Chapter 15

The Nation-State, International Society, and the Global Environment

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Introduction

Global environmental protection has become a well-established and to some extent routine aspect of foreign policy. Hardly a day passes without an international gathering of environmental experts and diplomats debating issues from species loss to air pollution or global warming. But it was not always thus. A century ago, most states considered environmental concerns to be part of domestic, not international, politics. The League of Nations was not given an environmental mandate, and even the United Nations did not initially have a separate body dealing with environmental matters. It was only from the early 1970s onwards that international society began to take a more systematic interest in matters relating to regional and global environmental protection. What explains this relatively recent surge of interest in green diplomacy? How committed are states, and the great powers in particular, to the emerging norm of global environmental responsibility? Does the rise of international environmental politics signify a lasting process of normative change in international relations, that is, a greening of international society and the nation-state?

This chapter reviews recent scholarship on the role that global environmental protection plays in states' foreign policy and the changes in international society that have promoted a green dimension in international diplomacy. It opens with a discussion of the relationship between the nation-state and the global environment, and between a territorially defined international system and the interdependencies of global ecosystems. Environmentalists have traditionally considered this relationship to be deeply problematic, although some have more recently speculated on the emergence of the "green state." The chapter then considers how domestic forces shape foreign environmental policy, before reviewing the international factors that have promoted a greater engagement by states with global environmental concerns.

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The Nation-State and the Ecological Challenge

Environmentalists have long considered the nation-state to be a dysfunctional form of political organization when it comes to addressing global environmental problems. There are several reasons for the deep-seated anti-statism in environmental thinking and activism (Paterson 2009). For one, the division of the world into sovereign nation-states stands in the way of the collective action that is needed to address global environmental threats. In the absence of a central authority such as a world government, individual states are driven to pursue a narrowly defined, short-term, national interest that ignores the universal and long-term concerns of the global environment. A fundamental mismatch exists between the political borders of international society and the physical boundaries of the ecological systems that span the world. In a fragmented and decentralized international system, the authority to deal with various local, regional, and global environmental challenges rests with political entities that are "widely seen to be both too big and too small" (Hurrell 2007: 216) to provide effective solutions.

Furthermore, despite enjoying formal sovereignty within their own borders, many nation-states do not exercise effective control over the environmental destruction that goes on within, or emanates from, their territory. This is evidently the case with so-called weak or failing states that are unable to provide even a modicum of domestic order and governance. Impoverished and unstable countries such as Haiti and Somalia come to mind in this context. Environmental destruction is rampant in such conditions, as local state officials either ignore environmentally damaging activities or are complicit in them (Hurrell 2007: 221). But a certain form of "state failure" can also be found in the so-called strong states of the industrialized world. As various authors have pointed out, some of the most advanced liberal democracies suffer from a control deficit when it comes to addressing newly emerging but potentially catastrophic ecological risks (Jänicke 1990; Beck 1995). As ecological problems take on ever more global dimensions, the ability of *all* types of states to direct social and economic dynamics towards greater sustainability is being called into question. The global environmental crisis has thus unearthed a much more profound crisis of sovereign statehood, with globalization and a shift of power from public to private actors eroding the regulatory power of the nation-state (Mathews 1997; Strange 1999).

Set against this ecological critique of the nation-state, which operates at both an empirical and normative level, is the assertion by other scholars that state-based political institutions remain central to the search for global environmental solutions (Meadowcroft 2005; Hurrell 2007). In this view, the nation-state and the international system have turned out to be more resilient to the corrosive effects of increased economic globalization and ecological interdependence than critics have suggested. Moreover, the growing awareness of the global dimensions of the environmental crisis has if anything increased the demands for state intervention in the global economy. Even if individual states on their own are unable to provide effective solutions to environmental problems, their central role in establishing the international environmental agenda, creating international environmental institutions, and negotiating environmental treaties has served to strengthen the legitimacy of state-centric forms of global governance.

