



## CHINA'S ROLE IN THE UNITED NATIONS IN ADDRESSING CLIMATE CHANGE DURING THE XI JINPING ERA

<sup>1</sup>Sarah Shabirah, <sup>2</sup>Ari Putra Setiawan, <sup>3</sup>Fajar Oktavianto,  
<sup>4</sup>Alif Albiansyah, <sup>5</sup>Dedy Saputro

<sup>1,2,3,4,5</sup> Department of International Relations, Universitas Satya Negara Indonesia

\*Corresponding Email: [sarahshabrh@gmail.com](mailto:sarahshabrh@gmail.com)

Submission: January 23, 2025 | Revised: March 22, 2025 | Accepted: March 23, 2025

### ABSTRAK

*Perubahan iklim telah menjadi tantangan global yang kritis di abad ke-21, dengan Tiongkok sebagai negara penghasil emisi terbesar yang memiliki peran vital dalam upaya penanganannya. Penelitian ini bertujuan menganalisis transformasi peran Tiongkok dalam kerangka PBB untuk mengatasi perubahan iklim di era Xi Jinping, dengan fokus pada perubahan postur diplomatik dan implementasi kebijakan. Menggunakan metode penelitian kualitatif dengan pendekatan deskriptif analitis melalui studi kepustakaan, penelitian ini menganalisis berbagai dokumen resmi, artikel jurnal, dan laporan kebijakan dari tahun 2020-2024. Hasil pembahasan menunjukkan bahwa di bawah kepemimpinan Xi Jinping, Tiongkok mengalami transformasi signifikan dari posisi defensif menuju kepemimpinan proaktif dalam diplomasi iklim global, yang direfleksikan melalui komitmen netralitas karbon 2060 dan pembentukan South-South Climate Cooperation Fund senilai 3 miliar dolar AS. Analisis melalui perspektif realisme ofensif mengungkapkan bahwa keterlibatan aktif Tiongkok dalam rezim iklim global merupakan manifestasi strategi power maximization dalam sistem internasional. Kesimpulannya, transformasi peran Tiongkok telah berkontribusi positif pada tata kelola iklim global, sambil tetap mempertahankan kepentingan strategis nasionalnya melalui kombinasi komitmen ambisius dan penggunaan berbagai instrumen kebijakan.*

*Kata Kunci: Tiongkok, Perubahan Iklim, Diplomasi Iklim, Xi Jinping, Realisme Ofensif*

### ABSTRACT

Climate change has become a critical global challenge in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, with China as the largest emitter playing a vital role in addressing it. This research aims to analyze China's transforming role within the UN framework in addressing climate change during Xi Jinping's era, focusing on diplomatic posture changes and policy implementation. Using qualitative research methods with a descriptive-analytical approach through library research, this study analyzes various official documents, journal articles, and policy reports from 2020-2024. The discussion reveals that under Xi Jinping's leadership, China has undergone a significant transformation from a defensive position to proactive leadership in global climate diplomacy, reflected through its 2060 carbon neutrality commitment and the establishment of a 3 billion USD South-South Climate Cooperation Fund. Analysis through an offensive realist perspective reveals that China's active engagement in the global climate regime manifests a power maximization strategy in the international system. In conclusion, China's transforming role has positively contributed to global climate governance while maintaining its national strategic interests through a combination of ambitious commitments and various policy instruments.

**Keywords:** China, Climate Change, Climate Diplomacy, Xi Jinping, Offensive Realism

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## BACKGROUND

Climate change has become one of the most critical global challenges faced by the world in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. As the world's largest emitter of greenhouse gases, China plays a crucial role in global efforts to address the climate crisis. Under the leadership of President Xi Jinping, China has demonstrated a significant shift in its diplomatic approach and environmental policies, particularly through active engagement in United Nations (UN) forums.

Since Xi Jinping assumed leadership in 2013, China has undergone a substantial transformation in its global positioning on climate change issues. Unlike its previously defensive stance, China now positions itself as a global leader in climate action. This is reflected in the ambitious commitments announced by Xi Jinping at the UN General Assembly in September 2020, where China pledged to reach peak carbon emissions before 2030 and achieve carbon neutrality by 2060 (Zhao et al., 2022).

