China’s Contribution to the Paris Agreement and Green Development Cooperation Strategy between China and EU

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Abstract: China is the key actor to influence and decide the Paris Agreement according to China’s strengthen, interests and action willing in global climate politics in post-Durban era. The success of Paris climate change conference is the outcome of six years of game, compromise and cooperation of three parties of U.S., the EU and China after Copenhagen climate conference and moral consensus driven strongly by small island developing countries and less developed countries. Among them, the change of China’s attitude and position towards climate issue and cooperation with both U.S. and the EU has played the very vital role. China played as a bridge between U.S. and the EU, between the North and South. It is under the game among China, U.S. and the EU that the Paris Agreement established new “bottom-up” governance mode with the core of INDCs plus review every five years. The Paris Agreement has injected new strong impetus into the global green development trend and marked a new historical stage of global climate governance and the start of era of global fossil fuel end. Based on China’s INDCs and grand trend of global green development, green development serves as one of the five great development concepts in China’s 13th Five Year Plan. Investing the future and accelerating green transformation, China will contribute to global climate governance and human civilization through green low-carbon development. With the successful experience of the Paris Agreement, China and the EU should jointly promote the construction of community of common destiny for humanity, continue to promote the global climate governance towards the win-win result, strengthen cooperation in green development concept, policy and development of new energy.

Keywords: China; EU; Paris Agreement; Green Development Cooperation

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Introduction

In December 2015, the adoption of the Paris Agreement has injected new strong impetus into the global green development, starting a new historical stage of global climate governance. This paper focuses on China’s positive role on the adoption of the Paris Agreement, the great significance of this agreement for global green development, as well as the necessity of strengthening the EU-China cooperation in global climate governance and green development. Specifically, this paper is divided into four parts. The first section defines China’s identity and status in the
international climate negotiations on the Paris Agreement, and then analyzes how China’s strength, interests and action willingness affecting the global climate governance. In the second section, the paper shows China’s “bridge” role on adoption of the Paris Agreement, by exploring China’s climate diplomatic activities to coordinate and cooperate with other parties before and during the Paris climate conference. The third section talks about China’s 13th Five Year Plan in the backdrop of global green development trend, and argues that including green development as one of the five great development concepts in China’s 13th Five Year Plan has a significant political and policy implication for China to achieve its INDCs in the Paris Agreement and understand China’s attitude and position on climate change governance and green development. Taking the successful experience of the Paris Agreement, the last section emphasizes the realistic necessity and possible strategies of strengthening the China-EU cooperation in constructing a community of common destiny for humankind and green development.

China’s strength, interests and action willingness in post-Durban climate negotiations

Paris Climate conference still took place in the national sovereignty system. Although it is in the institutional framework of the United Nations and strong international public opinion of global action demand, the anarchy of the international system remains strongly restrict of the level of cooperation between countries, as well as the substantive equality of all countries in the power and right. Therefore, if there is no substantive cooperation and compromise taken by the great powers or great powers group in global climate governance, it will be difficult to achieve any success. It looks like that the international political climate pattern in the Paris climate conference in a large extent is still a tripolar pattern which is dominated by the United States (umbrella group), the European Union and China (as an emerging economies and developing country). Thus, compared to previous Kyoto era and 2009 Copenhagen climate conference, China’s climate influence power in the tripolar pattern has increased significantly because China has substantial risen both in its GHG emissions and the economic strength in the world, and China’s attitude and position on climate change issue have tended to be positive. Although the EU has always been asserted to “leader” to a large extent its leading position is in a relatively weakening trend, especially during the Copenhagen period because of multiple crises within the EU and decline in both the proportion of emissions and its economic strength in the world. However, its influence in the tripolar pattern has enhanced because the EU has taken active measures in terms of climate diplomacy or in strategic alliances since the Copenhagen Conference 2009. And given the United States’ great influence both in climate diplomacy and economic strength, the United States’ climate influence has increased in the tripolar climate pattern due to Obama administration has strong regression to its leadership. But, the United States’ climate influence is not still fully play
out due to the fetters of domestic politics both in terms of commitments of emission reductions and in terms of financial assistance and technology transfer. Therefore, the success of Paris climate change conference is the outcome of six years of game, compromise and cooperation of three parties of the U.S., the EU and China after Copenhagen climate conference and also the result of moral consensus driven by small island countries and less developed countries. Among them, transformation of China’s attitude and position and the cooperation with both the U.S. and the EU has played the very vital role.

