

CLIMATE CHANGE AND SUSTAINABILITY: AN IMPORTANT PART OF CURRENT SINO-BRAZILIAN RELATIONS

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Abstract

The evolution cooperation pattern in regard Sino-Brazilian cooperation, has extended to climate and sustainability concerns in light of the United countries Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the Paris Agreement. The importance of this subject rests with the fact that two of the top 10 world economies are advocating for the principle of "common but differentiated responsibilities" and making it an important part of their bilateral relationship. By analyzing government documents, policies, and major projects related to climate change mitigation, the addresses various approaches, cooperation and improvement in bilateral and multilateral efforts. In this study, we argue that the risen to power of President Lula offered opportunities for deeper cooperation between Brazil and China to navigate external pressures and actions to protect the climate. Thus, Brazil and China are not only able to protect tropical rainforests, but also contribute significantly to ameliorate the global climate and promote sustainability.

Keywords

Brazil, China, Climate Changes, Environmental Diplomacy.

Resumo

O padrão de evolução da cooperação sino-brasileira estendeu-se às preocupações climáticas e de sustentabilidade à luz da Convenção-Quadro dos Estados Unidos sobre Alterações Climáticas (UNFCCC) e do Acordo de Paris. A importância deste assunto reside no facto de duas das 10 principais economias mundiais defenderem o princípio das "responsabilidades comuns mas diferenciadas" e do Brasil e da China terem tornado esta preocupações numa parte importante da sua relação bilateral. Neste estudo, defendemos que a ascensão ao poder do Presidente Lula ofereceu oportunidades para uma cooperação mais profunda entre o Brasil e a China para lidar com pressões externas e ações para proteger o clima. Assim, o Brasil e a China não só são capazes de proteger as florestas tropicais, como também contribuem significativamente para melhorar o clima global e promover a sustentabilidade.

Palavras-chave

Brasil, China, Alterações Climáticas, Diplomacia Ambiental.



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Introduction

The global concern on climate change has becoming more and more an urgent topic and it's the defining issue of our time. With the challenges led by shifting weather patterns and rising sea levels, nations worldwide are building strategic partnerships to combat this existential threat. Among these alliances, the relationships between Brazil and China plays a significant role in environmental sustainability (United Nations, n.d.).

As two of the world's largest economies and greenhouse gas emitters, the cooperation between Brazil and China does have the potential to be an important part of global environmental policy. The joint declaration of deepening comprehensive strategic partnership between the two nations in 2023 acknowledged the imperative to confront the impacts of climate change. This acknowledgment pushed the establishment of a specialized committee under China-Brazil High-Level Coordination and Cooperation Committee, focused on environmental protection and climate change reduction (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2023).

The book *Brazil-China Relations in the 21st Century: The Making of a Strategic Partnership* by Maurício Santoro and *Environmental Diplomacy: Negotiating More Effective Global Agreements* by Susskind et. al. provided the main inspiration for this paper. The content on news and government websites was also a source of reference. They provide factual references, theoretical support, and inspiration for ideas. This study examines both the internal and external challenges encountered in cooperation while also discussing the potential prospects and relevance of Brazilian-Chinese collaboration for other Latin American countries, particularly those with rainforests, and for global South-South cooperation.

The research objective is to analyze Brazil–China relations regarding climate change by scrutinizing their bilateral cooperation and commitments within multilateral platforms, focusing on policy documents and diplomatic exchanges. It will explore opportunities, challenges, and prospects for enhanced cooperation between the two countries in climate action and sustainable development.



Literature Review

According to Susskind et. al. (2014), environmental diplomacy specifically addresses the significance of agreements and negotiations related to global environmental importance and concerns. It refers to the function of international treaties, agreements and accords in promoting cooperation and settling disputes pertaining to environmental matters. According to this supposition, a variety of factors can be used to assess whether environmental treaty-making procedures are successful or unsuccessful, including the involvement of civil society, the strength of scientific consensus, and the execution of accords. The various issues of climate change diplomacy are also made clear by the rise of new academic subfields such as environmental security, global environmental governance, and environmental peacebuilding. By putting these different theoretical concepts to practical use, environmental diplomacies are able to reach agreements that are not only beneficial to the environment, but also enhance international relations by discussing these common and shared environmental issues (Susskind et al., 2014).

