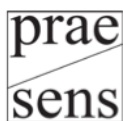# Climate Change Policy in Chinese Online Media Discourse: The Case of the Debate on the Copenhagen Climate Summit 2009

Thomas Immervoll

Abstract

This paper discusses the debate in Chinese online media on both climate change policy and the 2009 United Nations Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen (COP15). Based on the results of a discourse analysis of Chinese language weblogs, the paper argues that at the time of COP15 there was a dominant single discourse coalition, while also identifying alternative discourse formations. The main reasons for this discursive structure seem to be the ways in which actors are participating in the political process, the sensitivity of the topic of climate change in the Chinese discussion, and the influence of foreign debates.

Introduction

The success of an international climate change regime depends on the inclusion of China into any such endeavour. Nevertheless, the political message sent out by the People's Republic of China (PRC) has been rather ambiguous. Although Chinese leaders have persisted in their claim that the prevention of climate change is essential for the long term development of their country, the main argument still seems to be that China, as a developing country, must first grow economically before accepting any obligations within any international climate change framework. As a consequence, international climate change policies are often poorly implemented in the PRC.

China has become a big player on the global energy market and is increasingly providing economic aid to developing countries in Africa and Latin America in order to secure a sustainable supply of energy and raw materials to its own economy. At the same time, as China has failed to reach its own ecological goals and the problem of air pollution has not been resolved but has rather exacerbated in recent years, Chinese officials have increasingly articulated the need to reduce the emission of CO_2 and to foster China's path towards a low-carbon economy.

While climate change has become an important issue on the agenda of political discourse in China and the national climate change policy framework has got increasingly complex (cf. Kuhn 2014), there is still a lack of understanding with regard to its structures and developments. In this respect, it is advisable to find out about discourse, as '[p]olitical action, like action generally, is shaped and controlled by the discourses that supply it with meaning' (Fischer 2003: 23), and political discourse therefore is closely linked to policy.[1] Discourses often are marked by a linear development, thus we can hardly make any predictions on their future development—let alone the development of the phenomena they represent—but they are clear indications of policy development in the past or at present. The year 2009 was an important milestone in the history of climate change policy, when the Climate Summit in Copenhagen took place. In order to understand the most recent developments of climate change policy in the PRC it is, therefore, advisable to look at the discursive manifestation of this event.

When the political leaders of the world met in Copenhagen at the 15th session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), commonly known as the Copenhagen Summit (hence-

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1   On the relevance for language in policy process and policy analysis, see also Gottweis 2006: 464.

forth COP15), China and the United States (US), being the biggest emitters[2] of greenhouse gases, were regarded to play the key roles in the negotiations. According to the Bali Road Map, the negotiation process on substantial measures to tackle climate change should have been completed by 2009, but COP15 failed to bring about an agreement on substantial issues. Whereas the American government had nothing to offer because of internal politics, the role of China remained unclear. China had played a more active role in international climate change policy-making since the climate talks in Bali in 2007, including mitigation commitments (Oberheitmann and Sternfeld 2009: 141), and the Chinese leadership had also made great efforts to enforce Chinese climate change policy on the national level. Stensdal (2012) notes that in 2007 climate change policy 'became a domestic policy issue in its own right' in the PRC. In June 2007, the National Development and Reform Commission (*Guójiā fāzhǎn hé gǎigé wěiyuánhuì* 国家发展和改革委员会, NDRC) had published a National Climate Programme (*Zhōngguó yìngduì qìhóubiànhuà guòjiā fāngàn (quánwén)*《中国应对气候变化国家方案》（全文）) that referred to the forecasts on dramatic effects of climate change on China provided by the National Climate Report of 2006 (cf. CCICED 2007) and the 4th Assessment Report presented by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC 2007). But at COP15, the Chinese delegation was obviously not willing, once again, to contribute to any decision leading to a more ambitious climate change policy. How can this seeming inconsistency of the PRC leadership's internal and external strategy be explained?

In this paper, I intend to reconstruct parts of the discursive framework in which Chinese climate change policy was taking place at the time. Using a discourse analytical approach, I investigate certain segments of the Chinese online discourse at the time of COP15. I argue that the domestic policy debate was crucial for the action of the negotiators at the Climate Summit. The goal is to establish how the Chinese debate on climate change was structured and how can this structure be explained.

