Partners or Rivals? Assessing the China-US Relationship on Climate Change After the US Exit from the Paris Agreement

A qualitative study on climate cooperation between China and the United States

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Abstract

This thesis examines the effects of the US withdrawal from the Paris Agreement on the relationship on climate change between China and the US, two major global greenhouse gas emitters. The study aims to shed light on the impact of this withdrawal on climate cooperation between the two nations and its wider ramifications in global politics. By filling a gap in existing research, this study offers insights into the dynamics of Sino-American climate collaboration, contributing to a deeper understanding of the geopolitics surrounding climate change.

The study employs a content analysis methodology to investigate written texts, including official documents and media coverage, from the period spanning 2014 to 2020. To guide this analysis, the study constructs an analytical framework rooted in the theoretical perspectives of realism, neoliberal institutionalism, and collective action. By utilizing this framework, the study seeks to identify and analyze the competitive and collaborative behaviors exhibited by both countries.

The findings highlight the negative impact of the withdrawal on Sino-American climate cooperation, as China assumed a more assertive leadership role while the US shifted towards a self-focused and inward-looking stance. Notably, the study recognizes the influential role of media discourse in shaping perceptions, with media articles emphasizing criticism between the two nations more prominently than the official documents, thereby shaping a critical narrative surrounding the bilateral relationship.

Keywords: climate change, international climate cooperation, Sino-US relationship
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1. Introduction

Climate change is one of the most pressing issues facing the global community today. International cooperation and leadership are crucial in addressing the challenges brought about by climate change, particularly in reducing greenhouse gas emissions. The United States and China are two of the largest emitters of greenhouse gases in the world, and their relationship plays a crucial role in global efforts to combat climate change. While previous research has extensively explored the impact of international climate leadership and the consequences for China and other countries, little attention has been paid to the impact of the United States' withdrawal from the Paris Agreement on the relationship between China and the US. This thesis seeks to fill this gap in the literature by examining the effects of the US withdrawal on China and the US' relationship on climate change. By addressing this research question, this thesis aims to provide insights into the dynamics of the relationship between the world's two largest emitters and the implications for global climate cooperation.

Extensive research has covered various aspects of the Sino-US relationship, including China's approach to collaboration, US-China cooperation challenges, reasons behind the US's Paris Accord withdrawal, and China's compliance level. Some scholars explore China's potential as a climate cooperation leader, while others study how international cooperation can proceed without the US. The relationship's instability beyond the "cold war" narrative has led to alternative frameworks, and limited inquiry examines China's perspective on the US's withdrawal. Overall, the research indicates a complex, multifaceted relationship, requiring ongoing study and engagement to navigate effectively.

While previous research has examined the effects of the Paris Agreement and the US withdrawal on international climate leadership, there is a noticeable research gap regarding the specific consequences of this event on the relationship between China and the US. This thesis aims to fill this gap by conducting an in-depth analysis of the effects of the US withdrawal on climate cooperation between the two nations.

This motivates the research question of this thesis: What was the effect of the US withdrawal from the Paris Agreement on China and the United States' relationship on climate change?
This study contributes by filling a gap in the existing literature on China's response to the US withdrawal from the Paris Agreement. Despite the importance of China's response in shaping the global response to climate change, few studies have examined this topic in detail. This study provides a detailed analysis of China's response to the US withdrawal, highlighting factors that drove China's behavior and the implications of this behavior for global climate governance. Overall, this contribution helps to address an important gap in the literature and provides insights into the future of climate diplomacy between the world's two largest carbon emitters.

To achieve this objective, the study employs a content analysis approach, examining official documents from the Chinese and US governments as well as news articles and reports from US, Chinese and independent media outlets spanning the period from 2014 to 2020. The analysis enables the identification of key themes and patterns related to the US withdrawal from the Paris Agreement and its impact on Sino-American cooperation in addressing climate change.

For analyzing the documents, this thesis utilizes an analytical framework that combines realism, neoliberal institutionalism, and collective action theory to analyze the behavior of major powers in the context of global climate change. The framework considers both collaborative and competitive behavior, shedding light on the factors influencing state actions. Collaborative behavior focuses on understanding how actors cooperate through partnerships, networks, and coalitions to address climate change collectively. On the other hand, competitive behavior explores how actors may compete for resources and influence in the realm of climate change. By examining both dimensions, this framework provides comprehensive insights into major power dynamics in relation to climate change.

Through data analysis and coding, patterns in major power behavior will be identified and linked to either collaborative or competitive tendencies. By employing this approach, the study aims to enhance understanding of the intricate dynamics shaping major power responses to global climate change.

My research findings reveal the arduous efforts made by both countries to establish a collaborative relationship as evidenced by the joint announcement and the Paris climate negotiations. During the period of 2014 to 2016, both countries demonstrated a commitment to compliance and exhibited characteristics aligned with neoliberal institutionalism. However,
after the US withdrawal in 2017, there was a noticeable shift in the tone of both countries. The US became more inward-looking, driven by domestic interests and a realist approach, while China maintained its focus on climate change but with an increased emphasis on leadership and strategic interests. This change in China's approach was likely a response to the US decision to withdraw from the Paris Agreement.

The results of this study contribute to the understanding of the impact of the US withdrawal from the Paris Agreement on Sino-American cooperation on climate change, and the role of the media in shaping public opinion and policy positions on this issue. The study concludes by discussing the implications of the findings and suggestions for future research.

1.1 Outline of the thesis

This thesis will present an analysis of the relationship between China and the US in the context of climate change, specifically focusing on the impact of the US withdrawal from the Paris Agreement. The background section will provide a brief overview of the history of the Paris Agreement and the relationship between China and the US. Following is the literature review which examines previous research on the topic, with a focus on the relationship between the two countries in the context of climate change.

The analytical framework for analyzing the impact of the US withdrawal on the relationship between China and the US will be established in the theory section. This section will draw on theories of realism, neoliberal institutionalism, and collective action to guide the analysis of the data. The analytical framework will be developed based on these theories, providing a foundation for the analysis.

The methodology section will outline the research method that will be used in the study, including data collection and analysis techniques. In the data section, the selection of the data sources used in the analysis will be detailed.

The analysis section will provide an examination of the impact of the US withdrawal on the relationship between China and the US in the context of climate change. This section will explore the effects on both countries, as well as the impact on international cooperation and the broader implications for the global effort to address climate change.
The concluding remarks section will summarize the findings of the study and discuss their implications. It will also suggest avenues for further research, highlighting areas where additional analysis and investigation could deepen our understanding of the relationship between China and the US in the context of climate change.

1.2 Background and research problem

The background chapter of this thesis aims to provide contextual information on the Paris Agreement, the positions of the United States and China on climate change, and the history of their cooperation in this area. The chapter will begin with an overview of the Paris Agreement and will examine the role of the United States and China in the development and implementation of the agreement. It will also provide a brief history of the climate change negotiations and agreements that preceded the Paris Agreement.

In December 2015, 196 countries adopted the Paris Agreement, a legally binding international treaty on climate change which took effect on November 4, 2016. The primary objective of this agreement is to limit global warming to less than 2 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels and pursue efforts to keep the increase below 1.5 degrees Celsius. Every country is expected to set its own objectives for reducing greenhouse gas emissions, known as nationally determined contributions (NDCs), and to report their progress every five years. The agreement also includes provisions for financial assistance from developed to developing countries to support their mitigation and adaptation efforts (UNFCCC, n.d.).

The bilateral relationship between China and the US is considered one of the most significant and complex in the world, marked by fluctuations and intricacies since the end of the Cold War (Council of Foreign Relations, n.d.; Yan, 2010). According to the Council of Foreign Relations, issues related to cooperation on trade, climate change, and Taiwan have been the main factors leading to instability in the relationship. Additionally, the two countries have a history of being on opposite sides in conflicts, such as China's support of the communist North and the US defending the South during the Korean War in 1950. The relationship has been further strained by incidents related to trade, economics - especially the 2008 financial crisis - and other diplomatic disagreements between the two nations (Council of Foreign Relations, n.d.).
China and the US have encountered significant challenges to their collaboration on addressing climate change over the years. The US, during the George Bush era, did not ratify the Kyoto Protocol, an international treaty aimed at reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Similarly, other large emitters like China, India, and Brazil did not make binding emission limitation commitments, leading to the remaining Kyoto countries only being responsible for one-third of global emissions (Hovi & Skodvin, 2008). Critics have pointed out that the Protocol failed to adequately address climate change issues since it excluded major emitters like the United States and China. Additionally, developed countries could buy credits from developing countries instead of reducing emissions domestically. In 2011, Canada withdrew from the treaty, stating that the Kyoto Protocol "does not cover the world's largest two emitters, the United States and China, and therefore cannot work" (The Guardian, 2011). Nonetheless, the Kyoto Protocol did lead to a reduction in emissions from some participating countries, and it laid the groundwork for future international climate agreements (Cooper, 2001; Aldy, Barret & Stavins, 2003).

The principle of common but differentiated responsibilities (CBDR) has been a major point of contention between China and the US in previous climate negotiations. Developed countries, including the US, are expected to take on greater commitments and responsibilities to reduce greenhouse gas emissions while developing countries like China are allowed to continue to increase their emissions as they pursue economic development. China and other developing countries have generally argued that developed countries bear the historical responsibility for causing climate change and should, therefore, take on more significant actions to address it. They also argue that developing countries should not be penalized for pursuing economic development while emitting greenhouse gases, as developed countries had already done so. Conversely, the US and other developed countries contend that developing countries like China have become significant emitters in recent years and should assume greater commitments to reduce emissions. They argue that developing countries are not doing enough to combat climate change, and their increasing emissions threaten the effectiveness of global efforts to address the issue. These disagreements have largely prevented progress in previous negotiations (Yang, 2022; Kolmaš, 2023).

In 2012, Xi Jinping became China's President, taking over from Hu Jintao. Soon after, Xi and then-US President Barack Obama pledged to increase cooperation on global issues, with a particular emphasis on climate change. Two years later, the two leaders issued a joint statement on climate change, which prompted China to make its first commitment to limit emissions
growth by 2030 (Council on Foreign Relations). Throughout the Obama administration, cooperation on climate change played a significant role in US-China relations (Barnes, Dai & Luh, 2020).

The success of the Paris Agreement was largely attributed to the cooperation between China and the US. Several factors contributed to this, including the two countries recognizing the urgency of the climate change threat, their status as major emitters, previous progress in bilateral cooperation, and potential economic benefits. The US-China joint announcement on climate change in November 2014 was a crucial milestone, as it signaled to the world that the two largest emitters were committed to taking action on climate change. This announcement set the stage for the Paris Agreement negotiations, with China and the US playing a leading role in securing a global agreement (Godbole, 2016).

Overall, climate change cooperation between China and the US was a bright spot in their bilateral relationship during the Obama administration. However, with the US withdrawal from the Paris Agreement, the future of this cooperation is uncertain.

1.2.1 Research problem

China's greenhouse gas emissions exceeded those of all developed nations combined in 2019, contributing to 27% of global emissions, while the United States came in second as the largest emitter, accounting for 13% (Barnes, Dai & Luh, 2020). As the top two emitters, it is crucial for China and the US to collaborate and work towards addressing the issue of climate change together.

The US withdrawal from the Paris Agreement had far-reaching impacts despite its brief technical absence between November 4, 2020, and February 19, 2021. President Trump's lack of commitment to the agreement during his tenure made the withdrawal a mere formality. However, its effects on the global community were significant, and understanding the relationship between China and the US after the withdrawal is crucial. The two nations are prominent actors in international diplomacy and trade and their relationship has implications that extend beyond climate change. The complexity of their interactions can shape the direction of global politics and economics, as they have a history of both cooperation and conflict.
With the US shifting its approach to climate change, China has emerged as a more prominent leader in renewable energy. Understanding the current dynamics between the two nations, particularly regarding climate change, can provide valuable insights into the direction of climate diplomacy and the balance of power in the world.

Given the close ties between the United States and China, particularly during the Obama administration, it would be reasonable to anticipate that China would have a notable response to the US decision to withdraw from the Paris Agreement. Prior to the agreement's negotiation and subsequent signing, both countries had expended substantial effort to ensure its success, recognizing the significance of their respective roles as the world's two largest carbon emitters. Therefore, the US decision to withdraw could be expected to have strained the relationship between the two nations, particularly in the context of global climate governance.

Moreover, the withdrawal could be seen as a repudiation of the leadership role previously held by the United States on climate change, potentially leading to a shift in China's approach to global climate governance. The Chinese government has been working to establish itself as a leader on environmental issues, and the US withdrawal could be viewed as an opportunity for China to enhance its global standing on this issue. However, it is also possible that the withdrawal could have a negative impact on China's efforts, as the absence of the US could lead to a weakening of international efforts to address climate change.
1.3 Literature review

Numerous studies have been conducted on various facets of the relationship between China and the US. These studies have explored various aspects of the relationship, ranging from economic interdependence and competition to geopolitical tensions and ideological conflicts. The subject has received a lot of attention, yet many questions remain unsolved, and some areas still need more research. As climate change continues to impact the world, the relationship between China and the US in addressing this issue is of utmost importance. With the constantly changing political and economic landscape, there is a pressing need for updated research to provide insights into the evolving challenges and opportunities in this critical area of global affairs.

Firstly, research suggests that there has been significant instability and fluctuations in both the relationship between China and the US and their collaboration on climate change. Hilton and Kerr (2017) provide an in-depth examination of the changes that occurred between 2009 and 2015, allowing China to participate more actively in the international climate regime. One of the significant changes was China's willingness to take on commitments on the global stage. Their study found that development and the economy were the primary reasons offered for not committing initially. However, the changes that China made largely contributed to the success of COP 21 and the Paris Agreement, and China was the first large emitter to ratify the agreement (Hilton & Kerr, 2017). The findings highlight the importance of China's involvement in international climate negotiations, as its decisions can significantly impact the outcome of these negotiations. It also suggests that China's changing stance on climate change has led to a more stable and productive relationship between the US and China on this issue.

Several studies have highlighted the difficulties in achieving cooperation between China and the US in climate change. For example, Ewing (2021) has specifically examined this issue, noting that during COP 15 in Copenhagen, China emphasized the concept of "common but differentiated responsibilities”. This concept led to disagreements between China and the US regarding their respective responsibilities, which characterized most efforts at climate cooperation prior to COP 21 in Paris. Ewing also observed that the relationship between China and the US on this issue has been marked by hostility and a reluctance to work together. The US was concerned that China would exploit an agreement with fewer requirements, leading to a free-rider problem. These findings highlight the differences between China and the US on climate cooperation and help to explain why earlier attempts to establish an agreement have
failed, including disagreements on responsibilities between developed and non-developed countries.

Numerous studies have investigated why the United States has previously chosen to abstain or withdraw from international climate agreements. Zhang, Chao, Zheng, and Huang (2017) examine Trump's motives behind leaving the Paris Agreement. While the withdrawal was expected considering Trump’s election campaign, it caused a lot of uncertainty regarding international climate change cooperation. They found that Trump presented a variety of justifications, including the economics, unjust terms, and job losses, to justify the US withdrawal (Zhang, Chao, Zheng, and Huang, 2017). Xialong (2021) claims that the US withdrawal from the Paris Agreement was a result of deficiencies in the agreement's design and that the remaining countries will have an even harder time preserving the environmental integrity of the agreement after the disengagement of the US. Unny (2020) further examines factors that have discouraged the US from partaking in international climate change agreements. The analysis finds that the American perspective on climate change largely followed the realist line. An offensive realist would maximize their capabilities at the expense of other states. According to the offensive realists, the US leaving the Paris Agreement would provide its freedom from any consequences for its CO2 emissions, whereas China and India will be subject to regulation. Essentially, this would give the United States an advantage over China and India in their exploitation of energy and fossil fuels (Unny, 2020). Research has shown that the US decisions to not participate in or withdraw from international climate agreements is affected by both instrumental reasons, domestic politics as well as the agreement's design.

