framing and legitimacy function of ideology.....	128
5.2.3 Framing Climate Change .....	129
5.3 Social semiotics .....	130
5.3.1 Social Semiotics.....	130
5.3.2 Social Semiotics and Ideology.....	131
5.3.3 Social Semiotics and Society .....	132
5.3.4 Social Semiotics and Chinese Studies.....	133
5.4 Connecting Framing to Social Semiotics.....	134
5.5 What does Social Semiotics Have to do with Marxism-Leninism.....	135
5.6 Research Design .....	136
5.6.1 Sampling.....	136
5.6.2 Selected Sources .....	136
5.6.3 Selected Sample Period.....	139
5.6.4 Selected Articles.....	140
5.6.5 Coding Frames in News.....	143
5.6.6 Method.....	147
5.6.6.1 A Text-Linguistic Approach to Framing.....	147
5.6.6.2 Framing Activity in the headline.....	148
5.6.6.3 Framing Activity in Sources .....	149
5.6.6.4 Framing Activity in Sentences .....	149
5.6.6.5 Framing Activity in the Structure.....	150
5.7 Sampling Description.....	150
5.7.1 The status of Climate Chang in <i>People's Daily</i> .....	150
5.7.2 What does China's Climate Change News Cover? .....	153
5.8 Summary.....	155
Chapter 6 China's positive image in mitigating climate change .....	156
6.1 Introduction.....	156
6.2 Creating China's positive image.....	156
6.2.1 China's contribution or action .....	157
6.2.2 China's image.....	163
6.2.3 Source .....	165
6.2.4 Superior theoretical basis and the “tightening-crown spell” (紧箍咒) .....	169
6.2.5 Uphill battle(攻坚战) and Vanguard(排头兵) .....	173
6.3 Legitimacy crises .....	176
6.3.1 Responsibility or obligation.....	177
6.3.2 Fund and technology.....	180
6.3.3 Transparency .....	180
6.4 China's position.....	181
6.4.1 China's attitude toward CDRRC.....	181
6.4.2 China's strategy on financial mechanisms inside and outside UNFCCC.....	183
6.4.3 China's information transparency.....	184



6.5 China's climate discourse.....	185
6.5.1 Rethink of CBDRRRC .....	185
6.5.2 A Community of Shared Future for Mankind .....	187
6.5.3 Chinese ecological civilisation.....	188
6.5.4 Discourse with Chinese value .....	189
6.6 Summary .....	190
Chapter 7 Solidarity of International Community .....	192
7.1 Introduction.....	192
7.2 Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).....	193
7.2.1 Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) .....	194
7.2.2 The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).....	195
7.2.3 The United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP).....	196
7.2.4 The Kyoto Protocol and the Paris Agreement.....	198
7.2.4.1 The Kyoto Protocol.....	199
7.2.4.2 Reactions from all parties .....	199
7.2.4.3 The Paris Agreement.....	200
7.2.4.4 Reactions from all parties .....	200
7.3 From the Kyoto Protocol to the Paris Agreement .....	202
7.3.1 Changes for mitigating the target.....	202
7.3.2 Changes in financial assistance and transparency mechanisms .....	203
7.3.3 Expanding the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities (CBDRRRC) and the cooperation model .....	203
7.4 China's position in international cooperation.....	205
7.4.1 climate change is real and a threat .....	205
7.4.2 What drives <i>People's Daily</i> claims that climate change is real in domestic.....	208
7.4.3 What drives <i>People's Daily</i> claims that climate change is real on global level .....	210
7.4.4 CBDRRRC is a fair and cooperative principle.....	211
7.5 Summary .....	212
Chapter 8 International conflicts in mitigating climate change .....	214
8.1 Introduction.....	214
8.2 High attention to the US .....	215
8.2.1 China-US bilateral relations in modern history.....	215
8.2.2 Impact of US domestic politics on global climate governance .....	217
8.2.2.1 President George Walker Bush .....	217
8.2.2.2 President Barack Obama.....	219
8.2.2.3 President Donald Trump .....	220
8.3 The CCP's self-defence from liberal democracy .....	221
8.3.1 Chinese people's understanding of liberal democracy .....	221
8.3.2 Nationalism.....	221
8.3.3 International consensus.....	224
8.4 Conflicts between China and the US .....	227
8.4.1 Who is responsible for climate change?.....	227
8.4.2 What has changed in the discussion of climate change responsibilities?.....	230

8.4.3 Framing the US as an irresponsible developed country by comparison .....	233
8.5 What is the essence of China and the US conflict on mitigating climate change .....	236
8.5.1 Conflicts on CBDRRC.....	236
8.5.2 Conflicts on ideology.....	238
8.6 Summary.....	240
Chapter 9 Conclusion.....	241
9.1 Introduction.....	241
9.2 Main findings.....	243
9.2.1 The frame of China's performance.....	243
9.2.2 The frame of international involvement.....	244
9.2.3 Transition from developing demands to the new economic growing point .....	246
9.2.4 Transition in Ecological Philosophy .....	247
9.2.5 Transition from climate change has positive influence on it is real and a threatening.....	248
9.2.6 Transition from the differentiated obligation to common interest.....	248
9.2.7 China and the US .....	249
9.3 Research contributions.....	251
9.3.1 Contributions to CCP's ideology studies in dynamic.....	251
9.3.1.1 Climate change threatens the legitimacy .....	251
9.3.1.2 Politicised climate change.....	252
9.3.2 Contribution to Chinese climate change communication studies .....	254
9.3.3 Contribution to framing analysis and social semiotics analysis.....	255
9.4 Further study .....	255
Reference .....	257
Appendix 1: A list of samples .....	276

## List of Figures

Figure 1 Synonym's Comparison .....	141
Figure 2. Frequency of Kyoto Protocol and the Paris Agreement .....	142
Figure 3. Amount of Climate Change News on Each Page .....	151
Figure 4. Amount of Climate Change News in Each Month .....	152
Figure 5 Frequency of frame of China's performance .....	157

## List of Tables

Table 1 Coding Scheme .....	145
Table 2 Frame Frequency .....	153
Table 3 Structural elements of Prioritise energy conservation to meet emission reduction challenges....	158
Table 4 The syntactic structure of Gao, S. (2015)"China makes an irreplaceable contribution to the conclusion of the Paris Agreement" <i>People's Daily</i> 15th December .....	166
Table 5 Wars under CCP's guidance .....	173

## List of Abbreviations

Abbreviation	Definition
CCP	Chinese Communist Party
CCPPD	Central Publicity Department
CPPCC	Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference
CNY	Chinese Yuan
COP	Conference of the Parties
FYPs	Five-year Plans
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
ISA	Ideological state apparatuses
INDC	Intended Nationally Determined Contributions
ISO	International Organization for Standardization
MOFCOM	Ministry of Commerce
MEE	Ministry of Ecology and Environment
MOF	Ministry of Finance
MIIT	Ministry of Industry and Information Technology
MOST	Ministry of Science and Technology
NBS	National Bureau of Statistics
NDRC	National Development and Reform Commission
NEA	National Energy Administration
	National Leading Group on Addressing Climate Change and Energy
NLGCC	Conservation and Emission Mitigations
NPC	National People's Congress
NAMAs	Nationally Appropriate Mitigation Actions
NGO	Non-governmental Organisation
PD	People's Daily
PV	Photovoltaics

SEPAP	Solar Energy for Poverty Alleviation Programme
GAPP	State Council General Administration of Press and Publications
SOEs	State-owned enterprises

## Chapter 1 Introduction

### 1.1 Introduction

After China's market reform and economy developed, one area of legitimacy deficit has been environmental damage. Due to the excessive consumption of natural resources to develop the economy, the environment has become a constraint on China's further economic development (Delman and Odgaard, 2014, p.221). The CCP adopted the concept of ecological modernisation to seek to shift to a low-carbon green development model and break away the constraint of environment (Mol, 2006, p.34). By 2013, China had become the leading investor in solar and wind energy production in the world (Shen and Xie, 2018, p.407). Increasing the supply and consumption of renewable energy brings new economic growth opportunities as well as indirectly dealing with climate change.

This research offers support to Stevenson and Dryzek's (2014, p.3) argument that mitigating climate change is a side-effect of economic development in some countries and considers China as one such case. However, by examining the coverage of climate change issued by *People's Daily*, which is the mouthpiece of the CCP, this research found that economic development is not the only motivation for the CCP to be seen to be active in global climate governance. As an international political issue, claiming contributions to tackling climate change increases the CCP's legitimacy in the domestic and international community. It is also an area where the CCP attempts to compete with value of liberal democracy. Especially when western countries take tough measures against China, climate negotiations challenge the party's legitimacy but also provide an opportunity for the CCP to form an effective discourse on international governance mechanisms and protect China's interests. Further, based on common interests, China has cooperated with other developing countries in the international community and ultimately strengthened China's geopolitical position thus defending themselves from the western countries' challenges.

## 1.2 Ideology

In the 1840s, Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels conducted a series of discussions that had a vital influence on the development of the concept of ideology (Strath, 2013, P.6). They separated reality and ideology as well as base and superstructure. They considered both religion and the bourgeois state as expressions of ideology. Ideology was determined to be part of the superstructure, which reflected and camouflaged the actual material foundation. After World War II, ideology was considered governing society and social processes (Parsons, 1951, P.201). In this context, ideology gained political functions and was used to command society and guide actions. Further, ideology legitimated or delegitimated political actions and could make specific value preferences appear to be reasonable (Freeden, 2003, P.29).

After the Soviet collapse, liberalism was seen as the victor and ideological competition no longer existed. Certain scholars jumped to the conclusion that ideology was an outdated conception (Fukuyama, 1992, P.3). However, threats to legitimacy and the need for power mobilisation still existed under different regimes. For example, nationalism, populism, and racism have been invoked in ideological struggles, making ideological conflicts more diverse. Thus, there is no end to the ideology in history. Trying to understand ideology is, therefore, an ongoing study.

There are mainly three currents of understanding of ideology in Marxist theory. The first one involves applying ideology as a critical concept and considers ideology as "false consciousness". This genre attracts the support of Georg Lukács and the Frankfurt School. The second interpretation of ideology believes ideology can impact individuals' understanding of the world: Antonio Gramsci and Louis Althusser are pioneers in developing this concept. The last definition is Lenin's branch, ideology is a class-specific worldview in Marxism-Leninism, and it has a neutral and positive conception in its usage (Krawczyk, 2019, P.156).



### **1.3 Legitimacy and ideology**

Studies on sustaining legitimacy is a popular angle for accessing the concept of ideology. Lipset (1981, p. 84) identified legitimacy as "the capacity of the system to engender and maintain the belief that the existing political institutions are the most appropriate ones for the society". However, when legitimacy is understood as belief, public opinion becomes the only criterion for identifying legitimacy. It generates a problem of opaqueness in political phenomena because people are likely to acquiesce to the regime to gain personal benefit. From another perspective, legitimacy is the system's ability to convince members to believe its appropriateness. Thus, leaders set the rules and spread symbols to the followers (Lipset, 1981, pp.80-81) to deal with the legitimacy crisis caused by belief. Therefore, social semiotics is a valuable approach to identify CCP's intentions.

The legitimacy of power comes from its origin and purpose. In other words, power should come from democratic consent and act on the common interests or public interest. In the modern age, the transition from power to authority has highlighted rational-legal authority rather than charismatic and traditional structures. However, the rational-legal authority has been weakened. In terms of the epistemology route, constantly exploring the truth by employing skill and power can change the social and political world order. Thus, technology is the primary productive forces and the basis of legitimacy. In this context, technology is an essential frame to understand how modern countries enhances legitimacy.

In terms of the moral route, individuals' self-awareness is growing in the modern age. Rousseau believed that no country is truly legitimate until people have self-awareness and enjoy group moral bonds and restrictions. Then self-sufficiency and maximisation of utility are the sources of legitimacy. Therefore, it is a necessary approach to maintain legitimacy by embedding personal interests in political interests.

#### 1.4 Legitimacy crisis of the CCP

The most significant legitimacy crisis of the CCP emerges from the difference between the socialist character of the regime and the real economic system (Zeng, 2016, p.29). Since 1979, the Chinese regime has introduced a market economy through marketisation reform. The success of marketisation helped the CCP to get rid of the legitimacy crisis of poverty but plunged into another legitimacy crisis of ideological struggle. The CCP devoted great effort to explaining that introducing economic mechanisms with capitalist characteristics does not conflict with its socialist nature and proposed concepts such as "*the socialist market economy*" and "*the combination between the planned economy and market regulations*" (Bai and Wang, 2020) to argue for the regime's legitimacy.

Economic growth enhances the CCP's legitimacy in the short-term, and it brings further crisis. Firstly, according to the theory of "performance dilemma" (Holbig, 2010, p.400), people have non-material demands after satisfaction of their material needs. These demands include political participation, pluralisation or critiques of social inequalities. Further, members of the CCP do not firmly believe in socialism. The "New Left" elites ask for a new form of nationalist socialism, and pro-liberal elites also attempted to launch a liberal reform (Zeng, 2016, p3). In this context, the values of liberal democracy are a significant threat to the legitimacy of the CCP's domination.

The second crisis is environmental degradation. China has adopted an approach of sacrificing the environment and natural resources to pursue economic growth (Zhang, Mol & Sonnenfeld, 2007). Industrialisation and urbanisation are two means for economic modernisation. At the same time, fossil fuels, especially coal and oil, are the primary sources of energy and China uses coal in an inefficient way. In 2010, China consumed 46 per cent of coal consumption in the world, while producing 8 per cent of the world's GDP (IEA, 2012, p.15). Due to the massive consumption of fossil fuels, air pollution is severe, and China has become the largest emitter in the world. In 2013, air pollution resulted in smog and haze events which threatened people's health. People's living conditions suffered from pollution, and lung cancer became the primary

cause of death in Beijing (Spiegel, 2005). This resulted in dissatisfaction with the government and threatened the CCP's legitimacy. On the other hand, due to the massive consumption of fossil fuels, China became a net energy importer. The high reliance on energy imports threatened China's energy security, which became another concern for the CCP (Leung et al., 2014, p.3). Further, the environment restricts China's economic development. Large amounts of agricultural land have transformed into desert because of overgrazing (World Bank, 2001, p.18). A fourth of the population had difficulties in accessing clean drinking water (Economist, 2010) while dealing with environmental impacts cost around 8 to 15 per cent GDP (Spiegel, 2005). Thus, the CCP is seeking to transform to a low-carbon, green and sustainable development model.

However, as a one-party state, the CCP has an extremely high level of legitimacy (Wright, 2010, p.12). According to the Edelman Trust Barometer (2019), Chinese trust in government was 84% in 2018 and 86% in 2019. Public opinion indicates the effectiveness of the CCP's ideological mechanisms, and this study aims to explore how it works.

### **1.5 A crisis is also an opportunity**

"Energy-saving" and "expansion of the use of renewable energy" (Delman and Odgaard 2014, p.226) are part of China's shift to a low-carbon development model. Five-year Plans (FYPs) are long-term plans for China's economic development. During the 12th FYP (2011-2015), the target of average annual growth rate of GDP was 7 per cent, while the actual rate was 7.8 per cent (NDRC, 2016). Non-fossil energy was to account for 11.4 per cent of primary energy consumption, while the actual proportion was 12 per cent. Energy consumption per unit of GDP was reduced by 2.2 per cent more than the target of 16 per cent, and carbon dioxide emissions per unit of GDP was reduced by 3 per cent more than the target of 17 per cent. Further, according to the latest data from IEA (2019), compared to 2015, the rate of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions / GDP declined 10 per cent by 2017. Thus, when China transforms to a low-carbon development model to promote sustainable economic development it will also indirectly

mitigate climate change.

Climate change is invisible to the public and does not directly impact on health issue (Moser, 2010, p.33) as well as being a complex and large-scale issue (Rittel & Webber, 1973, p.95). Scientists try to explain climate change with various models and try to account for the complexity of climate change (Schafer, 2014, p.443). Climate change involves uncertainty as there is a lack of "data and adequate theoretical understanding of environmental system interactions" (Moser, 2009, p.35). Thus, it is difficult to perceive the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, and the public does not have a firm awareness of it. It is thus difficult to communicate climate change to the public.

Further, as a global political issue, climate change clashes with human progress (Stevenson and Dryzek, 2014, p.3) as it emerges from economic growth, which still is a priority for most governments. Mitigating climate change threatens economic development. In this context, if China can promote economic development on the one hand and deal with climate change on the other hand, then other countries will naturally ask what China is doing to achieve this. Climate change thus is an opportunity for the CCP to demonstrate their ruling ability and even the superiority of socialist ideology.

This study analyses climate coverage in *People's Daily* as it is the mouthpiece for the CCP. Due to climate change being a topic full of uncertainty and one which is difficult to communicate with the public, the first question this research aims to address is:

RQ 1: How is climate change framed in *People's Daily*?

Further, this research aims to understand the CCP's ideology in climate coverage by addressing a second research question:

RQ 2: What do these framings tell us about the ideology of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP)?

## 1.6 The CCP's view on ideology

The CCP employs the concept of ideology in its natural or positive sense. According to Lenin, ideology is true consciousness (Lenin, 1961, p.347) and a class-specific worldview in Marxism-Leninism. It is a theoretical system that can produce correct knowledge as well as a guarantee that political factors can construct a socialist social order and finally achieve a communist social order (Krawczyk, 2019, p.157). Ideology is a collective discourse for the proletariat to communicate with the public to drive society toward socialism. Marxism, as a kind of ideology, can overcome the shortcomings of capitalism. Thus, the CCP considers ideology is needed to maintain domination.

The CCP always thinks highly of ideology and the absolute dominance of ideology over policy has never changed (Holbig, 2013, p.62). The CCP is a political party founded by Marxists, and they believe that socialism is a superior social system. To be specific,

*"Mastering ideological education is the centre that unites the whole party in the great political struggle."-Mao Zedong (Anthology of Mao Zedong Volume 3, 1991, p1094)*

*"The most important means of improving the party's leadership is strengthening ideological and political work."-Deng Xiaoping (Selected Works of Deng Xiaoping, 1994, p365)*

*"The field of ideology is an important field in the struggle between peaceful evolution and anti-peaceful evolution and the position of ideological propaganda. If socialist ideology does not take the field, then capitalist ideology will take it."-Jiang Zeming (Jiang Zeming's speech at the conference celebrating the 70th anniversary of the founding of the CCP)*

*"The field of ideology has always been an important field where the hostile forces are battling us fiercely. If something goes wrong with ideology, it may lead to social unrest and even a loss of political power."-Hu Jintao (Selected documents since the 16th National Congress, 2011, p318)*

*"Why did the Soviet Union collapse? Why did the CPSU collapse? An important reason is that the struggle in the field of ideology is very fierce. Comprehensively denying the history of the Soviet Union and the history of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, as well as denying Lenin, and Stalin, engaging in historical nihilism made the party confused. Party organisations at all levels did not work appropriately, and the army was not under the leadership of the party."-Xi Jinping (Selection of important documents since the 18th National Congress, 2014, p113)*

Ideology can achieve the purpose of sustaining power because of its function of legitimation. Legitimacy is "the capacity of the system to engender and maintain the belief that the existing political institutions are the most appropriate ones for the society" (Lipset, 1981, p.84). As social values and expectations are always changing, so legitimacy is a dynamic concept. Ideology plays an essential role in mediating different ideas to enhance legitimacy. However, the stability of ideology determines the stability of power. This is because ideology can shape social expectations and foster or eliminate social anxiety as well as resistance to change. Thus, ideology has to keep continuity as well as adaptability to correspond to social values and expectations in a different context.

In addition, Nationalism and Confucianism are another two sources to the legitimacy of the CCP ideology. Nationalism is an essential part of the CCP's official discourse. Roskin (2009, p.426) claimed that "patriotism" and "performance-based legitimacy" can maintain the CCP's authority. Both pride and humiliation formed nationalism in China (Bajoria, 2008). It is easy to trigger the public's collective emotion against other countries while enhancing their belief in the CCP. However, it is difficult to use nationalism as a source of legitimacy (Bajoria, 2008) because nationalist sentiment reduces the space for manoeuvre in China's diplomacy (Holbig, 2010, p.403).

The value of Confucianism is that it can embed itself in socialist values, such as social order and stability, acceptance of hierarchy and devotion to the family and the country (Shi, 2001,

p.404). Hu Jintao placed Confucianism in a larger cultural context and his proposed slogans, such as "Well-off Society" and "Social Harmony" refers to values in Chinese culture, which represents historical achievements and future greatness (Holbig, 2010, p.411). Thus, the revival of Confucianism generates broad resonance and ultimately contributes to regime legitimacy. However, it is insufficient on its own for the regime's legitimacy. Continuity and adaptability of ideology guarantee the CCP's legitimation.

After experiencing the Great Leap Forward, the break with the Soviet Union; the Cultural Revolution and three years of natural disasters, China's politics and economy needed to recover (Zeng, 2016, p.37). In 1984, the Third Plenary Session of the 12th Central Committee passed the "Decision of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China on Economic System Reform". The document stipulated that China's socialist economy is a planned commodity economy based on public ownership. This broke through the traditional opposition between the planned economy and the commodity economy. It was a new development of Marxism-Leninist political-economic theory, and it became the core of Deng Xiaoping Theory.

After opening up and the creation of the socialist market economy, new legitimacy crises arose for the CCP because many the CCP members did not firmly believe in socialism, and social inequality and corruption had emerged as serious problems. In this context, Jiang Zeming proposed that "The CCP represents the development trend of China's most advanced productive forces, the orientation of China's most advanced culture, and the fundamental interests of the overwhelming majority of the Chinese peoples" (Jiang, 2013, p.519). The so-called "Three Represents" emphasised the CCP's ability and essential role in guiding the country. It was also an innovation of party theory to adapt to emerging issues and enhanced the CCP's vitality. During Jiang's period in office, the CCP emphasised that "The CPP represents the development trend of China's most advanced productive forces" and brought private entrepreneurs into the party. Critics considered it a betrayal of the working-class nature of the CCP (Holbig, 2010, p.405). Hu Jintao responded to the challenge of the left by emphasizing the third "Represent"-that "The CCP represents the fundamental interests

of the overwhelming majority of the Chinese peoples" (Lu, 2000, p.81). Maintaining the continuity and adaptability of ideology benefits the stability of the CCP's domination. Further, Hu Jintao initiated the concept of the "Scientific Outlook on Development" to respond to the crisis of economic growth without sacrificing the environment (Holbig, 2009, p.28). The concept stressed a comprehensive, balanced and sustainable development. Hu Jintao also proposed another concept to deal with social tensions, "Harmonious Socialist Society."<sup>3</sup> In the context of challenges by western liberal democracy, Xi Jinping's contribution to the party theory is "Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era" which emphasised that "the overarching task of upholding and developing socialism with Chinese characteristics is to realise socialist modernisation and national rejuvenation" (Central Propaganda Department, 2019, p.9).

In summary, as a one-party state, the CCP considers ideology as a means to maintain domination and carries out a comprehensive communication strategy to ensure its function of legitimisation. The CCP ensures the continuity and adaptability of ideology to maintain its domination. At the same time, it also involves nationalism and Confucianism to strengthen the legitimacy of its ideology. However, in the new era, the emerging challenge for the CCP is that environmental deterioration restricts space for sustainable economic development. China has become a significant polluter in the world. In the domestic sphere, sustainable economic development and a liveable environment are the primary legitimacy defects. In the international community, as a significant polluter, China's legitimacy defect is not doing enough to shoulder responsibility. China is trying to shift to a low-carbon and green development model to deal with the restriction of environmental deterioration. When approaching a low-carbon development model, energy saving as well as expanded consumption of renewable energy indirectly mitigate climate change. Thus, climate change provides an opportunity for the CCP to reduce legitimacy defects both on the domestic and international levels. However, how the CCP constructs climate change communication to fit into the continuity and adaptability of ideology and whether or not the CCP treats climate



change communication as a way to claim the superiority of socialist ideology is still unknown.

### **1.7 Climate Change communication**

The character of climate change brings challenges to communication. Climate change is a complex scientific issue and a political issue (Eberhardt, 2005, p.35). Boykoff and Boykoff (2004, p.126) argued that the journalistic norm of balance results in climate knowledge bias in the US prestige press. The US mass media thus confused the public and encouraged political inaction. If the representations of the causes of climate change which are delivered by news reports are different from the consensus held by the scientific community, public perceptions of climate change issues run the risk of being misguided (Boykoff and Boykoff 2004, p.127). Boykoff and Boykoff (2007, p.1191) also argued that mass media has a crucial role to play in shaping the variegated and politicised terrain and influencing perceptions and the ongoing dynamic interaction between climate policies and the public. Further, "climate scepticism" contributes to the uncertainty of climate change coverage, and climate skeptics have been particularly vocal in the US and UK right-leaning papers (Painter and Ashe, 2012, p.3). Moser (2009, p.32) argued that including "humanity's and the Earth's common fate" on the agenda in climate discourse can help the public understand their destiny and setting a common objective for humanity may be an effective way to communicate climate change.

There have been no sceptical voices in Chinese climate change news reports (Jia, 2017). Instead, policy and strategy have been the most crucial issues on the agenda in climate coverage. Criticism of government policies and climate sceptic voices is rare in Chinese media. Chinese media are a mouthpiece for the CCP and tightly censored by the party (Tong, 2009, p.594). Further, Chinese environmental journalists also try to be objective by adopting a balance norm but for a different purpose (Tong 2015, p.762). They employ frames arising from their judgements of the situation. Journalists edit news close to their opinions in environmental news reports and claim these news reports are legitimate by making them sound objective. In order to communicate with the people and deal with the legitimacy deficit, frames play a

significant role in helping political elites to present climate change (Bondees & Heep, 2012, p.6). This is because political elites can create political frames to strengthen the people's and the CCP members' belief in socialist values.

### **1.8 How to understand the CCP's ideology in climate change coverage**

This study adopted framing analysis as a research method and social semiotics as a general analytical approach. Social semiotics provides a way of relating frames to questions of ideology. Framing analysis tries to answer the question of how and why the issue is seen as a problem. It also can deal with the issues of how it should be handled, and who is responsible for it (Nisbet et al., 2003, p.37). It is a research method that can find out how issues are presented and interpreted in the news (de Vreese, Peter, & Trammell, 2001, p.107). This research employs framing analysis because it provides a way of analysing the CCP's ideological response to the issue of climate change.

According to Bondees and Heep (2012, p.8), "Official framing is a reaction to legitimacy deficits". This is because changes in belief or circumstances result in legitimacy deficits if rules of power do not adjust accordingly. In this context, official framing works to restructure the rules of power to adapt to public belief, which finally contributes to a public belief in "both the elites' leadership qualities and their determination to serve the common interest" (Bondees and Heep, 2012, p.8). There are three necessary elements for framing to resonate. The first one is "consistency" (Noakes and Johnston, 2005, p.15). The framing of beliefs, ideas, claims and actions should be consistent. The second is "cultural compatibility". Frames, symbols and ideational elements should in line with the compatibility of cultural stock. The last one is "relevance" (Snow and Benfor, 1988., p208), which means framing should fit the real world and make sense in the audience's daily life. Among these elements, cultural compatibility is essential to resonance. Thus "cultural narratives, symbols and ideational elements are central resources in the construction of frames" (Bondees and Heep, 2012, p.9). In this context, the social semiotic approach can help us to examine signs in culture and society.

Social semiotics studies not only examine signs but also explore their communicative functions in social contexts (Hodge & Kress, 1988, p.1). In this context, social semiotics aims to solve problems about how people design and interpret texts as well as how social interests shape the sign system and how it adapts to social change. From the perspective of social semiotics, the sign is a kind of resource for people to design and use, which finally generates meaning. Compared to other approaches in cultural studies, social semiotics provides tools enabling more in-depth exploration of languages (Hodge and Louie, 1998, p.7). Social semiotics is an effective way of analysing language in detail from the perspective of its social function.

The ruling class tries to express their view of the world, reflecting their interests and rights. At the same time, the ruling class continues to maintain the stability of its dominant position. Hodge & Kress (1988, p.3) propose the concept of an "ideology complex", which is a collection of contradictory views of the world. Specifically, the ideology complex enables one social group to exert pressure on another group in order to protect their special interests, or it enables another group to try to resist such pressure for its benefit. The ideological complex expresses social relations by serving both the ruler and the ruled. The social significance of a sign serving the interest of a social class or social groups, through its function, orientation and content, may be described as "ideology" or "ideological" in nature.

According to Goffman (1974, p.10), a frame implies rules and principles which can guide an understanding of the meaning of experienced events. In this point of view, particular frames can organise perception. This is because of a set of cues and signs indicate key matters. Therefore, a frame is a structure of knowledge, experience, values and meanings. From this point of view, this research considers frames as an outcome of social semiotics. This research applies social semiotics as an approach to identify frames in the CCP climate change coverage.

This research examines climate coverage issued by *People's Daily*. It has the highest circulation in China, 3.2 million per day (People's Daily Circulation, 2016). Its main

readership consists of decision-makers at all levels of administration and people who care about politics. The most important reason for selecting *People's Daily* as the data source is that it is the leading voice of the Party in print media, and arguably sets the broad tone and direction for all other serious news outlets in China. Officially and in practice, *People's Daily* is the mouthpiece of the party and the central government. It is one of the most important party organs at the central level. Further, it has unlimited access to official authorities (Jia, 2008, p.43). Journalists affiliated with *People's Daily* typically have the privilege of interviewing high-ranking officials, which makes their coverage more likely to reflect the government's ideas.

In addition, some scholars argued that there might be differences of frames between *People's Daily* and local or commercial newspapers. However, according to Tong (2014, p.363), there were not many differences between party-sponsored and market-oriented media, in terms of climate change coverage, as climate change is an international and political topic. Jia (2008) also found that *People's Daily* reported on climate change more often than commercial, central and local newspapers, and most of the stories were about politics and diplomacy. In this context, *People's Daily* is a representative sample source because this research is interested in finding out how the government tells the story and how the government communicates with the public by using particular frames.

The period selected for this research is from 1998 until 2018. The sample period covers two decades, during which media attention to climate change has increased along with related events, such as extreme weather or annual international climate change conferences (Han et al., 2017, p. 2891). The starting point is chosen because, in 1998, China signed the Kyoto Treaty. China's foreign policy since then has generally shown that China not only engaged in international negotiation and cooperation to mitigate climate change, but also considered climate change as a political and international issue. In addition, *People's Daily* published 45 climate change news articles before 1998, and most of them explained the science feature of climate change.

This research selected news on climate change related to the *Kyoto Protocol* and the *Paris Agreement*. They are the two most significant treaties emerging from UNFCCC to govern climate change. The process of negotiating and passing treaties reflects China's and other countries' positions and interests. Thus, they are different powers' concentrated embodiment and the epitome of decisions and attitudes toward climate change during international negotiations and domestic development. The sample consists of 204 news reports, including 149 related to the *Kyoto Treaty* as well as 56 related to the *Paris Agreement*.

This research uses inductive reasoning. This is because the CCP applying ideology to enhance legitimacy is a certainty, but we still need to study the encoding process, to understand the legitimacy function. An initial scan of the data found that *People's Daily* highlights China's contribution to dealing with climate change. Both international cooperation and international conflicts, especially the conflicts between developing countries and developed countries are significant topics in climate coverage.

### **1.9 Domestic motivation for mitigating climate change**

This thesis concurs with previous research that mitigating climate change is a side-effect of economic development in China. This is because, since 1978, China adopted an economic growth-oriented model, which consumes enormous energy (Delman and Odgaard, 2014, p.221). China pursued economic modernisation, which aimed to transform from an agricultural economy into an industrial economy (Ho, 2006). Fossil fuels, especially coal, are the primary sources of energy when developing industry. However, although China has abundant coal resources, using coal was very inefficient. In 2010, China used 46 per cent of the coal consumed in the world while producing 8 per cent of the world's GDP (IEA, 2012, p.15). There were 20 Chinese cities among the world's 30 most polluted cities in 2006, and coal consumption is the main driver of air pollution (Delman and Odgaard, 2014, p.224). Further, from being an energy exporter in the 1990s, China has become an energy importer today (Engels, 2018, p.3).

The high reliance on energy imports threatened China's energy security, which became a concern for the CCP (Leung et al., 2014, p.3). According to Delman and Odgaard (2014, p.226), there were two ways of dealing with the issue: "energy-saving" and "expansion of the use of renewable energy."

The CCP realised that China's development model had to turn in a sustainable direction, and the process reflects the ideal of ecological modernisation. "The basic premise of ecological modernisation theory is the centripetal movement of ecological interests, ideas and considerations with the social practices and institutional developments of modern societies. This results in ecology-inspired and environment-induced processes of transformation and reform of those same core practices and central institutions" (Mol, 2006, p. 33). Its realisation is accompanied by political modernisation and changes in production and consumption. China's low-carbon model resulted from the power struggle between the local and central government, also reflecting the process of political modernisation. Decentralisation, flexibility and delegation of power from a rigid command and control system to centres of local power can be seen in this process (Mol, 2006, p.40). However, decentralisation itself cannot trigger environmental protection. It also requires support from civil society and accountability mechanisms, as Engels argued (2018, p.4).

In China career incentives through evaluation of local government performance provide an effective system to make sure that local government is accountable to the central government (Mol, 2006, p.41). State-owned enterprises also drive political modernisation in terms of shifting the policy-making process from political and party influence to the dominant economic actors.

The 16th Central Committee of the Community Party of China in 2003 put forward the concept of a "scientific outlook on development". "Science-based development" was interpreted to mean making people's interests central to the government's work and pursuing harmonious development between humans and the environment (Hu 2003). In order to set up the green

development model, the CCP tried to adjust the existing model by using policy, legislation and administration. By 2013, China had become the leading investor in solar and wind energy production in the world (Shen and Xie, 2018, p.407). China expanded the use of wind power and solar parks to begin its transformation to a low-carbon model, and thus began to tackle climate change. This became the key for China to achieve its goal of expansion in renewable energy. This model is characterised by central regulators' active intervention to create and protect the market and home-grown technologies (Xu et al. 2010, p.4439). The state-led model adopts a top-down policy involving less participation and has been identified as "environmental authoritarianism" (Beeson, 2010, p.277). However, "authoritarian environmentalism" was not the only factor facilitating China's transformation to a low-carbon model. In fact, the transformation was the result of a power struggle between central ministries, local administration, and non-state actors (Shen and Xie, 2018, p.408).

To some extent, local power could affect central policy making. To be specific, investment in wind and solar generates substantial economic benefits at the local level. For local officials, GDP growth, employment as well as tax income are the most critical performance indicators for promotion. Private actors, such as manufacturers and financial institutions, also benefit from the investment. Thus, these forces synergised to push the expansion of renewable energy (Harrison and Kostka 2013, p.458). In the beginning, the central government delegated to local governments the power to approve investments. Local governments had the right to approve wind farms of less than 50 megawatts. Local governments, therefore, approved lots of 49.5 MW projects to avoid the central government's supervision. Between 2009 and 2010, more than 60 per cent of new projects were 49.5 MW projects (China Wind Energy Association, 2014). These projects caused difficulties for grid connection. National Energy Administration (NEA) reclaimed the right of investment approval from local authorities. However, this caused a shrinking of the renewable energy market. Manufacturers' profits declined by 70 per cent in 2012 (China Wind Energy Association, 2014). In order to protect the renewable energy industry, NEA had to return the approval right to local authorities in 2012 (Dai 2015, p.8). The

power struggle reflected the fact that the primary position of renewable energy: once renewable energy was on the verge of bankruptcy, the central government took action to save it.

Corporations have grown in influence, and they play a significant role in the policy-making process with the expansion of the renewable energy market (Schmitz, 2016, p.526). NEA and the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology (MIIT) are the essential political participants in the policy-making process. Corporations set up communication departments to communicate with political participants, and they contact each other frequently to formulate policy (Shen, 2016, p.88). The communication departments in corporations became the core team in making policy because the authorities did not have much experience in managing the renewable energy industry as it was an emerging industry and developed rapidly. The ministries had to make sure their policies would work appropriately (Hill, 1997, p.66). Thus, regulatory agencies depended on corporations' accurate data and market analysis to design policy. At the same time, the corporations were also eager to capture the newest policy. This is because renewable energy relies on policy support, and understanding policy is the most crucial strategy for corporations. Further, both political participants and corporations share a common interest in expanding the renewable energy industry (Shen, 2016, p.89). For political participants, their power comes from renewable energy market expansion as it is the main performance criterion for evaluating their work, while for corporations, they benefit from renewable energy market expansion. In addition, negotiation and coordination are frequently the main approaches to making policy (Miller and Demir, 2007, p.140). The regulators have to collect information about corporations' difficulties and feedback to draft policy rather than issuing commands directly. Thus, it loosened coercive state power and helped adjust the corporations' preferences. Meanwhile, corporations had the capacity to interpret information. In this way, the business sector could affect the most crucial elements of policymaking.

Further, corporations were the hub of local power and central power (Shen, 2016, p.89). The business sector provided data to formulate policy at the central level, and they also provided data at the local level to help local government complete an annual local renewable energy



development plan for the NEA. Therefore, companies were more proactive in communication and updating information than the bureaucracy. The process implies that resource exchange makes the alliance stable and firm (Miller and Demir, 2007). Thus, a low-carbon model is balancing interests and power among the central government, local government and business sectors. At the same time, central government, local government and business sectors became a dynamic and stable alliance to expand renewable energy.

According to Leach et al. (2007, p.9), ideals, beliefs and positive narratives are the bonds among participants in an alliance. Compared to fossil fuels, renewable energy has a superior position in environment and climate discourses. Therefore, the discourse of mitigating climate change became the most critical political strategy to promote renewable energy. In fact, the benefit of dealing with climate change through renewable energy was apparent to the non-political participants in the alliance first. Then the central level government helped to form the idea of mitigating climate change. Therefore, the positive narratives of renewable energy were formed through corporations' lobbying rather than through a top-down process.

The central government, local government and business sectors became a dynamic and stable alliance to expand renewable energy and mitigating climate change became a shared value. When did the alliance succeed in achieving the targets set by policies? This research mainly verified this question by examining the Five-year Plans (FYPs), especially the 11th FYP (2006-2010) to the 13th FYP (2016-2020) because this period laid the foundations for China to begin transforming to a low-carbon, green development model. FYPs are an essential part of China's economic planning, and they are long-term plans. They are also comprehensive plans that mainly focus on major national construction projects, the distribution of production and the essential proportions of the national economy (Guo et al, 2014, p.242).

Overall, China has almost met the target set in the 11th FYP and completely met targets in the 12th FYP. However, as the 13th FYP covers the year from 2016 to 2020, it is difficult to access the latest data and coronavirus may hinder achievement of targets. Thus, it is still not

known whether or not China can meet the targets in 13th FYP. By 2010, China had reduced energy consumption per unit of GDP by 19.06 per cent, which meant it did not meet the target of 20 per cent. However, the 20 per cent target was based on the GDP growth target of 7.5 per cent, whereas the average annual GDP growth during the 11th Five-year (2006-2010) was 11.2 per cent, which is much higher than the target (Guo et al., 2014, p.246). Although China did not completely meet the reduction target, the 11th FYP still worked in promoting energy-saving and expansion of renewable energy. For the 12th FYP, according to IEA (2017), the data on CO<sub>2</sub> emissions per unit of GDP shows that in 2015, China's rate was 1.01 kg CO<sub>2</sub>/US dollar, while in 2011, it was 1.27. Thus during 12th FYP, China achieved the target by reducing its emissions per unit of GDP by 20 per cent. According to the latest date from IEA (2019), compared to 2015, the rate of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions per unit of GDP declined 10 per cent by 2017.

Zhang (2015, p.48) argued that there are two ways to evaluate low-carbon policy, its "growth effect" and its "low carbon effect". In terms of "growth effect", against the background of the economic crisis in 2008, China issued stringent reduction targets in the 11th FYP, when the Chinese economy grew 10.69 per cent annually on average. Further, renewable energy has become a source of Chinese economic growth (Zhang, p. 49), as being the world's largest generator of wind power brings significant economic growth and employment opportunities. In terms of a "low-carbon effect", China has met its reduction targets in the 11th FYP and 12th FYP. The achievement shows that the CCP thinks highly of low-carbon development and set targets for reducing emissions. These are the political guarantees and incentives for low-carbon development. Although China's determination and mandatory policy are necessary, lack of flexibility is a shortcoming of its policy-making process and implementation. For example, some provinces had to cut power to meet targets set in the 11th FYP. Setting targets should consider the economically efficient level of actual emissions (Zhang, 2015, p.45). In addition, local government can assess policy more efficiently through enterprises than through a bureaucratic system. On the one hand, this reflects the fact that the bureaucratic system lacks efficiency in communication, while on the other hand, enterprises made up for the problem. Thus, central government, local government and enterprises form a flexible and

effective system in transforming the structure of energy consumption as well as governance of climate change. It also made China more confident in their ability to deal with climate change and play a positive role in global climate governance.

### **1.10 China's positive image in mitigating climate change**

The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) adopted in 1992 set differentiated emission reduction commitments for different countries or regions, depending on their different capabilities and national circumstances. This is the principle of Common but Differentiated Responsibilities and Respective Capabilities (CBDRRC) (UNCED, 1992). Developed country parties should take the lead in mitigating climate change and its adverse effects while considering developing country parties' specific needs and special circumstances to set reduction targets. The responsibilities of the parties are distinguished according to the dichotomy effectively introduced in Appendix 1 of the UNFCCC. However, as the economy and politics evolves, some developed countries have argued that the dichotomy of responsibility should be defined dynamically. For example, when developing countries have developed to a certain level, they should take on obligations. Developed countries are seeking fairness based on current and future emission demands.

Pauw et al. (2014, p.16) argued that the dichotomy of Appendix 1 or Non-Appendix 1 does not fully reflect the level of GDP of each country. Further, historical emissions are challenging to assess with any certainty and therefore, it is difficult to reach a consensus, for example, on which greenhouse gases should be considered as historical emissions (Dellink, 2008, p.3). Thus, the principle of CBDRRC continues to be a key concept of the UNFCCC. However, different countries interpret CBDRRC differently according to their historical responsibility, capacity, national circumstance and development needs.

In this context, the legitimacy of China's international behaviour declined. The developed countries criticised China for not doing enough to deal with climate change, especially during

the Copenhagen conference. The UK climate secretary, Ed Miliband (2009) considered that climate negotiations were hijacked (by China) and "China wants to weaken the climate regulation regime now, in order to avoid the risk that it might be called on to be more ambitious in few years' time" (Lynas, 2009).

Thus, on the one hand, *People's Daily* framed a positive image in climate news reports, focussing on China's contributions or actions in mitigating climate change and international climate negotiations. The image of a responsible major power and leader repeatedly appeared in the framing of China's image. On the other hand, China emphasised adherence to CBDRRC and their identity as a developing country. This study finds that for the CCP applying CBDRRC as a negotiation strategy was more important than claiming fairness for China. In addition, when developed countries attempted to reinterpret this international principle, the CCP realised that deep involvement in international negotiation was also crucial for the legitimacy of China's international behaviour. Thus, the CCP wishes to influence international rules with Chinese values and make the Chinese voice heard. The CCP aims to become an opinion leader rather than a passive recipient of rules.

In order to form an influential discourse, the CCP believes that it should satisfy the interests of more countries and find the greatest common denominator. Once a concept meets the interests of most parties, it will gain strong support. Thus, the CCP has started to rethink CBDRRC: from focusing on different countries' differentiated obligations to the common obligation to the human race, it not only emphasises that all countries have a unshrinkable obligation to take action on climate change but also provides a basis for reaching a broad consensus for parties to take responsibility and solve problems fairly and effectively. Emphasising common obligations is more likely to resonate widely and is in keeping with this strategy. For these reasons, the CCP has proposed the discourse of "A Community of Shared Future for Mankind."

The 18th National Congress of the CCP of China adopted the notion of a Community of Shared

Future for Mankind. It means that they advocate the consciousness of a common human destiny and consider the reasonable concerns of other countries when pursuing the interests of our country (Qian et al., 2012). The base of the community of human destiny is to abandon the zero-sum game. It is trying to establish the democratic principle in international affairs that all countries have rights to be involved in decision-making according to international rules. China is trying to establish a new model of international relations. The concept implies the values of common interests, mutual comprehension, cooperation and sustainability. It corresponds to the principle of win-win cooperation, shared development and shared prosperity. Development or sustainable development is the most important topic for all countries. Climate change is an issue caused by development, and it only can be solved by development. The CCP encourages each country to seek a development path by means of innovation and transformation to achieve economic growth and to create a planet where humans and nature co-exist in harmony. In this context, connecting mitigating climate change with national interests is an effective way to consider sustainable development and climate governance.

In addition, the CCP also fits the values of Confucianism into these discourses. To be specific, the CCP's rethink of CBDRRC stemmed from a desire "to seek common points while reserving differences". This means commonalities are fundamental, and differences are partial. *People's Daily* portrays China as an intelligent, influential power, capable of reconciling contradictions. This is the role that China strives to play in the international community. The revival of Confucianism has given a unique cultural stamp to discourse based on Chinese values. Confucianism also influences the discourse of A Community of Shared Future for Mankind. To be specific, it is based on principles of friendship and inclusiveness (Ding and Cheng, 2017, p2), such as "The poor should try to help themselves, while the successful should help make a better world" ("穷则独善其身, 达则兼济天下") (Yang, 2006, p.8).

These discourses are influential at the theoretical level because they reflect more countries' interests, sovereign equality as well as win-win cooperation, and have the imprint of Chinese

culture. However, China's actual contributions are the major reason that they can make these discourses influential. Further, only when China becomes a real great power, can they try to set a new model of international relations and have the right to interpret international rules, not only in the climate governance area. Therefore, China's shift to a sustainable development model can combine low-carbon development and mitigating climate change at the same time. It is also worth noting that at the current stage, these discourses are helping China expand its influence. At the same time, such discourses must match China's actions to make them persuasive. As a complex global issue, climate governance requires international cooperation while each country is struggling for economic benefits, development as well as technological protection. How China cooperates with other powers will be explored in the next section.

### **1.11 Solidarity of International community**

The main task of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) is to provide an evaluation of scientific knowledge on climate change, the potential impacts of climate change on society and the economy as well as countermeasures for adapting and mitigating climate change, in the form of an assessment report. In 1990, the IPCC issued the first assessment report, which confirmed the scientific basis of climate change. It prompted the UN General Assembly to decide to develop the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) (Blobel et al. 2006). The UNFCCC is an international environmental treaty adopted in 1992. The objective of the UNFCCC is to "stabilise greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere at a level that would prevent dangerous anthropogenic (human-induced) interference with the climate system" (UN, 1992, p9). Parties to the UNFCCC have held Conferences of the Parties (COPs) annually since 1995 and have tried to assess progress in mitigating climate change. The Kyoto Protocol was adopted at COP3 in 1997. The objective of the Kyoto Protocol was "stabilisation of greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere at a level that would prevent dangerous anthropogenic interference with the climate system" (UN, 1992, p9). COP21 adopted the Paris Agreement in 2015 with the aim of controlling the global

average temperature within 2 degrees compared to the pre-industrial period and controlling the temperature rise within 1.5 degrees.

The progress from the *Kyoto Protocol* to the *Paris Agreement* reflects the expansion of the international climate governance mechanism. First of all, compared to the *Kyoto Protocol*, the *Paris Agreement* emphasised national circumstances more when introducing the principles of CBDRRC. It expanded the value of fairness. Unlike the Kyoto Protocol, the Paris Agreement does not adopt a dichotomous approach by dividing parties into Annex I and non-Annex I countries. It suggests an in-depth exploration of the principle of equity in global climate governance. Further, in terms of governance model, the *Kyoto Protocol* employs a top-down model of cooperation as it sets emission reduction targets and timetables for developed countries, while there are no emission reduction targets for developing countries. Instead of continuing to employ the top-down model, the *Paris Agreement* confirms the cooperative model of Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), which is a bottom-up model.

However, both the Kyoto Protocol and the Paris Agreement are weak when it comes to enforcing compliance. Therefore, the international community needs a mandatory multilateral environmental governance mechanism. Multilateral relationships contribute to balances of power, which finally achieve mandatory measures. Parties carry out informal consultations, based on common interests. Informal consultations allow parties to express their opinion as a group and make sure these views can be considered. The main groups include the EU, the Group of 77 and China and the BASIC countries.

China's image in international cooperation is contradictory. In terms of economy, China is the second-largest economy in the world and based on current and future emissions, China has been expected to take more responsibility. China's strategy is emphasising its status as a developing country and participating in informal consultations groups to express China's position and interests. Developed countries believe that the foundation of the principle of

CBDRRC has changed. China's responsibilities and capabilities for climate change have increased, and these kinds of change will continue. Therefore, it is necessary to reinterpret CBDRRC, for example, by employing a dynamic dichotomy approach to distinguish Annex I and non-Annex I country. In this regard, *the People's Daily* emphasises historical emissions and argues that developed countries cannot shirk their responsibilities. It highlights that climate change is real and refutes climate scepticism. At the same time, China is a country with a large population. Although China's economy has improved, China is not a developed country and needs further development. Therefore, China does not believe that the foundation of the CBDRRC has changed. Based on recognition and adherence to CBDRRC, China and Brazil, South Africa and India form the BASIC countries. BASIC countries aim to unite developing countries and persuade developed countries to fulfil their commitments to carry out international cooperation in reducing emissions in line with their national interests.

