Chinese Approach to Global Climate Governance: from Concept to Practice

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Abstract. As one of the founding members of the United Nations, China has been actively promoting the process of global governance. In 2012, China proposed the concept of global governance of «a Community with a Shared Future for Mankind», aiming to promote the development of global governance system in a more fair and reasonable direction. The view on global climate governance is one of the five elements of the concept of «a Community with a Shared Future for Mankind». The theoretical and methodological underpinnings of this study are many approaches, theories, and methods from political science and related scientific fields, which give this work its interdisciplinary nature. Mainly geopolitical approach, method of comparison and method of comparison. In its long-term participation in global climate governance, China has formed a unique concept of global climate governance that focuses on win-win cooperation, fairness and reasonableness. China has made contributions to global public health governance. It helps enhance China’s voice and influence in the field of global climate governance. China’s view on global climate governance not only guides the practice of China’s participation in global climate governance, but also has great significance for the construction and future development of the current global climate governance mechanism. In the post-Paris Agreement era, it is possible for China to continue to promote and even lead the formulation and implementation of specific rules for the United Nations climate negotiations, and to make greater contributions to the construction of the global climate governance mechanism.

1 Introduction

Climate change is one of the most significant issues on the current global governance agenda. Due to the complexity of the problem and the multifaceted nature of the challenges, global climate governance remains a long-term and arduous task that requires extensive participation and joint efforts by member states around the world [1]. Today’s world is experiencing increasing crises of environmental degradation and climate risks, resulting in slow international processes and a lack of effective institutions to deal with global governance crises [2].

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In the process of China’s long-term participation in global climate governance, it has gradually formed its own unique view of global climate governance [3-4]. China’s view on global climate governance calls for building a cooperative and win-win, fair and reasonable climate change governance mechanism [5-7]. China’s view on global climate governance is one of the major elements of «a Community with a Shared Future for Mankind», which embodies the common vision of the world and helps to solve environmental and climate problems. It plays an important normative role in China’s global environmental cooperation practices and deepens the international climate system through the South-South cooperation, Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), and through international and regional cooperation platforms such as the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) [8-10].

This article traces the main connotation, conceptual basis of China’s view on global climate governance and China’s practice under the guidance of the view on global climate governance. As an organic whole, its core essence is win-win cooperation, fairness and reasonableness, and has a solid ideological traditional foundation and the conceptual basis of «a Community with a Shared Future for Mankind». It not only guides the practice of China’s participation in global climate governance, but also has great significance for the construction and future development of the current global climate governance mechanism.

2 Methodology

The theoretical and methodological underpinnings of this study are many approaches, theories, and methods from political science and related scientific fields, which give this work its interdisciplinary nature.

Geopolitical approach. China’s own global climate governance is a part of global governance. On the one hand, China promotes global climate governance by learning from effective domestic climate governance measures. On the other hand, China promotes global governance through regional aid to developing countries.

Method of comparison. By comparing with Western global governance concepts, find out the characteristics of China’s global governance concept.

The civilization method is used to study the influence of traditional Chinese culture on China’s view on global climate governance. The traditional ideas of fairness and rationality in Chinese traditional culture are the ideological basis of China's global climate governance concept.

3 Research results

3.1 Core essentials of China’s View on Global Climate Governance

On the basis of adhering to the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities, China’s view on global climate governance is developing in a more systematic and comprehensive direction. In December 2015, President Xi Jinping attended the opening ceremony of the Paris Climate Change Conference and delivered an important speech titled “Jointly Building a Cooperative and Win-win, Fair and Reasonable Climate Change Governance Mechanism”, clearly proposing that “everyone can do their best and cooperate for Win-win” [11-12]. Adhering to the governance concepts of the rule of law, fairness and justice, and “inclusiveness, mutual learning, and common development” clearly shows that China believes that the global climate change governance mechanism should pursue the value goals of win-win cooperation, fairness, reasonableness, inclusiveness, and mutual learning [13]. These propositions show that the core essence of China’s view on global climate governance is “win-win cooperation, fairness and reasonableness”.