China’s strength in both economy and GHG emission has risen rapidly since 2009. As shown in Figure 1 and Figure 2, China’s GDP is 6% of that in the United States, 10% in Japan in 1990, and China's GDP has reached 12% of that in the United States, 26% in Japan in 2000, this is to reach nearly 20% of that in the United States, 63% in Japan, in 2006. In 2014, China’s GDP has reached
near 60% of that in the United States, 225% in Japan. China’s CO₂ emission is 48% of that in the United States in 1990, and this is to reach 197% in 2014.

At the same time, China’s domestic environmental degradation has seriously affected the economic and social development. The pressure from both domestic and international environmental governance has prompted China to take a more active response policy in environmental and climate issues. It may not be a coincidence. China has put forward construction of socialist ecological civilization and the ecological civilization as an important part of the five national development strategies since 2012. Therefore, China’s policy and attitude has changed proactively in international climate negotiations in post-Durban era. Climate governance has been increasingly driven by the demand of both domestic and international economic and social development.

**Bridge: positive change of China’s attitude and positions on the climate change issue and coordination and cooperation with major parties in Paris climate conference in 2015**

Failure of the 2009 Copenhagen climate conference has made China blamed. Some countries have even considered that China hindered the reach of new international climate agreement.³ On the one hand, the accusation is still largely due to prejudice and misunderstanding of western countries to China, but, on the other hand it also reflects the great responsibility and pressure China facing in response to global climate change. But instead of saying that China hindered the climate agreement reached in Copenhagen conference, it is better to say that China was not ready to actively undertake the corresponding responsibility at that time under the impact of the world financial crisis in 2008, as well as western developed countries asking price on China was too high and the China can not afford under that circumstances. The 2009 Copenhagen climate conference’s disappointment and the great pressure have made China fully aware of the significance of global climate change. In 2010, China started the implementation of low carbon pilot work in eight cities and five provinces in China. In the 12th Five Year Plan from 2011 to 2015, China put forward carbon dioxide emissions per unit GDP decreased 17% than in 2010, non fossil energy accounted for the proportion of primary energy to 11.4% and increase the forest stock volume of 6 billion cubic meters as the binding targets. These public quantified commitments show China has transformed the quantified emission reduction commitment that was put forward before the 2009 Copenhagen Climate Conference to the actual action, and reflect the China is changing

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climate policy which did not accept any form of quantified emission reduction obligations in Kyoto era. In 2012, the report of the 18th CPC National Congress clearly put forward the construction of a socialist ecological civilization, and stressed that “adhere to principles of equity and common but differentiated responsibility and respective capabilities, China will take a actively respond to global climate change with the international community.” Since the establishment of the new government in 2013, China has begun to shift towards a more positive direction on climate change. This is reflected in China’s overall climate diplomacy more active, and China actively strengthen cooperation with the EU and the U.S. in the mechanism of China-EU summit and China-U.S. Strategic and Economic Dialogue to seek a breakthrough on the issue of climate change. Entered in 2014, running to the Paris climate conference, China’s climate diplomacy became increasingly proactive and active. March 2014, President Xi Jinping visited Germany and stressed in the speech at the Körber-Stiftung Foundation that: “China will never pursue development at the expense of other countries’ interests or follow a beggar-thy-neighbor policy. With the lofty cause of peace and development of the world in mind, we will contribute the Chinese vision to the management of contemporary international relations, offer the Chinese solution for improving global governance, and work with the international society to meet various challenges of the 21st century.” Since June 2014, China has respectively published the Joint Statement on climate change with U.K., the U.S., India, Brazil and the EU, also issued the Presidential Statement on climate change with the United States and France (Table 1).