The formation of multilateral groups in climate negotiations reflects the conflicts of interests among powers. International cooperation has begun to take place in a more balanced way. Although the parties have formed small groups base on common interests, they also have different interest requirements. Thus, climate negotiation is a process full of cooperation and conflicts. At the same time, climate change is a problem closely related to energy security, and energy security issues affect the security of national sovereignty, which makes climate change negotiations have the characteristics of ideological struggle. The next section will introduce the conflicts among different powers and investigate their ideological struggles.

### **1.12 International conflicts in mitigating climate change**

*People's Daily* pays significant attention to the US, and there is no other country that has as high exposure and presentation space as the US. The sample of 418 news reports includes 30 news articles related to the US, and the US plays a leading role in 20 news articles. *People's Daily* has framed the US as an irresponsible country and emphasised that the US should take more responsibility for climate change. *People's Daily* spends much effort to prove that developed countries should take a lead role in global climate governance.



Domestic politics has a profound impact on the US's performance in global climate governance, and under the leadership of different presidents, there were apparent differences. The US did not pass the Kyoto Protocol in 2001. President George Walker Bush did not deny that climate change was happening nor doubt the threat of climate change. The crux of the problem was that the Kyoto Protocol did not restrict developing countries' emissions at the same time as limiting those of the United States (The White House, 2001). In 2007, President Bush's administration proposed that after the first phase of the Kyoto Protocol expired, the new international climate change framework should include developed and developing countries (US Department of State, 2007). Thus, the Bush administration was trying to reshape the international community's consensus on the principle of CBDRRC and global climate change governance mechanisms to avoid burdening US economic growth. The Obama administration's climate change policy continued the policies of the previous administration and still attempted to reinterpret the principle of CBDRRC. For example, State Department envoy Todd Stern argued that the major developing countries must take action to reduce their emissions substantially. "And you cannot get the kind of reductions you need globally if China is not a major player in this. That's the reality" (Samuelsohn, 2009). President Donald Trump decided to withdraw from the Paris Agreement. The Trump administration's views on climate change issues are entirely from a political perspective. Avoiding US economic losses in global climate governance is the key to their climate policy.

The different administrations show that the essence of the conflict between China and the US is how to identify reduction responsibility. China and the US do not disagree on the content of the principle of CBDRRC. Instead, as the global political and economic landscape changes, there are differences in the interpretation and application of the principle. The US proposed that CBDRRC should be applied dynamically. Emerging powers, like China, should take more responsibility for reducing emissions. The principle of CBDRRC should reflect changes in the ability of some developing countries, which can take on more emission reduction responsibilities. The US puts more emphasis on current or future emission requirements as a

standard of responsibility, while China emphasises that it should completely adhere to CBDRRC and that developed countries should be responsible for historical emissions. The differences between China and the US show that they both hope global climate governance can benefit their development. The US's vision of the global climate governance mechanism is to reform the part that protects the interests of developing countries. They argue that emerging powers should take more responsibility to create a favourable competitive environment for developed countries. China's position is to insist on the global climate governance mechanism for safeguarding the interests of developing countries.

The *People's Daily* has paid great attention to the US, while the US also repeatedly emphasises that China should take more action to deal with climate change. This reflects China's and the US's anxiety about each other and even antagonism. The sense of anxiety comes partly from conflicts of interests. Both China and the US are trying to protect their economic development. As a Communist party, the CCP's interests are supported by a different kind of ideology, which is socialism. *People's Daily* has used the comparison to put China's responsible actions and the US's irresponsible action together. Therefore, by comparing the performance of mitigating climate change between China and the US, *People's Daily* seeks to persuade its readers to resist liberal democracy and rely on the CCP. This because Chinese people traditionally have a different understanding of liberal democracy, and they think highly of people-oriented policies (民本思想). It requires the leader should enhance the welfare of the people and only in this way, can power acquire legitimacy (仁政). Thus, by comparison with a capitalist developed country, socialism has superiority and legitimacy among the public. In addition, *People's Daily* fits nationalism into the ideological battle. As an international topic, nationalism is an effective discourse to generate a sense of national identity and national pride. *People's Daily* tries to frame China as a strong competitor to Western liberal democracy. For instance, after the US announced its withdrawal from the Paris Agreement, *People's Daily* framed China as a leader in mitigating climate change. It implied that considering China's achievements in mitigating climate change, that

liberal democracy is not the right path for China to achieve national renaissance and socialism is competitive.

### **1.13 Thesis outline**

The organisation of the remainder of this thesis is as follows. Chapter 2 offers a review of relevant literature. It finds that the CCP uses ideology as a means to maintain domination and keep continuity and adaptability of policy. At present, legitimacy crises for the CCP emerge from the public, CCP members do not firmly believe in socialism and environmental deterioration restricts sustainable economic development.

In this context, Chapter 3 discusses climate change causes CCP's legitimacy crisis but also is an opportunity to deal with legitimacy deficits. Unlike Western practices of presenting climate change, there are no sceptical voices in Chinese climate change news reports and Chinese environmental journalists try to be objective by adopting a balance norm to express their opinions. Chinese climate communication research mainly focuses on journalism, discourse and scope. However, not too many studies connect climate change coverage to the CCP's ideology. In addition, as an international issue, current studies leave a gap in understanding the CCP's ideology in Chinese climate communication across the international and domestic levels. Thus, how the CCP makes climate change communication fit into the continuity and adaptability of its ideology and how the CCP treats climate change communication to claim the superiority of socialist ideology are issues still requiring further study.

Chapter 4 explores the context of China's policies to mitigate climate change. China is shifting to ecological modernisation. Decentralisation and state-owned enterprises drive the policy-making process from political and party influence to the dominant economic actors resulting in ecological modernisation. Local power, central power and enterprises form a dynamic and stable alliance to promote renewable energy consumption and mitigate climate change as a shared value underpinning the solidarity of the alliance.

Chapter 5 explains the methods used to answer the research questions. This study adopted framing analysis as a research method and social semiotics as a general analytical approach. It considers frames as an outcome of social semiotic practices. This research examines climate coverage by *People's Daily* from 1998 until 2018 including news related to the Kyoto Protocol and the Paris Agreement. An initial scan of the data found that *People's Daily* highlights China's contribution to dealing with climate change, and both international cooperation and international conflicts are significant topics in climate coverage.

Chapter 6 to chapter 8 are data analysis chapters. Chapter 6 finds that the CCP spends a great effort arguing that although China became the second-biggest economy in the world, China still is a developing country. Thus, in theory, China's efforts to deal with climate change are voluntary, while in practice, China has overfulfilled their responsibility. Further, the CCP attempts to form influential discourse to affect international climate governance mechanisms rather than passively accept the rules. It is a way for the CCP to defend their legitimacy and refute Western countries' criticism that countries should take responsibility based on current and future emissions.

Chapter 7 argues that climate change coverage in *People's Daily* reflects changes in the world political and economic landscape from the *Kyoto Protocol* to the *Paris Agreement*. More and more developing countries play in an increasing role in the world's political economy as well as challenging the dominant position of developed countries in the global governance model. The international community needs a mandatory multilateral environmental governance mechanism. Multilateral relationships contribute to balances of power, which finally achieve mandatory measures. In reality, parties form multilateral relationships, such as Group of 77 and China and the BASIC group, to express their opinions. China actively participates in these group consultations to strengthen its position in geopolitics.

Chapter 8 finds that *People's Daily* coverage emphasises that countries have different interests when governing the climate according to their different national conditions. China uses the principle of *Common but Differentiated Responsibilities and Respective Capabilities* (CBDRRC) and the international climate governance mechanism to safeguard their interests and development space. China has always argued that their status is that of a developing country, a status which contributes flexibility of policy as well as room for manoeuvre in international negotiations. *People's Daily* has paid special attention to the US and framed the US as an irresponsible country, while China is a responsible country. This kind of comparison implies the failure of capitalism and the superiority of socialism.

Chapter 9 is the conclusion. It summarises the arguments and contribution, specifically this research contributes to the current Chinese climate communication study in dynamic and found that the CCP's ideology archives continuity and adaptability. Requirements cause China's climate communication development, and these developments flow from practical to philosophical levels. This research also contributes to the current Chinese climate communication studies across the international and domestic levels. Finally, these findings contribute to understanding the CCP's overall planning ability. It also discusses some ideas for future research.

## **Chapter 2 Ideology and Legitimacy**

### **2.1 Introduction**

Climate change threatens CCP's ideology differently from liberal values. Liberal values challenge the party from outside, or the Western world, which is also verified by the CCP's defensive response strategy (Xinhua Net, 2015). The issue of climate change can threaten CCP's ideology within the political system. Although from the perspective of historical cumulative emissions, or per capita emissions, China is not a significant emitter (MEE, 2018), as the cost of rapid development climate change is a general trend. In terms of domestic China, it is a socialist country governed by the CCP. Due to vast territory and diverse ethnic groups, the regime adopts an indirect form of accountability through people's congresses rather than complete and direct democracy. In addition, people's demands for a better life are increasing (Beijing Daily, 2020). Thus, if the CCP fails to address climate change, it will impact the party's ruling ability and, if the consequences in China are severe, could even threaten the regime. In terms of international society, the CCP follows Marxism-Leninism and agrees with the idea of universal laws of historical human development: they believe socialist society and a communist society will inevitably replace capitalist society (International Department of CPC, 2003). If the CCP fails to deal with a global issue such as climate change, it will also impact China's international status. Therefore, climate change poses a comprehensive challenge to the bases of the CCP's legitimacy.

Thus, this chapter will address this ideology as necessary for the CCP to maintain power and enhance legitimacy. This chapter introduces China's studies in ideology and various strategies to respond to the legitimacy crisis. The chapter is structured as follows. Section 2.2 introduces the party, state and society, the concept of ideology in section 2.3. 2.4 shows the development of ideology and three main genres of ideology in Marxist theory. Section 2.5 shows the CCP thinks highly of ideology because of its function of legitimation. The following sections explores crises for the CCP and the party's responses.

## **2.2 The party, state and society**

In the context of China's one-party system, when examining the ideology and legitimacy of the ruling party, it is necessary to distinguish the ruling party, the state, and the society in the very first place. This is because the state-society relationship is the most popular framework when analysing Chinese politics. However, due to this framework's lack of the party's role, it is impossible to observe the tension between the party and the state when issuing competing orders; for example (Snape and Wang, 2020, pp.477-478), in 2018, the Chinese Constitution added, "The leadership of the CCP is the essential feature of socialism with Chinese characteristics" and apply small leadership groups and party organisations to obtain power from state agencies. It will also be impossible to observe the dynamic interaction between the CCP, the state, and social actors.

In order to clarify the relationship between the ruling party, state, and society, the concept of party-state should be clarified in the first place. The concept of party-state implies that the interests of the party and state institutions coexist and are the same thing. In general, the party's leadership dominates important decision-making processes within the system. However, domination arises from the interaction between the party and the state. They cannot always be the same. Therefore, the party must operate through the state and social institutions and actors in the ruling process, while the state emphasises its professional behaviour, administrative knowledge, and governance. At the same time, the party cannot simply besiege the state's functions; otherwise, the party's legitimacy will be questioned. Thus, the concept of the party-state will conceal this dynamic process of competition between the party and the state (Snape and Wang, 2020, pp.480-481). How does the ruling party influence the country while defending its legitimacy in the ruling process? This research adopts the concepts of the CCP's ideology and legitimacy to understand the party's role.

This research adopts the CCP's ideology and legitimacy concepts because the party affects the state and society in various ways. In terms of the party affecting the state, the party achieve that through outward-facing and inward-facing action. In the aspect of outward facing action,

taking the Plan on Deepening Party and State Agency Reform as an example, civil servants are put under the party management by merging the State Civil Servants' Bureau into the CCP Central Organization department and 'organic melding' internal party oversight and discipline inspection and state organ oversight and supervision. In addition, the party applies vague language to blur the institutional nature of its relationship with the state. From the inward-facing perspective, since the party relies on the state and society to operate, they have to figure out the relationship with non-party members first. There are statements for formulating party groups in the same documents mentioned above. In other words, the party led decision-making mechanism in non-party organisations (Snape and Wang, 2020, pp482-485).

Snape and Wang (2020, pp.489-492) also pointed out problems of simply applying 'advancing party, retreating state' to observe state-society. It ignores the dynamic interaction between the party, state and society. They took Council Reform Plan in 1998 as an example. The state cancelled 15 departments, which related to trade and industry. Although the country gave up some powers, the state's status and role did not decline in society. Instead, the state takes responsibility for overseeing trade and industry associations. Thus, this is a process of changing the state's role and increasing social organisations' power. Further, in this process, the party relied on state institutions to govern social organisations, for example, Notice on Strengthening Societies' Party Building Work and the inclusion of societies in the Party Charter. In addition, the party deeply participate in social organisations by establishing a withdrawal posture. Finally, the party introduced the management norms for social organisations to ban illegal citizen organisations.

In summary, neither the party-state nor the state-society can capture the dynamic interaction of the party, state, and society in the context of a one-party system. Therefore, this study adopts the concept of the CCP's ideology and legitimacy, analysing the CCP's legitimacy crisis related to climate change and how the party responds to it in terms of ideology. During the research, it is necessary to bring the state and society into the investigation, but they are serving to understand the party's identity and role. The state and society are not the research objects of



this study.

### **2.3 Ideology**

The concept of ideology was proposed during the period of the French Revolution by Destutt de Tracy (Strath, 2013, P.4). In the beginning, ideology was subjects which explored "regular and general patterns that conformed to laws" (Strath, 2013, P.4). Moving to the middle of the 19th century, the concept of ideology became an "action-oriented concept for shaping the future". Ideology was no longer about exploring patterns which conformed to laws. In the 1840s, Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels conducted a series of discussions which had a vital influence on the development of the concept of ideology (Strath, 2013, P.6). They separated reality and ideology as well as base and superstructure. They considered both religion and the bourgeois state as expressions of ideology. Ideology was determined to be part of the superstructure, which reflected and camouflaged the actual material foundation.

In the twentieth century, Mannheim developed Marx's theory to be more general in terms of the function of ideology in capitalism and social-democratic relativisation. Ideology corresponds to particular social groups and status, which generates particular ways of thinking. He argued that the diversity of knowledge and ideas have a relationship to different social groups as well as their positions in social structures (Mannheim, 1929, P.29). Ideology acts as a reference point shaping a social group's cooperation and coordination. It plays an essential role in this process and works as a producer of a diverse ideas. Mannheim considered that ideology has both social and psychological meaning rather than simply being a means to manipulate. Ideology is dynamic and corresponds to changes in social power. After World War II, the political and social function of ideology was highlighted, and it became an applicable concept. During this period, ideology was considered a means of governing society and social processes (Parsons, 1951, P.201). In this context, ideology gained political functions and was used to command society as well as guide actions. Further, ideology legitimated or delegitimated political actions and could make certain value preferences appear to be

reasonable (Freeden, 2003, P.29).

After the Soviet collapse, certain liberal scholars considered ideology an outdated concept because ideological competition no longer existed, as there was the only one that remained. Liberalism was seen as the victor, resulting in “the end of history” (Fukuyama, 1992, P.3). However, threats to legitimacy and the need of power mobilisation still existed under different regimes. Nationalism, populism, as well as racism, have been invoked in ideological struggles, making ideological conflicts more diverse. Thus, there is no end to the ideology in history. Trying to understand ideology is therefore an endless study.

## **2.4 Marxist Theories of Ideology**

It is challenging to define the concept of ideology by reviewing its development through history. This section will mainly explain understandings of ideology in Marxist theory. There are three main currents.

Marxist understandings of ideology. The first understanding involves applying ideology as a critical concept and considers ideology as "false consciousness". This genre attracts the support of Georg Lukács and the Frankfurt School. The second interpretation of ideology believes ideology can impact individuals' understanding of the world: Antonio Gramsci and Louis Althusser are pioneers in developing this concept. The third and last definition is Lenin's branch, ideology is a worldview that is class-specific in Marxism-Leninism, and it has a neutral and positive conception in his usage (Krawczyk, 2019, P.156).

### 2.4.1 Critical Conception of Ideology

In the early stages, Marx identified ideology as a system of ideas, beliefs and worldviews, which dominates humanity by alienating them away from what is human (Krawczyk, 2019, P.156). This concept has been used to analyse elites' activities, explore the rationality of the

ruling class, and expand the universalisation of class interest. Thus, ideology gets away from its alien character by encouraging obedience to bourgeois rule. However, Marx abandoned the concept of ideology when he developed the concept of commodity fetishism. Commodity fetishism means every social relationship is an object relationship based on goods or money. Information exchange happens along with commodity exchange rather than as a meeting among humans in the process of commodity exchange. Therefore, commodity exchange hides a complex social relationship and makes information exchange appear as simply commodity exchange. At the same time, commodity exchange is an automated process which results from capitalist laws of social development and human activities (Eagleton 1991, P.25). In this context, "the justifying function of the thought-form in question" as well as "the systematising activities of ideologues" are missing in capitalist society (Krawczyk, 2009, p.157). Based on Marx's theory, Georg Lukács (1991, p.50) developed the concept of ideology as false consciousness. This kind of false consciousness is determined by commodity fetishism. In this context, ideology manifests an objective social relationship based on commodity fetishism rather than coming from ideologues and their thought-forms. Commodity fetishism serves to help capital society to understand social status. Once an idea reflects social status, it becomes a part of ideology. Thus, by challenging commodity fetishism, one can simplify complex social relations and awaken from social development dynamics, which is the critical concept of ideology.

#### 2.4.2 The Materiality of Ideology

Different from the critical concept of ideology, Althusser (1971, p.51) defined ideology as "living, habitual and social practice" and false consciousness. He also placed ideology in "material practices and rituals of ideological state apparatuses (ISA)". ISAs shape the subject of understanding through a material and ideological effect. Thus, ideology has been identified as the performance of ritual practices.

### 2.4.3 Natural or Positive Concepts of Ideology

Lenin concluded that ideology is just like the scientific theory of historical materialism (Krawczyk, 2019, p.157). In this context, ideology is a theoretical system that can produce correct knowledge as well as guarantee that political factors can construct a socialist social order and finally achieve a communist social order. Thus, ideology is a collective discourse for the proletariat to communicate with the public to drive society toward socialism. Compared to the previous two interpretations, Lenin identified ideology as true consciousness (Lenin, 1961, p.347). Lenin claimed that Marxism is a kind of ideology, which can be used to fix capitalist values. Just developing an ideology that conforms to socialist social order can be powerful in overcoming the shortcomings of capitalism. Thus, in this context, ideology is the collective discourse of classes. Therefore, the term "ideology" has been used in a positive way to communicate with the public to build a socialist society.

Based on the understanding of these three genres of ideology interpretation, this research follows the critical concept of ideology. According to Thompson (1990, p8), ideology is the meaning that can "establish and sustain relations of domination". At the same time, in order to understand the ideology is to understand how "symbolic forms" construct meaning. The CCP considers ideology to be a body of ideas or doctrines that sustain the CCP's power. Actually, the CCP treats ideology as a neutral or positive concept which is quite different to the critical concept adopted in this study. This study employs framing analysis to examine *People's Daily's* (P.D.) discourse rather than engaging in discussions of doctrines. However, in order to access CCP's ideology underpins climate coverage, it is necessary to understand the development of Marxist theories of ideology in China because they directly inform the CCP's communication practices.

## **2.5 Marxist Theories of Ideology in China**

Lenin's concept of ideology began to spread in China as far back as 1895-1910 (Mahooney,

2009, p.141). China adopted the positive concept of ideology. Since the 1980s, three significant events have influenced Chinese studies on Marxism. Firstly, the collapse of the Soviet Union was viewed as a failure of socialist society. It resulted in the second event, which was a popular discussion regarding the end of ideology in the western world. Thirdly, China experienced the "Tiananmen Square" event in 1989, and the values of liberalism failed to reform Chinese Marxism. Therefore, China's academic research on ideology in Marxist theory has adopted a different approach from the West. This section will explain how ideology is studied within Marxist theory in China. Although there are discussions of an "ideological vacuum" in China, the importance of ideology has remained stable since Mao's era. Even though China experienced economic reforms and media commercialisation, the absolute dominance of ideology never changed (Holbig, 2013, p.62).

#### 2.5.1 Dialectical Materialism and Stalinism

In 1938, the book *Dialectics and Historical Materialism*, edited by Joseph Stalin, offered an official interpretation of Marxism. It was an authoritative educational textbook in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, and it was exported to China as an official interpretation. According to Dialectical Materialism, the origin of the world is material, and ideology is highly developed material. However, this argument ignored the role of social intermediaries in the process of forming ideology. Thus, the Chinese scholar Yu Wujin (1993) clarified ideology as an "organic whole" involving various forms of consciousness, such as religion and law. Yu Wujin worked to re-evaluate Karl Marx. His book *On Ideology* is "the most comprehensive study of the topic" in China (Krawczyk, 2019 p, 162) and the main topic is the analysis of Karl Marx's work.

In addition, Yu (1993) also criticised Stalin for exploring historical materialism based on dialectical materialism. Stalin argued that world development moves from a low level to a high level through the power struggle of opposing tendencies. Yu argued that expanding the class struggle led to the failure of socialism in the Soviet Union. In contrast, Lenin and Mao Zedong overcame mechanistic materialism and considered ideology as the passive product of social

life, having an autonomous character.

### 2.5.2 Humanist Marxism

Humanist Marxism focuses on "what human nature consists of and what sort of society would be most conducive to human thriving" (Alderson, 2017, p.17). After the "Tiananmen Square" event, Humanist Marxism was suppressed in China, because it was considered a form of bourgeois humanism, which could endanger the Chinese socialism. In this context, Yu's attitude toward Humanist Marxism is ambiguous. He believed Humanist Marxism was necessary. Yet, he criticised unofficial ideology for abandoning historical materialism and denying the conflict between socialist and capitalist ideologies. Thus, the official ideology of the CCP aimed to preserve socialism. However, Zeng (2016, p.22) found that the CCP also adopted an informal ideology by applying populist language to justify authoritarian rule to Chinese society. It is worth noting that this informal ideology aims to destroy the legitimacy of liberal democracy and enhance the one-party state's ideological legitimacy. Informal ideology is not a value system. It is incoherent, and its values cannot form the basis for policies. For example, if the CCP makes people believe that China is a strong power, the public will expect China to be tough in international conflicts. If the CCP fails to act as a strong power, informal ideology such as national rejuvenation can be a reason to overthrow the CCP's rule. Thus, informal ideology works in the short term. Nevertheless, it still has been used to preserve socialist ideology.

### 2.5.3 The Nature of Ideology in Marxist Theory

According to Yu (1993), ideology in Marxist theory is a critical theory of ideology, and it is the precondition for historical materialism. Historical materialism would be unsophisticated empiricism without a critical theory of ideology. At the same time, he argued that the nature of ideology in Marxism is derivative. Ideology is the superstructure of an economic base. It represents the ruling class's interests. Its feature is to replace or disguise the truth by creating hallucinatory relations.

Similar to the previous critical definition of ideology, Marx critiqued bourgeois ideology as commodity fetishism. The purpose of capitalism is to produce value, yet in bourgeois fetishism, goods' social character is seen as a natural quality. Thus, Marx contributed to developing the labour theory of value. Since only labour can produce value, the core idea in bourgeois fetishism, for Marx, evaporated. When peoples use public means of production and consciously consider an individual's labour as social labour, then production time plays a dual role. On the one hand, there is the socially planned distribution of working time and the proper ratio of various functions corresponding to demands. On the other hand, working time indicates an individual producer's share of the collective labour and therefore measures an individual producer's share of consumption of the common production. Then the social relationship is no longer covered by production, and commodity fetishism will eventually be superseded. However, only the advanced stage of communist society can make commodity fetishism completely disappear. The next section will explain ideology's function of legitimation.

## **2.6 Legitimation and Ideology**

Studies on the use of ideology to sustain the CCP rule is a popular angle for accessing the ideology concept. Usually, such studies adopt the neutral concept of ideology. In this context, ideology is used to support political actors' status, interests and agenda. This section will explain how ideology acts to enhance legitimacy. This is essential to understand why ideology has not declined in China but rather is a vital pillar of the CCP rule.

Legitimacy is "the capacity of the system to engender and maintain the belief that the existing political institutions are the most appropriate ones for the society" (Lipset, 1981, p.84). This definition highlights beliefs and opinions. In other words, if people believe that an institution is appropriate, then the institution is legitimate (Schaar, 1984, p.108). However, when legitimacy is understood as belief, public opinion becomes the only criterion for identifying legitimacy. It generates a problem of opaqueness in political phenomena because people are

likely to acquiesce to the regime to gain personal benefit. From another perspective, legitimacy is the system's ability to convince members to believe its appropriateness. The leader sets the rules and spreads symbols to the followers (Lipset, 1981, pp.80-81). Regimes or leaders usually start by improving welfare. These signs condense the ruler's political practice and intentions. However, symbols do not fully reveal political activities and may also hide other intentions. For example, the symbol of democracy covers the actual governance process in modern countries. Therefore, the argument suggested that research cannot rely on the social semiotics approach to access the governance intentions. Thus, this research will only be rooted in understanding CCP's ideology when communicating climate change.

If the public's belief is the source of legitimacy, then the supplements from outside authority can support the public's belief. (Schaar, 1984, p.111). However, when the mode or restrictions of power has changed or new powers are given, legitimacy can be a weapon to help people to fight for benefits and get rid of the coercion. During the process of power legalisation, power is transformed into authority. This is also applicable in China. One of the legitimacy crises in China results from the challenges of liberal values. This point will be addressed in detail in section 2.7. The legitimacy of power comes from its origin and purpose. In other words, power should come from democratic consent and act on the common interests or public interest. In the modern age, the transition from power to authority has highlighted rational-legal authority rather than charismatic and traditional structures. However, the rational-legal authority has been weakened. The following sections will specifically introduce the decline of the legitimacy of rational-legal authority.

In terms of the epistemology route, exploring truth means constant discovery, or exploring a pre-established order. When people deepen their understanding of the world, they can achieve harmony with the outside world and themselves. People searching for truth and achieving harmony with the world is the same as when they get along with the social and political world. This is because when people consider faith as the source of legitimacy, the order of the social and political world exists besides human will. However, in the process of legitimising power,



the social order has changed to depend on human will and lack of external sources of rewards and punishments. In this context, skill and power can change the social and political worlds. Along with the decline of the view that legitimacy comes from faith, the authority class who had the knowledge and advocated the ruling power also dismantled. In the present, scientists are likely to replace them. When people cannot find undiscovered natural phenomena, they have to re-think legitimacy. This is because the order is artificial and easy to change. Everything is given corresponding authority in the system. The regime is false and malleable (Wolin, 1963, pp.15-29). Then new arguments are required to restrict human activities. As Habermas (1968) pointed out, science and technology are the primary productive forces and the basis of legitimacy. This is because the achievements of science and technology are non-political. Further, labour generates scientific and technological achievements. It implies that the legitimacy flows from the bottom up rather than resulting from the political domination of certain classes. Therefore, this research believes that science and technology are an essential frame for defence legitimacy when it declines in modern countries.

In terms of the moral route, the country or the community are "born" (Schaar, 1981, p.30). At the same time, a person with knowledge of law and customs can play a parental role to guide the people to become a nation. The prophet existed at the beginning of creating a nation and constantly corrects blurred or changed boundaries through myths and rituals after founding the nation. However, alongside individual self-awareness growth, people gradually ignore the close relationship between morality and the group. Individuals seek knowledge for themselves while devaluing external moral origins. Rousseau believed that no country is truly legitimate until people have self-awareness and enjoy group moral bonds and restrictions. Hobbes (1651, P.61) does not think that there is selfhood that can transcend a pure individual. In this context, the power suffers in maintaining order. Then self-sufficiency and maximisation of utility are the sources of legitimacy. When people pursue a personal interest, their political views are also based upon it. Thus, once people have achieved their goals, political bonds are naturally abandoned. In addition, the political or moral teaching of individuals can surpass the dependence and bonds on society; otherwise, it will drag personal interests. Competition and

inequality accompany pursuing personal interests and challenge morality, which can expose the legitimacy foundation's fragility.

In modern society, invisible hands have increasingly replaced visible power. Modern society works like a machine that can be adjusted automatically, which is called "autonomy of process" (Ellul, 1960, p.133). Modern society works in this way because the purpose and procedures are taken for granted, and people can intervene in the machine's operation by providing data or materials. At the same time, bureaucracy gives a model to organize and operate human resources in modern civilization. Bureaucracy's epistemology is a practical definition of information and knowledge because the definition filters information before it becomes knowledge (Schaar, 1984, p.120). Filtering is also one of the primary institutions of process autonomy. Bureaucracy has instrumental value, including defining knowledge. The bureaucratic cognitive tools must be objective and rational. While defining the problem, bureaucracy also must provide solutions, and technology can act as tools in this context. However, if officials are completely objective, they are separated from the objects of knowledge and manipulation. Therefore, the bureaucracy can rationally analyse information or materials but refuses to be responsible for actions. Modern countries are experiencing a legitimacy crisis because the "philosophical" and "experiential" foundations have been crumbled. The "ideal" and "material" forces result in legitimacy decline while attributing this failure to modern regimes.

The international system and globalisation also profoundly influence the state's legitimacy in the modern age. This is due to the multi-polar world and globalisation. Governance performance becomes the central theme of countries competition (Yang, 2021). At the same time, the source of legitimacy has expanded outward. International recognition and support are essential to maintain legitimacy based on domestic legitimacy. Therefore, legitimacy includes the international dimension (Clark, 2005, p.5). Specifically, it includes 'rightful membership' and 'rightful conduct'. Countries have to join various international organisations to obtain membership and at the same time abide by international norms and take international

responsibilities and obligations.

It is worth noting that the state can actively construct 'rightful membership' and 'rightful conduct' to strive for external resources for national development, gain international support and ultimately strengthen domestic legitimacy (Yang, 2021). Some countries even promote their own values and raise the domestic legitimacy cognition model to the international level, thereby influencing and shaping international legitimacy's measurement standard. In addition, international legitimacy is also a constraint force. Countries that accept international assistance have to adjust domestic policies to obtain international legitimacy. However, domestic legitimacy will decline if governments cannot balance external power and internal society (Yang, 2021).

The content of legitimacy externalisation includes: governance philosophy externalisation, which is directly transplanting or refusing external governance philosophy and promoting domestic philosophy to the world; governance group externalisation is the governance group that is closely linked to and supported by the world; governance resources externalisation is national development resources rely on external assistance. The legitimacy externalisation approach includes autonomous externalisation, which is based on sovereignty and independently communicating with international society to seek recognition. Dependent externalisation means regimes' existence, operation and development are highly reliant on external resources. Reverse externalisation is the regime resistance and reconstruction of existing external connections.

China is seeking independent development and getting rid of external control. Although external forces try to constrain China, positively responding to external challenges will enhance internal legitimacy. China has moved towards independent legitimacy externalisation by breaking dependence and implementing an independent development strategy, actively establishing alliances with other countries, and proposing a development plan through the UN.

However, globalisation development in depth brings a challenge to legitimacy externalisation. This is because dealing with global issues requires countries to have a willingness and mechanism to cooperate. At the same time, it also requires countries to have substantial financial resources and social mobilisation ability to concentrate resources and take collective action to deal with global issues. In addition, solving global problems involves multiple regimes, requiring authorities to take joint, long-term effort. However, long-term investment that fails to achieve results in short periods may cause domestic dissatisfaction and weaken domestic legitimacy. Climate change is one such global issue. Climate change challenges countries to enhance external legitimacy and ultimately promote internal legitimacy in international cooperation.

As a result of the function of ideology, institutions should conform to changeable social values and expectations, which means legitimacy also should be dynamic. Ideology plays an essential role in mediating different ideas. Socialist countries face threats to regime legitimacy as well as the uncertainty of future institutional change (Holbig, 2009, p.8). Political institutions must have the ability to remedy transformation failure when experiencing transition. In this context, a "stable ideological discourse" underpins a steady transition of power. This is because ideology can impact the public's support for the regime as well as redistribution of resources amongst social groups. Further, the stability of ideology determines the stability of power because it can shape social expectations and foster or eliminate social anxiety as well as resistance to change. Thus, in a societal transition, ideology needs to show continuity as well as adaptability to conform to changing social values and expectations.

In the context of communication interaction, Beetham (1991, p.15) advanced a model to explore ideology's function in the process of legitimation. He argued that a regime could be legitimate as long as it meets three conditions. First of all, "it conforms to established rules"; and then "rules can be justified by reference to beliefs shared by both dominant and subordinate"; at last, "there is evidence of consent by the subordinate to the particular power relation" (Beetham, 1991, p.15). These are three necessary conditions to maintain legitimacy.

According to the third condition, the public's beliefs about a regime's power also serves as a resource for legitimacy. There are two principles in the public's beliefs, "a principle of differentiation or separation" and "a principle of community or common interest" (Beetham, 1991, p.76). Specifically, the differentiation or separation principle tries to identify and separate dominators and subordinates. As the same time, the community principle means that dominators have obligations to achieve common interests. The ruling group attempts to express the world that can reflect their interests and power, while at the same time, it requires solidarity to maintain the domination system (Hodge and Kress, 1988, P,3). However, when there is a lack of congruence with these principles, a legitimacy deficit will result. In other words, changing beliefs leads to changing public support for the basis of power. Therefore, ensuring legitimacy is also a dynamic process. This is because when the public finds differences between their expectations and reality, the political elites have to constantly re-adjust policies to eliminate this perception of differences. Besides institutional transition, legitimacy also reflects the fact that ideology needs to show continuity as well as adaptability to conform to changing public perceptions.

In this context, frames play a significant role in helping political elites to restructure or change political perceptions, communicate with the people and deal with public perceptions of legitimacy deficit (Bondes & Heep, 2012, p.6). Thus, political elites will spare no effort to create political frames which strengthen people's belief in the system as well as reduce the legitimacy deficit. The research adopts framing analyse as a method and social semiotics as a general approach to analyse the CCP's ideology by exploring *People's Daily's* climate coverage. This research thus frames aims to find out what frames have been highlighted and how the highlighted frames can enhance the CCP's legitimacy and reduce its legitimacy deficit. The further details of the reasons that this research adopts a framing analysis approach will be discussed in Chapter 5 on methodology. This section shows that continuity and stability of ideology as well as Beetham's model plays a key role to strengthen legitimacy. The following sections will discuss how the CCP forms ideology to create continuity and stability.

## **2.7 Ideology and Legitimation of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP)**

As the largest socialist country, China did not follow the Soviet Union into collapse and failure, nor did it develop into a capitalist country and "end history" as Fukuyama (1992, p.6) had prophesied. Moreover, although China is a one-party state, it is one of the countries with the highest public trust according to the Edelman Trust Barometer (2019). For example, the percentage of respondents who trust the government was 84% in 2018 and 86% in 2019. As a one-party state, the CCP has an extremely high legitimacy level (Wright, 2010, p12), although it seems to lack democracy.

Yang and Zhao (2014, p.70) identified that legal electoral institutions, ideology, and performance are particular bases of China's high legitimacy. Institutions ensure that laws can constrain a state and social group or even state elite. Tradition, religion and philosophy can reflect the ideology of the state's right to rule. Finally, economic or moral performance and the capacity to defend national sovereignty contribute to performance legitimacy, which can justify the state's right to rule. Although strong legitimacy cannot rely on a single source, one of them can take a dominant place in a particular period. For example, Yang and Zhao (2014, p71) believe that since the 1970s, performance has dominated China's legitimacy. It is worth noting that performance legitimacy has a disadvantage. Due to providing specific commitments, it can raise expectations continually. In other words, if the regime does not fulfil its commitments, it will trigger dissatisfactions or doubts. If meets its promises, it will improve the people's living conditions and trigger higher requirements, including better material demands and the pursuit of political participation and social justice (Yang and Zhao, 2014, p.69; Holbig, 2010, p.400). Therefore, although performance legitimacy, which is based on economic growth has been improved.

In this context, "bounded autonomy" promotes further reforms to deal with economic legitimacy defects (Zhao and Hall, 1994, p.225). "Bounded autonomy" means "states with some independence from domestic social forces yet firmly oriented to participation in the international market economy" (Zhao and Hall, 1994, p.221). In other words, autonomy cannot

guarantee the state benefits from it. Only when social forces restrict autonomy, which is so-called "bounded autonomy" can it be the backbone of development. For example, during Mao's period, the country had absolute autonomy, but implemented policies such as the Cultural Revolution and the Great Leap Forward dragged the country into misery.

Yang and Zhao (2014, p.65) found that the Chinese state's autonomy and performance legitimacy are the most important reason for China's economic success rather than specific policies. They further explain that states can adjust policies and implement policies by enjoying autonomy, while societal pressure compels the state to apply autonomy carefully. However, the autonomy is constrained by the state's performance-based legitimacy. This is 'bounded autonomy'. Although Yang and Zhao's (2014) study is aware of the tension and dynamic between the state, society, and party, their investigation is still in the state-society framework. They believed 'state-society' restraints policy preference. Thus, the study left a space to understand the party's role, function and interaction among state and society in China's economic success. Yang and Zhao's (2014) study reveal regardless of the economy or climate change, China's success is not because of the specific policy. The interaction between the state, society and party, and performance legitimacy is the guarantee.

Although economic growth is widely seen as contributing to legitimacy in China (Holbig, 2010, p.396), this research agrees with Holbig's argument that it is insufficient for the CCP regime's legitimacy. The source of the CCP's legitimacy "lies in understanding its ability to construct and influence the subjective values and meanings against which its performance is measured" (Holbig, 2010, p.396), rather than individual factors, such as economic growth and nationalism. Beetham (1991, p.98) also argues that ideology can guarantee legitimation in identifying performance standards for government, common interests of society, and motivating public consent. Thus, this research considers developing Marxism with Chinese characteristics as the most significant response to the legitimacy crisis. However, both Confucianism and Nationalism are still necessary to reduce the legitimacy deficit. The CCP's ideology has identified performance standards by issuing policies and proposing a common interest

discourse to mobilise popular consent.

Further, Ji and Jiang (2020, p.660) found that selection and socialisation are the two mechanisms that create value differences between CCP members and non-members. Specifically, CCP members are more “liberal” and “enlightened” than non-members. Further, they argued that authoritarian regimes, like China, adopted progressive policies and alliances with modern social sectors to respond to modernisation challenges rather than offer an ideological challenge to liberal democracies. This requires that congruence in ideological preferences among the party and society should be high. Thus, it helps the party’s legitimacy to attract both lower-class followers and representative of modern sectors. This is how the CCP has used ideology to sustain its domination in history. Simultaneously, the CCP continuously adapts to social conditions and develops ideology to enhance its legitimacy, as will be discussed in the next section.

Evaluating whether a regime is legitimate or not requires people's feedback. Schaar (1981, pp.20-21) argued that opinion polls are not a reliable index. This is because the public is very aware of policy outcome and official strategies to manipulate public opinion. Sandby-Thomas's (2014, p.589) approach to assessing the public's beliefs and opinions by analysing *People's Daily's* discourses is also problematic. Although exploring the discourse of *People's Daily* can reflect top-ranked leaders' views and examine what views are spread to other groups in society there is a gap between communicating opinion and accepting opinion. Therefore, this research aims to answer the questions of the CCP's ideological underpins climate change coverage. This research does not focus on assessing people's beliefs in legitimacy.

Schubert (2014, pp.599-610) proposed to apply Easton's model, integrating policy analysis and zones of legitimacy building to evaluate Chinese political system legitimacy. He pointed out that local daily politics are unremarkable, and people are more familiar with local officials than high-level leaders. Thus, public opinion of local cadres and governments is a more reliable indicator of legitimacy, whilst lower administrative organisations focus more on measuring



China's political system's legitimacy (Schubert, 2014, p.594). Although the public's faith in the regime is vital, the elites and cadres' attitudes are equally important. Therefore, Schubert identified three paths to assess the political system's legitimacy: elites-cadres, elites-mass, and cadres-mass (Schubert, 2014, p.595). He claimed that Chinese people are satisfied with the political system because it can transform inputs into positive outputs. The public considers these outputs are positive, then supports the new demands emerge, as new input flows back into the system. Thus, evaluating visible actions that support or reject policies is more reliable than only considering beliefs. Further, legitimacy depends on how people perceive and evaluate local policymaking and implementation.

There are five policy formulation stages: problem definition, agenda-setting, policy formulation, implementation and evaluation. The policymaking cycle corresponds to the input stage (problem definition and agenda-setting) of the Easton model, output stage (policy formulation), result (of implementation) and feedback (evaluation) (Schubert, 2014, p.603). The problem of this analytical approach is the role of local cadres has been ignored. Due to the local level's importance in evaluating legitimacy, it is necessary to include local governments' responses to the public's demands and how the central level embraces it in the policymaking cycle. At the local level, policy implementation demonstrates efficiency, and the evaluation of local people is a crucial element of the legitimacy of the local government and political system. There are three zones of legitimacy building at the central level: the output zone, implementation zone, and evaluation zone (Schubert, 2014, pp604-610). The output zone includes problem definition, agenda-setting and policy formulation. It reflects the political system's ability to formulate policies and its adaptability to challenges. The implementation zone is where the output is transformed into the result. Empirical investigation should therefore focus on the local level, and the role of local government can be understood in this zone. The evaluation zone works through the public's response and policies' performance. This research does not focus on assessing people's beliefs in legitimacy because climate change is an international issue rather than a local issue. Further, compared to Western developed countries, China's potential for emissions reduction mainly lies on industries rather than people's s daily

lives.

## **2.8 The Crisis of the CCP**

As the discussion above in section 2.5 shows, ideology needs to show continuity and adaptability. In other words, if the CCP denies its past ideology, then the CCP's legitimacy will be cracked, just like Gorbachev's "reform and new thinking" which gave up socialist values as well as the socialist political system fundamentally. However, the CCP had to respond towards the change from ruling through class struggle to prioritising economic development (Zeng, 2016, p.30) and especially figure out how to deal with Mao Zedong's role in past failures.

The most fundamental crisis of the CCP's legitimacy is that which emerged as a result of the difference between the CCP's socialist character and the real economic system (Zeng, 2016, p.29). In 1979, the Chinese economy began gradually introducing market regulation mechanisms through marketising reforms. Since then, the central government has not completely implemented the planned economy. The success of marketisation threatened the CCP's legitimacy. The CCP had to propose various ideological tropes constantly to argue that the introduced economic mechanism with capitalist characteristics in China does not conflict with the CCP's socialist nature. These included "the socialist market economy" or "the combination between the planned economy and market regulations".

Further, although economic growth enhances the CCP's legitimacy in the short-term, it brings further crises. First of all, there is environmental degradation. Since 1949, China has experienced economic modernisation, which has resulted in industrialisation and urbanisation. At the same time, China has gradually gotten closer to a capitalist market (Ho, 2006, p.219). In order to achieve economic growth, the government stimulates investment, which tends to consume resources, such as land, oil, water and minerals (Zhang, Mol & Sonnenfeld, 2007). Since the 1990s, sacrificing the environment and natural resources to pursue economic growth has led to serious environmental problems, which bring natural disasters and health crises.

Climate change is one of the indirect consequences of economic growth. Suffering from such disasters and from pollution brings the CCP another legitimacy deficit as the public's belief declines. Second, the theory of "performance dilemma" (Holbig, 2010, p.400) shows that people have non-material demands after satisfaction of their material needs. Thus, they may demand political participation, and pluralisation or critique social inequalities. Hence, the values of liberal democracy are also a significant threat. The CCP has to work harder to explain its legitimacy, especially as a one-party state. The next section will explore how to respond to these crises, as the CCP developed Marxism with Chinese characteristics and adopted Confucianism and Nationalism to enhance public belief in a common culture.

## **2.9 The CCP's Response to the Crisis**

### 2.9.1 Developing Marxism with Chinese Characteristics

China experienced challenges to socialist ideology, such as the collapse of the Soviet Union and the Cultural Revolution (Holbig, 2009, p.36). In order to respond to these challenges, the CCP developed Marxism with Chinese characteristics. For example, Deng Xiaoping proposed "Seek truth from facts" (Deng, 1978) which can be seen as an innovation of ideology rather than abandoning ideology. After experiencing the Great Leap Forward, the break with the Soviet Union; the Cultural Revolution and three years of natural disasters, China's politics and economy needed to recover (Zeng, 2016, p.37). In 1978, the main content of the Chinese 11th CPC Central Committee Third Plenary Session was an effort to break the severe shackles of dogmatism and the cult of personality. Second, it sought to re-establish the ideological line of emancipating the mind and seeking truth from facts. Third, it sought to make a decisive break from the slogan "taking class struggle as the key link" and to transfer the focus of work to socialist modernisation. In 1984, the Third Plenary Session of the 12th Central Committee passed the "Decision of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China on Economic System Reform". The document stipulates that China's socialist economy is a planned commodity economy based on public ownership. This broke through the traditional opposition

between the planned economy and the commodity economy. It was a new development of Marxism-Leninism political economic theory, and it became the core of Deng Xiaoping Theory.

As part of the consequences of reform and opening up as well as the development of the socialist market economy, in the 1990s, China's social life changed. As discussed in the "performance dilemma" in section 2.7, having experienced economic development, Chinese people have started to make more non-material demands. Contradictions among the people have become complicated and diversified. At the same time, along with economic globalisation and introducing a market economy, CCP members do not firmly believe in socialism, and economic growth generates social inequality and corruption. According to Beetham's three conditions of legitimacy (Beetham, 1991, p.15), economic growth itself is not the source of legitimacy. Economic growth can enhance legitimacy because it can help the regime to present positive subjective perceptions among the public by showing itself to be efficient, fair and good at pursuing national interests in the international community (Holbig, 2010, p.400). Managing the party has become an urgent task.

In 2000 Jiang Zemin proposed that the CCP represents... (Jiang, 2013, p.519):

- the development trend of China's most advanced productive forces.
- the orientation of China's most advanced culture.
- the fundamental interests of the overwhelming majority of the Chinese peoples.

The "Three Represents", as they became known, were new developments in Marxism-Leninist party theory. Against the background of the ruling party's decline in credibility, the Three Represents emphasised the CCP's ability and its essential role in guiding the country. "Three Represents" shows that the CCP's innovation of the party theory and capacity for self-reform improved CCP's vitality. During Jiang's period, the CCP brought private entrepreneurs into the party. Critics considered it a betrayal of the working- class nature of the CCP (Holbig, 2010, p.405).

Hu Jintao responded to the challenge of the left to Jiang Zemin by reinterpreting "Three Represents". Hu Jintao emphasised that "The CCP represents the fundamental interests of the overwhelming majority of the Chinese peoples" (Lu, 2000, p.81). Thus, he emphasised governing for the people and devotion to the common interest. At the same time, the CCP initiated the concept of the "Scientific Outlook on Development" to respond to the crisis of the environment without sacrificing economic growth (Holbig, 2009, p.28). The concept stressed a comprehensive, balanced and sustainable development. Hu Jintao also proposed another concept to deal with social tensions, which is "Harmonious Socialist Society ". The concept shows that "Harmonious Socialist Society" is a social foundation for the party as well as conditions for achieving its historical governing mission.

Xi Jinping's contribution has been billed as "Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era". The CCP now claims that the "principal contradiction in Chinese society in the new era is between unbalanced and inadequate development and the people's growing needs for a better life. Therefore, the CCP has to continue the commitment to a people-orientated development philosophy and work to promote well-rounded human development and common prosperity for everyone "(Central Propaganda Department, 2019, p.8). It also made clear that the "overarching task of upholding and developing socialism with Chinese characteristics is to realise socialist modernisation and national rejuvenation" (Central Propaganda Department, 2019, p.9).

In fact, the public judge the party according to the CCP's ability and effectiveness to deal with social problems. As discussed in section 2.6 that ideology can guarantee legitimation in terms of identifying performance standards, common interests as well as mobilising public consent. So, to be specific, the party should apply ideology as a practical means to deal with real social problems rather than just ideals. Further, mobilising public consent requires ideology to be able to achieve multiple tasks (Sun, 1995, p.16). Ideology should keep adapting and innovating to correspond to social condition and development to maintain the dominance of the CCP. It

generates a challenge for the CCP to reform ideology in line with the communist tradition.

### 2.9.2 Nationalism

Nationalism is an essential part of the CCP's official discourse. Roskin (2009, p.426) claimed that "patriotism" and "performance-based legitimacy" can maintain the CCP's authority. Pan (2008, p.323) has similar arguments that "nationalist sentiment" and "extended boom" increased the CCP's authority. Both pride and humiliation formed nationalism in China (Bajoria, 2008). To be specific, China's pride comes from "five thousand years' of a glorious civilisation". At the same time, the humiliation was shaped by history from the First Opium War to and the end of World War II when China all but lost its sovereignty to a variety of imperial aggressors including all the major Western Powers plus Russia and Japan. Since then, China has considered itself a victim of Western imperialism. As humiliation is part of Chinese people's collective memory, it is easy for the CCP to enhance this public belief. However, it is difficult to use nationalism as a source of regime legitimacy (Bajoria, 2008). This is because, nationalism is useful in response to crisis, while it also easily gets out of control. Further, the high-frequency outbursts of nationalist sentiment reduced manoeuvre's space in China's diplomacy (Holbig, 2010, p.403). Thus, nationalism is a double-edged sword.

