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Rethinking climate leadership: Annex I countries' expectations for China's leadership role in the post-Paris UN climate negotiations

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ABSTRACT

Developed countries, defined in the global climate negotiations as the Annex I countries, have been expected to take the lead in tackling climate change. However, given the severity of climate change, reducing China's emissions is critical. China is a developing country with world's highest emissions and a leader in the renewable sector. Hence, outside expectations for China's climate action have been growing. Through constructivist role theory, the article researched what external expectations there are for China's potential climate leadership role. The leadership expectations of developed countries were examined from the UN climate conference high-level segment statements from 2016 to 2018. Results of the discourse analysis explain the expectations in six storylines: 1) all parties are placed on the same line, 2) the dichotomy of developing and developed countries is deconstructed, 3) the position of developing countries is highlighted, 4) China has a greater responsibility than non-Annex or a regular party, 5) China is recognized as a climate actor, and 6) China is excluded as a major player. The expectations recognize China's structural climate leadership but acknowledging China as a global climate leader might pose a role conflict for the developed countries. The conclusion suggests that this acknowledgement would require developed countries to rethink their own climate leadership and assign the role with China.

1. Introduction

Leadership has a significant role in the success of multilateral negotiations, especially when agreeing on complex transnational questions such as climate change (Kilian and Elgström, 2010; Young, 1991). Leadership can build other parties' trust on the process and encourage others to increase their ambition (Parker and Karlsson, 2010). During the 2000s and 2010s climate leadership research has focused on the European Union (see for example Kilian and Elgström, 2010; Oberthür and Groen, 2017; Parker and Karlsson, 2017), with a few exceptions of the United States (US) (Bang et al., 2016; Parker and Karlsson, 2018; Urpelainen and Van de Graaf, 2018). Leaders besides them began to be recognized after the Copenhagen conference in 2009, at which emerging developing countries negotiated the outcome with the US (Hurrell and Sengupta, 2013). Besides their growing economies, consideration of the emerging countries has increased because of their growing greenhouse gas emissions (Ylä-Anttila and Kukkonen, 2014). In 2008–2011, the participants of the Conference of the Parties (COP) recognized four actors as the leaders of the negotiations: the EU, the US, China and the G-77, meaning the group of developing countries (Parker et al., 2015).

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The fragmentation of the climate leadership landscape emphasizes the need to evaluate the nature of leadership because there is a difference between self-declared leadership and leadership recognized by potential followers (Karlsson et al., 2012; Parker et al., 2015). Climate leadership research has focused on the supply side of leadership, but the demand side has been researched less. Bäckstrand and Elgström (2013) have researched how other major players have influenced the role of EU in climate negotiations. Torney has researched the bilateral climate cooperation of China and the EU but he has also focused on the leader-follower relation (Torney, 2015, 2019; Yan and Torney, 2016). Parker et al. (Parker et al., 2015; Parker and Karlsson, 2017, 2018) have contributed significantly to the demand side research by analyzing which actors are considered leaders and why. Research about China's international roles by Harnisch et al. (2015) has tackled some aspects of climate governance but they do not cover the post-Paris era, which poses a new situation for China. This study contributes to the demand side discussion by providing knowledge about the external expectations for China's leadership after the US withdrawal from the Paris Agreement. The domestic and external expectations unceasingly shape China's roles (Harnisch et al., 2015), which is why the expectations are important for understanding China's role better in this pivotal moment.

This research analyses how China's leadership is constructed based on developed countries' expectations in the negotiations of the United Nations Framework Convention for Climate Change (UNFCCC) in COP22 in 2016, in COP23 in 2017 and in COP24 in 2018. The demand side of leadership research has emphasized the question who is seen as the leader more than the content of the expectations. Thus, this research answers particularly how the expectations are of the Annex I group for China, and whether they expect China to be a climate leader. This research applies constructivist role theory to understand how others recognize its potential leadership and does not emphasize whether China is a climate leader. This research does not have a hypothesis of whether China can perform this role based on its actions. Hence, the research concentrates on discourses of leadership and not about leadership practices per se.

Role theorists particularly in Europe have taken a constructivist approach to roles emphasizing language and social interaction (Harnisch, 2011). Constructivism in International Relations assumes that actors' interests and identities are not fixed but formulated by ideas, norms, knowledge and widely shared beliefs (Wendt, 1999). Discursive approaches in environmental social sciences have strengthened and particularly applications of Hajer's argumentative discourse analysis have gained popularity (Isoaho and Karhuna, 2019; Leipold et al., 2019). This research utilizes the concept of storyline based on Hajer's analysis (1995). The discursive branch of constructivist research on climate policy is multidimensional; Hajer's approach researches discourses through the idea of agency (Never, 2012). It builds on the idea that "reality is constructed through processes of social meaning-making, relying on the use of language as well as social practices" (Leipold et al., 2019: 447). Narratives conceptualized as storylines benefit this analysis because they explain uncertainty and change better than for example frames, which are usually utilized in more stable events (Lovell et al., 2009).

China is in a key position in the negotiations: it covered nearly 30% of the global CO₂ emissions in 2018 (Crippa et al., 2019). China's per capita emissions will exceed the average of the OECD member states by 2035 (International Energy Agency, 2011). While China's industrialization and high-energy demand still produces dependency on coal, China is rapidly transforming into a service-based economy structure and a cleaner energy mix of hydropower, wind and solar (IEA, 2019). These kind of changes in the scale of China are globally highly significant. For example, China's energy-intensive development phase influenced the global emissions growth strongly (IEA, 2019). China has been taking a more active role in the UNFCCC context (Dong, 2017; Gao, 2018). China's role in international affairs has been adopting from a "leading developing country" to that of "responsible care-taker" (Gottwald and Duggan, 2011). China's rise has led to arguments of a strengthening claim to respect of its growing role and its right to be heard in international institutions equally (Harnisch et al., 2011).

The focus is on the relation between China and the parties who were historically expected to take the lead, the developed countries. They are defined as the Annex I countries which comprised the OECD countries in 1992 and countries with economies in transition including the Russian Federation, the Baltic States and several Central and Eastern European States (UNFCCC, 2019). Developing countries present the other side of the dichotomy defined as the non-Annex I countries. Within the UNFCCC context, China is defined as a developing country. In addition, the Communist Party of China and Chinese society define their country as a developing country and part of the Third World (Chen, 2016; Cheng, 2016; Gottwald and Duggan, 2011). The division of developed and developing in climate politics has been recognized as being outdated for a quite some time now, as both of these groups have diversified (Brunnée and Streck, 2013; Hurrell and Sengupta, 2013). China does not clearly belong to either side of the dichotomy (Hilton and Kerr, 2017). However, since no other official division has been formally stated by the UNFCCC, excluding the special consideration for least developed countries, this study utilizes this definition.

