

SANNA KOPRA

With Great Power Comes Great Responsibility?

China and the international practice
of climate responsibility





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ACADEMIC DISSERTATION

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SANNA KOPRA

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For Aino and Senni

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In Numminen, 14 September 2016

Sanna Kopra

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Abstract

In recent years, there has been much talk about responsibility in world politics in general, and in international climate politics in particular. China's "rise" has also fuelled the debate on international responsibility as both politicians and academics argue and speculate about whether it will represent a threat or opportunity for the world. Political debate over China's responsibility has been especially heated in international climate negotiations where China has often been accused of "being irresponsible" and "blocking progress". China, for its part, has persistently highlighted its developing country status and portrayed itself by presenting an image of a responsible developing country during international climate negotiations. However, "responsibility" is a highly vague concept, and it is not very clear what it means in world politics. What does it mean to be responsible? Who is to judge responsibility in international society? To whom are states responsible and for what? What do states have to do, or refrain from doing, in order to be and be seen as responsible members of international society?

This study problematizes many meanings and dimensions of responsibility in the context of international climate politics from the theoretical perspectives of the English School of international relations. It argues that responsibility is an intentional social *practice* in which actors define who is responsible for what and to whom. Like all responsibilities, climate responsibility is *constructed* in social interaction; it is not given or static but it has evolved in social contexts that occur when states present, debate and apply definitions of responsibility. Due to its rising international status, China is undoubtedly an important participant in any practice of international responsibility, but in the context of climate responsibility, China's role is especially central both theoretically and empirically. Therefore, this study investigates the generation and evolution of the international practice of climate responsibility and analyses China's interpretations of and contribution to it. In particular, it studies how China has shaped the evolution of international climate practices and how international climate practices have shaped China's domestic practices. The approach of the study is twofold: the theoretical discussion portrays a picture of the kind of multidimensional responsibilities states ought to shoulder; the empirical parts look at what kind of climate responsibilities states – China in

particular – do shoulder in reality. In addition, the study contributes to the English School’s continuing debate on the definitions and roles of institutions in international society, using the lenses of the so-called “practice turn of social sciences”. It argues that the practice approach can develop conceptualizations of both the primary and the secondary institutions within the English School.

The study concludes that climate responsibility is an emerging primary institution of international society, and that the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, which is the most important secondary institution related to climate governance, functions as a bridging practice between it and the everyday politics of international society. Clearly, climate responsibility remains only an emerging primary institution as there are still wide disputes about its rules and because it clashes with established institutions. A critical question is whether or not climate responsibility will develop as a new “standard of civilization” that defines and validates the practices of “civilized” members of international society – as well as world society – in the future. Crucially, China plays an increasingly important role in this process. Although the referent objects of China’s climate responsibility are chiefly the party-state and the Chinese nation and not humankind or the environment *per se*, China no longer focuses only on national responsibilities. Thus, it seems that China is increasingly identifying itself as a great power, which by definition comes with great responsibilities.

Tiivistelmä

Kansainvälisessä politiikassa, ja erityisesti kansainvälisessä ilmastopolitiikassa, on puhuttu viime vuosina paljon vastuullisuudesta. Kiinan ”nousu” on kiihdyttänyt keskustelua, koska sekä poliitikot että tutkijat väittelevät ja spekuloiivat, onko se uhka vai mahdollisuus maailmalle. Poliittinen väittely Kiinan vastuullisuudesta on erityisen kiivas kansainvälisissä ilmastoneuvotteluissa, joissa Kiinaa on usein syytetty ”vastuuttomuudesta” tai ”neuvotteluiden jarruttamisesta”. Kiina itse puolestaan on itsepintaisesti korostanut kehitysmaastatustaan ja rakentanut vastuullisen kehityksmaahan imagoa kansainvälisissä ilmastoneuvotteluissa. ”Vastuullisuus” on kuitenkin hyvin epäselvä käsite, eikä ole lainkaan selvää, mitä sillä maailmanpolitiikassa tarkoitetaan. Mitä tarkoittaa olla vastuullinen? Kuka arvioi vastuullisuutta kansainvälisessä yhteisössä? Kenelle valtiot ovat vastuullisia ja mistä? Mitä valtioiden tulee tehdä, tai pidättäytyä tekemästä, ollakseen, tai näyttääkseen, vastuullisilta kansainvälisen yhteisön jäseniltä?

Tämä tutkimus tarkastelee vastuullisuuden monia merkityksiä ja ulottuvuuksia kansainvälisessä ilmastopolitiikassa kansainvälisten suhteiden englantilaisen koulukunnan näkökulmasta. Se väittää, että vastuullisuus on intentionaalinen sosiaalinen *käytänne*, joka määrittelee kuka on vastuussa mistä ja kenelle. Kuten kaikki vastuut, ilmastovastuullisuus on *konstruoitu* sosiaalisessa vuorovaikutuksessa: se ei ole staattista tai annettua, vaan se on muotoutunut sosiaalisessa kanssakäymisessä, kun valtiot esittelevät, väittelevät ja soveltavat vastuullisuuden määritelmiä. Nousevan kansainvälisen statuksensa vuoksi Kiina on epäilemättä merkittävä osallistuja missä tahansa kansainvälisen vastuullisuuden käytänteessä, mutta ilmastovastuullisuuden yhteydessä sen rooli on erityisen keskeinen sekä teoreettisesti että empirisesti. Sen vuoksi tämä tutkimus tarkastelee ilmastovastuullisuuden kansainvälisen käytänteen muotoutumista ja analysoi Kiinan tulkintoja ilmastovastuullisuudesta ja osallistumista käytänteen kehittymiseen. Tutkimus on erityisen kiinnostunut siitä, miten Kiina on vaikuttanut kansainvälisten ilmastokäytänteiden muotoutumiseen, ja vastaavasti kuinka kansainväliset ilmastokäytännöt ovat vaikuttaneet Kiinan kansallisiin käytänteisiin. Tutkimuksen lähestymistapa aiheeseen on kahtalainen: työn teoreettinen keskustelu kuvaa, millaisia moniulotteisia vastuuta valtioilla on, ja työn empirinen osuus

tarkastelee millaista ilmastovastuullisuutta valtiot, ja etenkin Kiina, kantavat todellisuudessa. Lisäksi tutkimus osallistuu englantilaisen koulukunnan meneillä olevaan keskusteluun kansainvälisen yhteisön instituutioiden määritelmistä ja roolista niin sanotun yhteiskuntatieteiden ”käytännesuuntauksen” näkökulmasta. Se väittää, että käytännesuuntaus voi olla avuksi kehitettäessä englantilaisen koulukunnan primääri- ja sekundääri-instituutioiden käsitteitä.

Tutkimus päättelee, että ilmastovastuullisuus on kansainvälisen yhteisön nouseva primääri-instituutio, ja Yhdistyneiden Kansakuntien ilmastomuutosta koskeva puitesopimus, joka on ilmastohallinnan keskeisin sekundaari-instituutio, toimii silloittavana käytänteenä sen ja kansainvälisen yhteisön jokapäiväisen politiikan välillä. Ilmastovastuullisuus on selvästikin edelleen vain nouseva primääri-instituutio, koska sen säännöistä on edelleen paljon kiistaa ja koska se on ristiriidassa olemassa olevien instituutioiden kanssa. Tärkeä kysymys kuitenkin on, voiko ilmastovastuullisuudesta kehittyä uusi ”sivilisaation moraalikäsitelmä”, joka määrittelee ja vahvistaa ”sivistyneet” kansainvälisen yhteisön ja kansalaisyhteiskunnan jäsenet tulevaisuudessa. Kiinalla on yhä tärkeämpi rooli tässä prosessissa. Vaikka Kiinan vastuullisuuden kohde on edelleen pääasiassa kommunistinen puolue, valtio ja Kiinan kansa, eikä ihmiskunta tai ympäristö sinänsä, Kiina ei enää keskity vain pelkästään kansallisiin vastuihinsa. Vaikuttaa siltä, että Kiina identifioi itsensä lisääntyvässä määrin suurvallaksi, mikä tuo sille samalla suurta vastuuta.

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Abbreviations

APEC	Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation
APP	Asia-Pacific Partnership on Clean Development and Climate
BASIC	Brazil, South Africa, India, and China
CBDR	Common But Differentiated Responsibilities
CCAN	China Civil Climate Action Network
CCP	Chinese Communist Party
CDM	Clean Development Management
CO ₂	Carbon dioxide
COP	Conference of Parties
CSS	Carbon dioxide capture and storage
EU	European Union
ES	English School
GDP	Gross domestic product
GHG	Greenhouse gas
INC	Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee
INDC	Intended Nationally Determined Contribution
IPCC	Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
IR	International Relations
LMDC	Like-Minded Developing Countries on Climate Change
MEF	Major Economies Forum on Energy and Climate
MRV	Measurable, Reportable and Verifiable
NAMAs	Nationally Appropriate Mitigation Actions
NDRC	National Development and Reform Commission
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
P5	Permanent Five
PPP	Polluter Pays Principle
PRC	People's Republic of China
ROC	Republic of China
UK	United Kingdom

UN	United Nations
UNCED	UN Conference on Environment and Development
UNCHE	United Nations Conference on the Human Environment
UNEP	United Nations Environmental Programme
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
US	United States
USD	US Dollar
WWII	World War II

1 Introduction

With great power comes great responsibility.
Spiderman

There has been much talk about responsibility in world politics in recent years. In particular, the allocation of responsibility has been a central issue in international climate negotiations where “Common But Differentiated Responsibilities” (CBDR) has been agreed on as a guiding principle. Clearly, “responsibility” is a highly vague concept, and it is not very clear what it means in world politics. What is responsibility? To whom states are responsible and for what? Who is to judge responsibility in international society? What do states have to do, or refrain from doing, in order to be and be seen as responsible members of international society? In this study, I problematize many meanings and dimensions of responsibility in the context of international climate politics from the theoretical perspectives of the English School (ES) of International Relations (IR). I argue that responsibility is a *practice* and *climate responsibility* is an emerging primary institution of international society. Like all responsibilities, climate responsibility is *constructed* in social interaction; it is not given or static but it has evolved in a social context where states present, debate and apply definitions of responsibility.

Responsibility has also become a vogue word when speculating whether the “rise”¹ of China² will represent a threat to or opportunity for the world.³ There is

¹ Despite its common usage, this is actually a misnomer: China’s “re-emergence” would be a more accurate description.

² In this study, I deliberately use “China” and “the People’s Republic of China” (PRC) interchangeably. I am also aware that there is no one China: China is not a monolithic actor but it is represented by a constellation of different private and public actors with competing interests, values and identity conceptions. Ultimately, China is not even a nation-state but rather a civilization-state (see, for example, Jacques 2009). Notwithstanding that, I take a state-centric approach in this study, thus “China” refers to the party-state: it is primarily represented by the central government and the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), which are certainly more or less one and the same. Again, this does not mean that I would not agree with Robert Jackson (2000) who has criticized political scientists for speaking of “states” although states do not exist or take actions as such. States and governments are always represented by “statespeople”, human beings who act on behalf their respective state: presi-

extensive body of academic literature on whether or not China is, or will become, a responsible player in world politics.⁴ Political debate over China's responsibility has been especially heated in international climate negotiations where China has often been accused of "being irresponsible" and "blocking progress".⁵ Yet, academic research on China's climate policy has largely focused on China's contribution to international climate negotiations, China's climate policy decision-making process, China's national interests in climate negotiations and China's responsibility for causing climate change.⁶ China's policies have mainly been evaluated in the context of Western interests and expectations and not enough attention has been paid to China's own notions of responsibility in international (climate) politics: in what terms does the Chinese government consider itself responsible and for what, to whom and why?⁷ To fill this gap, I study China's evolving notions of climate responsibility and investigate China's contribution to the evolution of the international practice of climate responsibility from the perspective of ES.

To some extent, China's rise can be seen as a normal change in the international order and hence "only" a factor in shaping the diplomatic practices for negotiating procedures and regulative rules on specific international issue areas. However, I presuppose that China's rising great power status and increasing engagement in international practices will certainly shape contemporary international order and generate the transformation of international practices. China is relevant for the discussion of any practices of international responsibility because its rise may open the way to more profound changes in international society as there are "deep cultural differences about what societies traditionally have considered just".⁸ In the context of climate responsibility, China's role is especially central both theoretically and empirically. As China is now the world's largest carbon emitter, it presents a tremendous challenge to climate change mitigation and human security globally. China's engagement in international climate politics is undoubtedly imperative:

dents, ministers, and other agents and officials. I kindly request that readers accept these simplifications which allow us meaningfully analyse China's practices of responsibility in international society.

³ See Deng 2006 for a comprehensive review of the evolution of the "China threat theory", the Chinese interpretations of it and China's political and rhetorical responses to it.

⁴ See Zoellick 2005; Gill 2007; Gill et al. 2007; and Xia 2001.

⁵ See, for example, Lynas 2009; Miliband 2009; Porter 2009 and Vidal 2009.

⁶ See, for example, Ella 2016; Gong 2011; Harris 2011; Harris & Yu 2009; Marks 2010; Moore 2011; Lewis 2007 and Yu 2008.

⁷ With the exceptions of Zhang & Austin 2001; Scott 2010 and Yeophantong 2013; see also Chen Z. 2009, Chen 2012; Chan 2006; Clark 2014 and Zhao 2013.

⁸ Watson 1982, 44.

without its participation, any global effort to combat climate change is going to fail. At the same time, China is still a developing country, which raises various political and ethical questions about the expectations of China's agency in international climate politics, such as issues of international justice and the allocation of responsibility.

China undoubtedly plays a key role in how international society defines and distributes state and especially great power responsibilities now and in the future. That is why I employ and combine the concepts of state responsibility⁹ and great power management in order to develop the ES idea of responsible international citizenship in the context of international climate politics. Both concepts are central for understanding China's role in international climate politics. However, both are also very fuzzy in nature and difficult to measure or define unambiguously. I take it for granted that states – and individuals – do have ethical responsibilities¹⁰, and I find it more interesting and more important to analyse how such responsibilities are constructed in practice. The purpose of this study is therefore not to assess China's responsibility in any moral or legal terms, nor do I intend to attempt to find a moral basis for responsibility in international society in general.¹¹ Besides, who would be in a position to judge whether China or any other state is responsible? Therefore, I am not going to use criteria developed by a philosophical or legal theory to provide the reader with a list of qualifications that would demonstrate and assess whether China is a responsible actor in international climate politics or what it should do in order to be responsible.

What I will do is argue that “responsibility” is always a situational ethics and it must be defined within particular historic events.¹² China's climate responsibility can thus only be researched in the context of international practices. I define climate responsibility as an intentional social practice in which it is defined who

⁹ Note that I hereby refer only to responsibilities of sovereign states. In contrast to this view, Miller 2007 speaks of national responsibility as he wants to emphasize that stateless nations hold responsibilities as well.

¹⁰ See Erskine 2003 and Mayer & Vogt 2006.

¹¹ Regarding to these perspectives in the context of the EU's responsibility, see Mayer & Vogt 2006 and Szigeti 2006.

¹² “International norms cannot be stipulated by academic theorists sitting in their university offices” as Jackson (1996, 173) points out. Thus, “they can only be disclosed by the actions of the particular people involved in that sphere of human activity, the most important of whom still are public officials”.

(not what) is responsible for what and to whom.¹³ This is situational ethics as it is constructed in a situation that is created by the states involved and through their policies, ideas, activities, interests, desires, values, beliefs, concerns, convictions, know-how, etc.¹⁴ Therefore, climate responsibility can be and is contested and transformed. Participants in such practices shape them through their words and actions, thus indicating whether or not they accept a particular definition of climate responsibility, for instance.¹⁵

In this study, I study the generation and evolution of the international practice of climate responsibility and analyse China's interpretations of it and contributions to it. Hence, the main research question of the study is: "*If climate responsibility comprises an international practice, what kind of practice is it and how has China influenced its content and development process?*" This question can be broken down into two sub-questions:

How is responsibility debated, defined and distributed in international climate politics and how should it be?

How have China's leaders throughout the different generations perceived their responsibilities and how have these notions guided and justified China's participation in international climate politics?

As the questions illustrate, this study is normative in both of its meanings: The theoretical discussion portrays a picture of the kind of responsibilities states ought to shoulder, while the empirical parts of the study look at the kinds of responsibilities states – in this case, China – actually shoulder. Although I investigate international climate practices as social interactions in their own right, I also address the weaknesses and strengths of contemporary climate practices. Hence, this study contains a strong policy aspect: the last chapter makes recommendations on how international climate practices should be improved and strengthened in the future. In theoretical terms, I intend to contribute to the ongoing theoretical debate within the ES on the definitions and roles of institutions in international society by exploring the role of agency in institutional change. In particular, I aim to provide empirical observations which are needed "if

¹³ To some extent, this view is similar to Iris Marion Young's (2006) social connection model of responsibility, and particularly to the social theory of special responsibilities by Bukovansky et al. (2012).

¹⁴ Jackson 2000, 143.

¹⁵ See Bull 2002, 68–69.

an institutional project *à la* ES is to get off the ground”¹⁶ by examining the emergence of a new primary institution of international society, namely, climate responsibility. I assert that the practice approach can develop conceptualizations of both primary and secondary institutions within ES. Empirically, I study how China has shaped the evolution of international climate practices and how international climate practices have shaped China’s domestic practices. To contextualize China’s conduct and notions of responsibility, I explore China’s evolving ideas, identities and interests related to the responsibility of states for the environment.

1.1 Climate change and International Relations Theory

Climate change is not only a neutral, natural and scientific phenomenon, but a discursively created political problem that raises a wide range of moral questions about how humans respond to it.¹⁷ As it is a very complex and wide-ranging phenomena, climate change cuts across many dimensions of justice. One dimension of climate change is that it will be unevenly distributed. Poor countries are the most affected by climate change but they have the weakest capability for coping with climate change. Another dimension is historic because not all states are equally “guilty” for causing climate change. From a causal perspective it is clear that developed countries bear a special responsibility for reducing emissions due to their history of polluting the environment. However, they were not aware of the effects of climate change during the early stages of their industrialization. As they did not deliberately produce emissions, can we hold them responsible for their omissions? At the same time, the share of global greenhouse gas emissions released by developing countries, especially China, has increased and will surpass the emissions of developed countries during their development processes.

However, instead of moral questions, traditional IR study has aimed to discover whether or not and how and why states can cooperate to resolve global (environmental) problems. Realists argue that in an anarchic world there is little room for cooperation but always the risk of conflict. Due to the fact that global environmental change can be seen as a factor possibly leading to new kinds of insecurity and conflict, many IR studies investigate “environmental security”.¹⁸

¹⁶ Wilson 2012, 577.

¹⁷ See, in particular, Gardiner 2011 and Gardiner, Caney, Jamieson & Shue 2010.

¹⁸ See, for example, Trombetta 2008.

Liberals believe that international cooperation is possible and necessary in order to address global (environmental) challenges and to prevent conflict. Therefore, many neorealist and neoliberal institutionalists focus on “problem-solving”, especially on the potential role of “international regimes” for solving conflicts and motivating cooperation between states. They agree that, in general, states cooperate because “it is in their interest to do so”.¹⁹ Regime theorists have paid particular attention to international regimes as defined in terms of principles, norms, rules and decision-making procedures and mostly focused on the rational aspects of the decision-making of states.²⁰ However, they tend to take actors and their interests as given and say very little about the normative aspects of environmental politics.

There are also other reasons why regime theory is not an adequate theoretical framework for the study of climate responsibility. Although many important international treaties have been made during recent decades, there are three central problems why they have not been able to respond effectively to ecological challenges. First, international (environmental) agreements are compromises and do not provide an adequate basis for finishing, preventing or even decreasing environmental degradation. In other words, international regimes do not seem effective enough to secure effective international environmental protection. In addition, states usually avoid agreeing on legally binding obligations but prefer to commit to non-binding guidelines or principles because the failure to meet them does not expose them to tough international criticism. On some pressing issues, such as climate change, despite tens of years of negotiations, states have not been able to agree on a sufficiently appropriate international treaty, nor have they defined their respective responsibilities efficaciously. In particular, before the 2015 Paris Climate Conference it seemed that international society was failing or had already failed to solve the climate issue. Second, even if states manage to form international environmental agreements, compliance is usually not guaranteed. This invites the question: how can we ensure that states actually do implement and comply with the international rules they have agreed on?²¹ If they are not implemented, even the most serious international agreements remain just pieces of paper and fail to make a real difference. Third, they exclude the “question of why

¹⁹ Hurrell & Kingsbury 1992, 23.

²⁰ See, for example, Krasner 1983.

²¹ See Faure & Lefevere 2011 for a more specific account of the theory and practice of state compliance with international environmental treaties.

global environmental change occurs in the first place”²² and do not indicate that human beings are a part of the world’s ecosystems, not separate from them. On the one hand, human practices have significant environmental impacts; on the other hand, environmental changes have harmful impacts on human lives.²³

Constructivists have studied ideas as explanandum of social phenomena.²⁴ For the study of climate responsibility, this approach has much to recommend it because a significant part of international climate politics – or perhaps the most significant part – is “discourse and dialogue concerning what policies or activities, ours as well as theirs, are desirable or advisable or appropriate or acceptable or tolerable or prudent or politic or judicious or justified in the circumstances”.²⁵ Climate change discourses define the nature of the phenomena, i.e. the politically perceived causes and consequences and thus situate and control how we think about the issue and what kind of action we can take (or not take) in order to respond to them. However, discourse is only one half of responsibility: responsibility itself has to be demonstrated through action. Furthermore, constructivists do not consider the specific social contexts in which discourses and norms are produced. In particular, they tend to dismiss the role of (great) power in international society.

Although I draw inspiration from both regime theory’s work on international organizations and constructivists’ work on collective identities and discourses, my approach to climate responsibility differs profoundly from both. One reason for that is because they tend to frame environmental changes as technical and economic problems which have to be solved by collective interstate action. Hence, they fail to recognize that “states are themselves (or alternatively, the state’s system is itself, through generating certain practices on the part of states) prime environmental destroyers”.²⁶ Another more important reason is that they tend to treat norms and discourses as “independent variables” and problem-solving endeavours, such as international treaties and organizations, as “dependent variables”.²⁷ In other words, they assume that norms and discourses cause change

²² Paterson 2000, 3.

²³ Although most of environmental problems are caused by human practices, natural processes such as floods and earthquakes may also cause environmental changes and reduce biodiversity.

²⁴ See, for example, Wendt 1999 and Goldstein & Keohane 1993.

²⁵ Jackson 2000, 37.

²⁶ Paterson 2000, 2.

²⁷ Navari 2014, 209.

in a state's domestic and/or international behaviour via "socialization processes".²⁸ This approach assumes that norms, or practices, exist "out there" and states "internalize" them in their social interactions.

I believe the English School of International Relations offers fruitful standpoints for both the study of social structures and ethical considerations within IR.²⁹ It notes that the international balance of power and different historic events and cultural circumstances affect states and their conduct. It also emphasizes that international norms are continuously produced and reproduced by states and non-state actors.³⁰ In contrast to American IR scholars who often underline causality in international relations, the ES does not believe that norms cause certain behaviour. The emergence of new international practices does not entail change in the conduct of all states. Although international discourses identify that states have certain responsibilities, this does not inevitably mean that states act responsibly.

1.2 The English School of International Relations and state-centric solidarism

The English School of International Relations developed from the theoretical enquiry of the British Committee on Theory of International Relations, founded in 1958 by the Rockefeller Foundation, particularly the works of Martin Wight, Herbert Butterfield, Hedley Bull, Adam Watson and R.J. Vincent.³¹ At the annual conference of the British International Studies Association in 1999, Barry Buzan called IR scholars to "reconvene the English School" and since then there has been a notable rise in academic work on the School's key themes.³² More recently – and importantly for this study – the central writers of the ES include: Barry Buzan, Ian

²⁸ See, for example, Finnemore & Sikkink 1998 and Wendt 1999.

²⁹ As Barry Buzan (2014, 170) puts it, the English School's "blending of normative and historical structural elements enables it not only to address the most pressing problems of the day but also to investigate deeper questions about the structure and evolution of international systems and societies".

³⁰ Notice, however, that Buzan's (2004) structural approach to international society largely dismisses the role of agency. He follows Wendt by contending that states *internalize* values and practices of international society via three modes: coercion, calculation and belief.

³¹ For historical development and the central figures of the English School, see, for example, Dunne 1998 and Linklater & Suganami 2006, 12–42.

³² For the latest developments, see Buzan 2007a.

Clark, Tim Dunne, Kalevi Holsti, Andrew Hurrell, Robert Jackson, Tonny Brems Knudsen, Cornelia Navari, Nicholas Wheeler, and Yongjin Zhang, whose works have inspired the theoretical approach of this study. Today, IR scholars around the world have become interested in the ES, meaning it has started to have genuine “brand power” globally.³³ Although the ES is a European-origin school, it has been successfully applied to the Chinese context as well.³⁴ Indeed, China has always served as an “important referent or testing case” for the theoretical arguments of the ES.³⁵ Given their desire to build up a national approach to IR theory, the label “English School” has attracted Chinese IR scholars³⁶ and a wide number of contributions to the ES have been published in and on China.³⁷ Despite the lively discussion amongst Chinese IR scholars³⁸, a Chinese School of IR has not yet developed.³⁹

The central idea of the ES is that international relations are about social relationships and that relations between states are norm-governed. In contrast to positivist notions of international relations, the humanist approach acknowledges that international relations are always a human activity: There are no given, self-existing international “structures”, nor “social or market forces” or an “invisible hand” guiding or manipulating world politics. As Jackson puts it, “international relations is entirely a sphere of human relations, nothing more and nothing less”.⁴⁰ The key concept of the ES is that international society exists, according to Hedley Bull’s classic definition, “when a group of states, conscious of certain common interests and common values, form a society in the sense that they conceive themselves to be bound by a common set of rules in their relations with one another, and share in the working of common institutions”.⁴¹ International society

³³ See Zhang 2014a for an interesting analytical narrative of the global diffusion and dissemination of the ES.

³⁴ See Buzan 2010; Clark 2014; Gong 1984a, 1984b; Qin 2010; Zhang 1991a; Zhang 1991b; Zhang 1998; Zhang 2003; Zhang 2011a and Zhang 2011b, for instance.

³⁵ Zhang 2011b, 764. See also Epp 2013.

³⁶ For comparisons between the ES and “the Chinese School”, see Wang & Buzan 2014.

³⁷ For a list of publication, see Buzan 2007b.

³⁸ See, for example, Qin 2011.

³⁹ One can also ask whether a Chinese school of IR is really necessary and what kind of value added it could offer to IR theory. Given that each state is unique, why would China be more unique than other states? Besides, if (IR) theories are not universal, what is their role in explaining and understanding the world?

⁴⁰ Jackson 2000, 29.

⁴¹ Bull 2002, 13.

is always a temporal social construction: It comprises certain recognized states and it is organized by certain institutions, rules and norms which are needed to sustain and preserve it. Therefore, Bull's five primary institutions – balance of power, diplomacy, international law, great power management and war – are social relations, or practices, that organize international society and make international affairs possible. The ES does not reject the idea that states seek their own national interests but, in contrast to the realists, it argues that there are also other drivers for state practices. It recognizes that even though states are sovereign, they are not isolated and not restrained from cooperation. Their membership in international society gives them not only rights, but also brings responsibilities. The capacity and willingness to accept and fulfil these responsibilities defines the status of their membership: great powers have greater responsibilities than smaller states, for instance. At a minimum, governments need to take the opinions and interests of others into consideration. They cannot only focus on their narrowly defined national interests but they are obligated to cooperate with others. For example, climate change politics does not support the normative logic of a sovereign state's right to do whatever it wants inside its boundaries – states are bound to cooperate in order to fulfil their obligations to other states.

Amongst ES scholars, there is an ongoing pluralist-solidarist debate about the possibility and potential of shared interests, norms, values, rules and institutions in international society.⁴² While solidarists assume that international society shares a relatively high degree of norms, rules and institutions among states, pluralists regard states as the dominant actors and emphasize the importance of state sovereignty. As Buzan notes, pluralists “give political, though not necessary moral, primacy to states over people”.⁴³ Pluralism's situational ethics raises questions about how to manage collective problems that threaten the coexistence of states; how far states should go to put themselves at risk on behalf of others; to what extent they have a moral obligation to rescue others, such as victims of genocide; and to what extent they can ignore these kind of humanitarian responsibilities if their national security and the lives of their citizens and soldiers is at risk. Regarding climate politics, an equivalent question would be: how far states can promote their national (economic) interests at the expense of climate change mitigation and to what extent they have a moral duty to protect the climate? In contrast, solidarism takes a cosmopolitan approach to the community of

⁴² See, for example, Bain 2014; Buzan 2014a and Wilson et al. 2016.

⁴³ Buzan 2014a, 90.

humankind (world society) and gives a moral priority to the universal rights of individuals over state sovereignty. In other words, solidarism considers humankind as a moral referent and raises questions about (humanitarian) justice. In practice, the English School remains “sharply divided over the extent to which solidarism remains premature”⁴⁴, adding that “few if any” ES theorists have suggested a cosmopolitan world society without states as “either a theoretical or practical option” but many of them have doubted the potential for states to go beyond pluralism.⁴⁵ Nonetheless, solidarism has served as the “key source” of normative discussions characteristic of the ES.⁴⁶ At the heart of the debate have been human rights, especially the question of humanitarian intervention and the “responsibility to protect”.⁴⁷

In general, environmental issues have been of interest to surprisingly few ES theorists although climate change in particular can be seen as a showcase for solidarist ethics.⁴⁸ Lately, however, some ES scholars have suggested that environmental stewardship has emerged, or at least is in the process of emerging, as a new primary institution.⁴⁹ Climate change, however, is a very distinct phenomena and climate responsibility should not be subordinated to environmental stewardship. Because climate change is an ethical global problem, and climate politics is highly normative, I find the concept of responsibility particularly apt for scrutinizing international climate change practices. In other words, I deliberately choose to study practices of *climate responsibility* in order to highlight the normative nature of climate change.⁵⁰ The concept of responsibility also problematizes the power relations shaping international climate practices and emphasizes the finality and future orientation of climate practices: whatever states decide to do today affects the well-being of future generations and it is very difficult or impossible to remedy today’s technically wrong or ethically irresponsible policy choices in the future. Finally, my conceptual choice points out that the terms of responsibility and duty are not synonyms, although they are

⁴⁴ Linklater & Suganami 2006, 229.

⁴⁵ Buzan 2014a, 119.

⁴⁶ Buzan 2014a, 118.

⁴⁷ See, for example, Wheeler 2000.

⁴⁸ But see Falkner 2012; Hurrell 2007; Jackson 1996; Jackson 2000 and Palmujoki 2013.

⁴⁹ See Buzan 2004a, 186; Buzan 2014a, 161–163; Falkner 2012 and Jackson 2000.

⁵⁰ A less normative approach would be to study practices of climate change mitigation, climate change management or global climate governance, for instance.

sometimes used interchangeably. While some would probably say that “duty” better describes the moral agency and obligations of states, I choose to continue the conceptual history of both the classical literature of the ES and international climate discourse. Besides, as the concept of responsibility highlights the significance of good outcomes, it fits better with international climate politics in which the outcome is more important than the specific performance of certain actions. As Goodin explains,

“What crucially differentiates responsibilities from duties is the discretionary component necessary built into them. Whereas duties require specific performance of certain actions, responsibilities allow agents to choose between alternative actions having the same overall consequences. A is responsibility-bound to see to it that X. But he is not told how to go about doing it. It is left to his discretion”.⁵¹

The ES is a practice-guiding and normative theory in two ways. On the one hand, it is a theory about practices and norms. Pluralists focus mainly on the “is-side”: what are the practices of international society and which norms organize and sustain international society? On the other hand, it is normative and practice-guiding in a moral sense as it attempts to guide how human practices ought to be. While there is an “ought-side” in pluralism as well, solidarism has been more purposeful in campaigning for how things ought to be in order for there to be a fairer world. However, Barry Buzan suggests that we do not have to view solidarism and pluralism as opposed poles but “interlinked sides in an ongoing debate about the moral construction of international order”.⁵² In order to blend and mix the two sides he introduces the concept of state-centric solidarism⁵³, which I choose to adopt in this study. Ontologically, state-centric solidarism is similar to pluralism as it recognizes that the present international society is state-centric and the potential for world society remains limited. Politically and morally, however, state-centric solidarism gets closer to solidarism as it acknowledges human beings as the moral referent object. State-centric solidarism is not only about world order and coexistence but also about cooperation and the pursuit of collective objectives. To use Buzan’s words, it is about the “possibility that states can collectively reach beyond a logic of coexistence to construct international

⁵¹ Goodin 1995, 84.

⁵² Buzan 2014a, 113.

⁵³ Buzan 2014a, 114–118.

societies with a relatively high degree of shared norms, rules and institutions among them”.⁵⁴

The conception of good international citizenship is useful when exploring notions about what it means to be responsible in international society from the perspective of state-centric solidarism. The conception was coined by Senator Gareth Evans, Australia’s then Minister for Foreign Affairs, in a series of foreign policy speeches in the late 1980s and early 1990s. It rejects the realist assumption that national interests always override moral values, especially the promotion of human rights. Evans emphasized that ethical standards of conduct are essential if we are to practice responsible foreign policy, putting human rights explicitly at the heart of good international citizenship. However, “good international citizenship is not an idealistic distraction or a quixotic quest”, Evans writes, “Nor it is the foreign policy equivalent of boy scout good deeds”. Good international citizenship means “no more – and no less – than the pursuit of enlightened self-interest”.⁵⁵

Evans’s conception of good international citizenship generated a wider debate over ethics and foreign policy in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Most notably, Andrew Linklater created the criteria for judging good international citizenship and suggested that good international citizens do not need to sacrifice their national interests, although they are requested “to put the welfare of international society ahead of the relentless pursuit of [their] own national interests...to place the survival of order before the satisfaction of minimal national advantages”.⁵⁶ Nicholas Wheeler and Tim Dunne took Linklater’s argument to the next level by arguing that the “welfare of international society” includes the respect for human rights: in addition to order, good international citizens place respect for human rights before their national economic and political interests.⁵⁷

I propose that the concept of good international citizenship forms an enlightened ethical basis for international society and the multidimensional responsibilities of states as it combines both national and global responsibilities. It acknowledges that, on the one hand, states are accountable for their actions that have impacts beyond their borders; on the other hand, it recognizes that states can only fulfil their domestic responsibilities by shouldering their international responsibilities. It also notes that responsible states cannot dismiss their national

⁵⁴ Buzan 2014a, 116.

⁵⁵ Evans 1990.

⁵⁶ Quoted in Wheeler & Dunne 1998, 855.

⁵⁷ Wheeler & Dunne 1998, 855.

responsibilities but they must also take care of the well-being of their citizens according to how that is defined in a specific country. The concept of international citizenship does not load responsibility only to wealthy or powerful states but acknowledges that "...we already live in an age where no nation, however mighty or, indeed, however small, can opt out of the demands of international citizenship".⁵⁸ Furthermore, the concept links together domestic and global practices. On the one hand, a state needs to "ensure that [its] own house is in order before we raise issues on the international scene" in order to avoid the indulgence of double standards. On the other hand, states that behave as good citizens at home tend to behave likewise abroad.⁵⁹ In this study, however, I want to develop Wheeler and Dunne's argumentation even further. I argue that the "welfare of international society" undoubtedly includes the environment as well. Good international citizens do not recklessly promote their commercial agendas, they put the survival of planet Earth before short-term national interests. In the context of international climate politics this means that states have to take part in international climate practices if they want to be or be seen as good international citizens.

1.3 How can we study climate responsibility?

As a response to criticism that ES scholars have a tendency to ignore methodology,⁶⁰ Cornelia Navari has (re)opened the debate on ES methodology.⁶¹ She demonstrates that both classical and contemporary ES scholars have applied various methods which have, *inter alia*, guided what kind of research materials they have used and how as well as how they have justified their arguments.⁶² For the ES, method does not mean a "recipe" that can be systemically applied to research material, instead it involves broader metatheoretical choices.⁶³ As my purpose is not to provide a legal or philosophical account of China's responsibility and I understand climate responsibility as a social practice, I propose that we can assess

⁵⁸ Evans 1990.

⁵⁹ Evans 1990.

⁶⁰ See, for example, Finnemore 2001 and Wilson 2012.

⁶¹ See, for example, Navari 2009a.

⁶² See Navari 2009b; Navari 2010 and Navari 2014.

⁶³ Navari 2014, 205.

China's climate responsibility only in the context of international practices. In this sense, this study can be situated in the "practice turn" of social science.⁶⁴

While many IR scholars tend to associate practice theory with Pierre Bourdieu⁶⁵, the ES conception of practice derives largely from the work of Theodore R. Schatzki.⁶⁶ For me, practice is merely a method to study international society and I do not pretend to contribute much to practice theories. In addition to Schatzki, my conception of practice is inspired by Vincent Pouliot and Emmanuel Adler, Cornelia Navari, Michael Oakshott and Etienne Wenger. Although some ES scholars, such as Robert Jackson and Andrew Hurrell, do not explicitly study international practices, their works are very close to practice theories and hence are of special interest to me. In contrast to the structural Bourdieusian tradition of practice theory, which focuses on the "stability, regularity, and reproduction of practices", I see practices as processes of change.⁶⁷ Although practices are repetitive patterns, they are not stable but "emergent and innovative".⁶⁸ They have a lifecycle: they constantly change. In general, ES scholars have paid surprisingly little attention to how institutions arise, change or die. Bull himself gave no explanation as to how institutions arise, and Buzan contented himself by saying that primary institutions change because the "practices associated with and justified by them change".⁶⁹

In metatheoretical terms, I take a pragmatist worldview and aim to produce practically relevant knowledge about state perceptions of environmental responsibility in the context of international climate politics. The pragmatist orientation does not, however, mean that I will, or can, bypass metatheoretical inquiries and leave them aside for philosophers of science, for example. As Christian Reus-Smit points out, even those who have the "most thoroughly articulated call for us to bypass metatheoretical inquiry", have to make epistemological and ontological assumptions, whether consciously or not.⁷⁰ The theoretical and methodological choices of this study are directed by the following

⁶⁴ See Adler & Pouliot 2011; Schatzki 1996 and Schatzki, Knorr Cetina & Von Savigny 2001 for the practice approach in general, and Navari 2010 for the ES concept of practice in particular.

⁶⁵ See Adler-Nissen 2013, and for criticism see Bueger & Gadinger 2015, 6.

⁶⁶ Navari 2010.

⁶⁷ Bueger & Gadinger 2015, 7.

⁶⁸ Bueger & Gadinger 2015, 8.

⁶⁹ Buzan 2006, 185.

⁷⁰ Reus-Smit 2013, 590.

assumptions. First, like ES literature in general, I attempt to understand and interpret climate responsibility, not to explain it.⁷¹ In my understanding, there is no need to construct complex and abstract analytical models of international relations, instead I believe a more practical way to understand international relations is to look at what practitioners actually say and do. Second, the best way to study institutions of international society empirically is to explore the practices they consist of. As international society does not consist of “flesh and blood” human beings, it is not possible to interview the members of international society and ask about their institutional arrangements, for example.

Third, international organizations (secondary institutions) are empirically observable practices: We can investigate their decision-making procedures, rules, and other organizational structures. It is also possible to look at the power-relations between the members of the practice, and analyse the contributions of the specific participants. International organizations create a social environment where non-state actors can participate in and shape international practices as well. Therefore, the observation of the practices of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (the UNFCCC), including China’s contribution to that process, can provide us with valuable information on state and non-state actors’ interpretations of climate responsibility. Fourth, as the theoretical focus of the ES is not a traditional “either/or” approach but a more “holistic, synthesizing approach”⁷², it may benefit from the new conceptual tools provided by the practice approach. The practice approach may help to forbear traditional dichotomies between change and stability, agency and structure, and ideas and issues.⁷³ Fifth, the purpose of this study is to analyse climate responsibility as a social phenomenon, not to assess whether or not states are responsible *per se*. Hence it is driven by empirical interests as to how responsibilities are intentionally constructed in political forums, and its purpose is not to contribute to the extensive literature on how responsibilities should be defined and allocated in philosophical and legal terms. The practice approach can provide useful tools for this. It also helps us understand why climate change is a subject of very heated international debate; if there were not so many competing discursive understandings of the phenomena and material preferences regarding suitable responses to climate change, there would be no climate politics at all.

⁷¹ This methodological approach can be called the Weberian notion of *verstehen*.

⁷² Buzan 2004, 10.

⁷³ Adler & Pouliot 2011, 6.

I will describe the characteristics of international practices in more detail in the next chapter. For the time being, it is adequate to refer to Adler and Pouliot's definition of practice: international practices are "socially meaningful patterns of action which, in being performed more or less competently, simultaneously embody, act out, and possibly reify background knowledge and discourse in and on the material world".⁷⁴ Today, it is quite clear that climate diplomacy forms such an international practice because it fulfils the five dimensions of international practices identified by Adler and Pouliot.⁷⁵ First, international climate diplomacy is a *performance*. It consists of various processes and actions, the UNFCCC being the most important forum for multilateral negotiations, bilateral meetings, workshops, exhibitions, press conferences and side events. Second, climate diplomacy is *patterned*: the parties under the UNFCCC meet annually and other forums hold regular meetings. Third, climate diplomacy is conducted by the representatives of sovereign states – as recognized by UN, who have a high degree of political and professional *competence* to act on behalf their respective state. Fourth, climate diplomacy rests on the *background knowledge* of the historical evolution of international climate change practices and an individual state's previous commitments and obligations and hopefully their scientific knowledge of climate change as well. Finally, climate diplomacy is both *discursive and material*: parties publish material artefacts such as white papers, use conference rooms, arrange exhibitions and have various meetings, press conferences, etc. to discursively communicate their intentions, preferences, and values to others. What is not clear, however, is whether *climate responsibility* also establishes an international practice, and if so, how constitutive that is to international society. If it comprises an emerging "green" institution in international society, it would indicate that international society is really becoming "green", as Jackson suggested twenty years ago.⁷⁶

For the time being, Kalevi Holsti provides perhaps the most extensive study on *how* to recognize and study international institutions. Inspired by Bull, Holsti identifies three criteria for institution: i) patterned *practices* ii) a set of *ideas and/or beliefs*, and iii) *norms*, including rules etiquette.⁷⁷ Like Holsti, I think it is important to look at what practitioners say and do, and hence I believe the practice approach

⁷⁴ Adler & Pouliot 2011, 6.

⁷⁵ Adler & Pouliot 2011, 7–8.

⁷⁶ Jackson 1996.

⁷⁷ Holsti 2004, 21–22.

offers valuable tools for studying institutions empirically. In contrast to Holsti, however, I do not see it necessary, or even possible, to deal with practices, norms and ideas separately. Norms, values, beliefs and ideas do not come out of blue – they *are* social practices: They are neither pre-culturally or pre-politically given nor static but historically evolving practices. In contrast to most ES scholars, secondary institutions are of special interest to me: while it is impossible to investigate an actor's influence on the evolution of a primary institution, we can also analyse a state's contribution to the institution-building of secondary institutions. Hence the empirical part of the study pays particular attention to the institutionalization of the UNFCCC and China's role in the process.

I consider international practices both *explanans* and *explanandum*. The former perspective problematizes whether climate responsibility is an international practice that can transform international society and to what extent China's climate change practices can be interpreted as a result of international practices. The latter perspective studies how climate responsibility is shaped by other international practices and to what extent, along with its rising international status, China's climate change practices shape international practices. To analyse whether or not climate responsibility comprises a primary institution, we must look at the evolution of climate practices and then assess if they play a constitutive role in international society.

