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Press Briefings in International Climate Change Negotiations

Carola Betzold, Thomas Bernauer & Vally Koubi

Press conferences are an important element of a government's ~~s'~~ communication strategy at ~~the~~ climate change summits. From a theoretical perspective, We argue that press conferences should serve two main functions: ~~as a means to~~ exerting pressure in negotiations, and informing the public. These functions correspond to two logics of action: a logic of consequence where governments use press conferences as negotiation tools and a logic of appropriateness where governments organize press conferences to increase transparency. Based on new data from the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) archives, we find limited support for these two logics of action. Neither democracies, which, we argue, are more likely to follow a logic of appropriateness, nor vulnerable countries, which are more likely to follow a logic of consequence, organize systematically more press conferences. Other factors, such as capacity and a government's function in the negotiation structure, seem to play a more important role.

Keywords: *climate politics, press briefings, ~~press~~ conferences, logic of appropriateness and consequence, climate change negotiations*

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Introduction

The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) was signed in 1992 and ~~came entered~~ into force in 1994. ~~In 1995~~ The following year, the first Conference of the Parties (COP) took place in Berlin. Since then, the international community has met every year to negotiate how to achieve the Convention's ultimate goal, namely, to avoid "dangerous" interference in the climate system (UNFCCC, 1992, art. 2). Since the first COP in 1995, the climate summits have received considerable public and media attention. Governments as well as intergovernmental (IGO) and non-governmental (NGO) organizations actively seek

this media attention, notably through press briefings or press conferences.¹ Yet, not all governments use this opportunity to speak to the media. While some country delegations routinely hold press conferences, others have never organized a press briefing. How can we explain this difference in communication strategy? Which countries reach out to the media through press conferences, and why do they do so?

While a growing body of literature ~~examines studies~~ media representations of climate change (negotiations), we know very little about governments' media strategies during ~~such proceedings~~ negotiations. Indeed, as Adolphsen (2014, p. 21) writes, "governmental communication at these events seems to be ignored altogether," even though governments tend to respond to the exceptionality of such events by spending large amounts of resources to be heard and achieve visibility. In this paper, we seek to examine at a more general level the motivations of governments to organize press briefings. We first review the 'landscape' of press briefings during climate change negotiations. In a second step, we theorize and quantitatively test two possible government motivations or logics for organizing a press briefing: a logic of appropriateness and a logic of consequence (March & Olsen, 1998, 2004). Under a logic of appropriateness, governments communicate with the media through press conferences because there is a strong (normative) expectation of public information and transparency. Since such norms are most prevalent in democracies, we would expect democracies to organize more press briefings under this logic. Under a logic of consequence, in contrast, press conferences are a means to an end, acting as an instrument for exerting pressure and pushing one's interest forward in the negotiation. Hence, we expect this logic to be more applicable for governments with extreme positions, since they have the strongest incentives to shift the negotiations toward their preferred outcome.

Admittedly, these are rather rough expectations on governments' motivations and more detailed analyses are needed to better understand different governments' perspectives on the uses of press conferences as well as other types of interaction with the media. The ~~weak-limited~~ evidence provided by our quantitative analysis emphasizes the need of more refined qualitative research. Nonetheless, we see this paper as a first step and useful starting point for further work on the strategic

¹ In this paper we use the terms press briefings and press conferences interchangeably.

communication and public relations efforts of (selected) governments at climate change and other global summits.

Climate Change (Negotiations) and the Media

~~From the start, t~~The UNFCCC COPs have attracted considerable public and media attention ~~from the beginning~~. Large numbers of ~~non-governmental organizations~~ NGOs and media representatives attend the COPs, sometimes even outnumbering government negotiators. The 2011 climate summit in Durban, for instance, attracted 1200 formally accredited journalists – in addition to around 5000 government delegates and another 5000 civil society representatives.² COPs have become “environmental mega-conferences” (Gaventa, 2010), “global mediatized political events where an enormous amount of knowledge production, economic lobbying, civic activism, and bargaining gravitate around potentially consequential political decision making” (Kunelius & Eide, 2012, p. 267f)

How the media cover climate change in general, and climate change negotiations in particular, is the focus of a growing body of literature. Most studies analyze newspaper ~~– sometimes also television~~, coverage of climate change (and sometimes also television reporting) in different countries around the world, particularly in developed countries like the United States, the United Kingdom (Boykoff, 2007, 2008), Finland (Lyytimäki, 2011) and Norway (Eide & Ytterstad, 2011). However, but increasingly studies are focusing on in developing countries such as Samoa (Jackson, 2010) or Chile (Dotson, Jacobson, Kaid, & Carlton, 2012; see also contributions in Eide, Kunelius, & Kumpu, 2010). In addition, recent research looks at media coverage in a comparative manner in a few (e.g. Soneryd & Cassegård, 2014) or many countries (e.g. Eide et al., 2010; Schmidt, Ivanova, & Schäfer, 2013; Schäfer, Ivanova, & Schmidt, 2011).