The layout of this paper is as follows: Chapter 2 provides an overview of the literature on China's climate change policy published in English. Chapter 3 presents the data used for analysis, as well as the methodological approach and theoretical

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2 According to a Carbon Dioxide Information Analysis Center (CDIAC) ranking of the world's countries' total CO_2 emissions by 2010, Mainland China was the biggest emitter of CO_2 in 2010 by 2,259,856 thousand metric tons of carbon, followed by the US (1,481,608 thousand MET). Nevertheless, China was only ranked 63rd in a list of countries by 2010 per capita fossil-fuel CO_2 emission rates. The US was in the twelfth place, only topped by a number of very small states (see http://cdiac.ornl.gov/trends/emis/top2010.cap and http://cdiac.ornl.gov/trends/emis/top2010.tot, both accessed 10 January 2015). In absolute terms, China had overtaken the US in 2006 (Vidal and Adam 2007). According to the Data of the Global Carbon Project, China produced 29% of the total CO_2 emissions in 2013 (McGrath 2014). This study also reports that China's emissions per capita (7.2 tons per person) had exceeded those of the European Union (6.8 tons) for the first time. The per capita emission of the US was 16.5 tons per person in 2013 (McGrath 2014).

foundation. Chapters 4 to 6 contain the main results of the analysis and their discussion.

Literature Overview

In recent years, a significant number of studies on a broadening range of issues related to Chinese climate change policy have been published outside of China. They mainly deal with the following aspects of Chinese climate change policy: (1) the international level; (2) the national level; (3) the local level and the central-local government relations; (4) the civil society; and (5) the discourse on climate change policy in China. In the following, some of the most significant publications will be presented for each of these aspects. Overall, the review of related literature indicates that a growing number of scholars have recently chosen different approaches, apart from economistic angles, to analyse climate change policy in China.

National Climate Change Policy and an Emerging International Framework

Many authors focus on the international aspects of climate change policy in China (cf. Garnaut, Jotzo and Howes 2008; Guan and Reiner 2009; Oberheitmann 2010; Oberheitmann and Sternfeld 2009; Christoff 2010; Conrad 2012; Zhang 2013). The emphasis here is on China's strategy in international negotiations and the reasons for certain strategic decisions. Furthermore, there was a considerable discussion about whom to blame for the frustrating outcome of the climate talks in Copenhagen. Since the US and China were seen as having the largest impact on the negotiations, many authors blame at least one of them as responsible for the failure to adopt a legally binding Copenhagen Accord.

Top-down Policies at the National Level: Adapting the Chinese Model of Economic Growth

There are a significant number of studies that deal with China's national policies as efforts to combat climate change. Most focus on macro-level policy outputs and top-down policy measures (cf. Cann, Cann and Gao 2005; Aden and Sinton 2006; Jun and Ji 2008; Lewis 2008; He 2010; Loher 2012; Hofem and Heilmann 2013; Xu et al. 2014). Chinese climate change policy is widely regarded as an economic policy. At the same time, the economic model developed since 1978 focusing on economic growth has increasingly been considered unsustainable because it causes environmental pollution (cf. Weigelin-Schwiedrzik and Ritirc 2011; Conrad 2012: 440).

The reform of this economic model has become a top priority policy target in China (cf. Cann, Cann and Gao 2005: 4). In recent years, there have been a large number of public announcements, scientific publications, and newspaper articles by official-ly approved Chinese organisations propagating the development of low-carbon economy in the Chinese context (cf. CCICED 2009; Xie 2009; *China Daily* 2010). But it is argued that environmental protection has to be implemented carefully in order not to jeopardise economic development. He Lichao (2010: 6–7) remarks that, according to the Chinese debate, environmental protection should not be implement-ed at the expense of the economy (cf. Lewis 2008). Many other texts primarily focus on Chinese energy policy issues (Oberheitmann and Sternfeld 2009: 143–9; Dulal et al. 2013; Dong et al. 2014; Gong and Shen 2014; Gunningham 2014; Li et al. 2014; Liu 2014; Lo 2014a; Valentine 2014; Wang et al. 2014; Yu et al. 2014; Yuan et al. 2014; Zhang and Lahr 2014).

Climate Change Policy at the Local Level and Central-Local Relations

Additionally, there is a literature on climate change policies at the local level and the impact of central-local relations in this context (cf. Jun and Ji 2008; Qi et al. 2008; Schröder 2012; Li 2013). The overall focus of this research is quite different to the studies mentioned above. One of the main questions raised in this context is the one of (non-)compliance of local actors to central government policies (see, for example, Lo 2014b). Investigating the case of Xiamen, Kuhn (2014) shows that applying political science approaches can be fruitful in terms of achieving a better under-standing of the increasingly complex institutional setting and policy mechanisms of Chinese climate change policy. In those studies, climate change policy turns into an issue of governance analysis. By applying actor-centred approaches, other scholars rather investigate the behaviour of local actors (cf. Habich 2011; Blichfeldt cit. in Loher 2013; Chen, Wang and Huang 2014; Huang et al. 2014). To some extent, in these studies local activists and local governments appear to be in opposition to central governmental policy.

China's Civil Society and Climate Change

An important contribution to the research on climate change politics in China is by scholars working on Environmental NGOs (ENGOs) and Civil Society Organisa-tions (CSOs) (cf. Stern, cit. in Lynch 2013). They oppose the mainstream research that focuses on environmental and climate change policy-making primarily as a matter of top-down policies. Nevertheless, authors like Kuhn (2014: 69) suggest that the influence of non-governmental actors still seems to be limited.