Leadership gap can easily lead to accelerating expectations about a potential leader. For example, the withdrawal of the US from the Kyoto Protocol strengthened the expectations that the EU would assume a leadership role and thus, the EU has been recognized as a leader with scarce evidence (Elgström and Smith, 2006; Gupta and van der Grijp, 2000). After Paris, the leadership scene became more fragmented than ever. Under the Paris Agreement, the developed countries are expected to continue to take the lead, but for the first time, climate action is expected from all parties according to their national circumstances. This increased opportunities for other countries to be recognized as climate leaders. This does not suggest that the expectations for the Annex I countries would have diminished but that the demand for China, the country with the globally highest emissions, has increased (Xiaosheng, 2016). The Annex I countries form a diverse group who all have different experience and attitude towards China. Consequently, their expectations for China vary greatly which makes it irrelevant to attempt to standardize them as one actor. Hence, this research aims at finding shared ideas among them instead of highlighting their differences.

The Sino-American climate cooperation during the Obama administration between 2013 and 2016 strengthened the image of China's climate ambition. The two countries announced that "In Paris, China and the United States, working together and with others, played a critical role in crafting a historic, ambitious global climate change agreement" (NDRC, 2016). However, their climate

cooperation ended during the Trump administration and the US gave up its climate leadership by withdrawing from the Paris Agreement (Schreurs, 2017). This opened China a straightforward opportunity to take the lead and strengthened the options for Sino-European climate cooperation (Schreurs, 2017). This study argues that China is a good case for redefining climate leadership in the post-Paris era. However, for China to be recognized as a global climate leader, its leadership should be supported by traditional climate leaders, the Annex I countries. Leadership of the traditional climate leaders will not result in reaching the objectives of the Paris Agreement. Although China cannot carry the responsibility alone, China's leadership is one of the few options to overcome challenges of slow and weak achievements of the climate negotiations during the past decades (Harris et al., 2012).

This introduction is followed by brief description of the constructive role theory and leadership typology and explanation of material and methods. After this, results are introduced in form of six storylines. In the discussion, the storylines are allocated to the climate leadership typology. The conclusion suggests that Annex I countries only partially recognize China's leadership role and full acknowledgement requires Annex I parties to rethink climate leadership to avoid a role conflict.

2. Theory

2.1. Constructive role theory

Role theory in International Relations is interested about the roles individuals, states and others take on the international level (Wehner and Thies, 2014). The ideas of constructivist role theory originally builds on the pivotal article by Holsti (1970). After a quieter period after the 1990s, the approach has received renewed attention in international relations and foreign-policy analysis (Cantir and Kaarbo, 2012; Harnisch et al., 2011; Wehner and Thies, 2014). Leadership status cannot be successfully legitimized without others. The signals by others influence the leader, in this case China, and as a consequence affect the role construction (Nabers, 2011). "Leaders and followers learn roles and change roles as their perceptions of situations change" (Nye, 2008: 21). The role theoretical approach constitutes researching leadership more fruitful because leadership is not a static status. Leadership needs to be deconstructed by looking at political processes because it is an act, a verb between the leader and other actors (Nabers, 2011). Self-declared leadership role without the support of others is often adopted as double standard or ambiguous (Elgström and Smith, 2006). Instead of fixed roles, environmental politics is an argumentative debate in which actors attempt to influence the way others view the problem and try to position other actors in a particular manner (Hajer, 1995).

Roles are highlighted to be an important component in states making of the international social order (Wendt, 1999). Roles are social positions and action models that explain who one is, who one would like to be in relation to others and how, considering the role, one should behave in social relationships (Harnisch, 2011; Harnisch et al., 2011). Roles are defined in a specific context and therefore are dependent on time, structure and the purpose of the researched group (Harnisch, 2011). An actor can have many roles in different contexts. In the overall climate leadership discussion, China cannot be considered a monolith, but its climate policies are guided by a large group of actors with varying interests. However, for the purpose of this study the focus is limited to the UNFCCC context and thus, in this study China means the official delegation of China in the COPs. The focus of UNFCCC does not exclude the opportunity for China to have other roles in this context but this research focuses only on the leader role.

Role expectations are important part of the role construction process. They are two-sided: the domestic perceptions of the appropriate role are defined as ego expectations and the implicit or explicit demands of other actors as alter expectations (Harnisch, 2011). Similar to roles, ego and alter expectations are constantly on the move (Chen, 2016). In international politics, sovereignty supports the claim that role performance would primarily result from the ego's role conception, but the significance of alter prescriptions differs depending on the context (Holsti, 1970). A role conflict might arise in the interplay of ego and alter expectations (intra-role conflict) or a conflict between the roles (inter-role conflict); growing intra- or inter-role complexity might increase and diversify role interpretations of role beholders (Harnisch, 2012). Especially when adopting a new role, the roles learned might even be unacceptable to others (Harnisch, 2011). Potential for role conflict appear constantly but Aggestam (Aggestam, 2006) emphasizes the stability of roles instead of relentless random fluctuation.

2.2. Leadership theory

Leadership comprises providing vision and inspiration in addition to suggesting and implementing solutions to a problem (Underdal, 1994; Young, 1991). Leadership in multilateral negotiations is "an asymmetrical relationship of influence, where one actor guides or directs the behavior of others towards a certain goal over a certain period of time" (Underdal, 1994: 178). Different analogies about leadership have been developed (Malnes, 1995; Underdal, 1994; Young, 1991), which Grubb and Gupta (2000) have evaluated and adopted for the context of climate change. They distinguish between three leadership modes, which are distinct but not mutually exclusive. The first one, *structural leadership*, appears as utilizing incentives based on political and economic power, such as the amount of current and future emissions in addition to the financial resources applicable to climate change. The second mode is *instrumental leadership*, defined as diplomatic skills to construct the negotiations and the regime purposefully to serve the needs of different parties. Within climate negotiations, instrumental leadership requires long-term assessment and inclusion of developing countries to make the climate regime meaningful. An example of instrumental leadership could be promoting appropriate negotiation coalitions and hindering the establishment of blocking coalitions. The third mode, *directional leadership*, centralizes the role of ideas and domestic implementation. In other words, it stresses an actor's ability to influence other countries' perceptions of the desirable and important aspects in the context of the negotiations. This mode can be divided into development of perceptions and solutions meaning 'leading by example' and to efficient international promotion of the perceptions and solutions (Grubb and Gupta, 2000).