Indeed, as the international states system is unlikely to be replaced with a different form of global political organization, a growing number of environmental scholars

argue that any global environmental rescue needs to involve the political authority of the nation-state. States may be myopic in their pursuit of the national interest, but they remain central to any attempt at organizing collective environmental action, whether at the domestic or global level. Only states possess the authority and steering capacity to direct powerful global economic actors towards greater environmental sustainability (Barry and Eckersley 2005). Where different national interests can be aligned to tackle global problems, as was the case with international cooperation to combat ozone layer depletion, the established institutions of international diplomacy can form the basis for effective remedial action at the global level (Benedick 1991). From this perspective, the challenge is thus to work out the conditions for successful interstate cooperation and institution-building, and to identify the political leadership that can promote green values and concerns in foreign policy (Eckersley 2004: 253–254).

More recent contributions to this debate have focused on the question of the nation-state's changing character, with some pointing to the beginning of a transformation in the state's central purpose and "the possible genesis of an ecological state, a state that places ecological considerations at the core of its activity" (Meadowcroft 2005: 3). At the heart of this argument is the idea that the state is not an immutable entity but a historically contingent political construct, and that its socially defined purpose has shifted over time, embracing industrialism and liberal democracy in the nineteenth century, welfare provision and social democracy in the twentieth century, and now environmentalism in the late twentieth and early twenty-first century. The basis for such a transformation can be found in the emergence of what Eckersley and others refer to as "ecological democracy," an evolution of liberal democracy to a state in which

> all those potentially affected by a risk should have some meaningful opportunity to participate or otherwise be represented in the making of the policies or decisions that generate the risk (Eckersley 2004: 111).

Others point to the gradual constitutionalization of environmental rights that advances both substantive and procedural environmental principles in policy-making (Hayward 2005). While most discussions of the evolution of the green state focus on the domestic sources of change (Dryzek *et al.* 2003), some authors highlight the inevitably international dimension of this process, as the aims of the ecological transformation of statehood can only be secured through international collective action (Eckersley 2004; Meadowcroft 2005: 12–13).

Whether such a transformation towards an ecological state is already underway and is likely to succeed remains a matter of debate and contention (Reus-Smit 1996). Some of the contours of this gradual and difficult transformation are already discernible, and recent scholarship has fleshed out both the normative foundations of what might be called "ecologically responsible statehood" (Eckersley 2004: 2) and its empirical manifestations. Others, however, warn that the intensification of environmental problems in countries with limited state capacity may promote a different kind of green state, one that combines authoritarian rule rather than democracy with a developmental model that seeks to balance the underlying growth imperative with emerging social and environmental pressures (Beeson 2010).

Much of the empirical debate about the international dimensions of the greening of the state has focused on Europe and the European Union's global environmental leadership. The notion of the EU as a unique political entity that reflects post-national values, including global environmental protection, has played a significant role in the wider debate about Europe's role in international affairs. Reflecting its unique supranational character and reliance on civilian rather than military power (Whitman 1998), some scholars have identified the EU as a "normative power" that defines itself in part out of a concern for environmental sustainability (Manners 2002). Other political values such as human rights and peaceful conflict resolution are usually cited as the core elements of Europe's distinctive normative identity. However, since acquiring an environmental policy competence in the late 1980s, the EU has increasingly made sustainable development and environmental protection one of its core principles and has also inscribed them into various constitutional treaties (McCormick 2001; Baker 2006). As a consequence, sustainability has risen in importance as a guiding principle of European foreign policy, and European leaders now routinely claim an environmental leadership role in international politics (Vogler 2005).

The notion of the EU as a green normative power has raised a number of questions and objections. Some scholars question the depth of the EU's environmental commitment and point to serious contradictions between its progressive stance on issues such as climate change and biosafety and its relatively weaker role in areas such as fisheries and agriculture. Others highlight major contradictions between the EU's commitment to sustainability and its other normative principles, such as economic freedom and trade liberalization (Zito 2005). Scholars working within a political economy perspective also point to the close links between domestic interest constellations and European foreign environmental policy, which determine the degree to which the EU assumes a global leadership role (Falkner 2007). In this view, green normative power is better seen as a strategy of regulatory export, with the drive towards the global adoption of European environmental regulations serving as much an economic as an environmental interest.