China's diplomatic posture transformation on climate change issues is inseparable from Xi Jinping's vision of a "Community of Shared Future for Mankind." Through this framework, China seeks to build a narrative that its leadership in climate action is a manifestation of its global responsibility as a major power. This approach has become increasingly relevant given the global leadership vacuum in climate change issues, especially after the United States withdrew from the Paris Agreement during the Trump era (Zhang, 2022).

At the UN forums, China has demonstrated a significant increase in engagement in various multilateral climate initiatives. Through the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), China actively promotes the implementation of the Paris Agreement and consistently emphasizes the principle of "common but differentiated responsibilities" in international climate negotiations. Beijing has also strengthened cooperation with UN agencies, such as the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the United Nations Development

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Programme (UNDP), in developing innovative solutions for a sustainable energy transition (Ali et al., 2024).

China's commitment to global climate action is also reflected in its increasing contributions to international climate finance. Through the South-South Climate Cooperation Fund, China has allocated \$3 billion to help developing countries address the impacts of climate change. The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) is also being increasingly directed toward green infrastructure development, with a focus on renewable energy and low-carbon technologies (Weins et al., 2023).

However, China's active role in UN climate diplomacy is also driven by national interest considerations. China's transition to a low-carbon economy aligns with its efforts to restructure its economy, reducing dependence on fossil fuel-based industries and shifting toward high-tech and clean energy sectors. By leading on climate issues, China also seeks to enhance its soft power and global influence, particularly in developing countries (Chen et al., 2018).

In practice, China faces significant challenges in balancing its climate ambitions with domestic development needs. Despite being a global leader in renewable energy development, China remains highly dependent on coal. This challenge has been further exacerbated by the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, which led some regions to increase coal consumption to support economic recovery (Lian & Li, 2024).

At the international level, China's climate leadership credibility also faces challenges from various criticisms, particularly regarding its funding of fossil fuel-based projects in BRI countries. Although China has committed to halting the construction of overseas coal power plants, the implementation of this policy still requires strict oversight (Zhang, 2022).

Despite these challenges, China's role within the UN framework for addressing climate change remains a crucial factor in the success of global climate action. As a country with significant economic and political influence, China's stance

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and policies have a strong demonstrative effect on other nations. China's success in achieving its climate targets will serve as a key catalyst for accelerating the global transition to a low-carbon economy (Wang et al., 2021).

Under Xi Jinping's leadership, it can be projected that China will continue to strengthen its role in UN climate diplomacy. This is driven by a combination of domestic and international factors, including the need to address domestic environmental degradation, the ambition to lead the global green technology revolution, and efforts to enhance China's position in global governance. However, the effectiveness of this role will largely depend on China's ability to demonstrate concrete progress in implementing its climate commitments and to build international trust through greater transparency and accountability.

Based on the background outlined above, this study aims to conduct an in-depth analysis of China's engagement dynamics within the UN framework for addressing global climate change. To focus the analysis and provide a more structured framework, this research will address the following key questions. *First*, how does the transformation of China's diplomatic position in UN climate forums under Xi Jinping's leadership reflect a shift from a defensive stance to a more proactive global leadership role? *Second*, to what extent do China's programs and initiatives within the UN framework have a tangible impact on global efforts to combat climate change? *Third*, how can the offensive realist approach explain the strategic motivations behind China's active engagement in UN multilateral climate diplomacy?

## LITERATURE REVIEW

In this section, we explored various scholarly works on offensive realism and China's foreign policy regarding climate change. Reviewing literature on these three areas is essential for understanding how the offensive realist perspective explains China's active involvement in UN multilateral climate diplomacy.

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## **Offensive Realism**

Neorealism is one of the schools of realism. In the field of International Relations (IR), realism has historically been the prevailing framework that highlights the competitive and conflict-driven nature of interactions among states. This perspective is grounded in a set of principles and assumptions that prioritize the state as the central actor, functioning as an independent entity within the international system and pursuing its interests in a rational manner. These interests primarily focus on ensuring power and security. Power is a fundamental concept from the realist viewpoint. A realist interpretation of international relations offers valuable insights into state behavior within a context marked by uncertainty, anarchy, and competition (Syahdani et al., 2024).