3. Material and methods

The material used in this study comprises high-level segment statements by the Annex I countries at COP22 Marrakech in 2016, COP23 Bonn in 2017 and COP24 Katowice in 2018. Material was limited to these three COPs since this study covers the era after Paris Agreement entered into force on November 4, 2016. The analysis was conducted based on 39 speeches at COP22, 39 speeches at COP23 and 37 speeches at COP24. The analysis focused in the UNFCCC context; hence the material was limited to these conferences and did not include any other bilateral or multilateral platforms. High-level segments at COPs provide all the parties with an opportunity to address the audience with a national statement limited to 3 min. The statements present viewpoints of the decision-making elite and this study is limited to nation-level expectations. The high-level segments are broadcast via live webcasts that are publicly available on the UNFCCC website. Official interpreters interpret the speeches into official languages of the UN and the quality of the interpretation is ensured by the statements being provided beforehand. All speeches analyzed were as video material and some as text files. The speeches available only in video format were transcribed onto text files to enable the analysis.

The high-level segments have been criticized for being useless for the progress of the meetings. Particularly inside the conference halls, they are considered as advertisements of the parties' own achievements. Hence, the analysis did not consider them as truth about climate action but rather revealing the manner the parties wanted to be seen. These speeches were chosen because they represent a forum of interaction as the statements are meant to be heard by other parties. However, these speeches provided only one-sided perspective of interaction as they lack reciprocity with China. Accordingly, the relevance of the data was limited to the alter expectations but could not be understood as a comprehensive picture of China's role in climate negotiations. To understand the meaning of climate leadership within a specific context, the material was approached inductively to avoid reproducing already existing definitions of climate leadership. To understand the context at a deeper level, the analysis was supported with observations on site at the COP24, Bonn climate change conference in June 2019 and COP25 conference in December 2019.

The analysis was conducted with the help of Hajer's argumentative discourse analysis and the concept of storyline. Hajer's approach builds on the idea that "discourses enable and constrain how political entities and societies understand and act on certain social or physical phenomena that are negotiated in environmental policy making" (Leipold et al., 2019: 447). Environmental discourses are fragmented and contradictory reconciled by a diverse group of actors (Hajer, 1995). Storyline is understood as "a generative sort of narrative that allows actors to draw upon various discursive categories to give meaning to specific physical or social phenomena" (Hajer, 1995: 56). Storylines enhance the ability to understand complex variation in the material as the emphasis is on finding the common ground of actors who might range in problem framings, goals and action (Jernnäs and Linnér, 2019). Storylines benefitted the analysis by reducing discursive complexity to overcome fragmentation within the heterogeneous group of Annex I parties and understanding how China is positioned.

Hajer utilizes the concept of discourse coalition for a group of actors who subscribe to a specific storyline or set of storylines. Members of the coalition assume a mutual understanding of the storyline but they might interpret the storyline in various ways (Hajer and Versteeg, 2005; Tozer and Klenk, 2018). This plays a functional role in coalition building and enables analytical focus on discursive categorisations actors have for themselves and others (Hajer and Versteeg, 2005). The objective was not to find discourse coalitions among the Annex I group but instead of differences, find convergence among them. Discourse coalitions are not always strict divisions but a storyline can be utilized by a diverse group of actors (Lovell et al., 2009). To some extent, Hajer has expected a conflict between the storylines in his earlier research (1995). However, research building on his work has shown that storylines are not necessarily in obvious conflict as for example discourse analysis by Laclau and Mouffe (1985), and Foucauldian ideas (Foucault, 1973, 1977) suggest. Storylines can also be complementary and to a certain degree overlap (see for example Jernnäs and Linnér, 2019; Lovell et al., 2009; Tozer and Klenk, 2018).

Qualitative content analysis aims at finding categories with similar meanings (Hsieh and Shannon, 2005). The statements were examined comprehensively with a broader scope than the times China was explicitly mentioned. The analysis was conducted by

Table 1

Examples of the analysis how the nodes were identified. To view all nodes, please refer to [Appendix I](#).

Node No	Node	How is China included or excluded?	What is expected from China?	Rationale
3	Vulnerable as the rest of the world	n/a	Highlighting that climate change is a collective threat and a problem. The consequences are shared among all the parties without any recognition of differentiation.	All parties are vulnerable of climate change
10	More vulnerable groups than developing countries: Impacts	n/a	Among developing countries, there are groups that are even more vulnerable to climate change than developing countries or the rest of the parties. The group of small island developing states is especially highlighted.	Climate change treats the developing country group differently
21	Major economy	China included, as it is the second largest economy in the world in 2019 (World Bank, 2019).	n/a	To have a more significant responsibility because it has the financial capacity

approaching every sentence of the speeches with two questions: *how is China included or excluded*, and *what is expected from China*? The answers to these two questions were organized within 35 nodes. The nodes were organized with the help of the Atlas. ti computer software. Because of the inductive approach, the whole analysis was double-checked to improve its coherence. Following the idea of Jernnäs & Linnér, every node was then analyzed to find the underlying rationale behind the expectation. For example, was China encouraged to enhance its action or was the node about promoting China's actions. Table 1 illustrates a small example of the analysis process. The storylines were formulated by combining all the nodes with a similar underlying rationale as one storyline (Jernnäs and Linnér, 2019).

After the analysis, the storylines were compared with the leadership typology to see whether the Annex I countries' expectations followed the existing categories of structural, instrumental and directional leadership (Grubb and Gupta, 2000).

4. Results

4.1. Context of the storylines

Discourse analysis was made particularly meaningful by the fact that all the parties had the same multinational audience and because of the time limit, they had to decide which topics to underline and omit. Not all the parties chose to address others but for example Germany decided to target many messages at other parties and hence, it subscribed to many of the storylines. Most parties spoke on behalf of their own countries or all nations and the data included only a few mentions of other nations. Of the countries outside the Annex I group, China was mentioned the most. Out of all nations, China and the US were specified the most, both six times. Other nations such as the UK, India or Japan were mentioned less frequently, three or fewer times. These frequencies excluded mentions of the COP host countries who are traditionally thanked at the beginning of the speech. The Presidency of Fiji at COP23 influenced storyline two about the dichotomy of developed and developing countries as the small island states received clearly more attention in COP23.

4.2. Storylines

Storylines are not explicitly given in the speeches but they can be considered more as analytical tools (Tozer and Klenk, 2018: 176). According to them, storylines are "heuristic constructs" that tell which narratives about China "are considered 'true', 'normal' or even 'inevitable'". After content analysis of the speeches, the storylines were constructed by creating them based on the narratives around

Table 2

Storylines based on the discourse analysis of the Annex I speeches.