The US withdrawal from the Paris Agreement has been extensively studied, with researchers analyzing its implications for the remaining nations and international climate governance. Dai, Zhang & Wang (2017) emphasize how the carbon emission space will be reduced and the mitigation costs will be increased for other parties like China, the EU, and Japan. According to Sælen et al., achieving the 2°C goal is already a challenging task that requires specific conditions. However, their research indicates that even a temporary withdrawal by the United States would significantly limit the already small set of conditions under which the 2°C goal could be reached. While the initial impact of a U.S. withdrawal from climate initiatives may predominantly affect its own emissions, the long-term consequences will be even more detrimental for other countries' emissions. Rhodes (2017) highlights that China has emphasized
to the US that fighting climate change is a global responsibility. After the withdrawal, forty other independent nations expressed their concern, disappointment, or outrage, and reaffirmed their own commitments to abide by the treaty. Zhang, Chao, Zheng, and Huang (2017) accentuate that the United States’ withdrawal from the Paris Agreement opposes sustainable development and climate justice. Meanwhile, the fluctuation in climate negotiation and climate governance is stepping into a new era as multiple countries and country groups are taking the floor together (Zhang, Chao, Zheng, and Huang, 2017). The potential risk of additional nations imitating the US and leaving the Paris Agreement is highlighted by Pickering et al. (2017). However, it is highlighted that there is far greater independent momentum for action on climate change after the Paris Agreement compared to the era of the Kyoto Protocol (Pickering et al., 2017). According to studies on the subject, the US withdrawal has a significant impact on the remaining nations, including a smaller carbon emission space and a new age of climate cooperation.

Recent literature has explored the potential for China to take on a greater leadership role in promoting global climate cooperation in the wake of the US withdrawal from the Paris Agreement. Zhang, Dai, Lai & Wang (2017) argue that the US withdrawal from the Paris Agreement in 2017 created a potential opportunity for China and the EU to exert their leadership. Cozier (2017) questions whether the US withdrawal may allow China to take the reins as the global leader in the adoption of clean technology and CCS. During the 12th EU-China Business Summit, the partners emphasized the need of developing cooperation in their climate policies while reiterating their commitment to implementing the 2015 Paris Agreement (Cozier, 2017). The US disengagement from the global climate governance system and its long-lasting negative effects have left the China-US joint leadership stranded (Yu, 2018). According to Yu (2018), China should therefore aim to play a larger role in leading efforts to combat climate change and improve collaboration through a variety of channels. These findings show that China now has the opportunity to become a global leader in climate change and green technology as a result of the US withdrawal from the Paris Agreement.

Although China has been seen as a possible leader in addressing climate change on a global scale, there are concerns regarding its adherence to the Paris Agreement. Xiaolong (2021) has evaluated China’s compliance capacity in the post-Paris Agreement era, taking into consideration the absence of the United States. The study found that due to differences in their respective stages of growth, energy consumption, economic structure, climate funding, and
availability of low-carbon technologies, China still lags behind the United States in terms of compliance capacity. According to Xiaolong (2021), China should focus on reducing its social-economic imbalance with the United States and strengthening its capacity to deal with climate change while launching follow-up negotiations for the implementation of the Paris Agreement. These findings highlight the need for China to address its compliance capacity and work towards achieving greater parity with the United States in the fight against climate change.

Effective international climate cooperation has been a topic of discussion in the post-Paris Agreement era, especially after the US's withdrawal. Smirnov (2019) highlights the need for additional greenhouse gas emission cuts from countries like China and India to achieve collective goals. However, the willingness of these nations to bear the higher costs brought on by the US withdrawal is uncertain. Despite this, Downie & Williams (2018) and Unny (2020) contend that climate cooperation without the US is possible, but they also stress the importance of America's participation. Some analysts are optimistic about the prospects of the remaining nations. Downie & Williams (2018) suggest that the BRICS countries could potentially shape global climate governance. Additionally, Jiahan (2018) argues that the cooperation between China and the United States is not likely to lose momentum due to President Xi's securitization of climate change, which was previously a contentious issue. So, while other nations may be required to make larger contributions, researchers suggest that it is still possible to combat climate change without the US.

The relationship between China and the US has also been the subject of much research. According to research done on the Sino-US relationship, instability has been a defining characteristic of the partnership over time. The possibility of the China-US relationship only being a "superficial friendship" is investigated by Yan (2010). The claim is further substantiated by several examples of their disagreements causing instability. Yan (2010) argues that the instability of the China-US relationship cannot change until the two countries transform their superficial relationship. Instability in the relationship is attributed to China's growing nationalism and rise to power, which has led China to become more assertive in its interactions with the US. Yan highlights that the partnership has been marked by a variety of events that could have led to conflict, but many of these have been ignored in favor of maintaining a relatively stable relationship (Yan, 2010). The research's key findings show that the China-US relationship has been unstable and superficial, necessitating a change in the dynamics of the two countries' interactions.
As a result of the deteriorating US-China relations under the Trump administration, various theoretical frameworks have been established to comprehend the substance of the two countries' recent great power rivalry. Yin (2020) examines the various ways to explain the connection between China and the US. Due to the history of the Cold War between the US and the Soviet Union, Yin argues that it is misleading to refer to the relationship between China and the US as a "cold war." In contrast to the Cold War, which can be regarded as a full-fledged strategic conflict without war, the US-China strategic relationship is best described, according to Yin, as being in the early phases of constrained strategic rivalry (Yin, 2020). The future of the relationship between the superpowers has also been discussed by Medeiros (2019), arguing that many of the drivers of the relationship are evolving and pushing it in a more competitive direction. Medeiros emphasizes that China's behavior is crucial to the US not just because it directly affects US interests, but also because it is taking place in a region that is crucial to both US interests and the global order since the Cold War ended. Subsequently, he concludes by arguing that competition is more of a condition than a strategy for the US-China relationship (Medeiros, 2019). Research on the US-China great power rivalry shows that it has developed into a condition of strategic competition.

A small portion of research has investigated the Chinese reaction to the US withdrawal. Swaine (2017) emphasizes that few observers have taken a detailed look at Chinese thinking on the matter of the US withdrawal from the Paris Agreement either before or after Trump's decision. Many observers have examined the implications of this decision for China and emphasized how it would benefit China by giving it the opportunity to take global leadership in this area. Swaine argues that most of the Western analysis of Chinese viewpoints only highlights China's rising commitment to global efforts to battle climate change and its apparent intention to leverage Trump's decision to increase support for China as a responsible global leader. Swaine offers a less benevolent Western perspective, contrary to arguing that China is gleefully striving to overthrow the United States as the world's leading power by taking advantage of the United States' withdrawal from the Paris Accords (Swaine, 2017). The main findings of this study indicate that, in light of the US Paris Agreement exit, the Chinese perspective is underrepresented.

In sum, previous research on the topic of the Paris Agreement and the US withdrawal has focused on international climate leadership and what the consequences for China and the
remaining countries would be. Even though there has been a sizable amount of research on the justifications, effects, advantages, and disadvantages of America's withdrawal as well as China's coping mechanisms, most of the existing literature has not made an effort to thoroughly analyze the impact it has had on the relationship between China and the US. Studies on China's response to the US withdrawal and its effects on climate cooperation are scarce. By focusing on the aspect of the relationship between China and the US related to climate cooperation, my thesis will attempt to fill this gap.

Hence, my research question is:

**What was the effect of the US withdrawal from the Paris Agreement on China and the United States' relationship on climate change?**
2. Theory

In this chapter, I will establish the theoretical foundation for the analysis of the relationship between the US and China on climate. I will introduce the relevant theories that will help analyze the dynamics of the relationships.

Realism offers insights into how states compete for power and influence in the international system, whereas neoliberal institutionalism emphasizes how international institutions and cooperation can promote shared interests. Meanwhile, collective action theory helps us understand the challenges that arise when multiple actors must coordinate their actions to achieve a common goal and the incentives and barriers that impact their willingness to do so. Together, these theories are relevant to explaining the dynamics of collaboration, or the lack thereof, on climate change.

2.1 Realism

Since the Second World War, the theory of realism has prevailed in the field of international relations. At its core, realism posits that states are the primary actors in the international system, and that they operate in a world without a centralized authority or power that can constrain their behavior. Realists contend that states are motivated by self-interest, and that they will pursue their own interests even if this means undermining the interests of other nations. As Keohane notes, the international system is essentially lawless, lacking any overarching authority to establish and enforce moral standards. Consequently, states must rely on the means and arrangements they can create to navigate this complex and uncertain environment (Keohane, 2005, p. 7).

Grieco's work underscores the central tenets of realism in international relations. According to Grieco, states are the primary actors in global affairs, and they are acutely aware of the costs associated with failing to protect their vital interests or pursuing ambitions beyond their capabilities. In addition, the absence of a centralized authority or power in the international system - known as international anarchy - exerts a profound influence on state behavior. Given their focus on power and security, predisposition towards conflict and competition, and overriding concern with their own interests, governments operating within an anarchic system are often reluctant to cooperate even when their interests converge. Grieco maintains that
international institutions have a limited impact on the likelihood of collaboration, with states generally prioritizing their own interests above all else (Grieco, 1988, p. 488).

Realist scholars acknowledge that states are not solely motivated by absolute gains, but also by compliance considerations. They argue that because states are not individual entities but rather occupy positions in a larger system, they are not only concerned with the possibility of their partners cheating but also with the prospect that their partners may benefit more from cooperation than they do. Realism suggests that a state will evaluate both its absolute and relative gains from collaboration and may choose to withdraw from an arrangement even if it is satisfied with its partner's compliance if the partner is reaping substantially greater benefits. Thus, realists identify state concerns about cheating and state concerns about relative gains as the two primary barriers to international cooperation (Grieco, 1988, p. 487).

Realism in international relations assumes that rational egoism is the foundation for decision-making among primary actors in international politics. This premise implies that actors engaged in international affairs should only consider their own welfare when making decisions, and they aim to maximize the value of their actions across a consistent set of objectives (Keohane, 2005, p. 66). While realist scholars acknowledge the significance of diplomacy and international institutions, they argue that these mechanisms should only be used to promote national interests and safeguard national security rather than viewed as ends in themselves (Jervis, 1999). Therefore, realism holds that international relations are characterized by self-help and competition among states, rather than cooperation and collective action.

As it provides a framework for understanding how states compete for power and influence in the global system, realism can be an effective tool for analyzing competitive behavior among states within the context of this thesis. According to realism, competition is an inherent characteristic of the international system, necessitating a constant equilibrium between a state's interests and those of other states. Realist theorists argue that governments must be prepared to utilize a wide range of tactics to achieve their objectives and ensure their security within a fiercely competitive international landscape.

Furthermore, realism is useful for understanding states' behavior regarding climate change. According to realism, states prioritize their own national interests over global interests, which can make reducing greenhouse gas emissions and mitigating climate change difficult. Realists
argue that without clear financial or security benefits, states are unlikely to sacrifice economic development and growth for reducing their carbon footprint. Moreover, international climate change agreements like the Paris Agreement may fail without effective enforcement mechanisms and penalties for non-compliance. However, some scholars suggest that realism can offer a framework for comprehending the potential for interstate cooperation on climate change, particularly if it results in economic benefits.

2.2 Neoliberal institutionalism

The challenger to realism is neoliberal institutionalism (Grieco, 1988). Neoliberal institutionalism offers a more hopeful and optimistic perspective on global politics. Overall, the premise of neoliberal institutionalism is that international cooperation is possible and desirable, but it depends on the institutional frameworks within which states operate.

Neoliberalism bases its assertions about cooperation on the idea that states act in an atomistic manner. It contends that states are unconcerned with the profits made by others and instead want to maximize their own absolute gains. The new theory contends that cheating is the biggest obstacle to rationally egoistic states working together, but it also contends that international institutions can assist states in overcoming this obstacle (Grieco, 1988, p. 487).

According to neoliberal institutionalism, international organizations can encourage state cooperation. The central claim of the new liberal institutionalists is that, even if the realists are correct that anarchy restricts states' capacity for cooperation, governments may still work together, especially with the support of international institutions (Grieco, 1988, p. 486). Neoliberal institutionalism maintains that self-interest generates state cooperation. The neoliberal perspective will be relevant if two requirements are met: the actors must have certain common interests to benefit from cooperation, and institutionalization levels have a substantial influence on how governments respond (Keohane, 2005). Collaboration demands active efforts to change policy to accommodate demands from others (Keohane, 2005, p. 12).

Neoliberal institutionalism offers valuable insights into the challenges of achieving international cooperation on climate change. Firstly, neoliberal institutionalism highlights the importance of actor collaboration in accomplishing collective goals. This is especially important when dealing with climate change, which calls for coordinated efforts across sectors.
and national boundaries. The importance of international institutions in facilitating cooperation is another aspect of neoliberal institutionalism. International organizations like the Paris Agreement and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) offer a framework for international collaboration in the area of climate change. Moreover, neoliberal institutionalism acknowledges that self-interest serves as the primary driving force for actors. In terms of climate change, this means that nations may be more inclined to work together if they believe that doing so will benefit their own interests, such as by lowering the likelihood of disasters caused by climate change or enhancing their international reputation.

2.3 Collective Action Theory

Mancur Olson's The Logic of Collective Action is a seminal work in collective action theory. According to Olson (1965), the probability of a free-riding problem increases as the size of a group increases. This is because the benefits of collective action become more diffused while the costs remain concentrated. The free-rider problem arises when actors benefit from non-excludable public goods without paying for them, which can lead to under-provision or lack of provision of the good (Olson, 1965).

The collective action theory, which is closely linked to economics, provides an explanation of group behavior that has been studied across various social disciplines under different names (Marwell & Ames, 1979, p. 1335). According to this theory, while cooperation could benefit all parties involved, collective action problems such as free-riding and coordination issues can hinder states from working together.

Formal models of social dilemmas assume that actors prioritize their own short-term interests, leading to the prediction that collective action is unlikely to occur (Potetee, Janssen & Ostrom, 2010, p. 171). States typically prioritize their own interests, seeking power to ensure the prosperity and security of their citizens rather than acting out of compassion or a desire to further international interests (Keohane, 2005, p. 10). International institutions, therefore, are created by states to foster cooperative relationships (Keohane, 2005, p. 11). According to Keohane, international agreements must be self-enforcing, as actors will only abide by them if they believe that doing so benefits them as much as pursuing their own interests without the agreement (Keohane, 2005, p. 14).
According to Mancur Olson (1965), organizations play a crucial role in promoting the interests of their members, particularly those with an economic dimension. He defines public goods as goods that are available for everyone in a group to use without exclusion, while non-collective goods can be restricted. States, like other organizations, provide public goods to their constituents. However, Olson notes that larger groups may face challenges in efficiently providing collective goods, whereas smaller groups may offer them in less efficient ways. While economic incentives are important, actors may also be motivated by social and psychological factors such as status, respect, and friendship (Olson, 1965, p. 60).

In the provision of public goods, no single actor can act independently to produce the common good. This is due to the incentive for each participant to free-ride, allowing others to pay for the provision of the public good. However, if every player acts in this manner, the public interest will not be served, resulting in a suboptimal state referred to as the Nash Equilibrium. One way to illustrate this concept is through the classic Prisoner's Dilemma game, where two individuals are better off when they cooperate rather than defect. However, the optimal outcome occurs when one individual defects while the other cooperates. Addressing the free-riding issue is, therefore, a central goal of global politics (Aklin & Mildenberger, 2020).

Private goods are those that can only be consumed by those who have purchased them, whereas public goods are goods that are made available to others in addition to the original purchaser. The non-excludability in consumption is a critical aspect of public goods, making the provision of such goods challenging (Marwell & Ames, 1979, p. 1336). The problem arises because any actor can benefit from the public good without contributing to its cost, a phenomenon known as free-riding (p. 1337). This creates a dilemma similar to the "prisoner's dilemma," where each actor is better off not contributing regardless of how other group members behave. However, if all actors act this way, the individual will be worse off than if everyone contributed, including themselves (p. 1338). This is referred to as the tragedy of the commons, where individual rational choices result in excessive use of a good or service, leading to negative effects on society (Hardin, 1968). Actors always choose a course of action that maximizes their personal benefit.

Climate change is often viewed as a classic example of a collective action problem. Since mitigating climate change requires a global public good, nations are incentivized to free-ride and benefit from the mitigation efforts of other countries (Hovi, Ward & Grundig, 2015, p.
667). However, the coalition unanimity rule can be used to discipline nations by preventing them from engaging in certain types of free riding, such as withdrawing from a climate agreement to avoid taking action (p. 668).