Inside-out: Domestic Sources of Foreign Environmental Policy

Why do states pursue environmental objectives as part of their foreign policy? The answers to this question fall into two broad categories: *inside-out* explanations that focus on the role of domestic factors in shaping foreign policy; and *outside-in* explanations that reverse the domestic logic and trace a state's stance in global environmental politics back to its position within the structure of the international system (for an overview of theories of foreign environmental policy, see Barkdull and Harris 2002). This section deals with the former, while the next section discusses the latter perspective.

Inside-out explanations can be subdivided into two broad strands: societal explanations that focus on the role of public opinion and competition between domestic interest groups; and statist explanations that identify the sources of green foreign policy within the institutional structures of the state. Their main difference concerns the extent to which the state, and specific actors within state institutions, can be assumed to be autonomous in deciding a state's foreign environmental policy.

Societal Interests: Environmental NGOs and Business

The societal perspective adopts a bottom-up logic to foreign policy-making in which the state is assumed to be a largely neutral actor that mostly responds to the demands and pressures arising from domestic politics.

This perspective is intuitively convincing if we consider long-term historical trends, which suggest that a state's conduct in international environmental politics broadly reflects domestic societal values and preferences. That societies that place greater emphasis on environmental protection tend to pursue a proactive foreign environmental policy can be seen from the creation of the international environmental agenda in the 1970s. The countries behind the first UN environment conference in 1972 – mainly the Scandinavian countries and the United States – were the first to experience a dramatic rise in domestic environmental awareness and green political campaigning. Environmental concerns still play a prominent role in Scandinavian societies today, and countries such as Norway, Sweden, and Denmark are noted for their green diplomacy. In contrast, a declining societal interest in environmental issues in America has coincided with a retreat of the USA from an agenda-setting role in global environmental affairs and a transfer of global environmental leadership from the USA to the EU (Kelemen and Vogel 2010; Vogel 2012). Even if the causal link between public opinion and foreign policy is not a straightforward one, long-term trends in public opinion provide at least a partial explanation of broader shifts in foreign environmental policy.

One of the factors that help explain the transmission of public opinion into governmental policy is the level of political mobilization and organization of environmental interests. The existence of a strong and highly organized environmental movement is of relevance here as it can directly play into electoral politics, either by shaping the electoral preferences of swing voters or by giving rise to the formation of green parties that compete directly in parliamentary elections. During the 1980s, for example, West Germany's Green Party gained in political prominence. As it won a growing number of seats in national and regional parliaments, other parties were forced to take environmental concerns more seriously. Ever since the arrival of the Greens in national politics, Germany has been in a leading international position on issues such as climate change, and particularly so after the Green Party was able to form a coalition government with the Social Democrats in 1998 (Hatch 2007).

To be sure, the strength of the environmental movement alone is no reliable indicator of a country's likely stance on specific environmental issues. For example, America is home to well-organized and experienced environmental campaign groups, but the USA has turned its back on environmental multilateralism and has failed to ratify most of the international environmental treaties negotiated since the 1992 Rio Earth Summit (Brunnée 2004). Environmental interests compete with other powerful domestic interests that may oppose ambitious environmental policies. It is thus in the interplay between pro- and anti-regulatory interests that we can find the strongest explanation of how domestic forces drive a country's foreign environmental policy. Much of the research literature has therefore focused on the competition between environmental campaigners and business groups as the key domestic constituencies of global environmental politics.

That environmental campaigners should call for their government to take a lead on global environmental issues is unsurprising. But that environmentalists could find allies in the business community in their push for international environmental regulation is a phenomenon that requires some explanation. Although business actors have traditionally resisted calls for stricter regulation, whether at national or international level, the field of business lobbying has changed dramatically since the 1980s, when global business groups first came to accept a greater responsibility for environmental protection (Falkner 2008: 5–7). Faced with strong regulatory pressure at home and international competition from countries with low environmental standards, some business groups have opted for a strategy of regulatory export to create a global level playing field or gain a first mover advantage.