Table 1: Joint Announcement and Statement on Climate Change between China and Major Great Powers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>On Climate Change</th>
<th>China’s major commitment</th>
<th>Statement on Paris Climate Conference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>UK/PRC Joint Climate Change Statement</td>
<td>17.6. 2014</td>
<td>London</td>
<td>one of the greatest global challenges we face</td>
<td>the clear imperative to work together towards a global framework for ambitious climate change action</td>
<td>We must redouble our efforts to build the global consensus necessary to adopt in Paris a protocol, another legal instrument or an agreed outcome with legal force under the Convention applicable to all Parties.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U.S.-China Joint Announcement on Climate Change</td>
<td>12.11. 2014</td>
<td>Beijing</td>
<td>one of the greatest threats facing humanity</td>
<td>achieve the peaking of CO2 emissions around 2030 and to make best efforts to peak early and intends to increase the share of non-fossil fuels in primary energy consumption to around 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 United</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

India-China joint statement on climate change 15.5. 2015 Beijing climate change and its adverse effects are the common concern of mankind and one of the greatest global challenges of the 21st century China and India are fully engaged in their domestic preparations for their respective intended nationally determined contributions (INDCs) in the context of the 2015 agreement and will communicate their INDCs as early as possible and well before the Paris Conference. work together, and with other Parties, to advance the multilateral negotiations to achieve a comprehensive, balanced, equitable and effective agreement under the UNFCCC in 2015, with a view to ensuring the full, effective and sustained implementation of the UNFCCC

Joint Statement on Climate Change Between China and Brazil 19.5. 2015 Brasilia climate change and its adverse effects are the common concern of humankind and one of the greatest global challenges of the 21st century intensifying domestic preparations for their intended nationally determined contributions towards the objective of the Convention, as decided in the UN Warsaw and Lima Climate Conferences Both sides reaffirm their commitment to reaching a balanced, comprehensive, equitable and ambitious agreement under the Convention at the UN Climate Conference to be held in Paris, France later this year, with a view to ensuring the full, effective and sustained implementation of the UNFCCC. China and Brazil will work together with other Parties, in particular with other BASIC countries, towards this goal.

China-EU Joint Statement on Climate Change 29.6. 2015 Brussels one of the greatest threats facing humanity The Two Sides note their respective announcements of enhanced climate actions by 2030, as the intended nationally determined contributions by China on one side and by the EU and its Member States on the other side towards achieving the objective of the Convention as set out in The Two Sides commit to work together to reach an ambitious and legally binding agreement at the Paris Climate Conference in 2015 that enhances the implementation of the Convention, on the basis of equity and reflecting the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities, in light of different national circumstances.

20% by 2030© Nations Climate Conference in Paris in 2015. 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.

© This is the first time to commit to achieve the peaking of CO2 emissions in China.
From the Table 1, we can find that China unites actively the major developing countries to stick to the principles, strive for their legitimate rights and interests and urge the developed countries to meet their commitment of emission reduction and finance in Kyoto era and after Copenhagen in the process of running to Paris climate conference; on the other hand, China also coordinates actively its positions to work with the United Kingdom, the United States and the European Union and other developed countries in close cooperation and responds actively to their positions and requirements. For instance, in U.S.-China Joint Announcement on Climate Change which was released on the eve of Lima climate conference in 2014, China announced its commitment to reduce GHG emission with the United States and emphasized that, “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 United States and China hope that by announcing these targets now, they can inject momentum into the global climate negotiations and inspire other countries to join in coming forward with ambitious actions as soon as possible, preferably by the first quarter of 2015.”③ The publishment of U.S.-China Joint Announcement on Climate Change highlights the important role that China and U.S. play in global climate governance and positive expectation and firm political will for Paris climate conference, which lay a solid foundation of the success of Paris climate conference. On 2 November 2015, French

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President Hollande visited China. It is generally believed that Hollande’s visit to China is to seek the support from China before the Paris climate conference will hold soon.\(^1\) *China and France Joint Presidential Statement on Climate Change* injected strong momentum for the success of Paris climate conference. President Xi Jinping was invited to attend the opening ceremony and delivered an important speech in the opening of Paris climate conference on November 30, 2015. This is the first time that China’s top leader attended conference of the parties to the UNFCCC since the starting of international climate negotiations, which shows that China attaches great importance to Paris climate conference.