Storyline No	Storyline	Argument for the storyline	Annex I parties who subscribed the storyline strongest
1	All parties are placed on the same line	Climate change affects all the parties and it is the responsibility of all the parties to do everything in their capacity.	Turkey Belarus Switzerland Liechtenstein Romania Ukraine Greece Monaco Russian Federation
2	The dichotomy of developing and developed countries is deconstructed	The dichotomy is seen more diversified; especially the most vulnerable and poorest countries are recognized. This would mean that China and other non-Annex countries are expected to scale up their action, and the financial assistance would be prioritized to other countries.	Germany Italy Belgium Sweden Australia France
3	The position of developing countries is highlighted	China is expected to be a developing country out of the two options. This would mean expecting China to act according to its national capacity, be vulnerable as a developing country and receive climate assistance.	Turkey Japan Sweden Belarus Germany Belgium
4	China has a greater responsibility than non-Annex or a regular party	China could and should enhance its action considering its emissions, its political, economic and security capacity.	Germany Switzerland NZ Japan Lithuania
5	China is recognized as a climate actor	China has begun to enhance its action. China's actions are recognized directly, or other parties are promoting solutions or ideas that China has already adopted. China is also seen as a potential partner for climate action.	US Australia Germany
6	China is excluded as a major player	China is not expected to be the driver of the action.	Germany France Italy Canada Japan

the expectations for China. It is important to remember that the storylines do not appear as direct quotes in the speeches and hence the active role of the researcher drafting the storylines cannot be unlearned (Isoaho and Karhunmaa, 2019). The storylines are summarized in Table 2. The presentation order of the storylines follows the frequency with which parties subscribed to them, beginning from the most common one. However, the purpose of the qualitative content analysis was not to follow these quantities (Hsieh and Shannon, 2005). The first three storylines were about China's position in the overall climate governance, in between of the developed and developing countries. Thus, these storylines covered more actors and consequently were mentioned more often. Storylines 4, 5 and 6 were mentioned less frequently but required recognizing China more specifically and for that reason, were more important for the research question.

The expectations of individual countries were not the interest of this article, which is why these subscriptions have not been explained in detail. However, the subscriptions were utilized to understand the possible conflict between the storylines. The discourse coalitions are not synonyms for political coalitions because they are not formed based on interests but linguistic choices (Hajer, 1995). This explains partly why Germany could subscribe to many of the storylines without an obvious contradiction in its interests. The results supported the ideas of earlier research that the storylines were not in obvious conflict as some of the policy change literature suggests (Lovell et al., 2009; Jernnäs and Linnér, 2019) but the storylines in some sense overlapped. Nevertheless, the storylines had different emphasis.

The material covered a three-year period, but relatively little temporal change was identified in the expectations. The greatest changes concerned the overall topics; for example, the IPCC (2018) Special Report increased the demand for urgency. There were unexpectedly few changes between the COPs in the ways that China was addressed. For example, the ending of Sino-American cooperation between COP22 and COP23 was not detectable in the speeches.

4.2.1. All parties are placed on the same line

The storyline "All parties are placed on the same line" was visible in nearly all speeches, 41 parties out of 42 subscribed to it. This storyline urged all parties to do everything in their capacity and promoted collective responsibility. It included claims that all parties are needed regardless of their size. In addition, the vulnerability was stated to be collective, "Climate change knows no borders, and affects all countries at all levels of development" (Turkey). Parity of the parties required bridging the developed and developing worlds. This storyline balanced the two sides by promoting particularly the vulnerability of the Annex I countries. Risks were visible in statements such as "In Liechtenstein the two degree world is already a reality" (Liechtenstein). Russia claimed that they experience climate change 2.5 times faster than rest of the world. Bridging the gap happened also by juxtaposing the two sides to have similar priorities. Two countries, Belarus and Turkey also equated themselves to be entitled to receive climate assistance by highlighting their national circumstances and Turkey even identified itself as a developing country.

4.2.2. The dichotomy of developing and developed countries is deconstructed

Storyline two, included in the speeches of 36 parties, recognized the diversification especially among the developing countries. This storyline diversified the old dichotomy particularly with terminology. The most vulnerable and poorest countries were specified from developing countries with sentences such as "Flexibility for developing parties should be set up in such a way that it follows their economic progress" (Croatia) and Canada underlined that they support "time limited flexibility for countries that truly need it". In addition, the financial assistance was targeted at a more specific group such as "the poorest developing countries" (Finland). This storyline lacked direct expectations for China, but it encompassed encouragement to countries such as China. The increased recognition of the non-Annex diversification excluded China from the group of the most vulnerable countries and prioritized the North-South financial assistance to countries other than China. Hence, this storyline included also nodes that required China to enhance its action. For example, Ukraine recognized the dynamics of development that some developing countries could step up more "and more climate leaders should appear on this arena".

4.2.3. The position of developing countries is highlighted

The third storyline, shared in the speeches of 32 out of the 42 parties, expected China to be a developing country out of the two options of being developing and developed. Developing countries were presented as a coherent group without any other classification. The differentiated position of developing countries was highlighted by promoting the responsibility of the Annex I countries. For instance, New Zealand argued, "Being a developed country confers greater responsibility" and Germany stated that rich countries do not have the right to impose their own tragedy to other countries of the world. Turkey related itself to this view of responsibility but from the developing country perspective: "Our historical responsibility for the climate change is quite minimal as it is the case in other developing states". Developing countries were presented as the most vulnerable group for climate change effects and as a coherent group to receive funding. Providing assistance to developing countries was underlined as being crucial for the Paris Agreement goals.

4.2.4. China has a greater responsibility than non-Annex or a regular party

The fourth storyline, present in the speeches of 24 parties, suggested China to have a greater responsibility than a non-Annex or a regular party because of its emissions and its political, economic and security capacity. China was included in claims that urged major economies, emerging economies and large nations to carry their responsibility. Germany recognized the dual role of China being a rapidly growing economy and one of the greatest emitters, and accordingly recognized China as important for the solution. Great powers were expected to participate more through their role within the UN Security Council and the G20 group. Major emitters were urged to scale up their action in various speeches. For example, Japan said they "will lead the international community so that major emitters undertake emission reductions in the light of respective capabilities". The storyline suggested that China's actions were

inadequate, or that China was encouraged to enhance its action. In addition to the attributes that directly included China, this storyline covered also indirect encouragement or recognition. For example, France could have meant China when stating, “When negotiating trade agreements we need to bear in mind the need for meeting these environmental goals. We should not negotiate with countries who are less ambitious to us, because that would reduce our collective ambitions.”

4.2.5. *China is recognized as a climate actor*

In the speeches of 19 parties, China was recognized as an active climate actor who had begun to enhance its action. The storyline included direct recognition of China’s increased action such as “the most recent messages from Beijing regarding decoupling economic growth from environmental impact have been clear and unambiguous, and that is a good sign” (Germany). China was also recognized as a potential climate partner: “Already, the United States is working bilaterally with countries such as China and India to advance power sector transformation and smart grid technologies, energy efficiency, and carbon capture, utilization and storage (CCUS)” (The US). This storyline also encompassed indirect recognition by promoting something that China had already adopted. For example, France promoted the idea of energy storage; Iceland highlighted the success of bringing the cost of renewables down; and Norway stated that the revolution of electric vehicles could not be reversed.