It is the competitive dynamic of an increasingly global marketplace that has led certain business groups to join forces with environmental groups in pushing for international treaties such as the Montreal Protocol (Benedick 1991; Falkner 2008: chapter 3) or resisting international agreements such as the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) (Gallagher 2004). As DeSombre (2000) argues in her study of US foreign environmental policy, domestic support from environmentalists and industry groups has been a critical push factor behind various attempts by US administrations to internationalize domestic regulation. DeSombre's analysis supports the broader conclusion that once an environmentally progressive country has introduced new environmental regulations within its own jurisdiction, environmental campaigners will usually support the extension of those standards to the global level. Once industry groups start calling for regulatory export to extend domestic regulation to their competitors, a so-called "Baptists-and-bootleggers-coalition" becomes the key driving force behind the government's foreign environmental policy. Similar patterns of domestically driven attempts to internationalize national environmental regulations have been observed in a number of contexts, most notably in the EU (Pollack 1997; Darst and Dawson 2008; Kelemen 2010).

As the role of business actors has received more attention in environmental scholarship (see Chapter 17 in this volume), the divisions within the business community have come under closer scrutiny (Falkner 2008). Business is rarely united in its stance on international environmental regulation, and divisions between different sectors or companies provide opportunities for environmental campaigners and state actors to create pro-regulatory alliances with progressive business forces. The political space that so-called business conflict creates has been recognized more widely in the literature. Students of social movements, for example, have identified various "industry opportunity structures" (Schurman 2004) that empower activists in their effort to build political support for specific regulatory approaches. Similarly, state actors themselves may seek to mobilize supportive industry interests to bolster their case for international environmental policies. Interaction between domestic interest groups and governments is thus not a one-way street but involves state actors themselves seeking to shape the domestic basis of foreign policy.

Statist Approaches

In contrast to societal models of foreign environmental policy which give domestic political actors causal priority, statist approaches place greater emphasis on the (semi-)autonomous role played by state actors themselves. Societal explanations

may dominate the literature on environmental politics, with but a small number of statist scholars have demonstrated how an exclusive focus on pluralist interest competition tends to underplay the significant degree of policy choice that actors within the state have. Statist explanations take on different forms, ranging from a focus on presidential leadership and executive–legislative relations to the study of intra-bureaucratic power struggles and the role of policy ideas and ideologies (see Barkdull and Harris 2002: 79–84).

Hopgood's (1998) study of America's engagement with global environmental affairs is one of the defining examples of a statist explanation of foreign environmental policy. Surveying the period from the 1972 Stockholm Conference to the 1992 Rio Summit, Hopgood shows how key members of successive US administrations played a central role in determining US foreign policy objectives. Although exposed to persistent lobbying by environmentalists and other interest groups, state officials enjoyed a considerable degree of autonomy in developing diplomatic strategies. Indeed, international environmental politics provided "an enhanced opportunity for officials to turn their preferences into policy" (Hopgood 1998: 222). Rather than merely responding to the policy input from domestic interest groups, these senior executive branch officials used societal actors as a power resource and support base in their political struggles within the core state institutions. Key individuals such as Russell Train thus acted as pivotal policy entrepreneurs, exerting influence over official policy that is independent from the strength of environmental lobbying in American politics (Barkdull 2001).

To some extent, the statist perspective challenges the view that global environmental politics is increasingly shaped by non-state actors. Environmental campaign groups and scientists may be influential in creating awareness and concern for environmental problems, but state actors remain central to the formulation of environmental policy and the creation and implementation of multilateral environmental agreements (Economy and Schreurs 1997: 3). Yet, it would be too simplistic to portray this debate as a zero-sum game in which state and non-state actors compete for control over international policy-making. Instead, more recent scholarship suggests a focus on emerging linkages – and potential synergies – between societal and state actors in shaping international environmental cooperation.