CSOs have also gained influence in the climate change policy debate at the international level. Sausmikat (2010) argues that this could be an opportunity for a more intensive co-operation of CSOs in Europe and China but there are still, however, a number of obstacles.

The Analysis of the Chinese Discourse on Climate Change Policy

Finally, there are also studies on the discourse on climate change policy in China (cf. Willats 2013; Sausmikat 2013). Stensdal (2012; 2014) argues that a *Climate Change Advocacy Coalition in China* has emerged in recent years. Some studies focus on the coverage of and discussion on climate change (policy) in the Chinese media (cf. Tolan 2007; Painter 2010; Gifford et al. 2014), with authors like Kuhn and Zhang (2014) arguing that climate protection issues have gained more attention in Chinese media over the last few years.

Method, Data, and Theory

Methodological Considerations

Political discourse in online media is a complex issue for several reasons. Firstly, it is not limited by national borders; everyone can access internet forums, contribute texts, or comment on news articles online. Therefore, it is difficult to denominate this discourse as 'Chinese'; rather, it seems more appropriate to define it as 'Chinese language' discourse. Secondly, it is quite hard to say which online articulation is affecting a particular debate and which is not. However, discourse analysis can give some evidence on the influence of specific discursive actions. Thirdly, not all contents put online remain the same over a long period of time. Websites may disappear and contents often change. It is therefore difficult for the researcher analysing a specific debate to get reliable information regarding which articulations were made and in which form at a certain point in time. Fourthly, not all websites are freely accessible within the PRC.[3] Some of them can be found and read temporarily, others cannot be accessed from the PRC at all. Nevertheless, it is possible for internet users on the Chinese mainland to overcome the Great Firewall of China (*fánghuǒ chángchéng* 防火长城) and access websites such as Twitter that are blocked within the PRC. These discussions can then have some influence on Chinese internet commu-

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3   There are numerous studies on Internet censorship in the PRC. A study reflecting the current situation was recently published by the Canada Centre for Global Security Studies/Citizen Lab at Munk School of Global Affairs, University of Toronto (2011); see also ONI 2009; Bamman, O'Connor and Smith 2012; and Zhu et al. 2013.

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nities that interact via platforms like Sina Weibo and QQ. Finally, both online discourse and the internet itself are developing rapidly. As Yang (2011: 21) puts it, studying the internet feels 'like shooting a moving target'. Analysing online discourses therefore is a challenge for the researcher.

Investigating online discourses from a holistic perspective, Klimek, Bayer and Thurner (2011: 1) suggest that 'the public perception of news reports follow a similar statistic as earthquakes do' with developments in media discourses being perceived as shocks and aftershocks. This is especially true for the blogosphere, defined as the sum of all weblogs[4] and their connections at a particular point in time, where this kind of waves in information flow can be investigated quite easily as they are highly interconnected. Online content therefore can be expected to accumulate around specific events. The biggest part of texts collected in the database were published between June 2009 and January 2010 (Figure 1), following a general trend of hypes of online texts on climate change around the COPs.

Data Collection and Management

This study is based on a database of blog entries on climate change with a focus on climate change policy in Chinese language. The free software Zotero was used to collect published live images of postings on weblogs, including all contents found on the websites.

The database contains about 1700 weblog entries in 79 weblogs (codified by numbers) published from 2006 to 2015[5] and collected in several steps since October 2012. All the texts are discussing climate change policy or low carbon economy on a broader perspective. Texts dealing solely with specific policy measures—i.e. specific technologies or products, single events, other environmental problems such as smog or trade conflicts—are not included into the database. Nor are texts on local issues, if they do not reflect climate change (policy) in general.

The texts were found using popular search engines such as Google or Baidu, or search engines integrated into the websites of weblog providers such as blog.sina.com.cn, blog.china.com.cn, or sohu.com. Links found on websites, especially the blogrolls of weblogs, were also used to access websites of other weblogs. In this way, it was possible to identify those demands that had the potential to influence the public debate and, therefore, were relevant for the discourse during a certain period of time. In this study, debates in important non-public arenas of

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4   There is no valid definition of the term *weblog* (abbreviation: *blog*) so far. Obviously, a weblog is a website that is created to put contents online frequently. These materials are more or less arranged according to a timeline. There is a great variety of weblogs so that such a definition has to be rather vague.

5   According to the dates of publication referred to on the websites.

discourse are not dealt with, apart from their impact and reflections (both linguistic and argumentative) on public debates.

It must be noted that, in 2009, social media such as Twitter, Facebook, Weibo, or QQ were still new and the proportion of weblogs on the international online discourse is supposed to have been much larger at that time than it is today. Thus, the sharp decrease of postings on climate change in the blogosphere after 2010 (see Figure 1) can be supposed to not only reflect a certain fading of the debate on climate change but also the shift of influence within the online media.