These latter studies highlight differences in the quantity and quality of media coverage. On the one hand, these differences may reflect diverse national circumstances such as elections or parliamentary debates (Boykoff, 2011). On the other hand, differences in coverage may result from time trends. As we discuss below, media attention to climate change has in general increased since the 1990s and

² See list of participants, available at <http://unfccc.int/documentation/documents/items/3595.php>.

regularly peaks during the annual climate summits (e.g. Schmidt et al., 2013). Yet this trend is not uniform, and some COPs receive much more attention than others (see figure 1 below).

Beyond quantitative trends in the number of newspaper articles, scholars have also ~~qualitatively~~ analysed newspaper content qualitatively. In particular they have looked at which actors newspaper articles quote. Here, research reveals that political actors dominate, both from the media outlet's home government and other governments (Russell, 2013, p. 906). For instance, Soneryd and Cassegård (2014) examined study the Danish coverage of the Kyoto summit (COP3) and found that over 75% of all quoted voices come from the transnational and national political systems. Kunelius and Eide (2012) analysed ~~look at~~ newspaper reporting on the Copenhagen Climate Summit (COP15) across 19 countries, ~~their study finds~~ finding that overall, 40% of all quoted actors come from the national and transnational political systems (see also e.g. Eide et al., 2010). Clearly and unsurprisingly, political representatives are an important information source for media reporting on climate change negotiations.

Political representatives, in turn, seem quite aware of their prominence in media reporting and of the competition for media attention among political representatives. Consequently, negotiators actively reach out to different media outlets to spread their point of view on climate change, in general, and the negotiations in particular through press conferences.

Press Conferences at Climate COPs

The UNFCCC explicitly encourages and facilitates media coverage of the climate summits by providing the infrastructure for press briefings among other things. Usually, the COP venue has two dedicated press conference rooms, one for government press conferences and, the other for NGOs and IGOs. Only accredited media representatives (apart from the organizers, of course) are allowed into the press conference rooms, although this is not always checked in the case of NGO press briefings (Adolphsen, 2014, p. 115; authors' own observation at COP17).

Press conferences were already an integral element of the negotiations at the first COP in Berlin in 1995. Since then, the number of such events has increased

considerably over time, with many events taking place in recent negotiation meetings (COP15 to COP17; see Figure 1).

Figure 1 about here

Some COPs have attracted a disproportionately large number of press briefings. In the early period of the negotiations, the Kyoto and The Hague COPs (COP3 and COP6 respectively) witnessed over 100 events, compared to an average number that is well below 100. These figures highlight their political importance ~~for the climate change regime~~. At COP3, the Kyoto Protocol was adopted and COP6 remains the only COP to fail to reach an agreement and continue to a second meeting, COP6bis.³ In the latter rounds of negotiations, starting with COP13 in Bali, each COP has witnessed well over 100 press briefings. The Copenhagen Summit (COP15) broke the record with over 350 events, while the following two COPs with 250 events each. Put differently, just under half of all press briefings took place during these three COPs.

Does this increase in the number of press briefings simply reflect the overall increase in the size of media attention for COPs? We know that while media attention to climate change was fairly low in the 1990s across a number of countries, media coverage of climate change grew considerably until 2009, with the starkest increase around 2006/2007 and the 2009 peak around the Copenhagen Summit. Since 2009, media attention has decreased with unclear future trends (Boykoff, 2011; Eide, 2012; Schmidt et al., 2013; Schäfer et al., 2011). At the same time, the number of participants at COPs has increased. While COPs before 2005 had on average about 5000 attendees overall (including government, IGO, NGO and media representatives), this number doubled after 2005. On average, 10,000 individuals attended COPs after 2005, even when excluding COP15 with its record number of participants.⁴ To account for the general trend toward ever larger climate conferences, we divide the number of press briefings by the number of attending journalists (in 100s). The black line in Figure 1 displays the proportion of briefings to journalists. It indicates that press briefings have become more important. Compared to only 2.5 press briefings

³ On COP6, see e.g. Grubb and Yamin (2001).