An agent that is driven by self-interest and makes decisions based on all available information to maximize personal benefits is an example of goal-directed behavior. However, when it comes to decision-making related to environmental management, the challenges are so intricate that it is highly unlikely for any individual to possess complete knowledge of the problem and evaluate all available solutions (Potetee, Janssen & Ostrom, 2010, p. 174).

Applying collective action theory to climate change-related topics is useful because it provides a framework to understand the complex challenges associated with addressing this global issue. Collective action theory recognizes that climate change is a collective action problem, in which individual actors have an incentive to free-ride and avoid taking action to mitigate emissions. By examining the incentives and motivations of different actors, such as states, businesses, and individuals, collective action theory can help identify barriers to cooperation and provide insights into effective strategies for encouraging collective action. Additionally, collective action theory highlights the importance of institutions and governance mechanisms in coordinating and enforcing cooperation, which can inform the design and implementation of international agreements and policies aimed at addressing climate change.

### 2.4 Different paths of relations between China and the US

*Collaborative and competitive behavior*

Realism, neoliberal institutionalism, and collective action theories can provide insights into the factors that shape collaborative or competitive behavior in international relations. By including both competitive and collaborative behavior in this analysis, it can provide a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding of international relations. Ignoring either dimension may result in an incomplete or biased assessment of the issues at hand. Therefore, it is important to integrate both perspectives to gain a more accurate and comprehensive picture of the dynamics of international relations.

By examining collaborative behavior, we can explore how different actors cooperate to address the issue of climate change. This involves understanding the role of partnerships, networks, and
coalitions in mobilizing collective action. On the other hand, by examining competitive behavior, we can investigate how actors may compete for resources and influence in the context of climate change. This involves understanding the role of power dynamics, interests, and incentives in shaping collective action outcomes. Incorporating both collaborative and competitive behavior can provide a more nuanced understanding of the complexity of collective action in addressing climate change, including how actors work together to promote shared interests, as well as how competition can hinder cooperation and the pursuit of common goals.

Gray (1989, p.5) defines collaboration as "a process through which parties who see different aspects of a problem can constructively explore their differences and search for solutions that go beyond their own limited version of what is possible" (in Gray & Wood, 1991, p. 4). Collaboration can be fostered by the presence of common interests and goals, such as combating climate change. Mutual respect for each other's sovereignty and independence is another key factor in establishing and maintaining a collaborative relationship. Efficient communication and trust are essential for nations to rely on one another and meet their responsibilities and obligations. A commitment to collaboration and cooperation is necessary for nations to accomplish common goals, including sharing resources and information. Although conflicts may arise, communication and negotiation must be prioritized over coercion or force to settle differences (Jervis, 1978).

Competition in international relations refers to the pursuit of contested goods, such as power, security, wealth, influence, and status, through self-interested actions aimed at gaining an advantage over other actors, particularly those perceived as challengers or threats (Mazarr et al., 2018). The focus is on individual self-interest rather than cooperation, and the pursuit of power and influence takes precedence over collaboration. This often leads to a zero-sum mentality, where one country's gain is perceived as another country's loss. Economic competition is also a significant aspect of a competitive relationship, where governments may use policies like trade protectionism or currency manipulation to gain an advantage over their rivals. Although there may be some limited cooperation between nations, it is often transactional rather than a sustained partnership, as each nation prioritizes its own interests above all else (Mazarr et al., 2018).
2.5 A short summary of the theories presented

Realism and neoliberal institutionalism are two distinct theoretical frameworks used to analyze international relations. Although they share the common understanding that the state is the primary actor in international relations, they differ in their views on how states interact with each other and how international cooperation can be achieved. Realism focuses on the significance of power and self-interest in shaping international relations, while neoliberal institutionalism stresses the importance of international institutions and cooperation in promoting peace and stability. In essence, realism assumes that states prioritize their own interests and will use their power to protect them, while neoliberal institutionalism maintains that international institutions can help states overcome collective action problems and promote cooperation. Collective action theory is a perspective that emphasizes the importance of cooperation and coordination among actors in achieving collective goals. It recognizes that collective action can be difficult to achieve due to factors such as free-riding, coordination problems, and the presence of multiple actors with differing interests. Despite these challenges, collective action theory suggests that under certain conditions, actors can overcome these obstacles and work together towards common goals.

Realism offers a lens through which to examine the strategic interests of the US and China, shedding light on how their actions and behaviors are shaped by their perception of power and the distribution of power in the international system. In contrast, neoliberal institutionalism can aid in understanding the role of international organizations, including climate agreements, in influencing the relationship between these two nations. By considering both perspectives, a more nuanced understanding of the complex dynamics between the US and China can be attained. Collective action theory provides a valuable framework for understanding the challenges and opportunities for collaboration between the US and China. However, collective action can be impeded by a variety of factors, including free-riding and coordination problems.

Understanding competitive and collaborative behavior is crucial for analyzing international relations and identifying strategies to promote global stability and cooperation. By recognizing situations where nations are competing for resources, power, and influence, potential conflicts can be predicted and resolved through negotiation and cooperation. Conversely, identifying common goals and interests among nations can lead to mutually beneficial outcomes, stronger partnerships, and collective action to address global challenges. Combining theories of
competitive and collaborative behavior can provide a framework for understanding and navigating the complex landscape of international relations.
3. Analytical framework

To analyze the texts, an analytical framework will be constructed. This framework will serve as a roadmap for structuring the subsequent analysis. Grounded in three theoretical perspectives - realism, neoliberal institutionalism, and collective action - the framework aims to identify and examine specific behaviors displayed by actors. The framework's coding scheme categorizes these behaviors as either competitive or collaborative, providing a nuanced understanding of the complexities of international relations.

3.1 Analytical pathway for coding

Analyzing documents through the lens of realism, neoliberal institutionalism, and collective action can provide insights into collaborative or competitive behavior in international relations. Realism emphasizes the role of power and self-interest in shaping state behavior. Realist analysis of documents can reveal how states pursue their national interests and seek to maximize their power in the international system. This can provide insights into competitive behavior between states.

Neoliberal institutionalism, on the other hand, emphasizes the importance of institutions and rules in facilitating cooperation and collaboration between states. Analyzing documents from a neoliberal institutionalist perspective can reveal how states work together through international organizations, regimes, and treaties to achieve common goals. This can provide insights into collaborative behavior between states.

Finally, collective action theory highlights the importance of individuals and groups acting together to achieve common goals. Analyzing documents from a collective action perspective can reveal how different actors, such as social movements, interest groups, or non-governmental organizations, work together to pursue shared objectives. This can provide insights into both collaborative and competitive behavior, depending on the goals and interests of the actors involved.

The analytical framework developed for this thesis is a valuable tool for examining the behavior of actors in international relations. Grounded in three theoretical perspectives - realism, neoliberal institutionalism, and collective action - the framework provides a comprehensive view of the factors that shape international behavior. The framework's coding scheme consists
of codes that are linked to each theory and subsequently connected to either competitive or collaborative behavior. This categorization of behavior based on motivation and interaction type allows for a nuanced understanding of the complexities of international relations. The application of this analytical framework to a specific issue, such as climate change, reveals the various behaviors exhibited by actors, including both competitive and collaborative behaviors. These behaviors are analyzed to identify underlying motivations and the potential outcomes of specific interactions.
### 3.2 Coding Scheme

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key elements</th>
<th>Realism</th>
<th>Neoliberal institutionalism</th>
<th>Collective action</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Maximize power</td>
<td>Cooperation</td>
<td></td>
<td>Coordination problems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-interest</td>
<td>Institutions</td>
<td></td>
<td>Free riding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic incentives</td>
<td>International agreements</td>
<td></td>
<td>Tragedy of the commons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Codes</td>
<td>Sanctions</td>
<td>Joint initiatives/agreements</td>
<td>Free-riding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accusations/blame-shifting</td>
<td>Positive statements/actions</td>
<td></td>
<td>Coordination problems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prioritizing domestic interests</td>
<td>Shared research/data</td>
<td></td>
<td>Shared responsibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased use of fossil fuels</td>
<td>Assistance provided</td>
<td></td>
<td>Lack of collaboration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership/reputation</td>
<td>Information sharing</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competition</td>
<td>Norm creation</td>
<td>Compliance</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-compliance</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behavior</td>
<td>Competition</td>
<td>Collaboration</td>
<td>Lack of collaboration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competition</td>
<td>Collaboration</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 1.*
3.3 Coding Scheme: An Overview of the Analytical Framework

I will use the analytical framework for coding data sources for the analysis.

Neoliberal institutionalism can be used to understand how institutions such as the Paris Agreement and other international organizations influenced the relationship between China and the US after the US withdrawal. Neoliberal institutionalism suggests that international institutions can facilitate cooperation between states by providing information, monitoring compliance, and creating new norms of behavior. The codes related to collaboration or competition can be used to identify instances where the Paris Agreement or other international institutions facilitated or hindered cooperation between China and the US.

Realism can be used to understand how power relations between China and the US influenced their behavior after the US withdrawal from the Paris Agreement. Realism suggests that states are driven by self-interest and seek to maximize their power and security in the international system. The codes related to competition can be used to identify instances where China and the US acted in a realist manner by prioritizing their own interests over international cooperation.

Collective action theory can be used to understand how China and the US worked together, or failed to work together, to address climate change after the US withdrawal from the Paris Agreement. The theory suggests that collective action is necessary to address global problems such as climate change and that collective action can be hindered by factors such as free-riding and coordination problems. The codes related to collaboration or competition can be used to identify instances where China and the US engaged in collective action or failed to do so.

Including collective action theory in the analysis of joint efforts is crucial to understanding why actors may not cooperate. While collective action theory cannot fully explain competitiveness, it can shed light on why lack of collaboration occurs. One of the main reasons for lack of collaboration is free riding, which is the result of actors not wanting to bear the costs of cooperation while still reaping the benefits. By incorporating collective action theory, we can gain more nuance and understanding of the dynamics at play and how they affect joint efforts. It is important to note that collective action theory is not meant to explain the presence of collaboration in this case but rather the lack of it, providing a more comprehensive understanding of why actors may not work together.
Applying the collective action theory to explain the lack of collaboration can provide a more nuanced understanding of the situation compared to solely applying realism. By considering the complexities and challenges of coordinating collective action among multiple actors, this approach can shed light on the barriers and incentives that hinder or facilitate collaboration. In contrast, realism tends to focus primarily on state interests and power dynamics, which may overlook important factors that influence collective action on global issues such as climate change.
4. Methods and data

In this chapter, I will describe the general research design used in this study, along with a discussion of the content analysis method used to analyze the data. I will also consider the validity and reliability of the study, including the strengths and weaknesses of the method.

4.1 General research design

In the thesis, to search for patterns in the relationship between China and the US, I use content analysis.

Content analysis is a research method that enables the identification of various patterns, trends, and themes in a range of communication media. This method will be utilized to delve deeper into the Sino-US relationship concerning climate change. Documents from various sources will serve as the data in this thesis. These sources include official documents such as China's Five-Year plans and US statements, as well as independent reports, and news articles from both countries. The analysis will cover the years 2014, preceding the Paris Agreement negotiations, through 2020, following the US withdrawal from the agreement and its subsequent impact. By utilizing content analysis, this research aims to provide insights into the effects of the US withdrawal from the Paris Agreement on the relationship between the US and China regarding climate change.

4.1.1 Content analysis

Content analysis can serve as a valuable research tool for investigating the research question of the effect of the US withdrawal from the Paris Agreement on China and the United States' relationship on climate change. This is because content analysis allows for a systematic and objective analysis of a large amount of text-based data, such as news articles, speeches, and official statements, which can provide insights into how the withdrawal affected the relationship between the US and China. Moreover, content analysis can enable the identification of changes in the tone and framing of the discourse, which can provide insights into shifts in perceptions, attitudes, and values related to climate change and international cooperation.

Text serves as the empirical data for content analysis, allowing for the examination, tracking, and comparison of the traits and attitudes of actors (Bratberg, 2021, p. 134). Content analysis is a research method that enables researchers to draw reliable and accurate conclusions about...
how texts (or other forms of meaningful content) are used in different contexts (Krippendorff, 2004, p. 18). Holsti offers a comprehensive definition of content analysis as "any technique for making inferences by objectively and systematically identifying specified characteristics of messages" (Holsti, 1969, as cited in Stemler, 2000). The primary purpose of content analysis is to reveal underlying themes and meanings in data that may not be readily apparent. Unlike other empirical approaches, content analysis interprets communications as texts in the context of their social use (Krippendorff, 2013, p. xii). Stemler (2015) emphasizes that content analysis is a highly adaptable technique that can be driven either empirically or theoretically.

Content analysis follows a systematic process for examining documentary evidence and answering targeted research questions. The content of various documents is systematically reviewed to identify relevant information about the conditions under study (Grønmo, 2023). Content analysis is particularly useful for identifying trends and patterns in documents (Stemler, 2000). Additionally, it can be used to identify the intentions and other characteristics of the communicators (Krippendorff, 2013, p. 52). According to Weber, there is no one correct way to conduct content analysis (Weber, 1990). However, structuring content analysis in a transparent and systematic manner is crucial to ensure its validity and reliability.

4.1.2 Validity and reliability
Validity is the extent to which a variable accurately measures or represents the intended phenomenon (Weber, 1990). In other words, validity is a measure of the degree to which the data collected accurately reflects the concept or construct that it was intended to measure. A variable with high validity produces data that accurately represents the phenomenon under study, while a variable with low validity produces data that is less reliable and may lead to inaccurate conclusions. Thus, ensuring high levels of validity is essential for producing accurate and reliable research findings.

Internal validity in a study refers to the extent to which the study design and procedures have minimized the potential for bias and confounding variables to affect the results. While external validity refers to the extent to which the findings of a study can be generalized to other settings, populations, or contexts (Halperin & Heath, 2020, p. 190-192).

Reliability is closely related to validity in research. While validity refers to the extent to which an indicator measures what it is supposed to measure, reliability refers to the consistency and
accuracy of the measurements obtained using the indicator. In other words, even if an indicator is valid, it must also be reliable to produce consistent and trustworthy results. If an indicator is not measured accurately, the resulting data will be unreliable, even if the indicator is valid. Therefore, it is important to ensure both the validity and reliability of research indicators to obtain credible and meaningful research findings (Halperin & Heath, 2020, p. 191).

Content validity assesses the extent to which an indicator fully captures all the relevant aspects of a particular concept, including its different dimensions or components. It is essential to establish content validity to ensure that the indicator used is comprehensive and adequately covers the concept of interest. Over-claiming what an indicator measures should be avoided, and careful attention must be given to ensure that the indicator measures what it is supposed to measure. Maintaining good practices in establishing content validity is crucial for ensuring that the research findings accurately represent the phenomenon under study (Halperin & Heath, 2020, p. 189).

4.1.2.1 Ensuring validity and reliability

High-quality data are essential for making accurate inferences and drawing strong conclusions. The reliability and validity of data are critical components that influence the credibility and usefulness of research findings. Therefore, ensuring that data is accurate, complete, and collected using reliable methods is essential for producing trustworthy research results. In summary, good data quality is a fundamental requirement for making sound inferences and drawing robust conclusions (Halperin & Heath, 2020, p. 187). In this thesis, various measures have been taken to ensure the validity and reliability of the study.

In a qualitative research study, achieving a comprehensive understanding of the research topic is paramount. Saturation is a crucial concept in this regard, as it involves collecting enough data until no new information or themes emerge, indicating that the point of saturation has been reached (Guest, Bunce & Johnson, 2006). To ensure a thorough exploration of the topic, I conducted an extensive search of available documents, exceeding one hundred sources. Once I realized that they were expressing the same idea, I selected the ones that were most relevant to my thesis. From this pool, I carefully selected 23 items based on set criteria that were most relevant to my study. By utilizing a variety of sources, my thesis aims to provide a nuanced and comprehensive understanding of the research topic, ensuring validity by exploring and
analyzing the data from various angles and minimizing the risk of overlooking important insights or perspectives.