Figure 1 Number of texts on climate change and climate change policy collected for this study
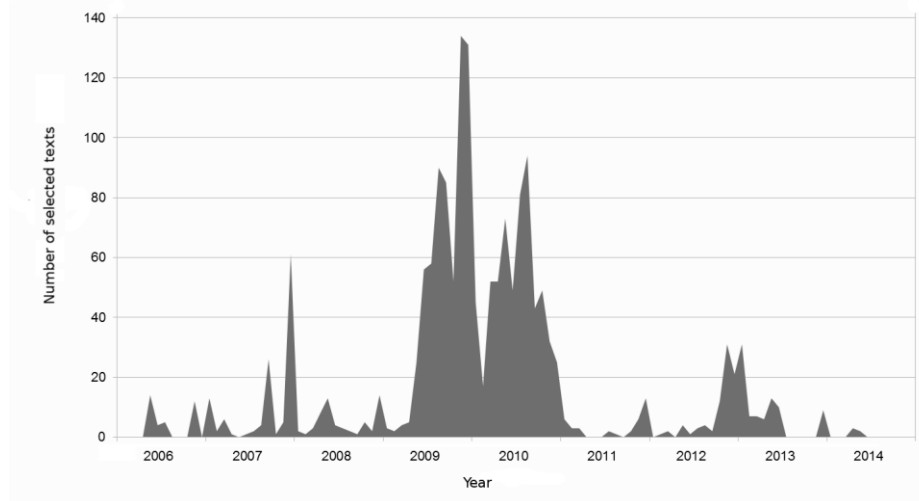
Source: Thomas Immervoll

While the biggest part of texts collected in the database were published between June 2009 and January 2010 (Figure 1), following a general trend of hypes of online texts on climate change around the COPs in the sense of the above mentioned theory of 'shocks' and 'aftershocks', the period of investigation covered by this paper was chosen according to its main research interest to observe the discussions leading up to and taking place during and after the conference. The 690 texts analysed for this paper were published between January 2009 and January 2010. They are used in the form in which they were found online at the date of access. Since the date of publication, they might have been modified or even deleted.

The corpus analysed contains quite diverse texts. Many of the weblogs are designed to report on current climate change policies. In some of them, media reports published elsewhere have been reposted. This kind of weblogs may contain dozens

or even hundreds of postings on climate change policy. Weblogs that are dedicated to other issues may include just one or two entries on climate change topics.

Many weblogs analysed in this study have been published by activists and EN-GOs. Therefore, they mainly represent a debate occurring outside of official texts. Most texts are obviously written and edited by Chinese authors, others seem to be translations from foreign languages, or published by the Chinese branch of Western organisations or companies. In some cases, the influence or origin from Hong Kong or Taiwan is obvious. In sum, the origin of the entries used was not validated; they were chosen upon availability on the websites of Chinese blogging services and the free online accessibility of the text.

Theoretical Foundations

Based on the approach suggested by Laclau and Mouffe (2001; cf. Laclau 1990), this analysis deals with the discursive structures within the Chinese online discourse on climate change policy, with a focus on identification and comparison of discourse coalitions.

For the operationalisation of the discourse theory developed by Laclau and Mouffe, the concept of discursive strategies suggested by Martin Nonhoff (2005: 12–21; 2006) to analyse (the development of) social conflicts has been very useful.

Laclau and Mouffe describe the process of building identities as the establishment of 'relations of equivalence' between actors that are taking 'differential positions'. Equivalence can be reached by knotting *chains of equivalence*, which define the common *demands* and features of different actors and determine *the Other*, i.e. the common *enemy*. They show that all those who are sharing this specific common identity are *different* from that *Other*.

An important task of this kind of discourse analysis is to explain how the *Other* is defined. A precise naming of whom a group of actors is fighting against is crucial for the creation of a common identity of this group. This identity is never fixed and can be jeopardised at any time. Society thus is a place of struggles for identities. By investigating the frontiers between identities, which are drawn by articulating the *Other*, we can get a detailed picture of the appearance and the change of social identities, as well as the differences between identities. Applying Sabatier's notion of advocacy coalitions, Nonhoff (2006: 188–202) denominates actors establishing the same chains of equivalence as *discourse coalitions*. Members of a discourse coalition have partly eliminated their differences originating from different discourse positions in order to oppose a common enemy, i.e. the *Other*. Those formations are necessarily precarious and can be contested at any time. But forming discourse coalitions is inevitable in the fight for hegemony in a policy field. For the policy

analyst, the identification of discourse coalitions is crucial for understanding discursive activities as a struggle for hegemonic power.