One such strand of research has focused on the growing internationalization of environmental politics, with domestic and international processes more closely intertwined and the state operating in a complex field of overlapping networks of actors. As Economy and Schreurs (1997: 2) argue, "[t]his internationalization of environmental politics is transforming the relationship among actors within and among states . . . Agenda setting, policy formulation, and implementation are becoming increasingly internationalized." States may remain in a powerful position to shape the international agenda, but international actors and institutions "reach down into the state to set domestic policy agendas and influence policy formation and implementation processes" (Economy and Schreurs 1997: 6). Increasingly dense vertical linkages between domestic environmental politics, state institutions, and the field of global environmental governance are thus reshaping established patterns of policy-making within the state and beyond (Busch *et al.* 2012).

Another strand has focused on the growth in horizontal environmental policy networks that connect state actors across national boundaries. In *A New World Order* (2004), Slaughter points to the growth in transgovernmental networks, comprising

environmental regulators from different jurisdictions that form "clubs" of experts with the purpose of enhancing the flow of policy-relevant information, assisting with the enforcement of national laws, and promoting the international harmonization of laws and regulations. In this way, state actors have responded to the challenges of an increasingly interdependent world in which states can no longer come up with effective policy responses on their own. Such networks increasingly include non-state actors too, for example in standard-setting organizations with a mixed membership such as the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) and public–private partnerships that promote sustainable development objectives (Prakash and Potoski 2006; Pattberg *et al.* 2012).

Outside-in: The Greening of the International System

An alternative view of the relationship between states and environmental politics places greater emphasis on the international system and its impact on state identity and behavior. In this outside-in perspective, foreign environmental policy is explained with the help of international power structures or the evolution of international norms. It also considers the role that policy transfer, diffusion, and learning play in the spread of green practices thoughout the international system.

Power and Hegemony

Power-based explanations of state behavior focus on the distribution of power in the international system. Although they have played a fairly marginal role in the study of international environmental politics (Barkdull and Harris 2002: 70), the contours of a structural approach can be detected in discussions of the role of hegemonic states in advancing the international environmental agenda (Falkner 2005). To employ the concept of hegemony in a meaningful way in this context, one has to move beyond narrow conceptions of military power and consider its economic and political dimensions, but also broader questions of the social construction of legitimate hegemonic power (Clark 2011: chapter 9). Borrowing ideas from hegemonic stability theory, some scholars have pointed to the leadership provided by the United States in the creation of international environmental institutions and agreements, particularly in the 1970s and 1980s. Hegemons may not be able to impose environmental accords, but their leadership can help foster international consensus on certain regulatory solutions (Young 1989: 88).

Environmental leadership can take many forms, such as injecting policy entrepreneurship into negotiations, developing regulatory blueprints that facilitate international policy diffusion, and using economic incentives and sanctions to encourage international cooperation (Young 1991; Vogel 1997; Ovodenko and Keohane 2012). Hegemony is neither a necessary nor sufficient condition for such leadership, but powerful states are usually in a better position to succeed in shaping the international environmental agenda in this way. Environmental leadership has thus been attributed to the United States until at least the 1992 Rio Earth Summit (DeSombre 2000: 5), while its absence in American foreign policy has been noted widely since (Paarlberg 1999; Falkner 2005). More recently, the EU has increasingly been credited with exercising global environment leadership. Its economic might as

the world's largest import market has given it the clout to push for higher environmental standards internationally, whether through multilateral negotiation or *de facto* standard-setting based on the "trading-up" mechanism (Vogel 1997; Falkner 2007; Kelemen 2010). But questions persist about the EU's ability to shape the global agenda. Apart from questions about its coherence and capability as an international actor (Bretherton and Vogler 2005), observers of multilateral processes such as the climate negotiations have highlighted the EU's lack of clout in situations where multiple great powers resist more ambitious environmental objectives and issue complexity makes it difficult to find mutually agreeable solutions (Haug and Berkhout 2010).

The experience with American and European leadership in international environmental affairs raises broader questions about the explanatory value of power-based theories, and particularly hegemonic stability theory. The first question concerns the correlation between a state's hegemonic position and its foreign environmental policy stance. As the American case shows, the fact of preponderant power does not in itself determine whether a hegemonic state is likely to promote or hinder international environmental governance. Throughout the last four decades, the US has pursued multilateral *and* unilateral strategies and has supported *and* blocked international environmental treaties. Hegemonic stability theory cannot explain the particular policy choices that a hegemon makes, a key limitation of structural approaches that has been noted in other areas too (Lake 1993: 477).