⁴ The average number of participants for COP11 through COP19 is 11,612, and 9,652 when excluding COP15 in Copenhagen, which had almost 30,000 participants. See lists of participants, available at <http://unfccc.int/documentation/documents/items/3595.php>.

per 100 journalists at COP3 in Kyoto, there were almost 20 briefings per 100 journalists at COP17 in Durban.

This absolute and relative increase in press conferences applies to all types of press conferences – those organized by government, NGOs and IGOs (see Figure 1). Overall, governments and NGOs have been the most active organizers, with approximately 700 and 800 events respectively, followed by IGOs (about 300 events). Less than 10% of all press briefings were joint press briefings organized by more than one type of actor. These figures are, however, only approximate, since the main organizer listed in the Daily Program may invite others to speak at their press conference.

We now turn to the 700 events organized by governments. Figure 2 lists the parties to the UNFCCC that have initiated the most press briefings during climate COPs. The European Union is the most active party inviting the media to 135 press briefings.⁵

The United States ranks second, holding 96 press briefings. Other active governments are Japan (39 press briefings), China (34 briefings), Canada (32 briefings), and Brazil (31 briefings). Among the most active initiators are a number of smaller countries, such as Bolivia (16 briefings), Ecuador (11 briefings), and Bangladesh (10 briefings).⁶

Figure 2 about here

It seems only a few countries hold press briefings. Of the 196 countries that are party or observer states to the UNFCCC, 123 countries (63%) never held a press briefing; 31 countries (16%) held only one briefing, and 17 countries (9 %) held ten press briefings or more.⁷

It is worth noting that the two weeks of climate negotiations are extremely busy, with countless meetings, formal negotiations and informal consultations, often occurring in parallel. Although the UNFCCC secretariat provides the infrastructure and coordinates time slots, organizing a press conference still requires precious time and effort. Why do governments then invest in organizing press briefings?

⁵ We treat the European Union here as a government, as it is Party to the UNFCCC and the Kyoto Protocol in its own right and has its own independent delegation at the climate summit.

⁶ If we include coalitions, the G77/China (28 briefings), the Alliance of Small Island States (22 briefings) and the African Group (17 briefings) ~~would~~ ~~will~~ also be on the list.

⁷ Note that these figures include co-organized events.

Two Functions of Press Conferences

There is no doubt that the media play an important part in foreign policy and international relations, in particular in what Gilboa (2000a) calls the “open diplomacy model”. In this model, negotiators actively involve the media in the negotiations, e.g., in press conferences or interviews. Climate change negotiations fit this diplomacy model since they are characterized by extensive media coverage (Gilboa, 2000a, 2000b). Negotiators resort to “media diplomacy”, sometimes referred to as “public diplomacy” or “international public relations” (Signitzer & Coombs, 1992), to advance negotiations and mobilize public support for agreements (Gilboa, 2000a).

While research recognizes press conferences as a ‘standard’ tool of media diplomacy and public relations efforts, we have seen earlier that only few governments conduct press conferences in practice, at least during climate COPs. In fact, we know very little about governments’ public relations and strategic communication efforts during such international summits (Adolphsen, 2014, p. 79f).

Adolphsen (2014) starts to fill this gap by analyzing the communication strategies of six governments, namely the United States, Mexico, Brazil, South Africa, India, and Germany as well as some environmental NGOs during the Cancún climate summit (COP16) in 2010. His model suggests five factors that influence an actor’s communication strategy and ~~thus her~~ communication activities: the type of actor (government vs. NGO), positions or standpoints on climate change, degree of professionalization in political public relations, level of funding for political public relations, and short-term discursive opportunity structures which are “distinctive circumstances under which particular contributions to summit discourse are induced and others are discouraged” (Adolphsen, 2014, p. 91). His study emphasizes that governments see press conferences as a negotiation tool, as a means to exert pressure in line with the media diplomacy model (Gilboa, 2000a). A comment by an NGO communicator cited in Adolphsen (2014, p. 173) clearly shows that summit participants consciously use ~~of~~ press conferences as diplomacy resource:

“Many of them [i.e., UNFCCC parties] engage in something that I refer to as ‘PR diplomacy’. I think what’s happening in the press conference rooms here is often – not always, but often – as important as what’s happening in the negotiation rooms, because it seems like some countries at least like to negotiate via press conferences”.