### 2.9.3 Confucianism

Besides nationalism, culture is another vital source for the CCP's ideology (Sun, 1995, p.18). The revival of Confucianism draws on Chinese folk traditions. The CCP has repackaged Confucianism and aims to enrich Marxism. The value of Confucianism is that it can embed itself in socialist values, such as social order and stability, acceptance of hierarchy and devotion to the family and the country (Shi, 2001, p.404) and these values can enhance the regimes' legitimacy. Even the genre of Confucian interpretation tries to replace Marxism ideology with Confucianism (Jiang, 1991, p.85). However, Hu Jintao placed Confucianism in a larger cultural context and his proposed slogans, such as "Well-off Society" and "Social Harmony" refers to

Chinese culture, which represents historical achievements and future greatness (Holbig, 2010, p.411). Chinese culture thus generates broad resonance and ultimately contributes to regime legitimacy.

## **2.10 Summary**

This chapter introduces the development of the concept of ideology in history. Based on the understanding of ideology development, three main genres understand ideology in Marxist theory. The study of Marxist theories of ideology in China is a crucial topic, and the CCP always thinks highly of ideology. As a one-party socialist country, the CCP employs the neutral concept of ideology to maintain power and enhance legitimacy. Ideology has to develop dynamically and maintain continuity and stability. Successive leaders have developed Marxism to deal with legitimacy defects in history. Economic growth, Nationalism and Confucianism are three contributors to guarantee legitimation for the CCP. However, these are double-edged swords. To face modernisation challenges, the CCP adopted bounded autonomy and selected highly educated and liberal party members to attract different social groups.

One of the legitimacy dilemmas that emerge from economic development is environmental degradation, and climate change is a complex issue among ecological problems. It involves sustainable economic growth, people's life quality, national security and international relations. The next chapter will introduce the CCP governance climate change issue and what kind of frames are used to solve legitimacy crises when communicating with the public.

## **Chapter 3 The Issue of Climate Change**

### **3.1 Introduction**

This chapter argues that an analysis of the CCP ideology as represented in the framing of the climate change issue in *People's Daily* represents an important gap for the following reasons: First, climate change challenges the CCP's legitimacy, and as a response, the party attempts to politicise it by arguing for modernisation and civilisation. Second, because this issue has only recently risen to prominence in Chinese governance discourse, relatively little research has been done on how the CCP presents its arguments and most of the existing studies ignored diachronic analysis. Third, because climate change is a complex scientific question, it presents particular challenges for a ruling party to communicate its ideology via climate change coverage. The study employs an approach based on critical concepts of ideology to clarify the links between the framing of the climate change issue and the political power of the CCP.

### **3.2 What is the Climate Change Issue?**

Climate change is an issue with several characteristics. Firstly, climate change is invisible (Moser, 2010, p.33) because greenhouse gas emissions, which contribute to climate change, are invisible and do not directly impact health. Further, because climate change is invisible, the public does not have a firm cognition of global warming. It is also difficult to perceive greenhouse gas emissions reduction even though emission reduction policies have been implemented. Secondly, climate change is a complex and large-scale issue (Rittel & Webber, 1973, p.95). Scientists try to explain climate change with various models and try to account for climate change's complexity (Schafer, 2014, p.443). Climate change is a phenomenon that happens over entire continents, hemispheres, and the whole world. The broad scope of climate change is far away from the public's daily life, and its causes are rarely acknowledged. Thirdly, climate change's complexity generates another characteristic of climate change, which is uncertainty (Moser, 2009, p.35). Lack of "data and adequate theoretical understanding of environmental system interactions" is the primary reason for uncertainty. In addition, people's



free will, as well as the capacity for reflexivity, also intensify uncertainty. Thus, these scientific characteristics of climate change bring challenges to human development, and the most fundamentally is the economy.

### **3.3 Climate Change Governance**

Svante Arrhenius was the first scientist who argued, in 1896, that climate change contributed by fossil fuels may result in increasing global temperatures (Stevenson and Dryzek, 2014, p.1). Moving to the 1960s, climate change began to stake its position in political agendas around the world. In 1992, the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development adopted the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), which established an annual two-week Conference of the Parties (COP) as a regular event on the UN calendar. In reviewing each COP, both progress and disappointment are in evidence. Passing the Kyoto Protocol and the Paris Agreement provided that countries in the world spend their efforts on facing climate change, while countries withdrew from various treaties, reflecting their difficulties in dealing with climate change (Stevenson and Dryzek, 2014, p.2). At some periods, mitigating climate change was an unintended consequence of financial crises or temporary contractions in production and consumption (Stevenson and Dryzek, 2014, p.3). For countries with the necessary resources and political will, including China, mitigating climate change also emerged as a result of investment in renewable energy and contributed to a low-carbon transition.

There is no consensus on whether authoritarianism is better than democracy in terms of climate change governance (Stevenson and Dryzek, 2014, p.16). China is the most popular example of this discussion. It is well known that China became the world leader in developing renewable energy and is trying to mitigate climate change. Thus "authoritarian environmentalism" is seen as an essential contributing factor for China to achieve a low-carbon model (Beeson, 2010, p.277). Actually, China did not entirely adopt a top-down approach to environmental governance. The central government was impacted by local power and by the private sector on

a certain level, as discussed further in chapter 4. It is difficult to conclude that authoritarianism performs better than democracy in climate governance. However, mitigating climate change may be an opportunity for China to compete with democratic regimes by claiming China's positive performance to deal with it. China often likes to claim that it is a kind of deliberative or consultative democracy. The next section will explain the advantages of deliberative practices in governing climate change.

### 3.3.1 Deliberative Governance on Climate Change

Deliberative democracy is a theme in democratic theory (Stevenson and Dryzek, 2014, p.13). It is a non-coercive communication. It can encourage participants to share their conceptual framework by connecting the expression of particular interests and general principles. According to Dryzek (1987, pp13-16), there are seven advantages of climate governance deliberative practices. The first one is coordination. This is because the climate problem is complex and solving it requires the coordinated involvement of various actors. Thus, the deliberation process can integrate different perspectives. Second, deliberative practices make it easier to access "feedback on the condition of social-ecological systems". The deliberative process can help to uncover environmental conditions, especially from the point of view of victims. "Prioritisation of public goods and generalisable interest" is the third advantage. The environment is a public good, and environmental quality is a kind of generalisable interest. In the deliberative process, common interest, such as public goods are much more accepted by all participants than self-interest. "Recognition of the interests of future generations and non-humans" is the fourth benefit. Compared to other political processes, deliberation has a moralising effect that makes participants think of others who have not been represented. Further, as the central part of deliberation, listening plays an essential role in revealing conflict. The fifth benefit is "promotion of ecological citizenship". Deliberation can make people consider themselves as citizens rather than consumers, and citizenship relates to obligations, and duties as well as rights. Thus, it is easier for the citizen to recognise ecological citizenship. In addition, recognising ecological citizenship can reinforce public goods and generalisable interests as

well as concern for future generations and non-human's interest in turn. Reflexivity is another benefit of deliberative practices. This is due to the fact that reflection and questioning are the keys of deliberative processes, which results in identifying shortages. The last one is creativity. Deliberation can generate creative alternatives to meet participants' interests.

China does not follow a completely top-down approach. Developing deliberative democracy is a unique form of democracy in China's socialist democratic politics. The CCP expanded deliberative practices through party consultation and People's Congress consultation (State Council, 2015). It expands the channels for citizens to participate in state and social governance and improve the scientific decision- making level. China also benefits from the advantages of deliberative practices when governance climate change. For example, some significant managers in the energy industry sector are also representatives in the People's Congress (Shen and Lei, 2018, p.411). They represent the interests of the energy industry, which encourages them to form proposals to expand renewable energy and indirectly reduce emissions.

### 3.3.2 Ecological Modernisation

Environmental policy is affected by nations' particular politics and culture. However, the common tendency of environmental governance is towards the prevention of pollution. This means that environmental policy pays more attention to improving energy efficiency and reducing pollution as well as the environment- related economy. Thus, environmental policy tends to become more complex as it involves the political agenda of the environment and the competition for legitimacy amongst regulators (Christoff, 1996, p.476). Ecological modernisation is a concept that involves the development, modernity and ecological critique. The first understanding of ecological modernisation is considering it as a side effect of improving market competitiveness (Janicke, 1988, p.100). In this context, ecological modernisation brings attention to the environmental advantages of technological developments. However, this genre of understanding cannot resolve the conflict between politics and economy. For example, considering ecological modernisation as technological development cannot deal

with the increase of total energy consumption as well as waste production. Thus, ecological modernisation is ultimately has no ecological stability guarantee.

Hajer (1995, p.15) claimed that ecological modernisation is a political discourse. The centre of ecological modernisation is preventing the costs of pollution, and it is an efficiency-oriented environmental approach. It asserts that economic growth and the environment can be harmonious. In this context, ecological modernisation is not only the technological solution to environmental degradation but also a political discourse to respond to environmentalist's critiques (Christoff, 1996, p.485). Ecological modernisation can be used as a discourse to argue that environmental degradation is not so much the malpractice of modernity as bringing it under control. In the 1980s, the concept of ecological modernisation gradually challenged the position of the economy as the sole priority of government (Mol, 2006, p.30). Since then, ecological modernisation has played a more critical role in production and consumption through such institutions as environmental governance systems.

### **3.4 CCP's Ideology on Climate Change**

#### 3.4.1 China's Climate Change Governance Institutions

China's climate change institutions reform reflected that the status of climate change is improved. At the same time, it reflects that there are ability requires improvement. In the beginning, the Meteorological department was in charge of the climate change issue. However, the meteorological department was too limited to mobilise other departments to participate in mitigating climate change. In 2007, the State Council established the National Leading Group on Addressing Climate Change and Energy Conservation and Emission Mitigations (NLGCC) to study and formulate major national strategies, guidelines and countermeasures for climate change. However, the specific measures addressing climate change will encounter resistance when it involves sectoral interests. In the State Council institutional reform in 2018, the Ministry of Ecology and Environment of the People's Republic of China (MEE) was established. The State Council transferred the Climate Change Department to MEE (China

Youth Daily, 2018). The Climate Change Department aims to formulate major strategies, plans, and policies to address climate change and greenhouse gas emissions and the issue of coordination was alleviated.

### 3.4.2 CCP's Ideology on Climate Change

*Postsocialist transition* refers to socialist countries experiencing economic, political and social transformations that strengthen private property ownership. China has presented a unique postsocialist transition case because China has introduced of capital market to the socialist economic system while maintaining a one-party system and communist values. In other words, China is exploring a transformation model that separates economic reform and political transformation, which implement marketization under an authoritarian regime (Herrschel, 2007). China's postsocialist transition promotes rapid economic growth and brings social and environmental problems. These issues encourage China to embrace the concepts of sustainable development (Guo et al., 2018). In 1995, the Fifth plenary session of the Fourteenth Central Committee of the CCP first introduced '*sustainable development*' (CPC, 1995). Jiang Zemin identified '*sustainable development*' is that population growth should adapt to social productivity development; economic development should coordinate with resources consumption and environment protection, which finally achieve a virtuous development circle (CPC, 1995).

Sustainability includes economic, social and environmental development. Different societies interpret sustainable development based on their particular goals and interests (Sneddon, 2000). This means that sustainable development needs to be understood through the local context and practice. Thus, in order to solve the issues caused by the postsocialist transition, China combines the traditional culture of Confucianism and Taoism to explain sustainable development, which is building a *harmonious society*. A harmonious society is a well-off society with political unity, social stability, and integration of human beings with nature. The individual and the socialist market play an important role in building a harmonious society (Li, et al, 2016). Moving to 2007, based on combining Confucian and Taoist thoughts on reverence

for nature, the First plenary session of the Seventeenth Central Committee of the CCP, Hu Jintao, proposed building a harmonious society between humanity and nature (CPC, 2007). Since 2012, the 'National Report on Sustainable Development of the People's Republic of China' defined sustainable development as an adjustment of economic development mode and structure. It is necessary to establish a resource-saving and environment-friendly society. The core requirement of sustainable development is to protect and improve people's livelihood and promote fairness, justice, and equality. Technological innovation is an inexhaustible driving force for sustainable development (Hansen, 2018, p.198).

Compared to the West, China creatively constructs the discourse of sustainable development through the concepts of livelihood (*minsheng*), intergenerational relations and ecological civilisation to maintain CCP's leadership (Liu et al., 2017, p. 742).

Ecological civilisation aims to establish a sustainable production and consumption model and achieve a harmonious society between humans and the environment (Wei et al. 2011, p.840). In order to promote ecological civilisation, Chinese official discourse developed it based on the Confucian thought of reverence for nature. Moreover, the CCP used it to solve the problems left by industrial civilisation rather than a form of capital (Liu et al., 2017, p. 744). Construct ecological civilisation is necessary to maintain the CCP's authority (Chen et al., 2017, p. 744). This is because combining the discourse of livelihood and intergenerational relations related to the environment, the CCP is a reliable authority to achieve scientific development. The CCP's authority is also reflected in eliminating goods and services that do not meet ecological standards through setting market access conditions. In addition, the establishment of a clean energy system can also ensure China's competitiveness in the clean energy market.

In terms of society, in order to achieve sustainable development, the government emphasises its commitment to improving people's livelihood and social justice by reducing poverty and increasing employment (Liu et al., 2017, p. 745). In addition, official discourse values people's quality (*suzhi*). When people's quality improves, they can take more social responsibility (Jacka,

2009, p.529). In this context, it is worth noting that the prerequisite for recognising individual interests is to obey the collective or state interests (Liu et al., 2017, p. 746). Sustainable development lies in meeting the needs of the modern generation while guaranteeing the needs of future generations. Chinese official discourse uses intergenerational relations in three aspects (Liu et al., 2017, p. 746): inherit and create a culture with Chinese traditions, avoid the spread of poverty towards the future generation, and maintain the well-being of the future generations, especially natural resources and the environment. It finally succeeded to constructing an acceptable concept of sustainability.

In the 1990s, ecological modernisation was seen as a Western theory. However, industrialisation in developing countries and globalisation prompted the spread of the discourse to the rest of the world (Mol, 2006, p.35). Political modernisation, economic actors and market dynamics, and institutions beyond state and market as well as international integration are four aspects that affect ecological modernisation in China (MoL, 2006, p.34). First of all, China has experienced political modernisation through decentralisation. This means that local governments have more room when designing development strategies, including environmental policies. These environmental policies can adapt to local conditions. The other tendency of political modernisation is separating state-owned enterprises (SOEs) and related responsible regional powers. This helps SOEs break away from political control and follows market logic. This kind of separation generates stricter environmental supervision. In addition, the rule of law has also contributed to political modernisation. The rule of law makes environmental governance easier to enforce. In terms of economic actors, private sectors consider environmental costs as a factor affecting competitiveness. Increasing environmental fees to deal with pollution offer another way to govern the environment. Finally, environmental performance is driven by market demands on production, which forces producers to emphasise the environment. Then the civil society contributes to ecological modernisation through environmentally oriented government-organised NGOs (GONGOs), complaints and unwritten social rules. International integration is realised through assistance in terms of investment and technology. Due to the global economy, China's performance on environmental governance can

be evaluated by the world more easily. At the same time, China's environmental policy can also affect the international ecological agenda and international negotiation.

The official ideology applies ecological civilisation to interpret the concept of sustainability. *Sociotechnical imaginary* ( Jasanoff, 2015a, p.4) is the public's shared vision of a perfect future, which is institutionally stable and realized by public participation. It is based on the public's shared understanding of social life and order and is realized through advanced science and technology. This concept captures the interweaving of technological values and future visions with politics, society and culture. Ecological civilization is one explanation of sociotechnical imaginary because it includes guidelines for formulating policy, law and technology while constructing a moral guideline for civilized behaviour and attitudes. At the same time, this is based on Chinese philosophical traditions, which is beneficial to enhance the continuity of national consciousness while creating a world future rooted in Chinese philosophy.

When China constructs ecological civilisation, they are not only using it as a framework for environmentally sustainable development but also as an advanced form of building social harmony (Hansen et al., 2018, p. 196). Ecological civilisation includes prospects for social politics and morality. The prerequisite for building an ecological civilisation is to ensure sustained economic growth through advanced technology, political planning and social means (Pan, 2007). China constructs a philosophical foundation for ecological civilisation through the selection and restoration of traditional Chinese culture. The philosophical foundation confirms the thought of harmony between human and nature in Chinses ancient tradition. It becomes a Chinese ethical value (Pan, 2003). This philosophical foundation supports the government's environmental policy, promotes national identity and supports the CCP, striving to prove that the revival of Chinese traditional ecological philosophy is the key to global sustainable development (Hansen et al., 2018, p. 198).

*Science and technology* are an integral part of the sociotechnical imaginary and the driving force for realising ecological civilisation (Hansen et al., 2018, p. 198). Therefore, ecological



civilization is not only a philosophical improvement but also a political effort. In human development progress, scientific and technological development promoted industrialization, which created wealth but also caused natural sources depletion and environmental deterioration. In order to solve this contradiction, science and technology are expected to have breakthrough innovations. Scientific and technological innovation is the leading force for building an ecologically civilized society rather than a fundamental change in the world economic system or a reallocation of resources. In other words, technological innovation can solve the environmental challenges brought by industrialization. Therefore, ecological civilization is an update of political ideology and practices. According to the sociotechnical imaginary, the CCP can lead China to realize an advanced form of human civilization-ecological civilization.

Ecological civilization is a sociotechnical imaginary that includes specific policies and an achievable vision. Official discourse connects civilization with real life to mobilize the public to participate in the construction of an ecologically civilized society. Social evolution is to inject the concept of ecological civilisation into the original social model and mobilise the public to realise a civilised society through taking actions in daily life (Liu and Li, 2017). The CCP encourages the *public to participate* in constructing a civilised society by setting examples for the people and officials to imitate. How to communicate with the public about the government's achievements and increase people's trust and defences on the CCP should be served by the propaganda system. Media as a means of propaganda is another significant contributor to enhance legitimacy. The section 3.8 'Climate change communication in China' will discuss how the media in China achieve this goal.

### **3.5 Legitimacy Crisis Caused by Climate Change**

#### **3.5.1 Economy**

Climate change clashes with human progress at least as it has been conceived until now (Stevenson and Dryzek, 2014, p.3). Climate change emerges from economic growth, to which most governments remain committed. As a result, taking action against climate change

constitutes a threat to the powers which benefit from existing economic systems. In China, the official priority is poverty eradication and economic development until the 2000s (Zhang, 2003, p. 68). In this period, dealing with climate change conflicts with development as it is closely related to economic growth, resource management, poverty alleviation and energy use (Heggelund, 2007, p.158). It is worth to noting that economic growth is not the source of legitimacy (Holbig, 2010, p. 400). It can be seen as a source to enhance legitimacy because CCP demonstrated ruling ability, efficient, fairness, and commitment to the realisation of common prosperity. A source of legitimacy also has to "avoid publicly manifest partiality or bias, capable of selectively embracing the benefits of globalisation while defending national interests on a complex international terrain, and so on"(Holbig, 2010, pp399-400). In this context, China's strategies when engaged in the Kyoto Protocol at the early stage is "Three Nos": "no obligations on China, no voluntary commitments by China, and not future negotiations to binding China" (US House, 1998). The required developed countries to transfer advanced technologies and financial assistance to developing countries.

However, economic growth only enhances legitimacy for a short-term and generates further legitimacy crises, such as environmental degradation. The 19th National Congress of the CCP clearly made the new summary of Chinese society's main contraindications. Chinese society's main contraindications have been transformed into people's growing need for a better life and unbalanced and insufficient development (Guangming Daily, 2018). The growing needs include material, political, cultural, social, and ecological aspects. It reflects that the official priority has become a balance development while concerning ecology. This transformation is a dilemma in energy, environment, international relations, and governance. As a result of economic growth, climate change has become a problem that the CCP has to respond to.

### 3.5.2 Energy

China's primary source is realising economic growth, fossil fuels, especially coal. Coal can be the dominant source because of the large amount of mineral deposits before 2000(Hatch, 2003,

p. 46). Due to the short supply of capital and hard currency, thermal power is the most saving choice for electric power. However, energy use was inefficient in China due to the consumption pattern. Coal consumption is high in the industrial sector. Outdated technology and coal pricing policy, which formulate coal price lower than production costs are the other two contributors to energy inefficient. Further, it causes two issues, energy security and pollution. China relies on energy imports to meet energy supplies demands. China became a net energy importer. According to Hu Jintao and Xi Jinping, energy directly relates to national security (Nyman and Zeng, 2016, p.308). China has increased dependence on energy imports, especially oil. Thus, the price and stable supplement are significant concerns to challenge energy security. Further, energy security challenges the effectiveness of China's energy policymaking institutions and strong vested interests. In fact, it reflects "the poor coordination of the conflicting objectives of different components of the bureaucracy" (Downs, 2006, p.1) as well as the tensions between the government and the state-owned energy companies when formulating national energy strategy. For example, leadership gradually paid more attention to energy demand moderation. However, the bureaucrats who can limit and balance demand are absent, while state-owned energy companies challenged the government with ambitious energy supplements (Downs, 2006, p.2). On the other hand, Svante Arrhenius was the first scientist who argued, in 1896, that climate change contributed by fossil fuels may result in increasing global temperatures (Stevenson and Dryzek, 2014, p.1). China has surpassed the US and became the biggest emitter globally (IEA, 2012, p.15). China is a victim of climate change on the one hand and has been criticised for trying to avoid narrowing emission space (Ed Miliband, 2009) but not doing enough to deal with climate change in the world on the other hand. Thus, climate change challenges the party's ruling ability to keep sustainable domestic development while defending the national interest when engaging in international negotiations.

### 3.5.3 Environment

As the most significant emitter in the world, China is a victim of climate change and suffers from heavy pollution. Chinese scientists have found the negative effects of climate change on

the economy, coastal areas, water resources, terrestrial ecosystems and agriculture (Heggelund, 2007, p. 165). There is an increasing drought in North China, flooding in the south, and other natural disasters. Natural disasters damage's costs high. Specifically, more than 200 billion yuan per year (South China Morning Post, 2006). Further, climate change threatens food supplement, water, and the protection of coastal areas. China has to pay attention to vulnerability and guard against extreme weather caused by climate change. Furthermore, public health and environmental protection threatened by pollution, challenging satisfaction for the party and social stability (Delman and Odgaard, 2014, p. 224). In this context, the party has to demonstrates their awareness of the environmental issues and ruling ability to control environmental problems and then enhance legitimacy.

#### 3.5.4 International Relationship

Being a climate change victim is the fundamental challenge to the party's legitimacy and motivated China to seek assistance from the international community. Until the 1990s, China experienced increasing research on climate change, and most of them were founded by the international community, such as the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank (Lampton, 2001, p.244). These researches found that climate change threatens China in term of agriculture, forestry, animal husbandry, marine life and industry. Chinese experts believed that China is a victim of climate change and engaging in international negotiation is necessary. Besides suffering from climate change, getting access to international funds, technology and training are the initial motivation for China to participate in international cooperation to deal with climate change (Lampton, 2001, p.246).

International pressure is another legitimacy crisis to stimulate China response to the climate change issue (Qi and Wu, 2013, p.305). Significantly, when China surpassed the US as the largest emitter by 2007, the government experienced great attention to tracking climate change. Then, it promotes the government considering the priority of climate change in China's policy agenda. During the Copenhagen conference, China suffered criticism that tried to avoid

ambitious reduction comment (Lynas, 2009). To protect China's image and reputation, the government adopted a positive attitude to deal with climate change.

### **3.6 China's Propaganda System and Censorship**

Although there are crises of legitimacy, the CCP still has high legitimacy as well as the top public trust (Edelman Trust Barometer, 2019). Besides the CCP's innovations in ideology, the communication and censorship system also play an essential role. The Central Propaganda Department (CCPD, Zhong Xuan Bu) is one of five departments directly led by the CCP Central Committee (Shambaugh, 2007, p. 34). CCPD is the 'institutional epicentre' of Chinese propaganda system (Shambaugh, 2007, p. 30). CCPD guides the Ministry of Culture, General Administration of Press and Publications, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, *People's Daily*, Bureau of Broadcast, Film and Television, New China News Agency and its affiliates and all-Party propaganda cadres at the provincial and sub-provincial levels. The Vice-Director Li Congjun identified that CCPD is a 'comprehensive functional department for ideology'(Shambaugh, 2007, p. 34). Further, CCPD also guides the State Council General Administration of Press and Publications (GAPP, Guojia Xinwen Chuban Ju) in terms of ideology (Shambaugh, 2007, p. 40). It is an important department in communicating the party's ideology.

Compared to democratic regimes, the media plays a strong propaganda role in China. First of all, the word "propaganda" is used in the Chinese language in a non-pejorative way (Stockmann, 2013, p.13). "Propaganda" is translated from "宣传" (xuanchuan), which has connotations similar to "persuasion". According to China's definition, "xuanchuan" means "using various symbols to communicate a certain concept in order to influence people's thought and their action "

News censorship is using relevant laws and law enforcement capabilities, artificially involved in any of the main processes of the news production process, such as collection, writing,

dissemination, and follow-up discussion to restrict the content of the news (Tong, 2009, p.595). King et al. (2013, p.329) found that the censorship system is primarily intended to limit information dissemination that may lead to collective action, regardless of whether the statement directly opposes national policies. Lorentzen (2014, p.403) shows that more coverage will be censored when a particular topic enjoys great social attention.

Journalists in China have to think of political risk. In order to reduce political risk, journalists and newsrooms apply self-censorship (Shambaugh, 2007, p. 29). In fact, journalists who have worked under the censorship system for a long time can naturally perceive what is sensitive news, and self-censorship has gradually become internalised as an instinct. Tong (2009, p.599) conducted two case studies of self-censorship practices, finding that journalists and newsrooms change their words to reduce policy risk as a primary self-censorship strategy. For example, journalists or editors use softer words or replace words which may put the public in a negative mood. Another strategy is highlighting the government's positive and swift reactions to events. These strategies help reduce negative attitudes and help build a positive image of the government. Self-censorship is a condition for mass media and journalists to have their voices heard, though they have to adjust their message to fit the political context.

Not only the central government but also the local government tightly controls the mass media. Tong (2010, p.928) conducted research looking at how local authorities monitor mass media. Central power has declined relative to local power with increased socio-economic development, because local power is more important than central power in developing local economies, and economic power has become decentralised. Thus political, cultural and economic elites integrate local power. Therefore, commercial newspapers are increasingly dependent on local authorities. Moreover, sometimes, the local government wishes to protect local companies' interests, which may be contrary to the central government's interests (Chen, 2013). In this context, the central government sometimes encourages the media to report local issues honestly, which allows the mass media to play the role of the supervisor (Brady, 2006, p.66). Thanks to the conflict between local government and central government, the media have some space to

tell the truth (Tong, 2010, p.935). In the 1990s, the amount of investigative journalism increased sharply. For instance, there was a notable television program called "Topic in Focus" (Jiaodianfangtan), which mainly served the purpose of supervision of the local government. However, beginning in the 2000s, the percentage of supervising reports sharply declined, and "Topic in Focus", changed its tone to positive reporting. The central government demanded that the media pay more attention to people's livelihood issues rather than the governance practices of local government. Thus, investigative journalism experienced a decline. The central government has also launched cross-regional newspapers to control local government (Huang, 2007, p.49). Cross-regional newspapers have their regional pages at lower administrative levels (Guo, 2008) and both lower levels of regional pages and the "parent newspaper" will share the same news sources. Such a practice is thought to help to bypass the intervention of the local power. The following sections will explore climate change journalism and coverage.

### **3.7 Climate Change Communication**

Studies on media coverage of climate change date back to the 1980s and mainly deal with it as an environmental story (Boykoff, 2011, p.13). From the mid-1980s, the international and domestic climate policy began to take shape. In the meantime, academics have turned their attention to the question of media coverage. In particular, they were reflecting their concern over whether they can communicate with the public or not.

Journalistic norms, such as balance and objectivity, are the significant factors shaping climate change coverage (Boykoff and Boykoff, 2004, p.126). To be specific, balance is a means to promote neutrality. It requires reporters to report on both sides equally when reporting on controversial issues (Entman, 1989, p.30). However, balance can cause bias in climate coverage. Since reporters have to present climate change issues in a balanced manner, they have to involve scepticism. Balance expands the impact of climate scepticism and turns it into a competitive discourse for the scientific consensus on climate change (Boykoff and Boykoff,

2004, p.126). In addition, the balance norm has been described as a "validity check", which could help reporters who have neither time nor scientific understanding when reporting complex issues, such as climate change, to conduct further investigations (Dunwoody and Peters, 1992, p.201). This further misleads the audience.

The objective requires reporters to overcome their subjective judgements. Reporters should observe social phenomena like outsiders (Tong, 2015, p.748). Donsbach (2004, p. 132) believed that absolute objectivity does not exist because the journalistic decision-making process cannot avoid being affected by the reporters' psychological cognition, insights and the influence of subjective judgment. When reporting environmental news, especially climate change, there are many problems with objectivity. Specifically, climate change involves scientific uncertainty (Giddens, 2011, p.33). "Climate scepticism" contributes to the uncertainty of climate change coverage. Painter and Ashe (2012, p.3) analysed climate articles in quality newspapers in the U.S., Brazil, China, France, India and the U.K over two periods in 2007 and 2009-2010. The study showed that "climate sceptics" has been particularly vocal in the U.S. and U.K and the "sceptical voices" were especially prevalent in right-leaning papers. By reviewing the history of human's research on this issue, causes and consequences have changed with technological progress. Therefore, under the guidance of objectivity, on the surface, journalists are trying to seek the truth of climate change, but they just quote as diverse opinions as possible (Bavadam, 2010, p.6). Thus, news sources are important indicators of the content of climate change coverage.

Besides journalistic norms, political norms and economic norms are the other two factors that affect the news (Bennet, 1996, p. 374). The mass media has the function of communicating political information to citizens, which can enhance political participation. While economic norms encourage journalists working in capitalist society to pursuing "efficient and profitable" (Boykoff and Boykoff, 2004, p.126)

Mass media are an essential source for the public to learn about climate change (Schafer, 2014)



and they also play a significant role in communicating climate change, as mass media can produce, reproduce and transform climate information (Carvalho, 2010, p.172). Ideology plays a significant role in colouring the facts with particular values, judgments or preferences (van Dijk, 1991, p.36). Further, Carvalho (2010, p.173) argued that the relationship between mass media and ideology is interactive. Ideology promotes news content, while the news produces ideology in turn. Climate change is a complex scientific issue, and communicating it brings challenges to mass media. Due to this, it is a political issue as well (Eberhardt, 2005, p.35), and there are political disputes in climate negotiations. However, because climate change is invisible and complex, the public has difficulty in perceiving and understanding it. It requires mass media to transform the message clearly and easily. In addition, climate change is also a high uncertainty issue, which means that the public can be persuaded to change their position easily. In this context, climate change communication has to send powerful and consistent messages to help the public to understand the issue. The characteristics of climate change have been misused in climate change communication for a purpose. For example, uncertainty has been used as an excuse to delay mitigating actions or for social forces to protect their lifestyle and self-interest.

Moser (2009, p.32) argued that including "humanity's and the Earth' s common fate" on the agenda in climate discourse can help the public understand their destiny and setting a common objective for humanity may be an effective way to communicate climate change. It helps the public understand the urgency of global warming and change their behaviour to face humanity's common fate. It also triggers the public's concerns with a remote issue like climate change by strengthening an individual's interest and encouraging the public to take action to dealing with climate change.

### **3.8 Climate Change Communication in China**

Environmental journalism in China dates back to the mid-1980s. The publication of China Environment News (Zhongguo Huanjing Bao) has been considered the origin of China's

environmental coverage (Chen, 2012). The media attention and increasing coverage of environmental issues show that environmental issues have had news value since then. Further, the environmental issue emerges from the dynamic social process rather than an objective issue (Hansen, 2015, p.2). Specifically, during the Great Leap Forward (1958-1960), the number of factories increased sharply. In order to increase fuel for the inefficient courtyard-style steelmaking, deforestation was expanded. Since the 1960s, many factories have moved from the coast to the interior area. This is due to considering the difficulty in military defence, but it expanded the scope of pollution. Since the economic reform in 1978, environmental degradation has continued to accelerate due to industrialisation's rapid development, including township enterprises (Liu and Diamond, 2005, p.49).

Tong (2014, p.361) found that Chinese newspapers frame the environmental issue as a criticism of economic growth and further deepen social inequality. The central government welcomes media to report environmental problems (Tong, 2014, p.349). This kind of media practice applies reflective discourse to help the government build a pro-people image and showing their determination and ability to deal with problems. Simultaneously, environmental coverage intensified anxiety about ecological risks, which can trigger economic development models' transformation. In this context, there are not many differences between commercial newspapers and the party newspapers. Further, by considering the market demand, climate change is a marginal topic in Chinese media. As an international topic, which is less attractive to local readers. At the same time, the editors approve populist ideologies to adapt to the market (Tong, 2014, p.363). As a party organ, reflective discourse helps *People's Daily* contribute to the government's self-reflexive image.

The Ministry of Science and Technology (MOST) started to research climate change in the 1980s. Academic work about climate change increased in the 1990s (Ji, 2007), including such works as "Science and Technology of China Blue Book No.5 - Climate Change" (CCG, 2015), and "The national climate change assessment report" (CCC, 2007). Although the research of climate change developed in China, analysis of climate change coverage is scarce.

In terms of journalistic norms, Tong (2015, p.762) argued that Chinese environmental journalists try to be objective by adopting a balance norm but reject absolutely objectivity. They employ frames arising from their judgements of the situation. Journalists express their opinions in environmental news reports and claim these news reports are legitimate by making them sound objective. Thus, in Chinese environmental news, the objective professional proposition is a disguise for journalists' subjective interpretation of environmental events. At the same time, being objective also saves journalists from censorship. However, most Chinese journalists lack professional climate knowledge (Geall and Hu, 2011, p.13), thus, in order to keep objectivity, some of them quote scientific research as source. In addition, NGO organisations or international scientific research institutions are another objective and reliable news source (Geall and Hu, 2011, p.19). Government and scientists' opinions are the main news source of Chinese climate change coverage (Li, 2011; Ji, 2013). This is because that politicised strategies are significant topics in Chinese media (Jia, 2017). Further, it reflected that climate change coverage presents the issue in an authoritative way, without introducing doubt. Accessing official information is not always smooth. When the information is beneficial to the government, the officials are willing to provide it to reporters, otherwise it will be difficult. The senior officials tend to be inaccessible. Lack of officials' transparency is biggest challenge to Chinese climate change coverage. Only when the government needs to communicate with audiences, will they contact media initiatives (Geall and Hu, 2011, pp.15-18).

In terms of the balance norm, Chinese journalists struggle to represent disputes in international climate negotiations between objective and fair reporting and safeguarding the national interest. They are seeking to keep the balance between the role of journalists and government mouthpieces. Further, because of the limitations of scientific knowledge, Chinese journalists believe that they should be fair and present the views of both sides of the climate change debate to audiences. However, Jia (2007) argued that there are no sceptical voices in Chinese climate change coverage because the media pays attention to climate issues attempting to access relevant policies. Thus, when presenting climate change, media tends to highlight policy and

strategy related to climate change.

In the early stage to explore the coverage of Chinese climate news, Tolan (2007, pp1-2) researched Chinese climate news's scope by looking at leading national media, such as Xinhua news agency, *People's Daily* and the Sohu and Sina news from 2006 and 2007. Tolan believes that before 2007, most of China's climate news emerged from Western scientific reports and did not recognise that climate change is a threat to humanity. At the same time, the Chinese media firmly believed that developed countries should be responsible for climate change. The high frequency of extreme weather events and IPCC reports prompted the press to pay attention to climate change and raise concerns regarding the negative impact of climate change on China (Tolan, 2007, pp4-8). In comparison, Tolan focuses on Chinese climate news's scope in the early stage; Han et al. (2017, p. 2895) tried to find out the generic frames in climate coverage by looking at *People's Daily*, Xinhua Daily, Telegraph, Science and Technology Daily, Southern Metropolis Daily, and Xinmin Evening News from 2005 to 2015. The media frequently cited official resources and applied frames of conflict, collaboration, and leadership to politicise climate change. Scientific newspapers pay more attention to the relationship between climate change and human interests by using the human impact frame than other newspapers. Party newspapers frequently use the collaboration frame, while commercial newspapers focus on the human-interest frame.

Some of the scholars conducted comparative studies among different countries to explore the coverage of climate news. Pan et al. (2019) conducted a comparative study of COP21 coverage in the US, the UK and China and found ten frames. Specifically, the worldview and values conveyed by the frame of "waiting list" and "zero-sum game" are practical challenges in global climate negotiations. At the same time, there is no "one size fits all" in negotiations. Solutions to climate change will be embedded in different frames by different parties. For example, fair for developing countries might be a zero-sum game for developed countries. Chinese media employs the "Vanguard frame" to show China's ambition in global climate governance (Belis et al., 2015). Compared to the US and the UK, China considers climate negotiations as a way

to solve the climate issue and regards it as an approach to identify China's status in the international community. However, these studies did not consider the effect of diachronic on the frames. As the world's economic and political landscape is developing dynamically, it will also influence the parties to adopt different dominant frames in different periods.

The public sphere is another branch of Chinese climate news study. Generally speaking, most Chinese people have a high awareness of climate change and agree that human activities are the cause of climate change (Wang and Zhou, 2020, pp.12-13). Due to the higher awareness of climate issue, the public is willing to pay more and change living model to cope with climate change. The public believes that the government is the main force in tackling climate issues and supports the government shouldering more responsibilities to reduce emissions. According to Carvalho's (2010, p.173) argument that the relationship between mass media and ideology is interactive, Han's study provides a trajectory to understand the public's high awareness of climate change and high support of the government. It also implied that the public has become increasingly concerned about climate change and the growing demand to access climate change information. Moreover, they may take a more critical and challenging view of governments' performance while dealing with climate change.

In China, the primary carbon dioxide emissions come from the industry. In other words, unlike developed countries, changing life behaviours is not a significant contribution to emissions reduction (Seligsohn et al., 2009, p.2). Compared to water pollution and air pollution, what concerns Chinese people most is not climate change (World Environment, 2008, p. 74). However, in recent years, the public paid more attention to the climate issue (Wang and Zhou, 2020, p.7). As early as 2007, Chinese media tried to associate carbon emissions with people's daily life (Geall and Hu, 2011, p.10). China makes efforts to promote low-carbon life to the public through education, media, public service announcements and celebrities. This is because Stockmann (et al. 2010, p.21) found that overexposing environmental issues triggers criticisms towards the government. One solution to save the government from the unsatisfied public regarding the climate change issue could be promoting low-carbon life. In other words, the

government encourages the public to the model low-carbon consumer and follow the instructions and policies rather than debating environmental issues. Further, when the Chinese government is designing policies, it needs to consult with other institutions. These invited institutions are proto publics. They pose challenges to public perception debates (Eberhardt, 2015, pp.45-46). Therefore, these policies are promoted by the non-democratic proto-publics and cannot represent a democratic public sphere where everyone is equal (Eberhardt, 2015, p.49).

Based on practical experience, Wang Binbin (2018, p.50) identified climate communication as a 'strategic tool for climate governance'. It is information transmission carried out by stakeholders at different global climate governance levels. She adopted a two-level analytic hierarchy process (Wang, 2018, p.36) to explain climate communication. The two-level analytic hierarchy process emphasises the simultaneous game at domestic and international levels with synchronic analysis across different levels. Based on this theoretical framework, she argues that climate communication's content and purpose are different at domestic and international levels. At the international level, climate communication aims to deliver accurate information, China's stories, and actions to reduce misinterpretation, promote China's active role in international negotiations and eventually facilitate global cooperation. Climate communication should appropriately convey China's pressure in the international game at the domestic level. It should communicate the urgency, importance, and specific actions to boost international climate mechanism domestication. At the same time, it improves public awareness, mobilises actions to deal with climate change and attracts more stakeholders to engage in mitigating climate change.

Wang (2018, p.87) divided China's climate transmission into four stages and set the Copenhagen, Paris, and Marrakech conferences as the dividing points. Before the Copenhagen conference, most of China's climate communication studies focused on content analysis or journalism's framework. During the Copenhagen conference, the media failed to communicate with the international community and the domestic public effectively. The Chinese delegation

shared press releases with the media at critical points and set agenda to control media coverage (Wang, 2018, pp.89-91). This approach can help the media catch up with the negotiation agenda and avoid mistakes, but it also causes homogenisation of reports and lack of in-depth analysis. The top-down paternalistic management limits the timeliness and effectiveness of communication and ultimately fails to gain the right to speak in international negotiation.

After the Copenhagen conference, China has changed climate communication strategy. For example, in order to improve journalists' professional level, the National Development and Reform Commission, the Forestry Bureau and the Meteorological Bureau hold regular training. They also organised interviews with local enterprises to help journalists understand the local governments and enterprises' measures to cope with climate change (Wang, 2018, pp.98-99). The Chinese media has an improving objective understanding of mitigating climate change.

After the Paris conference, China demanded to continue constructing discourse and deepening its image as a major responsible power. At the same time, as the largest emitter and fastest-growing developing country, the international community has an increasing expectation for China's reducing actions. Thus, the media has to balance international expectations and China's actions at the international level. In addition, stakeholders, such as the private sector and the public, have not been fully mobilised (Wang, 2018, pp. 121-124). This requires Chinese media to present a real China at the international level. In other words, climate coverage can not only convey China's achievements but also be honest about the actual situation, such as uneven development and impoverished rural areas. The media should properly pass China's pressure on international negotiation to the domestic public. This practice aims to strive for domestic support and, at the same time, pass domestic voice to the international community more understanding (Wang, 2018, pp.124).

After the Marrakesh conference, the global climate governance structure has changed, and the emission reduction model has changed from top-down to bottom-up (Wang, 2018, p134). China aimed to transform from a follower to a leader in this period. It required China to meet the

international community's expectations. Thus, China should take more responsibility to realise a low-carbon transition. However, financial, technological, institutional, and policy issues challenged China's process toward a sustainable society. Therefore, Chinese media should be able to agglomerate the determination to tackle climate change and the belief in cooperation at the international and domestic levels (Wang, 2018, pp. 149-151). Meanwhile, climate communication should also expand its breadth and depth by exploring the relationship between climate change and sustainable development to contribute to China's leadership image. Wang's (2018) research provides a wealth of empirical evidence for understanding the party's ideology underpins climate news. Since the Copenhagen conference, the two-level analytic hierarchy process comprehensively explains China's climate communication challenges, requirements, reflections, and improvements. Wang argued that climate communication is a tool for climate governance. However, it is unclear how the ruling party develops and strengthens this tool in terms of philosophical fundamentals and rhetoric.

### **3.9 Research Questions**

Chapter 2 and chapter 3 attempted to contextualise climate change. It starts with the concept of ideology. This research accepts the critical concept of ideology. It does so because it is concerned with communication rather than doctrine. The CCP emphasises ideology because of its function in legitimisation. The CCP has responded to the legitimacy crisis through economic growth, nationalism, Confucianism. However, these solutions are double-edged swords. It encourages the party to develop Marxism with Chinese characteristics. They also adopted bounded autonomy and selected highly educated and liberal party members to respond to modernisation. Thus, ideology is a dynamic concept and have to attract the public and different social groups, which may take a more critical view of the government. As one of the legitimacy crises, climate change involves a broad scope to cope with it, such as sustainable economic growth, public living quality, national security, and international relationships. It requires the party to take out a diverse ideological strategy to satisfy various social groups and claim legitimacy. The CCP has reformed ideology to respond to legitimacy deficits. China politicised



climate change through the concept of sustainable development and ecological civilisation. It promotes livelihood, social fairness, justice, and equality. In the promoting process, the revival of traditional cultural and technological innovation plays an important role.

The media plays a particular role in guaranteeing the CCP's rule, while censorship and self-censorship contribute to it. The media achieve their goals by forming official frames, which align with the CCP's interests. However, climate change is a challenging topic for the world's media to present. Even within the West, there is much controversy about reporting it because reporters do not have an adequate scientific knowledge level. Sometimes they strive to achieve balance by pitting pro- and anti-climate action voices against each other. China is different because the role of the media in society is fundamentally different. Climate change was seen as more of a scientific issue, but during international negotiations about mitigation, it has become more political. That means that if we want to understand what China is saying about climate change, we need to situate China's media coverage of the issue in the context of China's overall media and communications strategy. This strategy is all about serving the regime's needs for legitimacy and building up China's power vis a vis other country. China is open about this because, in the Marxist-Leninist tradition, the media's proper role is to serve the party. Chinese climate communication research mainly focuses on journalism, such as journalism norms, framing, discourse and scope. However, not too many studies connect climate change coverage to the CCP's ideology. In addition, the current climate communication comparative studies are carried out between different Chinese newspapers or different countries' newspapers. However, as an international issue, this leaves a gap in understanding the CCP's ideology in Chinese climate communication across the international and domestic levels. Although many studies involve decades of the sample period, they did not adopt diachronic analysis to observed changes. Further, how to claim the advantages of the authoritarian socialist's regime by politicising climate change. This study makes an initial approach to the topic, taking the *People's Daily* as an example because it leads the CCP mouthpiece. It analyses the framing of climate change stories and considers what these framings tell us about the changing ideology of the CCP.

Thus, the Research Questions to be addressed are:

*RQ 1: How is climate change framed in People's Daily?*

*RQ2: What do these framings tell us about the ideology of the Chinese Communist Party?*

### **3.10 Summary**

Climate change is a complex issue and challenges the CCP's legitimacy in sustainable economic growth, livelihood, national security, and international relationship. China has politicised climate change by adopting sustainable development and ecological civilisation to argue the advance of the socialist country. Chapter 2 and chapter 3 have discussed the party's response to the climate crisis in theory, and the next chapter will explain how political force and private sectors deal with climate change in practice.

## **Chapter 4 Can Policy Solve the Climate Problem?**

### **4.1 Introduction**

Since climate change has become an issue, China has been actively participating in international mitigation activities. Specifically, China claims that domestic carbon emissions have decreased significantly, and it even tries to play the leader role in mitigating climate change. To what extent has China achieved its carbon emission reduction goals? How to evaluate China's climate policies? What supports China's confidence in its ability to mitigate climate change? What are the motivations for China to actively participate in climate mitigation activities, and what kind of ideology can be found behind these motivations? In order to understand these questions, this chapter will explore how the highest-level policies can address the climate change issue. It is based on an examination of policy texts, particularly Five-Year Plans from 2001 to 2020, the policy decision process, and reports about the energy industry directly related to climate change.

In order to understand to what extent, the policy can address the issue of climate change, it is necessary to look at the broader picture. China's model of transformation and energy structure adjustment has a close relationship with mitigating climate change. In other words, mitigating climate change is to be achieved through more efficient and cleaner energy consumption in production. Thus, analysing energy-related policies is one way to understand how China can achieve its emission reduction goals. As discussed in the literature review, mitigating or failing to mitigate climate change is a side-effect of economic development (Stevenson and Dryzek, 2014, p.3). This also applies to China, as this chapter will explain in detail. Mitigating climate change involves encouraging new energy to compete with fossil fuels. Thus, mitigating climate change did not result in economic decline. By contrast, mitigating climate change brings many benefits to China. China can play an active role in mitigating climate change because there is a complex interest network between the central government, local government and corporations.

This chapter starts with China's economic development model in the early stages and its negative impacts, leading China to shift to a greener development model. After understanding the development background, section 4.3 analyses renewable energy policymaking in terms of institution and governance, especially challenges in the governance system. Section 4.4 explains other factors affecting policymaking, such as traditional energy and private sectors. Central and local government and corporations allied to promote renewable energy, and section 4.5 shows that climate governance can be a shared value to strengthen this alliance. The following sections explore how FYPs address climate change by restructuring energy consumption, and 4.10 summarises this chapter.

## **4.2 The China Model**

Since the 1950s, the CCP has pursued economic modernisation and transforming China's agricultural economy into an industrial economy (Ho, 2006). China's unique development model has resulted in industrialisation and urbanisation, and fossil fuels are the primary energy source.

### 4.2.1 The China Model in Early Stages

The "China model" (Delman and Odgaard, 2014, p.221) is an economic growth-oriented model, which consumes enormous energy. Since the reform and opening up started in 1978, this model has been China's primary economic development model. In this model, the authority of the CCP has played an essential role in fostering economic and political stability (Pan, 2007). The success of the China model may be partly due to the application of both state interventionism and an authoritarian political system. The government plays a central role in controlling the business sector. In addition, the government has reliable financial power due to the increased tax revenues, which can be developed to stimulate and guide investment (Lu, 2011). The model sets goals and provides incentives to meet the requirement for continuous growth. In this process, the market adapts to the interests and needs of the authoritarian state. Therefore, the

market and the authoritarian state stabilise one another (Yang, 2011). After the founding of the People's Republic of China, China experienced a difficult period, and getting rid of poverty was the top priority of the CCP's work. China's early-stage model focused on developing the economy and improving people's living conditions, enhancing legitimacy. However, the China model also caused pollution, social instability, corruption, unemployment, and a crisis of government trust, which eventually damaged the political system's stability. Since 1998, China could not develop any further under the early-stage model. This is because, on 1st January 1998, China began to implement the "Energy Conservation Law of the People's Republic of China" (Presidential Order No. 90 of the People's Republic of China). It is marking China's energy conservation to be legalisation and standardisation. Thus, innovation in the China model was necessary to solve existing problems.