It is not possible to “see” or “measure” responsibility. It can be, however, talked about. That is why I pay special attention to discourses when studying climate responsibility. Interviews can provide us with interesting information about what is understood as responsible behaviour in a specific context.⁷⁸ Given my interest in the historic evolution of climate responsibility, however, interviews or the direct observation of practices are not workable methods for this study. Besides, it is not easy to gain access to China's political circles to ask about their notions of responsibility. Therefore, I have to trace the policies, treaties and statements by which states have negotiated, justified and agreed on the rules of international climate practices. The UN General Assembly resolutions provide a good starting point from which to consider the emergence and evolution of international climate practices. At first glance, such abstract declarations may sound insignificant and irrelevant to actual political practices as they do not necessarily create legally binding obligations but rather express what it is that states hope to achieve. From a legal perspective, however, they are important “acts from which

⁷⁸ For the methodology of practice theory, see Pouliot 2013.

views about customary law can be inferred”.⁷⁹ “What matters”, Falkner notes, “is that they represent an explicit manifestation of an implicitly assumed and broadly accepted fundamental norm”.⁸⁰ The more often the UN reiterates the idea of the environmental responsibility of states, the more likely it is to effect international law and the practices of states. Changes in political discourses are integral to the process of changing political practices. However, focus on discourse is not sufficient on its own to study state responsibility. It is worthless to only speak about responsibility because it has to materialize in responsible actions both at home and abroad.⁸¹ When studying climate responsibility, it is necessary to “go beyond” statements expressing responsibilities because we need to look at how these words are performed as actions. Due to word limit constraints it is impossible to explore the climate actions of all the participants to global climate practices, therefore I narrow down my research material to China.

Because the ES is closely related to discourse theory, ES scholars tend to be “most comfortable when their analyses are confirmed in written acknowledgments”.⁸² I make no exception in this sense but my empirical corpus consists of four types of texts presented between 1968 and 2015: UN General Assembly resolutions and international agreements on the environment and climate; China’s official policy documents, such as white papers and other strategies, including the policy papers of China’s think tanks⁸³ on climate change; China’s statements presented at UN climate change negotiations; and statements and co-operation with other established and emerging great powers and international forums outside the UN system. The temporal period of my research begins before the politicization of climate change because earlier international environmental negotiations set the cornerstones for state environmental responsibility, which dictated the evolution of climate responsibility. I begin in 1968 due to the fact that before the late 1960’s environmental problems were not well understood as being global and because the UN did not discuss environmental issues prior to that year. The research material ends with the Paris Agreement,

⁷⁹ Perrez 2000, 278.

⁸⁰ Falkner 2012, 514.

⁸¹ There may be, of course, some discrepancy between what states say about their responsibility and what they do.

⁸² Navari 2010, 9.

⁸³ There is a wide consensus that foreign policy think-tanks have a substantial consultative influence on China’s political decision-making. See, for example, Shambaugh 2002a and Glaser & Saunders 2002.

which formalizes the contemporary international rules on climate responsibility agreed in December 2015.

Most of my research materials, but not all, are either English translations of statements made by China or material originally presented in English. This choice is validated as the main focus of the study is not empirical but theoretical. In other words, this study is not based on primary resources *an sich*, instead it is first and foremost an attempt to contribute to ES theory by making normative and historical observations. As I am aware of my own cultural bias as a white European citizen, I have carefully read relevant academic literature written by Chinese scholars in order to avoid my approach being too Eurocentric. In empirical terms, I use textual analysis in order to “read” how both international climate practices and China’s climate practices have emerged and transformed. Therefore, my analysis of these documents focuses, *inter alia*, on addressing intentions, values and interpretations and pays no attention to structure of the texts.⁸⁴ In addition, I complement my corpus with newspaper articles, existing academic literature and other relevant reports which offer information on how China has defined and acted out its climate responsibility in “real-life”. In this way, I try to “avoid stipulative definitions that have no reference to ordinary language” and that have the “unfortunate effect of alienating the world of political science from the world of politics”.⁸⁵ I believe that the most accurate way to study human conduct is to focus on real-life discursive practices.

As my choice of research material indicates, I deliberately take a rather state-centric approach to climate responsibility. This is not to say that non-state actors would not have an autonomous standing with rights and responsibilities in international relations. When investigating the evolution of the international practice of climate responsibility, I briefly discuss the role of non-state agents because their role as norm entrepreneurs⁸⁶, canalizers of public opinion and assessors of climate responsibility have certainly been critical.⁸⁷ Regarding China’s notions of responsibility, however, “practitioners” refer chiefly to state agents and I pay less attention to how other actors, such as non-governmental organizations (NGOs), business corporations or local authorities articulate and assess China’s climate responsibility. This choice is made for two reasons: first, states continue to

⁸⁴ Navari (2009b,46) calls this explanatory preference the intentional mode.

⁸⁵ Jackson 2000, 95.

⁸⁶ Finnemore & Sikkink 1998, 896.

⁸⁷ See Clark 2007.

form the most important settings for negotiating on practices at the international level, forming international treaties and putting them into effect on the local level. The role of different kinds of lobby groups remains quite limited: they can only influence and inspire the participants.⁸⁸ Second, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) has shown a very little interest in promoting the active participation of citizens in political decision-making process on any level.⁸⁹ Besides, the first Chinese environmental NGO was founded two years *after* the establishment of the UNFCCC and their autonomy is still questionable.⁹⁰ Given these deliberate dismissals, further research on the influence of non-state actors in both the evolution of international (climate) practices and China's notions of responsibility would be highly recommended.

1.4 The structure of the study

The study proceeds as follows. The next chapter introduces the theoretical and methodological standpoints of the study. I define the concept of international practice and relate it to the on-going theoretical debate on the ES conception of institutions. Most importantly, I discuss the constitutive role of both primary and secondary institutions and investigate how international practices develop and change.

Chapter three aims to build up a coherent theoretical framework of state responsibility. I begin with a brief review of the many meanings of responsibility and then explain why and how I understand responsibility as a social practice. In the last section of the chapter, I locate practices of state responsibility on a wide spectrum of differing orientations towards the moral referent object and explore the multidimensional responsibilities of states.

In chapter four, I reflect on the theoretical framework of the multidimensional responsibility of states in relation to China's notions of state responsibility. I study

⁸⁸ But see Epstein (2008) for a rare case in which international practice has emerged and diffused via a bottom-up process induced by non-state actors.

⁸⁹ See, for example, Martens 2007.

⁹⁰ For further information on the environmental movement in China, see Alpermann 2010, for instance.

both the cultural-historic background and contemporary aspects of China's conception of responsibility.

Chapter five discusses China's current rise and its implications for great power management. In particular, I investigate how China's growing international influence has transformed the rules of great power practices by boosting ideas of great power responsibility. Hence, I do not only look at China's evolving great power identity and the associated notions of great power responsibility, I also explore what kind of requirements the United States (US) sets for China's membership of the great power club.

Chapters six and seven investigate international practices of climate responsibility. Chapter six examines the historical evolution of the international practice of climate responsibility: how it emerged, what kind of social structures it has generated (i.e. institutions, norms, values), and how it defines and distributes international responsibilities. It also looks at how China has influenced the institutionalization of climate responsibility. Chapter seven discusses the contemporary practices of climate responsibility and pays particular attention to international justice. It also problematizes how other central international practices have shaped, or even hindered, climate responsibility and discusses cosmopolitan climate responsibility.

Chapter eight analyses China's notions of climate responsibility. On the one hand, it studies how China interprets international practices of climate responsibility; on the other hand, it investigates how China has demonstrated its responsibility through its actions at international and local level.

Finally, chapter nine recaps the main contributions of the study and discusses future prospects for climate responsibility. It also makes a few recommendations as to how international climate practices could and should be transformed in order to strengthen climate responsibility and enhance mitigation efforts in the future.

2 Practices of international society

Both the practice approach and English School are heavily based on the social theory of IR, which assumes that international relations represents social activity between representatives of states. Although no unitary theory of practice exists, various theories on practices are “joined in the belief that such phenomena as knowledge, meaning, human activity, science, power, language, social institutions, and historical transformation occur within and are aspects or components of the *field of practices*”.⁹¹ Apart from Etienne Wenger’s *Communities of Practice*, practice theory literature is very theoretical. I do not intend to formulate my own distinctive and complex definition of practice but I understand practice as a tool with which to study climate responsibility. My aim is thus to add more empirical insights to the theoretical discussion. Before moving on to the empirical study, however, we must unpack what practice is. Therefore, this chapter introduces the concept of practice and discusses how it can provide the ES with much needed empirical data.

2.1 International practices

Although the concept of practice “connotes doing”, it is not “doing in and of itself” but it is always “doing in a historical and social context that gives structure and meaning to what we do”.⁹² Hence the concept differs from the terms of behaviour and action, albeit they are often used interchangeably in everyday language. As Adler and Pouliot illustrate,

In a nutshell, the concept of behavior evokes the material dimension of doing, as a deed performed in and on the world; the notion of action adds an ideational layer, emphasizing the meaningfulness of the deed at both the subjective and intersubjective levels; and, finally, the term “practice” tacks another layer on to the edifice – or, better put, makes it hang together as one

⁹¹ Schatzki 2001, 2 (emphasis in original).

⁹² Wenger 1998, 47.

coherent structure, by pointing out the patterned nature of deeds in socially organized contexts.⁹³

In addition to Adler and Pouliot's definition of practice introduced in the previous chapter, there are many other sophisticated definitions of practices. According to Michael Oakeshott's definition, "practice may be identified as a set of considerations, manners, uses, observances, customs, standards, canon's maxims, principles, rules, and offices specifying useful procedures or denoting obligations or duties which relate to human actions and utterances".⁹⁴ And, it is a "prudential or a moral adverbial qualification of choices and performances, more or less complicated, in which conduct is understood in terms of a procedure".⁹⁵ Oakeshott suggests that we should understand a practice as a "language of self-closure" that can only be spoken by the participants to the practice.

It [a practice] does not impose upon an agent demands that he shall think certain thoughts, entertain certain sentiments, or make certain substantive utterances. It comes to him as various invitations to understand, to choose, and to respond. It is composed of conventions and rules of speech, a vocabulary and a syntax, and it is continuously invented by those who speak it and using it is adding to its resources. It is an instrument to be played upon, not a tune to be played. Learning to speak it is learning to enjoy and to explore a certain relationship with other agents. The requirements of a practice are not obeyed or disobeyed; they are subscribed to or not subscribed to.⁹⁶

Theodore R. Schatzki differentiates between dispersed and integrative practices. Dispersed practices are a "set of doings and sayings linked primarily, usually exclusively, by the understanding of X-ing".⁹⁷ For Schatzki understanding means the "ability to [that is, "knowing how to"] carry out acts of X-ing", the "ability to identify and attribute X-ings", and the "ability to prompt or respond to X-ings".⁹⁸ By integrative practices he refers to the "more complex practices found in and

⁹³ Adler & Pouliot 2011, 5.

⁹⁴ Oakeshott 1975, 55.

⁹⁵ Oakeshott 1975, 55.

⁹⁶ Oakeshott 1975, 58.

⁹⁷ Schatzki, 1996, 91.

⁹⁸ Schatzki, 1996, 91.

constitutive of particular domains of social life”.⁹⁹ In addition to providing an understanding of X-ing, they include “explicit rules, principles, precepts, and instructions”, and “teleoaffective structures comprising hierarchies of ends, tasks, projects, beliefs, emotions, moods, and the like”.¹⁰⁰ These understandings, rules, and teleoaffective structure organize practices normatively, by which Schatzki means “oughtness or rightness” and “acceptability”.¹⁰¹ Together, they

...specify how actions (including speech acts) ought to be carried out, understood, prompted, and responded to; what specifically and unequivocally should be done or said (when, where...); and which ends should be pursued, which projects, tasks, and actions carried out for that end, and which emotions possessed – when, that is, one is engaged in the practice.¹⁰²

The organization of a practice does not denote that only certain actions are correct, but “understanding X-ing, for example, opens a range of ways of acceptably [thus, not only correct] X-ing as well as prompting and responding thereto.”¹⁰³ As an example, Schatzki presents the idea of person in the military who understands that military orders and practices include not only the correct procedures for carrying out the orders of superiors but the different actions that may be taken without incurring correction, remonstrance, or punishment.¹⁰⁴

Although ES theorists have only recently started to consider practices directly¹⁰⁵, they have always considered institutional practices to be fundamental to the constitution of international society.¹⁰⁶ Almost all ES scholars have formulated their lists of (primary) institutions that can be seen as patterned sets of shared practices that organize and sustain international society. As the ES concept of practice is a “purposive goal-orientated conception”, Schatzki’s conception of practice seems to capture best the ES notion of practice.¹⁰⁷ For example, the ES

⁹⁹ Schatzki, 1996, 98.

¹⁰⁰ Schatzki, 1996, 99.

¹⁰¹ Schatzki 1996, 101–102.

¹⁰² Schatzki 1996, 101.

¹⁰³ Schatzki 1996, 102.

¹⁰⁴ Schatzki 1996, 102.

¹⁰⁵ See, for example, Navari 2010 and Little 2011.

¹⁰⁶ See, for example, Bull 2002; Buzan 2004; Jackson 2000; Holsti 2004; Hurrell 2007 and Watson 1982.

¹⁰⁷ Navari 2010, 3.

conception of great power management conforms to all the requirements of Schatzki's integrative practice. First, there is, at least to some extent, a shared understanding of how to identify the members of the "great power club". Second, it has its rules of membership, albeit they are not expressed in legal terms (other than the procedures of the UN Security Council).¹⁰⁸ Finally, it is teleoaffective: the goal of the practice is to maintain international peace and security. Indeed, Navari notes that Bull's concept of institution is "identical to Schatzki's concept of a practice".¹⁰⁹ The practice approach takes the existence of international society for granted: it is not possible to identify systemic practices in the context of the international system.¹¹⁰ However, I find it very confusing to treat conceptions of primary institution and international practice as synonyms. If they are not separated, what is the meaning of and relationship between primary institutions and other international practices?

For the purposes of this study, I define international practices as shared goal-oriented temporal learning processes which develop intersubjective meanings, negotiate rules, and organize the social world. Practices exist only in and through social participation. By social, I refer to a constructivist understanding of the world; everything we do is, in essence, social even if other people are not at present at the moment a specific action takes place. Hence, practices create new relations and connections with and in the world. The participants of a practice are chiefly, but not exclusively, human beings and practices evolve within and organize dynamic interaction between these participants.¹¹¹ The participation is not fixed but people (and states) come and go. Non-participants, however, also have a great, or potentially even greater, influence on international practices.¹¹² Adler and Pouliot identify three potential domains of change in practices: "in subjectivities (e.g. preferences, dispositions, or intentionality), in practices themselves, or in social orders (e.g. structures, domination patterns, or discourse)".¹¹³ Practices are temporal

¹⁰⁸ In contrast to Schatzki, the ES does not maintain that the rules of a practice have to be explicit.

¹⁰⁹ Navari 2010, 10.

¹¹⁰ Little 2011.

¹¹¹ Institutional human constellations such as states are clearly participants in international practices. In addition, my use of practice regards non-human beings as potential participants in practices. For example, a pet is a participant in family practices.

¹¹² International terrorism represents a clear example: states that do not participate in the international practices of anti-terrorism, undoubtedly have an important influence on international practices. In the context of climate politics, the non-participation of the U.S. in the Kyoto framework has had a very negative effect the viability of the UNFCCC.

¹¹³ Adler & Pouliot 2011, 18.

and situational. They are not intentionally designed nor do they appear from scratch. They evolve through the interactions of states in time and place, both in formal international organizations and informal processes. They are historical, ongoing, patterned processes which generate both new circumstances and are affected by changing circumstances. Practices have a life cycle – they emerge, diffuse, institutionalize, and fade away.¹¹⁴ The lifecycle is not necessarily linear and stable but may involve discontinuity; some practices do not comprise all the stages, and some practices change substantially during their lifecycle as participants are replaced, power relations shift, new ideas emerge, unexpected events happen, etc.

As practices are both material and discursive, it is not necessary to separate into doing and saying. At the same time, what is left unsaid is also important. Unarticulated, implicit assumptions, values, perceptions, judgements and contentions also influence how people interact. Practices are thus competent performances and the enactment of discourses. They “establish intersubjective meanings that allow the actors to direct their actions towards each other, communicate with each other, appraise the quality of their actions, criticize claims and justify choices”.¹¹⁵ Sometimes practices produce their own vocabulary. Climate diplomacy, for instance, has invented such a complex code of abbreviations that only competent actors are able to participate in the discussion. Practices are also learning processes. For instance, when participating in a practice, one learns to know “how to do something”.¹¹⁶ In Wenger’s words: “Learning is the engine of practice, and practice is the history of that learning”.¹¹⁷ On the one hand, practices produce knowledge; on the other hand, knowledge shapes practices. Thus, knowledge does not only give impetus to the emergence and change of practices but learning is also “enclosed” in the “very execution” of the practice.¹¹⁸ Practical learning helps the participants of the practice know “how to put the human world into a better alignment with our interests and concerns”.¹¹⁹

Furthermore, practices are goal oriented and they are based on, and bound up with power. They cannot be distinguished from power politics but they sustain, or transform, existing power relations between practitioners. Powerful participants

¹¹⁴ Finnemore and Sikkink 1998.

¹¹⁵ Kratochwil 1993, 76; see also Dryzek 2005.

¹¹⁶ Jackson, R. 2009, 31.

¹¹⁷ Wenger 1998, 96.

¹¹⁸ Adler & Pouliot 2011, 15.

¹¹⁹ Jackson, R. 2009, 31.

may mould practices by imposing their values and interests. Practices have rules and produce relationships of accountability as the participants are expected to follow the rules of the practice. These rules, which Mervyn Frost calls embedded ethics of practices¹²⁰, evolve in social interaction and direct how the participants of the practice should relate to one another. Sometimes the rules of practice are explicitly codified in national or international law (formal practices); sometimes they are unwritten, and unspoken, i.e. social standards of conduct based on shared values and interests (informal practices).¹²¹ Informal rules can be traced to a common discourse, or they can be observed “simply from behaviour of the parties which is *as if* in conformity with a rule, even though that rule is not agreed, not enunciated nor even fully understood”.¹²² Both formal and informal practices are communicated through the official statements and actions made by states.¹²³ The rules of practices specify the ethical underpinnings of a practice: “what the point and purpose of the practice are and what values are made possible within it”, and whether the “flouting of these rules would result in the exclusion (excommunication, expulsion, ostracization) of actors who flout them”.¹²⁴ Hence the rules of a practice form a moral basis upon which the participants’ moral agency is to be evaluated by themselves, other participants to the practice and/or any interpreter of the practice.¹²⁵ As formal rules are usually compromises produced through bargaining processes between unequally powerful members, they do not represent moral ideals. Moreover, rules of practices can never tell practitioners what choices they have to make but they announce “conditions to be subscribed to in making choices”.¹²⁶ Sometimes the ethical rules of different practices overlap, but they are hardly ever interchangeable. For example, medical ethics, business

¹²⁰ Frost 2003.

¹²¹ I am grateful to Cornelia Navari for pointing out this distinction.

¹²² Bull 2002, 216 (emphasis in original).

¹²³ Bull 2002, 68–69.

¹²⁴ Frost 2009, 21.

¹²⁵ Although these moral rules are not necessarily legal norms, one may face social sanctions if he or she fails to follow them. For example, a husband is expected to follow the rules of marriage, such as faithfulness. Although he is an autonomous actor, he is not the sole actor judging the morals of his actions. Obviously his wife has the strongest role on judging what would count as violating rules in their marriage. In addition, general social understandings of the appropriate behaviour of married couples inevitably affect his thinking. If he does not follow the rules of marriage, at least in the most of the societies, he has no legal consequences but he may be socially sanctioned or even excluded from the practice of marriage.

¹²⁶ Oakeshott 1975, 58.

ethics, family ethics and international ethics are subject to very different kinds of standards of conduct and make the participants look at the world in certain ways.¹²⁷ Participation in these practices involves ethical evaluations about possible and morally appropriate choices of action. If participants fail to follow these rules, they are accountable to, but not necessarily sanctioned by, the other participants to the practice – at the very least. Finally, practices influence the participants’ identity. For example, the knowledge used and produced by practices shapes the beliefs and understandings of participants and hence their identity and interests.

2.2 Institutions of international society

There is no consensus on the definition and functioning of institution either in the “mainstream” IR or ES literature: Norms, rules, principles, and institutions are often grouped together, and no clear distinction between social and physical institutions is made.¹²⁸ Although it is one of the key interests of IR theory, the concepts of norms, rules and principles are often used interchangeably and their interecine differences and affinity remain quite unclear. This study does not, unfortunately, make an exception in this sense but I understand norms and rules to be more or less synonyms. They are historically contingent standards of conduct which guide people (and states) engaged in specific social practices as to what is considered appropriate behaviour in a specific time and place. They are socially constructed and used to “judge the rightness or wrongness, the goodness and badness” of social practices.¹²⁹ They may have a “status of law, of morality, of custom or etiquette, or simply of operating procedures or ‘rules of the game’”.¹³⁰

Nevertheless, I attempt to make a clear distinction between physical and social institutions. In general, IR defines institutions as “stable sets of norms, rules, and principles that serve two functions in shaping social relations: they constitute actors as knowledgeable social agents, and they regulate behaviour”.¹³¹ The “mainstream” IR scholars, who Alexander Wendt and Raymond Duvall call “new

¹²⁷ This does not mean that all the participants to the practice look at the world in the same way – individual diversity naturally exists. Besides, one is always a member of many different practices, which all affect one’s identity and worldview.

¹²⁸ See, for example, Buzan 2004a, 163–167.

¹²⁹ Jackson, R. 2009, 22.

¹³⁰ Bull 2002, 52.

¹³¹ Reus-Smit 1999, 12–13.

institutionalists”¹³², have largely focused on international regimes. When talking about institutions, “old institutionalists” including the ES, in contrast, do not usually refer to institutes or issue-specific regimes but deeper social practices.¹³³ Recognizing this distinction, Buzan popularized the distinction between primary and secondary institutions in his seminal volume in 2004.¹³⁴ According to Buzan’s definition, primary institutions are “durable and recognised patterns of shared practices rooted in values held commonly by the members of interstate societies, and [sic] embodying a mix of norms, rules and principles”.¹³⁵ Buzan’s definition is somewhat similar to Reus-Smit’s fundamental institutions and Holsti’s foundational institutions.¹³⁶ For Bull, the common institutions are functionally important: they contribute to the maintenance of international society and to the fulfilment of its goals.¹³⁷ Although ES scholars do not agree on what the primary institutions of international society are, they do agree that they are the key for understanding interstate relations: They determine membership, organize relationships between states, facilitate coexistence and specify what legitimate international conduct is, for instance. Primary institutions are thus constitutive of international society. Unlike secondary institutions such as formal organizations or regimes, which are intentionally founded for specific purposes, primary institutions in ES terms are spontaneously “evolved”.¹³⁸

ES scholars generally agree that not all primary institutions are equally important in hierarchical terms. However, the mechanisms and how they relate to each other remain unclear and the ES has not yet given us answers as to “how some practices anchor, control, or organize others”.¹³⁹ Because practices are hierarchical and “differ in their dimensions, their complexity, and their density”¹⁴⁰, some primary institutions are more powerful than others. They enable and constrain other practices because they have a more central role in establishing and

¹³² Wendt & Duvall 1989.

¹³³ Wendt & Duvall 1989.

¹³⁴ Buzan adopted the distinction between primary and secondary institutions from Makinda 2002.

¹³⁵ Buzan 2004a, 181.

¹³⁶ See Reus-Smit 1999 and Holsti 2004.

¹³⁷ Schouenborg 2014, 80–81.

¹³⁸ Onuf 2002 and Reus-Smit 1999, 16.

¹³⁹ Swidler 2001, 79.

¹⁴⁰ Oakeshott 1975, 56.

maintaining international order.¹⁴¹ The problem is how to “know” what makes a primary institution so constitutive to international society that its change also changes other institutions of international society. Much scholarly work has been done in order to find out what the “bedrock institution” of international society is.¹⁴² Because Buzan presupposes that the easiest way to overcome the question of the hierarchical relations of primary institutions is to see it as “an issue of nesting”, he differentiates between two types of primary institutions: master institutions and derivative institutions. The former “stand alone” and contain or generate the latter.¹⁴³

Given the centrality of the notions of institutions within the ES, as Wilson points out, it is quite surprising how premature its agreement on the definitions, identity and role of institutions remain.¹⁴⁴ Many ES theorists have focused on the nature of international society, debating what institutions are constitutive for its maintenance.¹⁴⁵ Most of these lists, however, do not provide any explicit criteria to what makes something a primary institution, nor do they pay attention to how those institutions transform. In fact, not even Bull explained how he defined his five common institutions and why he excluded other institutions from his list.¹⁴⁶ Recognizing this ES shortcoming, Buzan declares that

There is an urgent need to acknowledge the centrality of primary institutions in English school theory, to generate consistency in the use and understanding of the concept and to make clear what does and does not count as a primary institution.¹⁴⁷

As a result, Buzan’s plea puts in motion the new institutionalists’ very theoretical debate about the (contemporary) primary institutions of international

¹⁴¹ Buzan (2004) differentiates between master and derivative institutions, Holsti (2004) between foundational and procedural institutions, and Reus-Smit (1999) between fundamental institutions and constitutive structures, for instance.

¹⁴² See Buzan 2004a, 175.

¹⁴³ Buzan 2004a, 182.

¹⁴⁴ Wilson 2012.

¹⁴⁵ See, for example, Wight 1999; Holsti 2004; Buzan 2004a; Buzan 2014a; Schouenborg 2011; Schouenborg 2013; Schouenborg 2014 and Wilson 2012.

¹⁴⁶ For enlightened guesses of Bull’s reasons, see Buzan 2014a, 97–98 and Schouenborg 2014, 80–81.

¹⁴⁷ Buzan 2004a, 171.

society¹⁴⁸ and also shunts secondary institutions “into the realm of regime theory altogether”.¹⁴⁹ Wilson’s own solution to the debate on what counts as a primary institution is empiricism: “Until we [ES scholars] have data about what institutions exist internationally, our speculations about them will remain just that, speculations, and our taxonomies and theories about them will remain rootless, subjective, and abstract”.¹⁵⁰ Wilson suggests that ES scholars should analyse the “social assumptions, standards and expectations” of people, especially those of the political elites and study how they socially construct institutions.¹⁵¹ As I partly agree with this approach, I investigate how some central political figures have perceived climate responsibility. Notwithstanding that, I assert that secondary institutions (and their constitutive documents in particular) are the most important venues for gathering empirical data on the institutions of modern international society. There has indeed emerged an active research programme within the ES which argues that secondary institutions should be of interest to it not only because they provide material evidence of the existence of primary institutions, but also because of their genuine role in the promotion of normative change.¹⁵² Secondary institutions offer a social platform for both states and non-state actors to negotiate meanings, establish hierarchies, assign roles, allocate rights and responsibilities, distribute material resources and formulate jurisdiction, etc.¹⁵³ As for climate responsibility, the UNFCCC is undoubtedly the most relevant secondary institution and its constitutive documents are therefore of special interest to this study.

Before moving on, it should be noted that I deliberately differentiate between the concepts of institutions and practice: they are not synonyms. Both primary and secondary institutions are produced and reproduced by a set of practices. In (over)simplified terms, institution is an *explanandum* and practice is an *explanans*. There is no single practice “behind” any institution but different kinds of practices uphold them over time, reflecting changing situations. For example, the primary institution of diplomacy has existed for centuries, but practices producing and

¹⁴⁸ As Wilson (2012, 580) notes, new institutionalists, such as Buzan and Schouenborg, methodologically depart from the traditional ES focus on social reality and aim to build abstract analytical categories instead.

¹⁴⁹ Spandler 2014, 2; see also Buzan 2004a, 163–167.

¹⁵⁰ Wilson 2012, 577.

¹⁵¹ Wilson et al. 2016, 114.

¹⁵² See Knudsen 2013; Navari in Wilson et al. 2016; Spandler 2014; Friedner Parrat 2015 and Palmujoki 2015.

¹⁵³ Spandler 2014, 10–11 and Onuf 2002, 224.

maintaining it have changed over time. While some international practices are “only practices”, some have emerged as so fundamentally constitutive to international society that they gradually develop into primary institutions.¹⁵⁴Therefore, in my reading, Buzan’s master institutions are primary institutions and his derivative institutions are “only” a set of international practices that primary institutions consist of. Moreover, some international practices materialize in the establishment of secondary institutions and some do not. Normally, the establishment of secondary institutions cannot be traced back to one single primary institution but they reflect and operationalize many primary institutions simultaneously.¹⁵⁵ Sometimes, however, it is easy to point out a primary institution “behind” a secondary institution: The UN Security Council is clearly a manifestation of great power management and plays an important role in the legitimation of great powers’ rights and responsibilities, for instance. Again, not all primary institutions are embodied in the establishment of secondary institutions: there are no secondary institutions that would regulate, for example, sovereignty or diplomacy *per se*.

When assessing whether an international (climate) practice is so constitutive that it comprises a new primary institution, Charlotta Friedner Parrat’s checklist is very useful:

- *Is the institution truly international, or can the same institution exist within a state?*
- *Is it a routinized practice based on ideas, and does it include norms, rules, and etiquette?*
- *Is it consciously upheld by actors?*
- *Is it quite stable over time and does a critical mass of states endorse it?*
- *Is it co-constitutive of actors?*¹⁵⁶

If the definition of the concept of primary institution is not clear amongst the ES, neither is the concept of secondary institution. Neither Makinda nor Buzan offer an elaborated definition, presumably because they had no interest in investigating secondary institutions. Buzan and Holsti emphasize the regulative nature of secondary institutions and see them merely as empirical materializations of primary institutions. It would be tempting to define secondary institutions as

¹⁵⁴ Knudsen (2013) takes a similar approach to what he calls “fundamental institutions” and practices.

¹⁵⁵ Palmujoki 2015.

¹⁵⁶ Friedner Parrat 2014, 10.

concrete international organizations which are intentionally established pragmatic solutions to “real-world” problems. However, that definition would ignore international treaties and informal multilateral institutions. For example, international climate governance is largely coordinated by the UNFCCC, which is not by definition an international organization but a political framework treaty. For regime theorists, the UNFCCC clearly represents a regime. Killian Spandler notes that secondary institutions “include international organisations and regimes”¹⁵⁷ and “specific rules”¹⁵⁸ as well as “*sets of discursively formulated expectations, but they are more specific [than primary institutions] in that they refer to temporally and spatially discrete sections of international reality and apply to a clearly defined set of actors*”.¹⁵⁹ Friedner Parrat develops Spandler’s conceptualization and defines secondary institutions as “specific rules, which, in principle, are institutionalized by states, within international organizations”.¹⁶⁰ Her example of such a rule is the UN Security Council’s permanent members’ veto power. In the context of international climate politics, CBDR could emerge under such a specific rule after being institutionalized by the UNFCCC.

I define secondary institutions as stable, goal-oriented practices which are intentionally designed by international actors to manage and regulate common problems in specific pragmatic issue areas and to govern cooperation through collectively settled norms and rules, whether legally codified or not. They include regimes and international organizations, and international rules which have become established practices over time. In accordance with Spandler’s suggestion of replacing the constitutive-regulative distinction between primary and secondary institutions with a model linking distinctive processes of constitution and institutionalization¹⁶¹, I believe that also secondary institutions serve to constitute international society. From this perspective, the biggest distinction between primary and secondary institutions is that secondary institutions are the products of purposeful institution building processes by agents, while primary institutions emerge through decentralized processes and over time. What makes secondary institutions special is that they create a social and political space in which individual actors can shape the workings of international society. Although non-state actors

¹⁵⁷ Spandler 2014, 7.

¹⁵⁸ Spandler 2014, 8.

¹⁵⁹ Spandler 2014, 13 (emphasis in original).

¹⁶⁰ Friedner Parrat 2015, 10.

¹⁶¹ Spandler 2014, 13.

are not members of international society, they are participants in international practices. Secondary institutions grant them access to the negotiation processes of the rules of international society.

Secondary institutions are always the products of a time: They are central to understanding power politics and the shared values of a particular time. However, this does not mean that secondary institutions are only “arenas for acting out power relationships”¹⁶² in which the “most powerful states in the system create and shape institutions so that they can maintain their share of world power, or even increase it”.¹⁶³ In contrast, secondary institutions are deliberately designed to solve global problems, and the participants of secondary institutions are usually willing to make concessions in order to find efficient solutions. In other words, the participants do not participate in secondary institutions out of self-interest, but also because they believe it is the right thing to do.

2.3 Why do states participate in and assume responsibilities within international practices?

Ian Hurd suggests that there are three general reasons why and how states participate in international practices: Coercion, self-interest, and legitimacy.¹⁶⁴ I assert that all three are active processes and, in contrast to the constructivist tendency, it is not necessary or possible to assess “how much” a state has internalized the rules of international practice. The first one, based on realism, is obviously the weakest of the three as social practices forcefully imposed by outsiders are not really internalized at all by actors themselves. The second one, based on liberalism, rests on rational calculations about the costs and benefits of participation. The last one, based on constructivism, is the deepest and the most stable of the three: states participate in and follow the rules of an international practice because they believe in the moral legitimacy of the rule or the legitimacy of the international organization that formulated it.¹⁶⁵ In real life, the relationship between the three modes of the internalization of the practices is complex and

¹⁶² Evans & Wilson 1992, 330.

¹⁶³ Mearsheimer 1994, 13.

¹⁶⁴ Hurd 1999; see also Buzan 2004a, 103, 130–133, 253–261; Hurd 2007, 30–40; Hurrell 2007, 67–77 and Wendt 1999, 247–250.

¹⁶⁵ Hurd 1999, 387.

none of them is likely to exist in a “pure, isolated form”.¹⁶⁶ Therefore, all social practices are held together by a *mélange* of all the three.¹⁶⁷ It is the “necessity of mixture, and how to deal with it...what defines politics”.¹⁶⁸ Besides, states’ identities and preferences change over time. Even if a state participates in an international practice for egoistic or other not-so-magnanimous reasons, it does not mean that those interests remain the only motivator of its practices in the future as well. The world changes, political leaders change and values change. International practices can also influence the participants’ beliefs and identity by shaping their values and preferences. Participation in international climate practices, for example, may change a state’s ideas of human well-being: although it had previously underlined economic factors of well-being, a state may begin to give more value to having a clean environment and a stable climate system. Over time, new ground-breaking ideas may become established practices that are taken for granted in social relations.

In the following sections, I provide only a short introduction to Hurd’s first two factors – coercion and calculation – because the former is not a very meaningful factor in the context of climate responsibility, and the latter has already been extensively studied by rationalists. Since Hurd’s third factor, legitimacy and belief, is of interest to the study of state responsibility, I explore it in more detail from a broader perspective of identity politics. In particular, I argue that there are strong links between identity, participation in social practices and responsibility.

2.3.1 Coercion and regulations

“Coercion”, Hurd describes, “refers to a relation of asymmetrical physical power among agents, where this asymmetry is applied to changing the behavior of the weaker agent.”¹⁶⁹ At this stage, a state participates in an international practice because it is physically or “psychologically” forced to do so. In other words, a state’s participation is motivated by fear of retribution or physical compulsion.¹⁷⁰ Coercion has indeed been an important method for the expansion of European

¹⁶⁶ Hurd 1999, 389.

¹⁶⁷ Buzan 2004a, 130.

¹⁶⁸ Buzan 2004a, 130.

¹⁶⁹ Hurd 2007, 35.

¹⁷⁰ Hurd 2007, 35.

international society. Many non-Western states, including China, were coerced into participating in international practices through colonialization and other unequal treaties before the 20th century. Practices of solidarity, such as human rights, can also be spread via coercion. Regarding climate change, an eco-intervention could be made to coerce a state that is reluctant to adopt environmentally beneficial laws.

Economic sanctions are a typical example of a non-violent form of coercion in contemporary international politics. International law can also be seen as a more restrained and prudent form of coercion: When an international norm is given a status of law, states have to follow it because it is a “law”. The status of a law thus “constitutes an independent reason for action”.¹⁷¹ International treaties may set directives and specific responsibilities in order to guide the conduct of the participants: Participants may be encouraged, permitted or required to do something, or they can be encouraged or prohibited from doing something. Sometimes, states might be socially coerced to follow the formal rules of practice because they are “adopted in manner that the actor accepts as legitimate”, such as majority decision-making even though they themselves resist such rules.¹⁷² Once a state has ratified a treaty, it may follow its rules and fulfil its responsibility not because it has internalized the responsibility but because it wants to avoid sanctions. In this case, a state’s compliance is not only coerced by international regulations, but is also motivated by calculations. International regulations also influence state behaviour – whether or not a state has ratified a specific international treaty related to the issue area. Even if the political leaders of a state do not put a premium on solidarist practices, such as human rights or animal welfare, international practices and regulations may nevertheless constrain and put pressure on domestic policies. The agency of the non-state actors is essential for the creation of the social pressure that is put on states.

Power politics is an important incentive for participation in international practices. States can use international institutions to promote their values and policies globally, which is naturally considered a more legitimate means compared to physical coercion. Therefore, as Franz Xaver Perrez notes:

...efforts to ensure international cooperation may be conceived sometimes rather as attempts to coerce less powerful states to bring their behaviour into

¹⁷¹ Bodansky 2010, 91.

¹⁷² Bodansky 2010, 90.

conformity with the interests of the most powerful states than as efforts to solve common problems cooperatively.¹⁷³

Although the negotiations of responsibilities are bounded by power, the most powerful participants cannot dictate what kind of responsibilities participants ought to shoulder. All the participants can usually participate in negotiations regarding what kind of responsibilities they are assumed to shoulder and hence they are not literally coerced into responsibility; responsibilities are voluntary, they cannot be coerced. It is not likely that real normative change will happen through coercion.

2.3.2 Interests

Rationalists maintain that states cooperate because it is their interest to do so: the costs of major war have increased and states cannot solve global problems without international cooperation. International norms and organizations help states to deal with common problems and organize cooperation, for instance. From this perspective, states participate in international practices and make commitments in order to promote and maintain their national interests for the very same reason they comply with the international treaties they have entered into. As most of the goals and interests of a state are domestic, their participation in international practices is thus motivated by domestic interests: the needs and desires of the state guide which practices they take part in and how they try to shape the goals and rules of the practice and what kinds of responsibilities they are willing to shoulder. Regarding climate change, each state makes calculations as to whether and to what extent they are willing bear the costs of climate mitigation and what the costs would be – in terms of losses of credibility and financial losses – regarding non-participation. Again, these calculations involve normative evaluations about the “value” a state gives to a clean environment. For example, does a state regard environmental protection only in terms of costs or does nature have some intrinsic value in the calculations?

Self-interest can be a central incentive for participation in international practices. The cost-benefit calculations may motivate a state to change its behaviour and assign some responsibility within the practice because non-

¹⁷³ Perrez 2000, 340.

participation would harm its interests and image internationally. Cost-benefit calculations are not, however, likely to make profound changes in an actor's preferences and values, and hence their influence may be short-term and limited. Long-term relations amongst self-interestedly motivated participants are difficult to maintain as they do not value relations or cooperation as such. Social practices that rely heavily on self-interest are necessarily thin and may easily disintegrate if power relations change.¹⁷⁴

Interests cannot alone explain state behaviour. As constructivists point out, interests are not given but different individuals (and states) have different kind of interests. “[I]nterests presuppose identities”, Wendt notes, “because an actor cannot know what it wants until it knows who it is”.¹⁷⁵ Ringmar echoes: “It is *only as some-one* that we can want *some-thing*, and it is only once we know who we *are* that we can know what we *want*”.¹⁷⁶

2.3.3 Identity, practices and responsibility

Solidarists believe that globalization and increased interdependence has fostered the emergence of world society, characterized by cosmopolitan notions of morality. In accordance with the (fragile) global “we-feeling”, Hurd's last stage indicates that states participate in international practices because they believe they have to do so. This belief is closely linked to one's identity: It is identity which determines:

...how you are treated, what is expected of you, what you expect of yourself, what jobs will be available to you, what jobs you even apply for, what your health will be, whether you will be allocated as a primary carer for children, whether you will be seen as an enemy or friend.¹⁷⁷

Again, identity is not exclusively an asset of our own as others also shape our identity. “We need *recognition* for the persons we take ourselves to be, and only *as recognised* can we conclusively come to establish an identity”, Ringmar explains.¹⁷⁸ Therefore, status, or social identity, is an important element of ones' identity and

¹⁷⁴ Hurd 1999, 387.

¹⁷⁵ Wendt 1999, 231.

¹⁷⁶ Ringmar 1996, 13.

¹⁷⁷ Zalewski & Enloe 1995, 282–283.

¹⁷⁸ Ringmar 1996, 13 (emphasis in original).

the pursuit of favourable status may be a significant motivator for a state's participation in international practices. This brings us back to the questions of self-interest and the calculations discussed above; it is sometimes difficult to distinguish between legitimacy and interests as states may accept international norms because it serves their interests.

The conception of legitimacy, however, helps us understand why states sometimes participate in practices against their self-interest. According to Mark Suchman, legitimacy is "a generalized perception or assumption that the actions of an entity are desirable, proper, or appropriate within some socially constructed system of norms, values, beliefs, and definitions".¹⁷⁹ If states accept the rules of an international practice as legitimate and justified, they do not participate in it only due to the fear of retribution or self-interest calculations but because of their "internal sense of rightness and obligation".¹⁸⁰ The perception of legitimacy "may come from the substance of the rule or from the procedure or source by which it was constituted".¹⁸¹ At this stage, states internalize the rules of a practice and incorporate them into their identity and interests. When this happens, states assume responsibility within the practice because they find it is the fairest thing to do.

Identities matter in social life. Identity is a subjective and objective discourse of the self: it is how both one and others perceive and establish distinctiveness. Who am I, what am I and what do others think I am? Identity is also always linked to others: What am I not? Furthermore, it is both material and ideational: It is based on the material site of a human body (or the territory of a state) but what make it so special are ideas: values, beliefs, knowledge, attitudes, memories etc. It is identity "what allows us to define what is important to us and what is not".¹⁸² "My identity", Charles Taylor explains, "is defined by the commitments and identifications which provide the frame or horizon within which I can try to determine from case to case what is good, or valuable, or what ought to be done, or what I endorse or oppose."¹⁸³ These "commitments and identifications" are constructed within the practices, such as religious, political, educational, or family practices, in which one takes part and which allocate certain responsibilities for the

¹⁷⁹ Suchman 1995, 574.

¹⁸⁰ Hurd 2007, 30.

¹⁸¹ Hurd 1999, 381.

¹⁸² Taylor 1989, 30.

¹⁸³ Taylor 1989, 27.

participants. Identity is hence a “lived experience of participation in specific communities”¹⁸⁴, and practices shape and transform participants’ identity, notions of morality and sense of appropriate choices of actions. Because practices anchor identities “in each other and what we do together” it is not easy to transform identity without the support of the other participants in the practice.¹⁸⁵ If a person is excluded from a practice important to his or her identity, he or she may face something colloquial language terms an “identity crisis”. Large communities like states need to have normative and organizational ideas that “signify their members what they stand for” and that “guide them in their interactions in the international arena”.¹⁸⁶ Ideologies are beliefs that define what is held right and wrong in a society.¹⁸⁷ They are incorporated in identities and embedded in many social practices such as governmental procedures, educational systems and the rhetoric of the political elite.¹⁸⁸

There are fundamental links between practices, identity and responsibility. The first link between identity and responsibility is historical. To some extent, our current self-understanding is a product of our past choices and commitments. For example, China’s contemporary identity and approach to responsibility is strongly shaped by both its imperial and Maoist practices, which do not exist as such anymore. The second link concerns the here and now: it is about the question “who am I?”. Usually the answer is a name (I’m Mary) or a statement related to the contemporary practices one takes part in (I am the mother of Mary, I am a Catholic, or I am a professor). The latter answer is thus close to something that Hart would call role responsibility¹⁸⁹, Wendt calls role identity¹⁹⁰, and which role theorists call role conceptions.¹⁹¹ The third link is social: The commitments and identifications of the others also shape our self-understanding and hence the responsibilities we assign. To use Buzan’s words:

¹⁸⁴ Wenger 1998, 151.

