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How do I know China wrecked the Copenhagen deal? I was in the room

As recriminations fly post-Copenhagen, one writer offers a fly-on-the-wall account of how talks failed

\* \* Mark Lynas <http://www.guardian.co.uk/profi le/marklynas>  
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Copenhagen was a disaster. That much is agreed. But the truth about what actually happened is in danger of being lost amid the spin and inevitability of an awful "deal" so western leaders would walk away carrying the blame. How do I know this? Because I was in the room and saw it happen. China's strategy was simple: block the open negotiations for two weeks, and then ensure that the closed-door deal made it look as if the west's inevitable result of rich countries refusing adequately and fairly to shoulder their overwhelming responsibility", said Christian Aid. "Rich countries All very predictable, but the complete opposite of the truth. Even George Monbiot, writing in yesterday's Guardian, made the mistake of singling out the Sudanese delegate Lumumba Di-Aping, who denounced the Copenhagen accord as "a suicide pact, an incineration pact, in order to maintain a Sudan behaves at the talks as a puppet of China; one of a number of countries that relieves the Chinese delegation of having to fight its battle Here's what actually went on late last Friday night, as heads of state from two dozen countries met behind closed doors. Obama was at the table, secretary-general of the UN. Probably only about 50 or 60 people, including the heads of state, were in the room. I was attached to one of them. What I saw was profoundly shocking. The Chinese premier, Wen Jinbao, did not deign to attend the meetings personally, instead sending a secretary. Several times during the session, the world's most powerful heads of state were forced to wait around as the Chinese delegate went off to make telephone calls. Shifting the blame

To those who would blame Obama and rich countries in general, know this: it was China's representative who insisted that industrialised countries do more. Australia's prime minister, Kevin Rudd, was annoyed enough to bang his microphone. Brazil's representative too pointed out the illogicality of Obama's despair and conceded the point. Now we know why – because China bet, correctly, that Obama would get the blame for the Copenhagen accord. China, backed at times by India, then proceeded to take out all the numbers that mattered. A 2020 peaking year in global emissions, essential for meeting the global 50% cuts by 2050, was also excised. No one else, perhaps with the exceptions of India and Saudi Arabia, wanted this to happen. I am on the corner of the world.

Strong position

So how did China manage to pull off this coup? First, it was in an extremely strong negotiating position. China didn't need a deal. As one developer of the Copenhagen Accord (Lula of Brazil, Zuma of South Africa, Calderón of Mexico and many others – were desperate for a positive outcome. Obama needed a strong deal to get below 2005 levels by 2020), and was obviously prepared to up its offer.

Above all, Obama needed to be able to demonstrate to the Senate that he could deliver China in any global climate regulation framework, so Copenhagen would be probably their only opportunity to go to climate change <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/environment/climate-change>> talk. Campaign groups never blame developing countries for failure; this is an iron rule that is never broken. The Indians, in particular, have become hoist with their own petard.

With the deal gutted, the heads of state session concluded with a final battle as the Chinese delegate insisted on removing the 1.5C target so to save this crucial number. "How can you ask my country to go extinct?" demanded Nasheed. The Chinese delegate feigned great offence – a move that was clearly part of China's game

All this raises the question: what is China's game? Why did China, in the words of a UK-based analyst who also spent hours in heads of state negotiations more than 15 years, concludes that China wants to weaken the climate regulation regime now "in order to avoid the risk that it might be called out? This does not mean China is not serious about global warming. It is strong in both the wind and solar industries. But China's growth, and growing confidence was on striking display in Copenhagen. Its coal-based economy doubles every decade, and its power increases commensurately. Its power in Copenhagen was much worse than just another bad deal, because it illustrated a profound shift in global geopolitics. This is fast becoming China's freedom of action. I left Copenhagen more despondent than I have felt in a long time. After all the hope and all the hype, the mobilisation of the

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