To further ensure the validity and reliability of my study, I will employ triangulation as a research strategy. Specifically, I will use both data triangulation and theory triangulation. Data triangulation involves using multiple sources to investigate the same phenomenon. For this I have used data such as official documents and news articles from multiple sources. For theory triangulation, I will employ three theories - realism, neoliberal institutionalism, and collective action - to interpret the data. By using both data and theory triangulation, I aim to produce research findings that are credible, trustworthy, and comprehensive. The data sources for my study will be diverse and varied, ensuring that the phenomenon under study is thoroughly explored from multiple angles.

A coding scheme has been developed to address various challenges related to the validity and reliability of the research. Krippendorf (2013) suggests that a clear and well-defined coding scheme is crucial for ensuring internal validity and that documenting the coding process is essential for maintaining research integrity and transparency. A well-defined coding scheme can also increase the reliability of the study. Therefore, I have developed a coding scheme to promote consistency in categorizing and interpreting data, as well as to identify any potential coding errors or discrepancies.

The coding scheme can also be used for the replication of the study. Replication involves conducting a similar data collection process to determine whether the original study's findings can be replicated using an independent data set. Through replication, researchers can establish the external validity of their data (Halperin & Heath, 2020). Replicability can also help ensure the internal validity of a study. By replicating a study using different methods or a different sample, researchers can evaluate whether the original findings were an artifact of the specific methodology or sample used in the original study, or whether they can be generalized to other contexts or populations. Replicating a study can also help identify potential confounding variables or other sources of bias that may have influenced the original study's results.

4.1.3 Strengths and weaknesses of the method

Content analysis is a research methodology that involves analyzing texts to identify patterns, themes, and meanings. One of the main strengths of content analysis is its flexibility, as it can
be used to analyze a wide range of texts, including written, spoken, and visual data. Content analysis can also be used to explore complex social phenomena and can be conducted in a relatively efficient and cost-effective manner.

On the contrary, content analysis has several limitations that can affect its validity as a research method. One of the main weaknesses is its reliance on the subjective interpretation of the researcher, which can introduce bias and compromise the validity of the findings. In addition, content analysis can be time-consuming, particularly when working with large amounts of data, and requires significant attention to detail to ensure that the analysis is reliable and valid. Furthermore, the quality and quantity of available data and the representativeness of the sample can limit the effectiveness of content analysis. As a result, guaranteeing the reliability of content analysis as a research method can be challenging since it is heavily reliant on the researcher's ideas and perceptions.

Content analysis has several significant advantages despite being challenging to validate. This approach allows for the analysis of a wide range of communication forms and a large amount of data in a structured and organized manner without requiring interaction with participants. Additionally, techniques such as data and theoretical triangulation and saturation can be used to address subjective interpretation and potential bias. It is crucial to note that the primary goal of content analysis is not to arrive at a definitive answer but rather to contribute to a larger body of knowledge and enhance our understanding of the subject. Therefore, content analysis is an effective tool for gaining insight into the relationship between China and the US regarding climate change.
4.2 Data

In this section, I will provide an overview of the selected data, including the process through which it was chosen, and address the challenges encountered during data retrieval. Furthermore, I will outline the steps involved in the subsequent data analysis. By discussing the selection criteria and challenges, I establish the foundation for understanding the reliability and scope of the data. Additionally, the delineation of the data analysis process offers transparency and clarity regarding the analytical approach I undertake.

4.2.1 Utilizing Primary and Secondary Data Sources

The data used in the thesis are considered both primary and secondary data. The official documents from the Chinese and American governments are considered primary sources when directly analyzed. Further, the data retrieved from sources such as news outlets and NGOs are considered secondary sources.

Official documents play a crucial role in my analysis of the relationship between China and the US. These documents, which include government reports, statements, and agreements, provide valuable insights into the perspectives and policies of both countries. Through a careful analysis of these documents, I aim to better understand the nature of the relationship between China and the US, including the motivations behind their actions and the potential outcomes of their interactions. Moreover, these official documents serve as a primary source of information that allows me to develop a comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the complexities of the Sino-US relationship. By examining the language and rhetoric used in these documents, I can identify areas of cooperation and conflict, as well as trends and shifts in policy over time. This understanding is essential to developing a comprehensive analytical framework that can inform strategies to promote global stability and cooperation.

To augment the primary data obtained from official documents, this thesis primarily relies on news articles as secondary sources of information. News articles can provide a wealth of data that reflects the perspectives of various actors and stakeholders, including governments, interest groups, and the general public. They can be particularly useful for tracking changes in public opinion, media coverage, and political discourse over time. In addition, news articles can offer valuable insights into the context and background of events and policies, which can be helpful for understanding the motivations and interests of the actors involved. Furthermore, news
articles are often readily available and can be accessed easily, which makes them a convenient and cost-effective source of data. Overall, the use of secondary data such as news articles can complement and enrich official documents in social science research, providing a more nuanced and comprehensive understanding of the issues under investigation.

I will incorporate secondary sources to provide additional context, background, and perspective to the analysis. By utilizing these sources, the argument can be supported, and a broader understanding of the topic at hand can be achieved.

4.2.2 Challenges and limitations to data collection

Collecting data on the US-China relationship posed several challenges that should be considered when interpreting the results of this study. Firstly, the limited access to classified documents presented a significant obstacle in gathering more comprehensive data. Therefore, this study relied only on publicly available and unclassified information. However, using publicly available information has the advantage of providing a clearer understanding of the public image that actors wish to project, compared to analyzing internal domestic information. Secondly, in contrast to the Chinese government's singular website, the vast number of U.S. government websites posed a challenge in locating relevant information on climate change. Finally, it is worth noting that there is limited data available on China's response to the US withdrawal from the Paris Agreement, which poses a challenge in fully understanding China's reaction. To address this issue, this thesis has relied on secondary sources to provide a more comprehensive understanding of China's response.

4.2.2.1 Use of English-written data

When conducting research on the relationship between China and the US on climate change, using only English-language texts as sources may limit the scope of the research, as it may exclude important sources of information from non-English speaking countries or regions. However, it is important to note that translations of non-English texts may be inaccurate or incomplete, leading to misunderstandings or misinterpretations of the data. Despite this, English is the most widely used language for academic research, and a significant amount of output on climate change is published in English. Moreover, English is the language of international communication in many fields. As a result, using English-language texts can still provide valuable insights for the scope of this thesis.
4.2.3 Retrieving data

The data selection criteria were based on several requirements. Firstly, it had to be from the specified time frame of 2014-2020. Secondly, it needed to be gathered from multiple sources to gain a broader understanding, including perspectives from news outlets, NGOs, and official sources. Thirdly, English-language materials were prioritized to ensure accuracy and reduce the risk of misinterpretation. Finally, the data had to pertain to themes such as China's climate policy, US climate policy, the Sino-US relationship on climate, and/or the Paris Agreement.

Significant effort has been made to gather data for this analysis, involving the reading of numerous documents to identify those most relevant. The selection of documents for this analysis was conducted through an attentive research process to ensure their relevance in addressing the research question of the thesis. Only the most pertinent data was chosen and included in the final analysis. For documents covering a broader range of topics beyond climate change, only sections deemed relevant to the research question were utilized.


After creating an overview of the theme, I proceeded to search for official documents from both China and the US. To locate relevant documents from the US government, I used search terms such as “China”, “Paris Agreement”, “US-China climate cooperation”, and “US-China relationship” on the official US government website. I also went through the archives of President Obama and President Trump, carefully analyzing statements, remarks, policy briefings, and fact sheets. Finally, I selected the most relevant documents, with a focus on those that covered China and/or climate change from the desired time period, to contribute to answering my research question.

To collect official Chinese documents, I utilized the Chinese government's official website, specifically the "Archive" section and the "White Paper" category for some of the documents. The documents were selected based on their relevance to the desired time period and content that focused on climate change or the relationship with the United States. In addition, I searched
for papers related to climate change, Paris Agreement negotiations, and the US relationship between 2014 and 2020 in the "Ministry Documents" section. Based on the data selection criteria, I identified and selected the most relevant documents for this study from the search results. It is important to note that all official Chinese documents were in English.

To gather secondary data, I utilized Google as my primary search engine and looked for news and other articles related to the topic. My search terms included phrases such as “US withdrawal from Paris Agreement,” “Reactions to US withdrawal from Paris Agreement,” “Xi Jinping's response to US withdrawal from Paris Agreement,” and “China-US climate cooperation.” To locate news articles from China, I utilized both the official website of the Chinese government under the "News" section (which covers news outlets like China Daily, Xinhua, and CGTN) and the China Daily website itself. I applied several search terms to find articles with the most pertinent content and within the desired time frames.

The data has been collected from six different categories, including seven official documents from the US, five official documents from China, four articles from US media, four articles from Chinese media, two articles from independent news outlets, and one article from an NGO.

4.2.4 Steps in data analysis

In conducting the data analysis, I undertook a thorough process that involved manually searching for relevant content based on the predefined criteria outlined in the analytical framework. This framework was developed based on the three theories and served as a guide throughout the data collection and analysis process.

The analysis is structured in the following manner: First, an analytical framework has been constructed based on relevant theories and the distinguishing features of collaborative and competitive behavior. Subsequently, a coding scheme has been developed by selecting key elements from the theories and integrating them with competitive and collaborative perspectives. This coding scheme will be applied to analyze the data in the various documents. Coding will be performed not only when specific keywords are identified, but also when entire sentences or meanings align with the categories specified in the coding scheme. After coding the data, I will conduct an analysis to identify any patterns, trends, or underlying intentions that may be present in the data. Subsequently, I will examine the findings in relation to the research question at hand and draw conclusions based on the results.
During the manual search process, I carefully read through each document and identified passages that were relevant to the research question. To ensure accuracy and completeness, I used my judgment to determine which sections of the text were most pertinent to the research question, based on the definitions and categories outlined in the framework. Although time-consuming, this manual search process was essential to ensure the accuracy of the analysis. Overall, I analyzed a total of 23 documents, including government documents, news articles, and reports from various sources. These documents were selected based on their relevance to the research question and the availability of data.
5. Analysis and results

The objective of the analysis is to address the research question: “What was the effect of the US withdrawal from the Paris Agreement on China and the United States’ relationship on climate change?” The analysis presents evidence in chronological order, commencing from the period before the withdrawal and extending beyond it. Official documents and supplementary data are utilized to identify changes in the relationship. The established analytical framework will be employed to examine all 23 documents, which comprise 12 official documents and 11 supplementary materials.

5.1 Analysis

5.1.1 Evidence of cooperation prior to US withdrawal from the Paris Agreement

Firstly, there is strong evidence of a collaborative relationship in the years prior to the Paris Agreement. The US-China Joint Announcement on Climate Change from November 12, 2014, highlights the efforts made between the two nations to cooperate on combating climate change.

The announcement emphasizes the importance of working together towards a common goal and consistently promotes the idea of collective action. For example, throughout the document, there are numerous references to the need for collaboration and cooperation. The words "collaboration," "cooperation," "shared responsibility," and "joint effort" appear multiple times throughout the document to emphasize the importance of working together. The following statements provide evidence of the document's focus on collaboration and collective action:

Examples of statements coded with joint initiatives/agreements / shared responsibility:

“*The United States of America and the People’s Republic of China have a critical role to play in combating global climate change, one of the greatest threats facing humanity. The seriousness of the challenge calls upon the two sides to work constructively together for the common good.*” (The White House, Office of the Press Secretary, 2014)

“To this end, President Barack Obama and President Xi Jinping reaffirmed the importance of strengthening bilateral cooperation on climate change and will work together, and with other countries, to adopt a protocol, another legal instrument or an agreed outcome with legal force under the Convention applicable to all Parties at the
The statements show that both parties recognize that climate change is a significant threat to humanity and that both countries have a critical role to play in addressing it. Both sides agree to work together constructively for the common good, showing a willingness to put aside differences and cooperate towards a common goal. The statements reaffirm the importance of bilateral cooperation between the two countries on climate change, indicating a willingness to share knowledge, resources, and technology to address the issue. Overall, these statements demonstrate a commitment to collaboration, cooperation, and shared responsibility in addressing the critical issue of global climate change.

Example of a statement coded with positive statements/actions:

“They 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.” (The White House, Office of the Press Secretary, 2014)

This excerpt recognizes that countries have different circumstances and capabilities, but still emphasizes the need for a collaborative approach to address the challenges of climate change. The statement reflects a constructive and positive approach to climate negotiations. China has been one of the countries pushing the most for common but differentiated responsibilities, as they believed that the developed countries must do more than the developing countries allowing them to continue to develop. In other words, China still considered itself a developing country which in turn should be allowed to have more emissions than developed countries. Reaching an agreement with the CBDR principle was fundamental for China and its growing economy. The US learned the hard way through COP 15 that for such an agreement to be reached China must get its way. Obama most likely realized that those were terms they had to agree with in order to get any type of climate agreement. For Obama himself, achieving this agreement would be a huge accomplishment. It is, therefore, reasonable to believe that there were some compromises on both ends to make the agreement work.

Example of a statement coded with shared research/data:
“To further support achieving their ambitious climate goals, today the two sides announced additional measures to strengthen and expand their cooperation, using the existing vehicles, in particular the U.S.-China Climate Change Working Group, the U.S.-China Clean Energy Research Center and the U.S.-China Strategic and Economic Dialogue.” (The White House, Office of the Press Secretary, 2014)

This statement suggests that both the US and China were committed to working together and sharing research and data to achieve their respective climate goals. The reference to the U.S.-China Climate Change Working Group, U.S.-China Clean Energy Research Center, and the U.S.-China Strategic and Economic Dialogue highlights existing channels for collaboration and cooperation between the two countries on climate issues. By announcing additional measures to strengthen and expand their cooperation, the statement suggests that the two sides recognize the importance of joint efforts in addressing climate change and are willing to work together to achieve their shared goals.

The announcement highlights the willingness to cooperate between former US President Barack Obama and China's Xi Jinping. As previously noted, China had been hesitant to participate on an equal footing with developed countries in climate negotiations, often citing unfair terms. However, something shifted in the years leading up to the Paris Agreement negotiations, as evidenced by this joint announcement. This offers an insight into the change of stance by China before the Paris Agreement. The U.S.-China Joint Announcement on Climate Change is a prime example of neoliberal institutionalism and collective action in international relations. The document emphasizes the role of international institutions and regimes in facilitating cooperation among states to address global challenges like climate change. It also highlights the importance of collective action, recognizing that the problem of climate change cannot be solved by one country alone.

Further evidence of collaboration is found in the Readout of President Obama's meeting with President Xi Jinping in 2016. The readout frequently uses words such as "cooperation," "joint efforts," and "shared goals" to underline the significance of working together. Here are some examples of statements that highlight the emphasis on collaboration between the two countries:

Example of a statement coded with positive statements/actions:
“The two leaders commended the progress achieved in strengthening the foundation of the bilateral relationship and committed to continuing to manage differences constructively and expand practical cooperation on regional and global challenges.” (The White House, 2016)

Example of a statement coded with joint initiatives/agreements:

“Both leaders expressed satisfaction with jointly joining the Paris climate Agreement and pledged to work together and with other parties to bring the Paris Agreement into force as early as possible.” (The White House, 2016)

The meeting’s readout underscores their ongoing commitment to collaborating on climate change, suggesting a positive trajectory toward a relatively healthy relationship, where differences are set aside to address global challenges. This readout further accentuates the commitment to collaboration and collective action as seen in the first joint announcement.

Upon closer examination of the Chinese perspective during the same period, compelling evidence emerges highlighting their active engagement in collaborative endeavors to tackle climate change. This can be seen in the 13th Five-Year Plan (National Development and Reform Commission, 2016), which highlights the importance of collaborative efforts in tackling climate change and reflects a neoliberal institutionalist perspective that emphasizes compliance.

Examples of statements coded with compliance:

“While working hard to both adapt to and slow down climate change, we will take active steps to control carbon emissions, fulfill our commitments for emissions reduction, increase our capability to adapt to climate change, and fully participate in global climate governance, thus making a contribution to the response to global climate change.” (National Development and Reform Commission, 2016, p. 136 in pdf)

The statement indicates that China is taking active steps to control carbon emissions, which suggests a commitment to complying with the targets and goals established by international agreements related to climate change. The statement also suggests that China is committed to fully participating in global climate governance, which includes complying with international
regulations related to climate change and working with other countries to achieve common goals.