In this context, Nonhoff also introduces the concept of *discursive strategies*. Every discourse coalition has elaborated specific *stratagems* in order to gain dominance within a discursive field. In this sense, every articulation is part of a broader movement whose objective is to gain hegemony within a specific discourse. If hegemony is already established, this discursive strategy is called *hegemonic strategy*.

The concept of *chains of equivalence* is very useful for empirical discourse analysis. As elaborated above, their task is to define the commonalities of the discourse coalition as well as the distinction from *the Other*. In Figure 2, two chains of equivalence (P and Q) are reconstructed. The chain of equivalence P is used to form a group identity that is shared by different actors. But as identity cannot be ultimately defined in this way, an *Other*, a common opponent, must be represented by a second chain of equivalence (Q). The elements of Q are the *articulation* of the *Other* within a certain discourse coalition.

Figure 2 Chains of equivalence after Martin Nonhoff
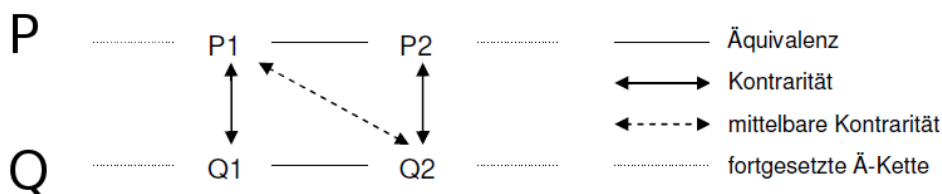
Source: Martin Nonhoff (2005: 341)

According to Nonhoff's theoretical model, all elements of Q are closely linked to the *Other* and, at the same time, cannot be part of P (and vice versa). This means that all elements of P are articulated in a relation of *equivalence* (*Äquivalenz*) to all other elements of P and in a relation of *contrariness* (*Kontrarität*) to all elements of Q. Even if there is no clear contrariness articulated between a single element of P and an element of Q, they cannot be articulated equivalently at a certain point of time. This relationship is called *indirect (relation of) contrariness* (*mittelbare Kontrarität*).

If an element switches from one chain to another, the whole discursive (or hegemonic) strategy is put in question and the discursive order changes. Sometimes, such changes are very subtle; in others, they take place very rapidly and have huge effects on the social order the discourse is constructing. That is, using this concept shifts within discursive structures can be determined and described.

If the border between both P and Q chains of equivalence is clear—i.e. if there is no element of P which at the same time is or tends to be element of Q, and all elements of both P and Q are clearly separated by a relation of contrariness—such a

discursive order provides a common legitimacy for actors. As soon as there is a shift of any element that threatens this order, the common identity of the discourse coalition, and thus their legitimacy, are called into question. Therefore, every speaker tries to draw a clear picture of *the Other* in order to become part of a stable discourse coalition that tries to gain hegemony within a certain field.

Departing from these theoretical concepts, the main goals of this study are to investigate the borders of the discourse on climate change policy and to shed light on the process of establishing equivalences between the different actors involved. From the perspective applied in this paper, the discourse analyst aims to investigate how the topic talked about is defined and to what the elements or the central demands of a discourse coalition are linked to. How are main concepts defined? How are the limitations of the issue under discussion set? Every concept can be articulated in a variety of contexts. For instance, climate change can be articulated as an economic, social, or ecological problem etc. An actor who is not articulating climate change policy in accordance with established definitions and contexts is prone to lack legitimacy.

Results

The Hegemonic Discourse Coalition in the Blogosphere

The results of my analysis indicate that the main focus of most weblog entries published between January 2009 and January 2010 are in fact dedicated to COP15. Since many of the authors and editors are NGO representatives that participated in the negotiations, they used the weblogs to report live from Copenhagen.

In the evening before the climate summit, many of them were quite sceptical regarding the chances for a good outcome. The weblog *Climate Tracker* complains that national politicians (i.e. the US Congress) were playing with numbers proposing new greenhouse gas reduction targets and accuses them of 'confusing public opinion' (*hùnxiáo shìtīng* 混淆视听) (Climate Tracker 2009).

In many texts, the US are held accountable for the failure of the negotiations to reach a satisfactory, legally binding accord. Not only Chinese actors share this opinion. In their Chinese weblog on international climate change policy, the Western NGO World Wide Fund For Nature (WWF)[6] criticises American policy-making as much less ambitious than the Chinese one. They claim that climate change negotiations were primarily framed by the conflict between 'developed states' (*fādá guójiā* 发达国家) and 'developing states' (*fāzhǎnzhōng guójiā* 发展中国家), including the

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6 Find the weblog *WWF Action against Climate Change* (*WWF yìngduì qìhòu biànhuà xíngdòng* WWF应对气候变化行动) here: http://wwfclimate.blog.sohu.com/; accessed 10 July 2014.