Anecdotal evidence confirms the importance of press conferences as an alternative negotiation forum. For instance, as formal negotiations in Copenhagen (COP15) stalled, a small group of countries met privately to craft the brief declaration that became the Copenhagen Accord. As soon as the Accord was written, the US government presented the agreement in a press conference even before the document was introduced in the plenary. Although this ‘going public’ was described as a “strategic mistake” (Dimitrov, 2010), it meant that opponents to the Accord would publicly be seen as blocking the agreement which restricted their room for manoeuvre. In international relations theory, such an instrumental understanding of press conferences corresponds to a logic of consequence, where governments do what they think best advances their interests (March & Olsen, 1998, 2004).

Another logic of action is the logic of appropriateness, which is normative and intrinsic (March & Olsen, 1998, 2004). It holds that political actors behave in accordance with prevailing norms of proper conduct; they seek to ‘do the right thing’ in a given social context. From this perspective, press conferences serve a second purpose: they inform the public about what is going on and thus contribute to transparency, or at least to an appearance of transparency. Since press briefings are an element of the standard operating procedure of democratic national policy-making, this ~~element~~ may simply be transferred to the international level. This translation of national expectations of transparency to the international level has two dimensions. ~~On the one hand~~ Firstly, governments are transparent to their own citizens. Citizens have a right to know and governments have a duty to inform them about what is going on nationally as well as internationally. ~~At the same time~~ Secondly, there is a global narrative of transnational democratic governance. Accordingly, international negotiations should follow similar rules as domestic democratic policy-making: an (imagined) global public that (rightfully) expects open and transparent deliberations on global issues.

Returning to Adolphsen’s study, he reports that for the United States in particular media relations, including daily press conferences, seem to be a “routine element of summit business” rather than a tool for spreading particular messages (Adolphsen, 2014, p. 132). Similarly, transparency was a key motivation for the Indian delegation’s interaction with the press. Adolphsen cites a member of the delegation:

“Our minister is very friendly with the press, in the sense that he believes in transparency. I would say two or three times a day, he would talk to the media contingent [...] just to give an update on how things are going – to the extent that he could talk about it, because our approach to the media was that more is better and that transparency is important” (cited in Adolphsen, 2014, p. 132).

Hence, at the most basic level, press conferences are used as a ~~negotiation~~-tool to influence the negotiations and as a platform for informing the public about the negotiations because of a standard operating procedure in democratic policy-making. On a theoretical level, these two functions correspond to the two logics of consequence and appropriateness.

Under a logic of consequence, a government’s position in the negotiations should play a role (see also Adolphsen, 2014, p. 89). The higher the country’s stakes in the negotiations, the more it should seek to influence the negotiations through press conferences. When are the stakes high in the climate change negotiations? Even though the climate change agenda has grown to encompass many different issues, we focus on mitigation, as it is arguably the core of the Convention and later negotiations. We posit that the more extreme a country’s position on mitigation is, the higher its stakes in the negotiations. Positions range from favouring very ambitious mitigation policies to strongly objecting to ambitious greenhouse gas reduction targets. We argue that a country’s position on this spectrum depends on its vulnerability to climate change as well as its vulnerability to climate change mitigation. In other words, the more vulnerable a country is to the negative impacts of climate change, the more it will favor strict climate policies and strong international agreements. At the same time, the more a country stands to lose economically from strong climate agreements, the more likely it will oppose ambitious mitigation targets. Both types of countries should resort to press conferences to shape and shift the negotiations in their interest:

H1a: Countries more vulnerable to the negative impacts of climate change are more likely to initiate press briefings.

H1b: Countries expecting to lose economically with stricter climate agreements are more likely to initiate press briefings.

Under a logic of appropriateness, in contrast, press conferences are routine business; they are a normal and normatively desirable activity, independent of one's standpoint in the negotiations. Press briefings here serve general goals of public information and transparency, whether to a domestic audience or an imagined global public. These goals should play a particularly important role in democratic settings, where the public, as electorate, is involved in policy-making:

H2: Democratic governments are more likely to initiate press briefings.

Of course, governments are unlikely to exclusively operate under one of these two logics of actions, quite the opposite: most political actions involve elements of both logics. As ~~see~~ March and Olsen (1998, p. 952) note, "Political action generally cannot be explained exclusively in terms of a logic of either consequences or appropriateness". Nonetheless, the relative importance of the two logics should vary by government type and position.