Neorealism recognizes various factors that influence the international system, including norms, laws, institutions, ideologies, and economic considerations that are pertinent to state actions. Neorealists view international law and institutions as products of the behavior of major powers and regard technology, particularly weaponry, as another significant systemic attribute possessed by states (Syahdani et al., 2024).

Offensive realism emphasizes the importance of understanding the anarchic structure of the international system. The fundamental assumptions of this theory rest on five key premises: the international system is anarchic, great powers possess military capabilities that can destroy one another, states can never be certain of other states' intentions, survival is the primary motive of states, and great powers are rational actors that strategically consider how to survive in the international system (Cooper, 2024).

Offensive realism is a key offshoot of the neorealist viewpoint, introduced by American political analyst John Mearsheimer. This theory arose from Mearsheimer's assertion that nations not only aim to enhance their power but also strive to do so in a manner that deters other nations from acting aggressively. According to offensive

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realism, the international system is characterized by anarchy, lacking any overarching authority that holds sovereignty over states. This situation leads to behaviors dictated by the system's structure, which is believed to drive nations to adopt aggressive policies, ultimately resulting in conflicts within the international framework. The theory emphasizes that a nation's primary concern is its ability to defend itself, which can only be achieved if it can compel other nations to refrain from posing threats (Karmilawaty & Janvy, 2024).

Mearsheimer further contends that, in addition to anarchy, the international landscape is rife with uncertainty regarding the intentions of other states. Therefore, the most effective strategy for survival is to amass as much power as possible and continuously enhance military capabilities. The strength of a nation is a crucial factor in its survival. Mearsheimer also posits that countries will relentlessly pursue hegemony, a state in which no other nation can rival the military might of the dominant power, allowing that nation to exert control over others (Karmilawaty & Janvy, 2024).

The offensive realist approach to climate change argues that when countries pursue power at the expense of others, and with the understanding that the world's resources are not unlimited, countries tend to exploit cheap and easily accessible energy sources (such as oil, gas, and coal) to maximize their profits (Heffron, 2015). Instead of working together to protect the planet or prevent potentially disastrous impacts of climate change, countries prefer to prioritize their energy security, even if it means harming other countries or the environment. As a result, the tragedy of the commons becomes inevitable, and the issue of climate change is often sidelined in international relations discussions (Heffron, 2015). Countries may prepare for climate change with the aim of outdoing their competitors. The losses experienced by one country, such as droughts, floods, or economic recessions, are seen as opportunities for other countries to gain an advantage (Heffron, 2015).

The Xi Jinping era marks a significant transformation in China's foreign

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policy, reflecting the principles of offensive realism. According to Walton (2022), Xi Jinping's foreign policy is characterized by greater assertiveness and an emphasis on the Chinese Dream as the central narrative in global diplomacy. This aligns with (Mearsheimer, 2018) argument that great powers will always seek to maximize their relative strength in the international system. Wan (2014) analyzes that the core principles of offensive realism in China's diplomacy are evident in the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and its more proactive approach to global governance. China no longer follows Deng Xiaoping's strategy of "hiding capabilities and biding time" but has shifted toward a more explicit power maximization strategy. Li (2016) further explains that this strategy is implemented through a combination of soft power and hard power, including economic diplomacy and the enhancement of military capabilities.

China's power maximization strategy on the international stage, as analyzed in *"China's Rise in the Global South"* by Murphy (2022), is demonstrated through its growing role in multilateral institutions and the establishment of alternative institutions such as the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB). This approach reflects the offensive neorealist assumption that great powers will seek to shape the international order in ways that benefit their national interests.

### **China's Foreign Policy towards Climate Change**

China's foreign policy towards climate change has been studied by many in previous research. Liu (2024) found that China, as a founding member of the United Nations, actively promotes global climate governance. In 2012, China proposed the concept of a "Community with a Shared Future for Mankind." This emphasizes mutually beneficial and fair cooperation, thus increasing its influence in climate negotiations and governance mechanisms. Moreover, China views climate governance mechanisms as being of significant importance for development and progress. In the post-Paris Agreement era of 2015, China has the potential to

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consistently promote and lead the formulation of specific rules for UN climate negotiations and make a substantial contribution to global climate governance.