2
First of all, “win-win cooperation” at the core of China’s view on global climate governance means that in the context of increasingly complex global governance in today’s world, countries around the world should unite and cooperate in global efforts to address climate change and achieve common development. Emphasize that countries benefit from working together to solve difficulties [14]. Win-win cooperation aims to promote countries, especially developed countries, to assume more responsibilities in the process of building a global climate governance mechanism, and to share governance outcomes with developing countries. This is beyond the utilitarianism and zero-sum game thinking of some countries on global climate issues.

Secondly, the basic starting point for fairness and rationalness is that developed countries and developing countries have different historical responsibilities, development stages, and coping capabilities. Therefore, an important way to achieve fairness is to improve the status and role of international law in global governance, and ensure that international rules are effectively observed and maintained. It is especially important that the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities is not only not outdated but should be respected. The principle of “common but differentiated responsibilities” (CBDR) was formally proposed at the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro. The establishment of this mechanism was the result of compromise between developed and developing countries in the international climate negotiations in the early 1990s. Its basic meaning is that all countries in the world have moral responsibilities without distinction in response to global climate change, but the proportion of this responsibility varies depending on national capabilities [15].

It is worth pointing out that “win-win cooperation, fairness and reasonableness” goes beyond the utilitarianism and zero-sum game thinking of some countries on global climate issues. Climate change is a common challenge for mankind. Climate is "the world's largest public good". Both developed and developing countries should belong to a community of interests. However, there are still various obstacles to reaching a world consensus as early as possible and achieving world action. Negotiations between countries on climate change are known as the “climate game”[16]. From the perspective of the main forces that determine the direction of the international climate process, the EU, the United States, and the Group of 77 plus China are the three forces competing among them. During the negotiations, developing countries, even major developing countries, such as Brazil, China, India, South Africa, and Mexico, which have large emissions, have different views, but on major issues still consistent. As the largest developing country, China’s concept of “win-win cooperation” has played a leading role in solidarity and cooperation. The climate issue is a topic that goes beyond sovereignty. Different countries have different interests and demands. Making sacrifices and concessions must be a game process. This is also the best window to show the magnanimity and vision of a major political country.

3.2 Ideological Basis of China’s View on Global Climate Governance

China’s view on global climate governance is rooted in China’s ancient traditional culture and based on the global governance concept of a community with a shared future for mankind. It focuses on human development and world harmony and is committed to establishing a fair and reasonable world order.

First, the origins of the concept of “China’s view on global climate governance” can be found in the traditional culture of Ancient China, which, among other things, is characterized by a wide variety of philosophical schools and movements. Among the variety of teachings, Confucianism played a special historical role. It was around Confucian sociopolitical norms that the social and state structure of China was formed. Confucianism “is the driving force
for the Chinese people” [5], and studying Confucianism is necessary to understand the specific circumstances of China’s participation in global governance.

On the one hand, the pursuit of win-win cooperation originates from the “Every form of beauty has its uniqueness. Precious is to appreciate other forms of beauty with openness. If beauty represents itself with diversity and integrity, the world will be blessed with harmony and unity. Achieving one's own goal yields gratification. Lending a hand to consummate others’ goal doubles satisfaction. Goals of self and others can be unified, thus the world can be harmonized. Everyone appreciates his own beauty, the beauty of others is beautiful, the beauty is shared, and the world is united [17], which is the idea that each civilization has its own unique charm. We should respect different civilizations and allow various civilizations to communicate with each other and prosper and develop together. China does not deny the country's pursuit of its own interests, but emphasizes the pursuit of its own interests while taking into account the interests of other countries to achieve a win-win situation. On the other hand, fairness and reasonableness come from the interpretation of “righteousness (义)”, which means principle of rationality [18]. China emphasizes that developed countries and developing countries have different historical responsibilities, development stages, and coping capabilities. Therefore, when improving the global governance system, we should take into account the national conditions of each country, especially respect developing countries, and allow countries to find the most suitable countermeasures for their own national conditions.