¹⁸⁵ Wenger 1998, 89.

¹⁸⁶ Legro 2005, 6.

¹⁸⁷ Watson 1982, 68.

¹⁸⁸ Legro 2005, 6. See also Haas 2005.

¹⁸⁹ Hart 1968, 212.

¹⁹⁰ Wendt 1999, 227.

¹⁹¹ See, for example, Harnisch 2011.

At the end of the day, it is not what states are, or what they say about themselves and others, that determines status, but how they calculate their own behaviour and, most importantly, how they respond to the behaviour of others.¹⁹²

Regarding China's climate responsibility, the commitments of developed countries form an essential precondition for China's motivation to take on more global responsibility. However, there is no causal relation between identity and responsibility, nor can identities alone explain action. To understand why and what kind of responsibilities one assumes in practice, we have to explore his or her interests. With respect to states, national interests and goals are thus of importance when assigning responsibilities as each state – or more accurately, its government – has certain goals that it wishes to obtain. These goals reflect a state's identity and values and motivate it to take certain actions. Hence, a state's identity and interests influence what kind of practices it may take part in, and what kinds of responsibilities it is willing to or capable of assuming within the practice. Free-riding and the failure to fulfil responsibilities would harm its international image and identity conception as a responsible international citizen.

2.4 Institutional change

As Andrew Abbott points out, the “social world is constantly changing and reforming itself.” By the same token, “change is the normal state of affairs” of international (institutionalized) practices.¹⁹³ Practices evolve and change as they mature.¹⁹⁴ Change is usually explained by certain types of “markers” such as trends, great events, and significant technological and social innovations.¹⁹⁵ A major technological development could, for example, dramatically lower the costs of climate change mitigation or carbon capture and storage and thus create more political will to shoulder broader climate responsibilities amongst states. These kinds of changes in circumstances can also produce new international actors such as new sovereign states or non-state actors. In general, markers identify *when*

¹⁹² Buzan 2004b, 68.

¹⁹³ Abbott 2001, 254.

¹⁹⁴ Finnemore and Sikkink's (1998) classic model of norm life cycle has three stages: norm emergence, norm acceptance and internalization.

¹⁹⁵ Holsti 2004, 7–12.

change takes place but do not specify *what kind* of change is happening.¹⁹⁶ Therefore, Holsti differentiates between six types of concepts of change: change as novelty and replacement; change as addition or subtraction; change as increased or decreased complexity; change as transformation; change as reversion and change as obsolescence.¹⁹⁷ However, these concepts do not identify *why* change takes place.

Many IR theorists, particularly realists and rationalists, explain change with reference to material factors. For example, Keohane and Nye explain regime change by changes in 1) economic and technological processes, 2) overall power structures in the world, 3) the power structure within specific issue areas and 4) power capabilities affected by international organizations.¹⁹⁸ Sometimes change is the result of an external shock like war, revolution or another crisis or change in circumstances. For the time being, climate change has not caused a dramatic crisis but its impacts have progressed slowly and are “invisible” for large audiences. Had it caused a sudden humanitarian crisis, states would most likely take more urgent action. Not all changes in international society, however, can be explained by great events. For constructivists, the primary reason for change is the transformation of collective ideas.¹⁹⁹ As discussed earlier in this chapter, identities matter in interstate relations. When an identity of a state transforms, its behaviour in international society also changes accordingly. However, ideational change cannot alone explain institutional change but relations of power and interests are important factors in shaping international society. The ES underlines that both material and ideational factors induce change in international society.²⁰⁰ For the ES, international institutions and practices are the most important markers and metrics of change in international society because they mirror international order and common ideas, problems, interests and norms amongst states of a historical era.²⁰¹

Within the ES, the most advanced theoretical account of change is provided by Tonny Brems Knudsen, whose “pre-theory of fundamental institutional change” points out that international organizations are central to the “reproduction and

¹⁹⁶ Holsti 2004, 12 (emphasis added).

¹⁹⁷ Holsti 2004, 12–17.

¹⁹⁸ Keohane & Nye 2012, 32–51.

¹⁹⁹ See Legro 2005 for a detailed framework of how ideas influence continuity or change in international society.

²⁰⁰ See Buzan & Lawson 2015 for an extensive account of the origins of our global modernity.

²⁰¹ Holsti 2004, 18–19.

working [of primary institutions], and therefore also to changes in their working”.²⁰² Knudsen’s approach differs profoundly from that of Buzan, who contends that clashes amongst primary institutions are the “key driving force” for institutional change in international society.²⁰³ This means that despite the terminology, the relationship between primary and secondary institutions is not a one-way hierarchical relationship because they both shape each other. Indeed, Knudsen concludes that secondary institutions are the “most important frameworks for the reproduction and change of fundamental institutions, and thus for the maintenance and development of international order and justice”.²⁰⁴ Knudsen identifies two drivers of change: “change *in* a fundamental institution” which is caused by “changes in the practices by which the constitutive principles are reproduced or maintained” and the “change *of* a fundamental institution”, referring to “changes in the constitutive principles themselves.”²⁰⁵ Knudsen’s conceptualization leaves room for the emergence of new primary institutions – if the constitutive principles of international society change fundamentally.²⁰⁶ Knudsen’s model, however, does not consider the role of agency in institutional change and hence it cannot explain the evolution of the international practice of (climate) responsibility.

I suggest that we should look at the role of agency when investigating institutional change. In addition to state agency, subnational and non-state actors, such as international organizations, non-governmental organizations, social and religious movements, scientists, the media, corporations, cities, and provinces, participate in the institutionalization processes of secondary institutions in many ways and are hence important subjects of change. They politicize new (environmental) problems, initiate or constrain international political agenda, produce and disseminate knowledge and participate in the construction of rules of international practices, for example. In addition, they can influence the development of the domestic (climate) policies of individual states as well as their position in international negotiations. Furthermore, we should not ignore the agency of individuals when investigating institutional change: people influence and

²⁰² Knudsen 2013, 18.

²⁰³ Buzan 2004a, 186.

²⁰⁴ Knudsen 2013, 34.

²⁰⁵ Knudsen 2013, 16 (emphasis added).

²⁰⁶ Knudsen 2013, 17.

shape international practices – both negatively and positively.²⁰⁷ For example, the French leadership, and especially the role of Laurent Fabius, French Foreign Minister and President of the 2015 Climate Conference, was widely commended as being eminent for the successful outcome of the Paris climate conference. Or, maybe if Al Gore had been elected as the President of US in 2000 instead of George W. Bush, the climate policy of the United States – and therefore other states – would have taken a different kind of road. This example also illustrates that sometimes factors not related to a specific practice may have a significant impact on it. The election of Bush probably had nothing to do with climate politics but it nevertheless influenced climate practices locally and globally. Regarding China, the values and interests of the chair of the CCP undoubtedly have a significant influence on state practices due to the state’s rather autocratic governance structure.

2.5 Secondary institutions, responsibility and institutional change

In contrast to sovereign states, which establish domestic institutions to channel and implement their responsibilities, an anarchic international society has no central authoritative organization responsible for the distribution of global responsibilities. Because relations between states and their responsibilities have to be regulated in some way,²⁰⁸ the international practice of the establishment of secondary institutions began at the Vienna Congress in 1815: “Since then there has been almost continuous expansion in variety, numbers and functional dimension of institutions with the exception of the period of the Second World War”.²⁰⁹ Today, secondary institutions are constitutive to the workings of international society not only because of their input to the “socialization” or “internalization” of international norms, or to the construction of state identity and interests, but because they serve as venues where state and non-state actors can settle and

²⁰⁷ Charlotte Epstein (2008) proves that individual activists have been especially influential in the evolution of the international practices of whaling.

²⁰⁸ According to Shue (1988, 703; 696), states indeed have a *responsibility* to “create, maintain and enhance” “positive-duty-performing” international organizations, which “can at least partly coordinate the activities of those claiming their rights and those doing their duties”.

²⁰⁹ Groom 1988, 3.

contest the constitutive rules of international society. Without the establishment of secondary institutions it would be difficult, or even impossible, to negotiate and mediate the positive responsibilities of states as they relate to global problems. Secondary institutions produce and enact constitutive rules of international society “in that they are *social practices*”.²¹⁰

I argue that secondary institutions function as *bridging practices* between the primary institutions and “real world politics” performed by state and non-state actors on a daily basis. It is a reciprocal relationship. First, secondary institutions embed primary institutions in quotidian workings of international relations. In general, I agree with Buzan and Holsti that secondary institutions are empirical manifestations of primary institutions. This view however dismisses agency and interests in general and those of great powers in particular. This leads to my second point, namely, that secondary institutions also embody changes in the workings of the day-to-day international relations in primary institutions. Strong-minded and influential individual actors’ domestic practices, and especially power shifts in international relations, may transform primary institutions via secondary institutions as well. For example, the global impacts of China’s rise may not only transform everyday politics in secondary institutions but also gradually shape the constitutive principles of primary institutions. Through secondary institutions, non-state actors can also shape existing primary institutions, such as sovereignty, or forward the emergence of new ones, as the cases of international environmental and human rights practices demonstrate. Secondary institutions therefore function as the bridges between international society and world society.

Consequently, secondary institutions constitute the key site of the politics of responsibility. They provide states and non-state actors with a platform to negotiate the content, scope and allocation of issue-specific general and special responsibilities as well as monitor the fulfilment of international rights and responsibilities. Once more, these negotiations are shaped and constrained by primary institutions. As international responsibilities are not given, it is the participants of secondary institutions who negotiate what the responsibilities of the participants are, on what ethical grounds they are distributed amongst the participants and through which mechanisms they are implemented and monitored. Some responsibilities are formulated as legal obligations in international treaties but most state responsibilities are merely uncodified and informal (customary international law). So far, states (and non-state actors) have agreed that

²¹⁰ Sending & Neumann 2011, 237.

“responsibility to protect” means that states have a responsibility to protect people from humanitarian suffering in terms of war crimes, etc. In the future, this responsibility might expand and include other elements such as climate protection.

Clearly, climate responsibility is about the interplay between global and domestic practices. Without the international level, states do not know what “climate responsibility” means; and without the national and local level, it is impossible to carry out climate responsibility. The international practice of climate responsibility cannot be “located” in one single secondary institution but there are many international organizations in which the participants can discuss climate responsibility, or at least some aspects of it.²¹¹ However, there is a special secondary institution, namely the UNFCCC, which has a more central role in the construction of climate responsibility than any other international organization. It gathers state and non-state actors²¹² together, offers a “common reference-point”²¹³ of climate responsibility, and coordinates climate practices and makes them possible. The UNFCCC bridges the gap between the international practice (or an emerging primary institution) of climate responsibility and real life experience. It has no intrinsic value as such but it is an instrumental practice that establishes a discursive framework in which the participants to a practice can negotiate meanings, rules and appropriate choices of action to respond to climate change and also to allocate climate responsibilities. Hence it formulates the infrastructure for the participants to debate and enact their climate responsibility globally and locally and provides a set of tools to do that. It also provides the infrastructure for derivative “sub-practices” that the participants of the UNFCCC can take part in, such as the practices of climate finance and flexible market mechanisms. The UNFCCC, however, is not a stand-alone actor and it has not much (if any) power as such. It is the participants of the practice who mould what the UNFCCC stands for. Hence the power relations between the participants and other international practices shape the form the UNFCCC takes. Power shifts in the UNFCCC may shape the constitutive principles of the emerging primary institution of climate responsibility over time. Furthermore, the UNFCCC facilitates the operationalization of climate

²¹¹ These include both inter- and non-governmental organizations, such as the UN Environmental Programme (UNEP), the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, the Climate Action Network, and the International Union for the Conservation of Nature, as well as multilateral financial institutions such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, to name but a few.

²¹² For an introduction to the participants of the UNFCCC, see Yamin & Depledge 2004, 30–59.

²¹³ Sending & Neumann 2011, 236.

responsibility at national and local level. In other words, climate responsibility does not materialize from the global framework of the UNFCCC – it must be implemented as national policies and acted out at the grass roots level.

2.6 Climate change and the established practices of international society

The number of international practices is unlimited, hence different kinds of practices “overlap, interpenetrate, mutually determine each other, and within which different logics intersect”.²¹⁴ Similarly, primary institutions are not “completely independent of each other, but rather mutually dependent and intertwined”.²¹⁵ Therefore, changes in and of the practices that a primary institution consists of may shape and transform other primary institutions and international practices. Climate responsibility shapes and is shaped by other international practices which constitute the rules and principles organizing international society. Since it is impossible to analyse climate responsibility’s interaction with all the international practices,²¹⁶ in this section I choose to discuss two central practices of contemporary international society: sovereignty and the economy.²¹⁷ I elaborate on great power management in chapter five. This choice is inspired by Barry Buzan who points out that there is a “central tension between the market on the one hand, and sovereignty, nationalism and war on the other” in contemporary international society.²¹⁸ Clearly, climate responsibility cannot be situated in either of the camps but it challenges and conflicts with both. However, is it going to change them?

²¹⁴ Pouliot & Mérand 2013, 34.

²¹⁵ Knudsen 2013, 26.

²¹⁶ Likewise, it would also be impossible to trace and describe all international practices.

²¹⁷ In contrast to Falkner (2012, 517–519), I do not find it meaningful to look at how climate responsibility relates to international law. In my understanding, international law is not a practice in ES terms but a body of formal rules of international practices. Because Schatzki’s integrative practices do not occur without rules (either formal or informal), international law can be seen as a “crucial site in the evolution of practice” and a “critical checklist in the consideration of practice, both in identifying it and characterizing it” (Navari 2010, 12).

²¹⁸ Buzan 2004a, 251.

2.6.1 Sovereignty

Sovereignty is a socially constructed international practice, or one of the primary institutions of international society²¹⁹, which has evolved over time. It presupposes the existence of international society.²²⁰ Like all practices, sovereignty must be looked at in relation to its historical context. Currently, it is in flux. Traditional understandings of sovereignty, which emphasize a state's independence and freedom, have proved to be too limited and ineffective in this global era in which transnational problems, such as climate change, challenge geographically and theoretically limited definitions. In other words, our traditional understanding of sovereignty is not functional for contemporary international society because it no longer serves and promotes the goals and purposes to which sovereignty pertains: international peace, security, prosperity and well-being.²²¹ In particular, it does not recognize that states have responsibilities beyond their national borders.

Climate change is a showcase for why sovereignty is both an essential and a bounded practice in international politics. First, climate change is fundamentally a global problem: greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions do not respect national boundaries but float throughout the atmosphere. Second, no country can avoid the impacts of climate change: every country is affected by climate change and each state's well-being is dependent on other countries' actions and failures to reduce GHG emissions. Third, no individual nation-state can solve or escape the problem of climate change on their own, which means global cooperation and solutions are needed. Fourth, a state's sovereign right to use the natural resources, such as oil and other fossil fuels, found within its jurisdiction affects the interests and well-being of other states and global biodiversity. Fifth, in an anarchic world, all the states make their own decisions about how many resources – if any – they are willing and able to use to control their GHG emissions. No state can force another to take actions. Sixth, states have the most authority when negotiating binding agreements and setting policies to mitigate climate change. Seventh, a state's policies and actions do not only affect present day populations, but also the lives of future generations. Finally, climate change does not only affect humans and human societies but a significant loss of biodiversity is also predicted to occur all around the world. For the time being, there is no sign that sovereignty would be

²¹⁹ Buzan 2014a, 97.

²²⁰ Wendt (1999, 209), however, argues that sovereignty “is intrinsic to the state, not contingent”.

²²¹ Perrez 2000.

disregarded, and most ES theorists continue to regard sovereignty as an inescapable factor in international society. However, we need to redefine sovereignty.

In 1996, Francis M. Deng and associates challenged the traditional concept of sovereignty by proposing that sovereignty should be defined in terms of responsibility: sovereignty is not “merely the right to be undisturbed from without, but the responsibility to perform the tasks expected of an effective government”.²²² A necessary obligation of sovereignty is thus to “preserve life-sustaining standards for its citizens”.²²³ If a state fails to carry out this responsibility, other sovereign states have the right, and indeed the responsibility, to interfere in other state’s internal affairs for humanitarian reasons. Perrez argues that sovereignty should include the responsibility to cooperate as states cannot fulfil their tasks and goals effectively without international cooperation.²²⁴ In modern times, sovereignty should not focus on autonomy but on the “authority and responsibility to participate and cooperate in the global community”.²²⁵ Therefore, sovereignty can be defined as the “authority to be a member of the international community”.²²⁶ “This authority,” Perrez writes, “also inherently includes a duty or responsibility: the duty and the obligation to fulfill the tasks of a state, i.e. to enable and maintain well-being of its people, and to participate as a responsible member in the solution of common problems of the international community”.²²⁷ In accordance with this definition, a state’s sovereignty over natural resources does not only mean the right to utilize those resources but also the responsibility to cooperate on issues concerning the use of common resources, shared resources and global commons. Responsible international citizens use their natural resources in a responsible way, cooperate if their use of resources causes transboundary effects and endeavour to minimize the harm caused to the others.

²²² Deng et al. 1996, xviii.

²²³ Deng et al. 1996, xviii.

²²⁴ Perrez 2000.

²²⁵ Perrez 2000, 332.

²²⁶ Perrez 2000, 335.

²²⁷ Perrez 2000, 335.

2.6.2 Economic growth

Through the lenses of the practice approach, it is clear that economics is a social practice. In accordance with transforming ideas and developing technologies, for example, its systems change locally, nationally and globally. ES thinking about economics remains undeveloped, and there is “hardly any discussion” about potential economic primary institutions.²²⁸ Unfortunately, I am not going to develop the economic views of the ES, I will simply look at how international practices that focus on economic growth have dictated international climate practices. I treat the market as a primary institution and regard economic growth as one of the international practices of which it is comprised.²²⁹ This is not to say that there were no economic practices before the emergence of free markets and capitalism, which brought along the “growth fetish”, in the late eighteenth century.²³⁰ For the purposes of this study, it is adequate to note that many developments and tragedies of the nineteenth century led to the abandonment of mercantilism and the emergence of capitalist free trade practices.²³¹ Firstly, secondary institutions related to capitalism were established in the late nineteenth century²³² and during the twentieth century, international capitalist practices become institutionalized.²³³ Although the market did not gain “something like fully global status as an institution of international society” before the end of the Cold War²³⁴, it has undoubtedly been the most influential economic practice since the emergence of international climate practices.²³⁵ Besides, it has also affected China’s climate practices from a very early stage as China started to take steps towards “red capitalism” in 1978. No doubt modern capitalism is “with increasingly few exceptions” and will be, the “operating system of the world economy” now and in the foreseeable future.²³⁶

²²⁸ Buzan 2014a, 136.

²²⁹ Within the ES, Buzan (2014a) talks about the market, and Holsti (2004) focuses on trade, for instance.

²³⁰ See Holsti 2004, 211–218 for mercantilist practices of seventeenth and eighteenth century.

²³¹ See Holsti 2004, 218–221; and Buzan & Lawson 2014, 147–156.

²³² Buzan 2014a, 138.

²³³ See Holsti 2004, 222–228; and Buzan & Lawson 2014, 24–42; 157–165.

²³⁴ Buzan 2014a, 138.

²³⁵ For the intertwined histories of capitalism and climate practices, see Newell & Paterson 2010, 11–35.

²³⁶ Speth 2008, 7.

“Development” is the key word of the capitalist era. While social practices usually emerge slowly, Wolfgang Sachs traces the emergence of the “development era” to a specific date and hour: On January 20, 1949, then US President Harry Truman gave his inauguration speech in which he for the first time defined poorer countries as “underdeveloped areas”.²³⁷ Truman’s conception was based on an idea that “all the peoples of the world were moving along the same track, some faster, some slower, but all in the same direction”.²³⁸ This view represented the Western models of socioeconomic development as universal norms and resonated with Western beliefs of “progress” and “improvement” in which the future will, or at least ought to, be better than the present.²³⁹ Yet, the ideas of progress do not specify for whom and in what terms the future will be better for: (the Western) elites, all humans or all living creatures, for example? Truman’s conception also packaged the diverse African, Asian, and Latin American countries into “one single category – the underdeveloped”.²⁴⁰

In the 1970s, the latest stage of capitalism²⁴¹, neoliberalism, started to evolve and diffuse.²⁴² Neoliberalism suggests that development can be best promoted through “liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade”.²⁴³ From a state responsibility point of view, this means that states have the responsibility to establish and maintain institutional frameworks to make markets work, but their interference in economic practices must be kept minimal. Since Truman’s speech, development has been largely understood as a synonym for economic growth and its qualitative aspects are often dismissed. Human well-being is usually measured in economic terms, such as gross domestic product (GDP), and governments tend to take economic growth as their ultimate responsibility. Consumerism has become a cornerstone of economic growth, involving a “powerful, socially sanctioned commitment to ever-increasing

²³⁷ Sachs 1993, 4.

²³⁸ Sachs 1993, 4.

²³⁹ See Barry 1999.

²⁴⁰ Sachs 1993, 4.

²⁴¹ According to Buzan & Lawson (2014, 151–165), the development of global capitalism includes four stages: the commercialization of agriculture, two stages of industrial revolution, Keynesianism, and neoliberalism.

²⁴² For the development of neoliberalism, see Harvey 2005.

²⁴³ Harvey 2005, 2.

purchase of goods and services on the market”.²⁴⁴ This approach clearly emphasizes material conditions over the social, environmental and spiritual factors of well-being.²⁴⁵

As J. R. McNeill notes, “growth fetish”, i.e. neoliberalism’s “overarching priority of economic growth”, was the key idea of the twentieth century.²⁴⁶ As a result, the wealth in the world has not been distributed equally and the gap between developed and developing countries has widened. Social disparities have also increased. Moreover, most citizens of developed countries have caught “affluenza”, a disease “suffered by the affluent in their addictive pursuit of capital and consumption, at the cost of destroying welfare, the environment, and individual health”.²⁴⁷ The environmental consequences of consumerism have been dramatic: on the one hand, the world overconsumes natural resources; on the other hand, it produces more and more pollution and waste. Yet, development is regarded as central to environmental protection and international environmental practices have been integrated into development since the beginning, as I will demonstrate in the empirical chapters of the study.

²⁴⁴ Speth 2008, 147.

²⁴⁵ Speth 2008, 147.

²⁴⁶ McNeill 2000, 33, see also Hamilton 2004.

²⁴⁷ Andrew Brennan and Y.S. Lo quoted in Harris 2013, 107.

3 Practices of state responsibility

Within and outside the ES it is widely accepted that organizations such as states, corporations and institutions are moral agents: they are human constellations, and therefore human-beings cannot escape from moral questions of right and wrong.²⁴⁸ States (or more accurately, the legitimate representatives of states) have ultimate responsibilities because they have the highest authority to make decisions and take actions, including those concerning the use of coercive power in their respective sovereign territory. Given my aim to find out how states define and how they ought to define and fulfil their climate responsibility, I integrate “empirical knowledge and normative reasoning”²⁴⁹ in this chapter. I begin with an overview of theoretical accounts of responsibility: What does “responsibility” mean in legal and moral terms? I deliberately avoid discussing rights at length as there is already an extensive body of literature on human rights including environmental rights.²⁵⁰ Clearly, responsibilities are tied to rights: if someone has a right, others have, at minimum, a corresponding responsibility to refrain from harming that right. Next, I argue that responsibility is a practice: in order to be and be seen good international citizens, states have to take part in and assign responsibilities within international practices. In the last section, I explore how the practices of state responsibility materialize in real life and I ask: what kind of multidimensional responsibilities do states bear and what ought they to bear? The English School provides us with insightful standpoints to explore them.

²⁴⁸ See, for example, French 1984; French & Wettstein 2006; Erskine 2003 and Mayer & Vogt 2006.

²⁴⁹ Reus-Smit 2013, 602.

²⁵⁰ See Shue 1980 for a detailed study of basic rights, and Alfredsson 2010; Anton & Shelton 2011 and Weiss 1989, 95–117, for example, for a comprehensive analysis with numerous examples of how the environment is taken into account in the human rights field and how international environmental regimes incorporate human rights.

3.1 Legal and philosophical accounts of responsibility

Responsibility is a nebulous concept. Its many meanings are well illustrated in a well-known passage written by H.L.A. Hart:

As captain of the ship, X was responsible for the safety of his passengers and crew. But on his last voyage he got drunk every night and was responsible for the loss of the ship with all aboard. It was rumored that he was insane, but the doctors considered that he was responsible for his actions. Throughout the voyage he behaved quite irresponsibly, and various incidents in his career showed that he was not a responsible person. He always maintained that the exceptional winter storms were responsible for the loss of the ship, but in the legal proceedings brought against him he was found criminally responsible for his negligent conduct, and in separate civil proceedings he was held legally responsible for the loss of life and property. He is still alive and he is morally responsible for the deaths of many women and children.²⁵¹

The first two sentences of the story demonstrate that we have to clarify the subject and the object of responsibility. Who or what is responsible for what? To whom is the subject accountable? Hart's passage also demonstrates that we have to distinguish between "identifying responsibility and assigning it".²⁵² The former is about finding out "who, if anybody, meets the relevant conditions for being responsible".²⁵³ This identification can be either correct or false, or justified or unjustified. The latter "involves a decision to attach certain costs or benefits to an agent, whether or not the relevant conditions are fulfilled".²⁵⁴ Thus, this decision cannot be correct or incorrect, but it can be justified or unjustified.²⁵⁵

Hart classifies many senses of responsibility under four headings that, to my understanding, attempt to capture both many the meanings of the concept of responsibility and the criteria of being responsible: role-responsibility, causal-responsibility, liability-responsibility and capacity-responsibility.²⁵⁶ Role-responsibility proposes that all social roles have their own "sphere of

²⁵¹ Hart 1968, 211.

²⁵² Miller 2007, 84.

²⁵³ Miller 2007, 84.

²⁵⁴ Miller 2007, 84.

²⁵⁵ Miller 2007, 84.

²⁵⁶ Hart 1968, 212–230.

responsibility”. In other words, each social role, defined as a “distinctive place or office in a social organization”, is attached to short-term tasks or duties “to provide for the welfare of others or to advance in some specific way the aims or purposes of the organization”.²⁵⁷ “A responsible person is one who is disposed to take his duties seriously”, Hart explains, and to “behave responsibly is to behave as a man would who took his duties in this serious way”.²⁵⁸ These responsibilities may be legal or moral, “or fall outside this dichotomy”.²⁵⁹ Causal-responsibility describes the relationship between cause and outcome: “A is responsible for Y” means that Y is a direct or indirect result of what A did. As Hart’s story about drunken captain shows, it is also possible for things, conditions and events to be responsible for results, thus, in this sense, no moral blame is attached to causal responsibility. To some extent, causal responsibility is assumed to be an important, although not a sufficient, precondition for moral and legal (or liability-responsibility, as Hart calls it) responsibility. Hart’s conception of liability-responsibility distinguishes between legal and moral liability-responsibility. When considering liability in the context of legal responsibility, “A is responsible for Y” means that “A is somehow at fault (guilty) in causing Y and can be rightfully legally punished for it”. In other words, a person who breaks the law is usually regarded as liable if a certain range of necessary and sufficient (psychological) conditions is met.²⁶⁰ Again, when considering moral liability-responsibility, “A is responsible for Y” means that “A is blameworthy for Y which can be rightfully morally disapproved”. Like legal liability, moral liability-responsibility also presupposes that a person has certain normal capacities including freedom of choice. Finally, capacity-responsibility refers to the expression “A is responsible for his/her actions” if he or she possesses a normal (psychological) capacity of understanding and control.²⁶¹ Regarding international justice, capacity is an important precondition for judging a state’s responsibilities. If a state has no capacity to act appropriately, how could it be held responsible?

Many scholars distinguish between legal and moral responsibility. At first glance, one could assume that they would mean exactly the same (at least in an

²⁵⁷ Hart 1968, 212.

²⁵⁸ Hart 1968, 213.

²⁵⁹ Hart 1968, 213.

²⁶⁰ For a detailed analysis of legal responsibility in the context of civil and criminal law, see, for example, Fletcher 1998; Ross 1975; Hart 1968 and Morris 1961.

²⁶¹ Hart 1968, 227.

ideal world). However, mostly for practical reasons, they are not always identical, as Steve Vanderheiden explains:

Assessments of moral responsibility rely on an agent's state of mind, intentions, knowledge, and beliefs, and these are not readily ascertainable by the institutions charged with determining legal responsibility, which instead rely more heavily on the observed consequences of acts, along with any aggravating or mitigating circumstances surrounding them – including evidence concerning the mental state or mens rea of the accused – as the basis for determinations and degrees of responsibility.²⁶²

The biggest difference between the two is that while legal responsibility is always judged by a jurisdiction, moral responsibility is assessed by morals, a “kind of internal law, governing those inner thoughts and volitions which are completely subject to the agent's control, and administered before the tribunal of conscience”.²⁶³ In the words of Joel Feinberg:

To be legally responsible for a harm is to be liable to official punishment or to legal pressure to make pecuniary reparation. To be morally responsible, on the other hand, is not to be liable to any kind of official action or even to unofficial informal responses such as acts of blaming. Moral responsibility, so conceived, is liability to charges and credits on some ideal record, liability to credit or blame (in the sense of “blame” that implies no action).²⁶⁴

Another distinctive feature between legal and moral responsibility is their temporal orientation. The focus of legal responsibility is always retrospective: The court asks if A was guilty of doing harm to X, for instance. Hence, one cannot be held legally responsible for something that he or she has not done (or failed to do). Usually, assessing moral responsibility follows a similar logic: we blame someone morally for something that that he or she has done (or failed to do). Moral responsibility, however, can sometimes also be prospective as the concept of sustainable development very well demonstrates.

Normally both legal and moral responsibility contains a causal component: one is either legally or morally “at fault” for the harm he or she did.²⁶⁵ Thus, one cannot be held responsible for something that has not happened because of his or

²⁶² Vanderheiden 2008, 150.

²⁶³ Feinberg 1970, 33.

²⁶⁴ Feinberg 1970, 30.

²⁶⁵ For a detailed elaboration on causation and responsibility, see Hart & Honoré 1985.

her “fault”. With respect to climate change, however, it is very difficult, or even impossible, to identify a single state or private enterprise as being “guilty” for causing climate change. Causality, on its own, is not a justified factor of responsibility, but there are other conditions of moral and legal judgement as well.²⁶⁶ For example, intentions, motives and choices are important when determining responsibility. One cannot be held responsible for something that happened due to an accident or factors beyond his or her control. To be morally blameworthy, a person is usually expected to have had an opportunity and the freedom to “have acted otherwise than he did”.²⁶⁷ Thus, free will and the absence of coercion is an important condition: a person must have acted voluntarily in order to be held responsible for something.²⁶⁸ However, this does not necessarily mean that people are only held responsible for their actions. Consequentialist theorists, who emphasize the significance of good outcomes, claim that one can also be held morally responsible for his or her omissions. In fact, they make no difference between consequences resulting from acts or omissions. This view is opposed to deontologists who seek to find out why agents do what they do and thus ask: what are the real motives behind their actions? “What matter much more to them [deontologists]”, Goodin writes, “are individuals’ [or states’] motives and intentions. They also insist that it be done, and be seen to be done, for the right reasons”.²⁶⁹ Because they pay less attention to the consequences of acts, deontologists do not hold persons responsible for their omissions. This distinction between positive and negative responsibility is often demonstrated in terms of the difference between killing (an agent’s active role) and letting die (an agent’s passive role) with the same consequence.²⁷⁰ However, in climate politics, it does not matter what an agent’s motives are when taking action because climate mitigation does not necessarily need to be done for humanitarian, environmental or other “right” reasons, it may also be a “side-effect” of energy security projects or the development of “green jobs”.²⁷¹ What counts is that states shoulder their

²⁶⁶ Every state has its own conception of the conditions of legal liability.

²⁶⁷ Ross 1975, 15.

²⁶⁸ May 1992, 16.

²⁶⁹ Goodin 1995, 47.

²⁷⁰ Vanderheiden 2008, 151–152.

²⁷¹ In contrast to this view, China’s climate policies are sometimes criticized because they are not implemented for “right” reasons. For example, Richerzhagen and Scholz (2008, 311) complain that even though renewable energy has been a top priority in China’s energy strategy since 2006, these

responsibility to mitigate climate change and cut their GHG emissions; they themselves can choose the most suitable and cost-efficient mitigation actions. Some states may prefer market-orientated economic mechanisms, some may choose to establish new regulations and taxes and some may pursue new technologies in order to achieve the goal of climate protection.²⁷²

Feinberg points out that moral responsibility “cannot be a matter of luck”, like it often is in the law, instead it “must be something one can neither escape by good luck nor tumble into through back luck”.²⁷³ Feinberg illustrates this problem – what Thomas Nagel calls “moral luck”²⁷⁴ – with the following example:

One man shoots another and kills him, and the law holds him responsible for the death and hangs him. Another man, with exactly the same motives and intentions, takes careful aim and shoots at his enemy but misses because of a last-minute movement of his prey or because of his own bad eyesight. The law cannot hold him responsible for a death because he has not caused one; but, from the moral point of view, he is only luckier than the hanged murderer.²⁷⁵

In addition to the division between legal liability and moral responsibility, there are also other ways to conceptualize responsibility. For example, David Miller provides an interesting alternative by distinguishing two senses of responsibility: On the one hand, outcome responsibility which is about the responsibility that people shoulder for their own actions and decisions; On the other hand, remedial responsibility which acknowledges that people have responsibility to aid those in need of help.²⁷⁶ Another useful alternative is Iris Marion Young’s division between the liability model of responsibility and the social connection model of responsibility. “Under liability model”, Young writes, “one assigns responsibility to a particular agent (or agents) whose actions can be shown to be causally connected to the circumstances for which responsibility is sought”.²⁷⁷ In contrast, the social connection model recognizes that “[o]ur responsibility derives from belonging

measures may not have been implemented for climatic reasons but in order to cut energy costs and to increase energy security, which is essential to maintain economic growth.

²⁷² Of course, states’ climate policies usually consist of a mixture of all these.

²⁷³ Feinberg 1970, 31, 32.

²⁷⁴ Nagel 1979, 24–38.

²⁷⁵ Feinberg 1970, 31–21.

²⁷⁶ Miller 2007, 81–109.

²⁷⁷ Young 2006, 116.

together with others in a system of interdependent processes of cooperation and competition through which we seek benefits and aim to realize projects.”²⁷⁸

Both Miller and Young point out that the concepts of legal and moral responsibility focus too much on causality and past actions: who is to blame for a specific harm? Therefore, they fail to identify the forward-looking responsibility of agents to aim for good outcomes and prevent bad outcomes. In the end, responsibility is about making responsible choices. By “responsible” we usually mean that an actor manages to perform its *responsibilities*, which are “those things for which an actor is accountable”.²⁷⁹ Responsible choices should not, Jackson notes, be “confused with perfect choices”. “Human decisions, especially political decisions, cannot be expected to be perfect”, he explains, “They can only be expected to be justified.” Therefore, “[r]esponsible choices are the best choices in circumstances, or at least most defensible choices”.²⁸⁰ This means that when we assess state responsibility we can, at a minimum, expect that states make responsible choices in restrictive circumstances. Responsible choices are hard and normative decisions are made between “conflicting but equally compelling” interests and values. Sometimes these choices are “between greater and lesser evil”, and sometimes they involve sacrifice.²⁸¹ Given this is very difficult decision-making, Jackson suggests that we could define a responsible state leader as “somebody who can make the best of a bad situation”.²⁸²

Finally, Henry Shue also points out many important dichotomies of the characteristics of responsibility.²⁸³ According to him:

Our inherited picture of duties is full of dichotomies. A duty is either negative or positive. If it is negative, it requires us not to do things. If it is positive, it requires us to do or provide things. A duty is either perfect or imperfect. If it is perfect, it is owed to specifiable individuals who have a right to its performance. If it is imperfect, it is not owed to specifiable individuals and no one can rightfully demand that its performance be directed at him. A duty is either special or general. If it is special, it is owed because of an act, event, or relationship of which a causal or historical account can be given. If it is general, it is owed on some ground independent

²⁷⁸ Young 2006, 119.

²⁷⁹ Bukovansky et al. 2012, 54.

²⁸⁰ Jackson 2000, 22.

²⁸¹ Jackson 2000, 142.

²⁸² Jackson 2000, 148.

²⁸³ Instead of responsibility, Shue uses the term “duty”.

of specific acts, events, and relationships, such as the mere fact that the parties involved are human beings.²⁸⁴

3.2 Practice approach to responsibility

As demonstrated in the previous section, responsibility is a genuine political concept. Regarding responsibility, we always refer to some kind of normative system, either moral or legal. There is no “natural” (causal or logical) normative system “as such” but statements about responsibility are always derived from human practices. Unlike a legal normative system, a moral normative system is not codified or institutionalized. As Ross points out, this raises many questions about the origin of morality:

What morality is to be appealed to, then, when we are to identify the conditions of moral responsibility? Is it Catholic or Protestant morality? Communist or Capitalist? Chinese or Eskimo? The morality of duty or of utility? Or perhaps the author’s own personal morality? Or are there certain presuppositions common to all moral systems, however much the evaluations that one derives from them may diverge?²⁸⁵

These questions illustrate very well that life is far too complex to formulate only one, universal moral ethics. Responsibility is a social conception. As there is no “final authority”, comparable to God, who would have the highest moral authority, the only way to evaluate an actor’s responsibilities is in the context of the social practice(s) he, she or it is constituted as a moral actor. There are naturally many kinds of practices and being part of one practice does not restrict the possibility to take part in other practices.²⁸⁶ There is no single moral compendium which would apply to everybody in all circumstances but ethics *is* a practice. Legal ethics makes no exception: there is no need to see any legal text as given. Instead, a legal text

²⁸⁴ Shue 1988, 688.

²⁸⁵ Ross 1975, 30.

²⁸⁶ For example, I am a participant in many practices which organize my social life, build up my identity and, not least, assign me specific responsibilities: I am a PhD candidate, a wife, a mother, a daughter, a dog owner, a neighbour, a debtor, a citizen, a voter, etc. Some of these practices do not overlap but some are prerequisites to the participation of others: without citizenship I could not participate in the practice of voting, for instance. Some practices are also only open to participants who have the formal competence to take part in them: for instance, I cannot participate in practices of medicine or jurisdiction as I have no competence achieved by education and formal recognition.

reflects and is the product of social practices. Legal liability is not a synonym of justice but it is a social construction. It is always judged with reference to a specific legal system produced within a state's practices, and there is no universal legal order as such. Legal responsibility is thus always relative and cannot simply be "read off the facts" or "*discovered*" but it is "something to be *decided*".²⁸⁷

Consequently, ethics is largely practical ethics which apply to those who are participants to a specific practice, and the moral rules about right or wrong that are negotiated and projected via those specific practices. Recall Oakeshott's definition of a practice as language.²⁸⁸ Similarly, ethics is "neither a system of general principles nor a code of rules, but a vernacular language" made by those who speak it.²⁸⁹ It is a "practice in terms of which to think, to choose, to act, and to utter".²⁹⁰ International ethics is thus a distinctive form of practical ethics which is produced and reproduced in interactions between states. Like all practices, it has a lifecycle. Frost provides a short introduction to "histories of ethics" showing that "our present-day conceptions of moral agency did not exist in former times" but international ethics is a historical practice which started to evolve after the World War II (WWII).²⁹¹

By the same token, I argue that the responsibilities of states are produced and reproduced through social practices: State responsibility is a goal-oriented, forward-looking practice which is composed of both domestic and international elements. It is founded on the institution of sovereignty: "Sovereignty itself means responsibility".²⁹² Naturally, sovereignty is not a guarantee of domestic well-being but it is "merely a framework of independence within which the good life can be pursued and hopefully realized".²⁹³ Because responsibilities are socially conceived, the responsibilities of states are not given or known "facts of life", instead it is an ethical issue to define and allocate them. International politics thus involves competition over understandings of responsibility. Through language and actions, states attempt to create a common understanding of what it means to be responsible in international society in specific times.

²⁸⁷ Feinberg 1970, 27.

²⁸⁸ Oakeshott 1975, 58.

²⁸⁹ Oakeshott 1975, 78.

²⁹⁰ Oakeshott 1975, 79.

²⁹¹ Frost 2003, 88.

²⁹² Deng 2010, 21.

²⁹³ Jackson 2000, 308.

The practice approach underlines that responsibility is not only about searching for the main culprit in a specific crisis. As Young soundly formulates, the point of responsibility is thus “not to blame, punish, or seek redress from those who did it, but rather to enjoin those who participate by their actions in the process of collective action to change it”.²⁹⁴ As the “responsibility to protect” principle demonstrates, states have a forward-looking responsibility to *prevent* humanitarian crises whether or not they can be legally or morally held at fault for the course of events which have resulted in the current state of affairs. If they do not contribute to the problems that they are not to blame for, harmful practices are going to continue and possibly negatively affect other international practices as well. That would be contradictory to the final purpose of the assignment of responsibilities, that is, “after all...not for duty-bearers to suffer more but for right-bearers to enjoy more of what they are entitled to”.²⁹⁵ Responsibility is thus not only retrospective, although it largely consists of elements derived from legal and moral ethics.

3.3 Multi-dimensional notions of the responsibility of states in world politics and international law

I build up my approach to responsibility by combining elements from the works of the English School scholars, mainly Robert Jackson and Barry Buzan, with ecocentric thinking, such as the work of Robyn Eckersley. Both Buzan and Eckersley argue that when we speak about ethics we should not focus on the polarization of mutually exclusive positions, such as realism–liberalism, pluralism–solidarism, or anthropocentrism–naturocentrism, but rather consider moral standings as moving positions on a wide spectrum of moral orientations. Buzan suggests that the pluralist–solidarist debate of the ES could be reconstructed as “not as mutually exclusive positions, but as positions on a spectrum representing, respectively, thin and thick sets of shared norms, rules and institutions”.²⁹⁶ If seen as the ends of a spectrum, they would strengthen “the position of international society as the *via media* between state-centric realism and cosmopolitan world

²⁹⁴ Young 2006, 122.

²⁹⁵ Shue 1988, 697.

²⁹⁶ Buzan 2004a, 139.

society”.²⁹⁷ Eckersley points out that the contemporary anthropocentrism–nataurocentrism division represents the “opposing poles of a wide spectrum of differing orientations toward nature” and that most of the recent studies in environmental philosophy fall “between these two poles”.²⁹⁸ Although Jackson can no doubt be located in the pluralist camp of the ES, he offers very useful conceptual tools for my analysis of state responsibility from the perspective of the state-centric solidarism. According to Jackson, governments have plural, multi-dimensional responsibilities: First, national responsibilities based on realism and the promotion of national interests; second, international responsibilities based on rationalism and a state’s membership of international society; third, humanitarian responsibilities based on revolutionism or cosmopolitanism and one’s membership of the human race; and fourth, responsibilities to the global commons based on the idea of the community of humankind’s responsibility for the health of the planet and global trusteeship.²⁹⁹ In this section, I intend to develop a solidarist approach to Jackson’s categories.