4.2.6. *China is excluded as a major player*

This storyline shared in the speeches of 12 parties did not expect China to be the driver of the action, as the attributes of potential leaders directly excluded China. These attributes included action-enhancing platforms of which China is not a member nation such as the OECD or the G7. For example, Japan addressed a platform for climate action excluding China by promoting preparation of the G7 long-term low emission development strategy. Highlighting the responsibility of the Global North to be examples for others also decreased the expectations for China: “We believe developed countries must lead the first step of a global transition, encouraging and supporting others to move forward” (Sweden). The storyline also included promoting the power of the Global North such as France’s claim after the US withdrawal from the Paris Agreement “I propose that Europe replaces America and France will meet that challenge”. The attribute of “historical emitter” was controversial in this storyline, as traditional justification of this term excludes China. For example, Germany stated, “They (industrialized countries) also have a historical responsibility to reduce CO2 emissions”.

5. Discussion

Six storylines were created to answer the questions how China is included or excluded and what is expected from China. These storylines provide one perspective to the construction of China’s climate leadership role. They are understood as devices to position China in relation to Annex I countries with specific ideas of for example “responsibility” (Hajer, 1995). The storylines position China as part of the solution to climate change but also part of the problem as a major emitter. To understand the value of these storylines, first the context of the storylines is outlined, then the storylines are compared and positioned within the climate leadership typology and lastly, the potential role conflict of Annex I countries is discussed.

5.1. *Expectations for China*

All the storylines have a different emphasis but between storyline one and two, the expectations cannot clearly be distinguished from each other. In this sense, they overlap because they both renew the manner the parties are positioned, the first by placing them all on the same line and the other by deconstructing the division between two groups. However, the storylines differ because the first one acknowledges the parties as one group, whereas the second one recognizes diversification among the developing countries. Storyline one lacks direct specification of China but the expectations for China are complex. Is China expected to behave similar to everybody else or is it expected to carry a responsibility similar to Annex I countries? In addition, positioning of China is rather blur in storyline two. Storyline two includes phrases such as “the most vulnerable to climate change” or “the ones who truly need the support”. The more these groups are recognized, the more China stands out from the developing country group as one with more capacity to act. No clear rules exist to define “the most vulnerable” and listeners might understand the phrases differently. This supports the claim that the actors who subscribe to a specific storyline often expect a mutual understanding but in reality, there is often a discursive complexity because the actors interpret the storyline differently (Hajer and Versteeg, 2005). These questions would be easier to answer if the communication in the COP process could be improved. Lack of communication and Paris Agreement offer plenty of decision-making power to states to define their own national capacities and vulnerabilities.

Storyline two and three conflict since reinforcing and deconstructing the dichotomy are opposites. This conflict is to some extent undermined by the fact that an actor can demand climate assistance to developing countries but simultaneously ask for it to be prioritized to the least developed countries. The low expectations of storyline three align with the Paris Agreement expectations for developing countries. To expect more would require excluding China from the group of developing countries out of which there are no examples in this storyline. China has many attributes that few of the non-Annex group shares, which constitutes it unique. China is the only non-Annex country that is a permanent member of the Security Council and among the five largest economies in the world. China is the fourth largest country by surface area in the world and largest country by population in 2019 (World Bank, 2019). Attributes such as emerging economy or G20 membership, China shares with other middle-income non-Annex countries such as Mexico, Brazil and India. India shares the attribute of the top five emitters, but the level of China’s emissions constitutes it unique even in comparison with India. These attributes do not support the attributes of the non-Annex countries; they were first given special recognition because of their historically low emissions, vulnerability and need for technological and financial assistance (Convention, 1992).

The recognition in storyline five is inadequate to be defined as leadership recognition and for that reason the storyline is defined as “climate actor”. Leadership would require clearer references to China whereas the storyline focus mostly on indirect promotion of China’s actions. Storyline six excludes China directly as for example, France expects Europe to replace the US in climate action or negotiations. Total omission of the Sino-American climate cooperation in the speeches also explains about the ignorance about China. The cooperation ended in 2016 but it is invisible even in the speeches at COP22 in 2016.

Somewhat unexpectedly, none of the storylines seems as the dominant expectation for China. The change that China would be expected to be something else than a traditional developing country in climate politics can be interpreted from storylines two, four and five. In this sense, these storylines are a sign of progression that the expectations for China are slowly changing. Nevertheless, compared to the idea that expectations for China would have increased in the post-Paris era (Xiaosheng, 2016), these storylines seem mild.

Hajer (1995) has suggested that various perceptions battle for discursive hegemony and one storyline slowly becomes more precisely defined taking the dominating position in leading the political process. However, the intersection of storylines might not always be the primary scene for this change but instead, change occurs also through numerous, scattered niches (Lovell et al., 2009). “Convergence is an ongoing process, with an extended period of flux as existing interests, knowledges, practices, and technologies are reframed, and new ones emerge” (Lovell et al., 2009: 105). This study complements this idea. Change in expectations for China would require also rethinking the traditional approaches of dividing responsibility in tackling climate change. Change happens in a number of niches simultaneously as the expectations change for China, but also for the developed and developing countries. The intersections of storylines are not the primary set of change for the expectations for China. This does not indicate that storylines would be irrelevant but it redirects attention from the boundaries to the center and decreases the need to create mutually exclusive categories. As originally suggested, purpose of storylines is to find common ground rather than create strict taxonomies (Hajer, 1995). However, the material of 2016–2018 represent a short period of the post-Paris era. The intersections of storylines might become more significant over time if the expectations for China in post-Paris era become more narrowly defined.

5.2. The allocation of the storylines and leadership modes

To improve understanding of the expectations, the storylines are compared to the ideas of climate leadership theory. Leader guides the others towards a specific goal (Underdal, 1994). By this definition, the Annex I countries cannot be said to expect climate leadership from China. The speeches omit recognition of specific goals introduced by China and include little recognition that the Annex I countries would directly follow China’s example. Underdal (1994) and Young (1991) have also suggested that a leader can provide vision, inspiration, solutions and implementation. These attributes are acknowledged particularly in storyline five. For example, putting a price on carbon is saluted as an effective solution that China has already begun to implement. China has also been actively developing other solutions mentioned in the speeches: electric vehicles to achieve sustainable transportation, conducting pilot projects on carbon emission trading to offer lessons at a global level and its actions influence the global decrease in renewable energy prices (Duan et al., 2018; IEA, 2019; Wu et al., 2012).