In 2019, China together with New Zealand, carried out a “Nature-based Solution” action at the Climate Action Summit 2019. This action is an integration and enhancement of various existing efforts in addressing climate change. It is also designed to strengthen its implementation and contribute significantly to global climate action and ambitions. As a leader in “Nature-based Solutions,” China gained a valuable opportunity to call for the development of a global ecological civilization and to provide leadership in global environmental and climate governance (Qi & Chai, 2023).

In the work of Kyriakopoulou et al. (2023), it is also mentioned that China plays a role in global climate action, particularly in the aspects of domestic and foreign policy-making for energy transition, its role in promoting multilateralism and international collaboration to build a sustainable world, and how China can accelerate climate action and diplomacy through research, development, and innovation. In the 2020s, China has significantly transformed and enhanced its energy and industrial structure, promoted research, development, and application of green and low-carbon technologies, as well as strengthened international climate cooperation in the face of change.

The evolution of China’s environmental policy has undergone significant transformation since Xi Jinping took leadership. Ali et al. (2024), in their study “China’s Environmental Policy Transformation,” reveal that a fundamental shift has occurred from a sole focus on economic growth to a more balanced approach between economic development and environmental sustainability. This period is marked by the introduction of the concept of “Ecological Civilization,” which serves as the philosophical foundation of China’s environmental policies. Xi Jinping’s vision of “Ecological Civilization” represents a holistic approach that integrates environmental considerations into all aspects of national development. According to

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Zhang (2022), this concept emphasizes the harmony between humans and nature, reflected in five key pillars: reforming the ecological political system, green economic transformation, resource conservation, environmental protection, and ecological cultural development. This vision has been incorporated into China's constitution and has become an integral part of "Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era."

The implementation of domestic climate policies in China has led to various concrete initiatives. Wang et al. (2021) in their book "China's Climate Leadership," explain that China has developed the world's largest national carbon market, increased investments in renewable energy, and implemented strict regulations on high-emission industries. These programs are supported by comprehensive institutional reforms, including the establishment of the Ministry of Ecology and Environment with a stronger mandate. China's national targets and commitments to emissions reduction reflect its growing ambition. Zhang (2022) notes that China has committed to reaching peak carbon emissions before 2030 and achieving carbon neutrality by 2060. These commitments are backed by specific policies, including a target to increase the share of non-fossil energy in primary energy consumption to 25% by 2030 and a reduction in carbon intensity per unit of GDP by more than 65% from 2005 levels.

## **METHODOLOGY**

This study employs a qualitative research method with a descriptive-analytical approach through library research. The qualitative approach was chosen because it provides a deep and comprehensive understanding of the dynamics of China's role within the UN framework in addressing climate change, including complex aspects such as policies, diplomatic strategies, and their implementation under Xi Jinping's leadership. Data collection relies on secondary sources, including official documents, academic journals, policy reports, UN documents, and other

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credible publications. The official documents analyzed consist of Chinese government policy statements, Xi Jinping's speeches on climate change, UNFCCC documents, and official UN reports on global climate action developments. Meanwhile, the academic journals and policy reports referenced focus on recent publications (2020–2024) to ensure the relevance and timeliness of the analysis.

The data analysis process is carried out in three main stages: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. To ensure research validity, source triangulation is conducted by comparing different types of documents and perspectives, including comparisons between Chinese government official documents, independent reports, and analyses by academics and international observers. The temporal scope of this study focuses on the Xi Jinping era, with particular emphasis on developments since 2020, when China announced its carbon neutrality commitment. Through this methodological approach, the research aims to produce a deep and comprehensive analysis of China's role in the UN's efforts to address climate change and its implications for global environmental governance.

This study faces several methodological limitations that must be considered in interpreting the findings. The exclusive reliance on secondary sources limits access to in-depth perspectives from policymakers and negotiators directly involved in China's climate diplomacy process. Additionally, limited accessibility to internal Chinese-language documents poses a risk of incomplete interpretation of the nuances of China's domestic climate policies.