By 2000, developing industry was an essential task for China's economic development in this period. Fossil fuels, especially coal, were (and still are) the primary sources of energy. China has abundant coal resources; however, using coal is very inefficient. In 2010, China consumed 46 per cent of the coal consumed in the world while producing 8 per cent of the world's GDP (IEA, 2012, p.15). The inefficient use of coal implies that China has great potential for energy saving. Increasing the efficiency of coal consumption has also become one of the driving forces for reducing greenhouse gas emissions. In addition, it gradually became more difficult to meet the requirements of hyper-growth of industrial production by relying mainly on coal. From being an energy exporter in the 1990s, China has become an energy importer today (Engels, 2018, p.3).

The hyper-growth of industrial production and the massive consumption of coal generates two other problems. The first one is heavy air pollution. There were 20 Chinese cities among the world's 30 most polluted cities in 2006, and coal consumption is the main driver of air pollution (Delman and Odgaard, 2014, p.224). In 2013, air pollution resulted in severe smog and haze events. Air pollution was threatening people's health. For example, lung cancer was the primary cause of death in Beijing (Spiegel, 2005). People's living conditions suffered again, resulting

in dissatisfaction with the government. Thus, pollution threatened a hidden crisis for the CCP's legitimacy. Secondly, China became a net energy importer. China imported not only coal but also oil. The high reliance on energy imports threatened China's energy security, which became a concern for the CCP (Leung et al., 2014, p.3). According to Delman and Odgaard (2014, p.226), there were two ways of dealing with the issue: "energy-saving" and "expansion of the use of renewable energy."

The China model made China the second-largest economy globally and the biggest polluter, and the largest contributor to climate change (IEA, 2010, p.17). The China model resulted in air pollution and energy security problems and generated other environmental issues. Specifically, large amounts of agricultural land transformed into the desert as a result of overgrazing. China experienced the worst erosion in the world due to desertification (World Bank, 2001, p.18). Water was also seriously polluted, and a fourth of the population had difficulties accessing clean drinking water (Economist, 2010). Environmental impacts cost around 8 to 15 per cent of GDP (Spiegel, 2005). Environmental degradation threatened human health as well. Both problems exacerbated each other and finally threatened the CCP's legitimacy. As addressed in the literature review, the CCP solved poverty but had to face a new legitimacy crisis caused by its development model. Therefore, it is necessary to transform into a low-carbon, green and sustainable development model to enhance legitimacy. In order to deal with the legitimacy crisis, the concept of "scientific outlook on development" was put forward by the 16th Central Committee of the Communist Party of China in 2003. It declared that China would shift to a sustainable green development model.

#### 4.2.2 The Green Development Model

When the China model was on the verge of collapse, the CCP realised that China's development model had to turn in a sustainable direction. "Scientific development", "low-carbon", "green", "sustainable", are becoming labels for a new China model. In 2003, Prime Minister Wen Jiabao proposed "science-based development" as the CCP's highest ideology to face the China model's

defects in its early stages. President Hu Jintao took up the slogan:

*"Adhere to the harmonious coexistence of human and nature in the development and utilisation of nature and achieve sustainable economic and social development."* - (Hu Jintao, 2011, p.558, Establishing and Implementing the Scientific Development concept). "Science-based development" was interpreted to mean making people's interests central to the government's work and pursuing harmonious development between humans and the environment.

In order to set up the new green China model, the CCP tried to adjust the existing model using policy, legislation and administration. In switching to the new green China model, the most significant barrier was the power struggle between central and local government. In pursuit of economic growth, the central government had decentralised, giving local governments more power (Zheng, 2006, p.105). Reducing the proportion of coal consumption in total energy consumption would obstruct the local coal industry's interests. In the context of central government decentralisation and increased power at the local level, encouraging the local government to engage with the new green development model was the first obstacle for the central government. Furthermore, local governments protected local businesses from pollution penalties to maintain employment and taxes. Local governments used the excuse that these penalties would threaten local social stability, which became a top concern of the central government (Wang, 2010). Therefore, the central government needed to set up an effective implementation and supervision mechanism to accompany decentralisation.

In addition, civil engagement contributed to stabilising the low-carbon and green model and implementing it at a deep level. A high level of public participation has a positive impact on the application of low-carbon technology (Huang et al., 2018, p.131). Thus, for an authoritarian regime like China to achieve development model transformation required alliances with local power and with the public as "recipient" and "bearer" of the new green model (Engels, 2018, p.4). With this understanding of the drivers underpinning China's urgent transformation from a carbon-intensive model to a green model, we can turn to decision-making procedures, implementation and supervision from the perspective of institutions and governance.

### 4.2.3 Ecological Modernisation

The transformation of the early-stage China model to a low-carbon model reflects the ideal of ecological modernisation. "The basic premise of ecological modernisation theory is the centripetal movement of ecological interests, ideas, and considerations with modern societies' social practices and institutional developments. This results in ecology-inspired and environment-induced processes of transformation and reform of those same core practices and central institutions" (Mol, 2006, p. 33). Its realisation is accompanied by political modernisation and changes in production and consumption. China's low-carbon model resulted from the power struggle between the local and central governments, reflecting the process of political modernisation. Decentralisation, flexibility and delegation of power from a rigid command and control system to local power centres can be seen in this process (Mol, 2006, p.40). However, decentralisation itself cannot trigger environmental protection. It also requires support from civil society and accountability mechanisms, as Engels argued (2018, p.4). Through the evaluation of local government performance, career incentives are an effective system to make sure that local government is accountable to the central government (Mol, 2006, p.41). SOEs also drive political modernisation to shift the policymaking process from political and party influence to the dominant economic actors. At last, the rule of law is a sign of political modernisation.

For economic actors, market competition compresses profit margins and motivates technological innovation to achieve energy saving. Environmental fees, such as discharge fees, can affect polluters' economic decisions (Mol, 2006, p.44). Thus, the requirement of environment friendly on the market promotes consumers' awareness of the living condition. As China becomes deeply involved in international trade, products must meet ISO certification. Chinese and joint venture firms must deliver international environmental standards to the domestic market and then make them the standard.



### **4.3 Renewable Energy Institution and Governance**

By 2013, China had become the leading investor in solar and wind energy production in the world (Shen and Xie, 2018, p.407). China expanded the use of wind power and solar parks to begin its transformation to a low-carbon model and thus began to tackle climate change. The "state-led model" became the key for China to achieve its goal of expansion in renewable energy. This model is characterised by 'central regulators' active intervention to create and protect the market and home-grown technologies (Xu et al. 2010, p.4439). The state-led model adopts a top-down policy involving less participation and has been identified as 'environmental authoritarianism' (Beeson, 2010, p.277). However, 'authoritarian environmentalism' was not the only factor facilitating China's transformation to a low-carbon model. The transformation resulted from a power struggle between central ministries, local administration, and non-state actors (Shen and Xie, 2018, p.408). Thus, dynamic competition between renewable energy and fossil fuels became the determinant of a successful transition. This section will address the main actors and institutions and the struggles between them.

#### 4.3.1 The Central Ministries

At the central level, since the 1980s, China's energy management system has experienced repeated reforms (Andrews-Speed, 2012, p.01). In 2013, the State Electricity Regulatory Commission disbanded, and the power of the National Energy Administration (NEA) increased. NEA oversees supervision, planning and verification of investment activities. NEA also issues capacity expansion targets annually, which provides the direction for manufacturers and investors to draft their commercial plans. Another regulatory institution is the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology (MIIT), which manages manufacturing capacity and technological innovations in solar photovoltaic panels and wind turbines (MIIT, 2012). MIIT supervises production capacity according to its investment plan and targets. The Ministry of Finance (MOF) oversees subsidy schemes for renewable energy activities, such as the "Renewable Energy Development Fund" (Shen and Luo, 2015, p.1481). In addition, the Foreign Investment Department and the Ministry of Commerce (MOFCOM) of the National

Development and Reform Commission (NDRC) oversee overseas renewable projects. These ministries require local offices to support central level departments' planning and regulatory activities.

#### 4.3.2 Conflicts in Renewable Energy Industry Development

Investment in wind and solar generates substantial economic benefits at the local level. For local officials, GDP growth, employment, and tax income are the most important performance indicators for promotion. Private actors, such as manufacturers and financial institutions, also benefit from the investment. Thus, these forces synergised to push renewable energy expansion (Harrison and Kostka 2013, p.458). Local officials and industrial actors all supported expansion targets for renewable energy. However, capacity expansion leads to an overheated market and overcapacity. For example, in 2005, wind turbines and solar PV panels' overcapacity reached 40 per cent (China Photovoltaic Industry Association 2016). NEA failed to restrict the capacity and eventually increased the solar target from 15GW to 17.8 GW in 2015 (China National Renewable Energy Center 2015, p.57) because local and market actors prefer the immediate economic benefits. NEA failed in consultations with key stakeholders. There was a gap between the expectations of the central government and local government and business sectors when the renewable energy industry developed beyond a certain level.

NEA's compromise shows that to some extent, local power and corporations could affect central policy and central ministries' local offices played an intermediary role during the process. Specifically, the central government's policy shifted from capacity expansion to industry management when renewable energy reached a certain scale. For example, besides thermal and hydropower, wind energy became the another primary energy source. However, policy transformation affected the economic interests of relevant stakeholders. In this context, the central ministries' local offices did not fully implement the central government's demands and prevented policy changes (Zhang and Barr 2013, p30). In the bureaucratic system, provincial and municipal leaders have "diagonal" relations of authority over the central

ministries' local officials.

#### 4.3.3 The Power Struggle Between the Central Government and The Local Government

Local power became influential because local authorities were the joint implementers of the central government's macro-management policies and responsible for local micro-management. Local governments wished to attract investment, which was in line with local economic interests. Provincial governments tended to exaggerate renewable energy plans to seek more investment. These plans were the fundamental basis for formulating the highest-level policy. Thus, the central government faced the challenges of protecting local enthusiasm for developing the renewable energy industry as well as making sure the plan was practicable. To deal with this problem, the MOF drafted an overall investment plan and designed the subsidy system (Ministry of Finance, 2015).

The renewable energy industry was a booming industry and attracted much investment. Therefore, the departments in charge of investment supervision obtained great power. In the beginning, the central government delegated to local governments the power to approve investments. Local governments had the right to approve wind farms of less than 50 megawatts. Local governments, therefore, approved lots of 49.5 MW projects to avoid the central government's supervision. Between 2009 and 2010, more than 60 per cent of new projects were 49.5 MW projects (China Wind Energy Association, 2014). These projects caused difficulties for grid connection. Thus, NEA reclaimed the right of investment approval from local authorities. However, this caused a shrinking of the renewable energy market. Manufacturers' profits declined by 70 per cent in 2012 (China Wind Energy Association, 2014). In order to protect the renewable energy industry, NEA had to return the approval right to local authorities in 2012 (Dai 2015, p.8). The power struggle reflected the fact that the renewable energy industry's primary development position had become the core driver of China's shift to a low-carbon model. Once the renewable energy industry was on the verge of bankruptcy, the central government adjusted policy to save the industry.

#### **4.4 Other Factors Affecting Policies**

As discussed in the previous section, "authoritarian environmentalism" was not the only means for the central government to realise the low-carbon model. The interaction between administrative and other factors also pushed the China model's transformation. The following sections will address this kind of interaction.

##### 4.4.1 Renewable Energy and Traditional Energy

Before 2014, both traditional energy and renewable energy developed harmoniously (Shen and Xie, 2018, p.413). Traditional energy's leading position in the national energy system did not experience any threat from renewable energy. This was because, along with economic growth, total energy consumption increased as well. While renewable energy was expanding, traditional energy was also growing, and the proportion of renewable energy in the total energy consumption remained at a low level. The most important point is that the traditional energy industry's participants, such as grid companies, state banks and state-owned enterprises, were also engaged in the renewable energy industry. These participants considered the renewable energy industry as a new business opportunity rather than a subversive force. Thus, before 2014, renewable energy did not suffer interference from traditional energy companies (Negro et al., 2012, p.3838).

However, the harmonious development of various energy sources has been broken. The first factor is the economic slowdown. In 2015, energy consumption increased by less than 1 per cent, which is the lowest level since 1974, while the energy supply did not cool off: new installed capacity grew by 9.4 per cent (National Statistics Bureau of PRC 2016). In other words, the energy market had an oversupply, which led to competition between the different sources of energy. Further, the balanced relationship between the central government, the local government and the private sector had to readjust. In addition, nuclear energy also challenged the development of renewable energy. Since 2014, there have been more and more projects to build nuclear reactors. In terms of political discourse, nuclear power has been considered clean

energy (China Electricity Council, 2016), which counted as renewable energy.

In this context, local authorities' attitudes to renewable energy have changed. They prefer to protect the thermal power sector (Shen and Xie, 2018) because they are associated with significantly more economical and social interests than renewable energy. Specifically, thermal power solves the problem of employment. The shrink of production scale leads to unemployment, which finally results in social instability, which is the central government's biggest concern. Although renewable energy's priority position has been legitimised in the Renewable Energy Law, policies and the law did not work as expected during the period of energy competition. As a transformation to the low-carbon model depended on renewable energy, the central government protected renewable energy. The peaceful solution to protect renewable energy was to find new markets. The Solar Energy for Poverty Alleviation Programme (SEPAP), which aims to install solar systems in poor villages (Geall, Shen and Zeren, 2017, p.4), was an example.

#### 4.4.2 Industrial Corporations

When the Renewable Energy Law was passed in 2005, the policymaking process followed a top-down approach. However, since the expansion of the renewable energy market, corporations' influence has grown, and they play a significant role in the policymaking process (Schmitz, 2016, p.526).

##### 4.4.2.1 Corporations and Policymaking

In the process of expanding the renewable energy market, large corporations shared the market and excluded small and medium scale corporations gradually. For instance, for wind power energy, the top ten corporations shared 71 per cent of the market in 2014 (China Wind Energy Association, 2014).

Similar to the wind power industry, the solar PV industry was also controlled by large companies but through a different path. Solar PV was an export-oriented industry with 80 per cent of panels exported (China National Renewable Energy Centre, 2014). However, the Chinese solar panel industry experienced EU anti-dumping measures (Lewis, 2014, p.15). On the one hand, this resulted in a reorganisation among manufacturers. On the other hand, the government paid more attention to supporting big corporations and offloading small ones (zhuada fangxiao) to save the solar PV manufacturing industry (MIIT, 2015). The top ten solar PV producers shared 70 per cent of the market in 2017. In addition, the central government also launched a plan to stimulate domestic market demand. It directly generated large investments in the industry, and large state-owned energy companies were the recipients of these investments. Large state-owned energy companies shared 50 per cent of total investment in 2013 (China National Renewable Energy Centre, 2014). Thus, leading manufacturing companies and large state-owned energy companies established their dominant renewable energy industry position.

As discussed in the section on the central ministries, NEA and MIIT are the essential political participants in the policymaking process. Corporations set up communication departments to communicate with the political participants, and they contacted each other frequently to formulate policy (Shen, 2016, p.88). They were the core team in making policy, and there were no established policies as the process became one of long-term negotiation and coordination.

Why involve corporations in the policymaking process? One reason was that the authorities did not have much experience managing the renewable energy industry as it was an emerging industry and developed rapidly. The ministries had to make sure the policies would work appropriately (Hill, 1997, p.66). Thus, regulatory agencies depended on corporations' accurate data and market analysis to design policy. However, political participants depended on corporations' data, but the corporations were also eager to capture the newest policy. This is because renewable energy relies on policy support, and understanding policy is the most crucial strategy for corporations. Further, both political participants and corporations share a common

interest in expanding the renewable energy industry (Shen, 2016, p.89). For political participants, their power comes from renewable energy market expansion as it is the main performance criterion for evaluating their work. Thus, the main participants had identical economic and political interests. The coalition pursued the goal of making renewable energy the leading energy source in the national energy plan.

Negotiation and coordination are frequently the main approaches to making policy (Miller and Demir, 2007, p.140). Before introducing a new policy, regulators have to understand corporations' difficulties and find solutions rather than issuing commands directly. The draft policy is then shared among participants, and feedback is collected. The final version will experience several rounds of modification and may emerge very different from the initial draft.

According to Shen (2016, p.89), there were many advantages to China's policymaking process. First, the political participants communicated with the consortium rather than individual companies. This helped the policy to protect the interests of the industry rather than individual companies. Second, the policymaking process was based on negotiation and coordination, which loosened coercive state power and helped adjust the corporations' preferences. In addition, participants had a shared information network through research institutions and business associations with which to collect and deliver information. Further, they not only provided information, but they also had the capacity to interpret data. In this way, the business sectors could affect the most crucial elements of policymaking.

#### 4.4.2.2 Corporations and Local Government

The local government plays a gatekeeper role in implementing renewable energy policy. However, local governments have more interest in instrumental benefits, such as tax income and employment, than in renewable energy per se (Dai, 2015, p.8). How then to encourage local governments to join the interest alliance of the renewable energy industry? For remote and less developed provinces, wind power and solar power brought political and economic

resources and did not consume local natural resources. Thus, local governments could benefit from developing renewable energy and become participants in the alliance.

Furthermore, corporations were the hub of political and economic resources (Shen, 2016, p.89). Large state-owned energy companies have strong financial capabilities, such as loans and bank credits. In terms of the policy, companies contacted the central ministries frequently and tried to stay at the forefront of policymaking. As discussed in the previous section, to some extent, companies became the missionaries of the policy. Therefore, companies were more proactive in communication and updating information than bureaucracy. In addition, as mentioned in the previous section, the business sector provided data to formulate policy at the central level, and they also provided data at the local level to help the local government complete an annual local renewable energy development plan for the NEA. The process implies that resource exchange makes the alliance stable and firm (Miller and Demir, 2007).

The previous discussion described the China model as a balance of interests among central power, local power, and business sectors. When oversupply appeared in the energy market, the coalition of interest groups began disintegrating. The central government's strategy for new energy shifted from expansion to exploring its unique role. The central authority attempted to describe renewable energy as a unique energy source and seek new market spaces as well as achieve long-term development. Therefore, the discourse of mitigating climate change became the most critical political strategy to promote renewable energy. The fact that renewable energy policy shifted to protecting a unique role reflected the ideology of China's economic shift from traditional development to a low-carbon and sustainable model. In addition, it saves the government from the criticism that China has to take more responsibility for climate change. In this context, the climate and environment sectors became a particular part of the new alliance. In short, mitigating climate change was a side-effect of China's economic transformation and national energy structure adjustment. The next section will explain how the discourse of mitigating climate was deployed to make the alliance strong and sturdy.



#### **4.5 Climate Change as A Shared Value**

According to Leach et al. (2007, p.9), ideals, beliefs and positive narratives are the bonds among participants in an alliance. Making the renewable energy industry the leading energy source in the national energy system is the alliance's purpose. Compared to fossil fuels, renewable energy has a superior position in environment and climate discourses. Further, sustainable economic development, energy security and independence are superiority discourses for renewable energy as well. The central government considers renewable energy as a development strategy related to China's position in world competition.

According to Shen (2016, p.92), these narratives on renewable energy did not follow a top-down approach. In fact, the benefits of renewable energy were apparent to the alliance's non-political participants and strengthened by market expansion. Finally, the central level government helped form these positive discourses. Specifically, various business sectors edited these ideals into government reports and submitted them to regulatory agencies. Some of the ideals were approved by regulators and became part of their discourse. The other approach to communicating values to the regulator is through the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) and National People's Congress (NPC). This is helped by the fact that many members of leading corporations are the representatives of CPPCC and NPC, and they used these nationwide forums to uphold the ideals and values of renewable energy. Therefore, the positive narratives of renewable energy were formed through corporations' lobbying rather than through a top-down process.

#### **4.6 Policies Related to Climate Change at The Highest Level**

The previous section described the policymaking process and factors that affected it domestically. Mitigating climate change has become a discourse of promoting the renewable energy market. This section will analyse the highest level of policy related to tracking climate change and find out how the alliance works to achieve emission reduction targets and to what extent the government's claimed achievements are actual.

This part of the study is mainly focused on the Five-year Plans (FYPs). FYPs are an essential part of China's economic planning, and they are long-term plans. They are also comprehensive plans that mainly focus on major national construction projects, the distribution of production, and the national economy's essential proportions (Guo et al, 2014, p.242). The documents set goals and layout the prospects of national economic development. China began to formulate the first "Five-year Plan" in 1953. Up to now, China has so far issued 13 five-year plans, the latest covering 2016-2020.

The National Development and Reform Commission and experts from various ministries participate in the process of drafting the FYP. At the first stage, they edit the suggestions for developing the FYP. After the suggestions are adopted by the Plenum of the CPC Central Committee, the suggestions become a draft FYP. The National Development and Reform Commission and experts discuss the draft repeatedly. The revised FYP draft is submitted to the National People's Congress (NPC) Standing Committee for consideration. The NPC reviews and formally approves the FYP. The State Council implements the goals and tasks of the FYP at different levels of local governments and clarifies the departments responsible for binding targets and the regional decomposition of binding targets; it establishes a bulletin system for binding targets and fixes them targets (Jiang, 2006). Further, the NPC incorporates comprehensive economic and social development evaluations in various regions and sectors and organises national implementation.

The FYP is a practical plan for China to transform into a low-carbon development model (Hu, 2011). This is because the logic of formulating the FYP is a step-by-step progress at each level. In other words, China makes progress every five years, and the sequence of FYPs contributes to China's transformation. It is also a methodology for China to construct a modern, socialist society. The logic corresponds to that of climate governance. Climate change is a long-term challenge for humanity, which requires planning on different timescales. For climate governance, the long-term goal is controlling global temperature rise within 2 ° C above pre-

industrial temperatures. China aims to cut 40 to 50 per cent of its emissions per unit of GDP in the current FYP. The 11th FYP (2006-2010) to the 13th FYP (2016-2020) laid the foundations for China to transform to a low-carbon, green development model. The implementation of each FYP provides experience and lessons for the next FYP.

China's policy has the character of continuity and consistency (Hu, 2011). So far, China has issued and implemented thirteen FYPs. As a one-party state, China does not experience power struggles between different parties, which may result in the overturning of the existing policies. Overturning existing policies would undermine the CCP's legitimacy. Thus, once China set socialist modernisation as a long-term goal, all subsequent FYPs were adjusted to fit the goal. Continuity and consistency of policies are the guarantees for tracking climate change, while the FYP can adapt to different phases in domestic conditions. Other countries, such as the US, lack consistency, which led to a changeable attitude toward the Kyoto Protocol and the Paris Agreement. Mitigating climate change requires a complete change in the economic development model and lifestyle, which could not be accomplished very soon.

The CCP thinks highly of low-carbon development and set the targets for reducing emissions. This is the political guarantee and incentive for low-carbon development. China's policies work on the domestic level and on the international level, for example, by submitting an INDC. Although China's determination and mandatory policy are necessary, lack of flexibility is the shortcoming of its policymaking process and implementation. As explained below in the discussion of the 11th FYP, some provinces had to cut power to meet their targets. Setting targets should consider the economically efficient level of actual emissions (Zhang, 2015, p.45). In addition, the local government can access policy more efficiently through enterprises rather than a bureaucratic system, reflecting the system's lack of flexibility. However, there are also many examples of flexible implementation, such as low-carbon pilot demonstrations. To some extent, this made up for low flexibility and helped avoid the risk of policy failure.

Zhang (2015, p.48) argued that there are two ways to evaluate low-carbon policy, its "growth

effect" and its "low carbon effect". In terms of "growth effect", against the background of the economic crisis in 2008, China issued stringent reduction targets in the 11th FYP, when the Chinese economy grew 10.69 per cent annually on average. Although the Chinese economy has slowed down since then, this is not because of the low-carbon strategies (Garnatut, 2014, p.8). Further, renewable energy has become a source of Chinese economic growth (Zhang, p. 49), as being the world's largest generator of wind power brings significant economic growth and employment opportunity. In terms of a "low-carbon effect", China has met its reduction targets since the 11th FYP (NDRC, 2011, p.8). As China experiences a low-carbon development mode transition, the emission peak year may arrive earlier than 2030 (Garnatut, 2014, p.16). Although the policy lacked flexibility, it helps China achieve reduction targets and keep the economy growing.

#### **4.7 FYPs and The Low-Carbon Transition**

This part of the study will review China's FYPs beginning with the 10th FYP (2001-2005) because they are comprehensive plans that guide economic development. They provide an entry point to understanding the central government's ideas.

As analysed in the previous sections, compared to Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development countries, China consumes four times as much energy to produce the same amount of GDP and emits six times the amount of carbon dioxide (Delman and Odgaard, 2014, p.226). This is partly because of energy and carbon inefficiency. China has the potential to achieve energy savings. At the same time, China also has the potential to reduce carbon dioxide emissions. This is the driver for FYPs to set emission reduction targets. Compared to 2005, China aims to cut 40 per cent to 50 per cent of its emissions per unit of GDP by 2020. It is difficult to access to latest data, and coronavirus may hinder achievement. However, during the 12th FYP (2011-2015), China achieved the target by reducing its emissions per unit of GDP by 20 per cent (IEA, 2017). In addition, it is worth noting that China's per capita emissions are much lower than in other countries. Until 2018 (Crippa, M. et al., 2019, p.36), China ranked

179th globally, with 8.0 tons per capita and half of the US (16.1 tons/year). In order to support development, China's total energy consumption was expected to keep growing from 2000 to 2020 (Delman and Odgaard, 2014, p.230). Although FYPs set reduction targets, such as expanding non-fossil energy and reducing carbon-intensity, the amount of coal and oil consumption is expected to increase consistently, resulting in high emissions. At the same time, other sources of energy are also expected to experience growth.

#### 4.7.1 The 10th FYP (2001-2005)

In this period, China established a market economic system, and the market gradually came to play a leading role in the allocation of resources while the planned economy was scaled back. In this context, the main problems for the 10th FYP to deal with were reducing the gap between the rich and the poor, ensuring a balance between fairness and efficiency, as well as developing the economy by applying market mechanisms. Thus, during this period, climate and environmental problems were not priorities. The 10th FYP did not set development targets or strategies for energy but still showed concern for the environment, for example:

"Insist on resource development (water, land and forest) and conservation, and put conservation first. Strengthen ecological construction, curb ecological degradation, increase environmental protection and governance. Actively participate in the global environment and development affairs, fulfil obligations, and implement policies and measures to mitigate global climate change." (NDRC, 2001)

During 2001-2005, the structure of energy and climate change were not domestic problems in China. However, pollution and environmental damage became more significant after rapid economic development. Thus, the 10th FYP paid more attention to environmental governance and protection.

#### 4.7.2 The 11th FYP (2006-2010)

The first chapter of the 11th FYP described the domestic situation as:

*"The long-term and deep-seated contradictions that restrict development are the shortage of energy and significant mineral resources, the fragile ecological environment, and irrational economic structure. During the 10th Five-Year Plan period, some major problems emerged: excessive energy resources consumption and intensified environmental pollution. We must accelerate the transformation of the economic growth model. Resource conservation should be a basic national policy and speed up to construct a resource-saving and environmentally friendly society, taking a new type of industrialisation and adhering to clean and safe development as well as achieving sustainable development." (NDRC, 2006)*

In order to upgrade the industrial structure, the 11th FYP set such targets as:

*"Reducing energy consumption per unit of GDP by 20 per cent. Resolving to develop wind energy vigorously and build 30 large-scale wind power projects of more than 100,000KW. Grid-connected wind power capacity and biomass power capacity to reach 5 million kilowatts and 5.5 million kilowatts respectively." (NDRC, 2006)*

There were many strategies in terms of energy-saving, including closing small-scale enterprises, an energy-saving power generation scheduling scheme, and so-called "top-ten" energy-saving projects. In order to achieve the targets of the 11th FYP, which is reducing energy consumption per unit of GDP by about 20%, the central government conducted ten projects, which can save 240 million tons of coal, such as transformation the coal-fired industrial boiler, heat and power cogeneration project. However, these strategies were centred on the Top 1000 Energy-Consuming Enterprises Program (Guo et al., 2014, p.243). The program distributed energy-saving targets to nine industry sectors, which were significant consumers, such as iron and steel, petroleum and petrochemicals, chemicals, electric power generation, non-ferrous metals, coal mining, construction materials, textiles, and pulp and paper. These sectors were required to submit energy-saving reports to the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) (Wang, 2009). The program made a great effort to meet the saving target. This is because it focused on energy-

intensive industries. The program also worked due to government pressure at the central level, while the local level provided investment plans with reinforced regulations. The last essential element contributing to the program's effectiveness was adopting the enterprise managers' evaluation system, which encouraged managers to show great enthusiasm for meeting the savings target. Similarly, there was also an evaluation system for local officials related to their promotion and other rewards (Wang, 2009). The system encouraged local officials not only to chase economic growth but also to consider the cost.

In terms of the expansion of renewable energy, the concept of renewable energy appeared on the policy agenda in 2005. During the global financial crisis in 2008, wind power was identified as an economic growth sector in China (Wang, 2009). In short, there were motivations for the expansion of renewable energy. Together with energy-saving, the 11th FYP included incentives to meet the reduction targets.

The energy consumption target helped China reduced coal consumption from 1.22 tons to 0.97 tons per ten thousand CNY of GDP (Jiang et al., 2007). If China achieved the target, it would be a significant action of mitigating climate change in the world. As discussed in previous sections, both energy-saving and expansion of renewable energy were seen as solutions to improve energy efficacy and meet the consumption reduction target. By 2010 China had reduced its energy consumption per unit of GDP by 19.06 per cent, which did not meet the target of 20 per cent. However, the 20 per cent target was based on the 11th FYP GDP growth target of 7.5 per cent, whereas the average annual GDP growth during the 11th Five-year (2006-2010) was 11.2 per cent, much higher than the target (Guo et al., 2014, p.246). Although China did not completely meet the reduction target, the 11th FYP still promoted energy-saving and expansion of renewable energy.

Several problems appeared in the process of carrying out the 11th FYP. First of all, in order to achieve the reduction target, local officials suffered too much pressure to push companies to save energy, which resulted in power cuts (Watts, 2010), especially in provinces with high

energy-intensity, like Hebei, Jiangsu and Zhejiang. Secondly, the credibility of energy data has been widely criticised. The central government and local governments apply different measurements. However, because reduction performance relates to officials' promotion and rewards. Thus, the central government should supervise it to ensure that the local government did not cheat in reporting reductions (Guo et al., 2014, p.246). At last, as mentioned in the previous section, large-scale state-own enterprises had the most significant share of the market. They were central to achieving the target. The 11th FYP adopted the enterprise managers evaluation system to encourage companies to meet the target.

#### 4.7.3 The 12th FYP (2011-2015)

Compared to the previous FYPs, in the 12th FYP, there was a chapter on "Green development; building a resource-saving and environmentally-friendly society", which described China's environmental condition and response as follows:

*"Facing increasingly constrained resources and environment, we must strengthen the awareness of the crisis, establish the green and low-carbon development concept, and focus on energy conservation and emission reduction, improve incentives and restraint mechanisms, accelerate the construction of resource-saving, environmentally-friendly production methods and consumption models, enhance sustainable development capabilities, and improve the level of ecological civilisation" (NDRC, 2011)*

The 12th FYP explained the green development model from six aspects, climate change, energy-saving and governance, the circular economy, environmental protection, ecological protection and restoration, water conservancy and disaster prevention. The 12th FYP set a similar GDP growth target and a lower energy consumption reduction target than the 11th FYP. The improvement of the 12th FYP was that the document set emission reduction targets for carbon dioxide and other pollutants in detail, for example:

*"The average annual growth rate of GDP should be 7 per cent. Non-fossil energy should account for 11.4 per cent of primary energy consumption. Energy consumption per unit of GDP*



*is to be reduced by 16 per cent, and carbon dioxide emissions per unit of GDP are to be reduced by 17 per cent. The total emission of major pollutants is to be significantly reduced, the chemical oxygen demand and sulfur dioxide emissions should be reduced by 8 per cent, and the ammonia nitrogen and nitrogen oxide emissions should be reduced by 10 per cent." (NDRC, 2011)*

According to IEA (2017), the data on CO<sub>2</sub> emissions per unit of GDP shows that in 2015, China's rate was 1.01(kg/US dollar), while in 2011, it was 1.27(kg/ US dollar). Thus, during the 12th FYP, China achieved the target by reducing its emissions per unit of GDP by 20 per cent. There were many improvements in the 12th FYP to stimulate various achievements. As mentioned at the end of the last session, some provinces with high energy-intensity suffered much more pressure to save energy, which led to power cuts. The 12th FYP paid more attention to adjusting the targets to adapt to the local condition rather than unified targets. Further, the FYP included targets for restricting cities' emissions, for example: "Promote low-carbon pilot demonstrations. Promote energy conservation and emission reductions for all people in cities" (NDRC, 2011)

The NDRC issued a "Notice to establish and develop low-carbon pilots in provinces and cities" in 2010 (NDRC, 2010). These provinces included Guangdong, Liaoning, Hubei, Shanxi and Yunnan, and cities such as Tianjin, Chongqing, Shenzhen, Xiamen, Hangzhou, Nanchang, Guiyang, and Baoding. Provinces and cities were required to design plans for emission reduction based on different regional conditions as well as promote low-carbon lifestyles and consumption patterns in the city. It is also worth noting that cities not included in the low-carbon pilot also encouraged the low-carbon model (Wang et al. 2010, p.707).

After the establishment of a low-carbon pilot model, the measurement system was to be clarified. As the actions to promote low-carbon growth had been conducted as a pilot model and as part of the Top 1000 Energy-Consuming Enterprises Program, it was urgent to provide a low-carbon standard. NBS was put in charge of developing the monitoring system for carbon

emissions, low-carbon technology and industrial standards (Guo et al., 2014, p.250). In addition, the 12th FYP proposed to establish a carbon trading market and establish a pilot in Shenzhen in 2013. Establishing the carbon trading market was expected to reduce the cost of boosting energy efficiency compared to command-control measures.

#### 4.7.4 The 13th FYP (2016-2020)

The 13th FYP indicated that during the 12th FYP period, China had achieved its targets. Specifically, the objective for the average annual growth rate of GDP was 7 per cent, while the actual rate was 7.8 per cent. Non-fossil energy was to account for 11.4 per cent of primary energy consumption, while the actual proportion was 12 per cent. Energy consumption per unit of GDP was reduced by 2.2 per cent more than the target of 16 per cent, and carbon dioxide emissions per unit of GDP was reduced by 3 per cent more than the target of 17 per cent.

Due to the exceeding of the targets set in place by the 12th FYP, the 13th FYP determined to set the speed of economic development at a medium to a high level as well as more ambitious targets for energy and emission reductions, for example:

*"The average annual growth rate of GDP will be set at 6.5 per cent. Non-fossil energy should account for 15 per cent of primary energy consumption. Energy consumption per unit of GDP should be reduced by 15 per cent. Carbon dioxide emissions per unit of GDP should be reduced by 18 per cent." (NDRC, 2016)*

According to the latest data from IEA (2019), compared to 2015, the rate of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions / GDP using exchange declined 10 per cent by 2017. Further, the more ambitious reduction targets reflected China's imperative to realise a green and low-carbon development model. However, there were many crises on the way to implementing the 13th FYP. As explained in previous sections, China set a slow economic development target and experienced severe overcapacity. Generator utilisation declined, and utilisation hours fell to the lowest level since 1978. Nevertheless, the number of coals fired power plants increased rather than fell due to the

previous period's inertia and reverse stimulus. Specifically, governments had approved many coal-fired powers generation projects in the prior period of rapid economic development. In addition, the government adjusted electricity prices, and coal prices declined, which contributed to making coal more profitable. Moreover, overcapacity made the harmonious development of fossil fuels and non-fossil energy collapse. Renewable energy was dependent on its unique climate and environment discourses to make it competitive with other energy sources.

#### **4.8 World Cooperation on Mitigating Climate Change and China's Low-Carbon Transition**

*"Widely develop international cooperation"* is one of the essential strategies for dealing with climate change in FYPs, specifically:

*"Adhere to the principles of common but differentiated responsibilities, equity, and respective capability. Actively participate in global climate change negotiations and promote the establishment of a fair, reasonable, and win-win global climate governance system. Support other developing countries to strengthen their capacity to respond to climate change."* (NDRC, 2011 & NDRC, 2016)

Based on common but differentiated responsibilities, finance and technology are two fundamental approaches to tackle climate change. As for finance, the agreed outcome of COP 13 was that developing countries should take Nationally Appropriate Mitigation Actions (NAMAs) before 2020 and gain funding and technical support. The Green Climate Fund provided financial assistance. China could use the fund to strengthen low-carbon capacity in urban areas (Fei and Gu, 2007). If it could generate a new market mechanism, China would have more opportunity to engage in the carbon market.

## 4.9 Moving Forward

According to the process of formulating FYPs, the 14th FYP is at the research and preparation stage. In terms of administration, China's climate department has moved from the NDRC to the Ministry of Ecology and Environment (MEE) (Bai and Yao, 2019). This means the climate department cannot participate in the early research stage with NDRC. To some extent, climate officials' ability to influence the FYP might be limited.

Compared with other FYPs, China Dialogue speculates that the following changes may occur in 14th FYP. First of all, in order to draft the 14th FYP, the Ministry of Ecology and Environment (MEE) is researching capping carbon emission. So far, China has not indicated a carbon cap. If 14th FYP will employ a carbon cap, it is a significant improvement. Wang Yi, a member of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress, suggested adopting a carbon emission cap to replace the energy consumption cap (Bai and Yao, 2019) as it is more efficient to restrict carbon emissions than to cap energy consumption. The energy consumption cap cannot measure carbon emissions of different energy sources, and it only concerns the total energy used. Once applying a carbon emissions cap, the benefit of renewable energy will be strengthened. Thus, the policies of renewable energy will deepen and help non-fossil fuels to expand. The target for the proportion of coal in the primary energy structure is expected to be lower in the 14th FYP. During the period of the 13th FYP, power supply stability improved, and power demand increased. It is necessary to demonstrate further that the development of renewable energy can satisfy the increased demand.

The target of non-fossil energy consumption in primary energy consumption will be an important index in the 14th FYP as the expansion of non-fossil energy is still an important way for China to transform to a low-carbon model. Although wind and solar power expanded during the 13th FYP, their development speed has slowed down (Bai and Yao, 2019). This is because NDRC, the Ministry of Finance and the National Energy Administration issued a new policy in 2018-Notice on Issues Related to Photovoltaic Power Generation. The policy announced that: "In 2018, there will be no further development scale targets for constructing photovoltaic

power projects, and it will be forbidden to arrange to construct photovoltaic power projects which depend on state subsidies." Thus, nuclear power and hydropower will play a more significant role in primary energy consumption. In other words, the government has tightened subsidies. At the same time, the 14th FYP has to figure out a conservative target for renewable energy.

#### **4.10 Summary**

This chapter has reviewed renewable energy policymaking processes and the formation of interest groups by central, local and private sector actors, who have collectively promoted the low-carbon model. Overall, China has met the reduction targets set in FYPs. These achievements have made China more confident in its ability to deal with climate change. These achievements give some ground for confidence that China can play a positive role in mitigating climate change. The next chapter explains the research design.

## **Chapter 5 Methodology**

### **5.1 Introduction**

This study adopted framing analysis as a research method and social semiotics as a general analytical approach. This is because a series of signs construct key matters, while a frame is a structure of meanings. Thus, in order to understand the CCPs ideology that underpins climate change coverage, this research employs social semiotics to identify frames. After an initial scan of the data, China's climate change governance performance, international cooperation, and conflicts are the three significant frames in the climate change news report.

Section 5.2 explains the definition and function of framing analysis. This section also shows why this research employs framing analysis. Section 5.3 explores the definition and function of social semiotics, especially how it works in the ideological complex and helps the ruling class maintain its dominant position. Then this chapter shows the connection between framing analysis and social semiotics. Based on theoretical knowledge, I explain the research design used in this research in section 5.6, and section 5.7 is a description of sampling. Section 5.8 draws a summary.

### **5.2 Framing analysis**

According to Matthes (2009, p.350), there are two primary genres of framing definition. General definitions describe frames without guidelines for operationalisation. For example, Gitlin (1980, p.6) identified frames as "principles of selection, emphasis, and presentation, composed of little tacit theories about what exists, what happens and what matters." Other definitions display what frames generally do, such as defining problems, providing precise operational guidelines, enabling "inferences that distinguish framing from themes, arguments, assertions and other under-theorised concepts" (Entman, 1993, p.52). These two definitions also express two framing approaches, labelling framing and constructive framing. The labelling framing focuses on identification but ignores the dynamical process to construct an issue.

However, constructive framing can overcome the labelling framing's shortage and capture the framing development of an issue. This study adopts a constructive framing approach to assess how the media uses signs to construct climate change and communicate the CCP's ideology to the public.

Framing analysis tries to answer the question of how and why the issue is seen as a problem. It can also deal with how it should be handled and who is responsible for it (Nisbet et al, 2003, p.37). It is a research method that can find out how issues are presented and interpreted in the news (de vreeze, Peter, & Trammell, 2001, p.107). Framing is a process in which some perceived reality aspects are selected, emphasised and make prominent, while others are excluded. According to Bennett (1988), framing can examine the content of news coverage by considering framing to find out broad organising themes, which are selected and emphasised. Elements of a story such as the scenes, their characters and actors are highlighted using supporting documentation are used. Therefore, framing analysis identifies particular problem definitions, causal interpretations, moral evaluations, and treatment recommendations (Entaman, 1993, p.52). This research employs framing analysis because it is concerned with ideology, in the discursive sense, and specifically with the CCP's ideological response to the issue of climate change.

Hall (1973, p.99) identified three positions that readers use to decode the messages:

1. The dominant position, in which the reader can decode information in the way it was encoded. The codes in this position with the broader universe of ideologies and encoded in particular discourses.
2. The negotiated position is a mixture of accepting and rejecting elements. In this position, readers accept the preferred meaning of the encoder. At the same time, resist some information according to their experiences or interests.
3. The oppositional position. Audiences interpret information on the opposite side to the encoder according to their understanding—the opposite position generated by conflicts

between dominant encoding and negotiated-corporate decoding. Thus, audiences can understand the text but interpret it in a contrary way.

Framing analysis is an inherent part of human cognition for organising and contextualising events. For example, Goffman (1974, p.47) claimed that media coverage provides the frames of interpretation by which people locate, perceive, identify, and label events, giving meaning to them, thereby organising experiences and guiding actions. Nisbet et al. (2003, p.38) also argue that media frames enable audiences to take interpretive short cuts to make sense of policy debates. They pointed out that journalists make various conscious and unconscious decisions in framing, which are reflected in the language used in news reports and tone, topic or focus, placement of specific facts and arguments, and observance of journalistic norms. Further, particular framings serve specific interests by influencing audiences. According to the cognitive model, audiences accept frames and adopt them as their understanding of new things. In this context, news reports may set up frames to influence audiences' thoughts for a particular purpose. How the CCP communicates climate change to the people of China and the world community and what are the CCP's motivations to do so is the ideological problem that this study attempts to solve.

### 5.2.1 Framing effects

The process of how frames in communication by elites' influence citizens' frames and attitudes is called a framing effect (Chong & Druckman, 2007, p.109). According to James Druckman (2001b, p.1043), both frames in communication and frames in thought are two factors resulting in the framing effect. Framing in communication pays more attention to what a speaker or news text says, and it often refers to media frames. Framing in thought highlights individual thinking. There are two types of framing effects: an equivalency framing effect and an emphasis framing effect. The equivalency framing effect can influence people to change their preferences when presented with different, but logically equivalent, words or phrases, while the emphasis framing effect emerges in the course of describing an issue or event. A speaker's emphasis on a subset of potentially relevant considerations causes individuals to focus on these considerations when constructing their opinions (Druckman, 2001b, p.1043). Therefore, a frame is the best way to



affect public opinion by emphasising a subset of different and potentially relevant considerations.

The emphasis on framing can increase or decrease an issue's salience under consideration when formulating an opinion. When elites participate in a contest to shape frames in the media, it is often a way of influencing other people's opinions and their predictions of public opinion and then finally affecting their political calculation (Wahl, 2003, p.3). There are three paths of this kind of influence:

- influencing citizens' response to opinion polls
- using the news frames to extrapolate current and future potential public opinion directly
- elite assessment of how other elites will respond to all this

Further, framing messages can have a particular political influence without affecting an individual's opinion about an issue. This is because a message can affect elites' perception of public opinion, assessments of the political environment, and political benefits calculation.

### 5.2.2 Framing and legitimacy function of ideology

"Official framing is a reaction to legitimacy deficits" (Bondees and Heep, 2012, p.8). As discussed in Chapter 2, this is because changes in belief or circumstances result in legitimacy deficits if rules of power do not adjust accordingly to changing. In this context, official framing works to restructure the rules of power to adapt to a public belief, which finally contributes to public belief in "both the elites' leadership qualities and their determination to serve the common interest" (Bondees and Heep, 2012, p.8). Besides producing official framing to reduce legitimacy deficits, the propaganda system in authoritarian regimes like China also plays a significant role in the communication of framing. There are three necessary elements for framing to resonate. The first one is "consistency" (Noakes and Johnston, 2005, p.15). The framing of beliefs, ideas, claims and actions should be consistent. The second is "cultural compatibility". Frames, symbols, and ideational elements should in line with the compatibility of cultural stock. The last one is "relevance" (Snow and Benfor, 1988., p208), which means framing should fit the real world and make sense in the audience's daily life. Among these

elements, cultural compatibility is essential to resonance. Thus "cultural narratives, symbols and ideational elements are central resources in the construction of frames" (Bondees and Heep, 2012, p.9). In this context, the social semiotics approach can help us to examine signs in culture and society. The following section will explain why this research employs the social semiotics approach.

### 5.2.3 Framing Climate Change

Framing analysis is a high-frequency approach to study climate change. According to Nisbet (2009, p.18), there are eight applicable frames for analysing climate change.

- Social progress: aims to improve life quality, solve problems and be in harmony with nature.
- Economic development and competitiveness: involve economic interests and global competitiveness.
- Morality and ethics: identifies right or wrong or reactions to boundaries.
- Scientific and technical uncertainty: expresses knowledge or consensus and hype or alarmism.
- Pandora's box/ Frankenstein's monster/ runaway science: precautions of possible catastrophe and out-of-control consequence.
- Public accountability and governance: serving the public interest or special interests; emphasizing control, transparency, participation, responsiveness, or ownership.
- Middle way/ alternative path: there is a third way between conflicting or polarized views or options.
- Conflict and strategy: means games or battle plans between different parties.

As discussed previously, labelling framing cannot observe the dynamic growth of frames; on the other hand, it cannot deal with the problem to distinguish different actors and purposes by applying the same frames. For example, private groups use climate uncertainty to maintain the proportion of fossil fuel and profit. At the same time, the CCP mentioned climate uncertainty as an opposing opinion and led to their support for renewable energy. Although Nisbet (2009)

proposes eight general frameworks, they cannot be fully applied to Chinese climate news. For example, there have been no sceptical voices in Chinese climate change news reports and politicised strategies are essential topics (Jia, 2017). In addition, Han (2017) found differences in the application of the framework between the party newspaper and commercial newspaper when presenting climate change. Thus, this research adopts an inductive approach.

### **5.3 Social semiotics**

#### 5.3.1 Social Semiotics

Traditional semiotics' functions tend to analyse signs in a static process and focus on their structure and coding (Hodge & Kress, 1988, p.1.). Saussure emphasised signs' structural and systematic nature, while Peirce focused on the logical sense and the sign's value (Hodge & Kress, 1988, p.14). In traditional semiotics, the function, practice and social meaning of signs are often ignored. Social semiotics studies not only examine signs but also explores their communicative functions in social contexts. In this context, social semiotics aims to solve problems about how people design and interpret texts and how social interests shape the sign system and how it adapts to social change. From social semiotics, the sign is a kind of resource for people to design and use, which finally generates meaning.

This research aims to understand the dynamic interaction between CCP's ideology and climate governance as well as climate communication. However, climate governance and communication are considered as independent variables and how they trigger changes in CCP's ideology. On the basis of enhancing domestic climate governance performance legitimacy, international recognition is the external source of legitimacy. So, the CCP's international legitimacy is crucial to understanding the party's ideology. Compared to other approaches in cultural studies, social semiotics provides tools enabling deeper exploration of language (Hodge and Louie, 1998, p.7). Social semiotics is an effective way of analysing language in detail from the perspective of its social function. Any verbal language, such as Chinese, is a semiotic system. This study explores the CCP ideology using social semiotics as a general

analytical approach underpinning a discursive concept of ideology, as discussed in the last chapter. The application of social semiotics explicates the relationship between signs and ideology.

### 5.3.2 Social Semiotics and Ideology

The uneven distribution of rights and material products is a phenomenon that exists widely in various societies (Hodge & Kress, 1988, p.2). In this context, the ruling class tries to express its view of the world, reflecting its interests and rights. At the same time, the ruling class continues to maintain the stability of its dominant position. In order to explain the relationship between power and stability. Hodge & Kress (1988, p.3) propose "ideology complex", a collection of contradictory views of the world. Specifically, the ideology complex enables one social group to exert pressure on another group to protect its special interests or enable another group to try to resist such pressure for its benefit. The ideological complex expresses social relations by serving both the ruler and the ruled. The social significance of a sign serving the interest of a social class or social groups, through its function, orientation and content, may be described as "ideology" or "ideological" in nature.