Next, the inductively created storylines are compared to the leadership modes developed by Grubb and Gupta (2000). The storylines hint at the kind of leadership Annex I countries could expect from China if any. For example, storylines four and two have similarities with structural leadership mode. In storyline four, China is recognized having political and economic power and its important position as a major emitter is recognized. China’s structural leadership is acknowledged by the US: “We do this through our work on next generation energy technologies with China, India, Germany and Japan”. These great powers are also the world leaders in energy technology, and they are developing next generation solutions, which others can utilize. To a lesser degree, structural leadership expectations can be found in storyline two. Leadership could be possible for those who have the capacity to step up. Because of its increased capacity, China could show a leadership example for other non-Annex countries.

Storyline five is coupled with directional leadership since China’s domestically implemented solutions are promoted as the key solutions for climate change. One example is found in Switzerland’s speech: “To address these issues we need to give CO₂ a price. It’s encouraging to see that emerging economies such as Mexico and China are now following this pathway”. This quote reveals that not everybody has given CO₂ a price yet but China has provided an example that others should follow. However, this kind of relation between the leader and the followers is present only in a few quotes, which reduces the directional leadership expectations. The modes are not mutually exclusive as for example, Switzerland’s quote exemplifies both, directional and structural leadership (Grubb and Gupta, 2000).

The instrumental leadership mode is weaker but storylines three and four intersect with it. Some parties highlight the developing countries as a homogenous group, which can be argued at least to some extent to be the merit of China and its diplomatic skills to promote appropriate negotiation coalitions. China has built its position as the leader of the developing world and as a strong voice to protect the rights of developing countries (Rauchfleisch and Schäfer, 2018; Shen and Xie, 2019). Germany acknowledges China’s increased positive influence for the negotiations and recognizes with delight that China has changed its participation from “rather reticent with regard of climate protection” to a more constructive part of the negotiations.

The storylines acknowledge China’s structural climate leadership the most, with the directional mode to a lesser degree and instrumental mode the least. Structural leadership recognition should not be underestimated as this mode had significant explanatory power in the formulation of the Kyoto Protocol for instance (Grubb and Gupta, 2000). Storyline one does not comprehend any leadership expectations for China because the claim is equal for everybody. The idea of “leadership by all” excludes any reference to a relation between a leader and a follower.

5.3. The role of Annex I countries

The role of Annex I countries is also constructed within the speeches (Harnisch, 2011; Harnisch et al., 2011). If the storylines are analyzed from the Annex I perspective, they suggest different leadership modes for themselves than for China. Instrumental leadership of the Annex I group is detectable in all storylines. Particularly storylines one and two include instrumental leadership because the Annex I countries reformulate the negotiation structure by positioning everybody on the same line. Structural leadership is visible in storylines one, six and two. For example, storyline six promotes attributes that maintain the Annex I countries as the leaders of climate action. Directional leadership can be detected from storylines three, four and six. For example, in storyline four, some of the Annex I countries show an example to the rest of the G20 members.

The Annex I speeches encompass a great degree of self-declared leadership, particularly from Germany, France, the UK, the US and Japan. For example, the US states that in spite of their withdrawal from the Paris Agreement, “The United States remain a global leader in reducing traditional pollution as well as greenhouse gases while expanding our economy”. Climate leadership of the EU is recognized by individual countries “We in Europe are aware of our responsibility” (Germany) and by the union itself “how Europe can lead the way to climate neutrality” (the EU). However, the European leadership is not acknowledged by other Annex I members, for example by Japan or the US. The EU clearly recognizes itself as a climate leader, but self-declared leadership remains rather ambiguous, as has been suggested by Elgström and Smith (2006).

5.4. Possibility of a role conflict

The self-declared leadership by some of the Annex I countries is predictable as traditionally they have been expected to take the lead. They provide an interesting case for a possible intra-role conflict. Recognizing themselves and China as leaders simultaneously might pose a role conflict for the Annex I countries, as they would identify themselves as leaders and followers at the same time. Nevertheless, acknowledging China as a leader would not require recognizing it as a hegemonic leader but rather as a partner for other leaders. This supports the claim that pure hegemonic leadership is non-significant for climate negotiations because of the complexity, longevity and universality of climate change (Grubb and Gupta, 2000).

Many countries strive to achieve leadership role, but they apprehend the requirements of leadership differently (Grubb and Gupta, 2000). If an Annex I Party recognizes itself as a climate leader (ego expectations) and expects climate leadership from China (alter expectations), it would require climate leadership be defined in a manner that it would include both, itself and China simultaneously. Thus, the Annex I expectations for China’s climate leadership are dependent on their own perception of climate leadership. For example, Germany and the US justify their leadership differently. The US argues for its leadership through the structural mode including attributes such as being a technology leader and the second largest renewable energy producer, whereas Germany upholds directional leadership with phrases such as “I hope that by mentioning this example from the German and European context I have at least been able to give you a bit of courage”. The storylines acknowledge China’s structural climate leadership the most, hence it is closer to the US examples than the directional examples of Germany. The US also recognize China’s climate action stronger than the others did, also during the Trump administration. One explanation is that the US and China share more ideas about climate leadership, than for example China and Germany.

5.5. Rethinking climate leadership

Leadership might be acknowledged easier in a context in which a party is not required to justify its own climate leadership simultaneously. If the Annex I countries would recognize China’s leadership in the high-level segments, they might diminish the legitimacy of their own leadership claims. Some recognition of China is given but partial acknowledgement can decrease the effectiveness of the leadership (Bengtsson and Elgström, 2011). By recognizing China as a climate leader, the Annex I countries could no longer justify their leadership role with the traditional expectations, but they would have to review their own ideas of climate leadership. This might also require enhancing their own action to legitimate their expectations about China.

The speeches lack recognition of the globally significant Sino-American climate cooperation. The cooperation demonstrates China’s instrumental climate leadership because it influenced the formulation of the negotiations and Paris Agreement (Christoff, 2016; NDRC, 2016). Climate cooperation between China and the EU would exemplify increased recognition of China, not as a leader above the EU, but standing next to EU. To admit China to a position as a partner standing next to EU would already be significant change because hitherto, the media has written about the potential cooperation with titles such as “EU plots climate deal with China” (Farand, 2019). These titles describe the relation in rather unequal terms, and the EU as the active party. Similar positioning is visible in a story in the Guardian: “All eyes are now on China, as the EU will try to woo Beijing with promises of trade negotiations and the lure of joint investments” (Harvey, 2019).

The potential for a leader to be recognized increases if the leader follows the widely accepted ideas and norms (Bengtsson and Elgström, 2011). A leader is more likely to be recognized by people from its own region. For example, in 2015, the EU was recognized as a climate leader by 61% of the European respondents but only by 17% of the African respondents (Parker and Karlsson, 2018). Multilateral negotiations such as the UNFCCC offer states an opportunity to agree on standard behavioral norms but the complexity of climate interests poses challenges to finding common ground (Nabers, 2011). Climate leadership research has been evaluating mainly leadership of the developed world in which the norms and ideas have been shared at least to some extent. However, China’s leadership potentially differs as it might not accept the international institutions, norms and values as given but adopt its role in the global governance on Chinese terms (Gottwald and Duggan, 2011). The climate discussion has been criticized for being western-centric: for

example, the developing countries are asked to raise their climate ambition by measuring it based on western norms (Uddin, 2017). The perceptions of China and the parties in the Global South would thus deserve more research to understand better the western centrism of these Annex I expectations. Therefore, it is highly important from whose viewpoint the network of expectations and roles are researched.