## **DISCUSSION**

### **China's Diplomatic Posture Transformation on Climate Change**

The transformation of China's diplomatic posture on climate change marks a significant shift from a defensive approach to a more proactive global leadership position. Since 2013, under Xi Jinping's leadership, China has undergone a fundamental reorientation in its climate diplomacy, characterized by strengthened

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international commitments and an increased role in global climate governance. This shift not only reflects China's awareness of its global responsibility as the world's largest emitter but is also part of a broader strategy to enhance its international influence (Zhang, 2022). The implementation of the vision of a "Community of Shared Future for Mankind" serves as a philosophical foundation reinforcing this transformation. Xi Jinping has consistently employed this concept to frame China's engagement in global climate action as a manifestation of its responsibilities as a major power. Ali et al. (2024) analyze that through this approach, China seeks to establish legitimacy in climate leadership by emphasizing shared interests and global interdependence. This vision also enables China to position itself as a bridge between developed and developing nations in international climate negotiations.

China's strategic momentum in climate leadership was further strengthened following the United States' withdrawal from the Paris Agreement during the Trump era. Lian and Li (2024), argue that this leadership vacuum provided an opportunity for China to solidify its position as a champion of global climate action. This was manifested through a series of ambitious commitments, including the carbon neutrality target by 2060, announced at the 2020 UN General Assembly. This commitment received international recognition and bolstered China's credibility as a leader in global climate mitigation efforts. The transformation of China's diplomatic posture on climate change has become more proactive in line with global efforts to address the increasingly urgent challenges of climate change. The reviewed literature supports the analysis that China's approach under Xi Jinping reflects not only political commitment but also a moral responsibility as one of the world's largest emitters. Awareness of climate change impacts, such as the rise in hydrometeorological disasters, sea level rise, and threats to key economic sectors such as agriculture and fisheries, has been a major driving force behind this transformation (Achmad Yugo Pidhegso et al., 2015; Dewi & Rosalina, 2022).

China's commitment to achieving carbon neutrality by 2060 reflects a deep

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understanding of the urgency of global action, aligning with the Paris Agreement's goal of limiting global temperature rise to 1.5°C. This ambitious target can be compared to measures taken by countries like Indonesia, which aims to reduce emissions by up to 41% with international assistance by 2030 (Budiarto, 2019). multilateral approach is also in line with the concept of a "Community of Shared Future for Mankind," which positions global interdependence as a fundamental principle of climate diplomacy (Ali et al., 2024).

From a financial perspective, China's efforts to integrate low-carbon budgeting can be illustrated by Indonesia's implementation of Climate Budget Tagging (CBT). Despite challenges such as limited human resources and non-binding regulations, CBT demonstrates how budget transparency can enhance the effectiveness of climate policies. A similar approach is reflected in China's strategy to mobilize both domestic and international financial resources to support the transition to renewable energy. Furthermore, China's leadership in addressing climate change impacts is evident through its support for climate technology innovation, such as the development of more accurate climate models and investments in clean energy. This science-based approach strengthens China's position as a pioneer in climate change mitigation while enabling more informed and effective policymaking (European Commission, 2011).

China's role in bridging developed and developing countries in international negotiations highlights how its leadership is not only based on economic strength but also on its ability to understand the specific needs of each group. For example, its support for indigenous rights in forest conservation and biodiversity preservation has become an integral part of the global strategy to combat climate change (Chandra Setiawan et al., 2020). These efforts are consistent with the principles of justice and inclusivity emphasized in various international forums.

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## **China's Climate Actions in the United Nations**

Over the past decade, China's involvement in UN climate conferences and agreements has grown significantly, prompting research into its actions. According to Ali et al. (2024), China has adopted a more active stance in international climate negotiations, especially following the 2015 Paris Agreement. The nation has consistently dispatched high-level delegations to the Conference of the Parties (COP) and has played a key role in shaping global agreements. Zhang (2022) highlights several major China-led initiatives, such as the South-South Climate Cooperation Fund and the Belt and Road Initiative Green Development Coalition, which demonstrate China's efforts to align global climate leadership with its international development goals.