Second, the concept of a community with a shared future for mankind is the conceptual basis of China’s view on global climate governance. In March 2013, Chinese President Xi Jinping, during a speech at the Moscow Institute of International Relations, for the first time presented the concept of «a Community with a Shared Future for Mankind». Subsequently, Xi Jinping repeatedly mentioned this concept in his speeches at various venues. The idea of building a human community with a shared future was included in the Charter of the Communist Party of China at the 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China in 2017, and it was also enshrined in the amendments to the Constitution of the People’s Republic of China in 2018. The concept was inscribed in resolutions of the UN Commission for Social Development, the UN Security Council and the UN Human Rights Council in 2017.

The inclusion of this concept in the UN resolution demonstrates China's contribution to global governance. The essence of the concept of «a Community with a Shared Future for Mankind» is “to create a world in which there is lasting peace, common security, common prosperity, openness and tolerance, purity and beauty” [11], the implementation of the concept is carried out from different angles in politics, security, economy, culture and ecology. In terms of ecology, it is necessary to respect nature, protect the environment and jointly respond to climate change. It is emphasized that climate change is a typical global problem that cannot be effectively solved by individual or some countries.

Only when the international community establishes a sense of «a Community with a Shared Future for Mankind» and jointly participates in building a community with a shared future for climate can we achieve mutual benefit and win-win results. Therefore, it can be said that the concept of «a Community with a Shared Future for Mankind» gives China’s ideas, discourse, approach, and vision for global climate governance in addition to providing a higher level conceptual basis for China to support global climate governance [19].

3.3 China's Practice Guided by China's view on Global Climate Governance

China not only actively maintains the principle of fairness in the global climate governance system, but also strives to find the intersection of cooperation between developing and developed countries, respect one another's interests, and promote the United Nations
multilateral climate change process to achieve substantive results, achieving mutual benefit and win-win results. The specific method is as follows:

First, China has been committed to upholding the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities and promoting the development of the global climate governance system in a more equitable and reasonable direction. The principle of common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities once caused huge differences between developed countries and developing countries, and even affected the progress of the UN climate negotiations. Before the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Paris in 2015, China held bilateral consultations with the United Kingdom, the United States, India, Brazil, the European Union, and France, issued a joint statement on climate change, and reached a series of consensus on strengthening climate change cooperation and advancing multilateral processes. Among them, the “China-US Joint Statement on Climate Change” issued on 12 November 2014 first proposed that China and the U.S. “are committed to reaching an ambitious 2015 agreement that reflects the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities, in light of different national circumstances” [20]. The “U.S.-China Joint Presidential Statement on Climate Change” issued on 25 September 2015 once again reaffirmed the relevant consensus between the two sides [20]. The “EU-China Joint Statement on Climate Change”(Council of the European Union, 2015) issued on 29 June 2015 and the “Sino-French Heads of State's Joint Statement on Climate Change” released on 2 November, 2015 also echoed the consensus between China and the United States, pointing out that the Paris Agreement should be “pointing out that the Paris Agreement must be implemented in accordance with the principles of equity, common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities”. China, the United States and Europe are key participants in the United Nations climate change negotiations, and France is the presidency of the Paris Conference on Climate Change. China, the United States, the European Union, and France have reached a consensus on the application of the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities, which has sent a positive signal to the negotiations on this issue at the Paris Conference on Climate Change and formed a strong political impetus to ensure the final agreement. The Paris Agreement adheres to this principle and to promote the development of the global climate governance mechanism in a more equitable and reasonable direction.

Second, China maintains close contact with both developing and developed countries to promote win-win cooperation among all parties. In the process of promoting the conclusion of the Paris Agreement, China has actively participated in the negotiations on various issues and promoted the cooperation of all parties. On the one hand, China has strengthened consultations with developing countries with similar positions and the “Group of 77 and China”, safeguarding the unity and common interests of developing countries, and playing a constructive leading role among developing countries. On the other hand, China maintains communication with the United States, the European Union and other developed countries, actively expands consensus. China's plan proposed during the Paris Climate Change Conference takes into account the positions and demands of all parties, seeks the greatest common denominator of the interests of all parties, and promotes a win-win situation for all parties in the multilateral climate negotiation process. Without China's support and participation, the Paris Agreement would not be possible. Impossible to achieve [23]. China engages in South-South cooperation on climate change with other developing countries. China has made every effort to help other developing countries, especially small island countries, African countries, and least developed countries, enhance their ability to adapt to climate change and mitigate the negative impact of climate change on them. China has signed 43 South-South cooperation documents with 38 developing countries, allocated more than 1.2 billion yuan ($160 million) for South-South cooperation on climate change, and trained
about 2,000 people in this field for more than 120 developing countries. Officials and experts.

country [24].