6. Conclusion

This article analyzed the expectations for China among the Annex I parties in the post-Paris era. The storylines created based on these expectations consider China's rise in climate politics relatively little. Even though China could hold on to the identity of developing country, it still might be expected to carry more responsibility if financial support and flexibility will be targeted more and more towards small island developing states, African states and least developed countries. However, the rights of developing countries are justified in the Paris Agreement text. Hence, China's position as a developing country will not change anytime soon if it does not want it to change. This is also guaranteed by the bottom-up approach of the Paris Agreement, which grants China the power to decide the level of its national capacity concerning its climate action. Consequently, the ego expectations, which are out of the scope of this research, are also important part in construction of China's climate leader role (Holsti, 1970).

China shares several attributes with many of the Annex I countries. These attributes turn attention away from the traditional idea of climate leadership and deconstruct the idea of who is considered responsible for climate change. However, based on the speeches China is not considered a leader but its potential, particularly potential for structural climate leadership, is acknowledged to some extent. The largest Annex I countries use the context of high-level segment to promote their own climate leadership. This self-declared role might not leave room for recognizing China's leadership role or it might pose a role-conflict for the Annex I countries. China is more likely to be seen as a partner in climate cooperation to the EU or the US.

The Annex I countries recognize particularly China's structural leadership but they pose more instrumental leadership themselves. Parties have different perceptions of the requirements of leadership (Grubb and Gupta, 2000), which complicates the process how expectations construct the leadership role. Roles are dependent on the context and the purpose of the researched group (Harnisch, 2011). The Annex I position was originally based on the historical responsibility. This traditional idea of climate leadership is becoming outdated globally but also within the Annex I group. Their expectations of climate leadership vary significantly, which is why this research attempted to find some common ground between them. In spite of their differences, researching the Annex I countries as a group remains relevant until they are treated as one in the UNFCCC negotiations.

To include China as a climate leader, the Annex I parties need to rethink or even redefine their own idea climate leadership if it is no longer attached to the traditional North-South division. The change in seeing China as a climate leader does not happen only in the storylines 4–6 that consider China, but also within storylines 1–3 that concern the overall negotiations. The speeches offer only one viewpoint to China's role but the Annex I expectations, however complex, are important for China's role. The Annex I countries were shown to have instrumental power to formulate the negotiations; hence their expectations are important in constructing China's position. This supports Holsti's (1970) claim that China's climate leader role is not solely result from its ego role conception but influenced importantly also by the alter expectations of others, especially by the traditional leaders.

Years 2016–2018 cover only the first years of the post-Paris era. During this time, the Annex I parties have given little recognition to China's climate leadership but China's role will continue to increase in the future. Particularly, if the US continues to pull back from the climate negotiations and leave the floor to China. One scenario estimates China to be "responsible for a large share of global investment in a range of clean energy technologies and applications, including electric vehicles, batteries, carbon capture and storage, nuclear power, and solar and wind power, with the potential to bend downwards the global cost curve in each case" (IEA, 2019). If these scenarios come true, it will be interesting to see how recognition of China will change in the near future. China being recognized as a climate leader by the Annex I countries and by other parties (particularly by parties from different geographical regions) could constitute more effective climate leadership and lead to an increase in ambition in the UN climate negotiations to reach the Paris Agreement goals. This virtuous cycle of ambition requires leaders who will lead the other parties to the path of 1.5 °C.

Declaration of competing interest

The author declares that she had no conflict of interest.

CRediT authorship contribution statement

Karoliina Hurri: Conceptualization, Data curation, Formal analysis, Funding acquisition, Investigation, Methodology, Visualization, Writing - original draft, Writing - review & editing.

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Appendix I

Node No	Node name	How is China included or excluded?	What is expected from China?	Rationale	Storyline	Argument for storyline	Annex I parties who subscribed the storyline strongest
1	Vulnerability of the Annex I	n/a	Vulnerability is discussed from the perspective of the Annex I countries by introducing specifically the risks they are facing. Developing countries are addressed as being particularly vulnerable to climate change. The difference between the two groups is balanced by introducing them as all being vulnerable for climate change.	All parties are vulnerable for climate change	All parties are placed on the same line	Climate change affects all the parties and it is the responsibility of all the parties to do everything in their capacity	Turkey Belarus Switzerland Liechtenstein Romania Ukraine Greece Monaco Russian Federation
2	Request for Annex I-Annex I support	n/a	Climate finance has been prioritized for developing countries but some of the Annex I countries claim they should also be entitled for the assistance.	Climate finance not only for non-Annex			
3	Vulnerable as the rest of the world	n/a	Highlighting that climate change is a collective threat. The consequences are shared among all the parties without recognition for differentiation.	All parties are vulnerable for climate change			
4	All parties are responsible to enhance their action	n/a	Promoting that climate change needs action from all the parties and everybody are responsible to enhance their action to achieve the Paris Agreement goals.	All parties are responsible			
5	*National capacities	n/a	Highlighting the different stages of parties and their national capacities according to the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities. A statement often argued by developing countries, particularly China, to highlight their different starting point for climate action.	Differentiation among the nations should not be forgotten			
6	*Bridging the developed and developing	n/a	The dichotomy is deconstructed with new bridging alliances or cooperation participated in by developed and developing countries.	New type of cooperation			

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Node No	Node name	How is China included or excluded?	What is expected from China?	Rationale	Storyline	Argument for storyline	Annex I parties who subscribed the storyline strongest
6	*Bridging the developed and developing	n/a	The dichotomy is deconstructed with new bridging alliances or cooperation participated in by developed and developing countries.	New type of cooperation	The dichotomy of developing and developed countries is deconstructed	The dichotomy is seen more diversified; especially the most vulnerable and poorest countries are recognized. This would mean that China and other non-Annex countries are expected to enhance their action and the financial assistance is prioritized to other countries.	Germany Italy Belgium Sweden Australia France
7	Request to recognize the dynamics of development	n/a	Parties are developing in different phases, particularly non-Annex countries and this should be considered when planning the implementation rules of Paris Agreement. The categories should not be stable.	Diversification among the parties			
8	Common rules with certain flexibility to developing countries who need it	n/a	Promoting the idea that the rules of Paris Agreement should be applicable to all and flexibility should be given to those who need it. Deconstructing the dichotomy by reinforcing the actual need for assistance.	Diversification among the parties			
9	Need for a change in the dichotomy	n/a	Deconstructing the dichotomy by highlighting different positions within the non-Annex group. For example, stating that they wish to support only the least developed, African countries or small island developing states. Recognizing that the old dichotomy is outdated.	Diversification among the parties			
10	More vulnerable groups than developing countries: impacts	n/a	Highlighting that among developing countries there are groups that are even more vulnerable to climate change than developing countries or the rest of the parties. The group of small island developing states is especially highlighted.	Climate change treats the developing country group differently			
11	More vulnerable groups than developing countries: support	n/a	Highlighting that among developing countries there are groups that require more financial support, for example, the least developed states or small island developing states.	Financial capacity of the developing country group varies			
12		n/a					