Furthermore, China has created various platforms for technology cooperation and knowledge exchange with developing countries. China's bilateral and multilateral climate cooperation has become a vital aspect of its environmental diplomacy. Chen et al. (2018) report that China has entered into over 30 bilateral agreements on climate change and is actively participating in multilateral forums like BASIC (Brazil, South Africa, India, and China) and the G77. These partnerships encompass a broad spectrum of areas, including technology transfer and climate financing. Assessing the effectiveness of China's role in the UN climate agenda yields mixed results. Wang et al. (2021) analyze that China's contributions have had positive impacts in areas such as renewable energy development and domestic air pollution reduction. However, challenges remain in terms of data transparency, policy implementation at the local level, and coordination among various stakeholders.

The evolution of China's engagement in the global climate regime reflects a transformation from a defensive stance to a more proactive and strategic approach. China leverages its position as the world's largest emitter to gain influence in global climate negotiations. This shift aligns with the principles of offensive realism, where

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environmental issues are used as instruments to maximize power and influence in the international system. Ministry of Ecology and Environment, on *“China’s Policies and Actions for Addressing Climate Change,”* shares China’s climate diplomacy through the lens of offensive realism, highlighting ambitious commitments such as the 2060 net-zero emission target (Environment, 2022). This strategy not only demonstrates China’s commitment to environmental issues but also serves as an effort to position itself as a global leader in green technology and sustainable development.

China’s national interests and global influence through climate change issues have become increasingly evident in contemporary international politics. Li et al. (2017), in *“China and Its Climate Leadership in a Changing World,”* argue that China’s active participation in the UN climate regime is part of a broader comprehensive national power strategy, where leadership in environmental issues is used to strengthen global legitimacy and expand influence in developing countries.

China’s involvement in the UNFCCC has significantly increased, marked by its active participation in implementing the Paris Agreement and strengthening multilateral cooperation mechanisms. Chen et al. (2018) note that China has played an instrumental role in driving global consensus on the implementation of Article 6 of the Paris Agreement, particularly regarding international carbon market mechanisms. Through its position in the UNFCCC, China has consistently advocated for the principle of “common but differentiated responsibilities,” which accommodates the interests of developing countries. China’s cooperation programs with UN agencies such as UNEP and UNDP have evolved into comprehensive strategic partnerships. A study by Ali et al. (2024) identifies that these collaborations have led to various innovative initiatives in low-carbon technology development and capacity building. Through UNEP, China has facilitated technology transfers and shared its experience in renewable energy development with developing nations, while its cooperation with UNDP has focused on integrating climate targets into the sustainable development agenda.

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The South-South Climate Cooperation Fund, launched by China, has made a significant contribution to supporting climate action in developing countries. Zhao et al. (2022) analyze that through this \$3 billion fund, China has assisted over 30 developing countries in building their capacity for climate adaptation and mitigation. Evaluations of China's peak emissions commitment for 2030 and carbon neutrality goal for 2060 indicate substantial progress, despite facing considerable implementation challenges.

Walton (2020), in *"The Third Revolution: Xi Jinping and the New Chinese State"* book review, asserts that China's strategic partnerships with UNEP and UNDP reflect greater assertiveness in Xi Jinping's era of diplomacy. The technology transfer and capacity-building programs facilitated through these UN bodies align with Mearsheimer's concept of using international institutions to project influence. China Model and Global Political Economy (2017) represents the implementation of economic diplomacy as an instrument of power maximization. This initiative strengthens China's position as a leader among developing nations on climate issues while simultaneously creating economic dependencies that serve its strategic interests. Li (2016) explains that the 2030 peak emissions commitment and the 2060 carbon neutrality goal are part of China's grand strategy to establish legitimacy as a responsible great power. This approach aligns with the principles of offensive realism, which emphasize securing a dominant position in the international system through a combination of hard power and soft power.

### **China's Role in Global Climate Governance**

The transformation of China's climate policy during the Xi Jinping era has not occurred in a political vacuum but has been shaped by the complex interplay of internal and external dynamics. Domestically, the implementation of the "Ecological Civilization" vision faces significant tensions among various stakeholders. The central government, which prioritizes the carbon neutrality agenda, often encounters

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resistance from provincial governments whose economies remain heavily dependent on high-carbon industries. Majid (2022) identify vertical fragmentation in climate policy implementation, where ambitious national targets are not always effectively translated at the provincial and local levels. This phenomenon is particularly evident in provinces such as Shanxi and Inner Mongolia, where coal mining and heavy industries dominate the economy.