Data and Method

Dependent Variable

The UNFCCC Secretariat publishes a Daily Program every day during COPs. The Daily Program includes, among other items, a list of press briefings scheduled for the day as well as who organizes the briefing. This data is freely available from the UNFCCC website but has, to our knowledge, not been subject to systematic analysis. We built a dataset based on these Daily Programs, focusing on events organized by governments. We count the number of press briefings organized or co-organized by each government at each of the COPs. Hence, our unit of analysis is the country-COP dyad. The predictors are located at the country and the COP level.

Independent Variables

We use two different measures to operationalize the logic of consequence. With regard to a country's physical vulnerability to climate change (hypothesis 1a), we use the Global Climate Risk Index, provided by Germanwatch (Anemüller, Monreal, & Bals, 2006).⁸ The index captures material and human losses from weather-related

⁸ All Germanwatch reports are available online at <http://germanwatch.org/en/crri>. Note that no yearly data are available for the period before 2004. We use the decadal average for this period, as provided in Anemüller et al. (2006).

events. We recoded the index such that higher scores mean higher vulnerability. The expectation is that more vulnerable countries adopt a more ambitious stance in the negotiations – and organize more press conferences to advance that ambitious position.

Assuming that fossil fuel producing and consuming countries face higher opportunity costs for stricter climate policies, we proxy opposition to stricter climate policies (hypothesis 1b) with a country's per capita carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions. Because of the skewed nature of the variable, we use its natural logarithm. Data is from the Climate Analysis Indicators Tool (World Resources Institute, 2014). The expectation is again a positive relationship between per capita CO₂ emissions and the number of press briefings organized or co-organized by each government at a COP.

Our measure for the logic of appropriateness (hypothesis 2) is an index capturing the extent of democratic participation in government, Polity, from the POLITY IV dataset (Marshall & Jaggers, 2012). Polity ranges from –10 (most autocratic) to 10 (most democratic) and contains the following three elements: presence of competitive political participation, guarantee of openness and competitiveness of executive recruitment, and existence of institutionalized constraints on the exercise of executive power (Marshall & Jaggers, 2012). Again, we expect a positive relationship: more democratic governments should organize more press conferences.⁹

Control Variables

First, we control for the political relevance of climate COPs with the total number of participants for each COP. Arguably, the more important a COP is, the more participants – and the more press conferences it will have.

Second, we control for the capacity of a country to hold press briefings. Although the UNFCCC Secretariat administers the time slots and provides the infrastructure, a press briefing still requires time and effort on the part of the initiator. For small countries, the opportunity costs of holding a press briefing can be considerable since national delegates organizing a press briefing will not be available for negotiations and consultations. We use the size of a country's national delegation to proxy for capacity (as coded by Böhmelt, [2012](#)~~2013~~).

⁹ As a robustness check, we replaced Polity scores with political rights by Freedom House. We obtain similar results with this alternative variable.

Third, the country hosting a climate COP plays a special role in the negotiation process. Rather than merely pursue its national interest, the COP presidency is expected to ensure that the conference runs smoothly and that compromises are reached. The presidency is also responsible for communicating developments in the negotiations to the media and hence to the general public. The country presiding over a COP is therefore expected to organize regular press conferences. We use UNFCCC documents, in particular the COP reports, to obtain information on the COP presidency and host country.¹⁰

Fourth, countries often negotiate as part of a coalition, such as the Alliance of Small Island States or the African Group. The country that chairs one of these coalitions usually speaks on behalf of the coalition members in the negotiations and therefore to the media. Accordingly, countries chairing a coalition should be more likely to initiate a press briefing. We extracted information for this variable from UNFCCC documents, in particular the COP reports as well as from the coalition websites. Unfortunately, not all coalitions publish information on chairmanships; in particular, no information on chairmanship is available for the Umbrella Group and the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC).¹¹

Method

Since our dependent variable is the number of press conferences per COP per government, we have many zeros in our data. To deal with excess zeros, we use zero-inflated count models (Greene, 1994). The first stage of zero-inflated models (the inflation equation) uses a binary specification to estimate whether there is a positive probability of a government holding a press briefing. The second stage (the count equation) accounts for variation in the number of press briefings initiated by a country that has a positive probability of holding a press briefing. This approach has several advantages. The zero-inflated models split the press briefing initiation process into two stages for statistical and theoretical reasons. It is unrealistic to assume that all governments have a strictly positive probability of holding a press briefing, as

¹⁰ Usually, the country hosting the COP acts as the COP president. However, for some meetings, the host did not hold the COP presidency. For instance, Zimbabwe officially presided over COP2, yet the meeting was held in Geneva, Switzerland. In such cases, both host and president were coded.