PRC. In their opinion, the US would have been responsible for setting clear and binding targets at the summit but, on the contrary, had threatened the post-Kyoto regime. For instance, Kim Carstensen, the leader of the WWF Global Climate Initiative at that time, during the Copenhagen Summit was cited as follows:

> Those countries heavily influenced by climate change currently have rather low capacities to adapt climate change; there are a couple of bad examples of developed countries who promised financial support to poor countries for adaptation measures but who did not live up to their promise in the end (WWF Action against Climate Change 2009).

This seems to be the hegemonic discourse coalition. The US are the main rival and articulated equivalent to the threat of climate change, as their policy is said to reinforce the impact of global warming. Europe is, although acting in another way than America, articulated as equivalent with America. Both the EU and the US are accused of forming part of a developed countries coalition whose common interests are opposed to and conflicting with those of the developing countries (including China). It is interesting that, in most cases, other blocks like BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa) or the Group of 77 (G77), a loose coalition of over 130 developing nations that were quite influential in the past, are not even mentioned.[7] Furthermore, the policies of individual countries (except the US) are rarely discussed in the texts. In almost all cases, no European countries are named; the (group) actor taken into consideration is just the so-called *fādá guójiā* (发达国家, developed countries), led by the US.

Figure 3 The hegemonic discourse coalition
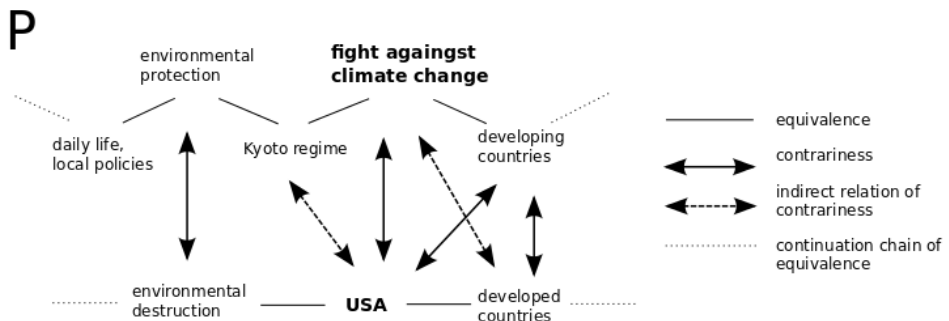
Source: Thomas Immervoll

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7   The G77 are playing a significant role only in texts discussing the fate of small island states (cf. Chinese Civil Society Replies to Climate change 2009).

The chains of equivalence formed by this hegemonic strategy are shown (summed up) in Figure 3.

In this case, the tackling of climate change is articulated as a positive goal, and so is environmental protection. The Kyoto Protocol is viewed as setting up a framework that shall be implemented. The developing countries are perceived as China's allies, whereas, on the other side, the US are seen as the clear opponent to climate change and to all those who fight it. They are presented as not interested in reaching the goals set up in Bali, whereas the industrial developed countries are presented as the US's natural allies.

In this discourse coalition, the *hegemonic demand* (i.e. the common demand that is necessary to construct this hegemonic coalition) is directed towards the US and the developed states to take their responsibilities. At the same time, climate change is seen as very closely connected to environmental protection and local action and thus not merely defined as a question of (sustainable) economic development.

Alternative Discourse Coalitions

Apart from the hegemonic discourse coalition displayed above, there are other voices on climate change within the blogosphere as well. In the following, I will outline three of those alternative discourse coalitions based on the analysis of the texts within the database.

First, there is an alternative discourse coalition suggesting that the US government is making efforts to combat climate change very effectively. Republishing an article by NASA, the weblog of the NGO *Care for Earth* (*Aì Dìqiú Liánméng* 爱地球联盟), founded in 2008, suggests that the climate change policy promoted by the Obama administration is very different from that of the Bush administration:

> At the moment, US President Obama tries to wake up the Congress and the American public to limit the catastrophic climate change caused by the rise of carbon dioxide CO_2 released into the atmosphere (CFE NGO Add Green Environmental Centre 2009).[8]

This argument is worth mentioning because it differs significantly from the hegemonic discourse strategy treating the US as *the Other* in order to define the Chinese position in the international climate change policy debate. In spite of the fact that the majority of postings in this blog articulate the hegemonic discursive strategy, texts like this one still suggest that there is room for deviating views on climate change policy within the Chinese language online discourse, even if, like in this case, the influence of foreign sources is evident. This means that even at the time of a strong

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8 当前，美国总统奥巴马正在试图唤醒国会和美国民众采取行动去遏制因大气中二氧化碳排放量上升而导致的灾难性气候变化。

position of the hegemonic discourse coalition, alternative coalitions can be affected from outside China.

Another alternative discourse coalition develops from a very different perspective: The weblog *There Really is a God that Loves You* (*zhēnde yǒu yī wèi shén ài nǐ* 真的有一位神爱你 2009) suggests that humans have been confronted with climate changes since antiquity. Those events were God's way to test and punish humans, as he did in the story of Noah's ark. The author of this weblog argues that, like Noah, we should use new technologies to oppose global warming. All countries in the world should unite to pass this divine test.