Inspired by Buzan and Eckersley, I locate practices of state responsibility on a wide spectrum of differing orientations towards a moral referent object. This is not a matter of value judgement as I do not suggest that any of the categories would be somehow more important than another. In contrast, I intend to demonstrate that different kinds of practices of responsibility are based on different kind of ideas about the referent object of responsibility. The other very end of the spectrum is pluralist and focuses on states as moral referent objects. The environmental issues, apart from national environmental security, are hence largely ignored at the pluralist end and the creation and enforcement of international norms is therefore difficult and rare. At the other very end of the spectrum is ecocentrism which gives nature a moral priority as such. Somewhere between these two ends we can find state-centric solidarism and cosmopolitan solidarism. In reality, the two very ends of the spectrum are not likely to occur. Thus, I deliberately dismiss the very pluralist end of the spectrum where a state only has responsibilities for its own survival. Instead, I argue that at minimum, states have national responsibilities: They are always responsible for the well-being of their citizens. If not, why would we have states at all? In contrast, I discuss the other end of the spectrum, i.e. ecocentrism, which I consider the “ultimate ought-side” of the responsibility of

²⁹⁷ Buzan 2004a, 50.

²⁹⁸ Eckersley 1992, 35–47.

²⁹⁹ Jackson 2000, 170–178.

states. An important, albeit unanswerable question in this study, is about the relationship between cosmopolitanism and ecocentrism. If seen as the very end of the spectrum, does ecocentrism presuppose a cosmopolitan world society or can international society be ecocentric?

State responsibilities are undoubtedly very complex. Although I distinguish four categories of general responsibilities, I do not argue that the categorization is exhaustive by any means. A state's responsibilities may also overlap or conflict. They may change when circumstances change. Different types of international societies have different kinds of primary institutions and practices as the "institutions of international society are according to its nature".³⁰⁰ Different kinds of practices have their distinctive ethics; even if it is accepted that environmental trusteeship has emerged as a primary institution of international society³⁰¹, its nature depends, for instance, on where international society is located on the spectrum of pluralism-solidarism, and anthropocentrism-ecocentrism. In the system of states or a very pluralist international society, states are interested in only the environment located within their national territory. They see nature as a stock of resources and the focus is on local environmental concerns such as local pollution, wastes and the insufficiency of natural resources. In a more solidarist international society, however, states cooperate to respond to global environmental concerns, recognizing that they cause environmental harms beyond their borders (and suffer from environmental harms caused by others). At the ultimate end of the spectrum, states may adopt ecocentric ideas. Thus, the primary institution of environmental trusteeship may be very pluralist and its existence does not entail that a primary institution of climate responsibility exists as well. Although climate change is often seen as a subcategory of environmental problems, it is very distinct from traditional environmental problems. As discussed earlier, climate change is truly a global problem and all the attempts to respond to it presuppose the existence of international society.

Like Jackson, I distinguish between national and humanitarian responsibilities although they could also be merged into one category: human-centric responsibility. Because I am a little pessimistic about the potential for states to "go beyond pluralism", I assume that states tend to pay more attention to the well-being of their citizens than that of other human-beings. The label national responsibility also implies that states do have state-centric responsibilities: they

³⁰⁰ Wight 1999, 111.

³⁰¹ See Buzan 2004a, 186; Buzan 2014a, 161–163; Falkner 2012 and Palmujoki 2013.

have to take care of their own survival as sovereign states. In a cosmopolitan world society, we could naturally abandon both the categories of national and international responsibility because nationality would be irrelevant for assessing the nature, scope and depth of state responsibility. Moreover, environmental responsibility is particularly difficult to locate. If nature is seen as only having an instrumental value for human-beings, there would be no need to differentiate it as an independent category, instead we could discuss what kind of environmental aspects belong to a state's national, international and humanitarian responsibilities. The focus would thus be on the environmental security of each category. However, this view would be too limited and would not acknowledge the intrinsic value of nature. To emphasize nature itself as a referent object of state responsibility, I choose to distinguish it as the ultimate end of state responsibility.

Finally, it should be noted that despite my state-centric approach to responsibility, I do not intend to undermine individuals' cosmopolitan rights and responsibilities as good international citizens such as their right to enjoy benefits provided by the state, their right to participate in political processes and their responsibility to promote the virtues of a good life and prevent harm.³⁰² Cosmopolitan citizenship raises important questions about the climate responsibilities of individuals (briefly discussed in chapter seven): Do individuals have a deeper responsibility to their family, friends and fellow citizens, or do they owe them to all human beings around the world?³⁰³ Moreover, state-centric approaches to IR often focus on a state's responsibilities to other *states* and pay less attention to the other kinds of ethical aspects of state practices. In practice, a state's policies and actions – especially those of a great power – affect the lives of all the *people* (and non-human species) around the world. With reference to the works of Bull, Vincent, Wheeler and Dunne, Chris Brown argues:

...all of these writers can be read as saying that...the ultimate referent object of international society ought to be individual human beings rather than states as such. The *telos* of international society, to change modes of discourse, is not, in the last resort, simply to preserve a multiplicity of separate states, but ultimately to promote human flourishing.³⁰⁴

³⁰² See, for example, Linklater 2007 for an inspiring collection of essays on cosmopolitan citizenship.

³⁰³ See, for example, Shue 1988; Goodin 1988 and Miller 1988.

³⁰⁴ Brown 2007, 179.

This means that even though the ES tends to regard sovereign states as the key actors, it does not mean that “everything done by state authorities is, by definition, legitimate”.³⁰⁵ Sovereignty is not a licence to do whatever a government desires to do inside its national borders. In contrast, the legitimacy of a government derives from its acceptance of being responsible for a population.³⁰⁶ Responsibility is thus closely linked to the legitimacy of a state.³⁰⁷

3.3.1 National responsibility

In general, people tend to think that boundaries matter when assigning responsibilities.³⁰⁸ As Henry Shue puts it:

The world is full of foreigners. Most of them are strangers to me, and I have every reason to doubt that most of them have ever given me a thought. Is there some reason I should give thought to them?³⁰⁹

Many realists have indeed stated that a state’s responsibility stops at the national border. At the same time, some realists have also started to question this assumption and brought ethical questions into the realist research agenda.³¹⁰ They maintain that states should respect the views and interests of other nations. As Chang proposes, ethical realism “*does* recognize the importance of morality, takes interests of others into account, and also tries to create a better world for all human beings” in a “prudent and pragmatic way”.³¹¹ Hans Morgenthau acknowledged this as well:

The national interest of a nation which is conscious not only of its own interests but also of that of other nations must be defined in terms compatible with the latter. In a multinational world this is a requirement of

³⁰⁵ Brown 2007, 179.

³⁰⁶ Deng et al. 1996, 32.

³⁰⁷ See Clark 2005.

³⁰⁸ See, for example, Goodin 1988 and Miller 1988.

³⁰⁹ Shue 1988, 687.

³¹⁰ See Chang 2011.

³¹¹ Chang 2011, 25.

political morality; in an age of total war it is also one of the conditions for survival.³¹²

Although the conception of national responsibility is heavily based on classical realism, it does not necessarily dismiss ethics. In contrast, it represents an enlightened version of realism: It is a state's "first obligation" and "chief duty" to preserve its national interests.³¹³ For Jackson, national responsibility is par excellence a "moral relation between a state and its citizens", and it takes the moral obligation of national interest as the "fundamental standard of conduct" and national security as a "foundational" value.³¹⁴ In other words, Jackson suggests that national interest is a "moral idea governing the conduct of statespeople: the idea that the nation and its population are a treasure which they have the responsibility to safeguard".³¹⁵ Therefore, states have a moral obligation to defend national interests driven by a "moral concern for the flourishing of the national population, for their good life".³¹⁶ Clearly, national interest can be seen as a moral guideline only if it is defined more broadly than in narrow, self-interested terms that focus on the security of state.³¹⁷ As Joseph Nye Jr. puts it,

In a democracy, the national interest is simply the set of shared priorities regarding relations with the rest of the world. It is broader than strategic interests, though they are part of it. It can include values such as human rights and democracy, if the public feels that those values are so important to its identity that it is willing to pay a price to promote them.³¹⁸

According to Francis M. Deng's definition, "sovereignty as responsibility" means that states have a responsibility to "ensure minimum standards of security and social welfare for their citizens and be accountable both to the national body

³¹² Morgenthau 1952, 977.

³¹³ Wight 1999, 95 and Watson 1982, 206.

³¹⁴ Jackson 2000, 170.

³¹⁵ Jackson 2000, 21.

³¹⁶ Jackson 2000, 171.

³¹⁷ It should be noted that public opinion is not synonym for national responsibility: Sometimes the fulfilment of national responsibility requires difficult decisions and policies that go against public opinion. In democratic societies, politicians may fail to shoulder their national responsibilities because they have to think of their voters' opinions and preferences if they want to – and usually they do want to – be re-elected.

³¹⁸ Nye 1999, 23.

politic and the international community”.³¹⁹ “To be legitimate”, Deng et al. write, “sovereignty must demonstrate responsibility, which means at the very least ensuring a certain level of protection for and providing at the basic needs of the people”.³²⁰ Deng’s definition demonstrates that while national responsibility is fundamental to the well-being of human beings, it does not mean that states should only contemplate their navel. On the contrary, national responsibility is closely interconnected with the whole of international society:

Sovereignty as responsibility meant that the state had to take care of its citizens and – if it needed support – call on the sub-regional, regional or continental organisations, or ultimately the international community. But if it did not do that, and its people were suffering and dying, the world would not watch and do nothing. They would find a way of getting involved.³²¹

Literature on happiness suggests that there are strong incentives for governments to take happiness as their ultimate responsibility.³²² Yet, Bhutan is so far the only nation that has adopted “gross-national happiness” as the central aim of its national policy.³²³ A pluralist approach to national responsibility would suggest that the happiness of the state – or more broadly, the well-being of citizens – should be the only legitimate goal of national policies. However, solidarists would disagree for both moral and practical reasons. They would argue that, for example, even if a government’s moral duty is to do its best to promote the well-being of its citizens, it cannot do it by harming the well-being of the citizens of other states as it has responsibilities beyond its own national borders. Moreover, responsible governments should not exclusively promote the short-term well-being of their current population. Sometimes they must make hard decisions, which conflict with the short-term (economic) interests of their citizens but promote the well-being in the long run.³²⁴

³¹⁹ Deng et al. 1996, 211.

³²⁰ Deng et al. 1996, 27.

³²¹ Deng 2010, 13.

³²² See, for example, Duncan 2010 and Bok 2010.

³²³ According to Bok (2010), Bhutan’s four pillars of gross national happiness include good governance and democratization, stable and equitable socioeconomic development, environmental protection and the preservation of culture.

³²⁴ Environmental protection is a very good example of this, as it sometimes conflicts with people’s short-term well-being interests, especially with those measured in economic terms. Similarly, a total ban on cigarettes would promote people’s health and therefore their happiness. In the short run,

As the concept of national responsibility emphasizes the significance of the domestic responsibilities of states, it sees international law and secondary institutions as “instrumental arrangements which are justified by how well they serve the national interest of states”.³²⁵ Hence, the concept indicates that states are mainly responsible for the well-being of their own people, not the “well-being of foreign countries and populations *as such*”.³²⁶ As for foreign affairs, this kind of normative standard supports Machiavellian principles of self-interest because states have to put their own nation and citizens first, and only cooperate with other states when it is necessary for the promotion of national interests and to avoid putting their citizens and own soldiers at the risk of harm, etc. As Machiavellian principles were defined in an era of a system of separate – and often rivalry – states, it was understandable to consider state responsibilities in purely national terms. International society did not exist and there were no responsibilities beyond a state’s national borders – or, if there were, they were derived from the national interest of having a peaceful international order. In the global era, however, these principles are inevitably outdated and do not provide a normative basis for international ethics.

Linklater and Suganami rightly criticize Jackson’s argumentation for its incomparable normative basis for national responsibility: According to Jackson, the “first duty of a government is to protect its own people. After that it can try to help whoever else it can”.³²⁷ Taken literally, states have to first do whatever they can do to assist their own citizens, and only after that, they may pay attention to the needs and interests of citizens of other states (albeit Linklater and Suganami admit that this is not necessarily the intention of Jackson’s argument). This would mean that in a war, a state could ignore the international codification of humanitarian law and do whatever it wanted to secure the interests of its own people and only after that, think about the human suffering of the opposing state or states’ soldiers and civilians.³²⁸

Sovereign states, at least liberal-democratic ones, define and allocate their national responsibilities according to their constitutions and other laws. This does

however, people would probably be not so pleased with the policy and their happiness could even decrease.

³²⁵ Jackson 2000, 170.

³²⁶ Jackson 2000, 171.

³²⁷ Quoted in Linklater & Suganami 2006, 235.

³²⁸ Linklater & Suganami 2006, 235.

not mean that a state is responsible for everything that happens within its borders: it is not a protector of property and life, nor is it responsible for its citizens' actions. Entering into international agreements does not decrease a state's sovereignty but it may even preserve it as international cooperation is needed to tackle many transnational threats that may put a state's sovereignty at risk. The concept of national responsibility does not necessarily ignore the environment either. In contrast to traditional security approaches focusing on a state's national security, a broader security approach is concerned with human and environmental security. This perspective emphasizes the idea that states have a responsibility to protect their citizens from environmental threats and threats of an environmental origin. There is an ongoing debate about whether or not clear causal links exist between environmental degradation and inter- and intra-state conflicts.³²⁹

3.3.2 International responsibility

The concept of international responsibility is based on rationalism and the concept of international society which suggests that, in contrast to the Hobbesian "war of all against all", states form an international society. International society is constitutional in nature: its members' duties and rights are written into international law, the UN Charter (1945) being the most fundamental. Because of this constitutional relationship, states are not only accountable to their own citizens, but are also "responsible for upholding international law and the society of states as a whole".³³⁰ They have a general responsibility to preserve international society and make it work, and they must pursue their national responsibilities without harming other states' rights.³³¹

When international society recognizes a state's sovereignty and membership in international society, it is assumed to accept and to be capable of exercising its rights and responsibilities in that society. It is, to use Eagleton's words, "upon this agreement to observe the rules of the community that international responsibility is founded".³³² Due to the state-centric basis of international society, the most essential international right under the UN Charter is the right of non-intervention,

³²⁹ For an overview, see, for example, Trombetta 2008.

³³⁰ Jackson 2000, 172.

³³¹ Watson (1982) calls this *raison de système*.

³³² Eagleton 1928, 5.

which also translates to a responsibility to not intervene (apart from in lawfully recognized circumstances). States also have a right and responsibility to participate in diplomatic practices. This means, at a minimum, that we can expect that every state respects the UN Charter, prevents harm to others and restrains from unnecessary military actions. However, if a state fails to bear its responsibilities, there are no methods for sanctioning states in the absence of supranational body.

From the English School perspective, international law provides an important – no less binding than domestic law – normative framework within which and with reference to which states make choices about what actions they perform in international society. As Peter Wilson puts it:

By providing a reasonably clear guide as to what is the done thing, and what is not, in any given set of circumstances, of what can be expected and what not, and what will be tolerated and what will likely be met with disapproving, perhaps vociferous, response, [international] law helps to reduce the degree of unpredictability in international affairs.³³³

Apart from the draft Responsibility of States for Internationally Wrongful Acts compiled by the International Law Commission in 2001, however, there is no international law of state responsibility. From the perspective of international law, states can be held responsible for pollution only if such pollution is wrongful under international law. Carbon dioxide or other greenhouse gas emissions are legal pollution mostly caused by the activities of individuals and private corporations. Hence states cannot be held legally responsible for the damage caused but the idea of a state's international responsibility usually refers to their *political* responsibilities as the most authoritative actors within international society.

As members of international society, all states have a general responsibility to cooperate and contribute to the solutions of common problems and to promote international peace and security, prosperity and well-being. This general responsibility does not entail how states should act or organize cooperation but it is a state's own authority as to how it organizes the governance and jurisdiction, etc. needed to exercise its own rights and responsibilities. In other words, the general responsibility to cooperate does not answer the question of “what” should states do but rather explains “why” they have to cooperate.³³⁴ Today, the general responsibility to cooperate is widely accepted as the basis for international law as it

³³³ Wilson 2009, 168.

³³⁴ Perrez 2000, 265.

was codified in the UN Charter. Furthermore, the UN General Assembly has reaffirmed the importance of cooperation in the Declaration on Principles of International Law concerning Friendly Relations and Co-operation among States in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations, which recognizes that states:

[H]ave the duty to co-operate with one another, irrespective of the differences in their political, economic and social systems, in the various spheres of international relations, in order to maintain international peace and security and to promote international economic stability and progress, the general welfare of nations and international co-operation free from discrimination based on such differences.³³⁵

Virtually all international environmental treaties have explicitly required states to cooperate.³³⁶ Regarding climate change, the Rio Declaration acknowledged the importance of cooperation in the field of climate politics: “States shall cooperate in a spirit of global partnership to conserve, protect and restore the health and integrity of the Earth's ecosystem”.³³⁷

The general responsibility to cooperate serves as a basis for the more concrete rights and responsibilities of states, which may have impacts on a state's independence and freedom to act. Perrez differentiates three types of concrete form with regard to international cooperation by states: 1) “concrete forms of cooperation with minimal effect on the freedom and independence of the states”, such as information exchange, and scientific cooperation; 2) “concrete forms of cooperation with some effect on the freedom and independence of states”, such as participation in consultation or negotiations, and the provision of foreign technological and financial assistance; and 3) “concrete forms of cooperation with significant effect on freedom and independence of the states”, such as the ratification of international treaties, cooperation and decision-making in international institutions and organizations, and the adoption and implementation of common measures.³³⁸

Jin Canrong also distinguishes three types of international responsibility for states. First, the “responsibility of fulfilling international contracts” is a “fundamental international responsibility” of members of international society: a

³³⁵ UN General Assembly 1970.

³³⁶ Perrez 2000, 274.

³³⁷ Rio Declaration on Environment and Development 1992, principle 7.

³³⁸ Perrez 2000, 262.

state has to comply with the international treaties they have signed, or they must withdraw from them or transform the “international system thoroughly according to its own aspiration”.³³⁹ Second, the “responsibility of maintaining international contracts” is a “limited responsibility”: The “greater a nation’s comprehensive national strength, the stronger its ability to maintain the international rules and regulations; the more a nation benefits from the existing international rules and regulations, the stronger its desire to defend them”.³⁴⁰ This means that “(g)reat powers often bear more responsibilities”.³⁴¹ Third, the “responsibility of reforming international rules and regulations” is the “leadership responsibility” of both hegemony and emerging powers. As Henry Kissinger explains, “in every century there seems to emerge a country with power, the will, and the intellectual and moral impetus to shape the entire international system with its own values”.³⁴² In order to fulfil their leadership responsibility, hegemony pursue the maintenance of their leadership role by reforming international order while emerging powers attempt to “fight for hegemony through completely reshaping the international order”.³⁴³

In practical terms, the circumstances and capacities of states vary a lot and hence their power and capability to shoulder international responsibilities also varies. International responsibility is more or less causal: the greater the power of a state³⁴⁴ the greater the international effect its domestic and foreign policy will have and the greater its responsibility for the collective well-being of international society will be.³⁴⁵ For Bull and Watson, the responsibility for the management of international society rests largely on great powers. Because “(p)ower breeds responsibility”³⁴⁶, great powers have a special collective responsibility to “ensure that the conditions of international peace and security are upheld”.³⁴⁷ Therefore,

³³⁹ Jin 2011, 3–4.

³⁴⁰ Jin 2011, 4–5.

³⁴¹ Jin 2011, 5.

³⁴² Quoted in Jin 2011, 5.

³⁴³ Jin 2011, 5–6.

³⁴⁴ This includes soft power as well. Despite the lack of military power, the Vatican has a substantive global influence, for instance.

³⁴⁵ This is only a general correlation. In practice, a state’s global influence also depends on its traditions, image, identity, experience, know-how, etc. Small states like Switzerland or Scandinavian countries may play an important diplomatic role in the resolution of a conflict or the formulation of international norms, for instance.

³⁴⁶ Eagleton 1928, 206.

³⁴⁷ Jackson 2000, 203.

“states with enough power to do serious damage to the functioning of international society should accept the responsibility not to cause such damage, but to pursue their interests with prudence and restraint”.³⁴⁸ This means that they have a responsibility to “agree at least tacitly on a form of crisis management”.³⁴⁹ In a suddenly sharpened conflict, the main responsibility for peace negotiations thus falls on great powers. In cases of unavoidable confrontation between great powers on the opposing sides of a conflict, the responsibility to avoid an unnecessary resorting to force belongs to them, rather than the “smaller and more immediate protagonists”.³⁵⁰ With similar logic, if climate change is seen as a source of potential international conflict, great powers bear the main responsibility for the resolution of the problem.

The great powers’ responsibility to solve conflicts through diplomatic means is hence greater than that of minor states. This responsibility is embodied in the UN Security Council which was established to secure the fundamental norm of international peace and security. It has a lawful right to intervene if the norm is violated by outlaw states. By legally recognizing their international status and affording them permanent seats on the Council of the League of Nations (and later on the UN Security Council), “it was hoped”, Wight explains, “that they would develop...from great powers into Great Responsibilities”.³⁵¹ However, Wight himself is very sceptical about this development:

History affords little support for the assertion the great powers like to make that they are more restrained and responsible than minor powers. It suggests, rather, that they wish to monopolize the right to create international conflict.³⁵²

Despite this pessimism, “(o)ne of the biggest mistakes anyone could make in assessing the international responsibilities of states is failing to notice or ignoring the moral significance of what is involved in being a great power and how their responsibilities differ from those of other states”.³⁵³ That is why I further elaborate on great power responsibility in chapter five.

³⁴⁸ Watson 1982, 201.

³⁴⁹ Watson 1982, 201.

³⁵⁰ Watson 1982, 201.

³⁵¹ Wight 1999, 43–44.

³⁵² Wight 1999, 42–43.

³⁵³ Jackson 2000, 173; see also Shue 1988, 697.

3.3.3 Humanitarian responsibility

The conception of humanitarian responsibility is derived from cosmopolitanism and the concept of world society. Cosmopolitanism maintains that people have universal negative responsibilities not to dispossess other people's rights.³⁵⁴ Due to their specific position and capacity to improve or harm the well-being of their fellow human-beings around the world, state leaders are responsible for the good life of all the people, not only the citizens of their respective countries.³⁵⁵ Therefore states have a fundamental positive responsibility to "respect dignity and freedom of human beings" and they have to do their best to defend human rights all over the world.³⁵⁶ From a humanitarian point of view, "respect for human beings – whoever they are and whatever they happen to be living – is a fundamental normative consideration in foreign policy".³⁵⁷

The humanitarian approach is deeply rooted in the Western tradition and Christianity. From the Chinese perspective, it is very Eurocentric to justify the humanitarian responsibilities of states by invoking a natural law and the universal valuation of human rights. Equally, the practice approach points out that international practices of human rights started to evolve after the horrors of WWII, when liberal-democratic states agreed on new humanitarian principles for international society. Procedurally, the humanitarian approach is written into international humanitarian law. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) recognizes that all human beings are born free and have an equal right to life, liberty and security. In practical terms, the humanitarian approach can indeed mostly be recognized in the strong human rights doctrine of Western countries. Linklater and Suganami regard article 5 of the Declaration, which states that all human beings have right to be free from "torture, cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment", as the "*grundnorm* of the solidarist position on good international citizenship".³⁵⁸ During the Cold war, questions of human right norms were muted in practice. In last couple of decades, however, interest in international humanitarian ethics has increased rapidly since globalization has brought new kinds of political concerns: global inequality and justice, sustainable development, and

³⁵⁴ Shue 1988, 690.

³⁵⁵ Jackson, 2000, 174–175.

³⁵⁶ Jackson, 2000, 174.

³⁵⁷ Jackson, 2000, 174.

³⁵⁸ Linklater & Suganami 2006, 243.

non-state actors' increasing role in world politics, to name but a few. These global developments indicate that states "cannot advance significantly beyond a pluralist conception of good citizenship" but that there is room for solidarist ethics.³⁵⁹

The concept of "sovereignty as responsibility" developed by Francis M. Deng et al.³⁶⁰ stimulated extensive political and academic discussions on state responsibility, leading to the shift from the "right to interfere" to the "responsibility to protect".³⁶¹ In 2001, the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty introduced "responsibility to protect" and highlighted two basic principles: 1) "[S]tate sovereignty implies responsibility, and the primary responsibility for the protection of its people lies with the state itself"; and 2) "where a population is suffering serious harm, as a result of internal war, insurgency, repression or state failure, and the state in question is unwilling or unable to halt or avert it, the principle of non-intervention yields to the international responsibility to protect".³⁶²

In 2005, the UN General Assembly adopted the "responsibility to protect" as follows:

Each individual State has the responsibility to protect its populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity. This responsibility entails the prevention of such crimes, including their incitement, through appropriate and necessary means. We accept that responsibility and will act in accordance with it. The international community should, as appropriate, encourage and help States to exercise this responsibility and support the United Nations in establishing an early warning capability.³⁶³

The UN General Assembly defined that "responsibility to protect" consists of three pillars: a state's responsibilities to its own citizens, international society's responsibility to assist states to carry out their responsibilities, and international society's responsibility to take collective actions in case a state manifestly fails to protect its citizens.³⁶⁴ This definition demonstrates two important aspects of state responsibility: On the one hand, sovereignty remains the fundamental principle of

³⁵⁹ Linklater & Suganami 2006, 229.

³⁶⁰ Deng et al. 1996.

³⁶¹ See, for example, Wheeler 2000.

³⁶² International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty 2001, XI.

³⁶³ UN General Assembly 2005.

³⁶⁴ UN General Assembly 2005.

international society. Indeed, it proves that sovereignty is an unquestioning precondition for state responsibility. Without independence from external control and full authority over a territory, a state cannot exercise full responsibility. Therefore, the “exclusive territorial jurisdiction of the state”, as Eagleton writes, “is the chief source of its responsibility”.³⁶⁵ On the other hand, the definition demonstrates that state responsibility presupposes the existence of international society. Thus, state responsibility is constructed in social interaction: if there was only one state, the concepts of external sovereignty and “responsibility to protect” would not make much sense.

Climate change inevitably poses serious concerns over human security as it affects the lives of all the people on the planet. Developing countries, especially the poorest people of living in those countries, are particularly vulnerable to climate change: They are often geographically located in tropical and subtropical areas, which are most likely to be affected by climate change and they do not have enough resources to adapt to climate change.³⁶⁶ Climate change violates basic human rights, such as the right to life, the right to health and the right to subsistence.³⁶⁷ The Human Rights Council of the UN acknowledged this in 2008 when it passed its very first resolution related to climate change. According to the resolution, “climate change poses an immediate and far-reaching threat to people and communities around the world and has implications for the full enjoyment of human right”.³⁶⁸ As climate change endangers the traditional practices of indigenous people and the very existence of island nations, there have already been legal cases against developed countries violating indigenous communities’ human rights by causing climate change.³⁶⁹ An important breakthrough in state climate responsibility was made in 2015, when a court in The Hague ordered the Dutch government to cut emissions at least by 25 per cent within five years in order to protect its citizens from climate change.³⁷⁰

³⁶⁵ Eagleton 1928, 7.

³⁶⁶ See Roberts & Parks 2007 for a systematic study of human suffering from climate change.

³⁶⁷ Caney 2009, 230–231.

³⁶⁸ Human Rights Council 2008.

³⁶⁹ See, for example, *Petition to the Inter American Commission on Human Rights Seeking Relief from Violations Resulting from Global Warming Caused by Acts and Omissions of the United States* (2005), and *Petition to the Inter American Commission on Human Rights Seeking Relief from Violations of the Rights of Arctic Athabaskan Peoples Resulting from Rapid Arctic Warming and Melting Caused by the Emission of Black Carbon by Canada* (2013).

³⁷⁰ An English translation of the court decision can be found at <http://uitspraken.rechtspraak.nl/inziendocument?id=ECLI:NL:RBDHA:2015:7196>.

As carbon dioxide, the main human cause of climate change, is a “stock pollutant” meaning that today’s emissions may not harm us today but cause problems for future generations, humanitarian responsibility can be extended to include the next generation as well. While it is not new that people are concerned with the lives of future generations, the capacity of the present generation to negatively affect the well-being of future generations is relatively novel. Although we cannot know for sure what the interests of future generations will be, we can assume that some basic needs, such as clean water and air, are common to all human beings (and other animals) regardless of time and location. And, if we agree that future generations have corresponding rights, this means that we have responsibilities to future generations. If our contemporary practices harm the basic interests of future generations, we violate their rights and no optimism about the future’s advanced technologies to clean our pollution will reduce our responsibility. The principle of sustainable development obviously acknowledged this – at least in principle. In real life, however, intergenerational responsibilities are not often discussed in terms of humanitarian responsibility.³⁷¹

As discussed earlier in this chapter, legal responsibility focuses on fault or negligence and therefore international law community has worked to compile rules to cover environmental damage. Indeed, there have been promising developments in international law regarding the right of citizens to a clean environment including climate stability. In 2006, the International Law Commission adopted the environmental liability principles, which pursue an “access to compensation for private citizens and communities subjected to environmental damage”.³⁷² On the one hand, draft environmental liability rules helped to define “who pays whom, and how, in cases of environmental damages”. On the other hand, they have not yet been widely accepted as some argue that there is no need to separate environmental liability rules from the general rules of state responsibility, codified in the International Law Commission’s draft Responsibility of States for Internationally Wrongful Acts in 2001.³⁷³ Although it was undoubtedly an important legal development, the compensation approach is also problematic as it tends to pigeon-hole the environment as an economic commodity reducible to a price tag. To be ordered to pay compensation for damages caused is not necessarily

³⁷¹ But see Weiss 1989.

³⁷² Koivurova 2014, 176.

³⁷³ Koivurova 2014, 175.

a positive inducement to prevent future damages as one may find it easier and cheaper to pay for pollution than to change harmful practices.³⁷⁴

3.3.4 Ecocentric responsibility

According to Jackson, people have a conservationist's responsibility because the health of planet Earth is vital to human-beings: we can live without nation-states, but we cannot live without the planet. Hence, we are bound to shoulder responsibility for the global environment. This norm is captured by the idea of global trusteeship; because human beings have the industrial power to shape the balance of nature, they also have a responsibility to conserve it. The heaviest "responsibility for the global commons" falls on governments that are "chief trustees or stewards of the planet" because they have juridical power to regulate activities and control potential harm caused to the environment. From Jackson's pluralist perspective, states are expected to protect nature within their own jurisdiction and to take international action to preserve the global environment.³⁷⁵

Although I do not disagree with Jackson's idea of "responsibility for the global commons" in general, I argue that it has to be revisited for two reasons. First, the definition of global commons is not clear enough. Usually, it is said that they consist of the oceans, the atmosphere, the ozone layer, global biodiversity, outer space, the North Pole, and Antarctica. Of these, global biodiversity is the fuzziest: What is it, where is it located? Apart from ecosystems located in the oceans, Antarctica, and the North Pole, biodiversity is not global in a physical sense. It always exists in the territory of specific countries. For example, we tend to describe the Amazonian rainforest as a global commons although it is located in the territory of several sovereign states. People happen to be living in those specific sovereign countries have the privilege to decide what to do with it; how to utilize biodiversity in terms of natural resources and how to treat specific species, etc. In other words, as a local resource, biodiversity is governed according to a sovereign state's political, cultural and social values, principles and norms. Second, it seems that Jackson's conception of global trusteeship is very anthropocentric: human beings, particularly state leaders, are responsible for the health of the planet

³⁷⁴ For example, Royal Dutch Shell has preferred to pay fines instead of changing its illegal gas flaring practices in the Nigerian Delta.

³⁷⁵ Jackson 2000, 175–178.

because it is, in the end, the only home we have. Hence, only human beings are seen as objects of our moral responsibilities and nature is given no intrinsic value (the value of ends: nature for its own sake) but only instrumental value (the value of means: nature in terms of resources). From this point of view, states have to shoulder “responsibility for the global commons” only because it is in the interests of human beings. In contrast, the consideration of the intrinsic value of nature would indicate that nature has to be respected and preserved for its own sake, thus states have responsibilities to the natural world *as such*. However, the instrumental value judgment of nature does not necessarily mean that human beings do not have any responsibility regarding nature but that there is a strong instrumental incentive to protect nature because it provides ecosystems vital for human beings.

International Relations theories concerning the environment usually focus on human policies over nature, geopolitics over natural resources and human environmental security. Hence, the focus is almost always on human well-being related to the environment and not many IR theorists have recognized the intrinsic value of nature itself. For their part, international lawyers are keen to establish multilateral treaties in order to govern international environmental cooperation and resolve environmental disputes. For Jackson, the massive amount of international environmental treaties indeed proves that “international society can be green”.³⁷⁶ State responsibility, however, is not about the number of international treaties but about the scope and ambition of international practices including treaties. In contrast to IR scholars and international lawyers, philosophers have widely elaborated on ethical questions concerning humankind’s relationship to the natural environment and debated whether they have responsibilities for nature *per se*.³⁷⁷ The most fundamental division between philosophers is the tension between anthropocentrism and naturocentrism. Traditionally, anthropocentric ethics has denied that human beings have any direct responsibility for nature³⁷⁸ while non-anthropocentric or naturocentric ethics has given a moral standing to non-human natural objects. Philosophers distinguish three main systems of naturocentric ethics: zoocentrism focuses on the moral standing of animals³⁷⁹; biocentrism

³⁷⁶ Jackson 1996.

³⁷⁷ For a comprehensive overview of the history of environmental philosophy, see, for example, Nash 1989.

³⁷⁸ See, for example, John Passmore’s *Man’s Responsibility for Nature* (1980).

³⁷⁹ See, for example, Peter Singer’s *Animal Liberation* (1990) and Tom Regan’s *The Case for Animal Rights* (1983).

extends the ethical focus to the respect of the life of all living beings³⁸⁰; and ecocentrism takes a holistic approach by giving moral consideration not only to living individuals, i.e. animals or plants, but also to ecological wholes such as ecosystems and species, including non-living natural objects like mountains and rivers.³⁸¹

In contrast to the traditional anthropocentric-naturocentric divisions, Robyn Eckersley distinguishes five major positions of a “wide spectrum of differing orientations toward nature”, moving from the anthropocentric, economic and instrumental environmental ethic towards a more holistic and comprehensive environmental ethic. First, resource conservation regards the “nonhuman world in use-value terms” and seeks to improve economic productivity by reducing waste and the inefficient use of non-renewable natural resources and also by maximizing the sustainable use of renewable resources. Second, human welfare ecology which promotes “environment quality” in the enlightened self-interested terms of a “cleaner, safer, and more pleasing human environment” by protecting the biological support system upon which human reproduction is dependent. Third, preservationism that focuses on the preservation of a wild nonhuman nature, wilderness, usually for instrumental and anthropocentric reasons such as “material and experiential benefits of wilderness to humankind”. Fourth, animal liberation extends human moral obligations to “all beings capable of experiencing pleasure and pain” and hence to the “equal consideration (as distinct from treatment) of the interests of all sentient beings regardless of what kind of species they are”. Fifth, ecocentrism provides a more holistic and ecologically informed approach by extending concerns to “protect threatened populations, species, habitats, and ecosystems *wherever situated* and irrespective of their use value or importance to humans”.³⁸² Eckersley continues by elaborating on three varieties of ecocentrism, namely autopoietic intrinsic value theory, transpersonal ecology and ecofeminism, and by examining the position of four major green political theories on the anthropocentrism–naturocentrism spectrum.³⁸³

From this study’s perspective, a general ecocentric approach is adequate for exploring the environmental responsibility of states: it recognizes that human-beings, and therefore states, have a moral standing on the Earth as such, and not

³⁸⁰ See for example, Paul Taylor’s *Respect for Nature* (1986).

³⁸¹ See, for example, Aldo Leopold’s *A sand county almanac : with essays on conservation from Round river* (1949) and the works of Arne Næss and other “deep ecologists”.

³⁸² Eckersley 1992, 35–47.

³⁸³ These include Marxism, Critical theory, Ecosocialism and Ecoanarchism.

only for anthropocentric and instrumental reasons. Ecocentrism recognizes various human interests relating to the environment, and thus also national interests. It does not ignore the role of anthropocentric interests, such as economic needs for natural resources and human welfare perspectives, but it provides a more encompassing approach by also recognizing the interests of nonhuman species and ecological communities and the future generations of both humans and nonhumans. At a fundamental level, biodiversity conservation is a moral recognition that all species have rights and that they should not be treated as lifeless or valueless objects.

The ecocentric conception of state responsibility is not just a utopian idea but is part of the practices of environmental constitutionalism, which regard the environment as a “proper subject for protection in constitutional texts and for vindication by constitutional courts”, which are now evolving worldwide.³⁸⁴ There are an increasing number of states explicitly recognizing the substantive environmental rights of citizens and the government’s environmental responsibilities.³⁸⁵ Although these environmental rights and duties are largely motivated by anthropocentric reasons, a more ecocentric constitutionalism “advancing the right of nature” is not uncommon either.³⁸⁶ Contemporary international law also “already carries the seeds of possibility for non-anthropocentric conceptions” of responsibility³⁸⁷, as I will demonstrate in the following chapters. At the moment, however, international environmental law is very fragmented and rather ill-equipped to deal with climate responsibility.³⁸⁸ There is no independent international treaty on environmental rights either. In fact, the UN International Law Commission’s State Responsibility Project abandoned the idea that state criminal responsibility would include the widespread pollution of the seas and atmosphere in the 1980s and 1990s.³⁸⁹

At present, the most prominent articulation of ecocentric responsibility can be found in the Earth Charter, a civil society initiative launched in 2000. Its principle 1 urges humans to “Respect Earth and life in all its diversity”, based on an

³⁸⁴ May & Daly 2015, 1–2.

³⁸⁵ See May & Daly 2015, Appendix A and C.

³⁸⁶ May & Daly 2015, 255. See, for example, Ecuador’s Constitution which includes a chapter on nature’s rights.

³⁸⁷ Bosselmann 2015, 40.

³⁸⁸ See Voigt 2008.

³⁸⁹ Koivurova 2014, 174–175.

ontological assumption that “all beings are interdependent and every form of life has value regardless of its worth to human beings”.³⁹⁰ As it is not endorsed by states, the legal status of the Earth Charter remains a soft law document. It is thus not legally binding on governments, but given that it is a statement expressed by the world over civil society, it is, to use Klaus Bosselmann’s words, “arguably one of the most legitimate international statements of principle ever to be made”.³⁹¹ Therefore, it should be morally binding to states.

³⁹⁰ Earth Charter 2000, principle 1.

³⁹¹ Bosselmann 2015, 110–111.

4 China's evolving practices of state responsibility

To understand China's contemporary (climate) practices, we must look at the social context in which they have historically evolved. Individual responsibilities are closely linked to identity. To use Taylor's words, to "know who you are is to be oriented in moral space, a space in which questions arise about what is good or bad, what is worth doing and what is not, what has meaning and importance for you and what is trivial and secondary".³⁹² Therefore this chapter explores China's identity, interests and values within a historical continuum.³⁹³ As they define the "ways things have significance"³⁹⁴ for China, they guide the kind of responsibilities China's government is willing, or capable, of assigning to international (climate) politics. The first section explores the historic background of China's contemporary practices of responsibility because they still largely influence China's notions of state responsibility. The second section looks at China's contemporary practices of state responsibility.

4.1 Legacy of earlier notions of responsibility in China

Because we cannot attempt to understand the present without knowing history, this section gives a short introduction to China's long history. As my intention is not to provide a comprehensive account of Chinese history, I focus on China's historic notions of the nature–human relationship. This will lay the foundations for how the Chinese see and treat the environment today. Indeed, many Maoist ideas are still very influential, and once-neglected Confucianism has also started to attract the political elite of the state.

³⁹² Taylor 1989, 28.

³⁹³ See also Yeophantong 2013.

³⁹⁴ Taylor 1989, 34.

4.1.1 Traditional discourse on the human–nature relationship

In ancient times, China was not “China” to the people living there, for them it was *Tianxia* (天下) “all under heaven”. The Chinese emperor was regarded as the centre of the universe and the son of heaven. He ruled everything that mattered and everything else, which was “not part of the Chinese world, was simply not under heaven, beyond the sphere of this world”.³⁹⁵ As the most powerful state and the most advanced civilization, China was the political, economic and cultural model of the region. It formed the Chinese world order, *Pax Sinica*, and defined the norms of the international order regionally and well before the birth of European international society.³⁹⁶ European state and non-state actors participated in the practices of *Pax Sinica* already in the sixteenth century but they did not try to impose European practices on China.³⁹⁷ Indeed, they did not “challenge, if ever they did question, the assumptions, worldviews, the legitimacy and predominance of the Chinese world order they encountered”.³⁹⁸ The era of *Pax Sinica* ended up with the beginning of “the Century of Shame” or “the Century of Humiliation” (1839-1949) which included several unequal treaties and sovereignty losses such as the ceding of Hong Kong to the British. China’s international responsibility at that time was “largely to make sacrifice as a colony” and the failed state was not able to fulfil the “fundamental responsibility of maintaining its people’s living standards, safeguarding basic human rights and developing economy”.³⁹⁹ The “Century of Shame” concluded with the Communist revolution and the establishment of the People’s Republic of China (the PRC) in 1949.

Before the globalization of Western ideas of human–nature relationships in the 19th and 20th centuries, there was no Chinese word equivalent to “nature”.⁴⁰⁰ In ancient China, “nature” did not exist itself but “its meaning was inseparably linked with the social sphere”.⁴⁰¹ Hence human-nature relationship was “reflected and disputed” over terms like *tian* (天), *xing* (性), and *sheng* (生)⁴⁰², and *ziran* (自然)

³⁹⁵ Sisci 2009, 75.

³⁹⁶ Zhang 2014b, 56.

³⁹⁷ Zhang 2014b, 72.

³⁹⁸ Zhang 2014b, 73.

³⁹⁹ Jin 2011, 7.

⁴⁰⁰ Weller 2006, 13.

⁴⁰¹ Schmidt-Glintzer 2010, 538.

⁴⁰² Schmidt-Glintzer 2010, 526.

became the accepted translation for the Western concept of nature only in the early 20th century.⁴⁰³ In contrast to the Western belief that God created nature (*natura naturata*), the ancient Chinese saw nature as the “ever-productive and self-renewing forces of nature” (*natura naturans*).⁴⁰⁴ There were at least three different kinds of schools organizing the relationship between humans and nature: Daoism which “tended toward accommodation to nature’s way”, Buddhism that promoted “reverence for all living beings”, and Confucianism that “actively sought to manage, utilize, and control nature”.⁴⁰⁵ Of these three, Confucianism has been the most influential. As agricultural economies, both the Ming (1368-1644) and Qing (1644-1911) dynasties followed the principles of Confucianism, and gave a high recognition to a balanced relationship between Man and Land, or Man and Nature (天人关系, 人地关系, 人大自然关系, 天人合一). To some extent, while explicitly abandoning traditional Confucianism, Mao’s effort to conquer nature was also based on Confucianism,⁴⁰⁶ and contemporary Chinese leadership has made efforts to revitalize the Confucian tradition. Although Confucianism emphasizes a harmonious human–nature relationship, it is foremost an anthropocentric approach which sees nature in terms of natural resources to be shaped to human needs. Hence, Confucianism does not provide incentives for an ecocentric approach whereas Daoism and Buddhism promote the idea that humans are a part of the ecosystem.