Furthermore, structural theory provides only a first-cut explanation of the likely outcome of international environmental bargaining. In the environmental field, in particular, hegemonic power is of only limited use in producing successful outcomes in a multilateral setting (Mitchell 2003). Even when hegemons seek to advance global environmental protection, it is far from clear how they could "force" other states to agree to more ambitious environmental policies and implement them domestically. The sheer scale and complexity of global environmental destruction makes hegemonic power a blunt and mostly ineffective tool. Moreover, where hegemons act as laggards or veto powers, they may not always succeed in preventing other groups of states from developing international environmental agreements. Several instances can be cited that suggest that environmental regime-building is possible without, and even against the interests of, the hegemon: for example, the 1982 Convention on the Law of the Sea (Young 1994: 117), the 1997 Kyoto Protocol on climate change, and the 2000 Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety (Falkner 2007).

The analytical shortcomings of hegemony-based explanations notwithstanding, power theory remains of vital importance to our understanding of the international politics of the environment. Imbalances of power between developed and developing countries have shaped the way in which international society has addressed global environmental problems. They have ensured that Northern environmental interests usually end up being prioritized on the international agenda. More recently, the rise of emerging powers and new coalitions such as the BRIC or BASIC countries have left their mark on international negotiations. New veto players (e.g. China, India) have emerged, as has become evident in the climate change negotiations. At the same time, established powers such as the USA have been able to challenge some of the key elements of the existing climate regime, leading to a reinterpretation of the main equity norms ("common but differentiated responsibilities") and a corresponding shift in the international bargaining dynamic (Hurrell and Sengupta 2012).

Green Norms in International Society

A different outside-in perspective on foreign environmental policy is provided by those that focus on the emergence of environmental norms in international society. This perspective draws broadly on social theories of international relations, particularly constructivism, historical sociology, and English School theory. It sees environmentalism as a potentially transformative force that affects the normative structure of international relations. According to this logic, environmental norms become embedded in the social structure of the international system and contribute to the ongoing redefinition of state interests and identities towards greater inclusion of environmental sustainability concerns (Falkner 2012).

The notion that the international system is undergoing a process of greening has been put forward by several authors. Sociologists associated with the Stanford School have advanced a world society perspective on the rise of global environmentalism and argue that a world culture based on scientific rationality, combined with environmental mobilization and organization across boundaries, has led to the emergence of a "world environmental regime" (Meyer *et al.* 1997). In similar fashion, Deudney (1993) provides a functionalist account of how growing awareness of the global environmental crisis is ushering in a new era of international cooperation, based on international institution building and the growth of post-national cosmopolitan values. In both these accounts, environmentalism is seen as a transformative force that ends up transcending the states system. States increasingly assume the responsibility of promoting global environmental objectives, but it is the transnational forces of scientific rationality and cosmopolitanism that are at the root of the global political transformation.

In contrast, writers within the English School tradition locate the political change that the rise of environmental values brings about within the society of states. In *The Global Covenant* (2000), for example, Jackson identifies the new environmental ethic that environmentalists promote as the source of a new guardianship norm in international society that is explicitly addressed to states and their key representatives. State leaders have become "chief trustees or stewards of the planet . . . because they have the authority and power to address the problem" (Jackson 2000: 176). In similar vein, Buzan (2004) speaks of environmental stewardship as a new primary institution of international society, alongside more established institutions such as sovereignty, territoriality, diplomacy, and the market.

How well established is this new international environmental norm, or primary institution in English School parlance? As Hurrell reminds us, while

> the ecological challenge has indeed been one of the most important factors contributing to the changes that have taken place in the changing normative structure of international society . . . there is a real danger that transformationist claims overstate the scale of the changes that have actually taken place (Hurrell 2007: 236).