¹¹ See Table A1 in the appendix for descriptive statistics.

standard models assume. Since it is not obvious *ex ante* when a country becomes ‘relevant’, the two-step procedure separates observations with zero probability of press briefing initiation from those with a positive probability. To model temporal dependence, time as well as its squared and cubic term (t, t² and t³) are included in the models. This approach acknowledges that a government’s decision to hold a press briefing today depends strongly on its behaviour in the years before and thus controls for time effects. The use of t, t² and t³ (cubic time polynomial) instead of cubic splines, recommended by Beck, Katz, and Tucker (1998), has the advantage of a more straightforward interpretation of the baseline hazard, whereas the approximation of the baseline hazard is at least as good as that with cubic splines (Carter & Signorino, 2010).

Results

Table 1 reports the results for the zero-inflated models. The first column (model 1) contains the model for the logic of appropriateness, with democracy as the only predictor; the second column (model 2) only includes the predictors for the logic of consequence, i.e., environmental and economic vulnerability. Model 3 combines these two sets of predictors; model 4 also includes our control variables. Finally, we include in model 5 dummy variables for the United States and the European Union. Because these two parties are responsible for the majority of all press conferences ever held (see Figure 2), we include dummies as controls.

Table 1 about here

Let us first look at the logic of appropriateness, that is, a normative motivation to hold press briefings for information purposes. If informing the general public was the central motivation for governments to hold press conference, we would expect democracies to conduct a higher number of press conferences (H2). The appropriateness model in the first column supports the argument that democracies are less likely to never hold a press briefing (the inflation equation). The coefficient is negative, as expected, and the effect is statistically highly significant (1% level). The count estimation similarly suggests a positive and significant relationship between democracy and the initiated number of press conferences: the more democratic a government is the more press conferences it will initiate. However, this relationship loses its significance as soon as other variables are included in the estimated model

(models 3 to 5, the relationship in the inflation equation is also insignificant in model 4 and significant at the 10% level only in model 5). It seems, thus, that counter to our expectations in H2, there is no strong relationship between democratic governments and the initiation of press briefings. Democracies, while less likely to never organize a press conference, do not systematically organize more press conferences.

Let us turn to the logic of consequence and to an instrumental understanding of press conferences as a negotiation tool. If the main motivation behind press conferences was to exert pressure on the negotiations, we would expect countries with extreme positions to organize more press conferences (H1a and H1b). The inflation equation suggests that more vulnerable countries are significantly more likely to hold a press briefing, although the significance level drops from the 1% to the 10% level when dummies for the United States and European Union are introduced (model 5). In contrast, according to the count model, there is no relationship between vulnerability to climate change and the number of press conferences organized: governments from more vulnerable countries do not speak to the press in briefings more often. Economically vulnerable countries, measured by logged per capita CO₂ emissions, in contrast, are associated with a higher number of press briefings (count estimation). The relationship is positive and significant in models 2 to 4 (1% level), yet it seems the two parties most active in organizing press conferences, the United States and the European Union, drive the results. When these are controlled for, the effect of per capita CO₂ emissions loses considerably in size and significance (model 5).¹²

The reason we find only weak evidence that extreme positions are associated with a larger number of press conferences might be due to our admittedly rough proxies. First, vulnerability is a contested concept. Some critics even argue that is impossible to quantify vulnerability to climate change at the national level (Hinkel, 2011; Klein, 2009). Additionally, vulnerable countries do not necessarily pay more attention to climate change. Schmidt et al. (2013) do not find a relationship between vulnerability and media attention for climate change. Similarly, a recent BBC World Service Trust policy brief reports that although African publics are among the most vulnerable to climatic changes, ~~yet~~ they are also among the least informed about climate change (BBC World Service Trust, 2009). Moreover, economic vulnerability to mitigation

¹² Similar results are obtained when using logged total, rather than per capita, CO₂ emissions (not reported).

may not automatically result in a laggard position. [For example](#), Norway, a heavily oil-dependent country, is a rather progressive country in the climate change negotiations. Finally, and perhaps more importantly, governments may take into account short-term tactical considerations when strategically using press briefings – that is, ‘discursive opportunity structures’ (Adolphsen, 2014). In this case, press conferences might be immediate reactions to micro-developments in the negotiations, for example to a draft document or another actor’s press conference. Unfortunately, our general measure of negotiation position cannot adequately capture such short-term considerations.