China’s rapid environmental change began already in the late 17th century as the country’s population started to grow, and the increasing population used more and more natural resources.⁴⁰⁷ By 1800, China faced a “pre-modern energy crisis” caused by heavy deforestation.⁴⁰⁸ The modernization of agriculture and industry, population growth, and commercialization during the late-Qing dynasty and the Republic of China (1912-1949) caused serious environmental degradation and social problems such as deforestation, energy shortages, droughts, famines and conflicts over water and land control.⁴⁰⁹ In particular, the mid-19th century marked the “watershed between traditional China and the modern age, between the pre-

⁴⁰³ Weller 2006, 13.

⁴⁰⁴ Kubin 2010, 517.

⁴⁰⁵ Shapiro 2001, 7.

⁴⁰⁶ Shapiro 2001, 8.

⁴⁰⁷ Sit 2010, 241–242.

⁴⁰⁸ Marks 2012, 6.

⁴⁰⁹ See Marks 2012, ch. 6.

industrial and post-industrial age, and between the choice of Neo-Confucianism and a reformed way of managing man-land relationship with regard to new technology and other factors in the modern era”.⁴¹⁰ Due to social and environmental changes of the mid-19th century, the PRC “inherited a seriously degraded natural environment”.⁴¹¹

4.1.2 Mao’s war against nature

The establishment of the PRC in 1949 marked the beginning of a new era in the history of China. Due to the burden of the past, Mao Zedong, the first Chair of the PRC, developed an obsession with sovereignty, a fear of invention and a suspicion of foreigners. Maoist China (1949-1978) resisted both formal and informal international institutions because they were regarded as “the creations of either the superpowers or the Western capitalist camp”.⁴¹² According to Zhao Suizheng, all the Chinese leaders in 20th century have shared “a deep bitterness at China's humiliation” and determined to “restore China to its rightful place as a great power”.⁴¹³ Maoist society rejected previous ideas of the human–nature relationship based on traditional neo-Confucianism and pursued social modernization, focusing on heavy industry, forced industrialization and central-planning. In contrast to the Western view of nature as “common heritage” or “private property that needed to be preserved”, the environment was regarded as a “common good that could be put to positive use”.⁴¹⁴ Indeed, Maoist China believed that the “utilization of natural resources is in principle inexhaustible, or at least, constantly extending”.⁴¹⁵ Accordingly to the militarization of other sectors of life and the state’s fight against capitalism, individualism, imperialism, feudalism, and revisionism, Mao declared a “war against nature” and promoted a slogan “Man must conquer nature” (人定胜天). As Judith Shapiro describes, the official discourse was filled with military metaphors:

⁴¹⁰ Sit 2010, 241–242.

⁴¹¹ Marks 2012, 263.

⁴¹² Deng 2008, 4.

⁴¹³ Zhao 2000, 4.

⁴¹⁴ Kobayashi 2005, 90.

⁴¹⁵ Greenfield 1969, 217.

Nature was to be “conquered.” Wheat was to be sown by “shock attack”. “Shock troops” reclaimed the grasslands. “Victories” were won against flood and drought. Insects, rodents, and sparrows were “wiped out”.⁴¹⁶

Inspired by Karl Marx, Mao applauded technological progress, economic growth and the conquest of nature.⁴¹⁷ He collectivized most of China’s land and forests, and focused on maximizing industrial output without paying attention to environmental impacts. Factories did not have any incentive to protect the environment because they were only evaluated by industrial output and economic growth. Due to inefficient production technologies and heavily subsidized energy prices, energy efficiency was – and still is – poor and natural resources were systematically wasted.⁴¹⁸ As the volume of workers was considered an important factor of the maximization of industrial in-put, the population policy was seen as an integral part of Maoist China’s national economic development. Mao Zedong promoted rapid population growth. In 1949, he stated:

It is very good that China has a big population. Even if China’s population multiplies many times, she is fully capable of finding a solution; the solution is production.⁴¹⁹

Although Maoist China recognized a “need for planned population growth”, it did not “associate it with environmental protection in the same way as many western industrialized countries.”⁴²⁰ In other words, China did not accept the Malthusian demographic theory as it rejected the “idea that population growth in itself brings pollution or damage to the environment”.⁴²¹ At the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment (UNCHE) in 1972, China denied the “essential link” between population growth and environmental protection, and rejected the use of terms like “over-population” and “population explosion”. Interestingly, at the 1974 UN World Food Conference, China “further rejected the association between food shortage and population”.⁴²²

⁴¹⁶ Shapiro 2001, 3–4.

⁴¹⁷ This view gets close to what Dryzek (2005) calls Promethean or cornucopian discourse.

⁴¹⁸ See Shapiro 2001.

⁴¹⁹ Quoted in Shapiro 2001, 31.

⁴²⁰ Greenfield 1979, 217.

⁴²¹ Greenfield 1979, 217.

⁴²² Greenfield 1979, 218.

Although Maoist China did not participate in international practices, it was not totally isolated. Jin Canrong describes the newly founded PRC's alliance with the Soviet Union as the fulfilment of China's "important limited responsibility" and to some extent "leadership responsibility". Accordingly, in its "responsibility of maintaining the survival, unity and development of socialist countries in the world" China supported the "socialist bloc" during the Korean War, the First Indochina War and the Vietnam War.⁴²³ After China and the Soviet Union broke up their alliance, China started to expand its relations with former colonial states around the world. In its "third-World" relations, China promoted "anti-America, anti-Soviet Union, [and] anti-colonialism" international norms and values.⁴²⁴ Given Maoist China's own poverty, it was "somehow too generous" in providing its fellow communist countries with foreign aid, which prevented the party-state from fulfilling its national responsibility to raise the standard of living of its poor citizens.⁴²⁵ In return for China's diplomatic and economic assistance many developing countries supported the PRC's bid to be the legal representative of China at the UN.⁴²⁶ The PRC's membership of the UN and particularly its permanent seat on the UN Security Council re-oriented the state's international responsibilities – at least in principle in the early 1970s. In real life, China was not willing to join all practices of international society, such as international trade, until the reform era. As the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment (1972) was the very first international conference the PRC ever participated in, ideas of environmental responsibility have been present from the very early stage of formulating the PRC's international responsibilities.

Despite substantial ideological and economic changes in post-Maoist China, Mao's views on foreign affairs and the nature–human relationship still guide, to a large degree, China's contemporary environmental practices. In addition, many of China's contemporary environmental problems can be traced back to the Mao era. Its development policies still focus on economic growth and do not pay enough attention to the environment, the rule of law is weak and public awareness of

⁴²³ Jin 2011, 8.

⁴²⁴ Jin 2011, 9.

⁴²⁵ According to Chen Z. (2009, 25), foreign aid expenditure accounted for 6.9 per cent of the PRC's state budget in 1973.

⁴²⁶ With the support of many newly independent developing countries, the PRC managed to assemble enough votes to win the long-term debate over the legitimate representation of China in October 1971, when the UN General Assembly resolution 2758 decided to restore the "lawful rights" of the PRC and to expel the Republic of China's (ROC) "unlawful" representation to any UN organization.

environmental problems is low. In contrast to the Western focus on nature protection and the ecological restoration of native ecosystems, the Chinese environmental projects aim to “construct” and “improve” nature by planting trees and engineering efforts, however, they have not managed to stop environmental degradation.⁴²⁷

4.1.3 Reform policies and the redefinition of state responsibility

China’s reform era began after Mao’s death in the late 1970s. In their efforts to build up a moderately well-off society, the Chinese leadership took economic growth in terms of gross domestic product growth and income per capita as the ultimate objective. Along with reforms and open-door policies, China’s national identity gradually changed during the 1980s and 1990s. Although the identity transformation was chiefly pushed by economic interests, it completely changed China’s membership within international society.⁴²⁸ Since the 1980s, China has pursued “comprehensive national power” (综合国力). The material focus on economic development caused enormous environmental degradation and social problems, thus the Chinese leadership also started to acknowledge the importance of environmental protection. In the late 1980s, it created many organizational, educational and scientific arrangements related to the environment.⁴²⁹

The 15th National Congress of the CCP held in 1997 set the building of an “all-around well-off society” (小康社会) as the main objective of the party.⁴³⁰ To secure a favourable international environment for economic development, China abandoned ideologist campaigns and took a more pragmatic foreign policy approach. Advised by Premier Deng Xiaoping, the Chinese government kept a low international profile and developed a concept of international responsibility “somewhat strange to foreigners”: It declared that the raising of its citizens’ living standards is the “fundamental national responsibility” and the “main way of defending the superiority of the socialist approach”.⁴³¹ Therefore, the leaders of the CCP argued that the fulfilment of its domestic responsibilities *is* about international

⁴²⁷ Jiang 2010.

⁴²⁸ Qin 2004.

⁴²⁹ See, for example, Harrington 2005, 108.

⁴³⁰ Jiang 1997.

⁴³¹ Jin 2011, 9.

responsibility as the collapse of China would undoubtedly cause instability around the world. This perspective is still central to China's understanding of its global responsibility. As Jin puts it, "it is a great responsibility for China to get its own things done" and hence the "internal requirement for China's international responsibility is to develop and enhance its own power".⁴³² For instance, Zhao Qizheng, a former Minister of the State Council Information Office of China, has defined China's responsibilities as follows: due to China's developing country status, the state's "first and foremost responsibility is to develop its economy to give the Chinese people a better life".⁴³³ The 2011 White Paper on China's peaceful development echoed: "For China, the most populous developing country, to run itself well is the most important fulfillment of its international responsibility".⁴³⁴

4.2 China's contemporary notions of the state's multidimensional responsibilities

This section explores China's contemporary notions of state responsibility through the lenses of Robert Jackson's typology of the multidimensional responsibilities of states introduced in chapter three. Because identity is the "horizon" within which one is "capable of taking a stand"⁴³⁵, it is necessary to take a quick look at China's evolving national identity before we move on to the Chinese government's interpretations of its multidimensional responsibilities. Without identity, China would not have an ethical foundation for its practices, and it would not know what it stands for.

In the early 1990s, China's economic wealth and international status started to increase rapidly in both material and ideational terms, which inevitably transformed its identity. In addition, with the end of the Cold War and the collapse of the Soviet Union, international society started to regard China as a new potential great power and wanted to integrate China into international practices. Hence both internal and external developments put in motion a process that led to China's accession to the great power club. At the moment, China is in the process of learning new ideas and ways of being in the world that are in accordance with this

⁴³² Jin 2011, 8.

⁴³³ Zhao 2012, 197.

⁴³⁴ Information Office of the State Council of the People's Republic of China 2011a.

⁴³⁵ Taylor 1989, 27.

new identity. Thus, it continues to have multiple identities. Indeed, Jin Canrong identifies four identities, which all are currently in the state of flux. First, China's identity as the largest developing country is being challenged by its economic miracle; second, China's identity as a regional power is not very accurate anymore as contemporary China has wide global interests and influence; third, China's identity as a socialist country is being eroded by its capitalist market system and consumerism; and fourth, China's identity as a Confucian civilization is becoming lost due to modernization and market economy.⁴³⁶ In general, it is not rare that a state has multiple identities because different practices may set up conflicting demands for the participants and it is sometimes difficult to combine them into a single identity.⁴³⁷ However, China has "dual features in each and every identity" which has made it, among other things, difficult for foreigners to predict and understand China's behaviour.⁴³⁸ China's notions of multidimensional state responsibilities may, however, illuminate China's valuations and preferences, and hence help us understand China's practices.

4.2.1 National responsibilities

IR tends to assume that states have universally generalized national interests. For example, realists, such as Kenneth Waltz, regard physical survival and security as the main (or the only) national interest of all states, which does not leave much room for international responsibility. Again, rationalists emphasize economic interests, which also rarely go hand in hand with international responsibility. The constructivist perspective, however, points out that national interests are ideas.⁴³⁹ Equally, the ES suggests that states have nation-specific interests that are what the nation thinks them to be.⁴⁴⁰ This approach reminds us that states are not only actors, but "first and foremost a *space* of positions".⁴⁴¹ Like any state, China is not a unitary agent but a set of complex social relations with multiple competing interests. For instance, the ideas and interests promoted by the Environmental

⁴³⁶ Jin 2011, 251.

⁴³⁷ Wenger 1998, 159.

⁴³⁸ Jin 2011, 251.

⁴³⁹ See, for example, Goldstein & Keohane 1993 and Legro 2005.

⁴⁴⁰ See Bull 2002, 63–64.

⁴⁴¹ Pouliot & Mérand 2013, 36.

Ministry may differ significantly from those of, say, the Ministry of Commerce. Hence the national interests of China are not given but they reflect the outcome of a contested and contingent political struggle over values and preferences amongst different state organs, influenced by non-state actors, such as business corporations, NGOs and the general public.

In a global world, states have increasingly more interests in common, hence the promotion of a state's national interest does not automatically threaten or decrease interests and the needs of others. Some national interests are quite stable, some evolve and change over time and some are merely a matter of choice. Some interests reflect a state's social circumstances: its identity, culture, traditions, history, political system, etc. As national interests are social constructions, they transform over time, thus what imperial or Maoist China considered its vital interest does not necessarily comprise the national interest of China's contemporary leadership. China's contemporary political practices are largely determined by the objectives of the CCP but they are also shaped by the nation's long cultural history. Furthermore, the geopolitical conditions of states vary and have a permanent influence on their interests and goals, regardless of the state's political and social practices. Each government of China, whether socialist or democratic, will be concerned with how to feed its enormous population; and each government of small island states will be concerned about sea level rise caused by climate change. Finally, some goals are simply determined by human choices. To respond to external and internal events (usually a crisis), decision-makers have to make choices between multiple courses of action, which naturally involves the ethical comparison of appropriate options. In 1989, the Chinese leadership decided to respond with guns and tanks to the student demonstrations at Tiananmen Square whereas the government chose to react to the Hong Kong protests in a more tolerant way in 2014. The influence of individual decision-makers is also very substantial in China as the leadership of the state is embodied in the chairman of the CCP. Hence the personal experiences, values, ideologies and goals of the chairman have a distinct influence on China's overall objectives.

Since the beginning of the reform era, economic growth has been the overriding priority of the Chinese party-state. Energy security emerged as a central national concern in the early 2000s: the state needs larger and larger quantities of energy to maintain rapid economic growth. Therefore, despite its growing international status, China's leadership is still mostly concerned with domestic issues, and the government's primary responsibilities lie at home. The Chinese government emphasizes that it has a moral responsibility to maximize economic

growth. Therefore, it would not accept an international treaty that would hinder its industrialization and hence impede its development by setting too low per capita emission levels, for instance. Besides, there is justifiable fear that investment and jobs important to economic growth would transfer to countries where labour is cheaper if emissions control led to increased business costs in China. The continuation of economic growth is also central to domestic stability and China's international influence and image, both being important factors for the legitimacy of the CCP.

Today, China's core interests include state sovereignty, safeguarding its basic systems and national security, territorial integrity and national reunification, overall social stability, and ensuring sustainable economic and social development.⁴⁴² The key motive behind Chinese foreign policy also seems to be economic growth rather than ideology. To sustain economic growth in a globalized world, China uses diplomatic tools to gain access to markets, foreign investments, energy and other natural resources and advanced technology, etc.⁴⁴³ Although it does not regard climate change as an issue of national security, the Chinese government is aware that it harms the Chinese economic and social development, and the life of its citizens.⁴⁴⁴ Due to climate-related extreme weather events and natural disasters, 430 million people were affected and economic losses of 309.6 billion yuan were caused in 2011 alone.⁴⁴⁵ In economic terms, Nicholas Stern estimates that "China experienced economic losses from drought and flood equating to 1.2 per cent and 0.8 per cent of GDP respectively" from 1988 to 2004.⁴⁴⁶ Climate change also poses a serious risk to food security in China.

The differences between the Western and Chinese legal systems demonstrate different ideas of responsibility: The Western views of democracy and the rule of law emphasize that the government is "responsible to the people" while the Chinese paradigm views the government as responsible *for* the people".⁴⁴⁷ As Jiang Zemin put it in 1997, "our Party shoulders a lofty historical responsibility for the

⁴⁴² According to China News Agency (2009), then State Councilor Dai Bingguo identified China's core interests at the first China-U.S. Strategic and Economic Dialogue.

⁴⁴³ For more detailed accounts and analyses of Chinese foreign policy, see, for example, Lanteigne 2013 and Liu 2004.

⁴⁴⁴ National Development and Reform Commission 2014, 4.

⁴⁴⁵ National Development and Reform Commission 2012.

⁴⁴⁶ Stern 2006, 106.

⁴⁴⁷ Dobson 2013, 63.

destiny of the Chinese nation”.⁴⁴⁸ The CCP Constitution explicitly describes the party’s responsibilities for the people:

Development is the Party's top priority in governing and rejuvenating the country. The general starting point and criterion for judging all the Party's work should be how it benefits development of the productive forces in China's socialist society, adds to the overall strength of socialist China and improves the people's living standards.⁴⁴⁹

By the same token, in his inaugural press conference in 2012, President Xi Jinping defined his leadership’s responsibilities for the nation, the people and the party.⁴⁵⁰ Due to China’s economic miracle and the CCP’s legitimacy crisis after the Tiananmen incident in 1989, the Maoist moral basis of the CCP has gradually crumbled during the past 30 years. To legitimate its authority, the CCP has been forced to rewrite its moral guidelines. It has increasingly used ideas from traditional Chinese thinking, especially from Confucianism.⁴⁵¹ This has transformed the party’s identity as well. Since 2012, Xi Jinping has led a national campaign to establish an “all-pervasive” “moral and ideological foundation” for the country. According to Xi, socialist core values, which include “prosperity, democracy, civility, harmony, freedom, equality, justice, the rule of law, patriotism, dedication, integrity and friendship”, should guide all public and private life in “socialist China”.⁴⁵²

4.2.2 International responsibilities

The rising economic wealth and gradual identity change of China led to a debate over the state’s international responsibilities in the 1990s.⁴⁵³ As the Chinese leadership began to see international institutions as being beneficial to China’s development, it did not want to be seen as a threat but started to cultivate a global

⁴⁴⁸ Jiang 1997.

⁴⁴⁹ *Xinhua* 2012a.

⁴⁵⁰ Xi 2012b.

⁴⁵¹ See Brady (2012a) for the evolution of Chinese state Confucianism from the Maoist “Smash Confucianism” via the “Chinese studies fever” in the 1990s to the sophisticated use of Confucian terms in CCP ideology in the 2000s.

⁴⁵² *Xinhua* 2014a.

⁴⁵³ Xia 2001.

image, presenting itself as a responsible major power.⁴⁵⁴ Since then, two “overarching beliefs” have shaped China’s political practices.⁴⁵⁵ On the one hand, it is widely believed that the future of China is more and more linked to international society.⁴⁵⁶ The government recognizes that China cannot develop in isolation and that its economic growth and national revitalization are closely connected to globalization and other international practices. A stable internal and external security environment is also important for the continuation of China’s economic growth, which is an important condition for the legitimacy of the CCP. The government has thus abandoned Maoist scepticism towards international cooperation and China has now signed more than 400 multilateral and more than 23,000 bilateral treaties and joined almost all international organizations.⁴⁵⁷ It has even helped to establish new regional multilateral groups such as ASEAN Plus Three and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. Thus there is no doubt that China fulfils its international responsibility to cooperate.

On the other hand, China’s political practices are guided by the perception of different kinds of threats.⁴⁵⁸ In particular, as ideologies impact on the foreign policies of states by shaping their perceptions of threats⁴⁵⁹, communism shapes China’s perceived internal and external threats. One of the most pervasive beliefs in China is that the United States seeks to constrain China’s development.⁴⁶⁰ Younger Chinese IR scholars explain this belief with reference to a realist paradigm whereas older often emphasize the Maoist class struggle against the US which is “bellicose, unpredictable, and determined to hem China in”.⁴⁶¹ Either way, the belief partly explains why China has not accepted the US discourse of great power responsibility and why China opposes legally binding greenhouse gas emission reductions.

The five principles of peaceful coexistence (mutual respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity, mutual non-aggression, non-interference in each other’s internal affairs, equality and mutual benefit, and peaceful coexistence), formulated in 1954,

⁴⁵⁴ Deng 2008; Gries 2004 and Johnston 1998.

⁴⁵⁵ Although Medeiros’ (2009) original argument of the two beliefs refers only to China’s views of international security, I think they also influence China’s role in international society in general.

⁴⁵⁶ Medeiros 2009, 20.

⁴⁵⁷ Liu 2015.

⁴⁵⁸ Medeiros 2009, 20.

⁴⁵⁹ Haas 2005.

⁴⁶⁰ Medeiros 2009, 30.

⁴⁶¹ Dobson 2013, 94.

still form the cornerstone of China's international responsibility.⁴⁶² They are very pluralist and state-centric in nature. Since 2004, the concept of “peaceful development” (和平发展) has been the official foreign policy of China. The concept assures us that a rising China does not seek hegemony and that it has no intentions to challenge the current world order. The principle emphasizes that the government's main interest is to maintain economic development and that China has no interest in interfering in conflicts and supports a stable international order. Instead of the traditional Cold War thinking of zero-sum security, which was based on military force, the Chinese government emphasizes the importance of “win-win” security and progress in international politics. The government believes that international cooperation must be based on mutual trust and mutual benefit so that all the partners “win”. The “win-win” rhetoric also emphasizes that China's economic growth does not pose a threat to other states, but instead offers them great business opportunities. Regarding climate policy, the Chinese government assures the world that it does not pose an economic, political or environmental threat to other states and instead works “unremittingly” in order to achieve harmony and welfare all over the world.

The Chinese government launched the concept of “harmonious world” (和谐社会) at the United Nations Summit in 2005. It was probably not a coincidence that Chinese President Hu Jintao presented the concept at the UN 60th anniversary summit: In traditional Chinese culture, 60 years marks the natural cycle of the end of one era and the birth of a new era. The concept of harmonious world put forward three diplomatic strategic viewpoints, which all emphasize the maintenance of friendly relations with all countries, mutual respect and mutual understanding, in China: “non-enemy diplomacy”, the construction of a stable regional cooperation and global inter-regional cooperation.⁴⁶³ Theoretically, the concept has attracted wide attention amongst China watchers who see it as a “result of the rise of China's international position” or as a “change of Chinese attitudes towards the outside world” and an “intention to be a ‘responsible power’”.⁴⁶⁴ In world politics, however, the concept has remained blurred and uninfluential. That is why Pang Zhongying proposes that the lexicon of harmonious world should be “translated from the realm of “good wishes” into formulating policy recommendations, identifying the challenges requiring China to

⁴⁶² Xi 2014a.

⁴⁶³ Su 2009, 54–55.

⁴⁶⁴ Masuda 2009, 58–59.

assume a greater leadership role and developing the norms, rules and institutions that will define the international order of the 21st century”.⁴⁶⁵

In 2005, Robert Zoellick gave a famous speech in which he urged China to become a responsible stakeholder.⁴⁶⁶ In addition, the global financial crisis of 2007-2008 raised China’s international status, whether or not the Chinese government wanted or was ready for that. For example, C. Fred Bergsten complained that “China's international mindset has not kept pace with its breathtaking economic ascent”.⁴⁶⁷ He recommended the formulation of “G2”, a “true partnership” between China and the US to “provide joint leadership” for global economic practices.⁴⁶⁸ Many other similar writings made China suddenly the “pioneer” of a new international order, which frightened most Chinese citizens.⁴⁶⁹ This illustrates very well how other participants to international practices give roles and responsibilities to each other, and sometimes the participants themselves feel that they are put under pressure to assume more responsibilities than they are willing or capable of shouldering. From the Chinese perspective, its global responsibilities must go hand in hand with its development level, and for now, China must focus on promoting development. At the same time, the government is aware that its permanent seat at the UN Security Council brings it a special responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security.⁴⁷⁰

In general, the Chinese agree that China’s rise comes with broader responsibilities. At the moment, they debate “about what responsibilities to assume, how to fulfil them, and how to balance between China’s own abilities and other’s expectations”.⁴⁷¹ At the same time, they ask whether and what kind of “corresponding rights” China can attain if it assigns itself more international responsibilities.⁴⁷² The debate amongst Chinese academia and policy makers has culminated in three main views of China’s responsibility: The first one encourages abandoning the low-profile policy and victim identity and taking “great power

⁴⁶⁵ Pang 2006, 10.

⁴⁶⁶ See Zoellick 2005.

⁴⁶⁷ Bergsten 2008.

⁴⁶⁸ Bergsten 2008.

⁴⁶⁹ Jin 2011, 13.

⁴⁷⁰ Wang 2013.

⁴⁷¹ Jin 2011, 253.

⁴⁷² Jin 2011, 18.

responsibility” to “ensure a “just” world order”.⁴⁷³ The second one recommends taking a “more active, or even a leadership role” to promote China’s core interests.⁴⁷⁴ The third view supports the continuation of a low profile policy and hence advises the avoidance of taking on more global responsibilities.⁴⁷⁵ The Chinese government itself has not talked about what kind of global power it would be but is concerned about “whether and how China can rise peacefully”.⁴⁷⁶

4.2.3 Human-centric responsibilities

While the priority at the beginning of the reform was to “get rich first”, the Hu Jintao-Wen Jiabao administration (2003-2013) noticed that rapid economic growth caused various environmental and social problems. Consequently, it started to pay more attention to social justice and the reduction of poverty, and introduced the principle of “putting people first” (以人为本) as the core principle of the social contract between the Chinese people and political leaders. The principle states that the leaders have to implement policies that benefit people and should not seek their own interests. As President Hu Jintao explained:

We must always put people first. Serving the people wholeheartedly is the fundamental purpose of the Party, and its every endeavor is for the well-being of the people. We must always make sure that the aim and outcome of all the work of the Party and the state is to realize, safeguard and expand the fundamental interests of the overwhelming majority of the people.⁴⁷⁷

The Hu-Wen administration coined two ideological concepts, which both operationalize the principle of putting people first. The first one, the Scientific Outlook on Development (科学发展观) “takes development as its essence, putting people first as its core, comprehensive, balanced and sustainable development as its basic requirement, and overall consideration as its fundamental approach”.⁴⁷⁸ It “provides new scientific answers to the major questions of what

⁴⁷³ Zhao 2013, 53.

⁴⁷⁴ Zhao 2013, 53.

⁴⁷⁵ Zhao 2013, 53.

⁴⁷⁶ Tang 2006, 130.

⁴⁷⁷ Hu 2007.

⁴⁷⁸ Hu 2007.

kind of development China should achieve in a new environment and how the country should achieve it”.⁴⁷⁹ According to Hu, the Scientific Outlook on Development was the “most important achievement” of his leadership because it introduces a “new realm in the development of Marxism in contemporary China” by “integrating Marxism with the reality of contemporary China and with the underlying features of our times”.⁴⁸⁰ As the “latest achievement in developing the system of theories of socialism with Chinese characteristics”, he explains, the Scientific Outlook on Development offers “a powerful theoretical weapon for guiding all the work of the Party and country”.⁴⁸¹ At the 18th CCP National Congress in 2012, the Scientific Outlook on Development was added to the revised Constitution of the CCP which states that the “Scientific Outlook on Development is a scientific theory” which “puts people first and calls for comprehensive, balanced and sustainable development”.⁴⁸² In addition, the 18th CCP National Congress affirmed the concept of “protecting nationals abroad” (海外公民保护) as its priority, reflecting the state’s gradual acceptance of its national responsibility to defend its citizens overseas. This responsibility was not, however, accepted on the basis of China’s great power identity but due to its economic interests in unstable states.⁴⁸³

The second ideological concept of the Hu-Wen administration was harmonious society (和谐社会), which emphasizes that “(s)ocial harmony is an essential attribute of socialism with Chinese characteristics”.⁴⁸⁴ The Sixth Plenum of the 16th CCP Central Committee declared in 2006 that, “social harmony is the intrinsic nature of the socialism with Chinese characteristics and an important guarantee of the country’s prosperity, the nation’s rejuvenation and the people’s happiness”.⁴⁸⁵ At the 17th Party Congress in 2007, harmonious society was institutionalized and added to the Constitution of the CCP, which meant that the CCP was “formally giving up Maoist ‘class struggle’”.⁴⁸⁶ In particular, Hu’s report to the Party Congress abandoned calls for “establishing a ‘new international political and

⁴⁷⁹ Hu 2012b.

⁴⁸⁰ Hu 2012b.

⁴⁸¹ Hu 2012b.

⁴⁸² *Xinhua* 2012a.

⁴⁸³ Parello-Plesner & Duchâtel 2015.

⁴⁸⁴ Hu 2007.

⁴⁸⁵ *People’s Daily* 2006a .

⁴⁸⁶ Brady 2012a, 66.

economic order', a phrase that Deng started using in these reports as far back as 1988".⁴⁸⁷ Instead of challenging the practices of international society, contemporary China plays a "constructive role" and works to "make the international order fairer and more equitable".⁴⁸⁸

In essence, scientific development and social harmony are "two sides of the same coin: a harmonious society is the objective and scientific development is the method to reach it".⁴⁸⁹ According to Hu, "scientific development and social harmony are integral to each other and neither is possible without the other".⁴⁹⁰ Both concepts can be understood as means and incentives to sustainable development, and putting people first does not inevitably mean that the Chinese government ignores the environment. On the contrary, the government recognizes that environmental degradation sets obstacles to sustainable economic growth and that pollution harms the well-being of people. Scientific development and social harmony therefore provide the government with strong human-centric incentives for environmental protection. Recently, China has started to pay attention to citizens' environmental rights as well. A white paper on Progress in China's Human Rights 2012 gave over an entire chapter to environmental protection for the first time. The chapter reviews the government's policies and actions for safeguarding citizens' environmental rights and interests to live in a clean and hygienic environment and to have a good eco-environment.⁴⁹¹ Environmental protection has indeed become an important part of national policy (and is discussed in the next section).

Although China has ratified many humanitarian treaties, including the Geneva Conventions, and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, its approach to human rights differs from the Western conception: the Chinese regard human rights as domestic affairs. From the Chinese perspective, the human rights issue falls under a state's national responsibility, not humanitarian responsibility. This does not necessarily mean that the concept of humanitarian responsibility does not sit in the Chinese context⁴⁹² as China has increasingly engaged in international practices of humanitarian assistance. For example, China no longer believes that

⁴⁸⁷ Medeiros 2009, 49.

⁴⁸⁸ Hu 2007.

⁴⁸⁹ Fan 2006, 709.

⁴⁹⁰ Hu 2007.

⁴⁹¹ Information Office of the State Council of the People's Republic of China 2013.

⁴⁹² As Chan (2006, 37) argues.

UN peacekeeping operations are “interference in countries’ internal affairs” and the “undesirable result of US–Soviet hegemonic power competition”⁴⁹³ but it has increasingly engaged in UN peacekeeping operations since 1990. However, developed countries often complain that China’s increasing presence in Africa for instance, has negative effects on democratization, human rights, good governance and environmental protection. China naturally denies these comments, assuring that although it “emphasize[s] both morality and interests in our exchanges with other developing countries”, it “put[s] morality before interests”.⁴⁹⁴

Climate change poses a significant threat to human security. As real human suffering caused by climate change cannot be estimated in economic costs, Roberts and Parks provide a more appropriate way of measuring climate-related risks: the number of people killed, made homeless, or otherwise damaged by climate-related disasters, such as floods, heat waves, droughts, and windstorms, in individual states.⁴⁹⁵ Measured in these terms of human suffering, China has faced huge losses; nearly 50 million Chinese lost their homes and nearly 45 000 Chinese were killed due to climate-related disasters from 1980 to 2002.⁴⁹⁶ Obviously, it is difficult to estimate to what extent climate change has affected previous climate-related disasters. However, these numbers show that China is geographically located in an area very vulnerable to climate-related disasters. The frequency and intensity of these kinds of disasters is predicted to increase due to climate change.

4.2.4 Ecological responsibilities

According to Robert P. Weller and Peter Bol, the idea that political leadership has “fundamental responsibility” for the maintenance of harmonious human–nature relations has a long history in China. However, this idea has not always resulted in very eco-friendly practices, largely because anthropocentric interests always override environmental considerations.⁴⁹⁷ President Jiang Zemin’s report to the 15th Party Congress held in 1997 was the first-ever national congress report that mentioned the environment. According to Jiang, “(w)hile exploiting our natural

⁴⁹³ Wang 1999, 75.

⁴⁹⁴ Wang 2013.

⁴⁹⁵ Roberts & Parks 2007.

⁴⁹⁶ Roberts & Parks 2007, 76.

⁴⁹⁷ Weller & Bol 1998, 473.

resources and making economical use of them, we lay emphasis on the latter so as to raise the efficiency of their utilization”.⁴⁹⁸ In particular, Jiang acknowledged that “population growth and economic development have caused great strains on resources and the environment” and environmental problems may set obstacles to China’s development in the future.⁴⁹⁹ This was a major change in the PRC’s discourse as previously it was believed that only capitalism causes environmental degradation.

At the 16th Party Congress held in 2002, President Jiang Zemin pointed out that the “contradiction between the ecological environment and natural resources on the one hand and economic and social development on the other is becoming increasingly conspicuous”.⁵⁰⁰ In 2004, China launched a highly publicized campaign on “green GDP” in order to integrate economic practices with environmental protection.⁵⁰¹ It pursued the development of an index that “quantifies and measures the monetary costs of environmental damage caused by a country’s economic growth”.⁵⁰² Due to technical difficulties, however, the world’s first “green GDP” report, published in 2006, calculated only environmental pollution’s costs to the economy.⁵⁰³ After that, the “green GDP” campaign was quickly buried due to methodological problems and the overriding priority of economic goals on the regional level.

Already before, but especially after, the launch of the harmonious society conception many Chinese intellectuals started to call for “ecological civilization” as a new model with which to find harmony between nature and humanity.⁵⁰⁴ As Ma Jun puts it, “if the aim of development is really to benefit the people, we cannot destroy the very resources on which people rely for survival”.⁵⁰⁵ In particular, Pan Yue, vice-minister of the State Environmental Protection Administration, stated in his two influential articles “Harmonious Society and Environment-Friendly Society” and “On Socialist Ecological Civilization” in 2006 that harmonious

⁴⁹⁸ Jiang 1997.

⁴⁹⁹ Jiang 1997.

⁵⁰⁰ Jiang 2002.

⁵⁰¹ See, for example, *Economy* 2007, 27–30.

⁵⁰² Zheng 2015.

⁵⁰³ *People’s Daily* 2006b.

⁵⁰⁴ Dynon 2008.

⁵⁰⁵ Ma 2007.

society cannot be achieved without environmental protection. Pan proposed that harmonious society should be:

...based on industry consuming less resources, people's livelihoods based on moderate-level consumption, greater recycling of resources, a highly efficient economic infrastructure, greater innovation, an orderly and open financial set-up, a distribution system emphasizing social justice and a democratic political system.⁵⁰⁶

President Hu Jintao responded to these calls by presenting new requirements for the building up of a moderately well-off society in his report to the 17th CCP National Congress in 2007. Most importantly, he officially proposed the building of an ecological civilization (生态文明)⁵⁰⁷ for the first time. According to Hu, China should pursue ecological civilization “by basically forming an energy- and resource-efficient and environment-friendly structure of industries, pattern of growth and mode of consumption”.⁵⁰⁸ Although Hu did not offer a clear definition of the concept, his report indicated that the government had redefined its development model by putting more emphasis on sustainable development. The concept of ecological civilization was quickly incorporated into the government’s overall policy plans, and it was added to the Constitution of the CCP in 2012.⁵⁰⁹ At the 18th national congress of the CCP in 2012, the concept received its own chapter in the work report. In his report to the national congress, Hu Jintao mentioned the concept of ecological civilization 15 times, in contrast to only two references in 2007 report. In the report, Hu acknowledged that the promotion of ecological civilization “is a long-term task of vital importance to the people’s wellbeing and China's future” and hence must be given “high priority”.⁵¹⁰ He declared that the party would “incorporate it into all aspects and the whole process of advancing economic, political, cultural, and social progress, work hard to build a beautiful country, and achieve the lasting and sustainable development of the Chinese nation”.⁵¹¹ Therefore, “resource consumption, environmental damage and

⁵⁰⁶ Pan 2006.

⁵⁰⁷ At first, the concept was translated as “conservation culture” or “ecological progress” in official documents, but the “ecological civilization” was quickly standardized as the official translation.

⁵⁰⁸ Hu 2007.

⁵⁰⁹ See *Xinhua* 2012a.

⁵¹⁰ Hu 2012b.

⁵¹¹ Hu 2012b.

ecological benefits” were added to the performance assessment “evaluating economic and social development, and related goals” of the state.⁵¹² Moreover, the delegates of the 18th Party Congress noted that China has entered a “new stage of development” which means that it should no longer focus exclusively on rapid economic growth but must also integrate environmental protection, emission reduction and energy conservation into the overall development target. However, economic growth was still seen as a precondition for environmental protection. As Zhou Shengxian, China Minister of Environmental Protection, puts it:

We must make sure that environmental protection is an essential part of the efforts to promote economic growth. It is impossible to achieve environmental protection without economic growth, because this would be like catching fish on a tree. And to only pursue economic growth without paying attention to economic [environmental?] protection, would be like taking out all the water from the pool and then going fishing in this pool.⁵¹³

Since the beginning of the Xi Jinping-Li Keqiang administration in 2013, the construction of ecological civilization has received wide attention amongst the party elites. In spring 2015, the State Council lifted ecological civilization to a position where it is seen as a prominent strategic guideline to be integrated into China’s economic, political, cultural, and societal plans. It issued an “Opinion on acceleration for the promotion of ecological civilization”, which defined that “accelerating the promotion of ecological civilization” means an:

Accelerating of the transformation of economic development, improving internal requirements regarding the quality and efficiency of development, promoting the putting the people first principle and the inevitable choice of social harmony, building a moderately well-off society and realizing the great rejuvenation of the Chinese dream, and responding actively to climate change and safeguarding global environmental security.⁵¹⁴

The 12 000-character document does not only set objectives and instructions on how to reorganize the Chinese economy to make it greener but also addresses how to overcome obstacles to improving the environmental standards of society. It declares that “green development” (绿色发展) is important to the development of

⁵¹² Hu 2012b.

⁵¹³ Quoted in CCTV 2012.

⁵¹⁴ *Xinhua* 2015a (the author’s translation).

China's competitive advantage and hence it plays an important role in building national comprehensive power.⁵¹⁵ The State Council aims to make "significant progress" in building up resource-saving and eco-friendly society by 2020.⁵¹⁶ Therefore, the government also relaunched the "green GDP" project in 2015 and plans to start pilot projects on a regional level in the near future.⁵¹⁷

"To fully understand the extreme importance and urgency of the idea of acceleration of the construction of ecological civilization, conscientious increase of the sense of responsibility, and respect, adjust and protect nature", the State Council explains, the "whole party and society must be mobilized to promote the in-depth and long lasting construction of ecological civilization, harmonious development between humans and nature, and the creation of a new era of socialist ecological civilization".⁵¹⁸ Therefore, the State Council maintains that the CCP committees and governmental officials at every level are responsible for the construction of ecological civilization.⁵¹⁹ In particular, it announces that economic performance should not anymore be the "only criterion in government performance assessment" but that environmental issues should have a bigger weighting in the cadre evaluations. Interestingly, the State Council declares that cadres have a life-long responsibility (终身追责) for environmental harm caused on their period of duty, even after they have retired or changed position. This means that if they manage to promote the construction of ecological civilization, officials are rewarded but if they fail or cause serious environmental damage, they cannot be promoted to higher positions.⁵²⁰

In September 2015, the State Council and the Central Committee, China's highest levels of both the CCP and the government, jointly published a reform plan entitled "Integrated Reform Plan for Promoting Ecological Progress",⁵²¹ which indicates a strong political will for improving environmental protection in China. The plan declares that ecological conservation must be given a "position of prominence and incorporated into every aspect and the whole process of

⁵¹⁵ *Xinhua* 2015a.

⁵¹⁶ *Xinhua* 2015a.

⁵¹⁷ Zheng 2015.

⁵¹⁸ *Xinhua* 2015a (the author's translation).

⁵¹⁹ *Xinhua* 2015a.

⁵²⁰ *Xinhua* 2015a.

⁵²¹ In accordance with the official translation of 生态文明, the English version of the plan should be called the "Integrated Reform Plan for Promoting Ecological Civilization".

economic, political, cultural, and social development”.⁵²² It formulates a comprehensive structural framework of institutional reforms that are needed to improve the “formation of a new pattern of modernization in which humankind develops in harmony with nature”.⁵²³ On the one hand, the plan states that it “is necessary to remain committed to the strategy of treating development as being of the utmost importance to China”. On the other hand, it acknowledges that development “is good only when it is green, circular, and low-carbon”.⁵²⁴ It also reiterates the cadres’ lifelong responsibility for environmental conservation and includes the decision to build a national supervision and inspection system to carry out their “natural resource asset audits”.⁵²⁵

There is much literature that elaborates on the concept of ecological civilization in China.⁵²⁶ While Western scholars tend to understand ecological civilization more or less as a synonym for sustainable development, focusing on greener economic development and environmental protection, the Chinese understand it as the “level of harmony that exists between human progress and natural existence in human civilization”.⁵²⁷ They thus emphasize the cultural and socialist dimensions of the concept and regard it as the next stage of social progress, after “the primitive civilization, the agricultural civilization and the industrial civilization”.⁵²⁸ The concept addresses the weaknesses of the latest stage, the (Western) “industrial civilization” and aims to find a better balance between the environment and development. The label “civilization” affords environmental protection a higher position in the CCP’s hierarchy of values, indicating environmental protection is, at least in principle, evolving as a moral or ideological imperative.⁵²⁹ Ecological civilization can be thus grouped together with other post-Mao morality campaigns that seek to formulate “what it means to be civilized”. The three other concepts of the CCP’s civilization narrative, namely material, spiritual and political civilizations,

⁵²² *Xinhua* 2015b.

⁵²³ *Xinhua* 2015b.

⁵²⁴ *Xinhua* 2015b.

⁵²⁵ *Xinhua* 2015b.

⁵²⁶ Western China watchers, however, have only recently become interested in the concept. Even 2013 *China Story Yearbook* entitled “Civilising China” mentioned ecological civilization in only one brief sentence, which indicates that Western scholars do not think that the concept has found its final place in the CCP toolbox.

⁵²⁷ Ma 2013.

⁵²⁸ Pan 2006.

⁵²⁹ Dynon 2008, 107.

have played an important role in establishing and maintaining the party's moral legitimacy.⁵³⁰

Ecological civilization represents a new, holistic worldview: While the Western “industrial civilisation requires that nature is conquered and moulded to our needs”, ecological civilization “requires that humans live in harmony with our environment, because the environment is the foundation of our very existence”.⁵³¹ It is based on the idea of environmental stewardship: Because nature cannot defend itself, it “is humans who need to act as guardians of nature”.⁵³² Ecological civilization hence differs from anthropocentrism by viewing human-beings as the core but not the dominators of nature.⁵³³ Indeed, ecological civilization could provide a basis for more ecocentric ethics locally and globally because it “believes that value exists in both man and nature; nature is also endowed with the power to take the initiative; and all forms of life depend on nature, including mankind”.⁵³⁴ Indeed, the concept has already generated international research cooperation on the “Institutional Innovation of Ecological Civilization” which may lead to more eco-friendly practices in the European Union (EU) and China.