Even though environmentalism pushes global politics beyond the limits of state-centrism, "there is little chance of escaping from the centrality of the state" (2007: 235). It is therefore critical to understand the barriers to deep-seated change in the normative structure of international society. To have a lasting effect, environmental values need to permeate what Reus-Smit calls the constitutional order of international

relations. They need to change the very purpose of the state, its *raison d'être*, which until recently has been defined by a focus on industrial growth and the concomitant exploitation of natural resources. Modern environmentalism as it arose in the late twentieth century started to challenge this industrial purpose but, as Reus-Smit warns, the results of this "ideological reevaluation . . . remain unclear" (Reus-Smit 1996: 119).

What is becoming clear, however, is that the greening of international society has left distinctive traces in the behavior of states. At a minimum, states have come to accept a basic commitment to environmental multilateralism as a procedural norm. Environmental protection has become a widely accepted concern in foreign policy, and all major powers now participate in international environmental conferences and negotiations as a matter of routine. In what could be considered an "environmental citizenship" norm, "states are now expected to participate in the ever-expanding scope of environmental standard-setting and treaty-making" (Falkner 2012: 517). It is also becoming clear that the emerging norm of environmental responsibility has left its mark on existing international norms, or primary institutions, even though the extent of their greening remains a matter of debate. National sovereignty is being reinterpreted and the purpose of the nation-state is beginning to shift "from environmental exploiter and territorial defender to that of environmental protector, trustee, or public custodian of the planetary commons" (Eckersley 2004: 209). International law has undergone a gradual evolution to include more far-reaching and innovative legal concepts and approaches, such as the precautionary principle and the harm prevention norm. And the market principle is being redefined to include corrective state interventions that seek to internalize the often hidden environmental costs of market transactions. Yet, the transformation of the foundational principles of international society is far from complete and involves ongoing processes of normative challenge and accommodation that often leave environmental responsibility as the weaker norm (Falkner 2012).

Policy Diffusion

A third strand of research on the greening of international relations focuses on the spread of specific policies and regulatory models throughout the international system. This perspective investigates horizontal and vertical processes of environmental policy diffusion between states and/or international organizations. It starts from the observation that states increasingly adopt policies and instruments developed elsewhere, whether or not they have agreed to be bound by international environmental treaties. Policy diffusion, learning, and transfer can thus be identified as mechanisms that help to bring about a convergence in state behavior even in the absence of a strong international environmental regime.

Recent scholarship has identified a number of cases of innovative environmental policy approaches being diffused from one country to another. For example, a majority of governments have adopted strategic approaches to long-term environmental planning and sustainable development over the last three decades (Jörgens 2004); eco-labels were first adopted in Germany in 1978 and spread to Scandinavia, the United States, and Japan in the 1980s, and later throughout the rest of Europe and to New Zealand and Australia (Kern *et al.* 2001); and energy taxation became

widely used in European countries despite the failure to create an EU-wide carbon tax in the early 1990s (Busch *et al.* 2005: 159).

The reasons behind the growth in policy diffusion are varied and complex, and scholarly debate continues on how best to explain this phenomenon. Some scholars point to a predominantly functionalist logic that is based on mimicry. In this perspective, governments that face similar environmental policy challenges copy the behavior of other governments that have developed innovative policy solutions and have shown some degree of success in implementing them. Under conditions of uncertainty over the consequences of policy choices, governments find it in their interest to adopt innovative policy models in order to reduce uncertainty and transaction costs (Ovodenko and Keohane 2012).

Others highlight the role that power plays in directing policy diffusion. Leading states that have invested political energy and incurred economic costs when establishing domestic environmental regulations may wish to see them adopted in other countries too, not least to ensure that their competitors operate under similar regulatory constraints and costs. The United States and the EU in particular have actively sought to spread their regulatory models worldwide, setting off processes of regulatory competition and polarization (Bernauer 2003; Drezner 2007). Yet other explanations focus on the ideational environment within which new policy ideas emerge, are adopted in one country, and then spread to other countries. Thus, the growing use of emissions trading schemes and self-regulatory agreements with industry reflects the popularity of a market-based approach to regulation since the 1980s (Bernstein 2001). Finally, domestic interest groups shape the pattern of policy diffusion by creating supportive environments for the adoption of new policies or vetoing their transfer if they oppose them (Falkner 2008; Meckling 2011).