As the largest emitter of greenhouse gases and the largest developing country in the world, China has a special status in global climate governance. Through the analysis of the Joint Statements on climate change between China and a series of countries, we see to a large extent China acted both as the “coordinator” between the developed and developing countries and served as the “coordinator” between the EU and the U.S. on the eve of Paris climate conference. China has learnt the lessons from Copenhagen in 2009. China carried out positive shuttle climate diplomacy on the eve of the Paris climate conference in 2015 and made a great contribution to the success of the Paris climate conference.

**Global green development trend and China’s the 13th Five-Year Plan**

*The Paris Agreement* Injected New Momentum to the Global Trend of Green Development

*The Paris Agreement* reached at the Paris Climate Change Conference in 2015 marked a new historic phase in global climate governance. *The Paris Agreement* established new “bottom-up” governance mode with the core of INDCs plus review every five years. It was pointed out in the *Agreement* that “Recognizing that climate change represents an urgent and potentially irreversible threat to human societies and the planet and thus requires the widest possible cooperation by all countries, and their participation in an effective and appropriate international response, with a view to accelerating the reduction of global greenhouse gas emissions.”\(^2\) Here we can say that *the Paris Agreement* has sent out a clear and strong signal to all countries in the world that more rigorous policy measures will be taken to limit or reduce the use of fossil fuel and that green development is bound to become a trend in global economic and social development.


\(^2\) UNFCCC, Decision 1/CP.21, Adoption of the Paris Agreement.
It was made clear in the Paris Agreement to “hold the increase in the global average temperature to well below 2 °C above pre-industrial levels and to pursue efforts to limit the temperature increase to 1.5 °C above pre-industrial levels, recognizing that this would significantly reduce the risks and impacts of climate change.” This set clear requirements and targets for the global climate governance and showed a clear direction for the transformation of the world economy. In order to achieve the long-term temperature goal of 2°C or even 1.5°C, Parties of the Paris Agreement aim to “reach global peaking of greenhouse gas emissions as soon as possible, recognizing that peaking will take longer for developing country Parties, and to undertake rapid reductions thereafter in accordance with best available science, so as to achieve a balance between anthropogenic emissions by sources and removals by sinks of greenhouse gases in the second half of this century, on the basis of equity, and in the context of sustainable development and efforts to eradicate poverty.” This will require all countries to cooperate and control the use of carbon-intensive fossil fuel and low-carbon clean energy and relevant technologies will surely become the general trend of economic and social development in all countries soon.

It was mentioned in the Paris Agreement that by the latter half of this century, i.e. after 2050, we are to achieve a balance between the anthropogenic greenhouse gas emissions and the carbon sink, that is, zero net greenhouse gas emission by the latter half of this century. By then, the energy structure will be dominated by new and renewable energy and the consumption of coal and other fossil fuel will approach zero. To achieve this, we will need an energy revolution in which new and renewable energy gradually replaces fossil fuel and low-carbon transformation of the economy is achieved. Only by doing so can we ensure development and emission reduction and thus achieve sustainable development while controlling global climate change in the same time. According to the latest statistics of the International Energy Agency (IEA), greenhouse-gas emissions from the energy sector represent roughly two-thirds of all anthropogenic greenhouse-gas emissions, and effective action in the energy sector is, consequently, essential to tackling the climate change problem. Figure 3 shows the global investment in variable renewables, CCS and electric vehicles if we are to achieve the goal of keeping the temperature increase below 2 °C over the pre-industrial level. We can see that the investment will have grown annually, the growth must be especially fast after 2020 and the overall level will gradually reach USD 700-800 billion after 2030. Figure 4 shows the number of countries adopting renewable energy policies and a trend of annual growth is also clear. In this scenario, the Paris Agreement is a clear commitment of all parties to develop low-carbon green economy and it is a strong signal