Implementation challenges are further exacerbated by horizontal fragmentation among ministries in setting and coordinating climate policies. The “National Leading Committee on Climate Change,” chaired directly by the Premier, struggles to align the priorities of various ministries, which often have conflicting agendas. According to Teng and Wang (2021), the Ministry of Ecology and Environment, which is formally responsible for climate policy, has relatively limited influence compared to the National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC) or other ministries with an economic focus. This situation is reflected in the “weak vertical coordination in the implementation of the carbon neutrality strategy,” as stated in the White Paper *“Responding to Climate Change: China’s Policies and Actions”* (China, 2021).

China’s leadership has had a transformative impact on the dynamics of global climate negotiations. identifies that China’s position as a bridge between developed and developing countries has facilitated stronger consensus in international climate negotiations. This role has become increasingly significant in the context of implementing the Paris Agreement and developing global carbon market mechanisms. China’s green development model offers valuable lessons for developing nations, particularly in the areas of green industrial policy and low-carbon technology development (Perdinan et al., 2019). China’s experience in integrating environmental considerations into economic development planning provides an important reference for countries pursuing sustainable industrialization.

The prospects for achieving global climate targets heavily depend on China’s

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success in fulfilling its commitments. Analysis indicates that China's achievement of carbon neutrality by 2060 could contribute to a global temperature reduction of 0.2-0.3°C by the end of the century. However, this success hinges on China's ability to overcome various domestic and international challenges in implementing its commitments. Future projections suggest that China's role in global climate governance will become increasingly significant. Deeper integration between domestic policies and international commitments, along with strengthened implementation capacity, will be key factors in determining the effectiveness of China's climate leadership in the future.

In the landscape of contemporary climate governance, a comparison of China's approach with other hegemonic actors reveals significant strategic divergences that reflect variations in domestic contexts and geopolitical ambitions. Unlike the European Union, which emphasizes a comprehensive regulatory approach through the European Green Deal with a carbon neutrality target by 2050, China's strategy exhibits an incremental-pragmatic character, focusing on technological innovation and capacity building (Sambodo & Satrio, 2024). It identifies that while the European Union prioritizes market-based economic instruments such as the EU Emissions Trading System (ETS) and the Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM), China adopts a hybrid mechanism that integrates administrative-directive instruments with market-based elements in its national carbon market.

In contrast to the United States, which has experienced policy discontinuities between administrations—as illustrated by the Trump-era withdrawal from the Paris Agreement and the Biden-era reintegration—China's approach reflects strategic continuity institutionalized through long-term planning. Ma'rif et al. (2020) observe that the implementation of the U.S. Inflation Reduction Act emphasizes a fiscal stimulus approach and tax incentives for clean technology, while China mobilizes massive public investment in low-carbon infrastructure through coordinated

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industrial policy instruments.

In the dimension of multilateral diplomacy, significant divergence is evident in negotiation positions. Pata and Kumar (2021) analyze that, in contrast to India's position, which prioritizes historical responsibility and climate justice, China adopts a pragmatic approach that balances advocacy for common but differentiated responsibilities with ambitious unilateral commitments. Unlike Brazil, which emphasizes sovereignty concerns in its climate policy, particularly regarding Amazon rainforest conservation, China integrates climate diplomacy into the broader strategic framework of the Belt and Road Initiative and South-South cooperation.

China's financial contributions to global climate action exhibit distinctive characteristics compared to other actors. Barus and Wijaya (2022) found that while Nordic countries and Germany prioritize multilateral funding through the Green Climate Fund and the Global Environment Facility, China emphasizes bilateral mechanisms through the South-South Climate Cooperation Fund and the development of green investment opportunities within the BRI framework. This pattern reflects China's preference for maintaining strategic control over resource allocation while maximizing its visibility and geopolitical influence.

In the context of green technology, Darmastuti et al. (2021) identified that China pursues an expansive approach that includes dominance in the global supply chain for strategic technologies such as solar panels, batteries, and electric vehicles, unlike Japan, which emphasizes energy efficiency and incremental innovation in low-carbon technologies. This strategy reflects a stronger integration between climate policy and industrial leadership ambitions, which is not as evident in other actors within the global climate regime.