Examining Brazil-China ties in the subject of climate change provides important points of view into the changing nature of global cooperation to tackle environmental issues. Since the early 1990s, both nations (Brazil and China) have actively participated in climate change negotiations, especially through their memberships in the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). This early participation significantly highlights Brazil's and China's importance as major actors in global climate governance (Santoro, 2022).

The literature also discusses the consequences of China's and Brazil's status as countries in the process of industrialization with abundant natural resources and biodiversity. Both nations have committed to combating climate change and protecting the environment, despite having different political systems. Their cooperation in climate diplomacy demonstrates their understanding of the value of group action in addressing global warming in addition to their shared interests (Santoro, 2022) (Cheng, 2022).

Methodological approaches focusing on policy responses related to climate change, provide a comprehensive understanding of the strategies adopted by Brazil and China in climate challenges (Barbi, 2016). By analyzing government documents, policies, and major projects related to climate change mitigation, the addresses various approaches, cooperation and improvement in bilateral and multilateral efforts. Overall, the literature on Brazil-China relations shows the importance of understanding the interactions between political, economic, and environmental factors in solving climate change issues.

Historical Background

Brazil and China have strong partnerships including economic cooperation, diplomatic exchanges, and cooperation in various fields. From the establishment of diplomatic ties in 1974 to the upgrade to a comprehensive strategic partnership in 2012, their relationships have flourished (Santoro, 2022). In the twentieth century, both Brazil and China went through the periods of intensive development primarily focusing on economic growth and industrialization. During this time, environmental concerns took a backseat as the primary goal was to use natural resources for agricultural and industrial purposes



(Furtado, 2005; Shapiro, 2001). This history resulted in significant environmental problem, including deforestation, pollution, and loss of biodiversity (Watts, 2010).

At the beginning, both Brazil and China didn't focus much on international environmental agendas, viewing them as they will slow down the developmental projects (Correa do Lago, 2007). In Brazil, the military regime prioritized economic expansion in the Amazon, while China was on a path of opening and reform. Environmental concerns were covered by the pursuit of economic growth.

The tide began to turn in Brazil during the democratization of the 1980s, marked by the emergence of a vibrant environmental movement, particularly in the Amazon region. Figures like Chico Mendes, a leader of rubber workers, gained global recognition, symbolizing the growing environmental consciousness of the era. Institutional developments, including the establishment of agencies dedicated to environmental protection, laid the base for future environmental policy and diplomacy (Santoro, 2022).

In 1992, Brazil took a significant step towards holding the global environmental cooperation by hosting the UN Conference on Environment and Development, known as the Earth Summit. This event represented the adoption of important agreements such as Agenda 21, the Convention on Biodiversity, and the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). The UNFCCC, especially, laid the base for international cooperation in climate change by recognizing the need for emission reductions (Santoro, 2022).

In climate change negotiations, both Brazil and China advocated for the principle of "common but differentiated responsibilities," as mentioned in the UNFCCC. This principle acknowledged the historical responsibility of developed nations for greenhouse gas emissions while recognizing the shared but differentiated responsibilities of developing countries (Santoro, 2022).

In the historical context, the trend of cooperation between China and Brazil on climate change is on the rise. China already has a good understanding of the local situation from its long history of political, economic and historical cooperation with Brazil, which has laid the foundation for the positive trend of cooperation on climate change that follows.

Current Status of Climate Change Cooperation

Brazil and China jointly released a statement in April 2023 pledging to confront the climate crisis together and acknowledge it as one of the greatest challenges of the modern era. At their meeting in Beijing, President Xi Jinping and President Lula da Silva agreed that combating climate change and establishing a just and prosperous global community are crucial and important (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2024).