In most cases, a combination of the above factors will be at play in international diffusion processes. To take the example of carbon emissions trading, mimicry and path dependence were involved in the US administration's initial support for emissions trading during the Kyoto Protocol negotiations, following the successful implementation of emissions trading as part of the US sulfur dioxide reduction program. That the USA succeeded in embedding emissions trading in the Kyoto Protocol's flexibility instruments, against European and developing countries' initial resistance, is more a reflection of the strength of American power than any form of international policy learning. Thereafter, the EU developed its own carbon emissions system as part of its commitment under the Kyoto Protocol, building in part on the institutional experiences of BP's and the UK's pilot trading schemes. Mimicry has again played an important role in the diffusion of emissions trading from Europe to other parts of the world that are seeking to learn from European experiences in designing a cost-efficient regulatory approach to carbon emission reductions (Damro and Méndez 2003; Meckling 2011).

Conclusion

This chapter has provided an overview of recent scholarship on the role of the state in international environmental politics. It is clear from the above discussion that, despite the many challenges that the global ecological crisis poses to the capacity and legitimacy of state-based environmental governance, global environmental policy

will need to continue to focus on how states and international society shape global environmental strategies. States are not going to disappear any time soon, nor are non-state actors likely to replace the state and its institutions with alternative global governance mechanisms. Understanding the potential for innovative state-centric policy approaches thus remains of critical importance to any discussion of how to organize a global response to the environmental crisis.

Recent scholarship has identified several ways in which domestic actors seek to influence states' foreign policy on environmental issue. A domestic politics-based perspective that focuses on the role of public opinion and the interplay between environmental and business interest groups offers a powerful explanation of foreign environmental policy. Environmentally progressive states often pursue a strategy of regulatory export, with key domestic constituencies pushing for the internationalization of domestic regulation. Building grassroots support for a proactive green diplomacy is thus an important element in any strategy to build support for ambitious international environmental policy. Especially in democracies but increasingly also in countries with autocratic regimes, the roots of strong environmental policy abroad are to be found in domestic politics.

However, despite the important influence of societal and business actors, the state cannot simply be seen as a neutral arbiter of domestic interests. Instead, the institutional structures of the state and the interests and ideas of key actors within core state institutions can often determine the direction of foreign environmental policy. This statist perspective plays a somewhat marginal role in the research literature but deserves closer attention. Proactive and charismatic state leaders have helped to shape environmental agendas and promote progressive policies at the domestic and international level. There is room for political leadership by individuals in the greening of state policies, even if domestic and international constraints restrict the scope for such forms of political agency.

The constraints on foreign environmental policy are most clearly felt when we consider the international political environment within which states operate. The absence of strong and centralized international institutions that could enforce environmental rules and compel individual states to comply with them must count as one of the chief obstacles for greater global environmental sustainability. In an anarchic international system, power differences and shifts in the international power balance inevitably constrain state behavior. But unlike in other areas of global policy-making, power theory provides only a limited explanation of the emergence and direction of international environmental politics. Great powers (and hegemons in particular) can be influential in putting environmental concerns on the international agenda, but power alone has rarely achieved successful outcomes in international environmental negotiations.

Social theories of international relations add a different perspective on the interaction between states and the international system. In this perspective, the rise of global environmentalism contributes to the ongoing transformation in the normative structure that underpins international society. We can thus identify a gradual "greening" of international relations that manifests itself in the growing acceptance of key environmental norms and of the need to engage in international processes of environmental regime-building. States now recognize both a substantive commitment to environmental sustainability and a procedural commitment to environmental

multilateralism. They learn from one another and diffuse innovative policies through international and transgovernmental networks. In this sense, international society has embarked on a profound process of normative expansion and transformation, even if this process is ongoing and incomplete. Further research is needed to develop a better understanding of the forces that can promote this process and of the conflict that arises between the emerging norm of environmental responsibility and existing norms of international society.

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