Many Chinese intellectuals have proposed that the CCP should develop the concept of ecological civilization by adopting ideas from both Marxist ecology and traditional Chinese religion and philosophy.⁵³⁵ In particular, some Chinese Marxist theorists have already suggested that Chinese scholars should develop their own Chinese ecological Marxism theory and not “treat ecological Marxism as a foreign dogma to be worshipped but a living method with which to analyze and solve the serious [environmental] problems facing China”.⁵³⁶ Unlike previous civilizations, which were mostly motivated by domestic developments and targeted at a domestic audience⁵³⁷, ecological civilization may have wide global impacts both in theory and practice. Given the shortcomings of the concept of sustainable development, ecological civilization could provide food for thought for more solidarist and ecocentric international practices. It is a conception that “knows no

⁵³⁰ Dynon 2008.

⁵³¹ Ma 2007.

⁵³² Ma 2007.

⁵³³ Ma 2013.

⁵³⁴ Pan 2006.

⁵³⁵ See Wang 2012; Wang, He & Fan 2014 and Pan 2006.

⁵³⁶ Wang 2012.

⁵³⁷ But see Nyiri 2006 for “yellow man’s burden” to civilize developing countries.

boundaries” but acknowledges that the “balance between humans and nature must be approached on a global basis”.⁵³⁸ However, some Chinese doubt the global possibilities of the concept because they regard socialism as a precondition for ecological civilization.⁵³⁹ Because the Western world has failed to build an ecological civilization, Pan Yue believes that China should take the lead in the development of a new ecological model of life.⁵⁴⁰ For the time being, nevertheless, the idea of ecological civilization has not (yet) been translated into an ecocentric policy practice. For example, China’s intended nationally determined contribution (INDC) to the UNFCCC in June 2015 (to be introduced in chapter eight) announces that China will “work together with all Parties to build a beautiful homeland for all *human beings*”⁵⁴¹ and ignores the intrinsic value of the environment.

⁵³⁸ Ma 2013.

⁵³⁹ Pan 2006.

⁵⁴⁰ Pan 2006.

⁵⁴¹ National Development and Reform Commission 2015, 16 (emphasis added).

5 Rise of China and great power responsibility

As chapter three pointed out, powerful states have special responsibilities in international society. In this chapter, I look at China's rise and its implication for ideas of great power responsibility. The chapter begins with a review of definitions of great powers. I do not aim to give my own definition of what constitutes a great power, instead I point out the fuzziness of the concept. My focus is on responsibility as a rule of practice of great power management: I discuss what kind of requirements a state must fulfil to become an accepted member of the "great power club". As China has emerged as the major candidate for challenging the superpower status of the US, the contemporary international discourse on great power responsibility is chiefly articulated in interactions between China and the US. Because "what others say about an actor is more important than what it says about itself",⁵⁴² I explore both the American expectations of a rising China and China's own notions of its evolving great power identity and responsibility.

5.1 Definitions of great powers

IR theorists have debated the definitions and roles of great powers in international politics since the mid-eighteenth century because, as Kenneth Waltz put it, "(i)n international politics, as in any self-help system, the units of greatest capability set the scene of action for others as well as for themselves".⁵⁴³ From a realist perspective, all politics is thus a "struggle for power" and realists define national power, and therefore great powers, mainly in terms of material capabilities but do not totally ignore social capabilities either.⁵⁴⁴ Many realists find it attractive to

⁵⁴² Buzan 2004a, 67.

⁵⁴³ Waltz 1979, 72.

⁵⁴⁴ According to Hans Morgenthau (1993, ch. 9), the components of national power include geography, natural resources, industrial capacity, military preparedness, population, national character, national morale, the quality of diplomacy and the quality of government. For Kenneth Waltz (1979, 131), a state's power ranking depends on their capabilities: the size of population and territory, resource endowment, economic capability, military strength and political stability and competence.

explain changes in international systems by counting the number of great powers and analysing shifting power distribution among the powers.⁵⁴⁵ Many ES scholars, who are interested in historical developments in international relations, agree: In contrast to giving a definition of what constitutes a great power, “it is easier to answer it historically, by enumerating the great powers at any date”.⁵⁴⁶ As a result, many scholars within and without the ES have offered lists of previous, contemporary and potential future great powers.⁵⁴⁷ These lists are, however, incoherent and even Wight himself gave inconsistent comments about which states he counted as great powers.⁵⁴⁸ In contrast, constructivists emphasize the role of identities and social interaction when defining great powers. As Brittingham puts it, “being a great power is an identity that must be enacted by a state, and recognised and reinforced by its peers”.⁵⁴⁹ In addition to these general definitions of great powers, some scholars also classify special categories of great powers based on the “operational range of power holds” as superpowers and regional powers.⁵⁵⁰

The English School conception of great power integrates realist and constructivist perspectives: Great powers have to have certain material capabilities, but foremost is an identity created in interaction between states. For the ES, power is a “social attribute” which must be placed “side by side with other quintessentially social concepts such as prestige, authority, and legitimacy”.⁵⁵¹ By the same token, great power is a social relationship that does not exist in vacuum: it is a matter of social recognition and order, shared values and norms. Instead of giving us a clear-cut definition of great power⁵⁵², ES literature describes many important dimensions of what a state must fulfil in order to be and be seen as a great power. First, great

⁵⁴⁵ See Waltz 1979, 131.

⁵⁴⁶ Wight 1999, 41.

⁵⁴⁷ Some scholars, such as Kennedy (1988), include only states that meet Western (material) definitions of great powerhood in their lists. In contrast, some others recognize the role of non-Western states in the history of great power politics. For example, Black (2008) addresses China’s changing role in great power politics from 1500 to the present day.

⁵⁴⁸ Buzan 2004b, 59.

⁵⁴⁹ Brittingham 2007, 84.

⁵⁵⁰ Buzan 2004b, 50–53.

⁵⁵¹ Hurrell 2007, 39.

⁵⁵² Notice, however, Gerry Simpson’s (2004, 68 emphasis in original) definition of legalized hegemony which provides a useful definition of great power management: “*the existence within an international society of a powerful elite of states whose superior status is recognised by minor powers as a political fact giving rise to the existence of certain constitutional privileges, rights and duties and whose relations with each other are defined by adherence to a rough principle of sovereign equality*”.

powers have to have a certain level of capabilities. In Bull's opinion, it is essential that great powers rank their military strength superior to other states. In the post-Cold War era, however, military strength has become a less important dimension of great power whereas the significance of soft power⁵⁵³ and credibility has increased.⁵⁵⁴ Interestingly, Waltz also notes that the "ability or inability of states to solve problems is said to raise or lower their rankings".⁵⁵⁵

Second, great powers can exist only in a plurality. For "mainstream" IR theory, the international society, or system, is anarchical, and hence there always has to be two or more great powers. Realists would explain that this is due to the balancing role of great powers in the international system, whereas liberalists see multilateral institutions having an important role in the prevention of inter-state conflicts. For constructivists and the ES, the reason would be that great power status is based on the membership of a social group with a shared identity and is thus always the result of the ranking the comparable statuses of states. "When we speak of great powers", Bull writes, "we imply...the existence of a club with a rule of membership".⁵⁵⁶

Third, being a great power is a social identity which shapes how certain states see themselves and how others treat them. Nationalism thus matters in power politics: to some extent, great powers are great because their citizens think (or wish) that their country is greater than other states. Like individuals, states construct their identities in social interaction and define themselves in relation to others.⁵⁵⁷ To use Buzan's words, "great power identity (or indeed any international identity) is a reciprocal construction composed of the interplay between a state's view of itself and the view of it held by the other members of international society".⁵⁵⁸

Fourth, if a state reaches a certain level of material capacity and has a certain national identity, it does not automatically become a great power but it has to be

⁵⁵³ In the early 1990s, Joseph Nye Jr. introduced the concept of soft power as the ability to get what one wants through attraction and persuasion rather than coercion and dominance.

⁵⁵⁴ Therefore, despite a substantial lack of military strength, the EU can be regarded as a great power.

⁵⁵⁵ Waltz 1979, 129.

⁵⁵⁶ Bull 2002, 194. Equally, according to Wight (1999, 42), great powers have a "tendency to club together as a kind of directorate and impose their will on the states-system".

⁵⁵⁷ For elaborations about the "Self-requires-Other logic", see Buzan 2004b, ch. 2.

⁵⁵⁸ Buzan 2004b, 61.

recognized and accepted by the others.⁵⁵⁹ Therefore, it is important to “*distinguish between power that is based on relations of domination and force, and power that is legitimate because it is predicated on shared norms*”.⁵⁶⁰ Given the Eurocentrism of international society, it is usually the West whose recognition matters the most. Hence China’s friendship with “rogue states” does not raise its international status, but its great power status must be recognized by the US and the EU. Waltz also acknowledges the importance of social recognition:

A country becomes a superpower if we treat it like one. We create other states in our image.⁵⁶¹

In contrast to other classical writers of the ES, Martin Wight takes a very materialist approach to great powers. According to him, “it is only part of the truth to say that a great power is a power that is recognized as great by its contemporaries”.⁵⁶² He quotes Khrushchev who, after his visit to Beijing in 1958, stated that it was not reasonable to ignore the PRC in international affairs: “This great power exists, grows stronger, and is developing independently of whether it is recognized or not by certain governments.”⁵⁶³ Therefore, Wight writes, a “great power does not wait for recognition, it reveals it”.⁵⁶⁴ Consequently, Wight considers war an important factor of the self-revelation of a great power: “Great-power status is lost, as it is won, by violence”.⁵⁶⁵

Fifth, great powers have internally and externally recognized rights and responsibilities.⁵⁶⁶ In contrast to other states, they have the capability and legally authorized right to “play a part in determining issues that affect the peace and

⁵⁵⁹ However, Bull does not clarify who the “others” are. Does he refer to other members of great power club or all the members of international society? And, if there is only one great power, who is able to recognize its hegemonic status?

⁵⁶⁰ Wheeler 2000, 2 (emphasis in original).

⁵⁶¹ Waltz 1979, 130.

⁵⁶² Wight 1999, 45.

⁵⁶³ Quoted in Wight 1999, 46.

⁵⁶⁴ Quoted in Wight 1999, 46.

⁵⁶⁵ Wight 1999, 48.

⁵⁶⁶ Bull (2002, 196) demonstrates that military powers, such as Nazi Germany, are not great powers because their international rights and responsibilities are not recognised by their own leaders nor by the other governments. Thus, even though contemporary North Korea, for example, has nuclear weapons, they do not bring it great power status because the social dimensions of great power are not met.

security” of international society.⁵⁶⁷ This right brings them the responsibility to modify their “policies in the light of the managerial responsibilities they bear”.⁵⁶⁸ Although Wight emphasizes great powers’ right to mould international systems in order to enforce international peace and security, he is a little sceptical of their solidarist motives, “we must ask whose security is in question, and at whose expense it is purchased”.⁵⁶⁹ For the time being, great powers have indeed been “more war-prone than any other category of state”, and small states are often more active in the establishment and promotion of international norms and multilateral organizations than great powers.⁵⁷⁰

5.2 International practices of great power management

From the perspective of the practice approach, no clear definition of great power is necessary. What matters is how a state is constituted in international practices.⁵⁷¹ In other words, a state must have certain material capabilities but more importantly, it has to be constituted as an accepted member of the “great power club”. As it emphasizes social participation and mutual engagement, Étienne Wenger’s concept of community of practice helps understand what the ES means by the “great power club”. Although “community” often connotes positive interactions, such as peaceful coexistence, Wenger’s concept does not offer an “idealized view of what a community should be like”.⁵⁷² Instead, the concept emphasizes that a community of practice exists because the participants are “engaged in actions whose meanings they negotiate with one another”.⁵⁷³ A shared practice does not require agreement but it may include competition, tensions and even violent conflicts among the participants. These disagreements also connect and engage the participants in complex ways and they can yield changes in practices. For classic ES theorists like Bull and Wight, great power management inevitably forms one of the primary institutions of international society. Holsti, however, disagrees because great power

⁵⁶⁷ Bull 2002, 196.

⁵⁶⁸ Bull, 2002, 196.

⁵⁶⁹ Wight 1999, 42.

⁵⁷⁰ Holsti 2009, 137.

⁵⁷¹ Frost 2003, 86.

⁵⁷² Wenger 1998, 76–77.

⁵⁷³ Wenger 1998, 73.

management does not meet his criteria for patterned practices, apart from the period of the Concert of Europe. For Holsti, great power is a status, not an institution.⁵⁷⁴ It is true that it is difficult or even impossible to tell where the great power club would nowadays be located in physical terms. Apart from the UN Security Council (and perhaps the Group of 8), there is no a secondary institution of great powers.

The great power club is a social community, which is an exclusive practice because some states are participants and some are outsiders of the “great power club” – of which membership is mainly defined by the rule of membership. No membership card exists and the qualifications for being an accepted member of the club change over time. The rule(s) of membership are not written into international treaties, rather they are based on social order taking shape in international practices. They form informal criteria for achieving and maintaining a state’s status as a member of the club, and define what is perceived as appropriate behaviour for great powers. Newcomers like China have to learn to follow the rules, or they can try to remould them through their words and actions. To be effective, social rules have to be carried out to some degree but it is normal that they are sometimes not obeyed. In fact, if there was no possibility that rules were violated from time to time, there would be no point in having them at all.⁵⁷⁵ At the moment, at least two conditions have to be met in order to be constituted a great power. First, club members must enjoy substantial institutional privileges in international decision-making, as China undoubtedly already does.⁵⁷⁶ Second, members of the club must “be treated as a *social* equal” with other members of club, which is the “primary reason” for questioning China’s membership in the great power club.⁵⁷⁷ If others do not recognize China’s competence as a great power, it cannot be accepted in the club.

From the ES vantage point, legitimacy is “constitutive of international action”: international norms and practices have a constraining role in international society as they set up social guidelines for and barriers to what is seen as acceptable and

⁵⁷⁴ Holsti 2009, 137.

⁵⁷⁵ Bull (2002, 53) illustrates that there is no need to formulate rules requiring people to sleep or eat, “which they may be relied upon to do” but most societies have rules prohibiting killing or stealing, “which some of them [citizens] are likely to do, whether there are rules prohibiting this kind of behaviour or not”.

⁵⁷⁶ Suzuki 2014, 637.

⁵⁷⁷ Suzuki 2014, 637 (emphasis in original).

legitimate state behaviour.⁵⁷⁸ By same token, societal legitimacy forms an important (or the most important) rule of membership of the great power club: “Great powers can fulfil their managerial functions in international society”, Bull writes, “only if these functions are accepted clearly enough by a large enough proportion of the society of states to command legitimacy”.⁵⁷⁹ This legitimacy is closely linked to great powers’ rights and responsibilities: Great powers are “recognised by others to have, and conceived by their own leaders and peoples to have, certain special rights and duties”.⁵⁸⁰ However, these rights and responsibilities cannot be formalized and made fully explicit, i.e. by writing the hegemonial rights of great powers, because anarchical international society rejects the idea of a hierarchical ordering of states.⁵⁸¹

Great power management is too indefinite and vague a practice to set up formal rules as to how great powers should act. In general, great powers are thought to have an informal general responsibility to cooperate and take other states’ interests into account, but there is no concrete, formal obligation to act in a certain way. This means that the practices of great power management specify what great powers ought to do, but do not single out the correct way to do it. Instead, they open up several acceptable ways to take action without exposing themselves, for example, to international sanctions.⁵⁸² To be seen as legitimate, great powers are bound to promote, or at least take into account, international justice, and other international demands. Other states do not expect a perfect performance but legitimate great powers have to avoid actions that would cause international disorder and injustice. Although they have the right to mould international practices, their freedom of action is thus limited by “responsibility”.⁵⁸³ Non-participants, such as minor states and non-state actors, can try to lobby great powers and remind them of their global responsibilities but in the end, it is the great powers themselves who define the rules of practice collectively.

Bull does not specify what “good” great power management is but we can interpret it as being about the responsibility to promote international security and

⁵⁷⁸ Wheeler 2000, 4–5.

⁵⁷⁹ Bull 2002, 221.

⁵⁸⁰ Bull 2002, 196.

⁵⁸¹ Bull 2002, 221.

⁵⁸² In reality, although great powers’ unacceptable actions are likely to be confronted with global criticism, they do not easily incur correction or punishment due to their economic and military superiority.

⁵⁸³ Bull 2002, 221–222.

peace. Like all virtues, the virtues of great power management are a result of historical practices and they may evolve and change in the future. It is up to the participants of the practice to negotiate what circumstances and demands shape and transform the rules of the practice. Therefore, the rise of China may significantly shape the rules of great power management over the course of time.

5.3 Responsibility as a rule of practice

There have always been great powers, but under the ES terms of a primary institution, great powers have formed an international club of “legalized hegemony” only since the early nineteenth century.⁵⁸⁴ At the Congress of Vienna (1814–15), Austria, Great Britain, Prussia, Russia – the four major powers that had beaten Napoleon – also invited the restored King of France, who obtained the recognized status of great power and established the “Holy Alliance” as an ideological basis for the rule of the great power club.⁵⁸⁵ The five great powers were “conscious of themselves as constituting an institution which was separate from other states and in possession of special responsibilities as well as rights vis-à-vis international society”.⁵⁸⁶ According to F.R. Bridge and R. Bullen, this status formed an implicit social contract between great powers and smaller states: “just as the great powers claimed special rights for themselves, so the small states claimed that the great had special responsibilities for their well-being”.⁵⁸⁷ As this contract was not written in international law, great power management constituted an informal practice in those days. The League of Nations also gave a special status to great powers but did not form an “institutional/ideological unity” similar to the Concert of Europe.⁵⁸⁸

In 1933, Britain, France, Germany and Italy signed the Four Power Pact which declared them to be “conscious of the[ir] special responsibilities”.⁵⁸⁹ In 1943, then British Foreign Secretary Anthony Eden insisted that “special responsibilities do rest on our three powers” – referring to the United Kingdom, the Soviet Union,

⁵⁸⁴ Reus-Smit 1999, 109 and Simpson 2004, 73.

⁵⁸⁵ Brown 2004, 7.

⁵⁸⁶ Brown 2004, 7.

⁵⁸⁷ Quoted in Bukovansky et al. 2012, 27.

⁵⁸⁸ Brown 2004, 8; for a detailed study of the League of Nations, see Zimmern 1945.

⁵⁸⁹ Bukovansky et al. 2012, 29.

and the United States.⁵⁹⁰ In 1944, he suggested the formalization of the special responsibilities of great powers by establishing a new world organization which would “make it possible for them [Four Powers] to carry out the responsibilities which they will have agreed to undertake” and therefore “they must be given...a special position in the organisation”.⁵⁹¹ By 1945, the language of responsibility was hence found on “everyone’s lips”.⁵⁹² For example, in his undelivered Jefferson Day Address scheduled for 14 April 1945,⁵⁹³ President Franklin D. Roosevelt wrote: “Today, we have learned in the agony of war that great power involves great responsibility”.⁵⁹⁴ Similarly, Roosevelt’s successor President Harry S. Truman told the US Congress – and reiterated it at the UN General Assembly in San Francisco in April 1945 – that:

While these great states have a special responsibility to enforce the peace, their responsibility is based upon the obligations resting upon all states, large and small, not to use force in international relations, except in the defense of law. The responsibility of the great states is to serve, and not dominate the peoples of the world.⁵⁹⁵

In its contemporary form, the great power club was institutionalized by the establishment of the UN Security Council in 1945. Great powers were formally *appointed*⁵⁹⁶ to have special responsibilities under the UN Charter which recognized their “primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security”.⁵⁹⁷ This responsibility was largely based on great powers’ material capabilities, because, according to Eden, “the more power and responsibility can be made corresponding, the more likely it is that the machinery will be able to fulfil its functions”.⁵⁹⁸ The permanent membership of the US, the USSR/Russia, Great Britain, France and the Republic of China (P5) at the UN Security Council “actually reinforces rather than simply restates the 19th century privileges of the

⁵⁹⁰ Quoted in Bukovansky et al. 2012, 29.

⁵⁹¹ Quoted in Bukovansky et al. 2012, 30.

⁵⁹² See Bukovansky et al. 2012, 29–30.

⁵⁹³ President Roosevelt wrote the speech 11 April, the night before he died.

⁵⁹⁴ Roosevelt, 1945.

⁵⁹⁵ Truman 1945.

⁵⁹⁶ See Goodin 1988, 680.

⁵⁹⁷ Charter of the United Nations 1945, Chapter 5, Article 24.

⁵⁹⁸ Quoted in Bukovansky et al. 2012, 31.

Great Powers, and places these privileges in the realm of positive law”.⁵⁹⁹ As Wight notes, great powers’ veto rights in the UN Security Council makes them “morally superior” to international doctrines such as equality and unanimity and places them “above the law they are to impose on others”.⁶⁰⁰ This privilege made great powers special, which, in turn, is seen as the source of their responsibility.⁶⁰¹

Since the Cold War broke out soon after the establishment of the UN, the institutionalization of the P5 did not lead to a collective understanding of the responsibilities of the great powers. During the Cold War, P5 became simply a great symbolic status that did not indicate either power or responsibility, as illustrated by the Republic of China’s (Taiwan) maintenance of its status as a permanent member of the UN Security Council for 20 years after its regime’s fall on mainland China.⁶⁰² In Western international society, the US took on a “new position of world responsibility” and become the “principal protector of the free world”.⁶⁰³ This responsibility, however, was not tied to the collective responsibility of the P5 but the global capabilities of the US as an individual state.⁶⁰⁴ As the US remained the lone great power on the world stage, the idea of great powers’ responsibilities towards international society did not make much sense because the idea of international society itself made “little sense”.⁶⁰⁵ As discussed earlier, the very conception of great power implies the balance of power and the existence of a “great power club”. If only a single dominant state existed, it would not be called a great power because it would not be possible to compare and rank the statuses of states or construct social identities. However, particularly after 2001, there has also been an increasing number of commentators arguing that the post-Cold war international system is unipolar due to the hegemonic dominance of the US.⁶⁰⁶ Within the ES, Ian Clark therefore asks: “what then happens to international order

⁵⁹⁹ Brown 2004, 6.

⁶⁰⁰ Wight 1999, 45.

⁶⁰¹ See Bukovansky et al. 2012, 31–32.

⁶⁰² Brown 2004, 9.

⁶⁰³ Truman 1948.

⁶⁰⁴ See also Bukovansky et al. 2012, 34.

⁶⁰⁵ Brown 2004, 11.

⁶⁰⁶ See, for example, Ikenberry, Mastanduno & Wohlforth 2007 and Mowle 2007. This discourse is mostly advocated by the US, but it has also been popular in China, where politicians, academics and the general public have called for “multipolarity” (but now they are increasingly talking about the “democratization” of international relations) in world affairs.

if there *is* only one predominant state?”⁶⁰⁷ In contrast to the anti-hegemonic ES tradition,⁶⁰⁸ he suggests that, by analogy with the role of the great powers, hegemony is a potential institution of international society.⁶⁰⁹ From this perspective, a hegemon can have responsibilities. In the absence of other members, the lone superpower can, at least in principle, define and exercise its responsibilities alone.

According to Chris Brown, there is a clear division between “unilateralists” and “multilateralists”, which both accept that hegemonic status brings great responsibilities to the US. However, the two camps differ dramatically on the nature of those responsibilities. On the one hand, “multilateralists” assure us that it is also in a sole superpower’s own interests to cooperate with smaller states as it cannot manage global problems alone. They think the US has a responsibility to lead the promotion of the public good.⁶¹⁰ On the other hand, “unilateralists” argue that the US has to use its power to promote its own values and conceptions of good on the world. For them, the outcomes of the US policies are important, and stability and order have no value as such.⁶¹¹ This political debate naturally shapes the US’s expectations of China’s global responsibility as China increases its influence. As the P5 has not been able to construct a deeper unity on the collective responsibilities of great powers, how single great powers or a sole superpower defines their own responsibilities to world society and other (potential) great powers is important.

5.4 Rise of China and expectations of global responsibility

Today, China undoubtedly plays an increasingly important role in global politics. Due to vague definitions of great powerhood, however, there is no consensus on whether or not China has achieved the status of a great power. As discussed above, being a great power embodies three criteria: material capabilities, identity and recognition by others. If defined as a “power (of some sort) that people at the time thought was great, that is, thought needed to be taken into account seriously in

⁶⁰⁷ Clark 2009a, 205. See also Bukovansky et al. 2012, 42–45.

⁶⁰⁸ According to Dunne (1998, 106), “balance of power is likened to the first article of the ‘constitution’ of international society” in the papers of the British Committee.

⁶⁰⁹ See Clark 2009a and Clark 2009b.

⁶¹⁰ Brown 2004, 11–12.

⁶¹¹ Brown 2004, 12–13.

policy-making”⁶¹², it would be foolish to not call China a great power. Evidently, China cannot be ignored in any sector of policy-making and it meets most of the material criteria to be seen as a great power: it is a very big country with a strategically good location, it ranks as the world’s second largest economy, it is predicted to become the world’s largest economy in the next 20 years, it is the most populous country in the world, and it has a large military with nuclear weapons. At the same time, China’s great power status is rather questionable in ideational terms: it does not (yet) have enough soft power to spread collective ideas and change international practices. That is why David Shambaugh calls China a “partial power” that is not really influencing world politics.⁶¹³

For time being, China has no clear great power identity. On the one hand, its increasing wealth generates expectations of greater international respect and China no longer accepts being left in the periphery though it struggles for “great-power recognition”.⁶¹⁴ On the other hand, its developing country status continues to be a central element of its identity, especially in international climate politics. As noted earlier, states construct their identity through international practices. When newcomers join a practice, like China is now entering/has entered in the great power club, they learn new ideas and ways of being in the world, which also transform their identity.⁶¹⁵ Other participants to a practice, who have a “stake in making up certain social categories and in trying to make people [states] conform to them”⁶¹⁶, play an important role in shaping state identity. In general, both China and the US agree that world peace is an essential value of international society and great powers have a responsibility to maintain global peace. However, the two states may have different views on the other global responsibilities of great powers. When a rising China asks itself “Who am I?”⁶¹⁷, the US tries to influence the answer by (re)defining what it means to be a great power in 21st century and what kinds of responsibilities great power status has. Although not all US contributions have explicitly defined “responsibility” as a rule of membership of the “great

⁶¹² Black 2008, 1.

⁶¹³ Shambaugh 2013.

⁶¹⁴ Deng 2008, 2.

⁶¹⁵ By “learning”, I do not mean that new participants just “internalize” existing rules of practices but they “learn to use” (or pursue the changing) of practices in ways that best serve their own interests and values.

⁶¹⁶ Zalewski & Enloe 1995, 282.

⁶¹⁷ Despite this analogy, I do not literally mean that we should treat states as persons which can think and feel. We do not have to study psychology in order to understand their behaviour.

power club”, there is a clear tendency, as I will soon demonstrate, that responsibility is a central requirement for states that wish to be recognized as a great power. As Buzan points out, the “key here is not just what states say about themselves and others”, he writes, “but how they behave in a wider sense, and how that behaviour is treated by others”.⁶¹⁸ As a result of this learning process, “relative newcomers become relative old-timers” over the course of time.⁶¹⁹ This promotion is usually unmarked and implicit; suddenly you realize that you are in a position to teach new newcomers and, at the same time, other participants start to expect you to know and do “more than you are sure you do”.⁶²⁰ As this section will demonstrate, this is exactly what is happening with the rise of China; the West expects China to shoulder heavier global responsibilities, while China still regards itself as a developing country unable to respond these demands. Before exploring the discursive clash between the US and China over China’s global responsibility, let me briefly outline China’s entrance to great power club.

At the founding of the UN Security Council, the Republic of China (ROC) was recognized as one of the victorious great powers of the WWII and given a permanent seat on the Security Council. However, this recognition did not result in China’s self-perception as a great power because the PRC had no international rights and legitimate representation to the UN before October 1971. President Nixon’s visit to the PRC re-established the US and China’s relations in 1972. Their relationship was largely based on the “mutual antipathy towards Moscow”.⁶²¹ At first, the US leadership was optimistic about China’s reforms and believed that “China would learn to be more like us” but the Tiananmen incident in 1989 changed the US’s China policy dramatically.⁶²² The “containment policy” was, however, replaced with the “engagement policy” in 1993. After the Taiwan Strait Crisis (1995-1996) the Clinton administration announced that its long-term goal was to integrate China into international society “with all the privileges and responsibilities of a major power”.⁶²³ In 1995, then US Secretary of Defense William Perry noted that the engagement strategy would ensure that China would

⁶¹⁸ Buzan 2004a, 67.

⁶¹⁹ Wenger 1998, 90.

⁶²⁰ Wenger 1998, 90.

⁶²¹ Lanteigne 2013, 105.

⁶²² Zheng 1999, 126.

⁶²³ Zheng 1999, 128.

become a responsible member of international society.⁶²⁴ In practice, that meant that the US “would make efforts to bring China into the world power club and that China has the obligation to honour existing international rules in its own behaviour”.⁶²⁵ Despite scepticism over the US’s motivations, China’s engagement policy allowed it a way to become a real great power.⁶²⁶ President Jiang Zemin’s visit to Washington in 1997 and President Bill Clinton’s visit to Beijing in 1998 restored the highest level official dialogue between the two countries for the first time since the Tiananmen incident.⁶²⁷ They decided to “build toward a constructive strategic partnership”, noting that “strategic partnership” was a “goal to be pursued, not an accomplishment that could be celebrated”.⁶²⁸ The two summits marked the end of a “decade of flux in great power relations” and thus gave impetus to the development of China’s great power identity.⁶²⁹

During his presidential campaign and at the beginning of his presidency, George W. Bush took a more hard-line policy towards China and redefined the US’s relationship with China from that of “partnership” to that of “competitor” which should be “treated without ill will but without illusions”.⁶³⁰ Bush, however, supported China’s accession to the World Trade Organization⁶³¹, and its bid for the 2008 Olympic Games, which “released goodwill to alleviate the crisis atmosphere” after the “aircraft collision incident” between a US Navy EP-3 reconnaissance plane and a People’s Liberation Army naval F-8 fighter in the South China Sea in April 2001.⁶³² Right after the resolution of the incident, Bush committed to the establishment of “constructive relations” with China.⁶³³ In return, China supported Bush’s post-September 11 anti-terrorist war, which improved its relations with the US but did not reward it with the status of strategic partner.⁶³⁴ Bush, however, was determined to further improve Sino-US relations and promote multilateralism, and attended, despite criticism over the importance

⁶²⁴ Jin 2011, 11.

⁶²⁵ Zheng 1999, 128–129.

⁶²⁶ Zheng 1999, 129.

⁶²⁷ Harding 1999, 7–8.

⁶²⁸ Harding 1999, 21.

⁶²⁹ Rozman 1999, 383.

⁶³⁰ Federation of American Scientists 1999; see also Yu 2009, 84.

⁶³¹ *New York Times* 2000.

⁶³² Yu 2009, 87.

⁶³³ Yu 2009, 87.

⁶³⁴ Roy 2002 and Shambaugh 2002b.

of the meeting, at a time when the US was at war, the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) in Shanghai in October 2001.⁶³⁵ Furthermore, Bush celebrated the 30th anniversary of Nixon's visit to China by visiting China again and took a "symbolic step forward in the place where Nixon stopped" in the Great Wall tour.⁶³⁶

In line with China's rising international status, many commentators have started to worry whether China will cooperate according to the contemporary international norms and practices created by the US after WWII. Some have suggested that China will attempt to shape contemporary international society and pursue some kind of China-centred international order instead. However, China has become more and more interested in multilateral cooperation during recent decades, which could be interpreted that it accepts contemporary international norms and is becoming a more responsible international actor. Besides, even if China overtook the US's position as the hegemonic leader of the world, it would face a very different kind of international society than previous rising powers, e.g. the US at the beginning of 20th century.⁶³⁷ If no massive world war occurs, it is unlikely that existing international organizations and practices will collapse and thus China will have an opportunity to design a totally new global governance system in accordance with its own preferences. In addition, contemporary problems are fundamentally different from those faced before and after WWII. Instead of the balance-of-power security dilemmas characteristic of the Cold War period, today's problems vary from terrorism to financial crises, from environmental degradation and climate change to health and drug issues. No matter how powerful a state's status, it cannot solve these problems unilaterally – international cooperation is needed. Therefore, it is not likely or even possible, that China could "exit" international society. Voluntary participation in international organizations and compliance with international law is also regarded as an important factor of a state's soft power and reputation for good international citizenship. It is important for a state's legitimacy and credibility as well.

Debate over China's global responsibility heated up when Robert B. Zoellick, US Deputy Secretary of State during the George W. Bush administration,

⁶³⁵ Yu 2009, 87.

⁶³⁶ Yu 2009, 88.

⁶³⁷ As Buzan & Cox (2013) demonstrate, there are, however, interesting similarities between the rise of the US and China.

introduced the concept of responsible stakeholder to international politics in 2005. According to Zoellick,

All nations conduct diplomacy to promote their national interests. Responsible stakeholders go further: They recognize that the international system sustains their peaceful prosperity, so they work to sustain that system.⁶³⁸

The concept was primarily an attempt to describe China's international responsibilities and to urge China to carry them out. Zoellick warned that China should neither attempt to challenge the existing international society nor to promote competing norms or another world order. He enforced the view that as a member of international society, China has a "responsibility to strengthen the international system that has enabled its success".⁶³⁹ Although there is no clear understanding of what China will do or what it will stand for when it finally achieves great power status, Zoellick was optimistic about China's potential to become a responsible stakeholder. He called on the US to help foster China's reforms:

We now need to encourage China to become a responsible stakeholder in the international system. As a responsible stakeholder, China would be more than just a member – it would work with us to sustain the international system that has enabled its success.⁶⁴⁰

In the following year, the concept of responsible stakeholder was incorporated into the US National Security Strategy 2006 that demanded: "As China becomes a global player, it must act as a responsible stakeholder that fulfils its obligations and works with the United States and others to advance the international system that has enabled its success".⁶⁴¹ The US has not, however, offered a unanimous definition of what it means to be a responsible stakeholder. As Bates Gill defines it, the meaning and purpose of the concept of responsible stakeholder is chiefly to evaluate China's policies in the context of US interests and expectations:

First, the concept communicates to Beijing a broad set of expectations of where and how the United States would like to China become a more

⁶³⁸ Zoellick 2005.

⁶³⁹ Zoellick, 2005.

⁶⁴⁰ Zoellick 2005.

⁶⁴¹ White House 2006.

responsible power. The concept points out that the United States expects China to meet certain international standards, and that China should abide by its stated and implied commitments to international rules, norms and institutions. In this sense the responsible stakeholder concept outlines a set of “behavioural benchmarks” against which the United States can gauge Chinese policies and practices in the international system as it wields growing power and influence. Second, the concept argues that China and the United States will have a better relationship when Beijing defines its own national interests not in narrow, self-interested ways, but more broadly so as to nurture and sustain the global system from which it has gained so many benefits. In doing so, China would take actions which are increasingly convergent with international norms, international institutions, regional expectations, and U.S. interests.⁶⁴²

The first Obama administration followed similar ideas and James Steinberg, Zoellick’s successor as a US Deputy Secretary of State, introduced his own China paradigm, “strategic reassurance” in 2009. He emphasized China’s negative responsibility not to harm other states:

Just as we and our allies must make clear that we are prepared to welcome China’s “arrival”, as you all have so nicely put it, as a prosperous and successful power, China must reassure the rest of the world that its development and growing global role will not come at the expense of security and well-being of others.⁶⁴³

Steinberg urged China to reassure others that it does not pose an international threat: “When it comes to the international system, we must ensure that new powers like China – and there are others as well, of course – can take their rightful place at the table without generating fear or mistrust”.⁶⁴⁴ On the one hand, he affirmed that the US is “ready to accept a growing role for China on the international stage”. On the other hand, he reminded China that “we will also be looking for signs and signals of reassurance from China”, and if “China is going to take its rightful place, it must make those signals clear”.⁶⁴⁵ In contrast to Zoellick, who did not mention climate change or environmental issues at all,⁶⁴⁶ Steinberg

⁶⁴² Gill 2007.

⁶⁴³ Steinberg 2009.

⁶⁴⁴ Steinberg 2009.

⁶⁴⁵ Steinberg 2009.

⁶⁴⁶ But Zoellick discussed energy security, which is very closely linked to climate change.

acknowledged the importance of effective US–China cooperation on climate change mitigation, “driven by the knowledge that the United States and China are the two biggest emitters of greenhouse gases”.⁶⁴⁷ The US has also underlined that increasing capacity is linked to broader positive responsibilities. For example, President Obama has welcomed China’s greater global role, “a role in which a growing economy is joined by growing responsibilities”.⁶⁴⁸ After China became the world’s biggest carbon dioxide (CO₂) emitter in 2006, the US started to urge China to shoulder more responsibility in climate change mitigation as well.

The second Obama administration defined the building up of a “productive and constructive relationship” with China as one of its strategic aims. A week after President Obama’s re-election in November 2012, the then US National Security Adviser Thomas Donilon encouraged “Beijing to define its national interest more in terms of common global concerns and to take responsibility for helping the international community address global problems”.⁶⁴⁹ He continued by urging China to become a responsible international citizen: “Now, we’ve been clear that as China takes a seat at a growing number of international tables, it needs to assume responsibilities commensurate with its growing global economic impact and its national capabilities”.⁶⁵⁰ Donilon reaffirmed this statement in March 2013 and called for US–China cooperation “to build a new model of relations between an existing power and an emerging one”. He pointed out that there is no a natural law according to which “a rising power and an established power are somehow destined for conflict”.⁶⁵¹

5.5 China’s evolving great power status and notions of global responsibility

In the years following the establishment of the People’s Republic of China, the Chinese government was more keen on constructing alternative international practices than entering into the existing great power club.⁶⁵² In order to join the

⁶⁴⁷ Steinberg 2009.

⁶⁴⁸ White House 2009.

⁶⁴⁹ Center for Strategic and International Studies 2012.

⁶⁵⁰ Center for Strategic and International Studies 2012.

⁶⁵¹ Donilon 2013.

⁶⁵² See Foot 2001, 24–28.

UN in 1971 and the Bretton Woods institutions in 1980, however, the PRC had to normalize its relations with the US. At the beginning of China's reform era, the Chinese admired the US as a "symbol of a comfortable material life, a spirit initiative, rational institutional arrangements, and advanced technologies".⁶⁵³ During the 1980s, however, the Chinese found out that the West was "far from their original high expectations" and its practices were unfair towards China.⁶⁵⁴ A new nationalism started to rise in China and the "chineseization" of society started to be called for.⁶⁵⁵ Since the early 1990s, three tenets have guided China's relations with major powers: "non-alliance, non-confrontation, and not directed against any third party" (不结盟, 不对抗, 不针对第三方).⁶⁵⁶ Economic interests naturally play an essential role in China's major power relations. In accordance with the three principles, China has not formed alliances but since the end of Cold War, it has established "partnerships" around the world.⁶⁵⁷ It now has a "strategic partnership" with the EU, Russia and the US, to name a few countries. Efforts to constrain the US's global influence (and Japan's regional influence), however, are still central to China's foreign policy. In particular, the contemporary Chinese leadership has promoted an Asia for Asians policy and introduced new concepts, such as the Asia-Pacific Dream (亚太梦), which can be seen as countermoves to the "Asia Pivot"⁶⁵⁸ of the US. Articulated by Deng in the early 1990s, China's strategic guideline for the US–China relationship continues to be "increase trust, reduce problems, strengthen cooperation, and avoid confrontation" (增加信任, 减少麻烦, 加强合作, 不搞对抗).⁶⁵⁹

Since the late 1990s, Chinese intellectuals have debated the international role and expectations of China at length.⁶⁶⁰ In his speech to the Russian State Duma in 1997, President Jiang Zemin acknowledged that great powers have great responsibilities by declaring that "being major powers of influence and permanent members of the UN Security Council, China and Russia shoulder an important

⁶⁵³ Zheng, 1999, 51.

⁶⁵⁴ Zheng, 1999, 51–52.

⁶⁵⁵ Zheng, 1999, 52.

⁶⁵⁶ Medeiros 2009, 95.

⁶⁵⁷ For a detailed analysis of China's "partnership diplomacy", see Su 2009, 35–41.

⁶⁵⁸ Campbell & Andrews 2013.

⁶⁵⁹ Medeiros 2009, 98.

⁶⁶⁰ For a review of this debate, see Shambaugh 2013.

responsibility for safeguarding world peace and stability”.⁶⁶¹ Since then, Chinese intellectuals have proposed that China, as a nuclear power and permanent member of the UN Security Council, should redefine its national interests to meet international expectations of its responsibility.⁶⁶² In 2001, Professor Xia Liping analysed the question of whether or not China will become a “responsible great power” in the 21st century by investigating internal and external factors which will influence the outcome in the future.⁶⁶³ He concluded that there are “some conditions necessary to make China a responsible great power” which would mean that China “should: (1) play its role in international society not only according to its national interests, but also in order to benefit regional and world peace, development, stability, and prosperity; (2) take its international obligations more seriously; and (3) participate in the formulation of international rules”.⁶⁶⁴

In 2002, Zheng Bijian, former executive vice-president of the Central Committee's Central Party School, visited the US and found out that Americans had severe doubts about China's rise to great power status, something which would later both impede Sino-American relations and hinder China's pursuit of great power status.⁶⁶⁵ In consequence, in 2003 he introduced the concept of peaceful rise (和平崛起) to dispel the fears of the “China threat”. In the following year, the concept was adopted by Hu-Wen administration as a new national strategy. However, the “rise part” of the concept was quickly viewed as counterproductive and it was soon replaced with “development”.⁶⁶⁶ Since 2004, “peaceful development” (和平发展) has been the leading principle of Chinese foreign policy. As discussed earlier, it assures the world that China's rise will be peaceful and there will be no “hegemonic war”.

⁶⁶¹ Quoted in Yeophantong 2013, 331 (emphasis in original).

⁶⁶² Yeophantong 2013, 348.

⁶⁶³ According to Xia (2001, 24–25), these conditions include four criteria: First, if China is confident about the international security environment and international mechanisms, it will integrate itself into international society and international governmental institutions. Second, other countries have to help China to participate in international institutions because it would not only be beneficial to them but also generate mutual trust and help cooperation. Third, the strategic balance of the US–China–Japan triangle relations should be established and maintained in a way that none of them tries “to control another”. Fourth, the Taiwan issue should be resolved peacefully because then “China will be more willing to play as a responsible great power in the international community”.

⁶⁶⁴ Xia 2001, 17.

⁶⁶⁵ Glaser & Medeiros 2007, 294.

⁶⁶⁶ For an in-depth study of the evolution of the concept of peaceful development, see Glaser & Medeiros 2007.

In general, both the Chinese government and Chinese scholars reacted positively to Zoellick's conception, although some of them pondered whether it was an engagement policy or a containment policy in nature.⁶⁶⁷ No official comment on the concept was made, and no "clear-cut comments" appeared in the *People's Daily*, the mouthpiece of the party.⁶⁶⁸ At his meeting with President Bush in 2006, Hu Jintao commented that "China and the United States are not only stakeholders, but they should also be constructive partners".⁶⁶⁹ On the one hand, Hu seemed to accept the characterization of China as an "international stakeholder" because it promoted China's international status. On the other hand, he did not link it to "responsibility", probably because he did not entirely approve of the US's definition of China's global role.⁶⁷⁰

Shortly after Zoellick's speech, the State Council Information Office issued a white paper entitled "China's Peaceful Development Road" to elaborate on the country's peaceful development philosophy. It highlighted China's development needs and declared that "China's development will never pose a threat to anyone" because "peaceful development is the inevitable way for China's modernization".⁶⁷¹ The white paper recognized that "Active in the settlement of serious international and regional problems, China shoulders broad international obligations, and plays a responsible and constructive role".⁶⁷² It also suggested that "China is certain to make more contributions to the lofty cause of peace and the development of mankind".⁶⁷³ However, it targeted the main global responsibilities at developed countries: "The developed countries should shoulder greater responsibility for a universal, coordinated and balanced development of the world, while the developing countries should make full use of their own advantages to achieve development."⁶⁷⁴ China's second white paper on peaceful development also reminded the world that China is "actively living up to international responsibility".⁶⁷⁵ It continued to underline China's developing country status and

⁶⁶⁷ Jin 2006 and Masuda 2009, 67.