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1. UNFCCC, Decision 1/CP.21, Adoption of the Paris Agreement.
2. UNFCCC, Decision 1/CP.21, Adoption of the Paris Agreement.
that the path of low-carbon and green development is a must for the future of mankind and green development will be a core concept in the global climate governance in the future.\footnote{Zhang Haibin, “Paris Agreement Ushers in a New Era of Global Climate Governance after 2020”, available at http://news.xinhuanet.com/world/2015-12/14/c_128528644.htm, accessed on December 20, 2015.}

Figure 3: Global investment in variable renewables, CCS and electric vehicles in the 450 Scenario

China’s the 13th Five-Year Plan and Green Development Concept

In the proposal on the 13th Five-Year Plan for National Economic and Social Development released at the Fifth Plenary Session of the 18th CPC Central Committee, green development was listed as one of the five great development concepts which are innovative, coordinated, green, open and shared development for China during the 13th Five-Year Plan period, saying that “Green, which represents an eco-friendly outlook, is a necessary condition for ensuring lasting development as well as an important way in which people pursue a better life. We must stick to the basic national strategy of energy conservation and environmental protection, carry on with sustainable development, adhere firmly to the development path of production development, well-off life, and good ecological conditions, accelerate the building of an energy-efficient and environment-friendly society, form a new pattern of modernization featuring harmony between

Figure 4: Number of Countries with Renewable Energy Policies, by Type, 2011–Early 2015
man and nature, promote the building of a beautiful China, and make new contribution to global ecological security.” This has laid solid theoretical and practical foundation for green development, and the ecological modernization strategy is the key to green development. China has officially unveiled its 13th Five-Year Plan in March 2016, which will guide the country’s economic and social development from 2016 through 2020. This latest edition builds on progress made over the last five years, and makes clear that environmental stewardship is an increasingly integral component of China’s development. China has put forward clear and binding natural resource and environmental indicators in this development plan. China has committed CO2 emissions per GDP reduce 18% from 2016 to 2020 and increase the share of non-fossil fuels in primary energy consumption from 12% to 15% by 2020. Eco-friendly and green development has become one of the most significant development concepts during this period.

**Constructing community of common destiny for humanity and green development cooperation strategy between China and the EU**

Since 2013, President Xi Jinping put forward the concept of “community of common destiny for humanity” in many international occasions. Taking part in global governance is one of the significant approaches to construct community of common destiny for humanity. Then, global climate governance is core of global governance. So, China has changed its positions and policies in addressing global climate change. Also, EU is one of the key actors in global climate governance. As announced in EU-China Joint Statement on Climate Change in June 2015, Both China and EU play “critical roles 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, in the context of sustainable economic and social development.”

Nowadays, all of the countries in the world are suffering the common severe effects global climate change has produced. All humanity may be never confronting so grievous environmental challenge in the long history. Therefore, the idea of constructing community of common destiny for humanity reflects China will not only be responsible for its international obligations but unite other countries to deal with these common challenges facing humanity.

Strategic cooperation between China and EU has become two sides’ one significant consenus at

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present. At the invitation of Premier Li Keqiang of the State Council of the People’s Republic of China, Herman van Rompuy, President of the European Council, and José Manuel Barroso, President of the European Commission, travelled to Beijing for the 16th China-EU Summit, from 20th to 21st November 2013. China and EU jointly adopted the China-EU 2020 Strategic Agenda for Cooperation, a comprehensive document setting out China and the EU’s shared aims to promote cooperation in the areas of peace and security, prosperity, sustainable development and people-to-people exchanges, to take forward the China-EU Comprehensive Strategic Partnership over the coming years. In China-EU 2020 Strategic Agenda for Cooperation, among others, sustainable development is one of the core cooperation agendas. Under this framework, both sides emphasized that “China and the EU face the common task of achieving innovative, inclusive and sustainable development. Addressing climate change, protecting the environment, promoting transparent international energy markets and facilitating resource-efficient, far-reaching, socially inclusive and low-carbon development policies are high on the international action list.”