“On the basis of equity and in accordance with the common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities of all countries, we will actively take on international obligations in line with our national context, stage of development, and actual capabilities, and ensure that China makes a contribution toward producing a stronger response to climate change.” (National Development and Reform Commission, 2016, p. 138 in pdf)

This further underscores China's seeming willingness to take on international obligations to address the issue. It also highlights the CBDR principle again which was demonstrably an important principle for China before they entered the negotiations on the Paris Agreement. The principle can allow China to balance its economic development needs with its commitment to addressing climate change while pushing developed countries to take more responsibility for reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Therefore, the push for this as a fundamental principle might suggest that China is still concerned about its own interest and making a deal that is not going to compromise its growth, reflecting a more realist approach.

Examples of statements coded with positive statements/actions:

“We will take an active part in negotiations on global climate change and work toward a fair and equitable system of global climate governance based on mutually beneficial cooperation. We will help deepen bilateral and multilateral dialogue, exchange, and practical cooperation on climate change.” (National Development and Reform Commission, 2016, p. 138 in pdf)

“We will actively implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.” (National Development and Reform Commission, 2016, p. 151 in pdf)

These statements show a positive attitude towards addressing climate change and sustainable development. The supposed commitment to taking an active part in negotiations and working towards a fair and equitable system of global climate governance based on cooperation shows a seeming willingness to collaborate with other countries to achieve common goals. The statement about implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development demonstrates a
claimed commitment to pursuing sustainable development and working towards a more sustainable future.

Example of a statement coded with assistance provided:

“We will ensure the South-South Cooperation Fund on Climate Change fully plays its role and support other developing countries in improving their capacity to deal with climate change.” (National Development and Reform Commission, 2016, p. 138 in pdf)

The statement demonstrates a recognition of the significance of international solidarity and cooperation in addressing global challenges, as it reflects a seeming willingness to assist other developing countries in enhancing their ability to tackle climate change. On the flip side, this may indicate that China sees this as an opportunity to strengthen its relationships with other countries, particularly developing countries, and to possibly position itself as a global leader in climate action. Helping other countries combat climate change may also benefit China by creating new markets for its renewable energy technologies and by reducing the overall global emissions that contribute to climate change, which ultimately benefits all countries. In this case, it could be interpreted as a sign of realist perception.

In May 2017, prior to the withdrawal, the Pacific Standard published an article about Chinese President Xi Jinping's warning to U.S. President Donald Trump regarding his administration's pending decision to withdraw from the Paris Agreement. The article provides insight in the coverage of the growing rift between the world's two largest economies over climate policy from an outside perspective. Firstly, the article highlights that China warned the US about the costs of withdrawing from the Paris Agreement:

“Flexing new muscles as the undisputed leader in global climate action, China is making it clear that, if the Trump administration follows through on its threat to withdraw from the Paris Agreement, there will be an angry international backlash and a tangible geopolitical price to pay.” (Friedman, 2017)

“(…)"President Xi (Jinping) and our ambassador to the United Nations have said several times that withdrawing from the Paris Agreement is irresponsible, which will harm the mutual trust in the multilateral mechanism.” (Friedman, 2017)
The article highlights that it was not just China that issued a warning to the US:

“Major U.S. corporations, even some fossil fuel companies, have urged the U.S. to stand by the agreement.” (Friedman, 2017)

The article emphasizes that China is willing to signal a proactive stance on climate action. By warning the US about the potential consequences of withdrawing from the Paris Agreement, Chinese officials are not only highlighting the importance of climate action but also asserting its leadership in this area. China is signaling that it is willing to play a leading role in promoting multilateral cooperation and mutual trust to address the climate crisis. This emphasis on diplomacy and global politics can suggest that China sees climate action not just as an environmental issue, but also as a crucial component of global governance and international relations. Overall, the article implies that China sees the US as a key player in addressing climate change and that its withdrawal would not only harm the mutual trust in the multilateral mechanism but also have negative consequences for the global fight against climate change. It could also suggest that China sees an opportunity to take on a greater leadership role in the international community on climate change if the US were to step back. These actions can be seen as a manifestation of competitive behavior. By signaling a leadership role in climate issues, China may be expressing a desire for increased global power and influence, which aligns with realist perspectives.

5.1.2 Evidence of competitive behavior after the US withdrawal

In 2016, President Donald Trump was elected with a campaign promise to withdraw the United States from the Paris Agreement. On June 1, 2017, he fulfilled this promise by issuing a statement announcing the withdrawal. The statement largely reflects a realist perspective as it is highly characterized by a shift of blame and accusations towards other countries and past administrations, particularly towards China and the Obama administration. Examples of statements coded with accusations/blame-shifting include:

“For example, under the agreement, China will be able to increase these emissions by a staggering number of years - 13. They can do whatever they want for 13 years. Not us.” (Trump, 2017a, p.3)
“China will be allowed to build hundreds of additional coal plants. So we can't build the plants, but they can, according to this agreement” (Trump, 2017a, p.3)

These statements show blame-shifting by suggesting that other countries, specifically China, are responsible for the problems associated with the Paris Climate Accord rather than the United States. The statements attempt to shift blame for the decision to withdraw from the Paris Accord by emphasizing the perceived shortcomings of the agreement.

The first statement suggests that China is given preferential treatment under the agreement, with the ability to increase its emissions for a longer period than the United States. By highlighting China's ability to increase emissions, the statement implies that China is responsible for the perceived unfairness of the agreement, rather than the United States. The second statement suggests that the agreement allows China to build additional coal plants while the United States is prevented from doing so. This further shifts the blame onto China for the perceived shortcomings of the agreement, implying that China is benefiting at the expense of the United States. By emphasizing the perceived shortcomings of the agreement and placing blame on other countries, the statements seek to justify the decision to withdraw from the accord.

These examples illustrate the US's position of non-compliance and reflect the administration's desire to prioritize domestic economic interests over global environmental concerns. Examples of statements coded with non-compliance include:

“(…) Therefore, in order to fulfill my solemn duty to protect America and its citizens, the United States will withdraw from the Paris Accord (...) but begin negotiations to reenter either the Paris Accord or a really entirely new transaction on terms that are fair to the United States, its businesses, its workers, its people, its taxpayers. So we’re getting out.” (Trump, 2017a, p.2)

“(Thus, as of today, the United States will cease all implementation of the non-binding Paris Accord and the draconian financial and economic burdens the agreement poses on our country. This includes ending the implementation of the nationally determined contribution and, very importantly, the Green Climate Fund which is costing the United States a vast fortune.” (Trump, 2017a, p.2)
The statements show non-compliance with the Paris Agreement in several ways. Firstly, The United States is withdrawing from the Paris Accord, which is a clear violation of the agreement's terms. The Paris Accord is a legally binding agreement under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, and countries that have ratified the agreement are required to abide by its terms. Secondly, President Trump suggests that the United States may re-enter the Paris Accord or negotiate a new agreement. However, the Paris Accord was negotiated over several years with input from all parties, and any renegotiation would be unlikely to be completed in a timely manner. The statement refers to the Paris Accord as a "draconian" agreement that imposes "financial and economic burdens" on the United States. This is a mischaracterization of the agreement, as the Paris Accord is a voluntary agreement that allows each country to set its own climate goals and does not impose any specific financial or economic requirements. Further, the statements indicate that the United States will cease all implementation of the Paris Accord, including the nationally determined contributions and the Green Climate Fund. This is a clear violation of the agreement, as countries that have ratified the Paris Accord are required to submit nationally determined contributions and contribute to the Green Climate Fund, and a big step in the wrong direction in the battle against climate change.

Example of a statement coded with domestic interests:

“As President, I can put no other consideration before the wellbeing of American citizens. The Paris Climate Accord is simply the latest example of Washington entering into an agreement that disadvantages the United States to the exclusive benefit of other countries, leaving American workers - who I love - and taxpayers to absorb the cost in terms of lost jobs, lower wages, shuttered factories, and vastly diminished economic production.” (Trump, 2017a, p.2)

The quoted statement emphasizes the importance of prioritizing the interests of the United States above those of other countries. Trump argues that the Paris Climate Accord disadvantages the United States by benefiting other countries at the expense of American workers and taxpayers. This reflects a realist perspective, which views international agreements as a means of advancing national interests and achieving greater power and security. The statement suggests that the United States should not enter into agreements that impose costs on American workers and taxpayers without providing sufficient benefits to the country. This
further reflects a realist approach that prioritizes the pursuit of national self-interest over broader goals such as global cooperation or environmental protection.

Example of a statement coded with blame-shifting:

“Even if the Paris Agreement were implemented in full, with total compliance from all nations, it is estimated it would only produce a two-tenths of one degree — think of that; this much — Celsius reduction in global temperature by the year 2100. Tiny, tiny amount. In fact, 14 days of carbon emissions from China alone would wipe out the gains from America — and this is an incredible statistic — would totally wipe out the gains from America’s expected reductions in the year 2030, after we have had to spend billions and billions of dollars, lost jobs, closed factories, and suffered much higher energy costs for our businesses and for our homes.” (Trump, 2017a)

This excerpt highlights President Trump's statement, which draws on research conducted at MIT. Trump is suggesting that the United States' efforts to reduce emissions and comply with the agreement are not worth the cost, especially if China continues to emit large amounts of carbon. This could be seen as a way of avoiding responsibility for acting on climate change by redirecting attention and criticism toward China.

This excerpt does not necessarily show climate skepticism, as Trump does not explicitly deny the existence or severity of climate change. However, the perspective reflected in the quote is often associated with climate skepticism or denialism, which is the rejection of scientific evidence that shows human activities are contributing to climate change. Trump suggests that the United States is being unfairly burdened by the Paris Climate Accord by casting doubt on its efficacy and cost and highlighting its disproportionate influence on China's emissions. While this perspective does not explicitly deny the existence of climate change, it does suggest a lack of urgency and a reluctance to take action to address the issue.

The statement by President Trump resonates with realism in several ways. Firstly, it highlights the focus on national interest and the idea of "America First" by emphasizing the potential economic burdens of the Paris Agreement on the US. Additionally, it emphasizes the importance of sovereignty, asserting that the US will not be bound by an agreement that it perceives as unfavorable. Finally, the statement emphasizes the need for negotiations that result in a more favorable agreement for the US, rather than accepting a multilateral agreement that
may not align with the US's national interests. All these points are consistent with a realist perspective on international relations, which prioritizes national interests and the importance of sovereignty in decision-making.

The White House's summary of the reasoning behind the US withdrawal, titled "President Trump Puts American Jobs First," reinforces the positions and emphasizes blame-shifting. For example:

“Under the Paris Climate Accord, the United States would carry the burden while other countries would get the benefits.” (Trump, 2017b)

It suggests that the burden of reducing greenhouse gas emissions and mitigating the effects of climate change falls disproportionately on the United States, while other countries are not doing enough or benefiting unfairly from the agreement. This framing shifts the blame away from any domestic policies or actions that could be taken by the United States to address climate change and instead places the responsibility on other nations and the agreement itself.

Example of a statement coded with prioritizing domestic interests:

“Harmful to the American People: The Paris Climate Accord could cost the United States economy millions of jobs and trillions of dollars in economic output over the next several decades.” (Trump, 2017b)

The statement suggests that domestic interests are being prioritized over global environmental concerns, as it emphasizes the potential negative impact of the Paris Climate Accord on the American economy and workers. It also implies that the agreement could result in job losses and a decrease in economic output by trillions of dollars. By highlighting these potential economic consequences, it seems that the U.S. government is adhering to a realist perspective that prioritizes national interests over global collaboration.

Example of a statement coded with increased use of fossil fuels:

“According to recent U.S. Energy Information Administration, the United States remained the world’s top producer of oil and natural gas combined.” (Trump, 2017b)
The statement alone does not necessarily show the increased use of fossil fuels, but it does suggest that the United States is continuing to prioritize and invest in the production of oil and natural gas, again, reflecting a realist perspective.

5.1.3 US media perspective

To gain a comprehensive understanding of China's reaction to the US withdrawal from the Paris Agreement, it is important also to analyze the perspectives and reactions of the US media to this event. By examining how the withdrawal was portrayed in the US media, we can gain a fuller picture of China's reaction and its impact on the relationship between the two countries on climate change.

On June 1st, 2017, The New York Times (Sanger & Perlez, 2017) published an article discussing the potential consequences of President Trump's decision to withdraw the United States from the Paris Climate Agreement, and how this decision could give China the opportunity to take on a global leadership role in the fight against climate change. The article explores the ways in which China could use this opportunity to promote its own interests and influence, as well as the potential implications for the future of international climate cooperation. These excerpts call attention to the opportunity for China to take leadership:

“In pulling out of the Paris climate accord, Mr. Trump has created a vacuum of global leadership that presents ripe opportunities to allies and adversaries alike to reorder the world’s power structure.” (Sanger & Perlez, 2017)

“His decision is perhaps the greatest strategic gift to the Chinese (...)” (Sanger & Perlez, 2017)

“Mr. Trumps remarks in the Rose Garden on Thursday were also a retreat from leadership on the one issue, climate change, that unified Americas European allies, its rising superpower competitor in the Pacific, and even some of its adversaries, including Iran.” (Sanger & Perlez, 2017)

Examples coded with domestic interests:
“The president, and his defenders, argue that such views are held by an elite group of globalists who have lost sight of the essential element of American power: economic growth.” (Sanger & Perlez, 2017)

“His proposed cuts to contributions to the United Nations and to American foreign aid are based on a presumption that only economic and military power count. “Soft power” — investments in alliances and broader global projects — are, in his view, designed to drain influence, not add to it (...)” (Sanger & Perlez, 2017)

“But for now it leaves the United States declaring that it is better outside the accord than in, a position that, besides America, has so far only been taken by Syria and Nicaragua.” (Sanger & Perlez, 2017)

Statements from this article suggest that President Trump's decision to withdraw from the Paris climate accord has weakened the US’s global leadership role and created opportunities for other countries, particularly China, to step in and fill the void. Trump's decision has also resulted in the loss of a unifying issue among America's allies, competitors, and adversaries, which has arguably further weakened the US position on the world stage. It is argued that Trump's focus on economic growth and military power at the expense of "soft power" investments in alliances and global projects is shortsighted and undermines the US long-term influence. The fact that only Syria and Nicaragua share the US position on withdrawing from the accord indicates that America is increasingly isolated in its stance on climate change. The article seemingly highlights a concern that the US is letting go of its leadership as the country earlier has traditionally played a crucial role in global initiatives and institutions.

If the U.S. abandons its leadership role, it may potentially lead to a shift in global power dynamics. Other countries may take on a larger leadership role, and the global power dynamic may shift in its favor. For example, if China were to step up as a global leader in climate action, it may gain more influence and power on the world stage. This shift in power dynamics could have far-reaching implications for global politics, economics, and security. Additionally, the US could lose its reputation as a reliable and trustworthy partner, which again could weaken its relationships with other countries and make it harder to achieve its foreign policy goals.
In another article published by The New York Times (Hernández, 2017), the focus is on the response of Chinese media and government officials to the United States' withdrawal from the Paris Climate Agreement. The article discusses China's growing leadership role in global climate governance and reflects a skeptical perspective towards China:

“In China, the government seized the moment to cast doubt on American democracy and promote an image of China as a responsible superpower.” (Hernández, 2017)

“The news media highlighted protests and criticism of Mr. Trump in the United States, suggesting that America was facing a crisis.” (Hernández, 2017)

“Now they [China] are showcasing the political divisions among Americans under Mr. Trump as evidence of the decline of the United States.” (Hernández, 2017)

“More broadly, the government is seeking to show that China is ready to take a more active role in global affairs — not just on the environment, but on issues like trade and infrastructure.” (Hernández, 2017)

“(…) the message was that China was a consistent and reliable partner, unlike the United States under Mr. Trump.” (Hernández, 2017)

These quotes suggest that China saw an opportunity to capitalize on Trump's decisions and use them to undermine the image of American democracy. It is claimed that China aimed to project itself as a responsible global power and highlight the perceived decline and divisions within the United States. Additionally, the quotes indicate that China positioned itself as a consistent and reliable partner compared to the United States under Trump's leadership. Overall, these statements suggest that from a (non-official) US perspective, China is making strategic efforts to enhance its global standing while contrasting it with perceived shortcomings in American leadership.