⁶⁶⁸ Masuda 2009, 67.

⁶⁶⁹ Quoted in Yu 2009, 97.

⁶⁷⁰ Masuda 2009, 67.

⁶⁷¹ Information Office of the State Council of the People's Republic of China 2005.

⁶⁷² Information Office of the State Council of the People's Republic of China 2005.

⁶⁷³ Information Office of the State Council of the People's Republic of China 2005.

⁶⁷⁴ Information Office of the State Council of the People's Republic of China 2005.

⁶⁷⁵ Information Office of the State Council of the People's Republic of China 2011a.

suggested that China should not be expected to shoulder broader global responsibilities before it has met domestic challenges and achieved a higher level of development. However, the white paper did not indicate what kind of level of development China should achieve before it assumes more global responsibility, nor when the government would expect this to happen.

As Jin describes it, being a great power means that a state sets international agendas proactively and does not let others control the agendas and define global responsibilities.⁶⁷⁶ Therefore, the CCP has begun to develop and promote its own concepts and ideas, such as “harmonious world” (和谐世界), “the China dream” (中国梦), “the Asia-Pacific dream” (亚太梦) and “the new type of major country relationship” (新型大国关系), and “new type of international relations” (新型国际关系) in order to organize international society. Time will tell if these new concepts manage to reorganize international practices so that they will become “less Westernized” and accommodate Chinese values and interests better. The purpose of these concepts is to reform international society in a “responsible manner”, not to replace the existing practices from which China has benefitted. In the field of finance practices, China has already provided alternative sources of global government by proposing new foreign policy initiatives such as One Belt, One Road (一带一路) and by establishing new multilateral financial institutions such as the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank and the BRICS New Development Bank.

From this study’s point of view, the concept of the “new type of great power relationship” is of interest. It was first expressed by the then China Vice President Xi Jinping in February 2012. He claimed:

We should work hard to implement the agreement between the two presidents [the U.S and China], expand our shared interests and mutually beneficial cooperation, strive for new progress in building our cooperative partnership and make it a new type of relationship between major countries in the 21st century.⁶⁷⁷

Xi Jinping highlighted four areas in which both countries should make greater joint efforts to build such a new type of relationship: increasing “mutual understanding and strategic trust”, respecting “each side’s core interests and major concerns”, deepening “mutually beneficial cooperation”, and enhancing

⁶⁷⁶ Jin 2011, 12.

⁶⁷⁷ Xi 2012a.

“cooperation and coordination in international affairs and on global issues” including climate change.⁶⁷⁸ Moreover, he declared:

Our world is undergoing complex and profound changes. China and the United States should meet challenges together and share responsibilities in international affairs. This is what China-US cooperative partnership calls for and what the international community expects from us.⁶⁷⁹

A couple of months later, then President Hu Jintao also reiterated the call for a “new type of great power relationship” and emphasized the importance of mutual trust. He stated that the “world we live in is big enough for China, the United States and all other countries to achieve common development”.⁶⁸⁰ In his report to the 18th national congress of the CCP in 2012, Hu Jintao asserted that China will continue to “play its due role of a major responsible country”.⁶⁸¹ This new type of relationship was included as a goal in the 18th Party Congress work report, and right after his nomination to China’s Premier, Li Keqiang reaffirmed that the fifth generation of Chinese leadership would “work with the Obama administration to work together to build a new type of relationship between great countries”.⁶⁸²

In June 2013, China’s Foreign Minister Wang Yi’s gave a rare comprehensive statement of China’s foreign policy entitled “Exploring the Path of Major-Country Diplomacy With Chinese Characteristics”. The official translation was thus “major country diplomacy” although the Chinese conception 大国外交 could be translated as “great power diplomacy”. Wang pledged that China’s fifth generation of leadership is going to take a more proactive approach to diplomacy. According to Wang, China is “ready to respond to this expectation of the international community ... to undertake its due responsibilities and make greater contribution to world peace and common development”.⁶⁸³ He also noted:

As a permanent member of the UN Security Council, China is always conscious of its international responsibilities and obligations and stands

⁶⁷⁸ Xi 2012a.

⁶⁷⁹ Xi 2012a.

⁶⁸⁰ Hu 2012a.

⁶⁸¹ Hu 2012b.

⁶⁸² Jones & Lim 2013.

⁶⁸³ Wang 2013.

ready to offer more public goods and play its unique and positive role in addressing various issues and challenges in the world.⁶⁸⁴

However, this does not necessarily mean that China would be “fully prepared to embrace the notion that it is a custodian of the current international system, with all of the responsibilities that would entail”.⁶⁸⁵ This assumption was confirmed by China’s Vice Premier Wang Yang at the end of 2014:

China and the US are global economic partners, but the leader of the world is the United States. The United States leads the system and rules; China is willing to join the system and to respect the rules and hopes to play a constructive role.⁶⁸⁶

From the perspective of great power responsibility, the conception of the new type of great power relationship, has not (yet) provided anything new. It focuses on “core interests”, not common interests that could be translated into new responsibilities for the both sides. Implicitly, it is about hard power and an attempt to persuade the US to respect China’s sphere of interests in East Asia. To decrease the US hegemonic status in world politics, China now supports the “full use of the United Nations’ General Assembly” and other international institutions in which all member states have equal votes and where the US cannot dominate decision-making.

⁶⁸⁴ Wang 2013.

⁶⁸⁵ Pang 2006, 9.

⁶⁸⁶ Chinaiiss 2014.

6 The emergence and evolution of climate responsibility

This chapter explores the evolution of the international practice of climate responsibility and pays particular attention to China's contribution to it. Due to the complexity of both the social structures of the globalized world and climate change it is impossible to trace all the generative relationships and processes that lead to the emergence and formulation of international climate practices (or any other practice). Therefore, I pay special attention to practices of responsibility. I am not going to provide a genealogy of climate responsibility in Foucauldian sense. A better, more selective story could certainly be told.⁶⁸⁷ Because I understand international climate politics as a “complex and continuous struggle over the definition and the meaning of the environmental problem itself”,⁶⁸⁸ I begin with a review of the environmental awakening of international society by studying how major international conferences on the environment and climate have attempted to articulate and initiate states' environmental responsibility. As there is always a political conflict “hidden in the question of what definition is given to the problem, which aspects of social reality are included and which are left undiscussed”,⁶⁸⁹ I explore the early environmental conferences and politicization of climate change at length. At first glance, I may pay too much attention to environmental history before the emergence of climate practices. For example, I discuss the Stockholm Conference albeit it was not a conference on climate change as such. However, it was Stockholm where most of the principles and rules of the contemporary practice of climate responsibility were created. They guided how climate change was later defined, what kind of responses were seen as appropriate, who were constituted as the participants of a practice and how global responsibilities were allocated, as well as other issues. Thus, I discuss how international climate practices

⁶⁸⁷ The role of individual participants, such as that of individual states and non-state organizations, could be traced, for instance.

⁶⁸⁸ Hajer 1995, 14.

⁶⁸⁹ Hajer 1995, 43.

have become institutionalized via UN climate negotiations process.⁶⁹⁰ My intention is not to provide a detailed theoretical or empirical explanation of how the UNFCCC, or any other secondary institution, has emerged and developed, or how it functions, my focus is again on the evolving practices of responsibility.⁶⁹¹

6.1 Environmental awakening of international society

When the UN was founded, environmental issues were not a major concern of international society, and the UN Charter, for example, did not address the environment at all. We cannot point to one single factor that opened up space for the emergence of climate responsibility, but there were multiple critical drivers working simultaneously, without which it would be difficult to imagine that a new planetary institution would have occurred. Prior to the politicization of climate change there was a process of environmental awakening around the world. Typically, scientists played a prominent role in identifying environmental change, framing those changes as political problems and formulating (political) agenda locally and globally. They started to organize international scientific conferences that focus on the protection of nature after the mid-19th century.⁶⁹² By the 1950s and in the early 1960s evidence of increasing environmental degradation was accumulating and being gathered. Additionally, a number of books and articles on pollution, wasted resources, overstressed ecosystems and misused technology were published.⁶⁹³ This raised public awareness and concern for environmental changes, which then engendered the birth of new international actors, namely environmental NGOs that also promoted environmental awakening and influenced environmental agenda-setting locally and globally.

⁶⁹⁰ This does not mean that the UNFCCC is the only platform for such debates.

⁶⁹¹ For comprehensive accounts of the development of climate regime, see Yamin & Depledge 2004 and Schiele 2014, and for developments of international environmental law, see Bodansky 2010 and Koivurova 2014.

⁶⁹² According to Caldwell (1990, 41), the first important conferences included the International Congress for the Protection of Nature (Paris, 1909), the International Congress on the Protection of Flora, Fauna, and Natural Sites and Monuments (Paris, 1923), the International Congress for Study and Protection of Birds (Geneva, 1927), and the Second International Congress for the Protection of Nature (Paris, 1931).

⁶⁹³ These included, for example, Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* (1962), Hardin's *The tragedy of the Commons* (1968) and the Club of Rome's *The Limits to Growth* (1972).

In 1968, the UN discussed environmental issues for the first time. In addition, the Intergovernmental Conference of Experts on the Scientific Basis for Rational Use and Conservation of the Resources of the Biosphere (the Biosphere Conference) held in Paris in September 1968 brought together representatives from 63 UN member states, including China (ROC), to discuss human–nature relations as a “new awareness of the loss of environmental quality” was occurring around the world.⁶⁹⁴ The conference pointed out that “man now has the capability and responsibility to determine and guide the future of his environment”.⁶⁹⁵ In December 1968, the UN General Assembly accepted the Swedish proposal and decided to hold a United Nations Conference on the Human Environment (UNCHE) in 1972. The Founex seminar, an in-depth development and environmental seminar held in Founex, Switzerland in June 1971, was probably the most important preparatory event of the UNCHE. Its outcome, the Founex Report, shifted the focus from Northern interests in pollution and nature conservation to the integration of development and environmental policies. It noted that environmental problems are not only caused by the development process, but also by a lack of development. The Report encouraged developing countries to take part in the UNCHE and laid the foundation for international environmental practices, such as the concept of sustainable development and the principle of “Common But Differentiated Responsibilities”.⁶⁹⁶

6.1.1 The United Nations Conference on the Human Environment

The UNCHE was held in Stockholm, Sweden from June 5 to June 16, 1972. Delegates from 113 countries as well as an exceptional number of non-governmental organizations, intergovernmental organizations, and other specialized agencies took part in the conference. As the UNCHE was the first international conference that opened doors for non-state actors to enter into interstate (environmental) negotiations, it had a tremendous general effect on the workings of international society. The conference adopted three non-binding instruments: the Declaration of the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment, an Action Plan, and an Action Plan for the Human Environment,

⁶⁹⁴ UNESCO 1968.

⁶⁹⁵ UNESCO 1968.

⁶⁹⁶ See Founex Report on Development and Environment 1971.

which included 109 sets of recommendations for governments, intergovernmental agencies and NGOs. In addition, the UNCHE played an important role in the establishment of the United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP) and gave momentum to the development of a wide range of international environmental agreements later on.⁶⁹⁷

Sovereignty was one of the key issues at the UNCHE. In the early 1970s, environmentalists began to express their concern over the clash between practices of sovereignty and global environmental problems. As they were sceptical of the capacity and willingness of nation states to solve the environmental crisis, many scientists and NGO representatives in the Stockholm Environment Forum, one of the parallel meetings of the UNCHE, urged the establishment of supranational global governance bodies which would be loyal to the “planet and to humanity as species”.⁶⁹⁸ In contrast, governments were not eager to compromise on their sovereignty and national interests for environmental protection. Many developing countries had gained their independence not long before the UNCHE and for them sovereignty was non-negotiable. Consequently, sovereignty served as a cornerstone for the definition of state environmental responsibility. Principle 21 of the Stockholm Declaration declares that “States have, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations and the principles of international law, the sovereign right to exploit their own resources pursuant to their own environmental policies”.⁶⁹⁹ This right, however, is constrained by a state-centric “no harm” – principle: The latter part of the principle 21 declares that states have “the responsibility to ensure that activities within their jurisdiction or control do not cause damage to the environment of other States or of areas beyond the limits of national jurisdiction”.⁷⁰⁰

The Stockholm Declaration defined a clean environment as a fundamental right of human beings, and therefore they bear a correlative, “solemn responsibility to protect and improve the environment for present and future generations”.⁷⁰¹ It was therefore the very first piece of international law clearly stating that both human beings and states have environmental responsibilities. The Stockholm Declaration

⁶⁹⁷ See Porter, Welsh Brown & Chasek (2000, 45–48) for UNEP’s role in shaping international environmental politics.

⁶⁹⁸ Caldwell 1990, 62.

⁶⁹⁹ Declaration of the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment 1972, principle 21.

⁷⁰⁰ Declaration of the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment 1972, principle 21.

⁷⁰¹ Declaration of the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment 1972, principle 1.

thus directed the greatest environmental responsibility to states and noted that it is a national government's task to define what it means to be environmentally responsible under their legislation: "Local and national governments will bear the greatest burden for large-scale environmental policy and action within their jurisdictions".⁷⁰² The Declaration also emphasized the importance of international cooperation: "International cooperation is also needed in order to raise resources to support the developing countries in carrying out their responsibilities in this field".⁷⁰³

At the UNCHE, developing countries insisted that the biggest environmental problem was the lack of development and that poverty was mainly caused by the unjust practices of developed countries. For example, then Prime Minister of India, Indira Gandhi stated:

Many of the advanced countries of today have reached their present affluence by their domination over other races and countries, the exploitation of their own masses and own natural resources. They got a head start through sheer ruthlessness, undisturbed by feelings of compassion or by abstract theories of freedom, equality, or justice.⁷⁰⁴

China agreed on this, but went further: According to a Chinese representative, the "main reason[s] for pollution of the environment [are]: the policy of plunder, aggression and war carried out by imperialist, colonialist and neo-colonialist countries, especially by the super-Powers".⁷⁰⁵ Hence, China was convinced that environmental degradation was a problem caused by capitalism and that there were no environmental problems in communist countries. Despite the isolationism of Maoist China, it played quite an important role at the UNCHE, which was the first ever UN conference it participated in. Participation in the conference was beneficial for China. It was a good chance to re-establish ties with other countries as the environmental issues were not seen as too controversial (compared to nuclear testing and arms control, for instance). As the UNCHE was the first major international conference on environmental protection and there were no existing norms or institutions, China was able to contribute to the evolution of international environmental practices from the very beginning. China also became

⁷⁰² Declaration of the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment 1972, paragraph 7.

⁷⁰³ Declaration of the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment 1972, paragraph 7.

⁷⁰⁴ Quoted in Caldwell 1990, 57.

⁷⁰⁵ UNEP 2015.

a voluntary leader of developing countries by advocating its ten point statement, which involved the interests of all the developing countries.⁷⁰⁶ To date, despite its rapidly growing economy China has persistently continued to represent itself as the leader of the developing countries in international climate negotiations.

At the UNCHE, China made key contributions to paragraphs 2, 4 and 5 of the Stockholm Declaration.⁷⁰⁷ In particular, China made a substantial contribution to the establishment of the link between the environment and economic development (with the emphasis on the latter). It also highlighted the development needs of developing countries:

Economic development and social progress are necessary for the welfare of mankind and the further improvement of the environment. The developing countries want to build modern industry and agriculture to safeguard their national independence and assure their development. A distinction must be made between these countries and a few highly developed countries. The environmental policies of each nation must not impede development.⁷⁰⁸

With minor drafting changes, paragraph 2 of the Stockholm Declaration adopted China's proposal which suggested that

The conservation and improvement of the human environment is a major issue which affects the livelihood and economic development of the people throughout the world, as well as an urgent wish of the peoples of the whole world and the bounden duty of all governments.⁷⁰⁹

The paragraph linked the quality of the environment with both human well-being and economic development and thus laid the foundations for the further development of the concept of sustainable development. Perhaps even more interestingly, the paragraph indirectly promulgated all governments' general legal obligation to protect the environment. As Louis B. Sohn suggests, the essence of the clause could be rephrased as follows: "The protection and improvement of human environment is the duty of all governments".⁷¹⁰ In the early drafting phases, similar suggestions for the solidarist general responsibilities of governments were

⁷⁰⁶ See ECO 1972.

⁷⁰⁷ See Greenfield 1979 and Sohn 1973.

⁷⁰⁸ ECO 1972.

⁷⁰⁹ Greenfield 1979, 219.

⁷¹⁰ Sohn 1973, 440.

made several times but states were “rather reluctant to accept such a broad obligation of an indeterminate scope”.⁷¹¹ However, the Chinese delegation was “somehow able to persuade other members of the Working Group not only to accept this duty but also to put it most appropriately in the forefront of the Declaration”.⁷¹² As Sohn points out, this was a “striking accomplishment”.⁷¹³ Despite China’s active participation in the debate at the UNCHE, it did not sign the final agreement since it did not contain strong socialist statements. While it recognized the importance of environmental protection, the promotion of the socialism was the overriding goal for Chinese diplomacy in those days.⁷¹⁴

With regard to international justice, the Stockholm Declaration sketched out new ideas of rights and responsibilities between developed and developing countries. First, the Stockholm recommendations addressed the need for additional financial resources, and technology transfer from developed countries to developing countries to meet environmental challenges.⁷¹⁵ Second, the issue of compensation was argued for as long as the developed states, especially the US, opposed the idea.⁷¹⁶ China, which naturally supported compensation, declared that

Each country has a right to safeguard its environment. The corporate states are discharging pollutants and the victim states have a right for compensation.⁷¹⁷

In the end, the Stockholm Declaration introduced the idea of compensation and encouraged states to develop liability rules for environmental damage:

States shall cooperate to develop further the international law regarding liability and compensation for the victims of pollution and other environmental damage caused by activities within the jurisdiction or control of such States to areas beyond their jurisdiction.⁷¹⁸

⁷¹¹ Sohn 1973, 440.

⁷¹² Sohn 1973, 440.

⁷¹³ Sohn 1973, 440.

⁷¹⁴ Shouqiut & Voigtsi 1993, 22.

⁷¹⁵ Recommendations for action at the international level in 1972.

⁷¹⁶ Caldwell 1990, 66.

⁷¹⁷ ECO 1972.

⁷¹⁸ Declaration of the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment 1972, principle 22.

In 1978, the International Law Commission indeed began to formulate liability rules applicable to environmental damage.⁷¹⁹

Although its output was mostly rhetoric, the Stockholm Conference played an important role in the emergence of climate responsibility. As it was the first major event bringing governments and non-governmental actors together to discuss environmental issues, the UNCHE promoted environmental awareness and knowledge globally and constructed the basis of the institutional framework for the further development of international environmental law. As Charlotte Epstein points out, the UNCHE “marked the moment where environmental groups shifted from being social movement outsiders to legitimate policy advisors” and bona fide participants of international practices.⁷²⁰ The UNCHE also marked a “major shift in the priority given to climatic issues by international organisations”,⁷²¹ thus after it the UN organized a series of climate-related conferences.⁷²² The UNCHE also generated political recognition of the idea of the “collective responsibility of nations for the quality and protection of the earth”.⁷²³ In contrast to traditional international law, the Stockholm resolutions gave numerous recommendations regarding states’ human-centric responsibilities. They guided “what governments should do in relation to their own people rather than, as in traditional international law, what a nation-state should or should not do in relation to other nation-states”.⁷²⁴ Despite its anthropocentric focus on economic and social concerns caused by environmental change, a legacy of the Stockholm Conference was, to use Lynton Keith Caldwell’s words, “an enlarged and reinforced concept of environmental responsibility that had prospective bearing upon the future of international political, legal, and organizational relationships”.⁷²⁵

⁷¹⁹ Koivurova 2014, 175.

⁷²⁰ Epstein 2008, 111.

⁷²¹ Melinda L. Cain, quoted in Paterson 1996, 25.

⁷²² These included UN World Food Conference in 1974, the UN Water Conference in 1976, and the UN Desertification Conference in 1977, which all identified climate change as a central concern.

⁷²³ Caldwell 1990, 55.

⁷²⁴ Caldwell 1990, 65.

⁷²⁵ Caldwell 1990, 67.

6.1.2 Other nascent notions of environmental responsibility

Following the then President of Zaire (now the Democratic Republic of the Congo) Mobutu Sese Seko's proposal, the Twelfth General Assembly of the International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources initiated the development of a charter for nature in 1975.⁷²⁶ The UN General Assembly adopted the World Charter for Nature in October 1982. In contrast to the Stockholm resolutions that defined environmental concerns in terms of the economic and social concerns of humans, World Charter for Nature denoted more authentic ecological concerns. It did not just recognize that "Mankind is a part of nature" and "civilization is rooted in nature", but it also explicitly underlined the intrinsic value of nature by declaring that "Every form of life is unique, warranting respect regardless of its worth to man".⁷²⁷ It set very ambitious – and given the limitations of international law, rather unrealistic – standards of ethical conduct for both governments and individual citizens by introducing 24 principles of conservation "by which all human conduct affecting nature is to be guided and judged".⁷²⁸ Rhetorically, the charter was very influential in tone. It was not treated as a sporadic issue on the General Assembly's agenda but it was solemnly named a charter, not a treaty, an agenda, or a convention. In addition, all the principles were phrased in the imperative and obligatory form of "shall".

Although Caldwell gauged in 1990 that "Future history may find the charter to be a landmark in the evolution of transnational affairs",⁷²⁹ the World Charter for Nature has neither achieved a recognized international status as a standard of ethical conduct nor resulted in progressive environmental action over the last 35 years. Nevertheless, the adoption of the charter was an important symbolic action which showed that states recognized and accepted the moral significance of a harmonious human–environment relationship – at least verbally. Without a common discourse, the development of international practice is not possible.

Against general belief, the origins of the concept of sustainable development are difficult to trace. By defining that the "ultimate objective of development must be to bring about sustained improvement in the well-being of individual and bestow benefits on all", the UN General Assembly linked economic and social

⁷²⁶ Caldwell 1990, 90.

⁷²⁷ UN General Assembly 1982.

⁷²⁸ UN General Assembly 1982.

⁷²⁹ Caldwell 1990, 90.

development to environmental protection for the first time in 1970.⁷³⁰ Both the Founex report and the Stockholm Declaration raised a new conceptual awareness of the environment–development relationship and laid the foundations for the concept of sustainable development. For example, Stockholm principle 11 recognizes that “environmental policies of all States should enhance and not adversely affect the present or future development potential of developing countries...”⁷³¹ In 1983, the UN General Assembly decided to establish a special commission to formulate “long-term environmental strategies for achieving sustainable development to the year 2000 and beyond”.⁷³² The established commission, the World Commission on Environment and Development, consisted of experts from 22 countries. Half of the members came from developing countries, including China. The Commission delivered its report *Our Common Future* (often referred as the Brundtland Report after Gro Harlem Brundtland, the chair of the commission) in 1987. Famously, the report defined sustainable development as “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”.⁷³³

Later, sustainable development proved to be a very fluid concept. For thirty years, academics have debated its actual meaning, and it has been used to justify various, even inconsistent, discourses on economic, environmental and social policies.⁷³⁴ Its contemporary understanding is very disappointing. First, although it is a very anthropocentric concept, it does not provide an ethically enlightened foundation for a solidarist international society or a genuinely cosmopolitan world society. It focuses chiefly on the short-term economic aspects of development, paying very little interest to social elements and intergenerational justice. Indeed, sustainable development seems to be synonym for “sustainable economic growth”. Second, the concept dismisses ecocentric ideas of sustainability. It does not value nature as such but sees it as an instrument for (economic) development. As Wolfgang Sachs puts it, sustainable development promotes the “conservation of development, not the conservation of nature”.⁷³⁵

⁷³⁰ UN General Assembly 1970.

⁷³¹ Declaration of the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment 1972, principle 11.

⁷³² UN General Assembly 1983.

⁷³³ World Commission on Environment and Development 1987.

⁷³⁴ See, for example, Redclift 2005 and Hopwood, Mellor & O’Brien 2005.

⁷³⁵ Sachs 1993, 10.

6.2 Politicization of climate change

As in the general environmental awakening process, scientists played an important role in the putting climate change on the political agenda worldwide. The first International Meteorological Congress was held in Vienna in 1873, leading to the formal establishment of the International Meteorological Organization. As early as the 20th century, Svante Arrhenius argued that human industrial activities might result in climate change to a “noticeable degree”,⁷³⁶ but it took until the late mid-1960s for the scientific community to begin to focus on how human activities can change the climate.⁷³⁷ After WWII, many scientific cooperative bodies were established, and a scientific consensus on climate change emerged during the 1970s and the 1980s.⁷³⁸ The first World Climate Conference, to which China did not send a representative, was held in Geneva in 1979. It noted that climate change poses a serious problem and issued a declaration appealing to states “to foresee and prevent potential man-made changes in climate that might be adverse to the well-being of humanity”.⁷³⁹ In the late 1980s and early 1990s, a series of non- and intergovernmental conferences focusing on the scientific and political dimensions of climate change were sponsored by UNEP and others.⁷⁴⁰ Of these conferences, the Villach Conference (October 1985) is often said to be the most influential, not because its contents “represent a significant change in scientific conclusions” about climate change, but rather because these scientific conclusions resulted in concerted demands for political actions.⁷⁴¹ The Villach Conference report not only made detailed proposals for “what the priorities for further [climate change] research should be” but also made recommendations which “emphasised the need for economic, social and technological research into policy options for responding to any potential climate change”.⁷⁴² Thus, the politicization process of climate change started at the Villach Conference, and in the mid-1980s, it developed gradually.

⁷³⁶ Arrhenius 1908, 54.

⁷³⁷ Paterson 1996, 24.

⁷³⁸ See Paterson 1996, ch. 2.

⁷³⁹ Quoted in UNFCCC 2014a.

⁷⁴⁰ See, for example, UNFCCC 2014a.

⁷⁴¹ Franz 1997, 2–3.

⁷⁴² Paterson 1996, 31.

Consequently, climate change transformed from being a scientific phenomenon to a political problem during the 1980s, which changed the framing of climate change.⁷⁴³ It became an object of hard political struggle over the significance of the problem, potential resolutions, the distribution of responsibility, etc. The discursive framing of climate change as a phenomena was and continues to be an important factor for defining and allocating climate responsibilities amongst states: do we categorize climate change as an economic, environmental, human security or ethical problem, do we focus on historical or contemporary greenhouse gas emissions, do we target the responsibility at those who produce the most greenhouse gas emissions, or those whose consumption patterns have caused the most emissions?

In the late 1980s, environmental issues were finally placed on the top of international political agenda. In December 1988, the UN General Assembly expressed its concerns that “certain human activities could change global climate patterns, threatening present and future generations with potentially severe economic and social consequences”.⁷⁴⁴ The Assembly framed climate change as a “common concern of mankind” and a “priority issue” which should be dealt with by a “global framework”.⁷⁴⁵ To draft such a global framework, the Assembly requested the World Meteorological Organization and UNEP, through the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) established in 1988, to prepare a comprehensive review and recommendations with respect to the state of knowledge of the science of the climate; the social and economic impact of climate change; the possible response strategies for delaying, limiting or mitigating the impact of adverse climate change; the identification and possible strengthening of relevant, existing international legal instruments that have a bearing on the climate; and elements for inclusion in a possible future international convention on climate.⁷⁴⁶ The IPCC responded positively to the request and released its first major assessment in 1990.

As climate change had become a political issue and the “possibility of formal negotiations increased”, states became more and more circumspect in their

⁷⁴³ As climate science addresses the causes and consequences of climate, it provides states with a general need to create environmental law or standards but does not raise ethical questions.

⁷⁴⁴ UN General Assembly 1988.

⁷⁴⁵ UN General Assembly 1988.

⁷⁴⁶ UN General Assembly 1988.

undertakings in the late 1980s.⁷⁴⁷ In particular, consensus amongst the Western countries began to split at the Noordwijk meeting in 1989. Most of the European countries, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand supported the Dutch proposal that industrial countries should stabilize their GHG emission levels by setting national quantitative emission limitations. In contrast, the US, Japan and the Soviet Union opposed the setting of international “targets and timetables” but supported the development of national climate strategies instead.⁷⁴⁸ The Noordwijk recognized the “need to stabilize, while ensuring stable development of the world economy” but it did not set any quantitative emission reductions targets, instead it asked the IPCC to provide more scientific information about possible targets.⁷⁴⁹ The Conference also defined a number of key principles relevant to a climate treaty: the concept of climate change as a common concern of humankind, the common but differentiated responsibilities of states, the sovereign right of states to manage their own natural resources and the necessity of sustainable development.⁷⁵⁰

Although UNEP had played a central role in initiating international climate negotiations, it was not appointed to prepare international climate negotiations because of the developing countries’ distrust of its (alleged) focus on “Northern” issues.⁷⁵¹ Instead, the UN General Assembly established an ad-hoc UN body, the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (INC), for a framework convention on climate change in December 1990.⁷⁵² The INC was asked to prepare “an effective framework convention on climate change, containing appropriate commitments, and any related legal instruments as might be agreed upon” prior to the UN Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) to be held in Rio de Janeiro in June 1992.⁷⁵³ The name of the conference, which gave equal status to both the environment *and* development, was bargained for by developing countries.⁷⁵⁴ The INC held five sessions between February 1991 and May 1992.⁷⁵⁵ At the beginning, the negotiation process was slow: Several days were used for

⁷⁴⁷ Elliott 1998, 67.

⁷⁴⁸ Bodansky 2001, 28–29.

⁷⁴⁹ UNFCCC 1993.

⁷⁵⁰ UNFCCC 1993.

⁷⁵¹ Porter, Welsh Brown & Chasek 2000, 47.

⁷⁵² UN General Assembly 1990.

⁷⁵³ UN General Assembly 1990.

⁷⁵⁴ Porter, Welsh Brown & Chasek 2000, 47.

⁷⁵⁵ For a detailed description of the sessions, see Paterson 1996, 51–64.

procedural questions, and “real negotiations” did not start until a couple of months before the UNCED “when governments realized that they would need to compromise if they wished to have a convention to sign at Rio”.⁷⁵⁶ Apart from the oil producing states, which did not want to have an international agreement at all, virtually all the states agreed on the need to establish a legal and institutional framework for future work on climate change diplomacy.⁷⁵⁷ The principal negotiation issues included the commitments of developed countries to reduce GHG emissions, financial assistance and technology transfer to developing countries, and institutions and the implementation of the Convention.

6.3 Institutionalization of climate responsibility

The institutionalization of practices often materializes in the establishment of secondary institutions. Regarding climate practices, the UNFCCC is the most central, but not the only secondary institution providing a platform for negotiating meanings and rules, and distributing climate responsibilities globally. This section provides a brief introduction to international climate negotiations from the perspective of state environmental responsibility. It introduces the key events and tensions which have shaped the formation of climate responsibilities globally. Like all politics, international climate politics is shaped by power struggles and participants’ domestic and international agendas. It is “about the negotiation of social identities, arguments about legitimate interests and social purposes, the formulation and execution of strategic practices, and struggles over the good and the just”.⁷⁵⁸ In particular, this section discusses how the human–nature relationship is discussed in international climate negotiations as it inevitably affects what kind of responsibility states are assigned by the UNFCCC and to whom. It also looks at what kind of role China has played in the institutionalization process of climate practices.

Moreover, this section explores how the goals of international climate practices are negotiated and contested. What is the goal of climate responsibility? At first glance, this seems a simple question but it is not. It comprises various moral, legal and political questions including, but not limited to, the following: should the goal

⁷⁵⁶ Bodansky 2001, 32.

⁷⁵⁷ Bodansky 2001, 33.

⁷⁵⁸ Bukovansky et al. 2012, 64.

be established by cost-benefit calculations, or for purely environmentalist considerations? Should states aim to prevent any climate change from occurring or only “dangerous anthropogenic interference”? Should they aim to protect the climate for human-centric incentives or should they pursue the prevention of any loss of biodiversity, including species harmful to human-beings? Should the mitigation goal be written in legal form or should it be implemented on a voluntary basis? How, and by whom, should the goal be achieved? Does the current generation have an ultimate responsibility to prevent climate change, or can it leave decision-making for future generations given that they probably have better scientific knowledge and technologies for responding to environmental harms? When should the goal be achieved in order to prevent dangerous climate change? What kind of likelihood is there of achieving the goal: Are states aiming to achieve, say, the goal of limiting the global temperature rise to 2 °C above pre-industrial levels, with a probability of 90 per cent, 66 per cent, or something less and what kind of policies must they set in order to achieve that?

6.3.1 The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and its Kyoto Protocol

The UNCED took place in Rio de Janeiro between 3 and 14 June 1992. It was a massive, unprecedented event with the representatives of 172 states (of which 108 were state leaders), about 2,400 NGO representatives (plus 17,000 participants in the parallel NGO forum) and about 10,000 on-site journalists. The NGOs’ unusually extensive access to international negotiations resulted in their greater participation in other international forums as well.⁷⁵⁹ Due to the large number of participants, it is probably fair to say that the outcomes of the conference – Agenda 21, the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development, the Statement of Forest Principles, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity – represented the universal agreement of all the states in the world. All the outcomes were characterized by the concept of sustainable development. The Rio Declaration confirmed several emerging environmental norms of international society (or as lawyers would put it, principles of customary environmental law): the no harm principle (Principle 2), the precautionary principle (Principle 15), the polluter pays

⁷⁵⁹ Porter, Welsh Brown & Chasek 2000, 69.

principle (Principle 16), the common but differentiated responsibilities (Principle 7), sustainable development (Principles 1, 4, 5, 6, and 8).⁷⁶⁰ In addition, states agreed to formulate national climate programmes, establish national greenhouse gas inventories, and cooperate in the field of adaptation, technology, science, and education.

Regarding the environmental responsibilities of states, the Rio Declaration can hardly be viewed as progress after the lofty wording of the Stockholm Declaration and the World Charter for Nature. The Rio Declaration reiterated the Stockholm Declaration's definition of states' environmental responsibility underlining sovereignty and the no harm principle. By adding one word, however, it changed the tone in an essential way. Principle 2 declares: "States have... the sovereign right to exploit their own resources pursuant to their own environmental and *developmental* policies".⁷⁶¹ As the World Commission's report had brought the language of sustainable development to the core of international (environmental) discourse and the developing countries' participation in the negotiation process was mainly motivated by development policy, this may not be a surprise. The insertion affords environmental protection and development policy an equal weighting, which implicitly subordinates environmental protection to economic growth. In other words, it gives the impression that sovereign states can do whatever they want with their natural resources if those actions are pursued in order to develop an economy. Economic interests thus override environmental responsibilities. The insertion clearly accommodates the developing countries' demands that their development needs cannot be impeded by global environmental politics.⁷⁶² Moreover, the Rio Declaration did not specify what kind of environmental standards states have to follow in order to be seen as responsible. In contrast, it noted that the ambition of states' environmental policies and legislation depends on their capacities. Because environmental standards have to reflect the "environmental and developmental context to which they apply", standards "applied by some countries may be inappropriate and of unwarranted economic and social cost to other countries, in particular developing countries".⁷⁶³ This formulation left the door open for developing countries to have low environmental standards in their pursuit of economic development and industrialization.

⁷⁶⁰ See the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development 1992.

⁷⁶¹ Rio Declaration on Environment and Development 1992, Principle 2 (emphasis added).

⁷⁶² Porras 1993, 23.

⁷⁶³ Rio Declaration on Environment and Development 1992, Principle 11.

In contrast to the Stockholm Declaration and World Charter, which both underlined the intrinsic importance of nature, the Rio Declaration was very anthropocentric. Principle 1 defines that “Human beings are at the centre of concerns for sustainable development” and that they “are entitled to a healthy and productive life in harmony with nature”.⁷⁶⁴ In general, developed countries opposed this approach because they thought that the “human being should be at the service of the environment”, not vice versa.⁷⁶⁵ Developing countries, however, were concerned about international interference with their national development plans and hence wanted to emphasize that environmental protection should not encumber economic development.⁷⁶⁶ For the very same reason they highlighted international justice and sovereignty in international environmental negotiations.⁷⁶⁷ Yet, it remains unclear what the latter part of Principle 1 means. Is “productive life” a precondition for “harmony with nature”? While Principle 1 seems to regard people merely as objects of state responsibility, Principle 3 defines “development” as a right. It does not explicitly define a clean environment as a human right but states that the “right to development must be fulfilled so as to equitably meet developmental and environmental needs of present and future generations”.⁷⁶⁸

From the perspective of climate responsibility, the most central outcome of the UNCED was the UNFCCC. The purpose of the UNFCCC was to establish a legal framework which holds certain parties liable for climate-related harm and hence formulates effective solutions for tackling climate change. The UNFCCC expressed states’ shared concern that “human activities have been substantially increasing the atmospheric concentrations of greenhouse gases”.⁷⁶⁹ Its “ultimate objective” is to achieve the “stabilization of greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere at a level that would prevent dangerous anthropogenic interference with the climate system.”⁷⁷⁰ What “dangerous anthropogenic interference” means is inevitably a scientific, ethical and political question, which was left unresolved at the Rio Conference.

⁷⁶⁴ Rio Declaration on Environment and Development 1992, Principle 1.

⁷⁶⁵ Porras 1993, 24.

⁷⁶⁶ Porras 1993, 24.

⁷⁶⁷ Porras 1993, 31.

⁷⁶⁸ Rio Declaration on Environment and Development 1992, Principle 3.

⁷⁶⁹ UNFCCC 1992, Preamble.

⁷⁷⁰ UNFCCC 1992, Article 2.

I will explore the objectives and definitions of responsibility expressed by the UNFCCC in more detail in the next chapter. At this point, it is sufficient to say that the UNFCCC defined the climate responsibility of states in accordance with Rio Principles 2 and 7. In other words, the UNFCCC underlined sovereignty and the CBDR principle. Both were conditions for reaching an international agreement with China and other developing countries. CBDR acknowledges that developed (the Annex I countries) and developing countries (non-Annex I countries) cannot be subjected to the same standards, but that state responsibility has to be tied to their national circumstances and capacities. To achieve its goal, the UNFCCC urged developed countries to implement national climate policies “with the aim of returning individually or jointly to their 1990 [anthropogenic emissions] levels”.⁷⁷¹ However, the UNFCCC did not ask developed countries to specify these policies, failing to set any legal objective or specific time-frame for stabilization. Instead, it stated that “...such a level should be achieved within a time-frame sufficient to allow ecosystems to adapt naturally to climate change, to ensure that food production is not threatened and to enable economic development to proceed in a sustainable manner”.⁷⁷² Despite its relevance to climate change, the polluter pays principle (PPP) was not written into the UNFCCC: On the one hand, developed countries were concerned about the costs of the PPP. On the other hand, developing countries preferred CBDR emphasizing historic responsibility while PPP would have also made poor polluters to pay.⁷⁷³

Practices often have “rules (that is, a procedure or practice) for making rules”.⁷⁷⁴ In the process of the UNFCCC, procedural practices have been contested because they are seen as a matter of fairness as such. Procedurally, the UNFCCC takes “political equality as an ideal for representation”⁷⁷⁵ and it has adopted a practice of making decisions by consensus. The Convention established the “Conference of Parties” (COP) and its secretariat to coordinate and promote cooperation amongst the parties.⁷⁷⁶ COPs lack democratic norms similar to national or subnational policies, which raises various questions related to justice. From the perspective of responsibility, there are important questions about

⁷⁷¹ UNFCCC 1992, Article 4.

⁷⁷² UNFCCC 1992, Article 2.

⁷⁷³ Bukovansky et al. 2012,128.

⁷⁷⁴ Oakeshott 1975, 56.

⁷⁷⁵ Vanderheiden 2008, 62.

⁷⁷⁶ UNFCCC 1992, Article 7 and 8; for the role of COPs, see Schiele 2014, 39–44.

procedural justice. For example, should those responsible for causing climate change, or those who have the best capability to mitigate climate change, have more power in the decision-making process in order to motivate them to participate because their participation is crucial for the efficiency of the practice? Alternatively, should those who suffer the most, have more weighting in the decision-making process because they have the most intense interest in finding an effective solution? And, who does represent future generations and non-human species in negotiations?⁷⁷⁷

China started a campaign to elevate itself to the unofficial position of the leader of developing states in international climate negotiations in 1991.⁷⁷⁸ In June, it held the Beijing Ministerial Conference on Environment and Development issuing the Beijing Declaration that called for international cooperation on environmental protection and sustainable development, demanded financial assistance for developing countries, asserted the right of developing countries to economic development and opposed interference in the internal affairs of developing countries.⁷⁷⁹ In essence, the Beijing Declaration included all the principles of China's environmental diplomacy.⁷⁸⁰ In September 1991, China, together with UNEP, organized a Symposium on Developing Countries and International Law that discussed a wide range of issues of interest to developing countries, such as finance and technology transfer, environmental protection and human rights.⁷⁸¹ Apparently, the main purpose of both meetings was to develop the developing countries' united bargaining position for the UNCED that was to be held in Rio in the following year, and China emerged as the chief leader for the group. For China, the UNFCCC was indeed a great diplomatic success: Both the basic elements of the Beijing Declaration and China's stance on sovereignty, opposition to interference in internal affairs, the responsibility of developed countries, development rights, foreign aid, and technology transfer were incorporated within the convention. By participating in the UNFCCC China fulfilled its responsibility to cooperate. In other words, the participation *per se* was China's contribution. Furthermore, China refused to commit to any kind of emission reductions but demanded that developed countries must shoulder all the

⁷⁷⁷ See Vanderheiden 2008, 62–63.

⁷⁷⁸ Johnston 1998, 574.

⁷⁷⁹ Ross 1999, 299.

⁷⁸⁰ Johnston 1998, 574.

⁷⁸¹ Shouqiut & Voigtsi 1993, 26.

responsibility for climate change mitigation for historical reasons. As a non-Annex state, China was not ordered to cut greenhouse gas emissions under the UNFCCC but it was obligated to prepare national inventories of greenhouse gas emissions caused by human activities, to develop a national climate programme to mitigate and adapt to climate change, and to conduct research on climate change. In 1992, then Chinese Premier Li Peng ratified the UNFCCC.

The UNFCCC entered into force in 1994. At the first COP, held in Berlin in 1995, the parties agreed that developed countries should set quantified emission reduction targets within specified timeframes, such as 2005, 2010 and 2020, and the commitments should be written into a protocol.⁷⁸² The Berlin Mandate hence launched the negotiation process leading to the adoption of the Kyoto Protocol in 1998. Negotiations culminated in two issues: What kind of emission reductions should developed countries undertake? What kind of mechanisms should be established, if any, to help developed countries achieve their emission reduction targets in a flexible manner?⁷⁸³ At Australia's insistence, the Kyoto Protocol defines that each Annex I country should agree on a legally binding, specific and differentiated emission reduction target.⁷⁸⁴ China naturally supported the differentiation between developed and developing countries. Only Australia, Norway and Iceland received targets that allowed them to increase their emissions above 1990 levels, and other developed countries were asked to cut their emissions by up to 8 per cent.⁷⁸⁵ In accordance with the CBDR, no quantitative targets were included for the developing countries. To facilitate and monitor emission reductions, the Kyoto Protocol also established reporting and verification procedures and three market-based mechanisms, Clean Development Management (CDM), emission trade and joint implementation (the so-called Kyoto mechanisms). At first, China opposed flexible mechanisms because they would have permitted developed countries to shun their responsibility to cut GHG emissions at home while "disregarding the living environment of people in other countries".⁷⁸⁶ In the early 2000s, however, China gave its "gradual if muted acceptance" to the mechanisms and started to show interest in small-scale CDM

⁷⁸² UNFCCC 1995, Decision 1.