In addition, China actively contributes international public goods, and China provides assistance and support to other developing countries in coping with climate change to the best of its ability. The report of the 20th National Congress of the Communist Party of China emphasized that China “firmly supports and helps developing countries to accelerate their development” [25]. China is actively providing international public goods for international climate cooperation within its capabilities, fully demonstrating the responsibility and responsibility of a major country. In 2017, China issued the “Opinions on Promoting the Construction of a Green Belt and Road Initiative”, which comprehensively explained its significance, overall requirements, main tasks and organizational guarantees. In 2019, China initiated the establishment of the “Belt and Road” Green Development International Alliance to actively create a cooperation platform for policy dialogue and communication, environmental knowledge and information, and green technology exchange and transfer for green “Belt and Road” participants. In September 2021, President Xi Jinping announced at the 76th United Nations General Assembly that China will vigorously support the green and low-carbon energy development of developing countries and will no longer build new overseas coal power projects.

Third, China not only advocates the establishment of a fair and reasonable global climate governance system and the realization of win-win international cooperation, but also takes practical actions to continuously improve the effectiveness of domestic climate change governance. China's domestic policies and actions make it one of the frontrunners in the global effort to tackle climate change [26]. Before the COP26 summit in November 2021, China released the “Working Guidance for Carbon Dioxide Peaking and Carbon Neutrality in Full” on 24 October, 2021, which are the two most significant policy documents of China's climate plan [21]. The document forms the basis of China’s policy framework to achieve two key carbon reduction goals, namely peaking carbon emissions by 2030 and achieving carbon neutrality by 2060. China’s policy framework to accomplish its two main carbon reduction goals—peaking carbon emissions by 2030 and becoming carbon neutral by 2060—is based on this paper. Three main carbon milestones—2025, 2030, and 2060—are the most important promises stated in the Working Guidance. By 2025, the share of non-fossil energy consumption in overall energy consumption will be approximately 20%; the percentage of land covered by forests will have climbed to 24.1%; and the total volume of forest stock will have grown to 18 billion cubic meters. There will be an 18% decrease in carbon dioxide (CO2) emissions per unit of GDP and a 13.5% reduction in energy usage. By 2030, energy consumption per unit of GDP will drop significantly, CO2 emissions will drop by more than 65% compared to 2005, the proportion of non-fossil energy consumption will reach more than 25%, the installed capacity for wind and solar power will exceed 1,200 GW, the forest coverage rate will be 25%, and forest stock volume of 19 billion cubic meters, and CO2 emissions have peaked and stabilized. By 2060, the proportion of non-fossil energy consumption will exceed 80% and carbon neutrality will be achieved [27].
Fig. 1. Percentage of non-fossil energy, year 2025-2030-2060

On October 27, 2021, the State Council Information Office released the white paper «China’s Policies and Actions to Address Climate Change» (hereinafter referred to as the white paper). The white paper points out that China calls on the international community to take urgent action to comprehensively strengthen solidarity and cooperation, resolutely safeguard the international system with the United Nations at its core, the international order based on international law, and resolutely safeguard the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and its Paris Agreement. We will fully implement the goals, principles and framework of the Paris Agreement and strive to build a global climate governance system that is fair, reasonable, cooperative and win-win. To this end, China is committed to sustainable development and multilateralism, and is committed to taking concrete actions and not deviating from China's course, turning around, or making empty talks [30]. These practices show that China’s view of global climate governance has gone beyond zero-sum game thinking. Breaking the old logic of “you do it first, I do it later” has laid an important foundation for China’s global climate governance outlook to play a leading role on the international stage.