The two articles from The New York Times present a narrative that portrays China as content with the US withdrawal from the Paris Agreement, as it provides an opportunity for China to pursue global dominance. This perspective is underpinned by a skeptical view of China and is
seemingly informed by realist assumptions that prioritize national self-interest over global cooperation and environmental protection.

The Guardian (Haas, 2017) published yet another reaction to the withdrawal. In the article, questions were raised about whether China would step up and fulfill a leadership role, or whether it was simply posturing for geopolitical gain. The article explores these questions and looks at the potential implications of China's response to Trump's withdrawal. The article highlights a skeptical view of China and its interest:

“As Donald Trump walked off the stage in the Rose Garden after announcing the US would withdraw from the Paris climate agreement, one could practically hear the champagne corks popping in Beijing.” (Haas, 2017)

“Chinese leaders are eager for more influence on the international stage, and Trump’s move opened up another opportunity for China to fill a void left by the US.” (Haas, 2017)

“China is taking a very internationalist stance, so taking the leadership on climate fits in well to that and they will be able to dramatically expand clean energy investment and markets overseas.” (Haas, 2017)

These statements suggest that China saw the US withdrawal from the Paris Agreement as an opportunity to increase its own influence on the global stage, particularly in climate leadership. The statements also suggest that China is positioning itself to expand its investments in clean energy and markets overseas, potentially filling the leadership void left by the US. This is further accentuated by these statements:

“There is no question that China will show leadership on climate, including putting a cap and trade system in place, investing in renewable energy, ramping down carbon emissions, ramping down coal,” Gordon added. “Those are all things they are committed to for environmental reasons, but also just for economic reasons.” (Haas, 2017)
“In the meantime, China will likely look for a new global partner to tackle climate change, as Chinese officials are not entirely comfortable taking sole responsibility.” (Haas, 2017)

“ ‘The moment Trump announced his Paris pull out marked the divorce of US-China climate relationship and the beginning of a reinvigorated partnership between China and the EU,’ (...)” (Haas, 2017)

The statements suggest that China appears to be committed to showing leadership on climate change and taking action to address the issue, possibly motivated by economic considerations. Nonetheless, the effects of these actions would be the same. It also indicates that China may not be entirely comfortable taking sole responsibility and may seek new global partners to address the issue. The statements suggest that the US's withdrawal from the Paris climate agreement has led to a shift in global partnerships, with China potentially forming a stronger relationship with the European Union on climate issues.

According to the article, the US withdrawal from the Paris Agreement may enable China to pursue a more moderate approach towards achieving its environmental objectives, all while maintaining its status as a global leader in this domain. Moreover, this move could also provide support to those in the Chinese government who seek to slow down the closure of polluting industries, as shown in these excerpts:

“Now China can step in and become the leader on climate, but without the pressure from the US, they don’t need to go as far to have that leadership mantle,” (...)” (Haas, 2017)

“The US exit from the Paris agreement also gives ammunition to detractors within the Chinese government who want to slow down the pace of shutting down polluting industries, particularly local governments (...)” (Haas, 2017)

The article from The Guardian implies that China was celebrating the US withdrawal from the Paris Agreement because it saw economic gains and the opportunity to take the lead as a global superpower. Overall, the article suggests that China saw the US withdrawal as an opportunity to assert its dominance and solidify its position as a global superpower in the face of the US
retreat from international leadership on climate change. It portrays a competitive dynamic between China and the US, with the expression that China could come out on top.

5.1.4 The Chinese response to the news from the US

Following President Trump's announcement of the withdrawal, it was a noticeable shift in China's tone. In October 2017, Xi Jinping held a speech at the 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China. Early in his speech, Xi emphasized Chinese leadership:

“Taking a driving seat in international cooperation to respond to climate change, China has become an important participant, contributor, and torchbearer in the global endeavor for ecological civilization.” (Xi Jinping, 2017, p. 4)

The statement suggests that China is seeking to actively take a leadership role in addressing climate change on a global level. By describing China as a "participant, contributor, and torchbearer," it implies that China is not only involved in efforts to combat climate change but is also wanting to take a leading role in shaping the direction of those efforts.

Example of a statement coded with positive statements/actions:

“We should be good friends to the environment, cooperate to tackle climate change, and protect our planet for the sake of human survival.” (Xi Jinping, 2017, p. 53)

Xi still emphasized the importance of collaboration between nations, rather than competition or conflict, to achieve this common goal.

Example of a statement coded with compliance/assistance provided:

“China supports the United Nations in playing an active role in international affairs, and supports the efforts of other developing countries to increase their representation and strengthen their voice in international affairs.” (Xi Jinping, 2017, p.54)

In terms of theoretical perspectives, China's expression of support for the United Nations and international cooperation aligns with both neoliberal institutionalism and collective action theory. Neoliberal institutionalism argues that international institutions like the United Nations can facilitate cooperation among states by establishing norms, rules, and regulations that guide behavior and provide a platform for negotiations and collective action. By signaling its
willingness to comply with these norms and regulations, China is demonstrating its recognition of the importance of international cooperation in addressing global challenges.

Similarly, collective action theory emphasizes the importance of cooperation among actors to achieve common goals. By expressing support for the efforts of other developing countries to increase their representation and voice in international affairs, China is recognizing the importance of empowering other actors and promoting equitable participation in global decision-making. This is consistent with the collective action principle that actors must work together to achieve collective goals, rather than acting solely in their own self-interest.

Alternatively, the realist perspective posits that states are primarily driven by their own self-interest and power, and therefore, China's backing of the United Nations and their emphasis on leading global issues like climate change may be seen as calculated actions aimed at promoting China's interests and increasing its global influence. Xi Jinping's emphasis on leadership in particular suggests that China sees an opportunity to increase its global power and influence in the wake of the United States' withdrawal from the Paris Agreement. By positioning itself as a leader in the global effort to combat climate change, China can strengthen its diplomatic relationships with other nations and improve its overall international reputation.

5.1.5 Chinese perspective from media articles

Given the challenges of discerning the full extent of China's reaction from official documents alone, I have chosen to complement them with news articles from Chinese media. These articles can provide additional context and nuance to help better understand China's response to the withdrawal.

Both of the following news articles were published by China Daily in the immediate aftermath of the US announcement of the withdrawal. The first article published in China Daily on June 7, 2017, discusses China's stance on the Paris Agreement and seeks to clarify that the agreement is not about ceding leadership to China but rather a global effort to tackle climate change. The article appears to be a response to other perspectives, such as those presented in the New York Times articles.

Examples of statements coded with leadership:
“China has never celebrated the US withdrawal or the void left by the US, as some in the US have worried in the past week. China, unlike the US, has never claimed to be a global leader, even it is playing such a role in some areas.” (Chen, 2017)

“So instead of sounding sour on China's great leap forward, people should celebrate it. The world will be better when every country is stepping up to play a leading role in fighting the climate change.” (Chen, 2017)

The excerpt suggests that China wants to defend its role as a collaborator in global efforts to address climate change. These statements can be seen as defensive against accusations that China is taking advantage of the US withdrawal from the Paris Agreement to increase its global influence. By emphasizing that China has never celebrated the US withdrawal or claimed to be a global leader, the statements imply that China is not seeking to fill a void left by the US but rather to collaborate with other countries in the fight against climate change. The second statement goes further in promoting the idea that every country should play a leading role in fighting climate change, implying that China's efforts should be seen as positive and celebrated rather than criticized.

On June 3, 2017, China Daily published an article that exemplifies a shift from a defensive tone to a more aggressive one following the announcement of the US withdrawal from the Paris Agreement. The article discusses how President Trump misinterpreted a climate research report from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) in his announcement of the withdrawal, as shown in these excerpts:

“Massachusetts Institute of Technology officials said US President Donald Trump badly misunderstood their research when he cited it on Thursday to justify withdrawing the United States from the Paris Climate Agreement.” (China Daily, 2017)

“We certainly do not support the withdrawal of the US from the Paris agreement," said Erwan Monier, a lead researcher at the MIT Joint Program on the Science and Policy of Global Change, and one of the study's authors.” (China Daily, 2017)

The article further emphasizes the potential impact of this misinterpretation on the US commitment to the Paris Agreement and the global efforts to address climate change:
“"If we don't do anything, we might shoot over 5 degrees or more and that would be catastrophic," said John Reilly (...) adding that MIT's scientists had had no contact with the White House and were not offered a chance to explain their work." (China Daily, 2017)

“Trump has repeatedly cast doubt on the science of climate change and once called it a hoax perpetrated by China to weaken US business." (China Daily, 2017)

President Trump used research from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) to justify withdrawing the United States from the Paris Climate Agreement, but according to the article MIT officials said that Trump misunderstood their research and that they do not support the withdrawal. The researchers emphasized the catastrophic consequences of not taking action on climate change and stated that they were not contacted by the White House to explain their work. The statements also point towards Trump's previous skepticism toward the science of climate change and his conviction that it is a fabricated concept. It suggests that there is significant disagreement and controversy surrounding both the issue of climate change and the decision by the US to withdraw from the Paris Climate Agreement.

This article highlights the significance of considering the context of a text. The fact that Chinese media published this critique underline their efforts to combat climate skepticism within China and to challenge the narrative that such skepticism is propagated by China. Additionally, it suggests that the Chinese media is taking an active role in shaping public opinion and influencing the narrative surrounding climate change, which may be part of a larger effort by the Chinese government to position itself as a global leader on this issue in the absence of U.S. leadership. Furthermore, the article may be seen as a way for China to subtly criticize and undermine the Trump administration's stance on climate change, which could have significant implications for international cooperation on this critical issue.

In October 2017, China Daily (Dzodin, 2017) published an article that showcased a different stance from China, one that was more assertive in highlighting the country's success and role. The article discussed the progress that China had made in achieving its ambitious goals for economic and social development, as laid out in President Xi Jinping's "Chinese Dream"
initiative. It highlighted the Chinese government's achievements in areas such as poverty reduction, innovation, and environmental protection.

Examples of statements coded with leadership/reputation:

“Since President Xi Jinping took office the stain of that humiliation has now been removed and China has again assumed its place in the pantheon of global leadership.” (Dzodin, 2017)

“Several initiatives of Xi are illustrative. The Belt and Road Initiative (B&R), China’s environmental leadership in the Paris Accords, and China’s championing of globalization and global governance are some of them.” (Dzodin, 2017)

These statements insinuate that China, under the leadership of President Xi Jinping, has regained its position as a global leader. The author highlights several initiatives undertaken by Xi Jinping's leadership that have contributed to China's leadership role on the global stage. These include the Belt and Road Initiative, which aims to strengthen infrastructure and economic ties with countries in Asia, Europe, and Africa; China's commitment to the Paris Agreement on climate change; and its support for globalization and global governance. It implies that China is actively working to shape the global agenda and assert its influence on the world stage.

“Another signal of China’s changed policies and status is Xi’s leadership in the Paris Agreement on climate change, working in concert with then US President Barack Obama. Xi’s leadership ensured that the Agreement became international law. Now that the US has begun the process of withdrawing from the Agreement, China is filling the leadership role left by the vacuum Trump created. The week after the US withdrawal was announced Xi convened and hosted a meeting of energy ministers in Beijing during which China launched initiatives and partnerships to promote clean energy and address climate change.” (Dzodin, 2017)

According to author of the article, China has taken on a leadership role in addressing climate change and promoting clean energy, especially since the US under the Trump Administration withdrew from the Paris Agreement. The statement highlights the role of President Xi Jinping in ensuring the Paris Agreement became international law and his continued leadership in
promoting global cooperation on climate change. It also suggests that China is stepping up to fill the leadership void left by the US withdrawal and is actively promoting initiatives and partnerships to address climate change:

“Taken as a whole, China has clearly stepped in to fill the vacuum left primarily by the United States which, under Donald Trump and his policy of “America first”, appears to have abdicated its leadership at the helm of the world order it helped create and dominate in the aftermath of World War II.” (Dzodin, 2017)

“(…) but it’s clear that Xi’s Chinese Dream is well on its way to becoming reality.” (Dzodin, 2017)

These statements indicate a growing sense of confidence in China's ability to shape the international system and advance its interests. The fact that Chinese state media outlets are publishing articles promoting the idea of China filling the void left by the US withdrawal from the Paris Agreement suggests that the government is at least open to this narrative being communicated, although it has not explicitly stated its intention to do so. This shift in rhetoric reflects a more realist perspective, emphasizing power, hegemony, and leadership, which marks a departure from China's traditional approach of downplaying its global ambitions. While China may be cautious about overtly expressing its desire to become a global superpower, especially in comparison to the US, the growing assertiveness of its media rhetoric suggests that it is increasingly comfortable with its role as a major player in the international arena.

5.1.6 Change of tone between China and the US

A month later, in November 2017, President Trump was invited to a state visit to China. The Joint Press Statement from President Trump and President Xi (The White House, 2017a) summarizes the statements made by the Presidents of the United States and China during their meeting in Beijing.

While analyzing the content, I found no information that directly relates to my research question. During their speeches, neither Xi Jinping nor Trump mentioned climate change, climate cooperation, or the Paris Agreement, indicating that these issues were not their top priorities. As a result, I have not assigned any codes to this text. However, this discovery is noteworthy as it is somewhat surprising that there was no mention of climate or collaborative
efforts between the two countries to tackle this issue. It indicates a significant shift from the previous year 2016 when both nations reaffirmed their commitment to working together to combat climate change.

Another report (The White House, 2017b) from the visit provides some insight into the priorities and interests of both China and the United States, as well as their perception on the current state of the relationship.

Example of a statement coded with positive statements:

“The two presidents affirmed that the United States-China relationship is shaped by shared interests and a common commitment to addressing global challenges.” (The White House, 2017b)

This statement suggests that the relationship between the United States and China is not solely based on competition and disagreement, but also on shared interests and goals. The two countries recognize the importance of cooperation in addressing global challenges. Although the scope of such cooperation may encompass areas such as climate change, economic growth, and security, there is no explicit reference to any of these in the text.

Promoting strong and sustainable global economic growth can be seen as a sign of domestic interest for both China and the US. A strong global economy benefits both countries' domestic economies and can lead to increased job opportunities and higher standards of living for their citizens. Additionally, promoting sustainable growth can address environmental concerns that affect both nations. These statements are examples of statements coded with domestic interest:

“The United States and China intend to jointly promote a strong, sustainable, balanced, and inclusive global growth.” (The White House, 2017b)

“The two presidents recognized the importance of United States-China economic relations to both nations’ prosperity and to the international trading system.” (The White House, 2017b)

Overall, the report suggests that economic concerns were a top priority in the discussions between the two countries. During the meeting, various areas of collaboration were discussed,
including the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula, combatting drug-related issues, addressing cybercrime and network protection, enhancing cybersecurity, strengthening military-to-military relationships, ensuring regional and maritime security, and undertaking joint projects on HIV/AIDS and infectious diseases. However, as stated earlier, there was no mention of climate change by either president.

The meeting between President Xi and President Trump marked a significant shift in the two countries' attitudes towards cooperation on climate change. This change can also be observed through a continuous shift in China's position, as identified in previous documents. In January 2018, The China Daily (Chen, 2018) reported the results of a survey conducted by the Gallup World Poll, which highlighted that China had surpassed the United States in people's perceptions of which country has the most leadership influence in the world, as shown in these excerpts:

“More people in the world approved of China’s leadership than US leadership in 2017, according to a Gallup poll released on Jan 18.” (Chen, 2018)

“Overall, 30 percent of those surveyed in Asia approved of US leadership, while 32 percent approved of China’s leadership. The US disapproval rating in the region was 39 percent, while China’s was 31 percent.” (Chen, 2018)

The article underscores the significance of Trump's decisions:

“In doing so, he [Trump] walked away from key institutions and alliances in 2017 that he felt didn’t serve US interests, including abandoning the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) trade deal and withdrawing from the global climate agreement. (…)” (Chen, 2018)

“Richard Haas, president of the Council on Foreign Relations, believes the US global leadership has become worse for the most part. “The bottom line is that the United States has added a degree of unreliability,” Haas said about Trump’s first year in office in a CFR podcast on Jan 16.” (Chen, 2018)
These statements in this article attempt to suggest that there has been a shift in global perceptions of leadership between the US and China, implying that more people are approving of China's leadership in 2017 than the US. The report highlights some of the policies that have contributed to this shift, including the US withdrawal from key institutions and alliances such as the Trans-Pacific Partnership and the global climate agreement. The comments from Richard Haas suggest that there is a growing perception that the US has become less reliable under Trump's leadership. Overall, these statements suggest that there has been a shift in global power dynamics, with China gaining more influence and the US losing some of its traditional leadership role.