Both opposing parties in the ideological complex want to resist each other. The ideological complex uses contradictory signs to resolve conflicts, but signs cannot work independently. Therefore, they mobilise the sub-level of information, such as shared culture. For example, Chinese people will not refuse to wear a facial mask when they catch a cold because of politeness and respect. Someone who comes from the same culture will not misunderstand. This level adjusts the operation of the ideological complex and has a close relationship with the production and acceptance of meaning. If the information producer wants the information to produce its intended effect, it is vital to ensure that the recipient of the information understands it completely. The "logonomic system" serves this process (Hodge & Kress, 1988, p.4), and it is a system of ideology or ideological signs, including the language or discourse that expresses ideology. The logonomic system is a series of rules determining the conditions

for the production and acceptance of meaning. The logonomic system governs the function of social semiotics in terms of production and reception. Hall (1973, p.99) argued the dominant position of decoding, the universe of ideologies and shared culture, is required in encoding. It is series of rules for processing information and clarifying meaning in practice. Ideology referring to the use of meaning to sustain relations of domination determines the intrinsic meaning of signs. The meaning of signs results in different coding methods due to the different forms of social communication. In other words, the signs can serve ideology because of the interaction between signs in the real world and the simulated world. Therefore, under the manipulation of the logonomic system, semiotics can serve the purpose of ideology. The ideological complex underpins the legitimacy of the ruling class's domination by reflecting various social contradictions. The logonomic system is a part of the ideological complex and implies a particular social theory, culture, and values system (Hodge & Kress, 1988, p5). This study aims to understand the CCP ideology features that underpin climate governance and climate communication to the world by analysing the *People's Daily's* coverage of climate change. At the same time, climate change discourse is characterised by uncertainties and scientific barriers, and the logonomic system serves a crucial function for activating signs. Thus, the social semiotic approach provides a way to understand ideology by considering its underlying social theory, culture and values.

### 5.3.3 Social Semiotics and Society

In the book "Language as Ideology", Kress and Hodge (1979, p.6) pointed out that the analysis and interpretation of language should focus on the text or grammar and explain it in its social context. According to Hodge and Kress (1988, p.1), semiotics and social communication should be considered integrated rather than isolated. Social semiotics focuses on signs in a relationship with each other in different social contexts. Therefore, social semiotics emphasises the vital role of society and culture, which construct the meaning of the sign. The sign is an element in social communication. The meaning of the sign is always constructed and transmitted through society. It reflects the social structure and social relations, and the corresponding ideology. In the meantime, the sign is also shaped by social organisations and

by the constraints of interactions and interrelationships in society. It reflects the social structure and social relations (Voloshinov, 1973, p.2). Social factors also play an essential role in constructing ideology. Social semiotics is thus an approach especially suitable for studying ideology through language and culture.

#### 5.3.4 Social Semiotics and Chinese Studies

Social semiotics has advantages for my research purpose as it provides a way to understand the interrelations of Chinese language, culture, and politics. "Chinese culture is strongly visual." and is "more semiotic than Western disciplines" (Hodge and Louie, 1998, p.8), which is partly dictated by the fact that there are many homonyms, and the written language is based on pictograms. Therefore, studies of the Chinese language have been required to be semiotically broader than studies of European languages. This research uses examples in the Chinese language to further understand the Chinese Communist Party's ideology by analysing media coverage of climate change. For example, the word for "step", *bufa* (步伐) means solemn and confident walking. Usually, the word of *bufa* (步伐) is using to describe a soldier on parade. Thus, the word *bufa* (步伐) contributes to a sense of confidence, of being powerful and in high spirits. It conveys a strong psychological suggestion of positivity and confidence. This research takes a social semiotic approach to understand the CCP's climate change coverage's political function. Social semiotics can alert us to the way power works by acting through semiotic codes or practices. This is because a certain use of language serves social and political functions (Hodge and Louie, 1998, p.9). Moreover, both social and political functions can only exist alongside semiotic codes and practices.

In terms of interpretation, discursive regimes try to shape readers understanding of the text, but readers can speculate about the shape of the iceberg below sea level (Hodge and Louie, 1998, p.18). Unlike the West, which values democracy and the free press, China highly controls official discourse (Hodge and Louie, 1998, p.19). The control of discourse generates different kinds of symptomatic readings as a survival strategy for Chinese readers. There are three

groups of readers. Some of them get the intended meaning through clues, while others may predict more than the presentation but never know right or wrong, and others only stay on the surface of the text. There are two forms of the discursive regime. One of them is a closed form without ambiguity and doubt, such as a slogan. The other is the open form with scope for multiple interpretations. The closed form aims to close an argument by emphasising one side. However, debate still exists; otherwise, there is no necessity for the slogan. Further, the slogan may invoke opposing opinions to take the dominance position. Thus, it will generate ambiguity, and ambiguity is a kind of semiotic resource.

#### **5.4 Connecting Framing to Social Semiotics**

Eco (1976, p.15) argued that semiotics is a technique for sign systems analysis. Semiotics is a kind of science of signs and provides a series of assumptions or concepts, which can analyse sign systems systematically. It is based on the linguistic model and considers the meaning produced by the difference in context. Signs can express difference and similarity in context. In other words, "a sign is something which represents or stands for something else in the mind of someone", which has been identified as expression and content or signifier and signified. Semiotics are studies to identify what can be considered a sign and something they stand for (Eco, 1979, p.15). The connection between signifier and signified is psychologically and socially constructed. Further, the connection between signifier and signified should be formed in shared, or collective knowledge or ideas called culture (Culler 1976, p.72).

According to Goffman (1974, p.10), a frame implies rules and principles that can guide an understanding of experienced events' meaning. In this point of view, particular frames can organise perception. This is because a set of cues and signs indicate vital matters. Therefore, a frame is a structure of knowledge, experience, values and meanings. From this point of view, this research considers frames are an outcome of social semiotics. This research applies social semiotics as an approach to identify frames in the CCP climate change coverage. Further, the process of framing is dynamic. Goffman noted how "a set of conventions by which a given

activity, already meaningful in terms of some primary framework, is transformed into something patterned on this activity but seen by the participants to be something quite else" (1974, p.81). Framing operation is a creative process, which based on gathering, assessing, and interpolating facts. The framing process's function is to maintain cultural authority and refine the inner cognitive structure in social institutions. Ultimately, a frame provides meaning for individuals to code data. To understand the changes, take place, it is necessary to examine what signs convey.

### **5.5 What does Social Semiotics Have to do with Marxism-Leninism**

Social semiotics breaks through the static form of structuralist semiotics by emphasising the practical, historical, and social aspects of signs. The sign does not come from personal consciousness or exist in personal psychology but is formed in the practice of human social interaction (Shi, 2018). In other words, the formation and existence of sign require specific social organisations and their practical activities such as conventions as conditions. Signs are the result of social discourse and social communication. Unlike structuralist semiotics, which is bound by the concept of static closed systems, social semiotics proposes that signs reflect or refract reality, which also means that signs, including their meaning, are determined by the relationship between the sign subject and the substance, and because of this, the core trait of the sign is ideology. In addition, signs also change, along with social development. Thus, the meaning of signs is dynamic. Further, the sign's meaning is what it represents and a substitute for it. Therefore, social semiotics broke through structural semiotics and provided broad space for studying social phenomena from a Marxist perspective.

The sign and sign application are an important research area to study the dialectical materialism theory of Marxism (Shi, 2018), such as the notions that material conditions precede consciousness, base determines superstructure and the determination of social consciousness by social being. Spirit, superstructure, ideology, or more specific forms, such as cognition, emotion, understanding, and values, emerge from signs. To understand Marxism, including the core issues in its theoretical system, such as the mechanism of ideology, how ideology is



generated in practice, the relationship of form to content, the laws of development as well as especially the complex relationship between the economic foundation and politics, inevitably involves analysing signs and their use, especially in language.

## **5.6 Research Design**

### 5.6.1 Sampling

This research uses purposive sampling. It directly refers to research questions (Byman, 2012, p. 408), so purposive sampling operates strategically. It is a non-probability sampling approach, which means the sampling cannot be generalised to the population. This research employs criterion sampling by applying a particular criterion (Byman, 2012, p.409), and the sample is composed of 419 news reports. This selected sample comes from *People's Daily*. To draw the sample, I selected issues with some specific and identifiable characteristic. News report on climate change also refers to various other topics, such as economic concerns, foreign or domestic policy. For example, according to the "China National Programme on coping with climate change" (中国应对气候变化国家方案) issued by China's National Development and Reform Commission in 2007, climate change is both an environmental issue and a development issue. However, at its core, it is a development issue. Further, to explore the Chinese Communist Party's ideology about climate change, the selected issues include specific reports related to the comprehensive information related to national or social development, policies, and international climate negotiations.

### 5.6.2 Selected Sources

The data source selected for this research is *People's Daily*. *People's Daily* has the highest circulation in China, 3.3 million per day. The *People's Daily's* primary readership is decision-maker at all administration levels and people who care about politics. The most important reason for selecting *People's Daily* as the data source is that it is the leading voice of the Party in print media and arguably sets the broad tone and direction for all other serious news outlets

in China. In other words, *People's Daily* is a vital source of information for other newspapers, Internet news portals and mobile apps, such as Caixin News (财新新闻), Sina News (新浪新闻) and Jinri Toutiao (今日头条). Also, *People's Daily* is the mouthpiece of the Party and the central government. It is the most crucial party organ at the central level. According to Jia (2008, p.43), limited access to official authorities is one of the main barriers that Chinese correspondents encounter in reporting climate change. Journalists affiliated with *People's Daily* typically have the privilege of interviewing high-ranked officials, making the media coverage more likely to reflect the government's ideas. Furthermore, there are many articles directly edited by officials. For example, *People's Daily* published an article written by Zheng Guoguang, Party secretary and director of the China Meteorological Administration on 23rd March 2016 titled "Facing Climate Risk and Promoting Green Development" ("直面气候风险促进绿色发展"). Therefore, *People's Daily* is a significant source for accessing the Chinese Communist Party's ideology. Furthermore, *People's Daily* is social semiotics because it is the CCP's mouthpiece, representing authority. News articles that can be published in the *People's Daily* imply that the news text is granted legitimacy in the sense of being legal and authoritative. While placing news in a special position, readers are treated as persuasive objects of persuasion. In the process of production and receiving information, this reflects how the logonomic system expresses the ideology.

In addition, some scholars argued that there might be differences of frames between *People's Daily* and local or commercial newspapers. This is because *People's Daily* is a party-sponsored newspaper. As a non-commercial newspaper, it is more likely to reflect the position of the Chinese Communist Party (Pan & Chan, 2003, p.662) and have the privilege of interviewing high-ranked official. Unequal access may result in a discrepancy between the non-commercial newspaper and commercial newspaper. Moreover, some commercial newspapers tend to support professional journalism and practice Western news values and norms (Luther & Zhou, 2005, p.858). Different journalism styles may also generate different framing. However, according to Tong (2014, p.363), there were not many differences between party-sponsored and market-oriented media, as climate change is an international and political topic. Jia (2008)

also researched climate change coverage by researching scientists and journalists at four leading newspapers, which covered commercial and non-commercial, central and local newspapers. Similarly, to Tong, the findings showed that *People's Daily* reported climate change more often than other newspapers, and most stories were about politics and diplomacy. In this context, *People's Daily* is a representative data source because this research is interested in finding out how the party tells the story and how the party communicates with the public by informing particular frames. The China Centre for Climate Change Communication conducted a national public awareness survey on climate change from August to October in 2017. The survey report shows high awareness of climate change among the Chinese public. Citizens are concerned about climate change and have strongly favoured policies issued by the government in response to climate change. This survey covered 4025 respondents in urban and rural areas of mainland China, and the survey was a computer-aided phone survey and samples were drawn from 15.4% fixed-line phones and 8.4% mobile phones. Moreover, according to the poll, the public trust government the most among environmental NGOs and enterprises or business organisations. and generally, support relevant policies about mitigating climate change. Compared to local and commercial newspapers, *People's Daily* can provide more accurate data on the Chinese Communist Party's ideology. This is why this research did not extend to commercial and local newspapers.

There are three editions of *People's Daily*, such as *People's Daily*, *People's Daily* overseas edition, and *People's Daily* Tibet edition (P.D., 1997). *People's Daily* overseas edition aims to present CCP's policies, popular social issues, international politics, economy, science and technology, education and culture. The primary readers are overseas Chinese and who are concerned about China. *People's Daily* Tibet edition communicates the party's national strategies and essential news regarding domestic and international affairs, Tibet and the Sichuan Tibetan area in Tibetan language. It aims to stimulate Tibetan economic growth and social harmony (P.D. 2019). This research aims to explore CCP'S ideology as expressed through climate change coverage. Thus, it is more important to examine how the paper's original edition communicates with the party members and domestic readership to enhance

legitimacy.

*People's Daily* Graphic Database (1946-2022) is an official database, including all news articles issued by *People's Daily* since it started a publication. I access the *People's Daily* Graphic Database (1946-2022) to select samples by applying for a Zhixing Library account (<http://www.zhixinglib.com/>). Zhixing Library has the right to access to the *People's Daily* Graphic Database (1946-2022). Thus, there is no restriction on searching and copy the news reports. I put keywords in the searching bar and chose "title+content" (the other two options are: "title only" and "content only") to select samples in results. I chose "title+content" because I found "title only" or "content only" filtered out relevant news reports.

### 5.6.3 Selected Sample Period

The period selected for this research is from 1998 until 2018. The sample period covers two decades because media attention to climate change increasing along with related events, such as extreme weather or annually international climate change conference (Han et al., 2017, p. 2891). If there are not significant events related to climate change, media attention remains at a low level. The starting point is chosen because, in 1998, China signed the *Kyoto Treaty*, which was a turning point. China's foreign policy since then has generally shown that China not only engaged in international negotiation and cooperation to mitigate climate change but also considered climate change as a political and international issue. Thus, 1998 marks the beginning of a period of growth in climate change coverage. Further, reviewing climate change news published by *People's Daily* before 1998 shows that the Chinese media were still in a stage of exploring climate knowledge. For example, the first published news of climate change was issued on 26th January, in 1961, entitled '*Issues of climate warming in the 20th century*' (关于二十世纪气候变暖的问题). From 1961 to 1998, the keywords of '*climate change*' have appeared in coverage closely related to agriculture and production safety. There were a few news articles about climate change exploring climate knowledge, such as '*Is there any relationship between the earth's rotation slowing down and climate change*' (1980)

(地球自转速度变慢同气候变化有关吗?) and '*A preliminary study on climate change in China in the last 5000 years*' (Zhu, 1973) (中国近五千年来气候变迁的初步研究). The end date was chosen as it coincided with the beginning of my research and included the post-Paris Agreement period in which the United States has begun to play a different role in international climate change negotiations. In addition, the period of 1998 to 2018 covers two decades, which is a sufficient period to examine changes in news framing and ideology. Thus, this research selected a period from 1998 till 2018.

#### 5.6.4 Selected Articles

This research selected news on climate change by searching the keywords '*Kyoto Treaty*', the '*Paris Agreement*', "climate change", "mitigation policy" (jianpai zhengce), "greenhouse gas mitigation" (wenshi qiti jianpai) and "technology advancement" (keji chuangxin) plus "climate change" and "mitigation target" (jianpai mubiao). In addition, this research applies "greenhouse gas mitigation" because the results' themes are about dealing with the pollution that causes climate change. In contrast, articles with keywords of "climate mitigation" (qihou jianpai) tend to separate climate and mitigation.

To determine the representativeness of the keywords, synonyms of "climate change" were tested, such as "global warming" and "greenhouse gas". There were 553 news articles with the keyword of "greenhouse gas" in the chosen period. Most of these news articles concern the issue of the *Kyoto Treaty* and climate change. Some of them also focus on energy and electricity projects. Simultaneously, there were 551 news articles including the keyword of "climate change", while 81 news included the keyword "greenhouse gas". The keywords of 'greenhouse gas' and "climate change" thus strongly overlapped (See Figure1).

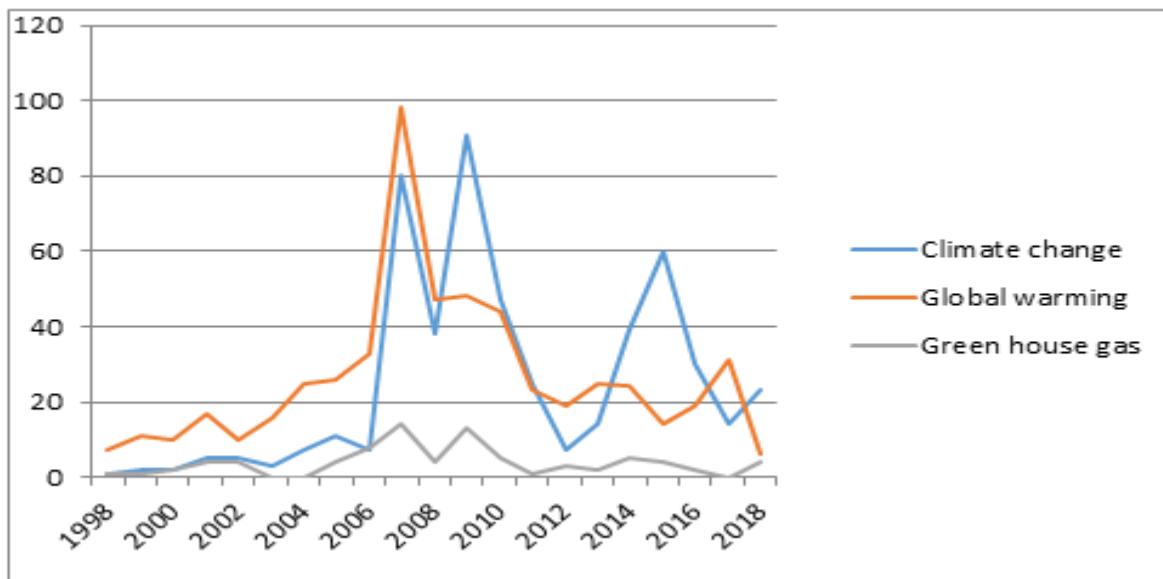


Figure 1 Synonym's Comparison

In terms of content, news stories about 'global warming' mainly concerned the negative effect on the natural environment, such as how global warming affects water security, or how global warming threatens plants' survival and how global warming threatens the Great Barrier Reef. Stories with the keywords 'climate change' tended to involve politics, international cooperation, and diplomacies, such as China's positive response to climate change, the E.U. ratification of the *Paris Agreement* on climate change and climate change governance. The examination of synonym keywords shows that 'climate change' is used mainly in political news and the resulting stories covered the issues of diplomacy, international cooperation and negotiation. As this research aims to find out how political ideology is framed in climate coverage, 'climate change' will be used in this research. A review of official documents, such as the Five-Year Plan, the National Economic and Social Development Plan and Government work, shows that "climate change" is the only phrase used to describe this issue.

According to the public opinion poll of '*Climate change in the Chinese Mind 2017*', respondents trust the central government the most as a source of information about climate change and strongly supporting policies issued by the government in response to climate change. Specifically, 59.3% of respondents said they support China's participation in the *Paris Agreement* with 195 other countries, and 52.5% of respondents strongly supported China's

decision to stay in the *Paris Agreement* to limit the pollution that causes climate change. Therefore, the *Kyoto Treaty* and the *Paris Agreement* are the two most representative policies to address why the public support government policies strongly. Moreover, both the *Kyoto Treaty* and the *Paris Agreement* are ongoing issues. Although the *Kyoto Treaty's* effectiveness has gradually weakened, according to the UNFCCC meeting in 2012, the implementation of the second commitment period and the second commitment period of the *Kyoto Protocol* will last for 8 years from 2013. Therefore, the *Kyoto Treaty* still is an ongoing issue. They are the concentrated embodiment and epitome of the Chinese central government's decision and attitude toward climate change during international negotiations and domestic development. In other words, the implementation of the *Kyoto Treaty* and the *Paris Agreement* concern the Chinese Communist Party's ideology, especially when participating in international negotiations, dealing with the contradictions between developed and developing countries and expressing China's ideology to the world. For the international dimension, 205 news reports were chosen. (Figure2)

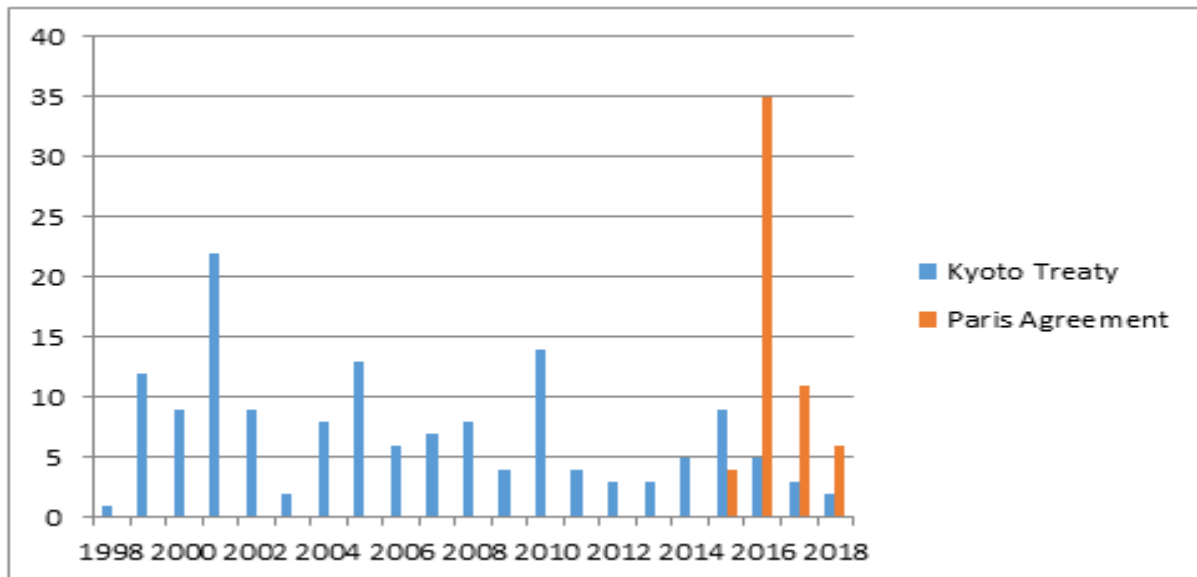


Figure 2. Frequency of Kyoto Protocol and the Paris Agreement

There are two paths for the CCP to create a responsible image, one is through international climate negotiations, and another is through national or social development and policies. Besides creating a responsible image in the international community, designing emission

reduction policies and achieving reduction targets to highlight the CCP's ruling capabilities is another way to boost China's image. Thus, this research also employs the keywords "mitigation policy", "mitigation target" plus "climate change", "technology advancement" to filter news articles. Although the search using keywords helped me narrow the sample, the search results were still massive. Thus, in order to accurately select a representative sample, this study adds several constraints. First, news flash has been culled. This type of news usually only includes the time, location, people, and events and does not explain the events in detail. Second, some news reports are relevant to the keywords, but the theme is not about climate change, such as the G20 summit or the meetings of different countries' top leaders. These news reports involve climate change, but it is not the theme. Finally, 418 news articles are selected.

#### 5.6.5 Coding Frames in News

This research uses inductive reasoning. Inductive reasoning aims to develop a theory by stimulating generalisation from observations, while deductive reasoning aims to test a theory from generalisation to specific observations (Streefkerk, 2019). The limitation of the inductive method is that the conclusions cannot be proven. For this research, the CCP applying ideology to enhance legitimacy is a certainty, but we still need to study the legitimacy function's encoding process.

As discussed in literature, climate change is an international issue. Chinese climate communication has a different purpose on an international and domestic level. At the same time, Chinese climate communication experiences different practices on different levels. Thus, this research identifies China's performance on a domestic level and international involvement as two principal frames. On the domestic level, China's actions and issued policies are crucial to understanding the party's ideology through administration. According to Marxism, science and technology are the primary productive forces, and the basis of legitimacy (Habermas, 1968). Because the achievements of science and technology are non-political, legitimacy grows from the bottom up. Science and technology are the driving force for realising ecological civilisation.



In the human development process, science and technology innovation caused industrial civilisation. In order to deal with environmental deterioration, science and technology are expected to breakthroughs and constructed ecological civilisation to figure out the conflicts left by industrial civilisation. Thus, this research label technology as a frame. Correspondingly, political factors such as relevant policies, measures and solution are also labelled as a frame. Balance and objectivity are the significant factors shaping climate news (Boykoff and Boykoff, 2004, p.126). This requires journalists to cover different opinions and overcome subjective judgements. In this context, news sources determine climate news to some extent. However, there are several issues worth noting. On the one hand, particular actors have their perspectives and purpose of making a claim; on the other hand, journalists play a role to select and filter sources. Further, news sources are not equally cited. For example, official sources are difficult to access unless the government want to communicate with the public (Geall and Hu, 2011, pp.15-18). Thus, news sources and claim-makers are a significant dimension to access CCP's ideology in climate news. Dealing with climate change promotes China to embed international cooperation and strengthen external legitimacy on the international level. In global governance, countries mediate based on their interests. Thus, each country's action, cooperation and contradiction are references for China to take an appropriate reaction.

The coding process identifies the other frames in the text. In order to identify frames, I read each article carefully multiple times. This helps me to identify frames by considering the context. If necessary, to ensure a full understanding of the article and draw the coding scheme from sampling. For example:

*'On the 30th of June, the Chinese government submitted 'Strengthening Actions to Address Climate Change- China's Nationally determined contributions' to the Secretariat of the United Nations Framework Convention on climate change.'* (PD, 02 July 2015)

The quotation contains policy and China's contribution to mitigating climate change. However, by reading its text and context, the quotation emphasises more China's contribution than governance concerns. Thus, I label it as China's contribution.

The coding system also identifies signs in the text that contribute to identifying frames. For example, *"Before the closing session on 12th, almost all the media observed the details: When Fabius walked into the venue, he embraced Xie Zhenhua straightway. Chinese and foreign media surrounded Xie Zhenhua in an interview after the meeting..."* (PD, 14th December 2015) In terms of space, the word "surrounded" (团团围住) signifies that China is in a central position, and it is also attracting attention from other countries in the world. It also signified China's image as a leading role in mitigating climate change. Thus, I label it as China's image.

For each, I recorded frames or frame elements (See excel file "news codebook"). The frames were coded using the following coding scheme:

Table 1 Coding Scheme

Basic Information	Title	News headline
	Date	Publish date
	Page number	Page number
First level frames	Second level frames	Third level frames
China's performance on domestic level	China's contribution/action	China's contribution or action to mitigate climate change, including government policies, projects, foreign investment aid, and positive quantity and quality results, actively participating in climate negotiation and so on.
	Issued policies/measures/solutions	In order to deal with climate change, the government has issued policies, take measures and find solutions.

	Advanced technology	Advanced technology to cope with emission has been invented and applied.
	China's image	China's image in mitigating climate change and climate negotiation, including positive or negative comments on China's action.
	Resource	China Officials' statement
		Chinese energy industry officials
		International organization officials' statement
		Other countries officials' statement
		Academics' statement
		Other media
		Someone else's statement
International involvement	Each Country's performance	The US/The EU/ Australian/ The UK/Belgium/Germany/ Russian /Japan's/South Korea/Canada's/Brazil performance in mitigating climate change, including government policies, projects and results.
	Cooperation	Global cooperation in response to climate change. China is cooperating with Africa/the US/The EU/France/Other developing countries/The UN/The UK/ France in respond to climate change including finance and technology project
	Contradiction	A contradiction among various countries to response to climate change, including finance, technology, development issues and so on.
Contradiction with developed countries, including criticism		

		on developed countries' responses to climate change
		China's limitation when dealing with climate change, such as finance, technology development issues and so on.
		A contradiction with developing countries, such as finance, technology, developing issues, and so on.
Others	Call for action	A call for action to mitigate climate change in domestic China or worldwide.
	Impacts of climate change	A description of the climate change influencing including positive and negative influencing.
	Extreme weather	A description of extreme weather caused by climate change, including extreme hot weather, extremely cold weather.
	Description of climate change	A description of climate change in science aspects.

### 5.6.6 Method

#### 5.6.6.1 A Text-Linguistic Approach to Framing

This research follows a method proposed by Dahl (2015, p.42). According to Dahl, text linguistics offers a systematic approach to addressing how frames are manifested in a text. Based on linguistic principles, qualitative framing analysis is associated with the macro level, for example, text structure and genre and the micro-level, represented by sentences and words. Further, to explore the Chinese Communist Party's ideology, this research's analysis is also based on the theories that developed in "Language as Ideology" and "Social Semiotics".

Language has been considered a determination of thought, while ideology refers to forces and vectors that affect various aspects of language. To be specific, the language includes semantic patterns, choices of words and phrases and syntactic forms, and speech and writing systems. For this reason, this research will examine language in news text in terms of wording and grammar.

#### 5.6.6.2 Framing Activity in the headline

According to Pan and Kosicki (1993, p.59), the news text's headline is an essential frame in the news story. Headlines can activate certain semantically related concepts in the audiences' mind. The codebook of the sample shows headlines, which also includes the reporter's name and publication date. The headline lexis is analysed first, and the headlines' sentence structure is examined as well. Moreover, both words and sentence patterns contribute to grammar, which connects directly with the important and substantive issues of social and cultural meanings (Hodge and Louie, 1998, p.71).

In addition, after the initial scan of the data, this research found that some news headlines ended with "(钟声)". Bell Tone (zhong sheng 钟声) is short for the Voice of China (zhong guo zhi sheng 中国之声). Bell Tone is a pen name of *People's Daily's* international department journalists and editors. In other words, the editors and journalists of the international department of the *People's Daily* all participate in Bell Tone article writing. It is the collective wisdom rather than a personal pen name. Bell Tone means the sound of warning bells. News edited by Bell Tone focuses on China's position on international issues and China-related issues. The Bell Tone is a sign. The social background for *People's Daily* employing Bell Tone's image is that the proportion of international affairs involving China is increasing due to the improvement of China's international position. In this context, China faces demands, doubts and even criticism. As the leading print media in China, *People's Daily* is obliged to express China's stance to refute false accusations from international society and defend China's image (Wu and Wang, 2012). The bell is a percussion instrument that chimes the time and alarms

the police. The sounds of the bell can convey important information. Thus, when the Bell Tone appears in the headline, it implies that the news is mainly about expressing China's view on important international and China-related issues, and at the same time refuting some false accusations made by the international community. Further, Bell Tone uses synaesthesia. Synaesthesia can communicate the senses of sight, hearing, touch and smell, and causes sensory transfer by association. For example, a sweet voice embodies taste and can be used to modify the sense of hearing. The Bell Tone engages the audience's visual and auditory senses. In terms of visual senses, the audience can see a brass percussion instrument usually used to tell the time or sound an alarm, while aurally, the bells emit a heavy, long-distance metallic sound. The Bell Tone making the sound of warning is impressive.

#### 5.6.6.3 Framing Activity in Sources

In order to strengthen authority and objectivity in news coverage, statements by sources are a powerful framing tool, which can give salience to specific aspects of the reported event or issue (Dahl, 2015). Further, the source's choice in itself indicates a specific framing (Bellamy, Chilvers, Vaughan, & Lenton, 2012; Calsamiglia & Lopez Ferrero, 2003). The frequency of sources is analysed. Then the statement is analysed according to the linguistic and grammatical principles.

#### 5.6.6.4 Framing Activity in Sentences

This research also followed linguistic principles to analyse the main body of the news, such as grammar. For example, double negation is a common grammar in the CCP's discourse. The slogan "*Without the Communist Party, there would be no new China*". The double-negative sentence emphasises that the CCP is the only reason China gets rid of the semi-colonial and semi-feudal social form and becomes a civilised and modern new society. It strengthens the party's status and makes the people's dependence on the party deeper.

#### 5.6.6.5 Framing Activity in the Structure

Pan and Kosicki (1993) proposed that framing devices can be represented by four structural dimensions: syntactic structure, script structure, thematic structure, and rhetorical structure. The syntactic structure is characterised by the inverted pyramid structure and by the rules of source attribution. Script structure results in newsworthy events and links audiences with the environment that transcends their limited sensory experiences. Scripts ensure news discourse has recognisable organisations. Thematic structures imply that news is oriented by actions or events and consists of issues and stories that focus on one issue by reporting several events or actions related to the issue. Thus, these stories contain a hypothesis-testing feature and thus cite events and quote sources to prove the hypothesis. Rhetorical structure describes stylistic choices that journalists make about intended effects. This research analyses the full news text according to these structural elements.

### **5.7 Sampling Description**

#### 5.7.1 The status of Climate Chang in *People's Daily*

This research selected 418 news reports. On the whole, *People's Daily* tend to present climate change in general, while detailed discussions are rare. In addition, the amount of climate change news always increases with significant climate change events, such as the United Nations Climate Change Conference. It is necessary to look at climate change news' page number and date to access climate change status in *People's Daily's* agenda-setting. There are 24 pages in *People's Daily*, and the first six pages present the most important news. Page 7 is the theory page (Lilun 理论). Page 7 focuses on the ideology related to public concerns and responding to significant ideological, theoretical issues. Their purpose is to expand socialism with Chinese characters as well as improve the socialist system. Then page 8 involves social news, while 9-15 pages are domestic news. Page 16 to page 20 usually present special issues and economic issues, or commemorate a festival, event or person, for example, the New Year special issues. In the end, page 21 to page 23 report the most important international news, while page 24 is a

supplement. The supplement consists mainly of prose, poetry and essays. Page 24 serves as a bridge to link to workers in the arts and other audiences. In order to evaluate the status of climate change in *People's Daily's* agenda-setting, figure 3 shows the frequency with which climate change news appears on each page.

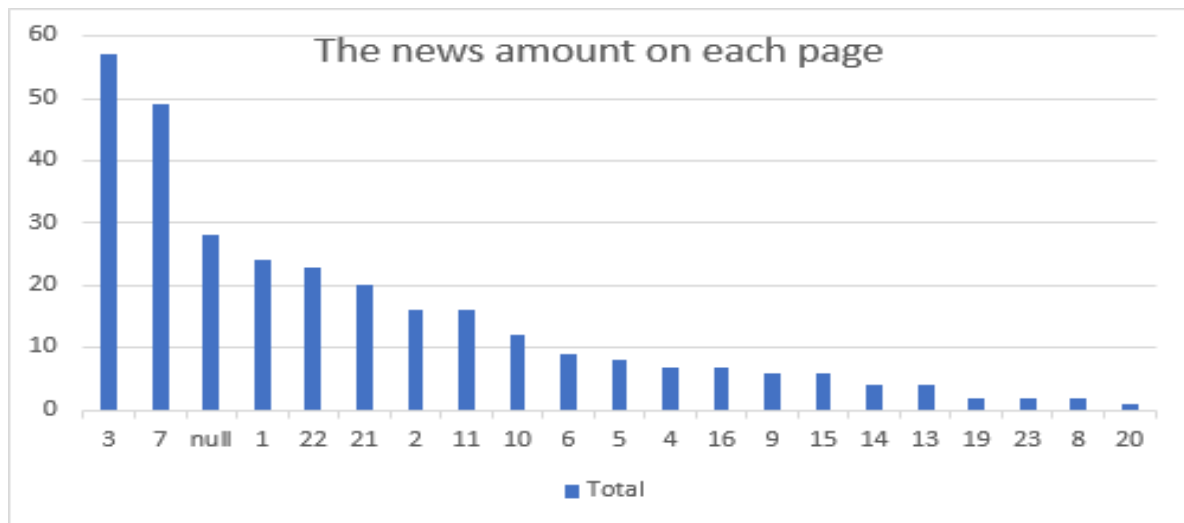


Figure 3. Amount of Climate Change News on Each Page

Figure 3 shows that pages 3, 7, 1 and 22 present climate change issue more often than other pages. According to *People's Daily's* page ordering, climate change has been considered essential domestic news, theoretical news, and an essential international news item. Climate change was not primarily presented as an environmental issue or economic issue. This is because significant policy and strategy are the most critical items on Chinese media agendas (Jia, 2017).

Figure 4 shows the *People's Daily* published most climate change news each year in November and December during the data period. This is because the international climate change conference is usually held at the end of each year. Therefore, both page number and publish date can confirm that *People's Daily* presents climate change because there are some international events related to the topic, and it also provides a platform to explain China's policy and strategy. The amount of climate change news declines when there are less relevant events. Further, the issue of climate change is not a high priority in *People's Daily*. Climate change has



been mentioned because it can reflect China's policy, which is the essential item on the agenda in mass media.

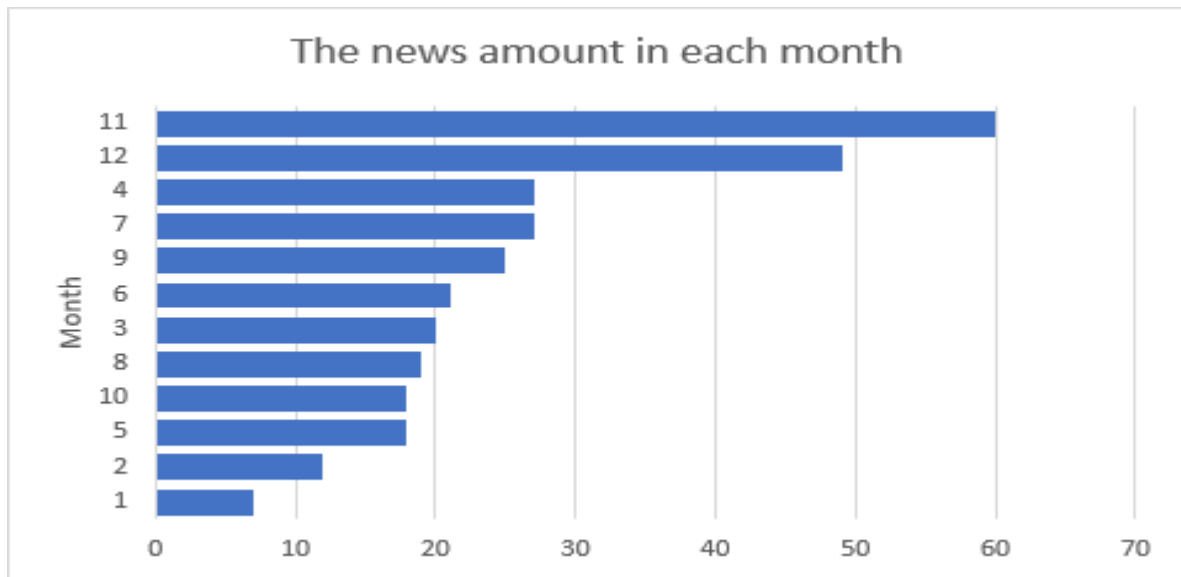


Figure 4. Amount of Climate Change News in Each Month

In terms of media attention, there is a similarity between China and Western mass media. The amount of climate change news reports increases in response to external events, such as the United Nation Climate Conferences and extreme climate events. However, compared to the western mass media, a detailed discussion of climate change is missing. For example, while Western mass media may frequently apply climate scepticism, there are no sceptical voices in Chinese climate change news reports.

In the West, climate scepticism meets the demands for balancing different points of view and attracting audiences. In Chinese mass media, journalists do not pay much attention to investigating climate change. This is because climate change is relevant to significant Chinese policies and China's performance or achievement. This results in another situation. The primary source of climate change news report is the government or technical departments in government, rather than universities or research institutions like in Western mass media. Therefore, climate change communication in China is top-down and mainly praises China's achievements. This helps explain why there is no scepticism in Chinese climate news because

it is difficult to involve a third party's opinions or evaluations during producing climate news.

### 5.7.2 What does China's Climate Change News Cover?

Through statistics, this research found that China's positive performance in mitigating climate change, international cooperation and international conflicts are the three frames with the highest frequency (See table2).

*Table 2 Frame Frequency*

First level frames	Second level frames	Number of frames identified	Frequency (%)
China's performance	China's contribution/action	117	38.61
	Issued policies/ measure/ solutions	45	14.85
	Advanced technology	13	4.29
	China's image	44	14.52
	Resource- China Officials' statement	95	31.35
	Resource- Chinese energy industry officials	14	4.62
	Resource- International organization officials' statement	51	16.83
	Resource- Other countries officials' statement	51	16.83
	Resource- Academics' statement	23	7.59
	Resource- Other media	6	1.98
	Resource-	10	3.30

	Someone else's statement		
International involvement	Each country's Performance-U.S.	43	14.19
	Each country's Performance-E.U.	14	4.62
	Each country's Performance-Australia	3	0.99
	Each country's Performance-U.K.	3	0.99
	Each country's Performance-Belgium	1	0.33
	Each country's Performance-Germany	3	0.99
	Each country's Performance-Russia	5	1.65
	Each country's Performance-Japan	5	1.65
	Each country's Performance-South Korea	1	0.33
	Each country's Performance-Canada	4	1.32
	Each country's Performance-Brazil	1	0.33
	Global cooperation	36	11.88
	Cooperate with Africa	2	0.66
	Cooperate with U.S.	13	4.29
	Cooperate with UN	2	0.66
	Cooperate with EU	3	0.99
	Cooperate with UK	2	0.66
	Cooperate with France	3	0.99
	Cooperate with developing countries	21	6.93
	Global contradiction	23	7.59
	Global contradiction-developing countries	19	6.27
	Global contradiction-Developed countries	39	11.88
	Global contradiction-China's struggling	25	8.25
Other	Call for action	22	7.26
	Impacts of climate change	43	14.19
	Description of climate change	15	4.95
	Extreme weather	29	9.57

(Calculation according to the codebook. See appendix2.)

This research found that *People's Daily* highlights China's contribution to dealing with climate change. Both international cooperation and international conflicts, especially the conflicts between developing and developed countries, are essential climate coverage topics.

## 5.8 Summary

This research aims to understand the CCP's ideology by analysing *People's Daily's* climate change coverage. It is a study of society, culture and politics. This research adopted framing analysis and social semiotics to analyse news texts. This is because social semiotics is a reflective approach to analysing language by considering social and political conditions that are flexible enough to accommodate the Chinese language and culture's specific characteristics. Specifically, Chinese culture is a strong visual language. This research considers framing as an outcome of the use of signs in their social context and applies social semiotics to understand frames' ideological significance.

An initial scan of the data found that China's performance in climate change, international cooperation and international conflicts are the three first-level frames in climate coverage published by *People's Daily*. Thus, Chapter 6 focuses on China's positive image in mitigating climate change, Chapter 7 deals with the international community's solidarity and Chapter 8 deals with international competition. Each chapter will analyse one of the three first-level frames in detail. Since *People's Daily* highlights China's contribution to mitigating climate change, it is necessary to grasp how the Chinese government attempts to mitigate climate change. At the same time, find out what kind of policies have been issued, while how these policies are formulated and to what extent they work in China's overall development goals. Chapter 6 will provide this context.

## **Chapter 6 China's positive image in mitigating climate change**

### **6.1 Introduction**

The sample description at the end of chapter 5 shows that *People's Daily* considered climate change as essential domestic news, theoretical news and crucial international news according to ordering of pages. At the same time, media attention increases along with the COP. Both page choice and media attention confirm Jia's (2017) arguments that climate change is related to significant policy and strategy, which make climate change is a priority issue in media. Further, China's positive image is the most significant frame in climate change news reports. This because a vague definition of responsibility and obligation drag China into debates about mitigating actions. On the other hand, criticism makes the CCP realise the importance of influencing international negotiations. Funding and technology assistance, as well as transparency, are the other reasons for *People's Daily* to spend the effort to explain the legitimacy of China's behaviour. CCP tries to defend legitimacy as well as deep involvement in the international community by applying international climate governance rules. The party also forms influential discourse by seeking shared interests and adding Chinese cultural value.

Section 6.2 describes several ways that *People's Daily* creates China's positive image. China's positive image is the most significant frame in climate news report partly because CCP suffers legitimacy crises in the international community. Section 6.3 introduces CCP's legitimacy crises in terms of the struggle of responsibility and obligation, fund and technology as well as transparency. Then section 6.4 analysis China's position and China's discourse in section 6.5 to respond to these crises. Then section 6.6 summarises this chapter.

### **6.2 Creating China's positive image**

The sample consisted of 418 news articles. On the first level frames, China's performance, including China's contribution or action and source, is a significant frame among international involvement and others. (See Figure 5.)

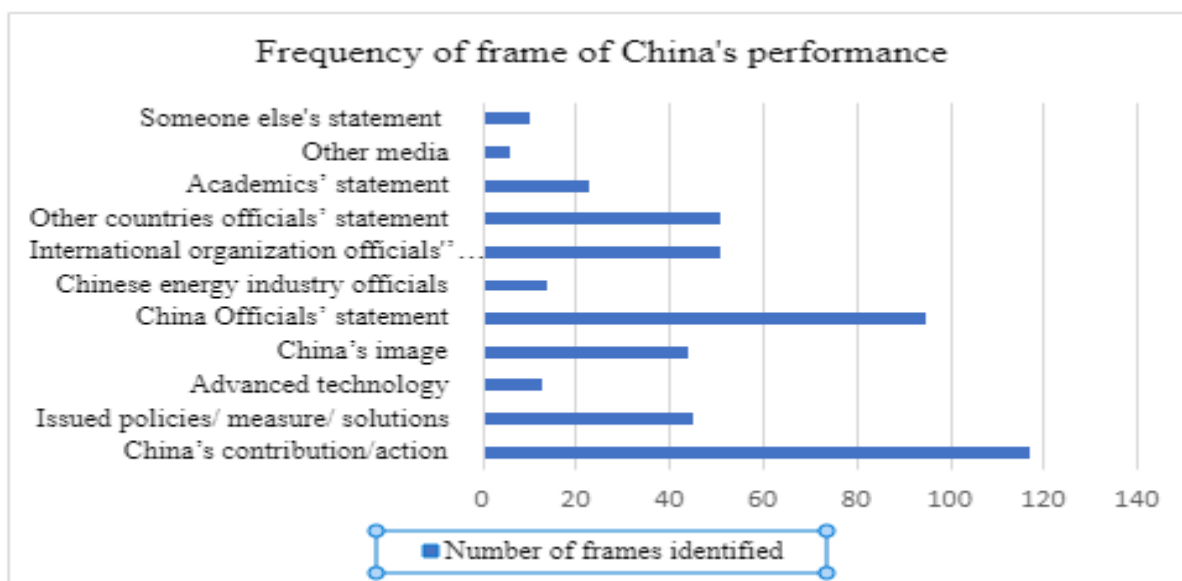


Figure 5 Frequency of frame of China's performance

(Calculation according to the codebook. See appendix2.)

This section will analyse how *People's Daily* creates China's positive image by applying frames.

### 6.2.1 China's contribution or action

*People's Daily* establishes China's positive image in an all-around stereo way. China's contribution or action has been identified as a dominant frame. The sample news articles generally present China's contribution or action regarding China's investment, technology upgrade, foreign aid projects and active participation in international climate negotiations with accurate figures. For example:

*"China's total energy conservation rate contributes more than 50% to the world. During the 12th Five-Year Plan, China's carbon intensity has dropped by 20%...we will actively promote South-South cooperation on climate change"- Wang, Y.S. (2016) "Responding to climate change action into the fast lane". (PD.18.Nov 2016).*

However, Chinese contributions to reducing mission occur under challenging conditions. For example: Structural elements of "Prioritise energy conservation to meet emission reduction challenges"- PD, 5th April 2007

Table 3 Structural elements of Prioritise energy conservation to meet emission reduction challenges

Sentence	Proposition	Syntactic	Script	Thematic	Rhetorical
S1-S3	From 1990 to 2004, China's fossil fuel emissions risen from 5.7% to 17.0%	Lead paragraph	Actor, Action	China's development and increasing emission	Statement
S4-S8	China does not accurately predict economic growth and carbon emissions	Quotation	Actor, Action	China's development and increasing emission	Negative sentence
S9-S15	China's rapid industrialisation process; Emission reduction costs are high; are the major difficulties for China to deal with climate change.	Background	Context	China's difficulties in reducing emissions	Rhetorical question/Negative sentences
S16-S18	China should adhere to energy diversification	Transition Background	Context	Solution	Imperative sentence
S19-S21	Wind power and nuclear power	Quotation	Actor, Action	Solution	Statement

	contribute to emission reduction				
S22	Priority for energy adjustment			Suggestion	Imperative sentence

This report pointed out that China's carbon emission has grown rapidly in the past 14 years. As a developing country with huge emission demand in the future, the cost of reducing emission is high. Subsequently, the report proposed that various energy structures could solve this problem and China's wind power status and prospects assessment support this claim. This news article adopts a concession rhetorical approach. Firstly, it admits shortcomings (China's rapid growth in carbon emissions) and then explaining the shortcomings (The cost of reducing emissions is high), and finally suggests that these shortcomings can be circumvented (Developing a diverse energy structure). The narrative approach applies retreat in order to advance. On the one hand, it emphasises that China's contribution to emissions reduction is arduous, and on the other hand, it reflects the central government's ingeniously formulating effective policies in balancing development requirements and practical limitations. In addition to showing China's outstanding contribution to reducing emissions by providing precise figures and concessional narratives, directly define China's images as a responsible leader is another way to create China's positive image.