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Node No	Node name	How is China included or excluded?	What is expected from China?	Rationale	Storyline	Argument for storyline	Annex I parties who subscribed the storyline strongest
	*Recognized that China's actions are insufficient		Highlighting indirectly or directly the insufficient climate action by China. This node excludes quotes in which all parties are blamed for lack of action.	China should enhance its action			
13	*Encouraged to enhance its action	n/a	China is indirectly or directly encouraged to enhance its action or recognized that it would have potential to do more. This node excludes quotes in which all parties are encouraged to scale up their action.	China could enhance its action			
5	*National capacities	n/a	Highlighting the different stages of parties and their national capacities according to the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities. A statement often argued by developing countries, particularly China, to highlight their different starting point for climate action.	Differentiation among the nations should not be forgotten	The position of developing countries is highlighted	China is expected to be a developing country out of the two options. China is expected to act according to its national capacity, be vulnerable as a developing country and receive climate assistance.	Turkey Japan Sweden Belarus Germany Belgium
14	Responsibility of Annex I	n/a	By using the terminology of Annex I, the dichotomy is reinforced because the other side is non-Annex, where China is positioned. If Annex I have the prior responsibility, then non-Annex countries including China do not.	Annex I countries should take the lead in tackling climate change			
15	Developing countries more vulnerable	n/a	Recognizing that climate change affect differently different areas and developing countries are more vulnerable. By using the terminology developing without any specifications means developing countries are treated as one group. China is expected to be vulnerable as well.	Climate change do not treat developed and developing countries equally			
16		n/a					

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Node No	Node name	How is China included or excluded?	What is expected from China?	Rationale	Storyline	Argument for storyline	Annex I parties who subscribed the storyline strongest
	To receive funding as a developing country		Recognizing that developing countries are entitled to receive funding from the developed countries.	All developing countries are entitled for climate finance			
17	Voluntary action	n/a	Voluntary action refers to the era of the Kyoto Protocol when only Annex I countries were expected to decrease their emissions and the developing countries' action was voluntary.	Climate action by non-Annex countries is voluntary			
18	To do its part as a non-Annex	n/a	Non-Annex countries are recognized for their different starting points and thus entitled to receive flexibility such as financial assistance and capacity-building also under the Paris Agreement. They are also expected to act according to their nationally determined contributions.	To participate in climate action considering their national capacities and receive support			
19	Developing country	China is included since under the UNFCCC classification China is defined as a developing country.	n/a	To participate in climate action considering their national capacities and receive support			
20	Large country	China included, as it is the 4th largest country by surface area and the largest country by population in the world in 2019 (World Bank, 2019).	n/a	To have a more significant responsibility because it is large	China has a greater responsibility than non-Annex or a regular Party	China could and should enhance its action considering its emissions, its political, economic and security capacity.	Germany Switzerland NZ Japan Lithuania
21	Major economy	China included, as it is the second largest economy in the world in 2019 (World Bank, 2019).	n/a	To have a more significant responsibility because it has the financial capacity			
13	*Encouraged to enhance its action	n/a	China is indirectly or directly encouraged to enhance its action or recognized that it would have potential to do more. This node excludes quotes in which all parties are encouraged to scale up their action.	China could enhance its action			

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Node No	Node name	How is China included or excluded?	What is expected from China?	Rationale	Storyline	Argument for storyline	Annex I parties who subscribed the storyline strongest
12	*Recognized that China's actions are insufficient	n/a	Highlighting indirectly or directly the insufficient climate action by China. This node excludes quotes in which all parties are blamed for lack of action.	China should enhance its action			
22	G20 member	China included, as it is a G20 member country.	n/a	To have a more significant responsibility because it has the financial and political capacity			
23	Great power	China included, for example with the definition that it has the permanent seat in the UN Security Council.	n/a	To have a more significant responsibility because it has the financial, political and security capacity			
24	Rapidly industrializing country	China included because of its growth	n/a	To have a growing responsibility because its financial capacity has increased			
25	Emerging economy	China included, because of its economic growth and its status as the second largest economy in the world in 2019 (World Bank, 2019).	n/a	To have a growing responsibility because its financial capacity has increased			
26	Security Council	China included, as it is one of the five permanent member countries of the Security Council.	n/a	To have a more significant responsibility because it has the financial, political and security capacity			
27	Major emitters	China included, as it is the greatest emitter globally in 2019 (World Bank, 2019).	n/a	To have a more significant responsibility because it is responsible for the most emissions globally.			
28	Recognized China has begun to enhance its action	n/a	Recognizing indirectly or directly climate action China has done in a positive manner.	China as a positive example of climate action	China is recognized as a climate actor	China has begun to enhance its action. China's actions are recognized directly, or other parties are promoting solutions or ideas that China has already achieved. China is also seen as a	US Australia Germany
29		n/a	Recognized implicitly that China has begun to enhance its action by				

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Node No	Node name	How is China included or excluded?	What is expected from China?	Rationale	Storyline	Argument for storyline	Annex I parties who subscribed the storyline strongest
	Promoting something China has already adopted		promoting the solutions & actions China has already adopted. These are useful examples for other parties as well.	China's actions indirectly as positive examples		potential partner for climate action.	
30	Partnership	n/a	Recognized China as a partner or as a potential partner.	China's potential for climate cooperation			
31	Recognized it has done its share	n/a	Recognized that China has carried its responsibility in relation to the demand set for it.	China has been responsible for its own share			
32	The power of the Global North	China excluded, as the node highlights the importance, power and ability of the Global North to tackle climate change.	n/a	The Global North should lead the way	China is excluded as a major player	China is not expected to be the driver of the action.	Germany France Italy Canada Japan
33	OECD countries	China excluded, as it is not an OECD member country.	n/a	OECD countries should lead the way			
34	Historical emitter	Controversial node whether China is included or excluded because of its great emissions. Traditionally the term has been related to Annex I countries because of their historical responsibility.	n/a	Historical emitters should lead the way			
5	G7	China excluded, as it is not a G7 member country.	n/a	The G7 countries should lead the way			

*) This node has been considered in many storylines.

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