Both states emphasized the need to combine immediate climate responses with conservation and cooperation to achieve sustainable development goals. They agreed to broaden, deepen, and enrich bilateral cooperation in the field of climate change, following the principles of the United countries Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the Paris Agreement. They also confirmed again their commitment to the Paris Agreement's objective of limiting global temperature rise to well below 2 degrees Celsius over pre-industrial levels, with efforts to limit the increase to 1.5 degrees Celsius. They also expressed determination to strengthen multilateralism and oppose



unilateralism, emphasizing the importance of international solidarity and cooperation in addressing climate change. In terms of concrete actions, both countries have undertaken various joint initiatives, policies, and projects aimed at reducing greenhouse gas emissions, promoting renewable energy, and enhancing climate sustainability. These include efforts in transitioning to sustainable and low-carbon economies, developing smart cities, investing in green infrastructure, fostering green industries, and promoting renewable energy sources (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2024).

Furthermore, Brazil and China are also cooperating on technology development and sharing, particularly in monitoring forest cover through initiatives like the China-Brazil Earth Resources Satellite Program (CBERS). They also intend to exchange knowledge and best practices in rain forest protection, sustainable management, ecosystem regeneration, and vegetation restoration. Both countries are engaging in policy dialogues and sharing experiences in climate financing, aiming to mobilize resources effectively and sustainably for climate-related projects (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2024). Brazil and China have established a subcommittee on environment and climate change under the China-Brazil High-Level Coordination and Cooperation Committee. This will provide a platform for continued dialogue, coordination, and joint action on climate issues (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2024).

Overall, the current situation of cooperation between Brazil and China in climate change reflects a commitment to sustainable development and international cooperation.

Challenges and Opportunities

The relationships between Brazil and China in climate change leads to both challenges and opportunities that will shape global environmental governance in the 21st century.

One of the significant challenges is from the different approaches of past Brazilian administrations towards environmental protection. While President Lula's holds a positive attitude on this, like establishing the Ministry of Indigenous Peoples and proposing Amazon-centric summits and conferences, which signifies a commitment to environmental preservation, the legacy of former President Bolsonaro's policies did not. Bolsonaro's unwillingness for environmental concerns and his initial withdrawal from hosting COP25 have played a negative role on Brazil's international environmental image. This difference within Brazil's governance creates challenges in making climate actions (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2023). Moreover, the competitive situation between the United States and the European Union for global climate governance leadership intensify external pressure on Brazil's Amazon policy. The influence from these key international actors complicates Brazil's efforts to balance sovereignty with protective environmental measures in the Amazon region. However, this pressure also shows an opportunity for Brazil to establish its own leadership and engage in effective multilateral cooperation, and its influence in global climate governance (Zhou, 2013).

On the other hand, Brazil and China share common ground in addressing climate change, particularly in tropical rainforest protection. China also has a large range of forests and successful experiences to protect them. Both countries have advantages in protecting these vital ecosystems and reducing climate change. The common ground of interests



provides a good way for cooperation, and Brazil and China can exchange their strengths and resources to advance sustainable practices and policies.

Brazil has been formally elected as the host country for COP 30. The Minister for the Environment and Climate Change and head of the Brazilian delegation, Marina Silva, declared that COP 30 will be hosted in the city of Belém do Pará. It will be the first time that the Amazon, an important biosphere for combating climate change, would host a UNFCCC COP. This will bring new platforms and new initiatives for cooperation between Brazil and China (XINHUANET, 2023). The risen to power of President Lula offered opportunities for deeper cooperation between Brazil and China to navigate external pressures and actions to protect the climate. Brazil and China are not only able to protect tropical rainforests but also contribute significantly to global climate and sustainability.

China and Brazil should increase their cooperation and exchanges in the environmental field. The feasibility of expanding environmental cooperation between the two countries is high. They have many points of convergence of interests; at the same time, their development and transformation tasks are similar, and they have the same demands for international cooperation.

This study considers that in the future, Brazil-China cooperation in the fields of climate change, clean and renewable energy, and green economy will push the environmental collaboration between the two countries to a new stage. From today's perspective, Chinese diplomacy in the current international situation shows a new development trend, which is the gradual increase in the sense of independence and innovation. The cooperation between China and Brazil on climate change will help strengthen the discourse and leadership of the two countries on related issues.