In this case, the chains of equivalence are rather different from those of the hegemonic discourse coalition. Climate change is related to God but, at the same time, is a kind of challenge that all men and women ought to accept. God is at the side of mankind; so, those believing in him will pass his test. In this case, no enemy, i.e. no *Other*, is defined in a singular text, but from the weblog context it is obvious that those not believing in God and not obeying God's signs are found being in contrast and in clear opposition to those listening to God's words.[9]

Xiǎo Fēixiá (2009) is another blogger who employs Christian terminology and calls the Qinghai-Tibetan Plateau the 'last ark of Noah' (*zuìhòu de Nuòyà fāngzhōu* 最后的诺亚方舟). Discussing the fate of the Maldives Islands, Xiǎo suggests that global warming is not caused by the Maldivians but is 'a common sin of all people in the world' (*quánqiú de rénlèi gòngtóng zào de niè* 全球的人类共同造的孽), and that the Maldives alone have to bear the punishment for that. He further proposes that we all have to work together to deal with the 'evil consequences' (*èguǒ* 恶果) of climate change. Therefore, the call of this discourse coalition is for a unification of all people in the world (or, rather, the international community) to use our human abilities to pass God's test. Some characteristics of this discourse coalition can be seen in Figure 4.

The texts of this alternative discourse coalition give us a very good idea of a discursive strategy that is in clear opposition to the hegemonic structure prevailing during the period of investigation. They are not part of the mainstream, and apart from the allegory of Noah's Ark itself,[10] their content was not tackled in the broader political discussion during that period. On the contrary, it seems as if the authors of

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9 It is clear that since weblog entries are rather short texts, chains of equivalence are not always fully elaborated within one text. In some cases, only the reading through a number of texts within the same weblog provides the context indicating or establishing the chains of equivalence. Sometimes, the context makes things clear. In this case, religious texts cited in the analysed texts suggest that there might also be an evil, like the devil, but at least there are those to be punished such as pagans or blasphemers.

10 The allegory of Noah's ark is widely used in weblogs on environmental issues (cf. the weblog *Shuǐyù wǒ hù shuǐ – Nuòyà fāngzhōu* (水育我护水－诺亚方舟), http://noahwater.blog.sohu.com/; accessed 10 January 2015; see also Hǎinán lóupán wǎng 2006; Kù Yùe 2008; Zhēnde yǒu yī wèi shén ài nǐ 2009).

these texts could not easily build coalitions with non-Christian actors within the discursive field. Their discourse position therefore is to be seen as fully isolated.

Figure 4 The Noah's Ark Discourse Coalition

Source: Thomas Immervoll

Finally, only one text analysed for this study contains the opinion of people who negate a significant human influence on climate change (Qīngqīng Lánxiang rùxīn 2010). This weblog is not edited by an NGO or any other organisation and is not focussing on climate change. The text is published anonymously and the author, right after referring to a couple of climate sceptics, states 'that we should still consciously pay attention to energy reduction to reduce emissions in our own environment'. This indicates that the author believes in the necessity of climate change policies but at the same time notes that there are Chinese who do not. Yet, the author is very sceptical and argues against aggressive actions by developing countries such as Tuvalu against industrial countries, because 'I don't like hatred'. He or she argues that nobody is enhancing climate change because he or she wants to damage others, so it is necessary to be calm when talking about this issue.

This weblog entry addresses the hegemonic discourse coalition at two points. First, it does not share the strong believe in climate change caused by humans, but stresses a different view. Second, it positions itself at a distance from the antagonism between developing and developed countries claimed vehemently by the hegemonic discourse coalition. Despite the fact that the blog is quite often read and the discussion below the posting is quite lively, it is not significant enough to verify the existence of a discourse coalition built on the foundations of these views. Nevertheless, the existence of this posting suggests the possibility of minority arguments either not represented within the database or not evidenced by the analysis.

Discussion and Conclusion

Climate change policy is a sensitive issue in China. Therefore, the Chinese public debate on that topic has not been very controversial so far. Most of the weblog entries analysed apply a discourse strategy that is to be called hegemonic according to the outcome of my analysis. The results show that in 2009 the structure of the discursive field was very clear. The position of the hegemonic discourse coalition was very strong, mainly because it was possible to identify a distinct opponent in the context of international negotiations. In this concluding chapter a number of explanations of this result are offered.

Possibilities of participation: Li (2013) explains that local policies in China are shaped by unequal opportunities for stakeholders to take part in the policy-making process. Only government stakeholders, scientists, and big businesses have the chance to participate via institutionalised channels. Other actors, such as NGOs and non-academic stakeholders, in many cases cannot influence policy-making (see also Kuhn 2014). The texts analysed seem to reflect this imbalance of opportunities to participate in policy-making.