*People's Daily* evaluates China's actions under objective conditions. This is the basic principle to assess China's performance. Chinese objective condition is that China is a developing country. Under such conditions, China's achievements in mitigating climate change have been identified as 'active', 'leading' and 'responsible'. To be specific, for example:

*China faces a series of development issues, including poverty alleviation, employment, narrowing the regional gap and the gap between the rich and the poor, etc. China's*



*urbanisation process is not completed yet. Coal is the primary energy source in China's energy structure while lacking oil and natural gas. China's technology research and development capabilities are far lower than developed countries, and the unreasonable international division of labour and trade structure has brought challenges to China to reduce carbon emissions. (PD, 03 June 2010)*

Emphasising objective conditions is a significant turning point in Chinese climate communication. Since 2007, China has surpassed the US to become the largest emitter. The international community has a growing expectation for China's emission reduction. *People's Daily* repeatedly explains China's objective conditions to balance China's mitigation performance and increasing global expectations. It mitigates China's international legitimacy decline caused by massive emissions. It constructs China's 'rightful conduct' to enhance international legitimacy.

In addition, before the Copenhagen conference, China's climate communication only present China's positive emission reduction actions on the international level (Wang, 2018, p. 68). This practice fails to establish a positive Chinese image as planned. It is also empty and fails to achieve the purpose of protecting China's interests in international negotiations. The CCP reflected the Copenhagen conference experience and told real Chinese stories by stating real domestic difficulties appropriately.

On the domestic level, the media applies reflective discourse to help the government build a pro-people image and show their determination and ability to deal with problems (Tong, 2014, p. 349). Specifically, reflective discourse presents a comprehensive picture of the CCP's overall plans for the central, local government, the industry and enterprises; economy and ecology; domestic and international; current and the future by describing the party combines legal, economic, technical and necessary administrative measure to deal with climate change.

- Administration and legal

For example, the article '*Cracking down on environmental crimes by means of punishment* (Law enforcement inspection report)' (PD, 30th Aug 2006) explored the legal actor that caused the 10th Five-year plan's environmental goal has not to be achieved. The party's responses to these issues through a combination of law and administration. The article '*The environmental protection goals are determined and local governments take tough actions*' (PD, 29th Aug 2006) also discusses why the 10th Five-year environmental protection plan has not been completed. It pointed out that weak local supervision is one of the reasons and then introduced the Shandong, Gansu, Guangdong, Jiangsu and Henan province government constraints on cities and enterprises through administrative and policy.

This demonstrates the party's determination and ability to deal with climate change from an administrative perspective. However, the administrative system faces many challenges and requires adjustment. For example, the article 'Documentary on the State Environmental Protection Administration's rectification of ideological style' (PD, 9th July 2006) presents institutional improvement and innovation, such as strengthening review to avoid conflicting documents and creatively legalise environmental protection. It also includes improving the law enforcement system and solving the watershed and administrative regions' governance problems. Thus, it forms an environmental protection supervision mechanism, which is central supervised, local supervised, business organisation takes responsibility and clearly defined responsibility.

In addition, institutional innovation highlighted two relationships. One is the exemplary leading role of the party members and the party groups. Second is the relationship between central supervision, provincial government supervision, and corporate responsibility. Therefore, in the process of using administrative means to coordinate local governments and enterprises, the party strengthens its leadership role. However, it is difficult to deal with complex issues such as climate change by only relying on administration or policy. Mitigating climate change requires mobilising the government and society to form a firm alliance (Yang and Zhao, 2014, p.70). Thus, it is necessary to bring in economic actors to attract local governments and

enterprises actively participate in emissions reduction.

- Economy

Administrative measures are not limited to supervision and punishment policies. The article, 'Mace and Carrot' (PD, 13th July 2006) introduced the combination of punishment and incentive policies. Punishment policies strictly control sulfuric dioxide pollution, while the incentive policies show that the central government provides financial support and implements preferential electricity price policies to help power enterprises reduce pollution.

In addition, the emission trading policy also encourages power companies to explore new growth points. The emission trading policy allows enterprises to sell the remaining sulfuric dioxide emission quotas to other enterprises, incentivising enterprises to overfulfill emission reduction tasks (PD, 14th April 2003).

The central government's support has attracted the financial institutions' participation and provided loan services for power enterprises. The article 'The effect of low carbon finance' (PD, 29th July 2010) explains that financial innovation promotes a low-carbon economy. Energy conservation and emission reduction projects, new technologies and new energy have potential market profitability due to the state's policy support. Thus, commercial banks propose the concept of green loans to support these projects. In addition, financial institutions expanded the emissions trading market by launching financial products related to carbon emission trading.

Therefore, bringing in economic actors promotes financial institutions and enterprises are more actively participate in emission reduction and form an ally. At the same time, the market-based model strengthens their bond. The energy-saving and carbon reduction have changed from the government-led to combining with the market actor. Further, a low-carbon economy is only used to deal with climate change but also can be used to solve other global challenges (PD, 4th May 2011), such as realise sustainable development and energy security.

On the international level, the CDM principle helps China obtain financial and technological support from developed countries to develop efficient power generation technology, technological transformation of energy saving and development of wind power, solar power and hydropower (PD, 11th April 2005). In this context, *People's Daily* describes climate change as a challenge and an opportunity. The analysis of economic actors reflects that technology innovation and renewable energy are particular to reduce emissions. The following section will analyse how to assimilate science and technology into administration.

- Science and technology

First, the CCP established that science and technology are the main force for realising ecological civilisation (PD, 6th Sep. 2015) in terms of theory. Then correspondently, the State Environmental Protection Administration adjusted the position of the Science and Technology Department so that science and technology could fulfil its function to construct ecological civilisation (9th July 2006). Finally, *People's Daily* also presents that science and technology should solve specific issues: it should address the negative impacts of climate change and environmental changes on ecosystems. The impact of environmental pollution on human health also should be dealt with. In environmental governance, it is necessary to be green and recyclable. At the same time, science and technology should break through into high technology and achieve precise management (PD, 6th Sep. 2015).

### 6.2.2 China's image

Further, China's contribution or action and official or academic statements frame a positive image of China in mitigating climate change. In international climate negotiation, the image of responsible major power and leader repeatedly appears in the frame of China's image. For example:

"This fully proves that China is a major responsible power in dealing with climate change" (PD, 14th December 2015)

"China showed its strong leadership in promoting global cooperation in mitigating climate change based on ambitious national actions" (PD, 08th April 2016)

As previously discussed, China's role as a major responsible power and a leader in mitigating climate change are the main images framed in *People's Daily*. In terms of text, for example:

"Before the closing session on 12th, almost all the media observed the details: When Fabius walked into the venue, he embraced Xie Zhenhua straightway. Chinese and foreign media surrounded Xie Zhenhua in an interview after the meeting..." (PD, 14th December 2015)

This paragraph describes the scene at the last meeting of the Paris climate change conference on 12th December 2015. This news article presented China's claim and commitment that contributed to the conference success. This paragraph supplements the detail and reinforces the news argument contained within the article that China is a major responsible power. First, time and occasion here are the important elements implying that actions or words are the conclusion and evaluation of the conference. Thus, Fabius's action is a kind of positive comment on China's performance in the climate negotiation, which affirms the news argument.

Then, "Xie Zhenhua was surrounded by Chinese and foreign media in an interview after the meeting." In terms of space, the word "surrounded" (团团围住) shows that China is in a central position, and it is also attracting attention from other countries in the world. At this moment, "China is close to the centre of the world." It contributes to frame China's position in the world. The scene implies that China has an essential status in the world. Further, it corresponds to the core ideological notion of telling the Chinese story well and letting the world listen to the Chinese voice. Similarly, the political position of Xie Zhenhua and Fabius also reflect the position of the world and China. These elements gradually strengthen the idea that China is pursuing a certain position in the world. The sign in the space has constructed China's central position in the international community to deal with climate change. The frame of sources also plays the same role.

### 6.2.3 Source

The source includes the Chinese officials' statement, Chinese energy industry officials' statement, international organisation officials' statement, other countries officials' statements, academics' statements, other countries' media, and someone else's statement. Among these frames, Chinese officials, international organisation officials and other countries officials are the significant frames. Climate change news articles tend to create China's positive images in two ways. Firstly, they quote authoritative Chinese officials' statement to increase information credibility and accuracy, which results in China making great efforts to mitigate climate change. For example:

"In the past 20 years, the amount of energy saved by China accounted for 52% of the world's total. In the past 10 years, China eliminated inefficient coal consumption power plants represent 100 million kilowatts of installed capacity, exceeding the installed capacity of the UK." Xie Zhenhua said. (PD, 14th December 2015)

Xie Zhenhua (谢振华) is Deputy Director of the National Development and Reform Commission. Data given by an official in a high position provide evidence that the information is reliable. Second, quoting officials' statements from international organisations or other countries can objectively establish China's positive image. For example:

"Hans Schonhuber, Director of the Institute for Climate Impacts in Potsdam, Germany, said: 'China's actions on mitigating climate change at the Paris Conference have proven that China takes a major power's responsibility to protect the future of the planet, and has received high praise from the international community'" (PD, 14th December 2015)

The academic quotations in selected articles tend to speak highly of China's actions in mitigating climate change rather than attempting to emphasise climate change from a scientific perspective. For example:

"China's actions have witnessed how a responsible big county fulfils its responsibility" Professor Fouad Faz Hassan, an expert in agriculture and biotechnology at the National research centre of Egypt" (PD, 30th August 2016)

The selected news articles also quoted from other country's news editors, which have been classified as the frame of someone else's statement, for instance, Kazakhstan Industrial News Chief Editor. The quotation from someone else also tends to emphasise praising China's response to climate change.

The frame of "resource" is the most significant frame when creating China's positive image in mitigating climate change. Unexpectedly, the findings show that *People's Daily* quotes praise or positive comments from western officials or academics' statements, while it quotes actions on mitigating climate change from Chinese officials and academics' statements. This kind of practice is not only convincing as discussed in the descriptive analysis but is also related to dominant aspect of Chinese culture, such as modesty. Modesty is the noblest quality in traditional philosophy of China. According to the Book of Change (Yi Jing 易经), the hexagram of modesty is the only one perfect hexagram in sixty-four hexagrams. Another well know quote by Mao Zedong is that "Modesty makes people progress, pride makes people fall behind." (Qian xu shi ren jin bu, jiao ao shi ren luo hou 谦虚使人进步, 骄傲使人落后) Further, matching Chinese culture can enhance persuasiveness through cultural recognition. It is an effective encoding to attract as well as reinforce China's positive image and position in mitigating climate change. In this context, the *People's Daily* tries to cement political by tapping into cultural codes and areas of public consensus. Finally, it ends to serve the CCP's purpose of educating, leading and ruling people.

In addition, the ideology of "Othering" also, in turn, stresses China's positive image among audiences, which appeal the most people's attention by stimulating nationalism, which generates national pride. Someone cannot be trusted or believed to express his or her own ideal unless others speak for him or her. This kind of practice is intensely applied in the news article as follows, for example:

*Table 4 The syntactic structure of Gao, S. (2015)"China makes an irreplaceable contribution to the conclusion of the Paris*

Sentence	Proposition	Syntactic
S1	The Paris Agreement arranged global action to mitigate climate change beyond 2020	Leading Paragraph
S2	<i>The Paris Agreement is a substantive document in the field of global climate governance</i>	References
S3	<i>China made an irreplaceable contribution to the Paris Agreement</i>	Supporting paragraph
S4-S5	<i>Obama praised the Paris Agreement as a turning point in the world's response to climate change</i>	Quotation
S6-S7	<i>Obama said that the joint statement of climate change issued by the US and China is the Foundation for the success of the Paris Conference.</i>	Quotation
S8	<i>David Vasco, Director of International climate action at the World Resources Institute said that the Paris Agreement is a turning point in global response to climate change</i>	Quotation
S9-S10	<i>Wang Xin, research at the French Institute for Sustainable Development and International Relations, said that the Paris Agreement has contributed to the term goal of a low-carbon economy</i>	Quotation
S11-S12	<i>Raymond Pacheco Pardo, the expert of the European and International Studies Department of King's College, University of London, said that the Paris Agreement is very positive.</i>	Quotation
S13	<i>Sean Tomlinson, the Senior Researcher at the Royal Institute of International Affairs' Energy Environment and Resources Program, said that this conference was very successful.</i>	Quotation
S14-S15	<i>German Environmental Protection Association spokesperson Daniel Huf Eisen said that reducing dependence on coal and oil will help improve the urban environment and public health.</i>	Quotation
S16	<i>Kovisi Pula, a researcher on modern China at the Mbeki Institute for African Leadership in South Africa, said that the Paris Agreement reflects the determination of humanity to change the world.</i>	Quotation
S17	<i>The minister of Agriculture and Food Security of Mauritius, Mahen Solution said that the Paris Agreement was a turning point.</i>	Quotation
S18	<i>Cuban Gramma newspaper said the Paris Agreement determined the difference between the responsibility of developed and developing countries.</i>	Quotation



S19-S20	<i>Wang Xin, a researcher at the French Institute for Sustainable Development and International Relations, said that China's active participation in the negotiations is the main driver of the Paris Agreement.</i>	Quotation
S21-S22	<i>Raymond Pacheco Pardo, the expert of the European and International Studies Department of King's College, University of London, said that as the largest developing country, China has sent positive signals to other developing countries.</i>	Quotation
S23	<i>Sean Tomlinson, Senior researcher at the Royal Institute of International Affairs' Energy Environment and Resources Program said that China's Positive attitude and determination is a very important constructive force for the success of the climate conference.</i>	Quotation
S24	<i>Hans Schonhuber, Director of the Institute for Climate Impacts in Potsdam, Germany, said that China has won unanimous praise from the international community for its responsibility to protect the future of the planet.</i>	Quotation
S25	<i>Australian Foreign Minister Julie Bishop said that we have cooperated with more than 200 countries including China and the US to promote energy conservation and emission reduction, which gives us great confidence.</i>	Quotation
S26	<i>Xi LuTong said that Mauritius is full of expectation and hopes to increase cooperation with China in the field of environmental protection and learn from China's advanced experience and technology and build a green home in China and Africa.</i>	Quotation
S27	<i>Kovisi Pula, a researcher on modern China at the Mbeko Institute for African Leadership in South Africa, said that China is the key member to pass the Paris Agreement.</i>	Quotation
S28	<i>The Cuban Grama newspaper commented that the cooperation between the Group of 77 and China has become a model for the cooperation of developing countries and played a pivotal role in mitigating climate change.</i>	Quotation

This news article consists of quotations. In sentence 1 to sentence 18 of the news, all the quotations highlight the importance of the Paris Agreement. In sentence 19 to sentence 28 of the news, the same sources are quoted but focus on China's contribution and responsible image. All these statements quoted from other countries' officials or academics. The full title of these

officials and academics has been given, which shows that they are others (foreigners) and can give professional comments. For the second part of this news article, China's positive image has been created by stimulating national pride. For instance, China actively participates in climate negotiation; China's attitude and position are essential to making the climate conference successful.

Moreover, the *People's Daily* not only tries to attract the majority of people in China, but it is also seeking a sense of identity worldwide. This argument can be verified in the first part of this news article. The first part of this news repeatedly highlights the importance and meaning of the Paris Agreement from different aspects to the whole world. Then the news addresses China as a significant force to facilitate the Paris Agreement to be practicable. Therefore, the CCP consolidates its power by attracting and educating people about China and tries to increase China's international status and influence by stimulating a sense of identity in the international community in mitigating climate change.

#### 6.2.4 Superior theoretical basis and the “tightening-crown spell” (紧箍咒)

China can act as a positive and responsible role in responding to climate change based on a transformed environment philosophy. For example, the following quotation describes adding "construction of a community with a shared future for mankind" into the Constitution of PRC. *"Fifth, the requirement of promoting the construction of a community with a shared future for mankind" has been added. This has pointed out the direction for the people of all countries to work together to improve global governance and build an equitable and reasonable international order. It has opened a broad space for the world to adhere to environmental friendliness, cooperate in responding to environmental challenges such as climate change, and protect the earth. It is conducive to building a world of lasting peace, universal security, shared prosperity, openness, tolerance, cleanness and beauty." (PD, 14th March 2018)*

Under the guidance of the dichotomy between humans and nature, man can understand, utilise

and transform nature. However, after the experience of excessive exploitation of natural resources and heavy pollution, while the economy rapidly grew, China's development model became unsustainable. Until the 2000s, CCP revived the traditional Chinese philosophy of harmony between man and nature and transformed its ecological philosophy. It acknowledges that people, nature and society are a whole organic entirety. The whole organic body determines the parts. It is the entity and form of the existence, development, evolution and creation of things. Therefore, the world is "a community of shared future for mankind", and only harmony can sustain development. There is a specific structural pattern between parts, which is a dynamic of interconnection and interaction.

*"(Xi Jinping's argument on ecological civilisation) developed and established the natural dialectics of contemporary ecological civilisation. For example, the saying "clean water and green mountains are golden mountains and silver mountains" transcends mechanical ecocentrism and sublates anthropocentrism. It not only reveals the dialectical relationship between man and nature, society and nature but also contains the artificial beauty, which is golden and silver mountains, the ecological beauty, which is clean water and green mountains and the transitional beauty of the process of human social development, which means clean water and green mountains are golden and silver mountains. It points out the direction and path for promoting the construction of ecological civilisation " (PD, 22th Aug 2018)*

This quotation not only demonstrates CCP's transformation on ecological philosophy but also added nature value theory. Ecological philosophy has gradually formed a theory of nature value. The external natural value assists human beings' survival and development, and its internal value is to survive and develop according to ecological rules. In this argument, golden and silver mountains (value) have been added to clean water and green mountains (nature resource). There is a natural value in traditional Chinese philosophy. For example, Mencius proposed that we love our relatives and extend it to love the people, from loving the people to loving all things ('亲亲而仁民，仁民而爱物'). The discussion of value provides resources for the CCP to develop ecological philosophy.

Under the guidance of ecological philosophy, the central government's strategy on production modes has changed. The integrity of the ecosystem determines that the production method cannot develop in a linear model, as in mining-production-waste. It should be a renewable cycle by extending the industrial chain through intensive processing, which is mining-production-reuse-production... For example,

*"Chen Jining pointed out that China is one of the first countries to propose and implement sustainable development strategies. Over the past 15 years, China has made every effort to implement the Millennium Development Goals and has made a series of significant progress. These achievements have improved Chinese people's well-being and made a significant contribution to global sustainable development. " (PD, 28th May 2016)*

Chen Jining is the head of the Chinese delegation and minister of the Ministry of Environmental Protection. The above quotation is from his speech at the Second UN Environment Conference. In addition to pointing out China's transformation of production thinking and development sustainable strategy, he also emphasised that China's philosophical foundation and guiding ideology for dealing with climate change is leading in the world. This has laid a superior philosophical foundation for establishing China's responsible leader image in mitigating climate change.

When describing administrative power, *People's Daily* uses a lot of words describing the effort, such as expand, enhance or in full to create a tough image of the administration. In addition, *People's Daily* has adopted the notion of a "tightening-crown spell" to show the administrative force's strong and effective image. In practice, "tightening-crown spell" means that the central government has incorporated energy-saving into the performance appraisal system. The "tightening-crown spell" comes from a story in *Journey to the West*. Monkey King is a highly capable character with 72 polymorphic transformations, an immortal body, and fiery golden eyes. He can defeat all demons, but he is reckless and does not obey his master-, the monk Tang Seng. Therefore, Guanyin Bodhisattva gave Tang Seng a golden crown and asked him to put

the golden crown on Monkey King's head. When Tang Seng recites the spell, the golden crown tightens, and Monkey King feels a splitting headache. Then he obeys the master and changes his unacceptable behaviours. On the one hand, the notion of “tightening-crown spell” implies the subordination relationship between administration and industry. On the other hand, the administration controls industry, and the industry constantly improves performance to the administrative requirements.

Further, the trope of the tightening-crown spell also has the meaning similar to "divine right of kings". In ancient Chinese mythology, deeply influenced by Buddhism, Guanyin Bodhisattva is a celestial being who has a consciousness of human affairs and development principles. So, he is free from the foolishness of all living beings and obtain eternal life and compassionately redeems all beings. He represents enlightenment, wisdom, and compassion. Guanyin Bodhisattva instructed Tang Seng to go to the West (India) to obtain the Buddhist Scriptures for all living beings. In order to control Monkey King to help Tang Seng, Guan Yin Bodhisattva gave the golden crown and the spell to Tang Seng. In other words, first, Tang Seng is the messenger for Buddha who knows the truth of the world. Second, Tang Seng obtained legitimacy from Bodhisattva to restrain the Monkey King’s bad behaviour. Therefore, firstly, it shows that the CCP's legitimacy comes from adopting a superior ecological philosophy by rethinking the relationship of humans and nature. This kind of wisdom transcends the duality, decentralisation, and zero-sum games, just like Tang Seng, who is the messenger of the Bodhisattva and has understood the truth of the world. He can judge whether Monkey King's behaviour is appropriate and whether to restrain it. Thus, the CCP represents advanced ecological philosophy theory, which can make correct judgments and restrain industry’s behaviour. Secondly, even though the CCP is a political party that always takes advanced scientific theory as their guiding ideology, they use a symbol full of mythology and religion. However, it is worth noting that although Tang Seng obtained the tightening-crown spell with the implication of divine right, the application of the “tightening-crown spell” is based on the judgment of truth. In other words, CCP does not obtain legitimacy from the myth of power or right but enhances its legitimacy from the myth of truth. The implication is that the CCP

represents the most advanced truth.

### 6.2.5 Uphill battle(攻坚战) and Vanguard(排头兵)

The previous analysis of China's contribution mentioned that China's contribution was achieved under challenging conditions. *People's Daily* uses the trope of an uphill battle to describe China working harder to achieve energy saving and emission reduction. For example, *"Energy-saving and emission reduction policies are beginning to take effect (Fight an uphill battle for energy saving and emission reduction)."* (PD, 12th Jun. 2010)

This is a news that covered the battle between government and high energy consumption industries. Although *"the demand for high energy-consuming products is increasing, the high energy-consuming industries are growing, some outdated production capacity has revived, and the energy demand has increased significantly"*(PD, 12th Jun. 2010). The administrative force finally controlled the growth of emissions. For example, *"Thanks to the country's further efforts to increase energy saving and emission reduction policies and measures, since May, the production growth rate of high energy-consuming industries has dropped significantly."*(PD, 12th Jun. 2010)

Using the trope of an uphill battle to describe dealing with climate change shows that China's efforts to save energy and reduce emissions are not easy on the one hand, and on the other hand, it implies that China will eventually win, which is inseparable from the CCP's guidance. Reviewing modern history, most of the significant wars that China has participated in have ended in China's victory (see Table 5).

*Table 5 Wars under CCP's guidance*

Time	Name of War	Belligerents		Result
1927-1937	The First Chinese Revolutionary Civil War	CCP	Republic of China	Truce
1937-1945	The Second Sino-Japanese War	China	Japan	Chinese victory

1945-1949	Chinese Communist Revolution	CCP	Republic of China	CCP victory
1950-1953	The War to Resist US Aggression and Aid Korea	First Republic of Korea	North Korea	Armistice (China have made outstanding contributions)
1959	Tibetan Uprising	PRC	Tibetan and Khampa	Chinese victory
1960-1961	Campaign at the China-Burma Border	PRC and Union of Burma	Republic of China	PRC and Union of Burma victory
1974	Battle of the Paracel Islands	China	South Vietnam	Chinese victory
1962	Sino-Indian War	China	India	Chinese victory
1969	Sino-Soviet Border Conflict	China	Soviet	Chinese victory in Zhenbao Island Incident but lost in Tielieketi
1979-1990	Sino-Vietnam War	China	Vietnam	Chinese victory

Chinese history shows that several significant wars under CCP's guidance were arduous, especially before and after the founding of the PRC (1937-1953). These wars were all won under poverty, lack of materials and great strength disparity between the enemy and CCP. In addition, these wars determined the establishment and stability of PRC sovereignty and lasted several years. So, China won in arduous circumstances due to the CCP's wise strategy, the army's high morale and absolute obedience, and the unity of the people. The *People's Daily*

uses the trope of war to describe mitigation of climate change, implying that under the CCP's leadership, China will eventually be able to win. It is very appropriate to use the trope of the uphill battle to describe China's response to climate change. As discussed in the literature review, China's fragile ecological environment is threatened by climate change, while climate change governance is in line with China's sustainable development model. Like the crucial wars that China has participated in, China is still disadvantaged when facing climate change. As a developing country, China's energy-saving and emission reduction costs are very high, including economic and social costs. China's rigid and inertial industrial structure is challenging to adjust. At the same time, the war against climate change will also be a protracted battle. Due to the CCP's high winning rate, the trope of war also implies that China will eventually win the battle against climate change. In addition, when considering mitigating climate change as a war, climate change becomes everyone's enemy, which means that everyone has a common enemy and shared interests. Thus, all countries, industries, social groups and individuals in the world form alliances. Further, uphill war expands the theory of "a community with a shared future for mankind". When tackling climate change becomes the common interest of all people, in order to maximise personal interests, people's view of the CCP will be based on this opinion. In other words, tackling climate change has become a political bond between the ruling party and the people.

While the central government emphasises its tough and effective administration, it also promotes central enterprises as models for reducing emissions. *People's Daily* uses the trope of the vanguard to describe central enterprises. State-owned enterprises are directly affiliated to the State-owned Assets Supervision and Administration Commission of the State Council or central ministries and commissions. The central government directly funds them and owns their profits. Their investment activities are directly deployed and serve the national strategy. As a result, in the energy-saving and emission reduction strategy, they have been given the role of example and bellwether. For example:

*"Central SOEs are becoming the vanguard of China's energy-saving and emission reduction. Compared with 2005, the SO2 emissions were reduced by 36.85% and the chemical oxygen*



*demand was reduced by 33.04% in 2009. 190 SOEs achieved the Eleventh Five-Year Plan emission reduction targets ahead of schedule." (PD, 04th Nov. 2010)*

*People's Daily* use of the notion of a vanguard to describe central enterprises also demonstrates that Chinese industries have the most significant energy-saving and emission reduction potential, as discussed in the literature review. As the pioneer, the central enterprises first practiced the recycling production model based on a superior ecological philosophy and implemented a stricter performance evaluation system (tightening-crown spell). The central enterprises ability to take the vanguard role depends on the application of advanced technologies. For example:

*"The central enterprises vigorously promote advanced technologies, new products, advanced materials, advanced production processes, promote energy-saving and emission reduction in technological innovation. The central enterprises form a batch of core technologies with independent intellectual property and have international competitiveness." (PD, 04<sup>th</sup> Nov. 2010)*

In summary, the CCP agrees with Lipset's definition of legitimacy that legitimacy comes from the people's belief in the current regime. *People's Daily* uses the trope of the tightening-crown spell to convince audiences that the CCP has fully understood the most advanced ecological philosophy and can make correct decisions in dealing with climate change. Then the trope of an uphill battle clearly defines the enemy and allies. Thus, it establishes the political bond between the ruling party and the people. This practice alleviates the legitimacy crisis result in the collapse of beliefs and the pursuit of maximising personal interests.

### **6.3 Legitimacy crises**

The sample description shows that China's positive image is the most significant frame in climate news reports. As discussed in the literature review, the media uses official frameworks to enhance legitimacy when legitimacy is declining. China's positive image as an official frame

implies that the CCP thinks that China is experiencing legitimacy crises. The first legitimacy crisis is caused by the struggle to identify responsibility and obligation in mitigating climate change.

As explained in methodology that some news headlines ended with the pen name of *People's Daily's* international news departments, for example:

"Global climate governance embarks on an 'implementation' of a new journey (Bell Tone)"  
( "全球气候治理踏上‘落实’新征程" (zhong sheng 钟声) (PD, 4 Nov 2016)

It can be seen from the title that the bell is reminding audiences that the news content focuses on clarifying China's position and expressing China's views. This research found that vague definition of responsibilities and obligations, developed countries' obligation to assist developing countries in terms of funding, technology and capacity-building, as well as transparency are the main themes for which *People's Daily* employs the Bell Tone sign. The *People's Daily* adopts a sign like Bell Tone to alert the world to enhance the power and verve of Chinese discourse, especially when arguing China's position in controversial issues.

### 6.3.1 Responsibility or obligation

China's contribution is the frame that appears most frequently in climate news. This is because the international community has criticised China for not doing enough to deal with climate change. For example, after the Copenhagen conference, China was blamed:

"We cannot again allow negotiations on real points of substance to be hijacked (by China) in this way"- *The UK climate secretary, Ed Miliband (2009)*

"It was China's representative who insisted that industrialised country targets, previously agreed as an 80% cut by 2050, be taken out of the deal...A 2020 peaking year in global emissions, essential to restrain temperatures to 2°C, was removed and replaced by woolly

*language suggesting that emissions should peak 'as soon as possible'. The long-term target, of global 50% cuts by 2050, was also excised...The analyst...concludes that China wants to weaken the climate regulation regime now, in order to avoid the risk that it might be called on to be more ambitious in few years' time" (Lynas, 2009)*

The target of a 50% cut by 2050 globally and 80% cut by industrialised countries implies that developing countries have 164 billion tons of emission space by 2050 (Zhu and Gao, 2017, p.43), which is 22% lower than in 1990. Then developing countries, especially China, would face a shortage of emission space. The target would be very demanding for developing countries to reduce emissions. At the same time, it is based on the principle of uniform global emission reduction to set the target. Therefore, in the international community, there exists a “contradiction” focus on the division of responsibilities and obligations. In Marx's theory, contradiction means the unity of opposites. The opposition is rejection and struggle between the responsibility and obligation to governance climate change. The unification of obligations and responsibilities lies in the mutual transformation between them. To be specific, developed and developing countries attempt to transform obligations and responsibilities under certain conditions through debate. At the same time, the contradiction will not disappear, and the "new" contradiction can replace the "old" contradiction. In the climate governance negotiations, the dichotomy between developed countries and developing countries results in a struggle of responsibilities and obligations. However, since the economic and policy landscape has changed, the contradiction transforms into the contradiction between developed and emerging developing countries.

On the other hand, China wishes to be involved in international negotiations deeply and must show their strong will to mitigate climate change. Fundamentally, the substantive cause of the high frequency of China's contribution frame is the vague definition of obligations and responsibilities. In addition, *People's Daily* has much discussion about responsibility and frame China as a responsible great power in managing climate change, for example:

*"Töpfer, the executive director of the United Nations Environment Programme, said in an interview in late May that developed countries are primarily responsible for global warming." (PD, 2 June 1999)*

*"In the climate change negotiation, China has demonstrated its responsibility as a big country." ("Leading the process of global climate governance with determination (The Bell Tone)" (PD, 24 Apr 2016)*

The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) is an international environmental treaty adopted in 1992 which aims to manage climate change. The UNFCCC set differentiated emission reduction commitments for different countries or regions, which depend on their different capabilities and national circumstance. This is the principle of *Common but Differentiated Responsibilities and Respective Capabilities (CBDRRC)* (UNCED, 1992). Developed country parties should take the lead in mitigating climate change and its adverse effects, while considering developing country parties' specific needs and special circumstances to set a reduction target. The responsibilities of the parties are distinguished according to the dichotomy effectively introduced in Appendix 1 of the *UNFCCC*. The main criterion for classifying a country in Appendix 1 is the level of economic development (Deleuil, 2012, p.272). As the economic and political evolves, some developed countries have argued that the dichotomy of responsibility should be defined in a dynamic way. For example, when developing countries have developed to a certain level, they should take obligations. However, most developing countries maintain the dichotomy.

Developed countries' argument founded on a sense of historic fairness. Pauw et al. (2014, p.16) compared GDP per capita data for 2010 and 1992 between Appendix 1 and the Non-Appendix 1 parties. While the average per capita GDP of the Appendix1 countries is the highest in the world, there are still 32 Non-Appendix 1 countries with GDP higher than the last five countries in Appendix 1. Thus, the dichotomy of Appendix 1 or Non-Appendix 1 does not fully reflect the level of GDP of each country. In addition, most of the Appendix 1 countries contributed to

historical emissions, and this is the main reason that these parties are required to take the obligation to reduce emissions. However, historical emissions are challenging to assess with any certainty and therefore, difficult to reach a consensus, for example, which greenhouse gases should be considered because historical emission is due to different types of greenhouse gases (Dellink, 2008, p.3). The principle of CBDRRC continues to be a key concept of the UNFCCC. However, different countries interpret CBDRRC differently according to their historical responsibility, capacity, national circumstance and development needs. The dichotomy represents a static distinction, which is not suitable for development. It is oversimplification and has led to the emergence of extreme positions that have undermined constructive negotiations under the UNFCCC.

### 6.3.2 Fund and technology

Funding and technology are another controversial issue in global climate change negotiation. According to UNFCCC, developed countries have an obligation to provide funding, technology and capacity-building for developing countries. Developed countries lack the will to offer financial assistance while developing countries have an increasing dependence on financial and technical assistance. China is facing a dilemma in that as a developing country, China does not have an obligation to provide fund under the UNFCCC. However, China has established funds as well as assisting other developing countries, such as South-South Cooperation. These activities outside UNFCCC affect actions within the UNFCCC. Thus, should the financial mechanisms outside the UNFCCC be included within the convention? China's strategy is emphasising its status as a developing country within the UNFCCC and attempt to draw a clear distinction between inside and outside UNFCCC.

### 6.3.3 Transparency

*"To achieve the objective of the Convention, Parties need reliable, transparent and comprehensive information on GHG emissions, climate actions and support. Under the*

*Convention, all Parties are obliged to communicate to the Conference of the Parties (COP) information relevant to the implementation of the Convention." (UNFCCC, 2019).* Ensuring transparency is an important basis for building mutual political trust and maintaining the operation of the management mechanism. The principle of CDRRC is extended to the requirements of reporting between developed and developing countries. Ideally, the requirements for transparency should be harmonised. Both developed and developing countries should submit reports adapted to the transparency requirements of the Convention. Developed countries, such as the EU members and the US, have well-developed statistical systems, while developing countries still find it difficult to meet the requirements, due to financial and technical constraints (Zhu and Gao, 2017, p113). For China, as the largest emitter, the global spotlight is on the effectiveness of Chinese emissions reduction, which challenges its information transparency. The definition of responsibilities and obligations, financial and technical support, as well as transparency, are the three main legitimacy crises in China's international climate negotiations. Based on the understanding of these crises, the next section will mainly analyse how China responds to these crises.

## **6.4 China's position**

After introducing the legitimacy crises in mitigating climate change, this section will show China's position on meeting to these challenges.

### 6.4.1 China's attitude toward CDRRC

China has always emphasised adherence to CDRRC, for example:

*"The principle of CDRRC is not only outdated but should be respected."-Xi Jinping (2015)*

Then does China use the principle as a position reflecting the concept of international fairness or as a negotiation strategy? This study found that China applies CDRRC as a negotiation strategy. This is because China has an internal motivation to do so. As discussed in chapter 4,

mitigating climate change is a side-effect of economic development and dealing with climate issue brings advantages to China's transition to a sustainable development model.

*"Xi Jinping pointed out that with regard to mitigating climate change, it is not a requirement for us to do it, but we do it for ourselves; We have already taken many measures, and we will do so in the future." (Xu, 2015)*

Thus, domestic interests motivate mitigating climate change. China needs to safeguard its national interests in international negotiations and express their strong willingness to mitigate climate change. Further, the most important point is that China must be deeply involved in international negotiations, including policymaking and have an influential discourse. On the one hand, China will have the opportunity to integrate its own interests with the common interests of the international community. On the other hand, China considers international rules to be an important form of competition between countries, for example:

*"The international order of the future will increasingly rely on the construction of international rules of a non-compulsory nature. International rules not only govern the distribution of interests among states but also determine the role that a state can play in the international community and influence the judgement of its international behaviour in terms of legitimacy. As a result, competition for the right to speak on international rules has become an important form of competition between states." (PD, 17 Feb 2017)*

In this context, the CCP has realised that deep involvement in international negotiation is crucial for China's international behaviour legitimacy. At the same time, the CCP also considers its weakness as a participant in international negotiations, for example:

*"China does not play a leading role in the formulation of most of the existing international rules and generally lacks a strong voice in international rules. China tends to participate in international governance by accepting existing international rules. China has exerted an increasingly important influence in the creation of international institutions and the formulation of international rules, such as in the negotiation of international climate conventions. Playing the role of a responsible power, in international rulemaking, China*

*should not be a passive recipient or follower but should be an equal member or even a protagonist. For some unfair international rules, we should seek to amend them at the appropriate time; for some new international rules that are relevant to China, we should create new ones. It should reflect Chinese thinking, Chinese values and Chinese solutions." (PD, 17 Feb 2017)*

It reflects why *People's Daily* employs the trope of the Bell Tone. The CCP wish to influence international rules with Chinese values and make the Chinese voice heard. The example also shows the motivation to frame China's positive image in *People's Daily*. It is a way for China to improve its influence and further involve itself in international rulemaking. The CCP aims to become an opinion leader rather than a passive recipient. It can help China to improve its international behaviour legitimacy and avoid criticism. The ambiguous definition of obligations and responsibilities for mitigating climate change is the focus of a contradiction between developed countries and developing countries. The CCP considers that China is misunderstood and blamed for not having an influential discourse. At the same time, the CCP believes in the importance of deepening participation in international rulemaking from the perspective of safeguarding national interests. China realises that in order to develop in the further, they cannot play the role of a passive recipient but should become an opinion leader.

#### 6.4.2 China's strategy on financial mechanisms inside and outside UNFCCC

China is emphasising its status of developing country within the UNFCCC. By doing this, China is attempting to draw a clear distinction between inside and outside UNFCCC, for example:

*"Developed industrial countries should have the primary responsibility in terms of reducing emissions, funding and technology. The primary tasks of developing countries are economic and social development and poverty eradication." (PD, 7 Nov 1999)*



However, as China's economy develops and takes more and more assistance activities outside UNFCCC, *People's Daily's* claim that developed countries should provide funding and technology has also undergone subtle changes. In the 1990s, it quoted international officials' statements to assert the obligations of developed countries. Nowadays, China has become more subtle in making this claim, for example:

*"Former UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, who attended the summit, pointed out in his speech that developed countries should also provide more funds to support developing countries to deal with climate issues, and fulfil the commitment to raise \$100 billion a year for developing countries to deal with climate change by 2020." (PD, 13 Dec 2017)*

Second, *People's Daily* describes China's assistance activities outside UNFCCC as a responsible country, and these are voluntary contributions from China. The following example is placed under the sub-title of *"China's contribution to mitigating climate change is enormous."*

*"Regarding China's use of government funds for South-South cooperation, Xie Zhenhua said that, in recent years, China had trained than 1600 people from more than 120 developing countries in order to help these countries improve their capacity to cope with climate change and their financing capacity. Currently, China is working to implement a project to establish ten low-carbon demonstration zones and 100 climate change mitigation plan and adaptation projects in developing countries." (PD, 13 Dec 2017)*

#### 6.4.3 China's information transparency

First, as discussed in Chapter 4, for China, the establishment of a statistical system is the basis for the low-carbon model development. Transparency can thus facilitate China's responses to climate change in terms of deepening low-carbon model development and improving evaluation level, rather than act as a constraint. China has improved information transparency (Zhu and Gao, 2017, p113), for example, by improving the emission reduction assessment system through the carbon trading pilot; and low carbon city pilot; and improving the energy

statistics and greenhouse gas statistics system. However, compared to other developing countries, China's information transparency is not strong. For example, Brazil and South Africa have submitted GHG inventory reports since 2000, while China submitted data only for 1994 and 2005. In this context, if China wishes to participate in international consultations deeply and has an influential discourse, using transparent and reliable data to show China's contribution to mitigating climate change is the cornerstone. The next section will specifically discuss what kind of discourse that China has adopted at this stage and how it is trying to influence international negotiations.

## **6.5 China's climate discourse**

The CCP believes that influential discourse should satisfy the interests of more countries, for example:

*"The history of the world coming together to deal with climate change is the epitome of countries' unremitting explorations in the field of global governance and finding the greatest common ground for cooperation. What kind of planet do we want to hand over to future generations? How can we achieve sustainable development?" (PD, 7 June 2017)*

Finding the greatest common divisor is a significant strategy for the CCP to form discourse. China's discourse attempts to in line with more nationals' interests and multi polarisation of the world.

### **6.5.1 Rethink of CBDRRC**

*People's Daily* published two articles on 26th April 2016 and 2nd June 2017 covering the Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Hua Chunaying's statement on the Paris Agreement. Comparison of the two news articles shows that the CCP's understanding of the CBDRRC principle has changed. The rethinking of the international cooperation principle is the

beginning of the CCP's deepening participation in international cooperation. Specifically, in the 2016 news, Hua Chunying focused on differentiated obligations, for example:

*"The Paris Agreement reaffirms the principle of common but differentiated obligations established by the UNFCCC. It is a balancing agreement and reflects the concerns of all parties. It is a comprehensive, balanced and powerful agreement." (PD, 26th Apr. 2016)*

In this example, Hua Chunying focused on differentiated obligations when mentioning the principle of CBDRRC. This is because that the Paris Agreement can balance and consider all parties' conditions, which makes the agreement comprehensive. On the same issue, Hua Chunying's interpretation in 2017 has changed significantly, for example:

*"Hua Chunying said that climate change is a global challenge, and no country can stay out of it. The results of the Paris Agreement were hard-earned and condensed the widest consensus of the international community, as well as clarified the direction and goal of further efforts for the global cooperation in mitigating climate change." (PD, 1 June 2017)*

By describing climate change as a global issue which no country can stay out of it, Hua emphasised that mitigating climate change is all parties' common obligation. The *People's Daily's* editor used double negative- "no country" rather than every country to make the sense of common interest stronger. Further, the Paris Agreement is an international consensus, which highlighted common interests again. The CCP's interpretation of CBDRRC shift from differences to common interests is not only emphasises that all countries have an unshrinkable obligation to take action on climate change but also provides a basis for reaching a broad consensus for parties to take responsibility and solve problems fairly and effectively. Emphasising common obligations is more likely to resonate widely, and in keeping with this strategy, the CCP has proposed the discourse of *"A Community of Shared Future for Mankind."*

### 6.5.2 A Community of Shared Future for Mankind

The 18th National Congress of the CCP of China adopted the notion of a *Community of Shared Future for Mankind*. It means that they advocate the consciousness of a community of human destiny and consider the reasonable concerns of other countries when pursuing the interest of our country (Qian et al., 2012). First, the discourse has been used in global governance on climate change to reflect the ideology of sovereign equality and cooperation rather than confrontation, for example:

*"The Paris Conference should discard the narrow mindset of a zero-sum game and promote greater sharing and commitment among countries, especially developed countries, to achieve mutual benefit and win-win results. President Xi Jinping's speech contributes wisdom to the international community's deep thinking about the global climate governance system and promoting the building of a community of shared future for mankind." (PD, 30 Aug 2016)*

This example interpreted Xi Jinping's speech on the Paris Conference. It pointed out that the base of the community of human destiny is to abandon the zero-sum game. It is trying to establish the democratic principle in the international community that all countries have rights to be involved in international affairs according to international rules. It also reflects that China wishes to cooperate with other countries based on goals which are mutually beneficial, for example:

*"Last September, President Xi Jinping attended a series of summits to commemorate the seventieth anniversary of the founding of the UN and put forward a major initiative to build a new type of international relations with win-win cooperation at its core and to build a community of human destiny, comprehensively elaborating China's policy on the future development of the UN."*

This example clearly shows that China is trying to establish a new model of international relations. The concept implies the values of common interests, mutual comprehension, cooperation and sustainability. It corresponds to the principle of win-win cooperation, shared development and shared prosperity. Development or sustainable development is the most

important topic for all countries. Climate change is an issue caused by development, and it only can be solved by development. The CCP encourages each country to seek a development path by means of innovation and transformation to achieve economic growth and to create a planet where humans and nature co-exist in harmony. In this context, connecting mitigating climate change with national interests is an effective way to consider sustainable development and climate governance.

### 6.5.3 Chinese ecological civilisation

Whether it is a shared or differentiated responsibility, mitigating climate change in line with China's development interests is the most significant motivation for China to address climate change actively. Thus, the CCP also uses the discourse of ecological civilisation to integrate national interests with the mitigating climate change, for example:

*"To promote the construction of an ecological civilisation at a fast pace, to shift lifestyles and consumption patterns towards diligence and thrifty, towards green and low-carbon, civilised and healthy directions, and to transform green development into a new source of comprehensive national power and new international competitive advantages." (PD, 23 Mar 2016)*

The 18th National Congress of the CCP adopted the strategy of construction of ecological civilisation (Zhang, 2017). This means to building a type of modernisation in which humans and nature live in harmony. Modernisation should provide more high-quality ecological products to meet the people's growing needs for a better life and a more beautiful ecological environment. Ecological civilisation adheres to the principle of giving priority to conservation, protection and nature restoration and finally makes nature harmonious and beautiful. Ecological civilisation is a supplement to modernisation, which is used to respond to the legitimacy crisis caused by pollution. In terms of the timeline, the discourse aims to create a perfect world for future generations, and the government has responsibility for the furtherance of this idea. It shows that the CCP employs populist arguments to show its

concerns for the welfare for the public and to maintain their power (Marinelli,2018, p.380). Ecological civilisation shows respect of nature and social justice, which are the fundamental social values (Marinelli,2018, p.380). These values affect conflicts between humans and environment through changing production and living models.

#### 6.5.4 Discourse with Chinese value

In addition to the emphasis upon common obligations which generate widespread resonance, China is aware that the ability to interpret existing rules is necessary to deepen participation in international cooperation. The CCP has a demand to express its position in the international community, for example:

*"As an active participant in the global fight against climate change, China's solutions, wisdom and actions have added strong impetus to the global climate governance system." (PD, 7 June 2017)*

In proposing a discourse based on Chinese values, the CCP draws on Confucianism. Zou Ji, former deputy director of the National Centre for Strategic Research and International Cooperation on Climate Change, describes an interesting scenario, for example:

*"A minister of a country raised objections at the last moment of the Paris Agreement negotiations. However, according to the United Nation's order, all countries should be involved in the negotiations to reach an agreement. At that moment, the Chinese delegation stepped forward to persuade the minister, pointing out that more than 190 countries from around the world had gathered to discuss ways to deal with climate change. It was not easy to find a solution and wish him to seek common points while reserving difference. In the end, the doubts were removed, and the agreement was reached" (PD, 14 Oct 2017)*

"To seek common points while reserving differences" comes from Confucianism. It means commonalities are fundamental, and differences are partial. At the same time, common ground can be sought while differences exist. In this scene, the *People's Daily* portrays China as an

intelligent, influential power and capable of reconciling contradictions. This is the role that China strives to play in the international community. The revival of Confucianism has given a unique cultural stamp to discourse based on Chinese values. Confucianism also influences the discourse of *A Community of Shared Future for Mankind*. To be specific, it based on principles of friendship and inclusiveness (Ding and Cheng, 2017, p2), such as "The poor should try to help themselves, while the successful should help make the better world" ("穷则独善其身, 达则兼济天下") (Yang, 2006, p.8). Ecological civilisation implies that the Confucian value of a humanism is an integral part of nature (天人合一). The CCP draw the value of making the world to be harmonious and better reflect the CCP's ambition to improve global governance mechanisms.

These discourses are influential discourse at the theoretical level because they reflect more countries' interests, sovereign equality as well as win-win cooperation, and have the imprint of Chinese culture. However, China's actual contributions are the major reason that they can make these discourses influential. China's actions are more effective at promoting its prestige in the international community. Further, not only in climate governance area, only when China becomes a real great power, they can try to set a new model of international relations and have the right to interpret international rules. Therefore, combining mitigating climate change with low-carbon development is an effective model for China to achieve sustainable development. It also worth noting that for the current stage, China's strategy is valid because these discourses are helping the country expand influence. At the same time, these discourses can match China's actions, which make them persuasive.

## **6.6 Summary**

This chapter mainly analysed how *People's Daily* frames China as a responsible big country and makes a great contribution to mitigating climate change. This research found that *People's Daily* employs China's positive image as the most important frame party because the CCP

considers they are suffering legitimacy crises in international cooperation, mainly caused by the vague definition of responsibilities and obligations, developed countries' obligation to assist developing countries in terms of funding, technology and capacity-building, as well as transparency. In order to reduce the legitimacy deficit as well as to be more influential in the international community, the CCP has formed discourse by seeking to generate wide acceptance, integrate national interests with international cooperation as well as draw from Confucianism. Based on China's motivations to participate in international cooperation and China's strategies to become influential, the next chapter will further discuss under the UNFCCC mechanism, how does international community deal with climate change and what is China's position in cooperation.



## Chapter 7 Solidarity of International Community

### 7.1 Introduction

Climate change is a political issue (Eberhardt, 2005) and an international issue (Tong, 2011). Thus, looking at the climate change issue can reflect competition and co-operation between different powers of the world. On the one hand, the world has reached a consensus that climate change is threatening the environment which human beings depend on for life. Climate change is an urgent issue and requires all powers in the world to take act immediately. On the other hand, each country is struggling for economic benefits, development as well as technological protection.