Case Studies: Brazil-China cooperation in Climate Change Initiatives

Brazil and China have done significant cooperations across various sectors, reflecting a shared commitment to environmental sustainability. This case study is into three key efforts between the two countries in climate change, including renewable energy, forest protection, and climate change strategies.

Case 1: Renewable Energy Research and Development

Brazil and China have been doing robust research on renewable energy since 2009, primarily as a result of the establishment of the Brazil-China Center for Climate Change and Energy Technology Innovation. Located in Tsinghua University and the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro, this institute acts as an innovative existence for scientific research and development, with a focus on the manufacture of biofuel from various oil sources. Both countries have made great progress in the conversion of oils into renewable liquid-form fuels through bilateral agreements and cooperative research initiatives, demonstrating the effectiveness of cooperative efforts in creating sustainable energy solutions and future (Paulino, 2017).



Case 2: Wind Energy Expansion and Technology Transfer

Brazil and China have led the world in wind energy expansion during the last ten years, contributing very significantly to the rise in installed wind capacity in both countries. Extensive cooperation in research and development across institutional, public, and private sectors has facilitated this expansion. Among the noteworthy projects are partnerships in Earth observation satellite programs, which established the groundwork for later cooperations in renewable energy technology.

While cooperations in private sector have encouraged innovation through cooperative design projects and licensing agreements, public sector partnerships have facilitated information sharing and technology transfer, such as the Brazil-China Center for Climate Change and Energy Technology Innovation. These initiatives demonstrate how Brazil and China are collaborating to advance the development of sustainable energy, wind energy (Bae & Velasco, 2014).

Case 3: Forest Protection and Climate Change Mitigation

As demonstrated by bilateral agreements and cooperative projects, Brazil and China have increased their cooperation in the areas of climate change, energy transition, and forest protection in recent years. In Beijing, Minister Marina Silva made a statement highlighting this partnership, which includes activities to combat environmental crimes, encourage sustainable land use practices, and improve commodity traceability. In order to accomplish the common and shared goals, both countries seek to enhance environmental protection through technology exchanges and strategic partnerships. Their commitment to international cooperation and group efforts in addressing global climate concerns is further demonstrated by their signing of a joint declaration on climate action (Ministério do Meio Ambiente e Mudança do Clima, 2023).

The case studies presented above shows us the different aspects of Brazil-China cooperation in climate change, including renewable energy research, wind energy expansion, and forest protection. These efforts not only show the potential for mutual benefits but also show the important roles of international cooperation especially between countries with large economies like Brazil and China.

Conclusion

Regarding climate change, Brazil and China have a complex relationship. This research stated that these two powerful countries are directing the worldwide response to climate change through the discussion of their initiatives, including renewable energy research, wind energy, and forest protection. A major step in their joint statement of a comprehensive strategic relationships in 2023 is Brazil and China's commitment to solving climate change. In addition to confirming the two states' understanding of the importance of climate threats, the declaration asks for greater action and cooperation.

Despite the challenges from domestic politics and external pressures, such as those from the United States and the European Union, Brazil and China have built common ground interests in protecting vital and important ecosystems and solving climate change issues.



Considering the future, the risen to power of President Lula offered prospects for deeper cooperation between Brazil and China, as well as other rainforest countries, to resist external pressures (from US or EU), protect their own goods and solve the climate change issues. Brazil and China have the potential to not only safeguard rainforests but also make substantial contributions to global climate change mitigation and sustainability by improving their strategies and using multilateral platforms. The climate change of the 21st century is going to be more complex and deeper, and the cooperation between Brazil and China can enhance the green perspective and discourse beyond the western world.

In conclusion, the complexity of Brazil-China cooperation on climate change demonstrates both the advantages and disadvantages of international cooperation in solving climate crisis. The relationships between Brazil and China are one of the hopes and futures for collective action in saving the world for future generations as we deal with the central issue of our day. The respective efforts of Brazil and China and the results of their cooperation provide a model and template for developing countries.

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