Sensitivity because of a tightening international situation: Kuhn (2014; cf. Kuhn and Zhang 2014) argues that the issue of climate change has become a very sensitive one in China not least because of the intense negotiations at the international level. Climate change policy is closely connected to questions of international power and trade, or economic issues such as energy and transport. Many of those issues are very technical and only a small number of experts can participate in the debate. Considerable economic interests clearly dominate those policy fields. Furthermore, patriotism brings in a strong emotional aspect into the political discourse. China is conceived as a bulwark against the developed countries that are said to have interests that differ clearly from those of developing states. Thus, China is pointed out as the main representative of that group of countries. This pathetic momentum contributes to a very successful hegemonic strategy within the Chinese discourse on climate change and to the lack of plurality in this discourse.

Furthermore, in many texts, the discussion of international talks is combined with a demand for patriotism that might prohibit any argumentation contradicting the opposition to the US as *the Other*. In 2009, the US provided the perfect target for Chinese actors to deal with the group of developed nations as unwilling to compromise and acknowledge their historic duty of combating climate change. As the US government had nothing to offer due to high internal pressure, and the European countries did not sufficiently draw the picture of an alternative policy to that of the US in order to reach a binding Copenhagen Accord, many texts convincingly argued that there was an antagonism between developing and developed nations.

Impact of the international discourse: The Chinese discourse was not isolated from the debate outside China. Some results of my analysis indicate that the Chinese

language debate on climate change in China is strongly influenced from abroad. On one level, many of the topics discussed in the Chinese blogosphere have been introduced or imported to China from the West. On another, many of the texts themselves have been published by Western NGOs in Chinese, or have been translated by Chinese bloggers from Western sources. On the one hand, this makes it more difficult for local actors to develop their own theories on climate change policy and obviously it influences the discursive structure in the field. On the other hand, only a selection of arguments from abroad entered the Chinese debate successfully. For instance, climate change scepticism, which was *in vogue* in countries like the US, seems to be hardly employed in Chinese language discourse. One reason for that was the high degree of pathos in the field.

In the case of the intended and active impact on Chinese discourse from abroad, it is important to know the political debate in highly complex fields of policy-making, such as the Chinese climate change policy, in order to influence it or to know the limits of action of the involved actors.

In 2009, the Chinese public clearly favoured an effective mitigation of specific consequences of global climate change. Seen from this perspective, there might had been a window of opportunity to get China into a successful climate change policy framework back then. But Chinese policy-makers and activists are embedded in a complex environment that to some extent frames their arguments. It is necessary to closely observe Chinese climate change policy discourse in order to better understand this context. The analytical method elaborated in this paper on the theoretical foundations of Nonhoff's discourse coalition provides a tool to conduct further studies on the discursive aspect of Chinese policy-making processes, both in terms of comparisons between different discourses and investigating the development of one specific debate.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BRICS	Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa
CCICED	China Council for International Cooperation on Environment and Development
CDIAC	Carbon Dioxide Information Analysis Center
CFE	Climate Forum East
CNNIC	China Internet Network Information Center
CO_2	Carbon dioxide
COP	Conference of the Parties
COP15	2009 United Nations Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
ENGO	Environmental NGO
G77	Group of 77
IPCC	Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
MET	Metric ton
NASA	National Aeronautics and Space Administration
NDRC	National Development and Reform Commission
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
ONI	OpenNet Initiative
PRC	People's Republic of China
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
US	United States of America
WWF	World Wide Fund For Nature

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GLOSSARY

Aì Dìqiú Liánméng	爱地球联盟	*Care for Earth* (name of an NGO)
èguǒ	恶果	'evil consequences'
fādá guójiā	发达国家	developed states
fāzhǎnzhōng guójiā	发展中国家	developing states
fánghuǒ chángchéng	防火长城	Great Firewall of China
Guójiā fāzhǎn hé gǎigé wěiyuánhuì	国家发展和改革委员会	National Development and Reform Commission
hùnxiáo shìtīng	混淆视听	To confuse public opinion
Shuǐyù wǒ hù shuǐ – Nuòyà fāngzhōu	水育我护水－诺亚方舟	*Born out of the water I am protecting the water – Noah's Ark* (Name of a weblog)
WWF yìngduì qìhòu biànhuà xíngdòng	WWF 应对气候变化行动	*WWF Action against Climate Change* (name of a weblog)
Zhēnde yǒu yīwèi shén ài nǐ	真的有一位神爱你	*There Really is a God that Loves You* (name of a weblog)
Zhōngguó yìngduì qìhóubiànhuà guójiā fāngàn (quánwén)	《中国应对气候变化国家方案》（全文）	China's National Climate Change Programme (Full Text)
zuìhòu de Nuòyà fāngzhōu	最后的诺亚方舟	'last ark of Noah'