As an international and political topic, climate change has derived another concept-climate diplomacy (*Qi hou wai jiao*). Climate diplomacy (Yang, 2009) means that China actively participates in international cooperation and works with the international community to address global issues, such as climate change. These activities include participating in international climate change negotiations under the United Nations Framework and clarifying China's position to the world as well as engaging dialogue or co-operation with other countries to mitigate climate change. All these international acts are in line with the characteristics of diplomatic activities. Specifically, climate change can reflect the CCP's role in this process and implies that China's purpose in international negotiation is to reach an agreement.

This chapter will analyse how *People's Daily* presents the topic of climate change in terms of international solidarity and examine the CCP's position and purpose in international negotiations. First of all, China can play an active role in mitigating climate change in the international community because it is the indirect result of domestic energy adjustment and transformation of development models. Secondly, at the end of the twentieth century, the foreign policy of this period was proposed by Deng Xiaoping. He put forward the maxim that China should "Calmly observe, stabilize the position, offer composed responses, hide its the light under a bushel, be good at seeming clumsy, never take the lead, and aim to do something

big (冷静观察, 稳住阵脚, 沉着应对, 韬光养晦, 善于守拙, 决不当头, 有所作为)

". This attitude led *People's Daily* in the early days of climate change negotiations to describe China as a victim when reporting international mitigating climate change consultations. Further, it argued that the fact that the *Kyoto Protocol* did not restrict China's emission was reasonable. Moving to the 21st century, China has attempted to be a leader in international climate change mitigation negotiations. On the one hand, this is a secondary effect of its domestic development strategy and the turn to a green model since the 12th Five-Year Plan. On the other hand, it is also due to Xi Jinping's proposed the foreign policy of approaching the centre of the world stage.

This chapter introduces the significant climate change mitigating international organizations, such as the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, and the considerable achievements of the annual the United Nations Climate Change Conference in section 6.2. Background information about the *Kyoto Protocol* and the *Paris Agreement* will also be presented in section 6.3. Then, this chapter explores China's internal motivations for claiming that climate change is real and threatens human survival in the international community in section 6.4. Finally, this chapter analyses China's discourse and purpose in global climate change mitigation negotiations.

## **7.2 Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)**

Before understanding the competition and cooperation between different countries as well as China's position, it is necessary to identify the international organisations dealing with climate change and how they work.

### 7.2.1 Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)

The United Nations official website describes the main international organisation dealing with climate change as follows:

*"The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) was set up by the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) and United Nations Environment Programme to provide an objective source of scientific information."*

As per United Nations' description, IPCC's main task is to provide an evaluation of scientific knowledge of climate change, the potential impacts of climate change on society and the economy as well as countermeasures for adapting and mitigating climate change, in the form of an assessment report. IPCC reports cover:

*"Scientific technical and socio-economic information relevant to understanding the scientific basis of risk of human-induced climate change, its potential impacts and options for adaptation and mitigation." (IPCC, 1998, p16)*

*"The IPCC does not carry out original research, nor does it monitor climate or related phenomena itself."(IAC,2010, p16)*

Despite the claims of climate sceptics voice, it is a fact that climate change causes severe or irreversible damage to the environment. IPCC can provide the scientific basis for this view and data on climate change. The role of the IPCC is to assess the best available scientific, technical and socio-economic information on climate change on a comprehensive, open and transparent basis. These assessments reports draw on the work of hundreds of experts in all regions of the world. The IPCC's reports seek a comprehensive reflection of existing views and make them policy-relevant, but not policy-indicative. The description of the IPCC's main work shows that the IPCC provides reliable data on climate change for policymakers and helps them to understand the causes and consequences of climate change. Furthermore, they show that taking the lack of scientific certainty in climate change as an excuse to try to avoid mitigating it, is an irresponsible position. In addition, the description of the IPCC also implies that it is not a mandatory or supervisory organisation capable of mitigating climate change. IPCC provides policy-relevant reports rather than policy-indicative reports. This means that

IPCC's suggestions have to legally binding power. In other words, IPCC provides a platform for all countries in the world when dealing with an issue for which no one can escape their responsibility. Thus, taking specific actions to mitigate climate change is dependent on to countries supporting each other as well as a balance among all powers in the world. This context provides an excellent analytical perspective for this research. It helps this research to capture the median position between different powers and assess the CCP's position.

### 7.2.2 The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)

The previous section mentioned that the main work of the IPCC is to issue assessment reports. In 1990, the IPCC issued the first assessment report, which confirmed the scientific basis of climate change. It prompted the UN General Assembly to decide to develop the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). Then the following assessment reports contributed to the development of UNFCCC (Blobel et al. 2006). The UNFCCC is an international environmental treaty adopted in 1992. The Convention entered into force in 1994. The objective of the UNFCCC is to "*stabilize greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere at a level that would prevent dangerous anthropogenic (human-induced) interference with the climate system*" (UN, 1992, p9). The UNFCCC puts forward the principle of "*Common but differentiated responsibilities*" and requires developed countries to take the lead in mitigating climate change. However, the UNFCCC does not impose specific obligations on each party, nor provide implementation mechanisms. Thus, the UNFCCC lacks legal force, yet the UNFCCC provides mandatory emission limit in subsequent protocols, such as the *Kyoto Protocol* and the Paris Agreement. It has to be said that the UNFCCC has laid the legal foundation for international co-operation in mitigating climate change, and it is an authoritative, universal and comprehensive international framework.

### 7.2.3 The United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP)

The previous two sections showed that both the IPCC and UNFCCC provide an authoritative political basis for dealing with climate change, and both of them are lacking mandatory requirements and binding force. The end of the previous section mentioned that the UNFCCC could set binding emission limitations in subsequent protocols. This section will mainly show how these protocols were formed and describe several particular Conferences of the Parties (COPs).

Parties to the UNFCCC have held Conferences of the Parties (COPs) annually since 1995 and have tried to assess progress in mitigating climate change. The first meeting of the COP was held in Berlin, Germany in 1995. The meeting decided to draft a climate protection protocol in two years. In 1997, COP3 was held in Kyoto, Japan and adopted the *Kyoto Protocol*. The *Kyoto Protocol* set that from 2008 to 2012, compared to 1990, the major industrial developed countries' greenhouse gas emissions shall be reduced by 5.2% on average. Among them, the EU will reduce 8% of the emission of six greenhouse gases, while the US will reduce them by 7% and Japan by 6%. Following Russia's adoption of the *Kyoto Protocol*, the treaty finally entered into force in 2005. The purpose of COP4 (Buenos Aires) in 1998 and COP5 (Bonn) in 1999 was to promote the *Kyoto Protocol's* entry into force as soon as possible. At the same time, it formulated a work plan for implementing the *Kyoto Protocol* as well as an implementation timetable. However, in 2000 COP6 (The Hague), held in the Hague, could not reach the expected agreement. During the conference, the US bargained over their emission reduction targets. COP6 was thus deadlocked. In 2001, the US announced its withdrawal from the *Kyoto Protocol* as it said it was not in the US's interest. Against the background of the US withdrawal from the *Kyoto Protocol*, COP7 (Marrakech) in 2007 adopted high-level political decisions on the implementation of the *Kyoto Protocol* and paved the way for the *Kyoto Protocol* to enter into force. This conference stabilized the international community's confidence in its measures to face climate change, and it was a critical step to implement the *Kyoto Protocol*. From COP8 (New Delhi) in 2002 to COP10 (Buenos Aires) in 2004, the conferences did not make much substantive progress. The technology transfer and

assistance to developing countries in improving their ability to adopt climate change as well as the issue of funding were difficult issues on which to reach consensus.

COP11(Montreal) in 2005 adopted the Montreal Roadmap including the dual-track route. On the one hand, under the *Kyoto Protocol*, parties were to start the negotiation process of reducing emissions responsibility after 2012. On the other hand, under the UNFCCC, parties also started a dialogue on a long-term strategy to mitigate climate change. The action was intended to keep the US from leaving global mitigating actions. COP12 (Nairobi) in 2006 has had two significant achievements. First, it approved the Nairobi Work Plan to help developing countries to improve their ability to respond to climate change. Second, parties agreed on the management of the "Adaptation Fund", which will be used to support developing countries in specific climate change adaptation activities. COP13 (Bali) in 2007 adopted the landmark "Bali Roadmap", which further confirmed the dual-track negotiation process under the UNFCCC and the *Kyoto Protocol*. The conference decided to hold the COP15 (Copenhagen) in 2009 and adopt a new protocol then, which could cover the emission reduction target from 2012 to 2020 and replace the *Kyoto Protocol*. COP14 (Poznan) in 2008 summarized the progress of the Bali Roadmap and launched the climate negotiation process. COP15 decided to continue the negotiation process of the "Bali Road Map" and authorized the negotiations of UNFCCC and *Kyoto Protocol*. In COP15, parties expressed the political will to joint mitigating actions. Parties also approved COP's negotiation results and reached consensus. At the same time, it proposed to establish a Green Climate Fund to help developing countries to mitigate as well as adapt to climate change. COP16 (Cancun) in 2010 did not have a particular effect. This was mainly because it was difficult to reach consensus on emission reduction targets. The long-term financial assistance is still a mere scrap of paper. COP17 (Durban) in 2011 decided to implement the second commitment period of the *Kyoto Protocol* and launch the Green Climate Fund.

COP18 (Doha) in 2012 finally reached agreement on the implementation of the second commitment period of the *Kyoto Protocol* from 2013 and the second commitment period

lasts long for eight years, which legally ensured that the second commitment period of the *Kyoto Protocol* would be implemented in 2013. However, Canada, Japan, New Zealand, and Russia announced that they would not participate in the second commitment. The achievements of COP19 (Warsaw) in 2013 included developed countries acknowledging that they should invest in supporting developing countries to mitigate climate change as well as start negotiations about compensation for loss and damage. Moving to COP20 (Lima) in 2014, the idea of using independent national contributions for reducing emissions was one of the main results. In this conference, parties reaffirmed their intention to submit their independent nationally determined contributions to mitigate climate change after 2020. In addition, climate adaptation was mentioned as a particular concept. Finally, the conference produced a draft of the *Paris Agreement*, and it became the basis of negotiation for the Paris conference in 2015. COP21 (Paris) in 2015 adopted the *Paris Agreement*. According to the agreement, all parties will participate in the actions to mitigate climate change in an independent contributory manner. Developed countries will take the lead and assist developing countries in terms of funding, technology as well as improving the capacity to adapt to climate change. The purpose of COP22 (Marrakech) in 2016 was to clarify the implementation of countries' independent contributions to climate change and to provide a timetable and roadmap for the subsequent negotiations on the implementation of the *Paris Agreement*. COP23 (Bonn) in 2017 adopted a series of arrangements to mitigate climate change before 2020 and also promoted dialogue for 2018 according to implementation of the *Paris Agreement*. COP24 (Katowice) in 2018 reached agreement on a set of implementation rules of the *Paris Agreement*. The new rules will guarantee that signatories keep their promises and reduce carbon dioxide emissions.

#### 7.2.4 The Kyoto Protocol and the Paris Agreement

The experience of previous COPs has shown that adoption and implementation of the *Kyoto Protocol* and the *Paris Agreement* have played an essential role in guiding the world to mitigate climate change. However, some countries have withdrawn from these agreements, while

others have tried to promote them. This section will mainly explain the effect of these agreements and the reasons for different reactions in the world.

#### 7.2.4.1 The Kyoto Protocol

The *Kyoto Protocol* was adopted at COP3 in 1997. The objective of the *Kyoto Protocol* was "stabilization of greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere at a level that would prevent dangerous anthropogenic interference with the climate system" (UN, 1992, p9). IPCC predicted that from 1990 to 2100, global temperatures would rise from 1.4° C to 5.8° C. If fully implemented, the *Kyoto Protocol* could have reduced the temperature increase to between 0.02° C and 0.28° C (UN, 1992). Those who opposed the *Kyoto Protocol* believed that the standard was too low to deal with severe crises in the future. The *Kyoto Protocol* also used the concept of "common but differentiated responsibilities". Developed countries were the primary greenhouse gas emitters in history as well as in the present, while per capita emissions in developing countries remained low. Some developing countries, such as India and China, were exempted from the *Kyoto Protocol* because they did not emit large amounts of greenhouse gases during the industrialization period that caused global climate change. Further, it was thought that controlling emissions in developing countries should be commensurate with the development level in these countries.

#### 7.2.4.2 Reactions from all parties

China signed the *Kyoto Protocol* in 1998 and approved it in 2002, and the *Kyoto Protocol* did not restrict China's emissions. Regarding the *Kyoto Protocol*, China's attitude was "Developed countries must take action first and then developing countries like China will follow up"

India signed the *Kyoto Protocol* in 2002. As with China, the *Kyoto Protocol* did not restrict India's emissions.



The United States never acceded to the *Kyoto Protocol*. The protocol requires ratification by the US Congress to enter into force. However, President Bush did not submit the *Kyoto Protocol* to Congress. He believed that the protocol would damage the US economy, and he doubted scientific certainty on climate change. He also claimed that the fact that the treaty did not restrict China's emissions was a flaw (Eckersley, 2007).

Japan has worked hard to meet the *Kyoto Protocol's* requirements. However, after the contract expired in 2012, Japan refused to implement the *Kyoto Protocol* further.

The EU has been a significant supporter of the *Kyoto Protocol* and has been working to persuade countries with swaying positions to join the treaty. However, after the Copenhagen conference in 2009, the EU lost its passion for continuing to play a leading role and did not play an active role in climate change negotiations. The EU still maintains a low target and chose a neutral position toward the second commitment period of the *Kyoto Protocol* (Yang, 2011).

#### 7.2.4.3 The Paris Agreement

As the *Kyoto Protocol* entered the second phase its effect was weak. COP21 adopted the *Paris Agreement* in 2015 and expected to mitigate climate change through it. The *Paris Agreement's* goal was controlling the global average temperature within 2 degrees compared to the pre-industrial period and control the temperature rise within 1.5 degrees. Unlike the *Kyoto Protocol*, which did not restrict developing countries' emission, the *Paris Agreement* requires independently determined national contributions from all signatories.

#### 7.2.4.4 Reactions from all parties

China approved the *Paris Agreement* in 2016 and became the 23rd party of the agreement. China has been actively promoting the adoption of the *Paris Agreement* and fulfilling China's

commitments on emissions reduction. China's Special Representative for Climate Change Xie Zhenhua emphasized that China has implemented the *Paris Agreement's* commitments three years in advance and will completely fulfil its obligations by 2020<sup>3</sup>.

In the US the Obama administration adopted the *Paris Agreement*, while the Trump administration announced to withdrawal from the *Paris Agreement*.

Germany has also actively joined the *Paris Agreement* and believes that the agreement can be seen as the first time the international community has reached a consensus on working to mitigate climate change.

France has also actively joined the *Paris Agreement* and calls on other EU countries to adopt the agreement as soon as possible.

Fiji, Palau, Marshall Islands and the Maldives has ratified the *Paris Agreement* as Pacific islands and climate-vulnerable countries.

Comparing to the *Kyoto Protocol*, the *Paris Agreement* has received more affirmation and support of powers in the world. The *Paris Agreement* involves all countries in the world in the agreement, and it has promoted a global response to climate change.

In summary, IPCC is not a mandatory or supervision organisation for mitigating climate change. IPCC provides policy-relevant reports rather than policy-indicative reports. The UNFCCC does not impose specific obligations on each party, nor provide implementation mechanisms. It offers mandatory emission limit in subsequent protocols. Since 1995, annual COP negotiations have been very difficult. The main contradictions lie in the responsibilities, financial and technical issues. The adoption of the *Kyoto Protocol* was very bumpy. Some developed countries did not sign it, like the US, and some countries withdrew from the protocol subsequently, like Japan. The *Kyoto Protocol* was ineffective. The *Paris Agreement* adopted

in 2015, applied the principle of "the intended nationally determined contributions" (INDCs). The *Paris Agreement* strengthened each country's confidence in mitigating climate change. Although the US has withdrawn from it, global determination to deal with climate change remains firm.

### **7.3 From the Kyoto Protocol to the Paris Agreement**

The failure of phase II of *the Kyoto Protocol* to issue a comprehensive balance and strong legally binding agreement like the *Paris Agreement*, it reflects the fact that global climate governance is more difficult the more it is legally binding and transparent. This section will focus on the analysis of what has improved in international climate governance.

#### 7.3.1 Changes for mitigating the target

The first change from the *Kyoto Protocol* to the *Paris Agreement* is an adaptation to climate change. To be specific, the *Kyoto Protocol* sets quantitative targets for emission reduction for developed countries and outlines adaptation actions without a clear target, for example, "The *Kyoto Protocol*, like the Convention, is also designed to assist countries in adapting to the adverse effects of climate change. It facilitates the development and deployment of technologies that can help increase resilience to the impacts of climate change." By contrast, the *Paris Agreement* aims at "increasing the ability to adapt to the adverse impacts of climate change and fostering climate resilience and low greenhouse gas emissions development, in a manner that does not threaten food production." Article 2 of the *Paris Agreement* sets emission reductions, adaptation and finance assistance as the main targets of climate governance. Further, it also proposed "Holding the increase in the global average temperature to well below 2 °C above pre-industrial levels and pursuing efforts to limit the temperature increase to 1.5 °C above pre-industrial levels." These changes illustrate that as technology has developed, humans have developed in-depth understanding of climate change issues and are able to set clear and detailed targets.

### 7.3.2 Changes in financial assistance and transparency mechanisms

As discussed in the previous section, the *Paris Agreement* includes finance assistance as one of the objectives for global climate governance. It aims at "making finance flows consistent with a pathway towards low greenhouse gas emissions and climate-resilient development." <sup>7</sup>In other words, all countries have to consider their finance flows, rather than developed countries providing funds to developing countries as stated in the *Kyoto Protocol*. Thus, the target of financial support is obscured. At the same time, the *Paris Agreement* expanded the subject of financial support. It not only pointed out that all developed countries should provide financial support but also encourages other parties to provide support on a voluntary basis.

Transparency is the basis for cooperation by all parties to implement agreements in global climate governance. The *Kyoto Protocol* contains reporting and verification requirements only for developed countries.<sup>8</sup> The *Paris Agreement* requires all countries<sup>9</sup> to communicate contributions, and international experts will review the contributions of all parties. The *Paris Agreement* makes progress in transparency while allowing the flexibility for developing countries.

### 7.3.3 Expanding the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities (CBDRRC) and the cooperation model

The concept of "common but differentiated responsibilities" comes from the "application of equity in general international law" (Sands et al., 2012, p.233). "Common but differentiated responsibility" is a means of linking environment and development at the international level and it is an expression of the fairness on each country commitments. It is the fundamental principle of global governance of climate change, a defined by UNFCCC. According to UNCED (1992) principle 7, "In view of the different contributions to global environmental degradation, States have common but differentiated responsibilities. The developed countries

acknowledge the responsibility that they bear in the international pursuit of sustainable development in view of the pressures their societies place on the global environment and of the technologies and financial resources they command." However, the beginning of the *Paris Agreement* sets out the intention to act "in pursuit of the objective of the Convention, and being guided by its principles, including the principle of equity and common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities, in the light of different national circumstances."<sup>10</sup> By emphasising national circumstances, the principles of CBDRRC expand the emphasis on fairness. Unlike the *Kyoto Protocol*, the *Paris Agreement* does not adopt a dichotomous approach by dividing parties into Annex I and non-Annex I countries. It suggests an in-depth exploration of the principle of equity in global climate governance.

Cooperation model is another difference between the *Kyoto Protocol* and the *Paris Agreement*. The *Kyoto Protocol* employs a top-down model of cooperation as it sets emission reduction targets and timetables for developed countries, while there are no emission reduction targets for developing countries. The *Paris Agreement* confirms the cooperative model of Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), which is a bottom-up model.<sup>11</sup> It also establishes an inventory mechanism to pursue emission reduction targets. Therefore, the *Paris Agreement* is stronger to force parties to govern climate under the agreement. At the same time, the emission reduction targets for developed countries are clearly quantified, and targets for developing countries are gradually quantified. Advances in cooperative models strengthen the legal foundations of global climate governance. The *Kyoto Protocol* establishes a top-down model with quantified emission reduction targets, so all parties are subject to united rules to measure national mitigating actions. However, these rules only bind developed countries, rather than developing countries, which will take a long time to develop their society and gradually increase emissions. The *Paris Agreement* has created a model that combines bottom-up targets setting for reduction action with top-down accounting and transparency standards. The setting of targets for action promotes global actions on mitigating climate change. The united accounting standard can lead to stronger actions. However, both the *Kyoto Protocol* and the *Paris Agreement* are weak when it comes to enforcing compliance. Therefore, the

international community needs a mandatory multilateral environmental governance mechanism. Multilateral relationships contribute to balances of power, which finally achieve mandatory measures. In reality, parties form multilateral relationships to express their opinions.

#### **7.4 China's position in international cooperation**

UNFCCC is the main cooperation channel for international climate governance. However, parties also carry out informal consultations, based on common interests. Informal consultations allow parties to express their opinion as a group and make sure these views can be considered. The main groups include the EU, the Group of 77 and China and the BASIC countries. Moreover, China's image in international cooperation is contradictory. In terms of economy, China is the second-largest economy in the world. Thus, China has been expected to take more responsibility for reducing emissions. In terms of political negotiations, China has always emphasised its status as a developing country. Therefore, in international cooperation, clearly identifying China's position is a challenge. China's strategy to identify its position by highlighting climate change is a threat in the first place. The next section discusses how China attempts to stake out its position by identifying climate change as a real threat.

##### 7.4.1 climate change is real and a threat

Although the authoritative assessment report issued by the IPCC clearly states that climate change is real and threatens human survival, *People's Daily* still raises the issue at the beginning of each international climate conference and affirmatively asserts that climate change is real and also is a threat of human survival. *People's Daily* argues it in several ways. The first one is the negative impact of climate change, for example:

*"The climate change brings terrifying danger to the planet. It makes snow and ice melt in Antarctica and the sea levels rise, which directly threatens the survival and development of coastal countries and more than 30 island nations in the world. According to the United*

*Nations Environment Program, sea levels rose 10 to 25 centimetres in the 20th century and based on this calculation sea levels will continue rising from 15 to 95 centimetres in the next century."-UN Environment executive thinks developed countries have primary responsibility for climate change 2nd June 1999*

Second, *People's Daily* widely cites academic achievements or official statement to prove that climate change is real and threatens human survival, for example:

*"Obasi is the Secretary-General of the World Meteorological Organization. At the opening ceremony of the Second International Conference on Climate and Water Held in Helsinki on the 17<sup>th</sup> of this month, he pointed out that the most recent research shows climate change poses a huge challenge to humans. Research has shown that climate change led to flooding and drought. Both flooding and drought around the world have had an important impact on the global water cycle, such as the Mississippi in 1993, the Rhine in 1995, the Oder in 1997 and the Yangtze River floods in China this year." (PD, 19 Aug 1998)*

Third, arguing against climate scepticism is also a critical strategy for *People's Daily* to emphasize that climate change is real, for example:

*"The United States refuses to implement the Kyoto Protocol and offers an extraordinary argument (妙论). First, the protocol is not in the interests of the United States; second, the treaty is unfair to the United States, because it does not require developing countries to reduce carbon dioxide emissions; third, the scientific knowledge about global warming is incomplete." (PD, 6 Apr 2001)*

In this example, the United States rejected the *Kyoto Protocol*, and one of its reasons was that scientific knowledge of climate change is incomplete. *People's Daily* responds to doubt about incomplete knowledge of climate change as follows:

*"A number of studies have shown that in the 1990s, the Earth's temperature has increased more than any other period. For example, the El Niño and La Niña phenomena, which have caused serious disasters to humans, are frequently linked to a large amount of greenhouse gas*

*emissions. Scientists from various countries around the world have already reached a consensus on the importance and necessity of reducing greenhouse gases, but US President Bush has blatantly said that science knowledge in this area is not complete. This is really a mockery of scientific knowledge.” (PD, 6 Apr 2001)*

In 1961, *People's Daily* published the first news report on climate change- “The issue of climate change in the twentieth century”. From that time, although *People's Daily* appeared to believe that climate change is real, it did not firmly maintain that there are only negative consequences of climate change. Before 1998, there were news reports that discussed the benefits of climate change in *People's Daily* (see table1). According to these articles, climate change can increase crop yields. However, since 1998, *People's Daily* has continuously emphasised that climate change is happening and threatens human survival, and no examples of climate scepticism can be found.

Table 1 The benefits of climate change news report

Title	Date	Page
Carbon dioxide promotes plant growth	5 <sup>th</sup> Sep. 1984	7
Soviet scientist puts forward new perspective-global warming is good	31 <sup>st</sup> Aug. 1989	3
The benefits of global warming outweigh the disadvantages	19 <sup>th</sup> Jan. 1992	8
Climate change has disadvantages and advantages for China's agriculture	4 <sup>th</sup> May. 1997	5

As discussed in the literature review, Jia (2017) analysed four main reasons of why there is no climate scepticism in Chinese media. The first one is that climate change is not an important topic in the Chinese media agenda. Climate change attracts media attention because it is related to significant Chinese policies and China's performance or achievements on the international stage. Second, the primary source of science news is government science departments rather than research institutions. Thus, results of scientific reports mainly praise China's scientific research achievements. The third reason is that mitigating climate change is related to what



are seen as positive changes in Chinese society, such as using clean energy. In terms of wind turbines, and solar panels, China can claim the leading role in clean technology in the world. Thus, the Chinese economy has benefited a lot from mitigating climate change. Finally, there is no climate scepticism in Chinese media also because China, as a developing country, required financial and technical support from developed countries, and saw the climate change negotiations as an opportunity to gain such support. Describing the negative impacts of climate change, citing academic and official statements, as well as arguing against climate scepticism are three main strategies that *People's Daily* uses. However, it is worth asking why does the *People's Daily* still have to argue that climate change is real in the context of what is becoming an international consensus? Why does *People's Daily* emphasize the position that climate change is real? The next section will mainly explain the motivations behind the argument that climate change is real.

#### 7.4.2 What drives *People's Daily* claims that climate change is real in domestic

Concerns about health, prompting the "Green Development" model (Delman and Odgaard, 2014) as well as a legitimacy crisis (Engels, 2018) are three main reasons underpinning *People's Daily's* firm claims that climate change is real. First, as discussed in the literature review, as China has developed its economy amidst unlimited exploitation of resources, environmental problems have become significant in China, especially since the 1990s (Tong, 2014). These problems have resulted in natural disasters and health crises. For example, the haze event of 2012-2013 attracted widespread attention from the public. The smog engulfed 30 provinces in China. In Beijing, there were only five bright days in January 2013. One of the leading causes of smog is excessive use of coal. Improving the efficiency of coal use and on the other hand, increasing the proportion of clean energy can help the central government to control pollution and protect people's health. An indirect result of this strategy has been to reduce emissions thus, mitigating climate change. The public concern about health is also a response to the fact that *People's Daily* describes the negative

impacts of climate change. Using a matter that the public is very concerned with, such as health, is an effective way of persuading readers that climate change is real by.

By reviewing news coverage of the haze event, this research found that the news reports described “climate conditions” as a cause of haze. “Climate conditions” can make smog worse indeed. However, it is worth noting that it is not a direct or significant cause of pollution. This kind of strategy can distract readers’ attention from exploring the reasons related to government supervision or misuse of energy, which would threaten the legitimacy of the CCP, for example:

*“Meteorological conditions made the rapid accumulation of pollution difficult to diffuse, and this is the cause of heavy air pollution.” Shi, S.H. (2013). The causes of heavy air pollution in Beijing, Tianjin and Hebei have been clarified. China Business Network.*

Further, health problems can trigger a crisis of the CCP's legitimacy. Take the haze event as an example: if air pollution cannot be controlled, the authority of the CCP will be destroyed. Therefore, the central government has the inherent motivation to control pollution and improve energy efficiency. Using clean energy and improving the efficiency of coal use are the two main strategies. In addition, using clean energy and improving the efficiency of coal use also can resolve the problem of energy security in China. China has gradually become a net energy importer. Although China has an abundance of coal, it cannot be enough for the sharp growth of industrial production in the 1990s (Zhang et al., 2017). Therefore, the CCP is anxious about increasing dependence on this resource. In this context, mitigating climate change is the secondary effect of China's energy adjustment (Engels, 2018).

Third, since 1978, China adopts a development model that is oriented towards growth and consumes resources. This model is very effective in economic development. However, as discussed in the literature review, environmental issues are becoming prominent and have created a new challenge to the legitimacy of the CCP. In order to resolve the crisis of legitimacy, the 16th Central Committee of the Communist Party of China in 2003

initiated the "Scientific Outlook on Development" as the official ideology. Specifically, "sustainable development", "green transformation" as well as "low-carbon development" were identified as sub-concepts of the "Scientific Outlook on Development". Thus, in China, adopting a green and sustainable development model came to be seen as inevitable in history. In summary, the *People's Daily* firmly adopted the position that climate change is due to China's domestic requirement of transformation as well as energy adjustment. It is also way for the CCP to deal with the legitimacy crisis when it challenged by environmental issues.

#### 7.4.3 What drives *People's Daily* claims that climate change is real on global level

*People's Daily* firmly believes that climate change is real, and the threat provides a solid basis for international negotiations. As discussed in Chapter5, developed countries believe that the foundation of the principle of CBDRRC has changed. China's responsibilities and capabilities for climate change have increased, and this kind of change will continue. Therefore, it is necessary to re-interpret CBDRRC, for example, by employing a dynamic dichotomy approach to distinguish Annex I and non-Annex I country. In this regard, *People's Daily* emphasises historical emissions and argues that developed countries cannot shirk their responsibilities. At the same time, China is a country with a large population. Although China's economy has improved, its ability to governance climate still cannot compare with that developed countries. Therefore, China does not believe that the foundation of the CBDRRC has changed. Based on recognition and adherence to CBDRRC, China and Brazil, South Africa and India form the BASIC countries. BASIC countries aim to unite developing countries and persuade developed countries to fulfil their commitments to carry out international cooperation in reducing emissions in line with their national interests.

Further, in order to make developed countries fulfil their obligations to reduce climate change, the CCP also emphasise international consensus. The COP highlights international

consensus as well as protecting each country's interests. *People's Daily* often expresses its opinion and positions by citing international consensus, for example:

*“At the end of May, in an interview with reporters, the Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme Claus Topfer said that global warming had sounded the alarm for humanity. If developed countries do not take responsibility and reduce greenhouse gas emissions, shocking consequence will occur soon.” (PD, 2 June 1999)*

Besides repeatedly affirming the international community's consensus that developed countries have the primary responsibility for climate change, *People's Daily* also attempted to speak on behalf of developed countries, for example:

*“Some developed countries have ignored the fact that developing countries have made many of the measures and contributions to mitigate climate change since the Kyoto Conference. Developed countries set new and difficult obligations for developing countries at this stage, and also demand as a prerequisite the ratification of the Kyoto Protocol. The representatives of developing countries in the meeting are very dissatisfied” (PD, 28 Nov 2000)*

In other words, *People's Daily* used the international consensus to convey China's economic development requirements. It also expressed the desire for a balance between different powers in the world. International consensus helps China to argue that developed countries should take the lead role in mitigating climate change.

#### 7.4.4 CDRRC is a fair and cooperative principle

China has always adhered to the CDRRC principle and believes it is a fair and cooperative principle. *People's Daily* conducted a series of discussions around this opinion to analyse China's rightful behaviour in international negotiations. These discussions deal with developed countries' opinion that developing countries should take more responsibility for reducing emissions. *People's Daily* cites data and examples to illustrate that developing countries should

not take the same responsibilities as developed countries due to historical accumulation, per capita emissions, and development requirements. Apart from the argument, the article 'Recalled the 'half biscuits' ' (PD, 5th July 2007) tells a story in the beginning. 'There was a hungry man who bought and ate six biscuits, but he was still hungry. So, he picked up the seventh. Unexpectedly, he was full after only swallowing half of it. So, the man said: 'if I knew I would be full after eating this half, then I would not eat the first six!' '. This article vividly reveals that developed countries ignore the objective law that quantitative accumulating triggers qualitative change through a fable. Therefore, it defeats developed countries' proposal's legitimacy.

When parties proposed emission reduction plans, China realised that the nature of the emission issue is a development issue. While dismantling the developed countries' legitimacy, the party actively constructs China's proposals (10th Feb. 2010). The CCP believes that green governance capacity is an important part of global governance capacity (9th Apr. 2018). Based on this understanding, the ruling party reflects the drawbacks of industrial civilisation and creatively builds an ecological civilisation with harmony between humanity and nature. This is not only for China's development but also explores a green transformation and sustainable development for the world.

## **7.5 Summary**

This chapter has described the international climate governance model. UNFCCC is the main channel for countries to cooperate in dealing with climate change. The *Kyoto Protocol* and the *Paris Agreements* are the main agreements for parties to take action and fulfil the responsibility to climate change. However, the legally binding nature of the *Kyoto Protocol* declined, while the *Paris Agreements* has become stronger in forcing parties to take action. Further understanding of climate change and the development of technology contributed to an expansion of UNFCCC's emphasis on fairness. This resulted in the *Paris Agreements*, which is a more acceptable and stronger legally binding

treaty. China's activities in international negotiations aim to defend national interests as well as arguing that as a developing country, China's contribution has exceeded its responsibilities. The changes from the *Kyoto Protocol* to the *Paris Agreement* is also a reflection of the changes in the world political and economic landscape. More and more developing countries play in an increasing role in the world's political economy as well as challenging the dominant position of developed countries in the global governance model. The formation of multilateral groups in climate negotiations reflects the conflict of interests among powers, and international cooperation has begun to take place in a more balanced way. At the same time, climate change is a problem closely related to energy security, and energy security issues affect the security of national sovereignty, which makes climate change negotiations have the characteristics of ideological struggle. The next chapter will further introduce the conflict among different powers and investigate their ideological struggles.

## Chapter 8 International conflicts in mitigating climate change

### 8.1 Introduction

The Soviet Union collapsed after the revolutions of 1989. As a socialist developing country, Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union gave China a warning in this period about the importance of maintaining political security and stability in the background of economic globalization and multi-polar political structure. In terms of inside the CCP, the Soviet Union collapse was understood to originate from the crisis of faith in socialism. At the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the prominent issue of people's livelihood increased and challenged the CCP's ability as well as party members and the public's faith in communism. The crisis of faith requires strengthening Marxist education and strengthening Marxist beliefs. From the external environment, the lessons of the Soviet Union's collapse also warned that the CCP should strengthen awareness of preventing and responding to the peaceful evolution inspired by external forces. As the party newspaper, *People's Daily* shoulders the mission of the defence of the CCP's ideology security and resists its erosion by capitalism. This is why *People's Daily* has set up a large number of comparisons to framing the confrontation between developed countries and developing countries. Furthermore, the CCP tries to maintain its leadership security, stability as well as legitimacy through carrying out the ideological battle of socialism and capitalism. This is because this chapter found that the *People's Daily* uses comparison repeatedly. Further, due to using capitalist economic strategies to promote China's economic growth, the CCP has difficulty to explain why they do not achieve socialism through class struggle. It puts the CCP in a weak position to argue its own legitimacy when challenged by liberal democratic values and even democratic protests.

In 1989, Chinese university students initiated a national demonstration at Tiananmen Square in Beijing, which lasted nearly two months. In the beginning, this event was Beijing universities students and citizens mourning the former General Secretary of the CCP's Central Committee Hu Yaobang who died of a heart attack. Under the leadership of some students, the mourning events turned to protests asking for the government to control inflation, unemployment,

corruption, and offer press freedom and liberal democracy. In the process of economic reform, Chinese economy gradually closed to the capitalist market. Then the worship of Western lifestyles, capitalism and multi-party systems slowly emerged. The new support for liberal democracy is one of the crucial reasons for this protest. The CCP is necessarily wary of liberal democratic values. Thirty years later, in 2019, under the separation of powers political system, Hong Kong also protests in the name of defending liberal democracy. This shows that the confrontation with liberal democracy is a long-term task of the CCP. After the Tiananmen Square Protests, Deng Xiaoping said that “Our biggest mistake is in education; ideological and political work is weak; the investment in education is not enough.” The work about education and communicate of ideology will be endless.

Section 7.2 describes the phenomenon that *People's Daily* pays a high attention to the US and explores reasons. This partly because the US criticised China did not do enough to deal with climate change. Then section 7.3 explains China's self-defence. Section 7.4 explores the conflicts between China and the US, and what is the essence of these conflicts in section 7.5. Finally, section 7.6 summarises the chapter.

## **8.2 High attention to the US**

The sample of 418 news reports includes are 30 news articles related to the US. The US plays a leading role in 20 news articles. On the issue of climate change, there is no other country that has as high exposure and presentation space as the US.

### 8.2.1 China-US bilateral relations in modern history

That the CCP feels anxiety towards the US comes from modern history. Since 1949 when founded the People's Republic of China, the US recognised the Republic of China (Taiwan) as the only legal government rather than CCP. It was the first time that the People's Republic of China felt threatened from the US. Then, in 1950, only one year after People's Republic



of China was founded and the Korean War started. It was a difficult time for China, but the central government still decided to send troops to support North Korea. In this event, the US was described as an imperialist aggressor by the CCP. Mao Zedong said: "People of the country and the world are united and fully prepared to beat any aggression by US imperialism" (Wang, 2009). However, the image of the US as an imperialist aggressor is not lost in the sands of time, due to these events has been written in history and politics textbooks. Rather, this image has always existed in Chinese people's minds. After a stable transition in the relationship during the 1960s, and rapprochement in 1972, China and the US established diplomatic relations in 1979. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the issue of ideological differences became significant. During this period, the issue of China's human rights became the subject of accusations by the US, including freedom of speech and association as well as universal suffrage. As a one-party state, the CCP was under pressures to explain its rationality and legitimacy when facing these values from liberal democracy. From 2000, China and the US reached a consensus against terrorism and then gradually sought cooperation in many other areas. However, since Donald Trump became president, the relationship between China and the US has become tense again. A series of issues have exacerbated tension, from accepting Cai Yingwen's, the president of the Republic of China's congratulation on Donald Trump becoming the US president, through the China-the US trade war, the passing the *Reciprocal Access to Tibet Act* as well as *Hong Kong Human Rights and Democracy Act*. There are additional to longstanding issues such as the US involvement in the Korean War, the political status of Taiwan, China's human rights, the Tibet issue as well as economic sanctions on China. Vice President Mike Pence said:

*"Nor, as we hoped, has Beijing moved toward greater freedom for its people. For a time, Beijing inched toward greater liberty and respect for human rights, but in recent years, it has taken a sharp U-turn toward control and oppression."*

Since the condemnation of China's human rights at the beginning, and then involving more and more China's political issues, the CCP feels pressured to defend themselves from US challenges. However, not only China considers that the US has attempted to interfere in China's

internal affairs and undermine China's sovereignty, but also the US claims that China undermines the US's liberal democracy. Vice President Mike Pence also said:

*"Beijing is employing a whole-of-government approach, using political, economic, and military tools, as well as propaganda, to advance its influence and benefit its interests in the United States. China is also applying this power in a more proactive way than ever before, to exert influence and interfere in the domestic policy and politics of our country."*

The ideological differences between China and the US are widening and the core of these differences is the competition between Chinese Socialism and Liberal Democracy with universal values.

### 8.2.2 Impact of US domestic politics on global climate governance

Domestic politics has a profound impact on the US's performance in global climate governance, and under the leadership of different presidents, there were apparent differences.

#### 8.2.2.1 President George Walker Bush

The US did not pass the *Kyoto Protocol* in 2001. President Bush explained his refusal to sign to the *Kyoto Protocol* as follows:

*"The National Academy of Sciences indicates that the increase is due in large part to human activity.*

*Yet, the Academy's report tells us that we do not know how much effect natural fluctuations in climate may have had on warming. We do not know how much our climate could or will change in the future. We do not know how fast change will occur or even how some of our actions could impact it.*

*This is a challenge that requires a 100 per cent effort; ours, and the rest of the worlds. The world's second-largest emitter of greenhouse gases is China. Yet, China was entirely exempted from the requirements of the Kyoto Protocol.*

*Kyoto is, in many ways, unrealistic. Many countries cannot meet their Kyoto targets. The targets themselves were arbitrary and not based upon science. For America, complying with those mandates would have a negative economic impact, with layoffs of workers and price increases for consumers. And when you evaluate all these flaws, most reasonable people will understand that it's not sound public policy"- President George W. Bush, 2001*

This shows that Bush did not deny that climate change is happening nor doubt the threat of climate change. The crux of the problem for him was that the Kyoto Protocol does not restrict developing countries' emissions at the same time as limiting those of the United States. Bush's views on climate changed over time, for example:

*"Burbank: And that was pretty much Mr Bush stock answer throughout his first term. Global warming was happening, but we just couldn't be sure why. Things changed, though, in 2005, as the president was on his way to Scotland.*

*Pres. Bush: It's now recognised that the surface of the earth is warmer and that an increase in greenhouse gases caused by a human is contributing to the problem.*

In the article *Refusal to fulfil obligations enrage every country* ( 6th Apr. 2001), *People's Daily* claimed there were three reasons that the US refused to implement the Kyoto Protocol. First, the Kyoto Protocol negatively affected the US economy. Second, the treaty was unfair because there were no reduction targets for developing countries, while the third was no clear scientific basis for the measures in the Protocol. In this context, *People's Daily's* news reports respected the truth insofar as Bush was not really a climate sceptic, he believed that global warming was happening but questioned the role of natural forces. *People's Daily* assumed that climate change was a real problem on the basis of scientific research and extreme weather events. They rejected climate change scepticism and pointed out that climate change scepticism reflects the concern of developed countries that it is unfair not to limit developing countries' emission.

In 2007, President Bush's administration shifted its climate change policy. For example, at the 33rd G8 summit, the US accepted to halve its emissions of greenhouse gases by 2050 (Merkel, 2008), "We are building the global house," declared Angela Merkel<sup>4</sup> and proposed to develop a new long-term strategy to deal with climate change. In 2007, the Bush Administration held a *Major Economies Process on Energy Security and Climate Change* and proposed that after the first phase of the *Kyoto Protocol* expires, the new international climate change framework research purpose should include developed and developing countries. Thus, the Bush administration was trying to reshape the international community's consensus on the Common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities (CBDRRC) and global climate change governance mechanisms to avoid burdening the US economic growth.

#### 8.2.2.2 President Barack Obama

In 2013 in his *State of the Union Address*, Obama expressed his determination to actively carry out climate action even without the support of Congress (The White House Office of the Press Secretary (2013). In the same year, President Obama released *the President's Climate Action Plan*, (The White House Office of Energy Efficiency & Renewable Energy, 2013), which made the US climate change policy more active and clearer. Nonetheless, the Obama administration's climate change policy continued the policies of the previous administration and still attempted to re-interpret the principle of CBDRRC. For example, State Department envoy Todd Stern argued that the major developing countries must take action to reduce their emissions substantially. Further, he claimed that: "China -- I'm not being critical -- has an extraordinarily successful economy, and it's in a different stage of development than we are," Stern added. "But emissions are emissions. You've just got to do the math. It's not a matter of politics or morality or anything else. It's just math. And you cannot get the kind of reductions you need globally if China is not a major player in this. That's the reality." (Samuelsohn, 2009). The Obama administration continued the previous administration and tried to shift the responsibility of historically accumulated emissions to future collective responsibility to reduce emissions. As a great power, the US has played a major role in global climate governance,

including promotion of measures and putting up obstacles. Regardless of whether it is positive or negative, the US has displayed their attempting to shape global climate governance to reflect their interests.

#### 8.2.2.3 President Donald Trump

In contrast to Obama's active response to climate change, Trump decided to withdraw from the Paris Agreement and to replace Obama's Clean Power Plan with the weaker regulations of the Affordable Clean Energy Act. Trump's attitude toward climate change looks confusing and inconsistent (Cheung, 2020). To be specific, he has tweeted that: *"The weather has been so cold for so long that the global warming hoaxsters were forced to change the name to climate change to keep \$ flow!"*

*"Climate change is very important to me. I've done many environmental impact statements in my life, and I believe very strongly in very, very crystal-clear fortune water and clear air." (Trump, 2019)*

He also showed his attitude toward to the Paris Agreement as follows: *"The badly Flawed Paris Climate Agreement protects the polluters, hurts Americans, and cost a fortune. Not on my watch!"*. From Trump's arguments, climate change is not a priority issue for the government. The Trump administration's views on climate change issues are entirely from a political perspective. Avoiding US economic losses in global climate governance is the key to their climate policy. The US occupies an essential position in China's climate diplomacy as *People's Daily* pays high attention to the US. The conflicts between China and the US as well as how the CCP defend themselves will be addressed in the following sections.

## 8.3 The CCP's self-defence from liberal democracy

### 8.3.1 Chinese people's understanding of liberal democracy

Chinese people traditionally have a different understanding of liberal democracy. Influenced by Confucianism, they believe that the person who has “superior knowledge” and “virtue” can take leadership (Dahl, 1989, p52) and this is a concept from “government by guardians”, which exists in Chinese culture. Further, “government by guardians” provides the basis for people-oriented policies (*Min ben si xiang*). It requires the leader should enhance the welfare of the people and only in this way, can power acquire legitimacy (*Ren zheng*). In other words, legitimacy comes from government positive performance, outcomes of policies as well as caring for the people rather than from procedural considerations of how to form a government (Shi & Lu, 2010).

Thus, in order to defend the CCP's legitimacy as a one-party state, it is necessary to highlight the government's performance. This helps explain why also in the following analysis the *People's Daily* constantly emphasizes the government's positive performance in mitigating climate change by comparing to the US's performance.

### 8.3.2 Nationalism

As the battle over ideology involves the relationship between China and other countries and climate change is an international topic, nationalism is an effective discourse to generate a sense of national identity and national pride. As an extension of the people-oriented policies (民本思想), China always tries to link making people wealthy with a strong country. A stable and reliable state is the basis for making people rich. The relationship between individual and country is mentioned in *Mencius* (孟子). Families are the foundation of the country, while the country is an extension of the family. Only when the country is strong, can individuals be happy (天下之本在国，国之本在家，家之本在身).<sup>8</sup> The relationship between individuals and country also has been described as lip and teeth. If there is no lip, the teeth are cold (唇亡齿

寒). This means that individuals and country are closely dependent on each other as well as sharing common glory and disgrace. Protecting the country's interests is protecting the individual's interests.

Thus, the CCP works hard to promote patriotic education. It is not only an important subject in school education but also exists as the motivation for many particular actions, such as aerospace projects or hosting international conferences. Patriotism is also widespread in films, songs performed at the Spring Festival gala evening, for example, the popular song *Country* (国家) has the following lyrics: “*Home is the smallest country; Country is millions of homes; there is a rich family only when the country is strong; I love my country; I love my home; I love my county*”. The Chinese language also confirms the close relationship between the country and individuals. 国 (guo) means country, while 家(Jia) means home. Once combined, 国 (guo) and 家(jia) also means country (国家). Thus, in Chinese cultural tradition, individual and country cannot be separated.

Since individuals and country are closely related, patriotic education also covers the Opium War, the Second Sino-Japanese War and other historical events involving imperialist invasion of China. Disgrace is another particular topic in patriotic education, and it has been repeated that disgrace cannot be forgotten. Imperialist countries were able to violate China's territory and sovereignty because China was weak, and people then were forced to live without dignity. Further, not only in history, nowadays, the Taiwan and Tibet issues as well as more recently the Hong Kong issue are all framed as Western Countries having an ulterior motive, which is to split China. Evoking disgrace more easily triggers the notion of rejecting Western liberal democratic values. This is because liberal democracy is not only a threat to the CCP, but also threatens all Chinese people in terms of both national pride and happiness, and a wealthy life. In this context, the CCP has applied nationalism to set shared goals for the people and the party and to narrow the gap between dominator and dominated, which finally obtains the people's support and maintains the CCP's legitimacy and dominant status.

Further with people-oriented policies (以人为本), sometimes, the CCP allows some press space for depicting suffering from liberal democracy. Take the Hong Kong protests in 2019 as an example. The mass media in mainland China framed the protests as violence and terrorism. The media presented the idea that Hong Kong citizens live in chaos, economic decline and tourism as one of the economic pillars is in depression. The media exposure of misery related to the protests helps the CCP to enhance Chinese people's sense of resistance toward liberal democracy.

At the same time, the media also try to frame China as a strong competitor to Western liberal democracy. For instance, after the US announced withdrawal from the Paris Agreement, *People's Daily* framed China as a leader in mitigating climate change. China received approbation from the international community, improving national pride as well as trust in the CCP. It implied that as an ideology that is different from universal value, Chinese socialism is effective, and it can be compared to liberal democracy. Moreover, compared to China's development in terms of economy, and its international position, the misery associated with Hong Kong protests shows that liberal democracy is not the right path for China to achieve national renaissance. Thus, the one-party system is in line with China's actual conditions, and it is effective as China became a great power in the world.

In 2017, Xi Jinping proposed "The Chinese Dream of the Great Renaissance of the Chinese people" (中华民族伟大复兴的中国梦) in the 19<sup>th</sup> session of the National Congress of the Communist Party of China. "Renaissance" (复兴) implied that the Chinese nation was superior and the CCP committed to recovering its superiority. Further, a superior nation should explore their own development path rather than follow western liberal democracy. Compared to "revitalise China" (振兴中华) or the "rise of China" (中华崛起), the discourse of Renaissance covers the meaning of resisting liberal democratic values. The CCP adopted "The Chinese Dream of the Great Renaissance of the Chinese people" to generates public support as the



concept involves individuals' lives. From the point of view of nationalism, "The Chinese Dream of the Great Renaissance of the Chinese" serves to maintain the CCP's legitimacy.