The publishing of this article suggests that China is working to enhance its image as a global leader and present itself as an attractive alternative to the US in terms of global leadership and stability. By highlighting the Gallup poll results that show more people approved of China's leadership than the US in 2017, China is signaling its growing global influence and portraying itself as a more reliable and stable leader than the US. The article highlights the US's recent decisions to withdraw from key international institutions and agreements, suggesting that the US is becoming increasingly unreliable and diminishing its global leadership role. This portrayal of the US further strengthens China's image as a stable and reliable global leader. The significance of context is highlighted by the fact that it was published by the state-controlled media China Daily which serves as a mouthpiece for the government's policies and perspectives.

5.1.7 New approaches to energy planning and policy in China and the US

The following year, the Trump administration released a document outlining its approach to energy policy (Trump, 2019). The document emphasizes the importance of the country's energy independence and the potential benefits for the economy, national security, and job creation.

Given the overall tone of the document, it can be inferred that the Trump administration's energy policy prioritizes domestic interests over international cooperation on climate change, aligning with the code for prioritizing domestic interests. The document emphasizes the importance of America's energy independence and the potential benefits for the economy, national security, and job creation. This suggests a focus on domestic interests over international cooperation on climate change.
Example of a statement coded with non-compliance:

“President Trump withdrew from the terrible Paris Climate Agreement.” (Trump, 2019)

This statement alone does not provide evidence of non-compliance with the Paris Climate Agreement, as it simply states that President Trump withdrew from the agreement. However, the decision to withdraw from the agreement can be seen as an act of non-compliance, as the United States had previously committed to reducing its greenhouse gas emissions under the accord.

When all of the nations were able to agree on a set of terms and were able to cooperate to fight climate change, the Paris Agreement was hailed as a victory for the international community. It is apparent that a lot of effort was made to ensure the Agreement's success, particularly between China and the US, whose cooperation was essential to the outcome of the negotiations. The use of the word “terrible” is therefore remarkable. This could also suggest a divergence between the perspectives of the former Democratic President Obama and the current Republican President Trump regarding the significance of the accord. The statement is coded as non-compliance since the US does not uphold a global pact to combat climate change.

The document advocates for expanding the production of oil, gas, and coal in the United States to achieve energy dominance. This implies a desire to gain a competitive advantage by increasing the use of fossil fuels. These are some examples of statements coded with increased use of fossil fuels:

“President Trump ended the war on coal by getting rid of costly Obama-era regulations like the Stream Protection Rule and the Clean Power Plan.” (Trump, 2019)

“Crude oil production hit a record high last year, leaping past the previous record set in 1970.” (Trump, 2019)

“The United States has become the largest crude oil producer in the world.” (Trump, 2019)

President Trump emphasized the US' production of fossil fuels. It is seemingly portrayed as something positive. This correlates with the “America first” narrative in terms of securing
domestic jobs, factories, and the economy. These statements suggest a shift towards promoting domestic production of fossil fuels and reducing regulations on the industry. This approach is consistent with a broader emphasis on promoting domestic energy independence and boosting economic growth through the expansion of the fossil fuel industry. The emphasis on promoting domestic production of fossil fuels and reducing regulations on the industry suggest a preference for fossil fuel-based energy over alternative sources, which could have implications for long-term climate change mitigation efforts. President Trump's statements suggest a realist perspective that prioritizes competition over collaboration.

The document highlights the Trump administration's approach to energy policy, with a clear focus on promoting domestic interests. While the document does not explicitly mention competition with other countries, the emphasis on increasing domestic energy production and promoting America's energy independence can be seen as reflecting a realist approach to international relations, where countries seek to gain a competitive advantage over others. Additionally, the document mentions the need to remove burdensome regulations that hinder the growth of American energy production, which could be interpreted as a strategy to increase the competitiveness of American energy companies.

State Councillor and Minister of Foreign Affairs H.E. Wang Yi's speech at the UN Climate Action Summit on 23 September 2019 could be viewed as a response to the climate policies of the US. His remarks demonstrated China's continued commitment to addressing climate change, despite the US's decision to withdraw from the Paris Agreement. Wang Yi emphasized China's readiness to express commitment to addressing climate change and the need for global cooperation in tackling this issue. The speech highlighted China's efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, promote renewable energy, and work with other countries to achieve the goals of the Paris Agreement.

China expressing its commitment to its role as a global leader is evident through the following statements coded with leadership:

“The withdrawal of certain parties will not shake the collective will of the international community, nor will it possibly reverse the historical trend of international cooperation.” (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, 2019)
“Developed countries, on their part, need to take the lead in reducing emissions and honor their commitment of mobilizing US$100 billion a year in climate finance by 2020.” (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, 2019)

“No matter how the international landscape may evolve, there will be no change in China's efforts to fight climate change, its readiness to deepen climate cooperation with other countries, or its commitment to the multilateral process on climate change.” (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, 2019)

From these statements, it appears that China is dedicated to tackling climate change and working collaboratively with other nations towards this objective. China seems to regard the departure of certain countries from the international climate agreement as a challenge that requires a collective response from the global community rather than a reason to abandon efforts to combat climate change. Furthermore, China emphasizes that developed nations should take the lead in reducing emissions and mobilizing climate finance. However, China also reaffirms its own commitment to fighting climate change and deepening collaboration with other nations in the multilateral process on climate change. Overall, these statements indicate that China perceives itself as a responsible global actor and a leader in addressing climate change.

From an external perspective, it is conceivable that the statements made are indirectly criticizing the United States. The first statement might be viewed as a response to the US's decision to exit from the Paris Agreement, implying that China remains dedicated to working with other countries to address climate change, despite the US's withdrawal. The second statement indicates that developed nations, which includes the US, need to do more in terms of reducing emissions and providing financial assistance to developing nations to tackle climate change. The third statement reiterates China's commitment to climate action, regardless of the actions taken by other nations, which could be perceived as a comparison to the US's more erratic and occasionally contentious approach to climate policy.

Example of a statement coded with shared responsibility:

“Climate change is a common challenge to all countries. To jointly tackle this challenge and protect the planet we all call home will be a journey critical to the future and destiny of humankind.” (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, 2019)
The statement emphasizes the importance of collective action in addressing climate change as a global challenge that affects all nations and people. It emphasizes the need for international cooperation and a shared responsibility to protect the planet. This sentiment is echoed in international climate agreements and statements.

Examples of statements coded with compliance:

“First, be determined to win the fight. We must honor our commitments, follow through on the Paris Agreement and its implementation guidelines, and see to it that both this Summit and the COP25 produce positive outcomes that will inject fresh impetus into the post-2020 multilateral process.” (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, 2019)

“China will faithfully fulfill our obligations under the UNFCCC and the Paris Agreement, and realize as scheduled its nationally determined contribution targets submitted to the UNFCCC secretariat.” (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, 2019)

“Third, be committed to cooperation. The joint fight against climate change requires us to uphold multilateralism and explore solutions within the framework of the UNFCCC and the Paris Agreement.” (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, 2019)

The statements indicate that China would like to signal its dedication to adhering to international agreements and collaborating with other nations to tackle climate change. China acknowledges the significance of upholding its obligations under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Paris Agreement and is resolute in fulfilling its nationally determined contributions towards mitigating greenhouse gas emissions. As outlined in the analytical framework, these statements align with the principles of neoliberal institutionalism.

After Wang Yi's indirect criticism of the US and the reaffirming of China's commitment to fighting climate change, Premier Li Keqiang, the head of the National Energy Commission, chaired a commission meeting to discuss energy security and development (Chinese
Government, 2019). During the meeting, Premier Li stressed the need to balance economic growth with environmental protection and advocated for a transition towards high-quality energy development.

Coded as prioritizing domestic interests:

“As China is still a developing country, modernization and energy supply guarantee remain a long-term strategic task.” (Chinese Government, 2019)

The statements suggest that China is prioritizing its own domestic interests over international cooperation on climate change. By emphasizing the need for modernization and energy supply guarantees, the statement indicates that China is more concerned with meeting its own economic and energy needs than with taking actions to mitigate global climate change.

This focus on domestic interests is consistent with a realist approach to international relations, which emphasizes the pursuit of national self-interest and the primacy of the state over international institutions and cooperation. In this context, China's focus on modernization and energy security can be seen as a reflection of its desire to maintain its economic and political power and to continue its development as a major global player.

While it is important for countries to address their own domestic needs, it is also important for them to work together to address global challenges like climate change. By prioritizing its own domestic interests over international cooperation on climate change, China may be contributing to the difficulty of achieving meaningful global action on this issue.

Examples of statements coded with increased use of fossil fuels:

“The exploitation of oil and gas should be expanded to improve China’s self-sustainability, he said, adding that open, win-win and diversified global collaboration on oil and gas should be deepened. And efforts should be made to strengthen safety reserves and emergency supplies.” (Chinese Government, 2019)

“He [Premier Li] said energy is vital to people's lives.” (Chinese Government, 2019)

These statements suggest that China recognizes the importance of energy security and self-sustainability as a developing country. The focus on a coal-based energy structure indicates that
coal remains an important source of energy for China's economy. The emphasis on expanding the exploitation of oil and gas and deepening global collaboration in this area suggests a desire to ensure access to these resources in the future. Overall, the statements reflect China's strategic approach to energy development and its recognition of the importance of energy to its economy and the people of China.

It may be somewhat unexpected that China is focusing more on fossil fuels again given the global trend towards renewable energy and the pressing need to address climate change. While China recognizes the importance of renewable energy and has made significant investments in it, the statements suggest that the country still views fossil fuels as a crucial component of its energy mix in the short to medium term. China's continued reliance on fossil fuels may also be driven by concerns over energy security and the need to ensure a stable supply of energy to meet the demands of its growing economy and population. This could be interpreted as a reaction to the US policies, particularly due to its timing, which coincides with the release of the American energy policies. It is important to note that there may be multiple factors that influence these policies. However, in the context of this analysis, it can be interpreted as a response to the actions taken by the United States.

An article from China Dialogue (Wu, 2019) commented on the changes from China and the United States. The article, published in November 2019, explores the impact of the ongoing US-China trade war on the coal industry. It suggests that the trade tensions have led to a shift in China's energy strategy, with an increased reliance on coal power, potentially undermining global efforts to combat climate change. These are some excerpts from the article:

“(…) emphasised China’s energy security and coal utilisation and downplayed the importance of a rapid transition away from fossil fuels.” (Wu, 2019)

“Other causes for concern lie outside China. The ongoing trade dispute with the US is a threat to the energy trade between the two superpowers, and supplies from the Middle East are at risk from mounting instability in the region.” (Wu, 2019)

“The government’s concern over energy security is positive for coal given that China has lots of it.” (Wu, 2019)
“Li also downplayed China’s low-carbon energy transition. At the same meeting in 2016, Li called on China to: ‘increase the proportion of renewables in the energy mix’ and ‘accelerate’ such a transition. This year, there was no mention of renewable energy’s share of the energy mix and ‘acceleration’ was replaced by the blander term ‘development’. The change of tone was hard to miss.” (Wu, 2019)

“Controlling coal power development and supporting renewable energy is the bedrock of China’s energy policy in the current Five Year Plan (2016-2020).” (Wu, 2019)

“Li’s speech suggests momentum in the energy transition could be lost if the next Five Year Plan for Energy charts a different path.” (Wu, 2019)

These statements suggest that China has placed greater emphasis on its energy security and coal utilization while downplaying the importance of a rapid transition away from fossil fuels. This is worrisome for the global transition to renewable energy and the fight against climate change. Additionally, the ongoing trade dispute between China and the US presents a potential threat to energy trade between the two countries. While it's possible that the trade war may have influenced China's energy policies and use of coal, it's challenging to attribute any changes solely to the trade war as there are many factors that influence a country's energy mix. Nonetheless, Premier Li's speech highlights a potential loss of momentum in China's energy transition, with less emphasis on accelerating the transition to renewable energy and more focus on development.

The report “China's Policies and Actions for Addressing Climate Change” (Ministry of Ecology and Environment, 2019) mostly shows compliance and cooperation. Although China's policies and actions for addressing climate change emphasize compliance and cooperation, it is worth noting that China still prioritizes its own energy security. This suggests a disparity between what China communicates and what it prioritizes in practice. The report outlines China's policies and measures for tackling climate change, including the country's targets for reducing greenhouse gas emissions, its efforts to promote clean energy, and its initiatives to strengthen international cooperation on climate change. It also provides an overview of China's progress in implementing these policies and actions, as well as its future plans for achieving sustainable development and mitigating the impacts of climate change.
Example of a statement coded with positive statements/actions:

“Since 2018, the Chinese government has played a positive and constructive role in international negotiation of climate change with a highly responsible attitude, and made great contributions on promoting global climate governance and deepening international cooperation to address climate change through firmly upholding multilateralism, strengthening multi-level dialogue and exchanges on climate change with all countries and promoting relevant parties to build consensus.” (Ministry of Ecology and Environment, 2019, p. 24)

This statement shows a positive attitude on the part of the Chinese government towards addressing climate change. It suggests that China has been actively involved in international negotiations on climate change, taking a responsible attitude and making significant contributions towards promoting global climate governance and deepening international cooperation.

Examples of statements coded with compliance:

“Actively participating in the negotiation process under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) (…)”. (Ministry of Ecology and Environment, 2019, p.24)

“(…) cooperative and win-win global climate governance system” (Ministry of Ecology and Environment, 2019, p. 24)

“And accelerating strong commitments to contribute to the Green Climate Fund” (Ministry of Ecology and Environment, 2019, p. 28)

“We are willing to work with all parties to fully support the COP25 presidency in an open, transparent, consensus-driven, party-driven way to promote the success of COP25 and lay a solid foundation for the comprehensive and effective implementation of the Paris Agreement.” (Ministry of Ecology and Environment, 2019, p. 29)

The excerpts show compliance by indicating that China is actively involved in international negotiations and discussions around climate change and is following the established framework for addressing the issue. The alleged commitment to contribute to the Green Climate Fund is
another way that China is demonstrating compliance and support for global efforts to address climate change. Finally, the statement about working with all parties to fully support the COP25 presidency shows a willingness to engage with the international community and to follow the established protocols for addressing climate change in a cooperative and collaborative manner. Premier Li's previous statements indicate a potential discrepancy between the communicated intentions and the actual actions taken by China. This raises the possibility that China may be portraying a façade of compliance and cooperation, primarily for external perception. While there is an outward display of willingness to engage collaboratively, it is important to consider whether these declarations align with concrete measures and policies implemented by China.