With regard to the control variables, we find that countries with large delegations and countries hosting a climate summit are more likely to hold press briefings. Press conferences do require human resources and countries with small delegations of only a few delegates have clearly less capacity to prepare and conduct a press briefing. Indeed, some of the larger government delegations such as the USA and the European Union, even include specific public relations staff on their delegation (Adolphsen, 2014; Painter, 2010). The COP host not only has a general responsibility of communicating with the public but often uses its special position to advance its own general political agenda by gaining visibility on the international stage with press conferences (Adolphsen, 2014; Rivenburgh, 2010).

Contrary to our expectation, we do not find that coalition chairs initiate more press briefings. Instead, they are associated with a significantly lower number of press conferences. A possible explanation for this counterintuitive finding might be the higher workload of the coalition chairs. They are responsible for coordinating their group members and for coming up with compromises, joint texts, and are typically involved in closed-door negotiations and consultations. This may simply leave no time for also engaging in public relations. Alternatively, coalition chairs may organize press briefings in the name of the coalition which would mean that their press briefings are not included in our dataset.

Size matters, as was to be expected. The larger a COP, the more press briefings it witnesses. While the effect size is small, the relationship is highly and robustly significant at the 1% level. Finally, the time variables also have large and significant effects: having organized a press conference in the past is a strong predictor of organizing a press conference in the future.

Conclusion

Press briefings are an important element of international climate change negotiations; it is here that government negotiators communicate with the media and through them with the general public to relate positions and the status of the negotiations. Press conferences are widespread and their number has increased sharply over the past round of negotiations. However, only a small subset of governments conducts press conferences. Across all COPs from 1995 to 2011 (COP1 to COP17), 123 countries never organized a press briefing. Which governments then conduct press briefings and why? We tested two motivations or logics of action: on the one hand, governments may use press conferences to exert pressure in the negotiations; on the other hand, governments may see press conferences as a means to inform the public and increase transparency. Our analysis, however, finds little evidence for these two logics of action: neither democracies nor countries vulnerable to climatic changes and large CO₂ emitters organize more press conferences. Other factors, in particular state capacity (delegation size) and hosting the climate summit are better able to predict which governments conduct press conferences.

A possible explanation for the lack of empirical support for our theoretical expectations might be that our analysis focuses on the long term and general patterns of communication behaviour across all COPs, and hence it is unable to capture governments' motivations at a specific point in the negotiations. Adolphsen (2014, p. 91) emphasizes the importance of short-term discursive opportunity structures on an actor's communication strategy. Possibly, these short-term discursive opportunity structures are more important than general standpoints on climate change. When strategically using the media – through press conferences – governments may respond to specific micro-developments during the two-week summits. For example, our dataset indicates that there are slightly more press conferences in the second week of negotiations, when high-level government representatives tend to arrive and when media attention is therefore higher. Similarly, governments might organize a press conference as a reaction to an official draft proposal in order to publicly comment on or counter that draft proposal. Recall the press conference at the Copenhagen Summit mentioned earlier, where President Obama presented the newly drafted Copenhagen Accord. The press conference was an immediate reaction to the new final document rather than a reflection of the general US position in the negotiations.

It seems, therefore, that there are more factors that influence governments' decisions to organize press conferences in international negotiations, beyond our broad expectations on positions and democracy. Yet, our analysis can serve as a starting point for further (quantitative and qualitative) research, by identifying governments that are particularly active in organizing press conferences or inactive. Our evidence, however, indicates that we need to look in greater detail at the specific circumstances under which a press conference takes place. For instance, when exactly in the negotiations does it take place? What is happening in the negotiations around the press conference? Our research hence emphasizes the need for a more refined model of governmental communication strategies beyond the two logics of consequence and appropriateness. Such a model could, for instance, link the two broad logics with additional factors influencing a government's communication strategy such as the degree of professionalization in political public relations, the level of funding for political public relations, and short-term discursive opportunity structures (Adolphsen (2014, p. 91).