### **Power Maximization Behind China's Climate Actions**

China's transformation in diplomatic posture on climate change reflects a power maximization strategy aligned with the core premises of offensive realism.

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Mearsheimer (2018), in *"The Tragedy of Great Power Politics,"* asserted that in an anarchic international system, states will always seek to maximize their relative power to ensure their survival. In this context, China's shift from a defensive to a proactive approach in global climate diplomacy can be understood as a manifestation of its effort to maximize power and influence in the international system. China's ambitious commitment to achieving carbon neutrality by 2060 not only reflects environmental awareness but also serves as a strategic instrument to build global legitimacy and strengthen its hegemonic position.

The global leadership vacuum in climate issues following the United States' withdrawal from the Paris Agreement provided China with a strategic momentum to strengthen its position. Walton (2020) analyzes that under Xi Jinping's leadership, China leveraged this situation to project itself as a responsible leader in global climate action. This aligns with the concept of offensive realism, where great powers seek to fill power vacuums to maximize their influence. The establishment of the \$3 billion South-South Climate Cooperation Fund serves as a concrete manifestation of this strategy, with China utilizing financial instruments to expand its influence in developing countries. The integration of the "Community of Shared Future for Mankind" concept into China's climate diplomacy reflects a systematic effort to align national interests with the global agenda (C. Li, 2016b). This concept serves as a philosophical foundation that enables China to frame its national interests within the context of shared global interests. This approach allows China to build international legitimacy while simultaneously strengthening its bargaining position in global climate negotiations.

China's active engagement in the UNFCCC can be analyzed as a manifestation of the struggle for power in the international system, as explained within the framework of offensive realism. Tang (2019), in *"Theoretical Perspectives on International Relations in Asia,"* elaborates on how multilateral forums like the UNFCCC serve as arenas for great powers to project their strength and build

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influence. In this context, China's consistent advocacy for the principle of "common but differentiated responsibilities" not only reflects its diplomatic stance but also serves as a strategic move to build coalitions with developing countries and strengthen its bargaining position in global negotiations. China's strategic cooperation with UN bodies, such as UNEP and UNDP, demonstrates a comprehensive approach to building institutional influence. Lobell and Ernstsen (2021) analyzes that great powers tend to utilize various policy instruments, including engagement in international organizations, as a means to maximize their relative power. Through this cooperation, China not only facilitates technology transfer and shares its experience in renewable energy development but also strengthens its position as a leader in global climate governance.

Low-carbon technology development and transfer is an effective soft power instrument in China's diplomatic strategy. Li et al. (2017), in *"China and its Climate Leadership in a Changing World,"* explained that China's leadership in green technology and sustainable development not only provides economic benefits but also strengthens its global influence, particularly in developing countries. China's position as a bridge between developed and developing nations in climate negotiations reflects a broader strategy to establish hegemony in global governance.

## CONCLUSION

China's transformation in its diplomatic posture on climate change under Xi Jinping's leadership reflects a significant shift from a defensive approach to more proactive global leadership. This shift is grounded in the vision of a "Community of Shared Future for Mankind," which serves as the philosophical foundation for strengthening China's legitimacy in global climate governance. The strategic momentum for China's climate leadership intensified following the United States' withdrawal from the Paris Agreement under the Trump administration, creating an opportunity for China to solidify its position as a champion of global climate action.

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China's commitment to achieving carbon neutrality by 2060 reflects a deep understanding of the urgency of global action, aligning with the objectives of the Paris Agreement.

In implementation, China has integrated low-carbon budgeting and mobilized financial resources to support the transition to renewable energy. Its role as a bridge between developed and developing countries in international negotiations demonstrates its ability to address the specific needs of different country groups. China's climate diplomacy transformation under Xi Jinping has successfully positioned the country as a key player in global climate governance while strengthening its influence and legitimacy in the international system. Through a combination of ambitious commitments, concrete initiatives, and diverse policy instruments, China has demonstrated effective leadership in the global effort to combat climate change while maintaining its strategic national interests.

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