Last, just as the logic of the CCP cannot only rely on economic growth as a source of legitimacy, nationalism also cannot guarantee the CCP's legitimacy when China's performance does not meet the public's expectation. When the CCP started to describe itself as a strong and reliable leader, the media had to emphasise that China is a great power in the world. As mitigating climate change meets China's requirements of economic development as well as being an international issue, climate change is a perfect topic for the CCP to promote its ability and performance.

### 8.3.3 International consensus

International consensus is another significant pillar for the CCP to defend its dominance status. At the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, China's "principal contradiction" was between the ever-growing material and cultural needs of the people and the backwardness of social production. Therefore, the CCP considered the main task was economic development. As a developing country, China could not take responsibility for reducing emissions in this period. In 1998, China became the 37<sup>th</sup> signatory of the Kyoto Protocol. According to the Kyoto Protocol, China as a developing country could avoid taking emissions reduction responsibility until 2012. In the meantime, developing countries could gain developed countries assistance in terms of funding and technology. China could take advantage of signing the Kyoto Protocol. However, there were sceptical voices regarding the Kyoto Protocol. First of all, this kind of scepticism came from climate change scepticism. As discussed in Chapter 2, due to climate change being an uncertainty issue, there was doubt about the causal relationship between greenhouse gas emission and climate change. Secondly, criticism of the Kyoto Protocol pointed out that it will delay the industrialization process and even transfer wealth to the Third World countries, for instance, in 2001, President George Bush announced the US do not implement the Kyoto Protocol because:

*“The incomplete state of scientific knowledge of the causes of, and solutions to, global climate change and the lack of commercially available technologies for removing and storing carbon dioxide. Harmful to our economy and hurt our workers, it exempts 80% of the world, including major population centres such as China and India, from compliance, and would cause serious harm to the US economy”<sup>9</sup>*

As a developing country, China supported the Kyoto Protocol. In order to defend China’s development right, on the one hand, China emphasised its developing country status repeatedly in this period, and even buried its name behind “developing countries” in climate change coverage, as the following sections will analyse further. On the other hand, China used international consensus as a way of pressuring developed countries to fulfil their responsibilities. For example, Liu Jianchao, a spokesperson of Foreign Ministry said:

*“Developed countries should take responsibility for reducing emissions. We believe that climate change involves human’s survival and development. The international community should work together to mitigating climate change. Developed countries should take responsibility for their historical emissions and take the lead role in reducing emissions. Developed countries should transfer funds and technologies to developing countries and help developing countries to achieve their reduction targets.”*

*People’s Daily* presented a series of intense discussions about who should take responsibility for climate change. *People’s Daily* argued that developed countries have to take responsibility for reducing emissions. Besides cumulative historical emissions and developed countries’ economic conditions, the international consensus was a particular reason to support China’s claim that developed countries should take responsibility as well as assistance developing countries. In this period, China relied on international consensus to defend itself from US challenges. Sixteen years later, President Donald Trump announced that the US would renounce the *Paris Agreement*<sup>10</sup> in 2017 because:

*“In short, the agreement does not eliminate coal jobs, it just transfers those jobs out of America and the United States and ships them to foreign countries. This agreement is less about the*

*climate and more about other countries gaining a financial advantage over the United States.”*

*“Even if the Paris Agreement were implemented in full, with total compliance from all nations, it is estimated it would only produce two-tenths of one degree-think of that; this much-Celsius reduction in global temperature by the year 2100. Tiny, tiny amount. In fact, 14 days of carbon emissions from China alone would wipe out the gains from America...”*

Similar to President George Bush, President Donald Trump also expressed his doubts about climate change as well as implementation the accord on the basis it brings disadvantages to the US economy. Further, they both considered that China did not control climate change effectively and they are both criticisms on China’s large emission. In the same year, the Chinese principal contradiction became the one between unbalanced and inadequate development and the people’s ever-growing needs for a better life. At the same time, in this period, the CCP considered Chinese society as a moderately prosperous society in all respects.<sup>11</sup> In the “new area” announced by Xi Jinping, when facing the US’s questioning of climate change, international consensus was no longer used as a way to put pressure on developed countries to fulfil their responsibilities and offer assistance to developing countries. Instead, *People’s Daily* applied it to express criticism of the US, and also considered it as indicating at broader tendency towards international climate change mitigation.

Further, *People’s Daily* tried to frame the CCP as a strong competitor to the US. In this context, international consensus emerged as a universal criterion to judge each country’s performance. Thus, China’s active performance on mitigating climate change was not only compliant with the standard but also tried to do something more, while the *People’s Daily* explained that US tended against mitigation due to capitalist’s “selfishness and short-sightedness”. In the process of competition between China and the US, an international consensus is always an effective tool for *People’s Daily* to frame China as a responsible big country. As taking actions to mitigating climate change is international consensus, *People’s Daily* told the story in the way that would reflect moral values. To quote Mencius, there is more support when you are just; there is less support when you are injustice ( 得道多助，失道寡

助).<sup>12</sup> International consensus as a universal criterion can represent justice and China is in line with it. In terms of moral value, the *People's Daily* defends central government's performance and ideology.

## 8.4 Conflicts between China and the US

### 8.4.1 Who is responsible for climate change?

*People's Daily* framed the US as an irresponsible country and emphasised that the US should take more responsibility for climate change. This is the consistent view of the *People's Daily*, but the specific reports vary according to China's condition in different periods. At the end of the 20th Century, *People's Daily* employed the principle of CBDRRC to defend that it is reasonable that China as a developing country does not undertake emission reduction obligations. At the same time, *People's Daily* tried to show that social development and poverty eradication are the primary task for the developing countries, for example,

*“The primary task for developing countries is economic and social development and poverty eradication”, Liu Jiang said, the head of the Chinese delegation.” (PD, 9 Nov 1999)*

It is worth noting that as the head of the Chinese delegation, Liu Jiang said that developing countries have development requirements, rather than China has a development requirement. Using "developing country" rather than "China" is an expression based on the then international consensus, which was based on common interests with other developing countries and made China's requirement stronger. On the other hand, *People's Daily* claimed that mitigating climate change was developed countries' responsibility, for example:

*“According to the Climate Change Framework Convention, developed countries should reduce greenhouse gas emissions, but in fact, greenhouse gas emissions in many developed countries are still growing. So, there is no reason to require developing countries to make commitments to reduce or limit emissions. The Framework convention clearly defines the principle of ‘common but differentiated responsibilities’ and the principle of ‘fairness’, which set different obligations for developed and developing countries. If we break the balance of the convention,*

*it will bring danger to the future of the conference, to make the conference a success, all countries should cooperate and should not require developing countries to undertake mitigating obligations.” (PD, 4 Nov 1998)*

There are three levels of meaning in this example. Firstly, according to international consensus climate change is developed countries’ duty. It is reasonable for a developed country to take responsibility. If they do not take action to deal with climate change, they are irresponsible. Secondly, developed countries not only did not fulfil their duty but also, they asked developing countries to take action. Developed countries were not only irresponsible but also attempted to shirk their responsibilities. Thirdly, *People’s Daily* also tries to use the international community to exert pressure on developed countries. At the same time, it tried to explain that what is widely recognized is correct. Besides international consensus, because their economic conditions are different from developing countries, developed countries can take responsibility for reducing emissions, for example:

*“Developed countries should take the main responsibility of emissions in terms of funding and technology.” (PD, 9 Nov 1999)*

After identifying that climate change is developed countries’ duty, *People’s Daily* tries to make a connection between developed countries and the US Firstly, the US is the largest emitter in the world. The US is the key to the problem, for example:

*“The success of the Hague Conference will depend on the US attitude. As the major polluter, the US accounts for 36% of the world’s total carbon dioxide emissions.” (PD, 14 Nov 2000)*

Further, *People’s Daily* explained the US performance in mitigating climate change by providing accurate data, describing the US attitude and actions at the climate conference as well as quoting comments, for example:

*“According to data provided by the US Environmental Research Institute’s- ‘World watch Institute,’ the US remains the world’s largest emitter of carbon dioxide and accounts for*

*23% of the world's total emissions. In the US carbon dioxide emissions increased 8.8% between 1990 and 1996 and increased 3.5% in 1996” (PD, 4 Nov 1998)*

*“The sixth conference of the Climate Change United Nations Framework Convention held in the Hague did not achieve the expected agreement and was forced to discontinue. A few developed countries’, especially the US’s selfishness and lack of sincerity were the main reasons for the disappointment of the meeting. Many countries and the public opinion expressed dissatisfaction and unanimously called for the developed countries headed by the US to fulfil their obligations.” (PD, 28 Nov 2000)*

At last, then *People’s Daily* refers to the US’s performance in dealing with climate change when talking about developed countries being irresponsible. For example:

*“Most developed countries do everything possible to evade their obligations and put pressure on developing countries to undertake the obligation to reduce emissions and to take responsibility to reduce emissions at the expense of development. A disappointing fact is that emissions in most industrial countries are still increasing. For example, the US, which currently ranks the world’s number one in emissions (25% of the world’s emissions), is responsible for reducing 7% of total emissions under the Kyoto Protocol, but in fact, it increased 11% emissions from 1990 to 1997.” (PD, 9 Nov 1999)*

By explaining that the US is neither fulfilling its responsibility nor trying to get rid of it, the irresponsible image of the US was set up firmly.

*People’s Daily* discussed who should be responsible for climate change and successfully identified that it is reasonable for China to not take responsibility, while the US absolutely should be responsible for it. In the process of discussing the attribution of responsibility, *People’s Daily* also successfully framed the US as a symbol of an irresponsible developed country. *People’s Daily* did this by paying great attention to the US, while taking the US as an example when talking about developed countries who are irresponsible, describing the US attitude and actions in climate conference as well as quoting comments. The US is the

only developed country which has been presented with further details in *People's Daily*. Thus, *People's Daily* has been successful in framing the US as a symbol of developed countries as well as failing to acknowledge other developed countries situation in mitigating climate change. *People's Daily* frames the US as the classic representative of the developed country by repeatedly emphasizing that the US is the largest emitter as well as using sentences like “developed countries headed by the US...” and “irresponsible developed countries, for example, the US...”. *People's Daily* train audiences to have a natural assumption that “developed country” means the US. In the meantime, if the US is irresponsible then developed countries are irresponsible. Why *People's Daily* try to set the US up to represent developed countries will be discussed in the next part.

Framing the US as a symbol of the irresponsible developed country can avoid diplomatic awkwardness. When *People's Daily* criticized the US, it could use the term “developed country” instead. Why does *People's Daily* need a metonym when criticizing or accusing other countries? In fact, when it comes to criticizing other countries, *People's Daily* not only uses metonyms but also tries to quote others' opinions to express *People's Daily's* standpoint. This kind of practice continues from 1998 to 2018. Overall, *People's Daily* avoids direct criticism, and the next section will take the US's announced withdrawal from the Paris Agreement in 2017 as an example to explain it.

#### 8.4.2 What has changed in the discussion of climate change responsibilities?

The international situation has changed, and China has surpassed the US to become the largest emitter in the world. Accordingly, *People's Daily's* discussion on the responsibility for climate change has also changed. This section will mainly discuss how *People's Daily* reframed the US as an irresponsible country from the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century to the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. It is worth noting that although the CCP's ideology has changed in this period, it continues to guide the public to believe that the US is an irresponsible developed country. The discourse about the US as an irresponsible country in mitigating climate change appeared over

again in 2017 when the US announced its withdrawal from the Paris Agreement. Unlike previous attempts at identifying responsibility, *People's Daily* tried to quote others' statements to convince audiences that the US is irresponsible. There were seven news reports covering the US withdrawal from the Paris Agreement. It is a significant volume in *People's Daily* because it is rare to report the same event multiply. However, five of them cite political leaders or scholars' statements who come from other countries. This can be found from these news headlines, for example:

*"The UN General Secretary restate his disappointment of the US withdrawal from the Paris Agreement"* (PD, 6. Aug. 2017)

*"The international community criticizes the US for withdrawing from the Paris Agreement"* (PD, 07. Aug.2017)

*"Global climate governance needs to be practical responsibility-Many countries and international organizations expressed regret and disappointment that the US has withdrawn from the Paris Agreement."* (PD, 03. June.2017)

*"The US withdrawing is difficult to resist the global trend of mitigating climate change"* (PD, 05. June.2017)

*"OPEC General Secretary: OPEC supports the Paris Agreement"* (PD,11. July.2017)

The *People's Daily* has changed its attitude towards the US withdrawal from the *Kyoto Protocol* and the *Paris Agreement*. From the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century to the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, *People's Daily* clearly stated the Chinese position on mitigating climate change and use negative words, such as condemn, disappointment or irresponsible. However, news reports regard that the US announced to withdraw from the Paris Agreement, *People's Daily* did not use negative words. There were two pieces of news expressing China's position and attitude. One of these two news are the Foreign Ministry spokesperson's statement, and another one is China's contribution to the Paris agreement, for example:



Table1 Structural elements of Foreign Ministry spokesperson-China is willing to work with all parties concerned to safeguard the outcome of the Paris Agreement -2 June 2017

Sentence	Proposition	Syntactic	Script	Thematic	Rhetorical
S1	Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Hua Chunying implies that China is willing to work with all parties concerned to safeguard the outcome of the Paris Agreement	Lead paragraph	Actor, action	China will stay in the Paris Agreement	Statement
S2	Climate change is a global challenge, and no country can stay out of the way	Quotation	Actor action	Emphasise national responsibility	Double negation
S3	The Paris Agreement is the broadest consensus of the international community	Quotation		The status of the Paris Agreement	
S4	No matter how the positions of other countries change, China will seriously implement the Paris Agreement	Transition Background	Context	The cause theory of China implements the Paris Agreement	Parallelism Comparison

S5	China is the defender and promoter of global climate governance	Quotation	Context	China's stand of mitigating climate change	
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The news contents used the words “other countries” or “no country” instead of the US, but audiences understand that it means the US. This kind of practice is consistent with the values of harmony and peace in Chinese culture. Avoiding directly criticizing others is seen as avoiding conflict.

Furthermore, framing the US as an irresponsible developed country solved the problem of vagueness. Once the audiences have a natural reflection that developed country means the US, in the future coverage when *People's Daily* present developed countries' irresponsible reaction in facing climate change, the audiences can automatically think of the US's specific behaviour as evidence. In this context, reader decodes information in the way it was encoded. *People's Daily* creates a dominant position that readers decoding the messages. Thus, no proof is needed in further news articles that developed countries are irresponsible. Further, it strengthens the negative image of the irresponsibility of the US in the audience's mind. This is because once developed countries have been mentioned, audiences will remember the US's specific irresponsible behaviour again and again, which reinforces their image of the US as an irresponsible developed country. The *People's Daily's* purpose in proving that the US is an irresponsible developed country is the main topic in the next section.

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#### 8.4.3 Framing the US as an irresponsible developed country by comparison

*“In the first ten minutes, the leaders are very busy. In the next ten minutes, the Chinese people are very happy. In the last ten minutes, the people in other countries are suffering.”*

This is a very popular joke in China. It describes the content of CCTV's news simulcast. It is a daily news programme, which lasts long for 30 minutes. It is shown simultaneously by all local TV stations in mainland China, which is the most important news programme in China. The audiences found a regular pattern for this programme. In the first ten minutes, the programme focuses on national leaders attended the meetings or participated in events. In short, they are working hard and busy. In the next ten minutes usually report employment, medical treatment or education and other topics of people's livelihood and show people's life had been improved. The last ten minutes section is international news and it usually reports natural disaster and human-made disaster, in which other countries' peoples are suffering.

This joke reflects the CCP's strategies of propagating ideology and how it consolidates the dominance of the one-party system. As Chapter 4 discussed, emphasizing government performance is the most critical approach for the CCP to spread ideology and further shape the legitimacy of the one-party system as well as the CCP's dominant status. Emphasizing government performance to makes people feel happy is a significant strategy for propaganda ideology. As discussed in Chapter 2, due to the strong influence of Confucianism as well as Chinese modern history, providing welfare for people is an important indicator of the CCP's ruling ability and legitimacy. However, it is not enough to show that the one-party system is perfect. Especially when the values of liberal democracy are popularized, people cannot stop wondering, perhaps a free and democratic government is the most ideal government.

In this context, the CCP is looking for a comparison to dispel the illusion about liberal democracy. Thereby, the CCP can reinforce its dominant status and legitimacy. Just like in the last ten minutes in CCTV network news, referred to in the joke. *People's Daily* applies comparisons to achieve the goal of eliminating the myth of democracy. For example:

*"The developed industrial countries should take primary responsibility in terms of their large emissions, financial assistance as well as technology. However, since the first meeting, most developed countries have tried their best to evade their obligations and put pressure on*

*developing countries to sacrifice development to take on the obligation to reduce emissions. A disappointing fact is that emission in most industrial countries is still increasing” (PD, 9 Nov 1999)*

*“Some developed countries have ignored many of the measures and contributions that developing countries have taken to deal with climate change since the Kyoto Conference. Developed countries set new obligations that developing countries cannot fulfil. Developing countries are very dissatisfied with this” (PD, 28 Nov 2000)*

From the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century to the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, *People’s Daily* set the comparison by framing the opposition between developed countries and developing countries. This created tension between developing countries and developed countries. The news articles in the sample in this period used emotive words to enhance opposition. For example: *“There are no national boundaries of climate. You pollute the sky, and nature will revenge (bao fu) you ruthlessly.” (PD, 28 Nov 2000)*

“报复” (Bao fu, revenge) elicits an emotion that incites resentment and dissatisfaction toward those who have brought us frustration and unhappiness. In this example, developed countries deserve ruthless and cold revenge. Using emotional words triggers the audience's anger. Why did the *People’s Daily* attempt to intensify conflicts between developed and developing countries during this period?

Moving to the 2010s, the comparison provides an opportunity for *People’s Daily* to demonstrate the CCP’s excellent ability. For example, another news article expresses China’s position in terms of China’s contribution to the Paris Agreement. Published after the US announced its withdrawal from the Paris Agreement, the article claimed that:

*“A few days ago, the United States announced that it would withdraw from the Paris Agreement on global climate change. What is the future for global climate governance? Will it greatly reduce the effectiveness of the Paris Agreement? Many people are anxious. At*

*this moment, China clearly stated that China would continue to do a good job in mitigating climate change; actively participate in the multilateral process of climate change and unswervingly maintain the global climate governance process. China's position is winning the international community's cheers!..Green development, and the unchanged initial heart.” (PD, 7 June 2017)*

In this example, *People's Daily* compared climate governance actions between the US and China. The US regressed, but China still showed a firm willing to reduce emission. At the same time, the US brought anxiety to the world, while China has strengthened global confidence in dealing with climate change.

*“For global issues, such as climate change, if you hold utilitarian thinking; you hope to take more advantage while taking less responsibility. In the end, it will hurt both yourself and others. China's firm commitment to continue to implement the Paris Agreement and unremitting pursuit of green, low carbon and sustainable development will inject a strong impetus to build a beautiful green home for humanity.” (PD, 7 June 2017)*

In these two sentences, there are two completely different ways of thinking about the global issue. One is narrow that pursuit rights and avoids responsibility. Another one is a sustainable path that insists on reducing emissions. China is the latter one. In comparison, China plays a positive role in global climate governance. There are several comparisons in this example and emphasise China's justice and efforts in mitigating climate change. From 1998 to 2018, all these comparisons have tried to show the US is an irresponsible developed country.

## **8.5 What is the essence of China and the US conflict on mitigating climate change**

### 8.5.1 Conflicts on CDRRC

*People's Daily* spend much effort to prove that developed countries should take a lead role in global climate governance. The essence of the conflict between China and the US is how to

identify reduction responsibility. China and the US do not disagree on the content of the principle of CDRRC. Instead, as the global political and economic landscape changes, there are differences in the interpretation and application of the principle. The US proposed that CDRRC should be applied dynamically. Emerging powers, like China, should take more responsibility for reducing emissions. The US puts more emphasis on current or future emission requirements as a standard of responsibility, while China emphasised that it should completely adhere to CDRRC and emphasised that developed countries should be responsible for historic emissions. *People's Daily's* coverage shows that China committed to shoulder more responsibility to maintain the legitimacy of their international behaviour. At the same time, it also self-defences from developed countries' criticism based on current and future emissions.

On the other hand, China insists on applying the principle of CDRRC to dividing up emission reduction responsibilities. In other words, although China has increased emission reduction contribution, it still cannot have the same reduction capabilities as developed countries. Rather than focussing on specific emission reduction targets, China pays more attention to the nature of its commitments. This voluntary form has helped protect China's status as a developing country. Thus, China has room for manoeuvre in global climate governance and more policy flexibility. However, such flexibility can be maintained not only on climate governance issues but even in other international affairs.

The differences between China and the US shows that they both hope global climate governance can benefit their development. The US's vision of the global climate governance mechanism is to reform the part that protects the interests of developing countries. They argued that emerging powers should take more responsibility to create a favourable competitive environment for developed countries. China's position is to insist on the global climate governance mechanism for safeguarding the interests of developing countries. The CCP is anxious that if the UNFCCC changes according to the preferences of developed countries, it

will damage China's development. Therefore, China is eager to form a powerful discourse on climate governance. It is not only a conflict of interests but also ideology.

### 8.5.2 Conflicts on ideology

In the previous discussion, it was explained that the *People's Daily* frames the US as an irresponsible developed country through clarifying responsibilities, international consensus as well as comparison. This section will mainly focus on analysing the ideological mechanism behind it. As discussed at the beginning of this chapter, liberal democracy is the biggest threat to a one-party state like the CCP, especially where the CCP applies capitalist market policy to successfully promote China's economic growth. Climate coverage from the end of the 20th century to the beginning of the 21st century mainly focused on clarifying responsibilities and international consensus discourse to describe the US as an irresponsible country. Further, *People's Daily* tries to show that developed countries' selfishness and utilitarianism. In this context, why is irresponsibility the main accusation? Firstly, it is a moral concept. As discussed in chapter 2, Confucianism influenced Chinese people's understanding of power and democracy strongly. Chinese people consider that power should provide welfare for people as well as be kind and love the people, which is benevolent governance. This also is what expected by the kingly way (王道). Such values can increase legitimacy. However, *People's Daily* described that the US had done everything opposite from moral values. The US always violates the international consensus and bullies developing countries. The US is a developed country and a capitalist developed country. They are developing according to capitalist values, which are lacking in moral value. Thus, the values like liberal democracy which comes from capitalism also lack moral basis. In the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, China's economic growth has led it to surpass the US as the world's largest emitter. The persuasive power of the right to development is declining. At the same time, environmental issues caused by economic growth has attracted more public attention. On the one hand, during this period, *People's Daily* emphasised the Chinese government's achievements in reducing

emissions, providing aid to other countries as well as its commitment to mitigating climate change.

On the other hand, *People's Daily* has used comparison to put China's responsible action and the US's irresponsible action together. On the first level, this implies that Chinese socialism is in line with China's national conditions and this can be seen in China's reaction to climate change in the international community. China is developing from poverty and it is less critical to influence the international situation than it is to achieve a "moderately prosperous society". This kind of development is due to the CCP's rule and the Chinese socialist ideology. On the second level, using comparisons shows that the US not only does not make progress but has also degenerated in its global mitigation efforts. This proves that capitalism is defective. Thus, Socialism can fight with capitalism. Further, Chinese people have a different understanding of democracy, which is biased on people-oriented thinking, more like populism. Chinese people pay more attention to government performance and outcomes of policies rather than "how it came to be". Therefore, by comparing the performance of mitigating climate change between China and the US, *People's Daily* seeks to persuade its readers to resist liberal democracy and rely on the CCP.

As climate change is an international issue, nationalism also frequently appears in climate coverage. Nationalism has been used to strengthen audiences' beliefs in the CCP's ideology. It is a product of capitalism and emphasizes short term interests (Holbig, 2010, p.403). In order to resist liberal democracy, *People's Daily* tries to prove Chinese socialism and the CCP rule can make China a strong country by repeatedly praising central government performance and comparing it to the US's performance. In this process, nationalism plays an essential role in the ideological battle between Chinese socialism and liberal democracy.

Unlike Deng Xiaoping's diplomatic strategy of "hide your light under a bushel," China's diplomatic strategy in the Xi Jinping period became more aggressive. Instead of drowning its name in developing countries, China clearly explains the US's irresponsible behaviour and



China's significant contribution to mitigating climate change. China in this period hopes to be "closer to the centre of the world stage" and promote "China's great national rejuvenation". *People's Daily* used comparison not only to frame the US as irresponsible but also implied that China's reaction to climate change is better than the US's. What is more, that *People's Daily* tried to frame China as a leader in mitigating climate change after the US announced its withdrawal from the Paris Agreement. China has become a significant country and has a certain influence in the international community. China has grown into a big country, which is a rival to the Western powers like the US. National pride reinforces the public's support to the CCP and further, believe in Chinese socialism.

## 8.6 Summary

Countries focus on global cooperation in mitigating climate change under the UNFCCC based on sharing the same interests, which is mitigating climate change to save humanity. In order to fight for each country's interests, parties have formed negotiation groups, such as the EU and BASIC countries. However, even in these groups, countries still have different interests according to their different national conditions. Therefore, the global response to climate change is a process full of cooperation and competition. *People's Daily* has paid special attention to the US and published a series of discussions on who should shoulder the responsibility to mitigate climate change. The essence of these discussions is that China uses the principle of CBDRRC and the international climate governance mechanism to safeguard their interests and development space. China has always adhered to its status as a developing country, which contributes flexibility of policy as well as room for manoeuvre in international negotiation. When the legitimacy of the CCP declined, *People's Daily* framed the US as an irresponsible country, while China is a responsible country. It implies that the CCP, as the ruling party, has the ability to solve global problems, even if the problem is difficult for a developed country to address. Further, compared with capitalism, socialist ideology is competitive.

## Chapter 9 Conclusion

### 9.1 Introduction

Ideology has always been the basis for the CCP's leadership. This is because the stability and security of the country and the regime mainly depend on ideology. As China has deepened its involvement in the world system, collisions between socialism and capitalism are occurring more frequently. As a communist party, the CCP employs Marxism to maintain its ruling position and construct a socialist social order and ultimately to achieve a communist social order. On the one hand, the CCP firmly believes that socialism is a superior social system. In the context of dynamic international competition, the CCP has to make sure their ideology remains vigorous. Thus, adaptation to maintain stability guarantees that the CCP can continue their dominate. On the other hand, the CCP applies ideology to deal with its legitimacy crisis and defend itself from criticism. From the example of climate communication, this study uncovered the strategies which *People's Daily* uses to successfully 'market' their product. The government's real achievements in climate governance contribute to the party's ruling ability. Further, competition between China and developed countries contribute to audiences' confidence in socialism and the CCP.

This research investigated how *People's Daily* frames climate change and what kind of ideology underpins it. In order to understand climate communication, this study reviewed China's climate governance actions at the international and domestic levels and drew the following conclusions:

First of all, hard power is the primary support for forming influential discourse. When China succeed in economic development, developed countries proposed new interpretations of the principle of "common but differentiated responsibilities" in international climate governance mechanism to try to limit China's emission space and protect their emission space. While developed countries negotiated climate change within the logic of tragedy of the

commons, China tried to break it and expand common interest. To be specific, the proposal made China realised that passively accepting the management of the international climate governance system would make it difficult to safeguard national interests and seek room for development. China has to deeply participate in the international climate governance system and construct an influential discourse in order to safeguard national interests. The strong influence of its discourse comes from the hard power of the country. China's climate governance has an endogenous motivation. This is because adjusting the energy structure fits the interests of China's economic development. Possessing technology and production capacity makes China a global leader in the field of renewable energy. It also has a broad market, so even when Europe restricted the import of Chinese solar panels, the domestic market was able to consume these products. Therefore, it can be seen from climate governance that handling important cutting-edge technologies can help China to protect national interests rather than being constrained and excluded. International climate governance is a form of competitive cooperation. As climate is a global common problem, countries in the world have to cooperate while striving for their own interests.

Further, the national will to deal with a complex problem demonstrates the CCP's ruling ability and enhances legitimacy. China has strong confidence in addressing climate change because it has the guarantee of hard power. When the US withdrew from the *Kyoto Protocol* and the *Paris Agreement*, China's actions changed significantly. To be specific, it changed from following international voices to accuse the US to emphasising that no matter what other countries do, China will firmly respond to climate change. It also changed from emphasising that developed countries should play a major role in climate governance to making independence contribution while providing assistance to other developing countries. These changes in stance demonstrate the CCP's ruling ability and further enhance its legitimacy.

Second, nationalism and Confucianism have enriched Chinese ideology. The dynamic interplay between adaptability and stability helps keep the CCP ideology alive. Nationalism and Confucianism help *People's Daily* code information and audiences to decode information

according to the same cultural values. As shown in my analysis that extensive use of the future tense allows audiences to accept the *People's Daily's* 'marketing' of the government message, enhancing the public's trust in and dependence on the CCP.

## 9.2 Main findings

*RQ 1: How is climate change framed in People's Daily?*

This research found that China's performance and international involvement are the two significant frames to access to CCP's ideology in climate change coverage.

### 9.2.1 The frame of China's performance

*People's Daily* highlighted China's performance and created China's positive image when dealing with climate change.

China's contribution or action has been identified as a dominant frame at the second level. The sample news articles generally present China's contribution or action regarding China's investment, technology upgrade, foreign aid projects and active participation in international climate negotiations with accurate figures. However, these contributions have been achieved in challenging conditions. It reflects the central government's ingeniously formulating effective policies in balancing development requirements and practical limitations. Further, it defines China's images as a responsible leader to create China's positive image. In international climate negotiation, the image of reliable significant power and leader repeatedly appears in the frame of China's image at the second level.

The source includes the Chinese officials' statement, Chinese energy industry officials' statement, international organisation officials' statement, other countries officials' statements, academics' statements, other countries' media, and someone else's statement has been widely cited. *People's Daily* quote authoritative Chinese officials' statement on China's contribution to increasing information credibility and accuracy while quoting officials' statements from

international organisations or other countries can objectively establish China's positive image. The academic quotations in selected articles tend to speak highly of China's actions in mitigating climate change rather than emphasising climate change from a scientific perspective.

Climate change is an international issue. This research found different climate communication requirements on the domestic and international levels. On the international level, climate news coverage is expected to establish China's positive image and protect China's interests in international negotiations (Wang, 2018, p.68), while on the domestic level, it should mobilize actions to deal with climate change. At the same time, climate change communication should pass international pressure to the domestic to gain support while delivering domestic approbate on China's mitigating action to the international community to gain understanding and support. Thus, *People's Daily* repeatedly emphasizes that China's performance should be within Chinese objective conditions and tell the real China's story. Although the expectations of climate communication are different, telling China's real story achieves a twofold balance: the growing international expectation of China's emission reduction action and China's dilemma to mitigate climate change and the international and domestic requirements of climate communication.

### 9.2.2 The frame of international involvement

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) is the main international organisation dealing with climate change. IPCC provides the climate change assessment reports. UN General Assembly to decide to develop the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). Parties to the UNFCCC have held Conferences of the Parties (COPs) annually since 1995 and have tried to assess progress in mitigating climate change. However, IPCC is not a mandatory or supervision organisation for mitigating climate change. IPCC provides policy-relevant reports rather than policy-indicative reports. The UNFCCC does not impose specific obligations on each party nor provide implementation mechanisms. It offers a mandatory emission limit in subsequent protocols. Since 1995, annual COP negotiations have

been very difficult. The main contradictions lie in the responsibilities, financial and technical issues. This research considers obligation as committing to dealing with climate change, while responsibility focuses on the moral duty towards climate change.

CBDPRC (UNCED, 1992) stipulated developed country parties should take the lead in mitigating climate change and its adverse effects while considering developing country parties' specific needs and unique circumstances to set a reduction target. The parties' responsibilities are distinguished according to the dichotomy effectively introduced in Appendix 1 of the UNFCCC. The main criterion for classifying a country in Appendix 1 is the level of economic development (Deleuil, 2012, p.272). As the economy and politics evolve, some developed countries have argued that the dichotomy of responsibility should be defined dynamically. For example, when developing countries have developed to a certain level, they should take obligations. However, most developing countries maintain the dichotomy. Thus, there is a disagreement on climate change concerning developed countries' obligation and developing countries' responsibility or emerging developing countries' obligation.

The Kyoto Protocol and the Paris Agreements are the main agreements for parties to take action and take responsibility for climate change. There are three main changes from the Kyoto Protocol to the Paris Agreement. The first change from the Kyoto Protocol to the Paris Agreement is an adaptation to climate change. It illustrated that as technology has developed, humans have developed an in-depth understanding of climate change issues and can set clear and detailed targets. Secondly, compared to the Kyoto Protocol, the Paris Agreement expanded the subject of financial support. It pointed out that all developed countries should provide financial support and encourage other parties to provide support voluntarily. Last but not least, UNFCCC expanded the principle of CBDPRC by considering different national circumstances. Unlike the Kyoto Protocol, the Paris Agreement does not adopt a dichotomous approach by dividing parties into Annex I and non-Annex I countries. It suggests an in-depth exploration of the principle of equity in global climate governance. Further, The Paris Agreement has created a model that combines bottom-up targets for reduction action (Nationally Determined

Contributions, NDCs) with top-down accounting and transparency standards. Therefore, the Paris Agreement is more vital to force parties to governance climate under the agreement. However, both the Kyoto Protocol and the Paris Agreement are weak when it comes to enforcing compliance. The international community needs a mandatory multilateral environmental governance mechanism. Multilateral relationships contribute to balances of power, which finally achieve mandatory measures. In reality, parties form multilateral relationships to express their opinions.

Further, there are 21 pieces of news presenting the US's performance in dealing with climate change. There is no other country that has as high exposure and presentation space as the US. It shows that the US occupies an important position in China's climate diplomacy, and it is a process full of cooperation and conflicts.

*RQ2: What do these framings tell us about the ideology of the Chinese Communist Party?*

In diachronic analysis, this research found the CCP's ideology in responding to climate change remains stable while constantly adapting to the emerging circumstances.

### 9.2.3 Transition from developing demands to the new economic growing point

After the founding of the People's Republic of China, China experienced a difficult period, and getting rid of poverty was the top priority of the CCP's work. Developing the economy and improving people's living conditions were two main ways to enhance legitimacy. The hyper-growth of industrial production and the massive consumption of coal made China the second-largest economy globally and the biggest polluter and the most significant contributor to climate change (IEA, 2010, p.17). Such a development model also caused pollution, social instability, corruption, and a crisis of government trust, which eventually damaged the stability of the political system.

The 16th Central Committee of the Communist Party of China in 2003 put forward the concept of a "scientific outlook on development". CCP interpreted that "Science-based development" means making people's interests central to the government's work and pursuing harmonious development between humans and the environment (Hu 2003). In order to set up the green development model, the CCP tried to adjust the existing model by using policy, legislation, and administration and expansion in renewable and clean energy. By 2013, China became the leading investor in solar and wind energy production in the world (Shen and Xie, 2018, p.407). China expanded the use of wind power and solar parks to begin its transformation to a low-carbon model. Then tackling climate change is in line with China's development preference.

Postsocialist transition challenges the party to balance rapid economic growth and environmental degradation. This promotes China's turning to a suitable development model. This requires mobilising a wider range of stakeholders to participate in the low-carbon development model. However, administrative measures cannot mobilise the stakeholders' enthusiasm. In practice, the state combines market and administration to explore new growing points to mobilise stakeholders.

#### 9.2.4 Transition in Ecological Philosophy

*"The changes in the economic foundation lead, sooner or later, to the transformation of the whole, immense, superstructure"- Karl Marx.*

In China's transition to a low-carbon sustainable development model, renewable energy and clean energy have become new economic growth points. CCP's ideology on ecological philosophy has also changed. The CCP abandoned the dichotomy between humans and nature. They borrowed the idea of harmony from traditional philosophy and considered people, nature, and society as a whole organic body. There is a specific structural pattern between parts, which is a dynamic of interconnection and interaction, and only keep harmony can sustain development. Further, Xi Jinping proposed "clean water and green mountains are golden mountains and silver mountains" ( “绿水青山就是金山银山” ) added value in nature. In



practice, the production modes are shifting from linear production model (mining-production-waste) to cycle model (mining-production-reuse-production...).

China's low-carbon transformation reflects on industrial civilisation. On the one hand, China is limited by its resource structure, population and uneven development and cannot adopt the industrial civilisation approach to development. On the other hand, China cannot afford the environmental problems left by industrial civilisation. Therefore, based on the selective revival of traditional culture, the CCP creatively proposed the harmony between humanity and nature. This is not only China's philosophical innovation but also provides a reference model for global sustainable development.

#### 9.2.5 Transition from climate change has positive influence on it is real and a threatening

The literature review found that health concerns, prompting the "Green Development" model (Delman and Odgaard, 2014), as well as a legitimacy crisis (Engels, 2018), are three main reasons underpinning *People's Daily's* firm claims that climate change is real. This research found that *People's Daily* firmly believes that climate change is real, and the threat provides a solid basis for international negotiations. Developed countries believe that the foundation of the principle of CBDRRC has changed. Developing countries like China should take more obligation to deal with climate change. Therefore, *People's Daily* emphasising climate change as real and historical emissions to argue that developed countries cannot shirk their responsibilities.

#### 9.2.6 Transition from the differentiated obligation to common interest

China considered CBDRRC as a negotiation strategy to safeguard development rights by 2017 and realised that China must be deeply involved in international negotiations, including policymaking, and have an influential discourse to integrate its interests with the common interests of the international community. Thus, the CCP's interpretation of the CBDRRC shift

from differences to common interests is to emphasise that all countries have an unshrinkable obligation to take action on climate change and provide a basis for reaching a broad consensus for parties to take responsibility and solve problems fairly and effectively. Emphasising common obligations is more likely to resonate widely, and in keeping with this strategy, the CCP has proposed the discourse of "A Community of Shared Future for Mankind". This transformation resolves the disputes over obligation and responsibilities in theory and expands China's influence when dealing with international affairs.

On the international level, this transition responds to the challenges of global governance. Global governance refers to solving global issues through international policies and maintaining international political and economic order (PD, 08 Mar. 2017). The challenges of global governance are that first, there are more and more global issues, but the provider of the public goods cannot monopolise all the benefits. Thus, the quantity of the public goods is declined. Second, when dealing with global issues such as climate change, there are differences in the impact of international rules on different parties. It is unfair to require developing and developed countries to achieve the same emission goals. This requires promoting democracy in global governance to safeguard countries' interests. Furthermore, in order to achieve common development in global governance, it is necessary to ensure that developing countries have development opportunities. China proposed "A Community of Shared Future for Mankind" based on Chinese traditional culture and low-carbon transition experience. It is an institutional public good for the international community. It tries to promote a new global partnership for development that is fair and balanced. It aligns with the peaceful development purpose and has become the greatest common divisor in all countries.

### 9.2.7 China and the US

*People's Daily* framed the US as an irresponsible country and emphasised that the US should take more responsibility for climate change. This is the consistent view of the *People's Daily*, but the specific reports vary according to China's condition in different periods. At the end of the 20th Century, *People's Daily* employed the principle of CDRRC to defend that it is

reasonable that China as a developing country does not undertake emission reduction obligations, but developed countries, especially the US, should take action.

*People's Daily* spent much effort to discuss that developed countries should take the obligation to mitigate climate change. The essence of the conflict between China and the US is how to identify reduction obligations. Compared to the content of international principles, both China and the US pay more attention to the right of interpretation. Further, by arguing dealing with climate change is developed countries' obligation determining that the nature of China's contribution is voluntary, which is both noble and flexible.

China can act as a positive and responsible role in responding to climate change based on a transformed environment philosophy. The CCP revived the traditional Chinese philosophy of harmony between man and nature and transformed from the dichotomy between humans and nature to considering people, nature, and society are a whole organic body. The CCP also added nature value theory in ecological philosophy. The external natural value assists human beings' survival and development, and its internal value is to survive and develop according to ecological rules. For example, Xi Jinping's argument on ecological civilisation: "*clean water and green mountains are golden mountains and silver mountains*". In this argument, golden and silver mountains (value) have been added to clean water and green mountains (nature resource). Under the guidance of ecological philosophy, the central government's strategy on production modes has changed from linear model to renewable cycle. Further, *People's Daily* adopted the "tightening-crown spell" to imply that CCP represents the most advanced truth.

In summary, these transitions in climate communication have been driven by demands. These demands occur at the practical level first. Specifically, climate news has to deliver climate knowledge at the domestic level and mobilise more stakeholders to participate in emissions reduction and help the CCP construct the rightful behaviour when dealing with climate change. At the international level, Chinese climate news has to clarify China's position, protect national interests, and then promote international cooperation. Based on these requirements, the changes

in climate news start with communication rhetoric, such as telling real China stories and identifying the responsibilities and obligations of reducing emissions. However, as climate change poses more complex challenges to China and the international community, the requirement of Chinese climate news has changed. Specifically, climate communication should expand its breadth and depth at the domestic level by exploring the relationship between climate change and sustainable development to contribute to China's leadership image. On the international level, China's climate communication should be able to agglomerate the determination to tackle climate change and the belief in cooperation. Communication rhetoric cannot satisfy these expectations anymore. It requires philosophical refinement to support and respond to these issues.

These changes reflect the CCP's overall planning ability. First, the party combines legal, economic, technical and necessary administrative measures to mobilise the central, local governments and stakeholders such as industry and enterprises on the domestic level. Second, the party coordinates economy and ecology through philosophical innovation. In addition, these changes promote a fair and balanced global partnership and explore the greatest common divisor on the international level. Thus, it achieves overall planning at the international and domestic levels. The first three overall planning contribute to the last overall planning-current and the future. The party not only experienced sustainable development at the domestic level but also provided a reference to the global ecological transition.

## **9.3 Research contributions**

### 9.3.1 Contributions to CCP's ideology studies in dynamic

#### 9.3.1.1 Climate change threats the legitimacy

Legitimacy is *"the capacity of the system to engender and maintain the belief that the existing political institutions are the most appropriate ones for the society"* (Lipset, 1981, p.84).

Climate change clashes with human progress, at least as it has been conceived until now (Stevenson and Dryzek, 2014, p.3). Climate change emerges from economic growth, to which most governments remain committed. In order to make the public believe that the regime is the appropriate one, CCP made an effort in marketisation. Economic growth enhanced legitimacy because the CCP demonstrated ruling ability, efficiency, fairness, and commitment to the realisation of common prosperity (Holbig, 2010, p. 400). In this context, CCP has to show ruling ability to deal with the emerging issue-climate change to maintain legitimacy.

In China, the official priority is poverty eradication and economic development until the 2000s (Zhang, 2003, p. 68). During this period, economic growth was the common interest for the public, and pursuing economic growth became a political bond between the state and the individual. However, when economic growth has been achieved, this political bond gradually collapsed. Instead, politicised climate change issue and re-establish political bond to maintain legitimacy is necessary.

Climate change is a scientific issue. People have deepened their understanding of the world while continually exploring climate change. The harmony between humans and the social and political world has been broken. People realised that relying on fossil fuels as the main source of power has serious consequences. This result in pre-established legitimacy declined. Then science and technology as the primary productive forces and transforming production methods have become the basis of legitimacy.

#### 9.3.1.2 Politicised climate change

The findings demonstrate that the CCP follows Lipset's definition of legitimacy and agrees that people's belief is the source of legitimacy. *People's Daily* adopts various narrative techniques to convince audiences that the CCP has fully understood the most advanced ecological philosophy and can make correct decisions in dealing with climate change. While enhancing the people's belief in CCP, they also re-establish the political bond with people by setting

common interests in mitigating climate.

In 1995, the CCP introduced "sustainable development" to deal with resource consumption and environmental protection. The official ideology applies ecological civilisation to interpret sustainability. It developed based on the Confucian thought of reverence for nature. It can be used to solve the problems left by industrial civilisation. The discourse of people's livelihood and intergenerational relations has successfully shaped CCP as a reliable authority for scientific development. China constructs a philosophical foundation for ecological civilisation through the selection and restoration of traditional culture. The philosophical foundation confirms the idea of harmony between humans and nature. It has become a Chinese ethical value. The foundation supports the government's environmental policy, promotes national identity and support for the CCP, and strives to prove that the revival of Chinese traditional ecological philosophy is the key to global sustainable development.

Further, in the diachronic analysis of CCP's ideology, findings show that CCP's view of climate issues has changed from binary opposition to binary complementary. For example, from the dichotomy between humans and nature to considering people, nature, and society as a whole organic body; from development to opportunity; from the differentiated obligation to the common interest; no longer viewing an issue in a dualistic way helped CCP broaden the way of solving problems and developed diverse discourses in dual supplements. These changes reflect the CCP's ideology's adaptability and continuity. Although, in order to respond to the legitimacy crisis in the new age, the CCP has developed ideologies, such as reflecting on the drawbacks of industrial civilisation and abandoning binary, selectively reviving traditional culture, proposing sustainable development, and constructing ecological civilisation, these changes are carried out under the Chinese characteristic's socialism framework. Thus, the CCP's ideology has not dramatically changed but has kept a balance between adaptability and continuity to the emerging challenges.

### 9.3.2 Contribution to Chinese climate change communication studies

Most exciting climate change coverage studies investigated journalistic norms, such as balance and being objective, climate news scope, the public sphere, discourse, and frames, while my research identified CCP's ideology underpins climate news. These studies found that in order to keep objectivity, some of them quoted scientific research as the source, such as NGO organisations or international scientific research institutions. Among these, government and scientists are the main sources. However, this research found that in order to enhance legitimacy, the government including Chinese officials, other countries' officials, and international organisations' officials is the main source and most of their statements are praising China's performance in dealing with climate change.

Compared to existing studies found that party newspapers frequently use collaboration frame, while commercial newspapers focus on the human-interest frame, this research found that China's performance and international involvement are the main frames in *People's Daily* to enhance the audience's belief in CCP's ruling ability.

Some of the scholars conducted comparative studies among different countries or different newspapers to explore the coverage of climate news. international community. However, these studies did not consider the effect of diachronic on the frames. As the world's economic and political landscape is developing dynamically, it will also influence the parties to adopt different dominant frames in different periods. My research covered 2 decades to observed changes in frames and emerging ideology adapting into the new situations.

This research investigates climate communication across the domestic and international levels. This research argues that climate communication at the international and domestic levels is not parallel, and the domestic level takes a priority place. This is because, first, based on the theory of legitimacy externalization, domestic legitimacy is the internal driving force of international legitimacy. Second, in practicality, climate communication has explored different strategies based on these two-level purposes. Specifically, climate news tells a real story after the

Copenhagen conference on the international level. At the domestic level, climate news presents China's specific difficulties in controlling pollution when the environmental protection goals of the 10th Five-year plan (2005) were not achieved. Since the two levels are not parallel, the balancing strategies of the two levels in climate news reflect the CCP's overall planning ability.

### 9.3.3 Contribution to framing analysis and social semiotics analysis

Framing analysis is the most popular method to access climate communication study. This research adopts an approach combining social semiotics and framing analysis. Semiotics is a technique for sign systems analysis. "A sign is something which represents or stands for something else in the mind of someone", which has been identified as expression and content or signifier and signified. Semiotics are studies to identify what can be considered a sign and something they stand for (Eco, 1979, p.15). The connection between signifier and signified is psychologically and socially constructed. Further, the connection between signifier and signified should be formed in shared, or collective knowledge or ideas called culture (Culler 1976, p.72).

According to Goffman (1974, p.10), a frame implies rules and principles that can guide an understanding of experienced events' meaning. Further, the process of framing is dynamic. Framing operation is a creative process, which based on gathering, assessing, and interpolating facts. Thus, this research connects social semiotics to framing analysis to identify frames and changes in frames.

## **9.4 Further study**

Although the CCP uses nationalism in climate change reports, it does not increase its opposition to the US on this issue. Instead, it focuses on national identity and national pride. Therefore, in climate change negotiations, China still retains room for manoeuvre. Since climate change is a global problem, the issue of climate change in the future can become an



ice-breaking issue for China-US cooperation again. Further research can specifically focus on the changes in China-US relations as reflected in climate negotiations.

In terms of administration, currently the central government, local governments and enterprises form an alliance. The central government's renewable energy policy has gradually shifted from expanding renewable energy to shaping renewable energy. In this context, the contribution to mitigating climate change is part of the character of renewable energy. Therefore, the alliance is expected to include the climate sector or the environmental sector in the future. However, currently, in the process of formulating the FYP, the climate department does not participate in drafting policy from an early stage, but only participates in the review at the later stages. With the deepening of low-carbon development, the questions of whether the alliance includes the climate sector or not and the role of the climate sector deserve further study. This matters from the perspective of the administration, which argues the superiority of the one-party state system to govern complex international issues. In addition, during the implementation of the 11th FYP, some provinces are under great pressure to reduce emissions to achieve their targets, and they cut off power to limit emissions. Although the 12th and 13th FYP adjusted emission targets, the process of policy implementation is also worthy of in-depth investigation, especially how local power and enterprises balance economic interests and political achievements.

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## **Appendix 1: A list of samples**