In addition, governments may simply have different approaches to the media. Resources certainly play a role, as our analysis indicates. Consequently, smaller countries – regardless of their democratic quality or negotiation position – may simply not have the capacity to organize their own press briefings. At the same time, there may also be few or no media representatives from smaller and poorer countries present at the COP. If governments then want to inform their own citizenry about the status of the negotiations, sending press releases to the media at home may be more effective than organizing a press conference where no domestic journalists are present. Hence, future research should examine other communication channels that governments may use. In particular they could explore which governments give interviews to (selected) media representatives, issue press releases, or use social media and ? How do these different communication actions and channels interact? ? Finally, we have only examined looked at the government side, and neglected the media as agents. Yet, as previous research has shown, the media actively frame news in a certain way and make conscious decisions concerning what to report on, or on whom to quote. Accordingly, it would be illuminating to examine not only who organizes press conferences, but also who attends them and what they take away from it in their reporting.

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Appendix

Table A1: Descriptive Statistics

	N	mean	std. deviation	min	max
press conferences	3510	0.21	1.18	0	16
polity	2669	3.23	6.57	-10	10
climate risk index	3071	-82.58	38.91	-168.67	-1.83
per capita CO ₂ emissions (logged)	3218	0.60	1.69	-3.88	4.34
delegation size	3490	14.06	30.08	0	737
COP host/president	3510	0.01	0.07	0	1
coalition chair	3510	0.02	0.15	0	1
COP participants (total)	3510	8004	5548.83	1575	27294

Tables and Figures

Table 1: Panel (zero-inflated negative binomial) models

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
	Logic of Appropriateness	Logic of Consequence	Logic of Appropriateness and Consequence	Both logics with controls	Full model with EU & USA
	<i>Coeff./Std. error</i>	<i>Coeff./Std. error</i>	<i>Coeff./Std. error</i>	<i>Coeff./Std. error</i>	<i>Coeff./Std. error</i>
# of press conferences					
polity	0.081** (0.040)		0.023 (0.033)	0.025 (0.022)	-0.007 (0.018)
climate risk index		-0.003 (0.008)	0.002 (0.009)	-0.001 (0.008)	0.007 (0.004)
per capita CO ₂ (logged)		0.574*** (0.119)	0.492*** (0.122)	0.406*** (0.153)	0.170 (0.123)
delegation size				0.007** (0.003)	0.004*** (0.001)
COP host/president				1.149*** (0.353)	1.534*** (0.209)
coalition chair				-2.073** (0.887)	-1.890** (0.782)
COP participants (total)				0.000 (0.000)	0.000** (0.000)
EU (dummy)					2.018*** (0.289)
USA (dummy)					1.295*** (0.254)
constant	-0.276 (0.400)	-0.450 (0.546)	-0.449 (0.561)	-1.027* (0.608)	-0.288 (0.322)
inflate					
polity	-0.124*** (0.036)		-0.093*** (0.034)	-0.056 (0.041)	-0.075* (0.039)
climate risk		-0.026*** (0.007)	-0.024*** (0.006)	-0.016*** (0.007)	-0.010* (0.006)
per capita CO ₂ (logged)		-0.006 (0.166)	-0.023 (0.171)	0.324 (0.244)	0.116 (0.182)
delegation size				-0.049*** (0.011)	-0.045*** (0.010)
COP host/president				-22.544*** (0.720)	-22.716*** (0.638)
coalition chair				-0.934 (1.569)	-1.709 (1.854)
COP participants (total)				-0.000** (0.000)	-0.000*** (0.000)
EU (dummy)					-2.238*** (0.486)
USA (dummy)					-1.140** (0.536)

t	0.978*** (0.176)	0.954*** (0.189)	0.898*** (0.185)	0.713*** (0.224)	0.611*** (0.203)
t2	-0.096*** (0.027)	-0.089*** (0.028)	-0.088*** (0.029)	-0.055 (0.041)	-0.045 (0.037)
t3	0.003** (0.001)	0.002** (0.001)	0.003** (0.001)	0.002 (0.002)	0.001 (0.002)
constant	0.422 (0.412)	-2.325*** (0.730)	-1.378** (0.639)	0.884 (0.858)	1.786*** (0.587)
natural log of alpha					
constant	1.015*** (0.234)	0.953*** (0.310)	0.824*** (0.290)	-0.028 (0.176)	-1.049** (0.491)
N	2669	2873	2501	2500	2500

Notes: The inflation equation estimates the probability that a national government never holds a press briefing (belongs to the Always 0 group). The count equation estimates the expected number of press briefings, weighted by the probability that a government belongs to the Not Always 0 group. Robust standard errors clustered on country and are listed in parenthesis. *p<0.10;**p<0.05;***p<0.01.

list of figure captions

- 1 Number of Press Briefings, by COP and Actor Type**
- 2 Total Number of Press Briefings for Most Active Governments**