In January 2024, the “Fourth National Communication on Climate Change of the People’s Republic of China” and the “Third Biennial Update Report on Climate Change of the People’s Republic of China” were officially submitted to the Secretariat of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. The two reports comprehensively and detailedly introduced to the international community the new progress in China’s compliance with the climate change treaty as of 2020, reported on China’s policy actions and results in response to climate change, and exceeded the national appropriate mitigation action goals announced to the international community in 2009, namely “By 2020, carbon dioxide emissions per unit of GDP will be reduced by 40% to 45% compared to 2005, non-fossil energy will account for about 15% of primary energy consumption, the forest area will increase by 40 million hectares compared with 2005, and the forest stock volume will increase compared with 2005 1.3 billion cubic meters” nationally appropriate mitigation action target. China has thus demonstrated that since the “13th Five-Year Plan”, China has accelerated the adjustment and optimization of energy structure, comprehensively promoted the low-carbon transformation of industry, promoted green and low-carbon development in the construction field, built a low-carbon transportation system, and consolidated and enhanced ecosystem carbon sinks. contributions and achievements. The implementation of previous climate change treaties and a series of achievements have shown the world that China has become a leader in the global climate governance process [31].
4 Discussion

Global governance in today’s world is at a crossroads. As a rising power, China has the ability and willingness to participate in global governance and put forward its own plans. The basis of an important conceptual document for China’s participation in global governance is «a Community with a Shared Future for Mankind», which contains five aspects. Among them, climate governance involves the issue of human survival. Therefore, starting from global climate governance, summarizing climate governance experience and making contributions to global governance is undoubtedly an effective way for China to enhance its voice in global governance.

Our results show that China has put forward a complete view on climate governance under the framework of a community with a shared future for mankind. Through research results, we can find that China’s view on climate governance contains unique elements of traditional Chinese morality and emphasizes that countries around the world should abandon the zero-sum game thinking. Think about the problem from the perspective of the interests of all mankind. At the same time, China will fulfill its policy documents regarding participation in global governance as proof of its ability to fulfill its commitments.

This research is mainly based on the cultural and policy roots of global governance that Chinese leaders talk about most in official occasions. However, there is not much analysis of the different views of Chinese political schools. Our results highlight the theoretical sources and revealed foundations of the Chinese government’s strategic planning. Next steps include incorporating into the study the impact of the Chinese school of international relations theory on China’s policies, and how Chinese schools of international relations theory explain China’s participation in global governance from their respective perspectives.

5 Conclusions

China’s view on global climate governance was formed in the past 30 years of global climate governance practice, which has distinct Chinese characteristics, contains significant moral and ethical factors. Its core essence emphasizes win-win cooperation and fairness and rationalness goes beyond utilitarianism and zero-sum thinking. It has an important value oriented role in the construction and future development of global climate governance mechanisms, and it also effectively guides China's participation in the practice of global climate governance.

China’s view on global climate governance based on win-win cooperation, fairness and rationalness has two conceptual foundations: First, it is in line with the social justice thought in traditional Chinese culture, advocating self-interest and altruism, and emphasizing fairness and rationalness. Second, it is also a concrete manifestation and application of the concept of a community with a shared future for mankind in the field of climate change governance.

Under the guidance of China’s view on global climate governance, China’s practice in the field of global climate is mainly reflected in three aspects. First, China adheres to the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities to promote the transformation of the global climate governance system in a more fair and reasonable direction. Second, China maintains close contact with both developing and developed countries to promote win-win cooperation among all parties. Third, China takes practical actions to continuously improve the effectiveness of domestic climate change governance.

These all practices show that China’s view on global climate governance has surpassed zero-sum game thinking. Breaking the old logic of “you do it first, I will do it later”. It helps China occupy the moral high ground and enhance China’s voice and influence in the field of global climate governance. In today’s era of global governance at a crossroads, it is possible for China to continue to promote and lead the formulation and implementation of specific
rules for the United Nations climate negotiations, and to make greater contributions to the construction of the global climate governance mechanism.

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