As we all know, EU has played leadership role in green development fields such as natural resource protection, clean energy and climate change mitigation technologies. Nowadays, however, EU is facing many great challenges such financial crisis, integration crisis, refugee crisis and terrorist attack and so on. Under such circumstance, on the one hand, EU must deal with its development challenges through internal cooperation among its member states in which addressing climate change may be one important point to promote European economic and social transformation. On the other hand, facing a globalization economy and complex interdependence international situation, EU must enhance international cooperation with the key partners because it can’t cope with many challenges by itself. At the same time, China is also facing internal and external many challenges such as resource and environmental degradation, air, water and soil pollution, energy security and low-carbon transformation and so on. To cope with these challenges effectively, China is implementing low-carbon development strategy. China needs not only foreign directive investment, green technologies and clean energy but also green development conception and ideas. As China-EU 2020 Strategic Agenda for Cooperation has pointed out, “The world of today is experiencing profound and complex changes. As important actors in a multipolar world, China and the EU share responsibility for promoting peace, prosperity and sustainable development for the benefit of all.”

Green development has therefore become a key area of strategic and practical China-EU cooperation.

There may be three ideas for enhancing green development cooperation between China and EU.

First, China and EU should enhance the strategic coordination in global climate governance in both international climate negotiations under the UNFCCC and some bilateral cooperation mechanisms such as China-EU emission trading capacity building project and other climate cooperation initiatives from global strategic level so that realizing win-win results. Second, strengthening technology innovation and transfer between China and EU is the key of the levers to promote the social and economic transformation towards low-carbon economy in both sides. Technology is core of low-carbon development. In the Paris Agreement, technology development and transfer is one of the most important provisions. The two sides should enhance the mutual introduce of best-practice in eco-friendly technology development and marketization through all kinds of governmental projects, enterprise cooperation and national or local strategic technology support projects and so on. Especially, green technologies development and marketization in EU are more successful than that in China. In order to reach ultimate objective of UNFCCC and the Paris Agreement, China should learn more best-practice and successful development experience from the EU. Third, China and EU should enhance green development ideas and concepts research to provide direction and approaches for green development and social and economic transformation of both sides. To a certain extent, development ideas and concepts are more vital than practices. In this point, there are more successful stories in the EU than that in China. Green development may be a journey of humanity thinking change and innovation. Without change of development phyllosophy, there will be no ultimate success of green development. Based on this view, China and EU must strengthen exchange and mutual learning of its development ideas and concepts.

Conclusion
Based on the above discussion, we can draw a conclusion that China’s influence has increased significantly and made a great contribution to the adoption of the Paris Agreement which has created a new era of global climate governance in which green development has become one global trend to urge all of the countries to change and transfer their development ideas and approaches. In this global trend, China and EU have great responsibilities to not only ensure their own low-carbon transformation successfully but also guide and lead to some extent the global green trend. China and EU have developed a great blueprint for mutual cooperation not only in China-EU 2020 Strategic Agenda for Cooperation but in the Paris Agreement and their significant commitment recently. Nowadays, more than 165 countries have pledged to sign the Paris Agreement and the Agreement will no doubt take effect on schedule. China has developed its new plan for social and economic development in March 2016. In this 13th Five-Year Plan of China, green development has become one of five great development concepts. Green development and socialist ecological civilization construction have injected new strong impetus into China’s social and economic transformation. Green development strategic cooperation between China and EU has already laid a better foundation and achieved remarkable effects based on which China and
EU should enhance their strategic cooperation from at least three levels: strategic coordination from global strategy level; technological cooperation and transfer from economic and social development level; and green development ideas and concepts research cooperation and diffusion from the development concept level. Of course, we all know that although the Paris Agreement has pointed out the direction and path for the global low-carbon transformation, but we are still facing enormous challenges and arduous task in the future. Emission reduction commitments in most of the countries have submitted the INDCs before and after the Paris agreement have still a very big gap to the emission reduction needs for the 2°C goal and efforts to the global social and economic transformation is not easy. In a word, the prospects may be bright, but the road is still full of twists and turns.