5.1.8 The prospects of cooperation between the United States and China

In a Reuters article from 2020 (Volcovici and Stanway, 2020), the focus was directed towards the potential challenges that the United States and China may face in collaborating on climate diplomacy. However, tensions and disagreements on trade, technology, and human rights may pose significant obstacles to successful collaboration, as these excerpts point out:

“And the once-careful negotiations between Washington and Beijing have unraveled to what experts say is the worst level in years.” (Volcovici and Stanway, 2020)

“Under Trump, the United States has launched a trade war against China and blamed Beijing for the COVID-19 pandemic, while China has cracked down on pro-democracy protests in Hong Kong, imprisoned Uighurs in Xinjiang and escalated tensions in the South China Sea.” (Volcovici and Stanway, 2020)

The statements indicate a significant deterioration in the relationship between the United States and China in recent years, as evidenced by strained negotiations due to various issues such as the trade war, accusations surrounding COVID-19, and China's actions in Hong Kong, Xinjiang, and the South China Sea. The article sites that this is the worst the relationship has been in years, signaling that the years of Trump in the lead did not do good to their relationship. The most important takeaway for the purpose of this analysis is that it implies that there may have been an imbalance in the past, where the US and China were competing more than cooperating, and that a new approach is needed for the two countries to work together effectively. Overall, the article highlights the complex and delicate nature of the US-China relationship.
Lastly, an article from The Brookings Institution (Stern, 2020) published in 2020 further explores the prospects for renewed climate cooperation between the United States and China. The article discusses the previous joint efforts of the two countries on climate action and the potential challenges and opportunities for future collaboration in the context of the changing geopolitical landscape, as shown in these excerpts:

“(…) reviving our climate cooperation will be no mean feat in light of both the deterioration of our overall relationship and the evolving landscape of the climate challenge.” (Stern, 2020)

“We will have to learn to manage a relationship marked by both competition and collaboration, working with allies to stand up against unacceptable Chinese behavior where necessary, while seeking to collaborate where we can and must.” (Stern, 2020)

“Unless we can get this mix of competition and collaboration right, renewed climate cooperation won’t get off the ground.” (Stern, 2020)

“China’s leadership will need to understand, before too long, that there is no way for China to maintain and enhance its standing in the world, with rich and poor countries alike, if climate change starts to wreak widespread havoc and China stands out as the dominant polluter who refused to do what needed to be done.” (Stern, 2020)

The statements shed light on the deterioration of the relationship between the two countries and the complexities involved in reviving climate cooperation. It is acknowledged that reviving climate cooperation is no easy task, given the overall deterioration of the relationship and the evolving landscape of the climate challenge. The relationship is being characterized as a mix of competition and collaboration, necessitating the management of this delicate balance. These quotes collectively highlight the challenges and importance of finding an equilibrium between competition and collaboration to effectively address climate change in a deteriorating international relationship.
5.2 Discussion

In the run-up to the Paris Agreement, it appears that China recognized the importance of collaboration and working towards shared goals, rather than engaging in competition with the US. The joint announcement in 2014 helped set the stage for the Paris negotiations, as it signaled a willingness on the part of both countries to take ambitious action on climate change. It also helped shift the global conversation on climate change away from a narrative of competition between the US and China, and towards one of collaboration and shared responsibility. Additionally, China and the US collaborated on various initiatives to promote clean energy, including the US-China Clean Energy Research Center and the US-China Clean Energy Deployment and Cooperation Program.

After the US withdrawal from the Paris Agreement, the relationship underwent a significant shift. President Trump's blame-shifting rhetoric exemplifies the competitive behavior exhibited by the US, which in turn contributed to a more adversarial relationship with China. Trump's constant comparisons between the US and China reinforce this competitive dynamic. Additionally, the emphasis on domestic interests, exemplified by the "America first" approach, clearly prioritizes national concerns, and hampers international cooperation. The perception of free-riding, where the US views climate agreements as unfair to its economy and chooses not to actively participate, further intensifies the lack of collaboration. These factors collectively underscore Trump's emphasis on prioritizing the US' own interests and its diminished inclination towards international cooperation. The US's withdrawal from the Paris Agreement, while not explicitly driven by the intention to free-ride, can be interpreted as capitalizing on the efforts of other nations to revive its own economy. This reflects a lack of collaboration and prioritization of domestic interests over global cooperation. Consequently, the withdrawal reinforces the perception of the US benefiting from the endeavors of others without proportionate contributions.

During Trump's presidency, the US-China relationship increasingly prioritized domestic interests, exemplified by the state visit to China in 2017. The Trump administration's foreign policy approach, emphasizing economic nationalism and protectionism, fueled a more competitive relationship with China. The US-China trade war, which commenced in 2018, highlighted the diverging geopolitical and economic interests of both countries, including their stances on climate change. Under Trump's leadership, environmental and climate change issues...
received little attention, with most focus placed on trade. Climate change cooperation was not addressed in talks between Trump and Xi, indicating a diminishing emphasis on soft power, such as investments in alliances and global projects. The US withdrawal from the Paris Agreement and the absence of statements regarding climate change or the environment accentuate the impression of a shift away from collaboration.

Following the US withdrawal from the Paris Agreement, China's rhetoric also underwent a significant shift, with more emphasis placed on its own leadership role in climate action. Although official Chinese documents did not exhibit a notably strong reaction to the US withdrawal, a thorough examination of news articles and statements by Chinese officials reveals that China remained highly reactive to the situation. This indicates that the US withdrawal prompted a shift in China's approach to the issue of climate change, even if this was not directly reflected in its official documents.

However, a change that could be seen in the official documents was the Chinese shift in approach to prioritize its own interests, particularly after President Trump emphasized the importance of fossil fuels for energy security. Premier Li echoed this sentiment, stressing the significance of domestic energy security in China's strategy. Both countries recognized the need to prioritize their respective energy security, leading to a shift in their approaches to address this aspect of their domestic interests. While Premier Li emphasized the need for increased energy securitization, China continued to signal its commitment to the Paris Agreement and its collaborative efforts with other nations to address climate change. Yet, a more competitive relationship between China and the US could potentially lead to the necessity for China to become self-sufficient in energy provision. This emphasis on energy security could have significant implications for the global community, potentially resulting in increased emissions.

China's behavior exhibits signs of collective action, neoliberal institutionalism, and, at times, realism, indicating a complex interplay between competitive and collaborative tendencies. On one hand, China's participation in collective action is reflected by its seeming willingness to cooperate with other nations on climate change issues and contribute to global efforts. This also aligns with the principles of neoliberal institutionalism, which emphasize the role of international institutions and cooperation in addressing shared challenges. On the other hand, China's occasional display of realist behavior implies a focus on national self-interest and the pursuit of its own goals in the global arena. This suggests that while China may engage in
collaborative actions, it also considers its own competitive position and strategic interests. The coexistence of these different behavioral tendencies underscores the intricate nature of China's approach to climate change and highlights the need for a nuanced understanding of its motives and actions.

The media coverage demonstrably contributed to the worsening tone between the countries. US media articles tended to have a critical view of China's intentions, suggesting that China was pleased with the US decision to withdraw from the Paris Agreement and was ready to assume a leadership role in the global fight against climate change. Some even argued that the US withdrawal handed China a significant advantage in this regard. In contrast, Chinese media attempted to counter the narrative that China viewed the US withdrawal from the Paris Agreement as a gift and argued that it was detrimental for all parties involved.

Other articles from Chinese media expressed more optimism on its own behalf regarding the opportunities that could arise from the US withdrawal from the Paris Agreement. By 2018, they appeared to be increasingly confident in their leadership role in the fight against climate change, as suggested by the news article on leadership. In the following years, Chinese media promoted a narrative that portrayed China as highly interested in assuming a leading role. Notably, this perspective is more readily found in Chinese media coverage compared to official Chinese documents. However, China's messaging often presents a perplexing picture, leaving observers uncertain about its true intentions and objectives.

Additional media outlets extensively discussed the deteriorating state of the relationship between China and the United States during President Trump's tenure. These discussions underscored the negative consequences of the US withdrawal from the Paris Agreement on their cooperation regarding climate change. These findings indicate that the US withdrawal had a tangible and detrimental impact on the climate change relationship between the two countries, as observed through the lens of the analyzed documents.

Despite the Chinese government projecting a non-confrontational image, possibly to uphold its international reputation, this analysis gives the impression that China views the US as a competitor. Evidence of this can be found in Chinese media articles, where government-led sites published various critiques of the US after the withdrawal from the Paris Agreement. However, in public settings, they maintained a neutral tone when addressing the situation.
Overall, these findings illustrate the evolving dynamics of the US-China relationship, with both countries increasingly prioritizing domestic interests and exhibiting competitive behavior. This shift has implications for international cooperation on climate change and suggests a reduced willingness to collaborate on global issues.
6. Concluding remarks

China and the US are two of the largest carbon emitters in the world, and their actions and cooperation on climate change are crucial for the success of the Paris Agreement and global efforts to address climate change. Understanding the effect of the US withdrawal on the relationship between China and the US is essential for understanding the current state of global climate politics and the potential for future collaboration or conflict between these two superpowers on climate change and other important issues. This motivated my research question:

What was the effect of the US withdrawal from the Paris Agreement on China and the United States' relationship on climate change?

The significance of this research question lies in its examination of a pivotal event within international relations and climate policy. The Paris Agreement represents a vital global accord designed to address the challenges posed by climate change, making it a topic of utmost importance. The withdrawal of the United States during the Trump administration holds substantial implications for the collective global efforts to combat climate change. By investigating this event, we can gain valuable insights into the broader impact and consequences that the US withdrawal had on the global climate agenda and the overall progress towards achieving the goals set forth in the Paris Agreement.

6.1 Key findings

This thesis has explored the impact of the US withdrawal from the Paris Agreement on the relationship between China and the United States in the context of climate change. The research question sought to determine the effect of the withdrawal on the relations between the two nations, and the analysis revealed substantial impacts resulting from the US withdrawal. This conclusion will summarize the key findings and contributions of this thesis and discuss the broader implications of these findings for understanding the dynamics of international relations in the era of global climate change.

To address the research question, I conducted a content analysis on both primary and secondary sources from the US and China. Furthermore, the study has utilized an analytical framework
that combines realism, neoliberal institutionalism, and collective action theory to analyze the behavior of major powers within the context of global climate change. By considering both collaborative and competitive behavior, the framework sheds light on factors influencing state actions. The coding for the analysis was done manually on all 23 documents. All though it was a time-consuming process, it helped reveal the nuances needed for this study.

Initially, I anticipated a strong response from China to the withdrawal. However, upon analyzing the official documents, the Chinese Government's reaction was not explicitly forceful. In contrast, the media provided a clearer expression of the reactions, both from the US and China.

The research findings indicate that both China and the US invested significant effort in establishing a collaborative relationship in addressing climate change, as evidenced by the joint announcement in 2014 and their participation in the Paris Climate negotiations. During the period from 2014 to 2016, both countries demonstrated a shared commitment to compliance with international climate agreements and exhibited characteristics aligned with neoliberal institutionalism, which emphasizes cooperation through international institutions and norms.

However, the dynamics changed after the US withdrew from the Paris Agreement in 2017. Following the withdrawal, it was a noticeable shift in the tone and approach of both countries. The US became more inward-looking, prioritizing domestic interests and adopting a realist approach that focuses on national self-interest and power dynamics. This shift can be attributed to a combination of factors, including the Trump administration's emphasis on protecting the US economy and skepticism towards international agreements.

On the other hand, China maintained its focus on climate change but placed a greater emphasis on its own leadership role. This shift in China's approach can be seen as a response to the US decision to withdraw from the Paris Agreement, which created a leadership void that China seemingly sought to fill. By positioning itself as a global leader in climate action, China is viewed to assert its influence, gain international recognition, and capitalize on the opportunity to shape the global climate agenda.

The analysis reveals that media coverage played a discernible role in shaping the perception of the relationship between the two countries. Media articles from both sides exhibited a tendency
to criticize each other, a tone that was not as explicitly evident in the official documents examined. This indicates that media discourse had some influence in amplifying the critical narrative surrounding the bilateral relationship.

The change in China's approach to climate change, coupled with the US's inward turn, highlights the impact of the US withdrawal on the dynamics of the China-US relationship and their respective approaches to addressing climate change. While China maintained its commitment to climate action, its increased emphasis on leadership suggests a more assertive role in shaping global climate governance. Meanwhile, the US's shift towards domestic interests and skepticism towards international cooperation raises concerns about its willingness to engage in collective efforts to address climate change.

This shift in dynamics between China and the US underscores the complex interplay between competition and collaboration in the realm of climate change. While both countries previously demonstrated arduous efforts to establish a collaborative relationship, the US withdrawal prompted a change in the approach of both countries, with China emphasizing its leadership role and the US adopting a more self-focused stance. Understanding these shifts is crucial for comprehending the evolving landscape of global climate governance and the challenges and opportunities they present for international cooperation in tackling climate change.

6.2 Implications

The implications of finding that the US withdrawal from the Paris Agreement had a negative impact on the relationship between China and the US on climate change are significant.

Firstly, it indicates a deterioration in cooperation and collaboration between two major global powers in addressing one of the most pressing challenges of our time. Climate change requires international efforts and collective action, and the strained relationship between China and the US undermines the ability to effectively tackle this global issue.

The negative impact on the China-US relationship highlights challenges in global climate governance. It raises questions about the effectiveness of international agreements and mechanisms in driving collective action and resolving differences among nations. It may
stimulate discussions and debates about the need for stronger global governance structures and mechanisms to overcome barriers and ensure meaningful cooperation on climate change.

The US has historically played a significant role in global climate change leadership. Its withdrawal from the Paris Agreement and the subsequent negative impact on its relationship with China may create a leadership void, providing an opportunity for other countries to step up and take a more prominent role in advancing climate action on the global stage.

The analysis indicates that China is assuming a leadership role in addressing climate change. This undertaking entails a considerable financial commitment not only to China's domestic efforts but also to support other nations. Furthermore, considering that the US previously contributed significantly to the Green Climate Fund, China may be expected to fill the gap, which could be financially burdensome over time. This raises the question of whether China's strategic interests prioritize power dynamics over economic considerations, a dynamic that will unfold over time.

The Chinese government recognizes the imperative of addressing domestic climate issues like air pollution to ensure stability and gain public support. Consequently, China remains committed to taking climate action irrespective of the United States' actions or choices. Leveraging its position as a leading renewable energy producer, China sees an opportunity for economic growth by exporting its technology and reinforcing its commitment to sustainable development. This strategic focus on renewable energy development may position China as a global leader in the field and intensify competition with the United States, thereby incentivizing further progress. Should China successfully execute its long-term sustainable development strategy, it could establish itself as a leader in sustainability and renewable energy, while the United States lags in its transition. However, the degree of ambiguity surrounding China's intentions and approach makes predicting its future actions challenging.

Ultimately, the negative impact of the US withdrawal on the China-US relationship underscores the urgency for renewed collaboration and stronger commitment from both countries to address climate change. It emphasizes the need for global cooperation, multilateralism, and diplomatic efforts to overcome challenges and achieve sustainable solutions in the face of a changing climate.
6.3 Suggestions for future research

While this study focuses specifically on a particular aspect of the US-China relationship, the analytical framework developed in this thesis holds potential for broader applications in future research. By employing the same framework and research approach, subsequent studies can explore a wide range of topics, including security dynamics, economic policies, and human rights issues. This adaptability of the framework enables researchers to gain valuable insights into different facets of the complex US-China relationship, contributing to a more comprehensive understanding of this significant global partnership.

The effect of the US withdrawal from the Paris Agreement on China and the United States' relationship on climate change can also be explored through the lens of economic consequences. Further research could investigate how the withdrawal has impacted trade, investment, and market opportunities in the renewable energy and clean technology industries in both countries. This includes analyzing the effects on the employment rate and economic growth in these sectors, as well as examining potential shifts in the global market share for these industries. Furthermore, research could also investigate how the withdrawal has affected the bilateral and multilateral economic relations between the two countries on issues related to climate change, such as carbon pricing and green finance. By analyzing the economic impact of the US withdrawal, researchers can gain a better understanding of the long-term implications for both China and the United States and the potential for future collaboration on climate change.

An alternative and intriguing approach to consider is conducting a rhetorical analysis, specifically focusing on the rhetoric employed by the two presidents. Exploring the rhetorical strategies and language used by the presidents can provide valuable insights into their communication styles, messaging, and underlying ideologies. By closely examining their speeches, public statements, and official communications, this analysis would shed light on the persuasive techniques employed by each president, as well as their framing of key issues related to climate change and international cooperation. Such an investigation would offer a unique perspective on the political dynamics and the strategic use of language in shaping public opinion and influencing policy decisions.
7. Bibliography


Appendix

List of documents used in the analysis

Official U.S. documents
1. U.S. - China Joint Announcement on Climate Change (November 12, 2014)
2. Readout of the President’s Meeting with President Xi Jinping of China (September 3, 2016)
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