⁷⁸³ Bodansky 2001, 36.

⁷⁸⁴ Triggs 2001, 306.

⁷⁸⁵ UN 1998, Annex B.

⁷⁸⁶ Harris & Yu 2009, 59.

projects.⁷⁸⁷It shortly became the biggest beneficiary of the CDM credits worldwide. Again, the CDM is widely criticized because it has not been able to boost emission control but instead created incentives for reluctant countries to avoid effective emissions reduction.⁷⁸⁸

The US ratified the UNFCCC in 1992 and hence, at least in principle, accepted the CBDR principle. President Bill Clinton signed the Kyoto Protocol in 1998 but President George W. Bush refused to ratify it because he did not want to sacrifice economic growth. In particular, he found the Kyoto Protocol unfair as it did not assign special responsibilities to major developing emitters, such as China and India.⁷⁸⁹ Naturally, the US withdrawal from the Kyoto process diluted the scope of climate responsibility. Nonetheless, the Kyoto Protocol entered into force in 2005 after Russia's ratification of the protocol in 2004.⁷⁹⁰ At the first Meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol in Montreal in 2005, the states decided to establish an ad-hoc working group to facilitate the negotiations of the second phase of the Kyoto Protocol (2012-2020).

6.3.2 Post-Kyoto process

The Bali Conference (COP13) in 2007 raised high and perhaps over-optimistic expectations for the achievements of the post-Kyoto climate negotiations. States developed the Bali Action Plan which portrayed a shared vision for long-term cooperative climate action, including a long-term global goal for emissions reduction, and action on mitigation, adaptation, technology and financing for the period beyond 2012, to be adopted at COP15 in Copenhagen. Because some of central parties of the Convention were not parties to the Kyoto Protocol (particularly, the US), the post-Kyoto negotiations were agreed to be organized with two tracks. Notably, China and other developing countries committed at COP13 to implement nationally appropriate mitigation actions (NAMAs) in the context of sustainable development that are supported and enabled by “measurable, reportable and verifiable” (MRV) technology, financing and capacity-

⁷⁸⁷ Harris & Yu 2009, 59.

⁷⁸⁸ See, for example, Wara 2007 and Streck & Lin 2008.

⁷⁸⁹ See Bush 2001 and Bush 2002.

⁷⁹⁰ It was agreed that the Kyoto Protocol would enter into force when at least 55 countries, covering at least 55 per cent of greenhouse gas emissions produced by developed countries would have ratified it.

building. Although NAMAs were not legally binding emission reduction targets but voluntary national policies, this was an important step in the negotiation process as it was becoming more and more clear that major developing countries had become “major emitters” and without their participation, climate change mitigation would be difficult.⁷⁹¹

At the Copenhagen Conference in 2009, however, China and other developing countries argued that MRV should only be applied to internationally supported climate actions but not voluntary, independently financed national actions. China particularly emphasized its sovereignty and said that as its climate measures would not be internationally supported, they could not be externally reviewed.⁷⁹² As a compromise, the Copenhagen Accord defined that only internationally supported actions shall be subject to MRV while other mitigation actions shall be communicated through national communication to the UNFCCC “with provisions for international consultations and analysis under clearly defined guidelines that will ensure that national sovereignty is respected”.⁷⁹³ China was pleased with the Copenhagen Accord as it respected China’s sovereignty and short-term national interests.⁷⁹⁴ However, other states blamed China for being “irresponsible” and for “blocking progress” as not only did it oppose binding emission reductions for developing countries but also the reduction of global greenhouse gas emissions by 50 per cent by the middle of the century.⁷⁹⁵ As Peter Christoff explains,

Procedurally, it [China] repeatedly delayed the COP from moving into working groups and plenaries that would have advanced negotiations. Substantively, it required that critical Annex 1 and global targets and goals be deleted from various negotiating texts, including the Accord. Diplomatically, Premier Wen’s absence from the larger final high-level negotiating sessions and the presence of relatively junior officials in meetings with Obama and other heads of state were read as insults.⁷⁹⁶

⁷⁹¹ See, for example, Vihma, Mulugetta & Karlsson-Vinkhuyzen 2011 for the developing countries’ role in international climate negotiations; and Hallding et al. 2011 for the emerging powers’ climate cooperation.

⁷⁹² Bukovansky et al. 2012, 149.

⁷⁹³ UNFCCC 2009, paragraph 5.

⁷⁹⁴ Christoff 2010.

⁷⁹⁵ See, for example, Lynas, 2009; Miliband 2009; Porter 2009 and Vidal 2009.

⁷⁹⁶ Christoff 2010, 647.

In accordance with the Fourth IPCC Report, the Copenhagen Accord, which was not adopted by all the states, agreed that the increase in global average temperatures should not increase by more than 2 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels. Parties also committed to considering the lowering of the maximum to 1.5 °C. The long-term goal of 2 °C was included in the UNFCCC framework in COP16 in Cancún in 2010. According to natural scientists, the achievement of the 2 °C target, however, would not prevent severe risks of climate change from occurring. It is thus not clear whether the goal of 2 °C is consistent with the UNFCCC's ultimate objective of "avoiding dangerous climate change" and other indicators have been suggested to replace it.⁷⁹⁷

At the Durban Climate Conference in 2011, the parties agreed to launch a new round of negotiations to compile a new climate treaty by 2015, to come into force in 2020, and to include all the major emitters. The distinction between Annex I and non-Annex I was hence not mentioned but the proactive climate policies of developing countries were considered increasingly important for achieving the long-term goal of 2 °C. The EU also committed to the second commitment period under the Kyoto Protocol. Before the Durban Conference, the Chinese government determinedly refused to agree to any binding climate obligation and offered voluntary national objectives instead. After the Durban Conference, however, China took a more constructive role in international climate negotiations and at COP21 held in Paris in 2015, a new international climate agreement entitled the Paris Agreement was adopted. It will enter into force when 55 states "accounting in total for at least an estimated 55 per cent of the total global greenhouse gas emissions" ratify it and it will be implemented from 2020 onwards.⁷⁹⁸

The long-term goal of climate responsibility was debated at length at the Paris Conference in 2015. Eventually, the Paris agreement decided to limit "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" because this would significantly reduce the risks and impacts of climate change.⁷⁹⁹ Although the goal of 1.5 °C was revered, many analysts and NGOs did not regard it as realistic since the agreement did not have measures ambitious enough to achieve it, or even the 2 °C target. COP21 also acknowledged

⁷⁹⁷ See, for example, Victor & Kennel 2014.

⁷⁹⁸ UNFCCC 2015a, Article 21.

⁷⁹⁹ UNFCCC 2015a, Article 2.

the gap between the emissions reduction commitments of states and the emission reduction action needed to achieve the goal.⁸⁰⁰ It asked the IPCC to produce a report in 2018 to outline a roadmap showing how a global temperature increase could be limited to 1.5 °C above preindustrial levels.⁸⁰¹ Furthermore, the Paris agreement declares that states “aim to reach global peaking of greenhouse gas emissions as soon as possible...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”.⁸⁰² This means that states pursue a “carbon-neutral” world.

Although the Paris Agreement does not distinguish between Annex I and non-Annex I countries, it is guided by CBDR⁸⁰³: It states that developed countries “*should* continue taking the lead by undertaking economy-wide absolute emission reduction targets”.⁸⁰⁴ Nevertheless, it creates a common framework for all countries’ climate responsibility: it notes that developing countries “should continue enhancing their mitigation efforts, and *are encouraged* to move over time towards economy-wide emission reduction or limitation targets in the light of different national circumstances”.⁸⁰⁵ The agreement notes that developing countries need assistance to implement their national climate action plans and their peaking of emissions may be slower than developed countries.⁸⁰⁶ This formulation was strongly supported by China, which together with the BASIC countries (Brazil, South Africa, India, and China) and Like-Minded Developing Countries on Climate Change (LMDC) (including Argentina, Bolivia, China, Cuba, El Salvador, Ecuador, Iran, Nicaragua, Venezuela, Malaysia, Vietnam, Saudi Arabia and India) resisted legally binding emission reductions for developing countries. In particular, both groups see no sub-categories between developed and developing countries. Sub-categories would obviously weaken their position regarding international climate negotiations. Nevertheless, China no longer focuses only on the historic responsibility of developed countries as – in his speech to COP21 – Xi Jinping

⁸⁰⁰ UNFCCC 2015a, Paragraph 17.

⁸⁰¹ UNFCCC 2015a, Paragraph 21.

⁸⁰² UNFCCC 2015a, Article 4.

⁸⁰³ UNFCCC 2015a, Article 2.

⁸⁰⁴ UNFCCC 2015a, Article 4 (emphasis added).

⁸⁰⁵ UNFCCC 2015a, Article 4 (emphasis added).

⁸⁰⁶ UNFCCC 2015a, Article 3, 4.

called for all states to “assume more shared responsibilities for win-win outcomes”.⁸⁰⁷

Despite some shortcomings, the Paris Agreement was widely applauded as a historic landmark of climate responsibility. As an international treaty, it obligates the states that ratify it. Although it does not include quantitative, binding emissions reduction targets for any state – nor sanctions if states fail to implement their climate action plans – there are strong hopes that states will fulfil their climate action pledges. It seems to be one of the biggest strengths of the Paris Agreement that although it does not set a top-down obligation, states have been able to commit to voluntary, domestically appropriated mitigation plans. In particular, this negotiation style appealed to China, which prefers moderate voluntary commitments to legal international obligations. This way, there is no fear of failure but China can exceed global expectations and “gain face”. The bottom-up approach attracted the nearly universal participation of states, which indicates global concern over climate change and a strong political will to tackle it. No doubt COP21 marked a crucial turning point in climate responsibility. Indeed, it seems that the international practice of climate responsibility has become an institutionalized international practice⁸⁰⁸ and is now approaching a stage of assimilation.

6.3.3 Other forums for negotiating climate responsibility

The UNFCCC is not the only forum aiming to define and institutionalize climate responsibility. Because multilateral climate negotiations have been very slow and troublesome, many commentators have suggested that they should be replaced with “minilateralism”.⁸⁰⁹ As Moisés Naím suggests, we “should bring to the table the smallest possible number of countries needed to have the largest possible impact on solving a particular problem”.⁸¹⁰ Regarding climate negotiations, “minilateralism” would mean smaller forums of major emitters. Naím proposes

⁸⁰⁷ Xi 2015a.

⁸⁰⁸ According to Holsti (2004, 144–145), a practice becomes institutionalized when “most states most of the time is consistent with its rules”, “there is a reasonable consensus on the interpretation of norms, rules, and rights” and it has “some authority independent of the particular interests of particular states at a given time”.

⁸⁰⁹ For an overview of minilateral initiatives, see Falkner 2015.

⁸¹⁰ Naím 2009, 135.

that twenty is the “magic number” because 20 major polluter states account for 75 per cent of the world’s greenhouse gas emissions.⁸¹¹ There have already been such intergovernmental forums representing the world’s major emitters: the Asia-Pacific Partnership on Clean Development and Climate (the APP), and The Major Economies Forum on Energy and Climate (the MEF), for example.

Due to his dissatisfaction with the Kyoto Protocol, President George W. Bush initiated the APP in 2006. The pro-market coalition of Australia, Canada, China, India, Japan, Korea, and the United States worked “to meet goals for energy security, national air pollution reduction, and climate change in ways that promote sustainable economic growth and poverty reduction” and “focused on expanding investment and trade in cleaner energy technologies, goods and services in key market sectors”.⁸¹² Hence the APP focused on reducing future emission intensity through technological innovation and transfer, and it did not bother the “questions of equity, historical responsibility, capabilities, or the ethical implication of cumulative per capita emissions.”⁸¹³ The “win-win” approach of the APP did not impose significant costs or other sacrifices on anyone and the participation did not pose any risk for any of the partners. The APP concluded its work in 2011.

The MEF, initiated by President Barack Obama, was launched on March 28, 2009. It did not attempt to replace the UNFCCC but to spur the UN negotiations in Copenhagen. The 17 participants of the MEF include Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, the European Union, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Korea, Mexico, Russia, South Africa, the United Kingdom, and the United States.⁸¹⁴ Today, the MEF continues its work:

The MEF is intended facilitate a candid dialogue among major developed and developing economies, help generate the political leadership necessary to achieve a successful outcome at the annual UN climate negotiations, and advance the exploration of concrete initiatives and joint ventures that increase the supply of clean energy while cutting greenhouse gas emissions.⁸¹⁵

⁸¹¹ Naím 2009, 135.

⁸¹² Asia-Pacific Partnership on Clean Development and Climate 2011.

⁸¹³ Bukovansky et al. 2012, 143–144.

⁸¹⁴ Major Economies Forum on Energy and Climate 2015.

⁸¹⁵ Major Economies Forum on Energy and Climate 2015.

Moreover, the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of Cold War opened up new possibilities to P5 to carry out its responsibilities in the promotion of international peace and security as intended in 1945. In the early post-Cold War era, ideas of environmental security started to develop as a common approach to international security.⁸¹⁶ At first, much scholarly attention was paid to environmentally induced conflicts. With these developments and the end of the Cold War, the UN Security Council started to take a broader approach to international security. In 1992, it noted that the “non-military sources of instability in the economic, social, humanitarian and ecological fields have become threats to peace and security”.⁸¹⁷ In the mid-2000s, many “securitizing moves” aimed to promote climate change mitigation were taken.⁸¹⁸ Since then, the relationship between climate change and violent conflicts has been widely researched.⁸¹⁹ These developments generated debate on the UN Security Council’s role in climate change mitigation: If seen as a threat to international peace and security, climate change can and should be added to the agenda of the UN Security Council.

In 2007, the UN Security Council under the British presidency held the “first-ever debate” on the relationship between climate change, energy and security, although some, including China, doubted whether the Council was a proper forum for the discussion.⁸²⁰ In contrast, Margaret Beckett, the British Foreign Secretary and President of the Council, insisted that the Council should discuss the security impacts of climate change because the “Council’s responsibility was [is] the maintenance of international peace and security, and climate change exacerbated many threats, including conflict and access to energy and food”.⁸²¹ In 2009, the UN General Assembly encouraged relevant UN organizations to intensify their efforts to tackle climate change, “including its possible security implications” and requested the UN Secretary-General submit a comprehensive report on the potential security impacts of climate change.⁸²² In response to the General Assembly, the Secretary-General’s report defined climate change as a threat

⁸¹⁶ For a detailed overview of these developments, see Trombetta 2008.

⁸¹⁷ UN Security Council 1992.

⁸¹⁸ Trombetta 2008, 594–595.

⁸¹⁹ See, for example, Lee 2009; Mazo 2010 and Welzer 2012.

⁸²⁰ UN 2007.

⁸²¹ UN 2007.

⁸²² UN General Assembly 2009a.

multiplier which could affect security through five channels.⁸²³ A couple of years later, the Security Council under the German presidency discussed the potential security impacts of climate change. In 2011, the Council adopted its first-ever statement on the issue, expressing its concerns over possible the security impacts of climate change.⁸²⁴ However, the Council made no decision on whether new environmental peacekeeping forces, “green helmets”, could be used to settle conflicts caused by resource scarcity.⁸²⁵ In 2013, the Security Council held informal talks on the issue but failed to define climate change as an international security threat due to the resistance of China and Russia.⁸²⁶ Even though the Council has not made any concrete decisions on climate change, the very fact that it has discussed climate security has already upgraded the status of climate change on the global political agenda: as an environmental issue, climate change is a matter of “soft politics”, its potential securitization makes it a part of “hard politics”.

Despite their potential to increase the willingness and capacity to reduce emissions amongst major emitters, minilateral forums can be criticized from an ethical perspective. In particular, they do not consider the viewpoints of developing countries, i.e. those most vulnerable to the effects of climate change. That is why Robyn Eckersley proposes “inclusive minilateralism” in the form of a global “Climate Council”. Procedurally, the Council would be based on “common but differentiated representation”: representation by the “most capable” (the leading industrialized countries), the “most responsible” (the biggest emitters “historical, aggregate and forecasted” greenhouse gas emissions) and the “most vulnerable” (developing countries that suffer the most from climate change and have the least capacity to respond it).⁸²⁷ All the three groups would be included in a Council composed of the US, the EU, China, India, Russia, Japan, Brazil, South Korea, Mexico plus representatives of the Alliance of Small Island States, the African Group and the Least Developed Countries. Such a group of twelve would cover about 70 per cent of the total emissions of the world and around 70 per cent

⁸²³ According to UN General Assembly (2009b), these channels include vulnerability, development, coping and security, statelessness, and international conflict.

⁸²⁴ UN Security Council 2011.

⁸²⁵ UN 2011.

⁸²⁶ Krause-Jackson 2013.

⁸²⁷ Eckersley 2012, 35.

of the world's population.⁸²⁸ This composition, however, would totally exclude civil society, whose role in environmental negotiations has been essential.⁸²⁹

From the climate responsibility vantage point, there is no univocal argumentation either for or against “minilateralism” in climate negotiations. On the one hand, “minilateralism” could enhance political dialogue, find new solutions to climate governance and help to define the special responsibilities of participants of a “climate power club” in a more explicit manner (albeit it is not clear how such a club would motivate or pressurize the participants to take more ambitious action to reduce emissions); On the other hand, “minilateral” groupings would not generate the much-needed political will to reduce emissions globally. In particular, it would not encourage cosmopolitan climate responsibility and it would erode the legitimacy of the UNFCCC. Therefore, I believe that “minilateral” clubs would work best when used as complementary settings for multilateral climate practices.

⁸²⁸ Eckersley 2012, 36.

⁸²⁹ For example, environmental NGOs play an important role in issue identification, agenda setting, environmental education and communication, policy formatting, the democratization of environmental decision-making, normative development, organizing political pressure for states, international organizations and companies, and monitoring the implementation of environmental standards.

7 Contemporary practices of climate responsibility

As demonstrated by the previous chapter, climate politics is largely about struggles over ideas of responsibility: how is “responsibility” defined in a specific context and who is *appointed*⁸³⁰ to be responsible for what, when, and how? In general, we tend to equate responsibility with blame or guilt. Hence we may ask who has caused climate change. Many westerners would answer simply that China is to blame for causing climate change because it is now the biggest CO₂ emitter in the world. Again, China would reply that the West is to blame because climate change is caused by the cumulative emissions of the industrialized countries. The issue of climate change thus demonstrates why responsibility is not only about causality and legal liability but also about moral rights and entitlements. We should not only look for the guilty but also ask who was entitled to produce greenhouse gases in the past, in the present and who is entitled to do so in the future. Are there differences between the emissions of developed countries and those of developing countries? Who has the responsibility and capacity to reduce the emissions: those who cause greenhouse gases or those who consume them? And, should responsibility be allocated on the basis of absolute emissions, emissions per capita, or emissions per unit of GDP? As the UNFCCC sets the institutional framework for the international practices of climate responsibility, it is the principal forum for negotiating answers to these questions. In other words, the UNFCCC defines what kind of responsibility must be shouldered and by whom in order to achieve the politically negotiated goals of the practice. Therefore, this chapter explores how general and special responsibilities are defined and distributed by the UNFCCC, which is the most important secondary institution related to climate governance. It also discusses the emerging practice of cosmopolitan climate responsibility and ponders whether climate responsibility may evolve as a new “standard of civilization” in the future.

⁸³⁰ See Goodin 1988, 680.

7.1 Climate responsibility and international justice

As members of international society, all states have equal general responsibilities derived from the UN Charter: they have a responsibility to safeguard international peace and security, prosperity and the well-being of people, both present and future generations locally and globally. They are also obligated to not cause harm to others. From a legal and moral perspective, there is thus a significant causal link between contribution and responsibility: If you are guilty of doing something, you have a responsibility to fix it. This is captured in the “Polluter pays” principle, which is nonetheless problematic at least for three reasons: first, many polluters cannot pay because they are already dead; second, many polluters cannot afford to pay; third, many polluters refuse to pay.⁸³¹ Regarding climate change, it is impossible to point out who is “guilty” of causing climate change. Because climate change is caused by a large number of people participating in morally and legally accepted practices, they can be collectively held responsible for it.⁸³² But, would it be fair to ask all the states, or people, to shoulder a similar responsibility to mitigate climate change?

Responsibility and justice are inextricably tied together. But what is justice? According to John Rawls, “Justice is the first virtue of social institutions”.⁸³³ Hence justice is a “normative ideal which serves to distinguish between good and bad outcomes or states of affairs, to inform present and future acts and choices, and to evaluate proposed and past actions”.⁸³⁴ Although philosophers have provided well thought out theoretical accounts of justice, neither a fixed conception of justice nor a general international agreement on what is just exists. Different individuals, even at the same time in the very same community, hold differing subjective views about what is “just”, and even the opinions of an individual may change over time and differ from one subject to another. Although states do agree that climate change is a serious problem for humankind, they have been trapped for years in a debate on what is a just way to respond it. China has argued that developed countries have to

⁸³¹ Caney 2010, 134.

⁸³² Notice Larry May’s (1992, 38) distinction between shared and collective responsibility: “When a group of people shares responsibility for a harm responsibility distributes to each member of the group. When a group is collectively responsible for a harm, the group as such is responsible; but this does not necessarily mean that all, or even any, of the members are individually responsible for the harm.”

⁸³³ Quoted in Vanderheiden 2008, 48.

⁸³⁴ Vanderheiden 2008, 49.

shoulder their historic responsibility and it would not be right to ask developing countries to invest in climate change mitigation; the US has maintained that China's proposal is not fair and that emerging states must reduce emissions as well. The participants to a practice have to negotiate and renegotiate what is considered just within a specific practice, for example, is the focus on individual or collective good? To cope with the rise of China, international society may need to adjust its rules and ideas of justice, which may also shape and gradually modify ideas of international rights and responsibilities.

Recall Henry Shue's dichotomy between general and special responsibilities. This tension between the general responsibilities of all states and the special responsibilities of those having greater capabilities is central to understanding the practices of global responsibility including climate responsibility. While general responsibilities are connected to "arithmetical" justice, meaning that states have equal rights and responsibilities, the distribution of special responsibilities is a political decision made by international society as a whole, in the "light of consideration of its common good or interest".⁸³⁵ Although states in general agree that the distribution of responsibilities is a matter of fairness and some of them have special responsibilities, there is a heated political dispute about the ethical underpinnings of how to define and distribute responsibilities in an equitable manner. Historically, special responsibilities have predominantly been attached to great powers which have "fundamental global capabilities and responsibilities that minor or medium powers do not have".⁸³⁶ As Jackson puts it:

...international ethics is an ethics of responsibility because some very powerful players are involved who can do a lot of good and also a lot of harm. Indeed, their actions taken together affect virtually everyone on the planet, both for the better and for the worse.⁸³⁷

As discussed in chapters three and five, great powers' special responsibilities are largely based on a strong causal link between material power and responsibility. This causal link does not only underline power but capabilities and capacity: those who have more resources have a responsibility to act. It would be pointless to assign responsibilities to those who have no capability to fulfil them. For example, since a big proportion of China's GHG emissions are "subsistence emissions"

⁸³⁵ Bull 2002, 77.

⁸³⁶ Jackson 2000, 21.

⁸³⁷ Jackson 2009, 29.

produced to fulfil people's basic rights, it would be unfair to demand that China shoulders the heaviest responsibility in international climate politics only because it is the *biggest* emitter of CO₂ in the world at the moment. A fair approach to international responsibility considers states' capability to act as well.

Moral philosophers have elaborated the fairness of the allocation of climate responsibilities.⁸³⁸ For example, Shue suggests three principles for allocating global responsibilities equitably. His first principle considers the contribution to the problem and reads as follows:

When a party has in the past taken an unfair advantage of others by imposing costs upon them without their consent, those who have been unilaterally put at a disadvantage are entitled to demand that in the future the offending party shoulder burdens that are unequal at least to the extent of the unfair advantage previously taken, in order to restore equality.⁸³⁹

Shue's second principle looks at the ability to pay:

Among a number of parties, all of whom are bound to contribute to some common endeavour, the parties who have the most resources normally should contribute the most to the endeavour.⁸⁴⁰

Finally, Shue's third principle guarantees a minimum standard of living for all, and reads as follows:

When some people have less than enough for a decent human life, other people have far more than enough, and the total resources available are so great that everyone could have at least enough without preventing some people from still retaining considerably more than others have, it is unfair not to guarantee everyone at least an adequate minimum.⁸⁴¹

Regarding climate change, all three principles highlight the responsibility of developed countries. Therefore, Shue concludes that whatever has to be done by affluent states or by developing countries about climate change, or other global

⁸³⁸ See, for example, Caney 2010; Gardiner 2011; Gardiner, Caney, Jamieson & Shue 2010 and Vanderheiden 2008.

⁸³⁹ Shue 1999, 534.

⁸⁴⁰ Shue 1999, 537.

⁸⁴¹ Shue 1999, 541.

problems, developed countries must bear the costs.⁸⁴² At the same time, the GHG emissions of developing countries, and particularly those of emerging powers such as China and India, have increased greatly. That is why Simon Caney suggests a hybrid model of two principles which revise and combine Shue's three principles. His first principle, which merges Shue's first and third principles, reads as follows:

Parties who contribute to dangerous climate change should bear the burden of combating it unless doing so would push them below a decent minimal standard of living.⁸⁴³

This first principle is insufficient alone because many of those who have contributed to climate change by emitting high levels of GHG emissions are no longer alive or are too poor to pay.⁸⁴⁴ Therefore a second principle is needed to govern who should bear the responsibility for climate mitigation on the behalf of the "Remainder" by which Caney means the previous generations and the global poor. Caney's second principle also arises from criticism of Shue's second principle as it does not take into account that some people or states have generated their wealth in a "climate-endangering way" and some in a "clean" way.⁸⁴⁵ Caney's second principle reads as follows:

The duty to bear the burden of the Remainder should be borne by the wealthy (proportionately to their wealth) because a) they can bear the burden most easily and also b) the wealth that they hold came about in climate-endangering ways.⁸⁴⁶

Elsewhere, Caney introduces the "beneficiary pays" principle related to the problem of how to make the "Remainder" pay. He suggests that those who have benefitted from the environmentally harmful development processes of others should bear the burden of climate change. It would solve the problems of the polluter pays principle by exempting developing countries from paying for their greenhouse gas emissions and by making affluent countries (and individuals) pay for them.⁸⁴⁷

⁸⁴² Shue 1999, 545.

⁸⁴³ Caney 2009, 240.

⁸⁴⁴ Caney 2009, 240–241.

⁸⁴⁵ Caney 2009, 242.

⁸⁴⁶ Caney 2009, 243.

⁸⁴⁷ Caney 2010, 128.

Next, I investigate how international society has debated and applied international justice when defining and distributing climate responsibilities. Can we identify Shue's or Caney's principles in the contemporary practices of climate responsibility?

7.1.1 General climate responsibilities

The UNFCCC acknowledges that “change in the Earth's climate and its adverse effects are a common concern of humankind”.⁸⁴⁸ Although developing countries were not very comfortable about accepting “common responsibility”,⁸⁴⁹ the UNFCCC assigns general responsibilities to all the parties of the Convention.⁸⁵⁰ First of all, all the parties have a solidarist, intergenerational responsibility to “protect the climate system for the benefit of present and future generations of humankind”.⁸⁵¹ Second, all states have a responsibility to cooperate “the global nature of climate change calls for the widest possible cooperation by all countries and their participation in an effective and appropriate international response”.⁸⁵² Third, all states have a general responsibility to “take precautionary measures to anticipate, prevent or minimize the causes of climate change and mitigate its adverse effects”.⁸⁵³ Both these two general responsibilities are, however, limited by the principle of CBDR. Fourth, all states have to provide information. They are, for instance, asked to compile and publish national inventories of anthropogenic greenhouse gas emissions by source and the removal of sinks. Fifth, all states must develop national climate programmes. Sixth, all states have to cooperate in the fields of science, education, training, and so forth in order to improve the capacity to mitigate and adapt to climate change around the world.⁸⁵⁴ Seventh, the UNFCCC regards sustainable development as both a right and a responsibility of

⁸⁴⁸ UNFCCC 1992, preamble.

⁸⁴⁹ Porras 1993, 28.

⁸⁵⁰ Procedurally, it refers to “parties” in order to emphasise that its principles and definitions of responsibility have no broader relevance in international law but they apply only to the signatories of the UNFCCC. Given the universal ratification of the UNFCCC, I use “party” and “state” interchangeably.

⁸⁵¹ UNFCCC 1992, Article 3.

⁸⁵² UNFCCC 1992, preamble.

⁸⁵³ UNFCCC 1992, Article 3.

⁸⁵⁴ UNFCCC 1992, Article 4.

states. It declares: States “have a right to, and should, promote sustainable development”,⁸⁵⁵ which links climate responsibility with development goals. As binding emission reduction caps would restrict developing countries’ development objectives, this article did not only underline developed countries’ historic responsibility but also indicated that developing countries have a right to increase their greenhouse gas emissions via industrialization that would raise the living standards of the poor. Finally, the UNFCCC also affirmed the right to sovereignty as an important principle in climate politics.⁸⁵⁶

Largely at the US’s insistence, international climate negotiations have debated all states’ general climate responsibilities at length. At the UNCED, China strictly opposed the proposition that climate protection would be a “global issue of common responsibility for all states in an indiscriminate manner”.⁸⁵⁷ Together with the G77, it resisted the idea of the policy review of a state’s national development strategies and policies because it was seen as interference with the internal affairs of states. As discussed earlier, China compromised on its previous position at the 2007 UN Bali Conference where it and other developing countries committed themselves to implement NAMAs. This was an important change in the global distribution of climate responsibility: climate change mitigation was no longer regarded exclusively as the special responsibility of developed countries but a general responsibility of all states. Many developing countries submitted their NAMAs by 2012 and many of them indeed pledged to undertake action comparable to or even more ambitious than those of developed countries.⁸⁵⁸

The 2014 Lima Accord (COP20) asked all the parties to develop their intended nationally determined contributions (INDCs) well in advance of COP21. As a result, 187 sovereign states submitted their INDC to the UNFCCC. Even some very poor areas in conflict zones, such as Afghanistan, issued a national climate change plan. In total, the INDCs represented about 95 per cent of the world’s greenhouse gas emissions.⁸⁵⁹ The very inclusive, nearly universal, participation of the world’s states indicated a fundamental paradigm shift in climate responsibility: Although the CBDR was not abandoned, developing countries were now required

⁸⁵⁵ UNFCCC 1992, Article 3.

⁸⁵⁶ UNFCCC 1992, preamble.

⁸⁵⁷ Gao 2001, 281.

⁸⁵⁸ For an overview of developing countries’ climate change policies, see, for example, Held, Roger & Nag 2013.

⁸⁵⁹ For a summary of all INDCs, see UNFCCC 2015b and www.carbon-pulse.com/indcs/.

– and willing – to contribute to climate change mitigation. In other words, all states are now urged to “undertake and communicate ambitious efforts” to respond climate change.⁸⁶⁰ Those efforts are asked to “represent a progression beyond the Party’s then current nationally determined contribution and reflect its highest possible ambition”.⁸⁶¹ China agreed to this paradigm change.⁸⁶² Again, INDCs were not ambitious enough to limit the rise of global temperatures to 2 °C. To raise the ambition of the INDCs, the Paris agreement obligated states to submit an updated INDC by 2020, and thereafter every five years.⁸⁶³ Another sign of the erosion of the old developed versus developing countries distinction is that the Paris agreement establishes a transparency framework with a common binding commitment for all states. Each state is required to submit a “national inventory report of anthropogenic emissions by sources and removals by sinks of greenhouse gases” and to provide information “necessary to track progress made in implementing and achieving” their national nationally determined mitigation and adaptation goals.⁸⁶⁴ This required a compromise from China which previously regarded reporting obligations as a violation of its sovereignty. In addition, developed countries have to report on financial, technology transfer and capacity-building support that they have provided to developing countries, which then have to report on the support received.⁸⁶⁵

In addition to climate change mitigation, adaptation to climate change plays an important role in climate politics. Apart from developed countries’ special responsibility to provide developing countries with the funds, equipment and know-how for adaptation (to be discussed in the next section), adaptation has not been a very contested issue in international climate negotiations. Previously, it was not discussed at length in international climate negotiations because it would have been seen as avoiding the responsibility to reduce emissions. The UNFCCC does not provide a clear definition of adaptation but it acknowledges that all states have a general responsibility to “take precautionary measures to anticipate, prevent or minimize the causes of climate change and mitigate its adverse effects”.⁸⁶⁶

⁸⁶⁰ UNFCCC 2015a, Article 3.

⁸⁶¹ UNFCCC 2015a, Article 4.

⁸⁶² Xi 2015a.

⁸⁶³ UNFCCC 2015a, Paragraph 23; 24.

⁸⁶⁴ UNFCCC 2015a, Article 13.

⁸⁶⁵ UNFCCC 2015a, Article 13.

⁸⁶⁶ UNFCCC 1992, Article 3.

However, it is now becoming clearer and clearer that states have failed to prevent climate change. The climate system is already changing whatever states do now. Even if a highly ambitious global treaty is concluded, climate change will cause significant human security threats by increasing the frequency and intensity of extreme weather events, enhancing the spread of infectious diseases and harming food production, etc. Therefore, adaptation has now attracted more attention from politicians and academia.⁸⁶⁷

The Lima Accord recommended that all parties include adaptation plans in their INDCs, and many of them, especially developing country parties, added the adaptation component into their INDC. For many developing countries, adaptation to climate change was defined as a primary goal of the INDC due to climate change's negative impacts on national development, sustainability, and security.⁸⁶⁸ The Paris agreement also acknowledged that “adaptation is a global challenge faced by all with local, subnational, national, regional and international dimensions.” It noted:

Parties acknowledge that adaptation action should follow a country-driven, gender-responsive, participatory and fully transparent approach, taking into consideration vulnerable groups, communities and ecosystems, and should be based on and guided by the best available science and, as appropriate, traditional knowledge, knowledge of indigenous peoples and local knowledge systems, with a view to integrating adaptation into relevant socioeconomic and environmental policies and actions, where appropriate”.⁸⁶⁹

Yet, there is no common understanding of what kind of concrete policies and actions adaptation should consist of. Due to countries' diverse national circumstances, such as geographical, demographic and socio-economic characteristics, the risks posed by climate change vary from country to country, hence the potential for and reasonable means of adaptation are diverse as well. When defining “what is adaptation”, Barry Smit et al. suggest that at least the following aspects must be considered: a) adaptation to what?; b) who or what adapts?; c) how does adaptation occur?; and d) how appropriate or good is the

⁸⁶⁷ In particular, there is an extensive body of literature on resilience, a concept which social scientists have adopted from ecology and other fields of natural sciences.

⁸⁶⁸ See UNFCCC 2015b, 14–16.

⁸⁶⁹ UNFCCC 2015a, Article 7.

adaptation.⁸⁷⁰ In general, adaptation can be proactive or reactive. It includes, for example, the risk assessments of health, food security, agricultural, environmental, economic, and disaster management, and strategies to alleviate and respond to these risks. In the end, adaptation is merely a domestic matter: the governments of states that must develop and implement national adaptation plans. In short, adaptation can be seen as the general national responsibility of all states.

7.1.2 Special climate responsibilities

An egalitarian perspective on states' general responsibilities is limited and does not recognize that the capabilities of states to fulfil their responsibilities vary. In particular, Shue's distinction between "subsistence emissions" and "luxury emissions" makes it clear that not all GHG emissions are "equally bad". In short, developing countries' "subsistence emissions" (or "survival emissions") are unavoidable as they are produced in order to guarantee a basic minimum standard of living for the poor.⁸⁷¹ This raises the issue about the relationship between rights and responsibilities. The developing countries' fundamental right to survive and develop grants them the right to produce "subsistence emissions", and therefore the "polluter pays" principle should not apply to them.⁸⁷² In contrast, affluent people and states can be held accountable to their "luxury emissions" because they surpass minimum emissions levels many times over.⁸⁷³

Consequently, CBDR has been the cornerstone of the UNFCCC as it defines that developed countries have special responsibilities to respond to climate change. Although developed countries have not caused climate change intentionally, their industrialization process has made them affluent at the expense of a clean environment while leaving developing countries poor. Developing countries suffer from the impacts of climate change and have no resources to contribute to climate change mitigation. Developed countries, therefore, have a greater responsibility to help developing countries meet basic standards of living. In other words, they have a positive responsibility not only to reduce emissions but also to support

⁸⁷⁰ Smit et al. 2000.

⁸⁷¹ Shue 1993.

⁸⁷² See also "Greenhouse Development Rights" framework introduced in Baer, Athanasiou, Kartha & Kemp-Benedict 2008.

⁸⁷³ Shue 1993.

developing countries' efforts to cope with climate change. Although developed countries generally accept Shue's argumentation, it has not been easy to agree on their special responsibilities related to climate change. Negotiations on special responsibilities have been characterized by two tensions. The first one has concerned the scope of the emission reduction commitments of the US and other industrialized countries, and the second one has debated how much developed countries should provide developing countries with (financial) assistance to meet the costs of climate change.

First, at the heart of climate responsibility is the need for emission reduction. The UNFCCC acknowledged this but it failed to set quantitative emission reductions requirements for any party due to the US's refusal to accept an emission reduction target. In accordance with the CBDR, the UNFCCC declared that developed countries must take the "lead in combating climate change and the adverse effects thereof".⁸⁷⁴ It stated that Annex I countries "shall adopt national policies and take corresponding measures on the mitigation of climate change, by limiting its anthropogenic emissions of greenhouse gases and protecting and enhancing its greenhouse gas sinks and reservoirs",⁸⁷⁵ but it did not require any country to achieve this target. The Kyoto Protocol, however, operationalized the CBDR: While the UNFCCC encourages developed country parties to reduce emissions, the Kyoto Protocol commits them to do so. It requested developed countries reduce their overall greenhouse gas emissions by five per cent compared to 1990 levels over the first five-year period (2008 to 2012).

The CBDR and the US's unambitious notions of climate responsibility continued to dominate post-Kyoto climate negotiations as well. The George W. Bush administration pursued the replacement of the CBDR approach with a "mutual-burden sharing" approach which denied the historical responsibility of developed countries and focused instead on reducing the future emission intensity via technological innovation.⁸⁷⁶ After the presidential election of Barack Obama in 2008, new hopes for greater US climate responsibility were aroused. Unlike the Bush administration, the Obama administration has acknowledged the special climate responsibilities of the US based on the historical responsibility and material capabilities.⁸⁷⁷ However, Obama's commitments have not translated into very

⁸⁷⁴ UNFCCC 1992, Article 3.

⁸⁷⁵ UNFCCC 1992, Article 4.

⁸⁷⁶ Bukovansky et al. 2012, 144.

⁸⁷⁷ See, for example, Obama 2014 and Obama 2015.

ambitious domestic climate policies. In particular, because of the resistance of the US Congress, the US could not commit to a legally binding emission reduction target at the Paris Conference in 2015. Therefore, the Paris Agreement does not specify a legally binding emission reduction target for any state but is based on states' voluntary, nationally determined contributions instead.

Second, developed countries' special responsibility to support the capacity of developing countries to meet climate change has been a heated debate in international politics for decades. Although the UNFCCC urged developed countries to provide developing countries with "new and additional financial resources" and technology transfer to respond to climate change⁸⁷⁸, China has criticized international climate negotiations for focusing too much on climate change mitigation and paying too little attention to adaptation, thus failing to "meet the actual needs of developing countries, in particular the least developed countries and small island countries".⁸⁷⁹ Since adaptation is "an essential component in the framework of sustainable development to address climate change", China demands that developed countries provide developing countries with the technological and financial support to develop their adaptation capacity.⁸⁸⁰ Indeed, the CBDR notes that developed countries have a special responsibility to assist developing countries to mitigate and adapt to climate change. This is not described as "aid" but constructed as a "responsibility", this formulation was a "significant step in the development of normative international relations", based on the "fact that everyone, including developed countries, will benefit from such transfers which cannot therefore be regarded as charity".⁸⁸¹ In addition, the UNFCCC acknowledged:

The extent to which developing country Parties will effectively implement their commitments under the Convention will depend on the effective implementation by developed country Parties of their commitments under the Convention related to financial resources and transfer of technology and will take fully into account that economic and social development and poverty eradication are the first and overriding priorities of the developing country Parties.⁸⁸²

⁸⁷⁸ UNFCCC 1992, Article 4.

⁸⁷⁹ National Development and Reform Commission 2008.

⁸⁸⁰ National Development and Reform Commission 2008.

⁸⁸¹ Jackson 1996, 185–186.

⁸⁸² UNFCCC 1992, Article 4.

This principle has also formed a cornerstone of China's stand on international climate negotiations.

States have created diverse institutional arrangements to coordinate and implement the special responsibility of developed countries to assist the climate policies and actions of developing countries. The UNFCCC established a financial mechanism to offer funds to developing countries. At first, the financial assistance was channelled through the Global Environmental Facility, either directly or through two climate funds, the Least Developed Country Fund and the Special Climate Change Fund. In addition, the Adaptation Fund was established in 2001 in order to help the Kyoto Protocol's developing country parties finance their concrete adaptation projects. At the 2009 Copenhagen Conference, developed countries pledged to provide developing countries with new and additional resources worth about USD 30 billion for the period between 2010 and 2012 (fast-start finance). They also promised to mobilize USD 100 billion per year by 2020, but no agreement on how the funds should be mobilized (public/private ratio) was made. Furthermore, COP16 held in Cancún in 2010 established the Green Climate Fund and adopted many other concrete institution-building decisions related to adaptation (the Cancun Adaptation Framework), technology (the Technology Mechanism), and forests (REDD+), for instance. China has not joined the Green Climate Fund. On the one hand, UN climate funds have helped developing countries to begin to meet the challenges posed by climate change⁸⁸³ although developed countries have not yet fulfilled their promises of additional resources. On the other hand, many bilateral and multilateral funds, such as Climate Investment Funds, have also been established as a result of growing disaffection with the UN funds.⁸⁸⁴

The Paris Agreement requires developed countries “provide financial resources to assist developing country Parties with respect to both mitigation and adaptation”.⁸⁸⁵ These funds can be mobilized “from a wide variety of sources, instruments and channels, noting the significant role of public funds” and the “mobilization of climate finance should represent a progression beyond previous efforts”.⁸⁸⁶ The agreement itself does not define how much developed countries

⁸⁸³ Nakhooda & Norman 2014.

⁸⁸⁴ See, for example, a list provided by the UNFCCC 2011.

⁸⁸⁵ UNFCCC 2015, Article 9.

⁸⁸⁶ UNFCCC 2015, Article 9.

should provide funding because such a binding commitment would require congressional approval in the US. Nevertheless, COP21 decided that in addition to the current goal of an annual USD 100 billion, developed countries will extend their financial assistance with a “new collective quantified goal” for the period after 2025.⁸⁸⁷ Funds will be allocated through the UNFCCC’s Financial Mechanism. Notably, COP21 did not obligate China, as a developing country, to take part in financial assistance but it encourages “other parties” to “provide or continue to provide such support voluntarily”.⁸⁸⁸ Already before the COP21, China pledged to establish its own voluntary and complementary South-South Cooperation Fund, which will “make available ¥20 billion [about 3.1 billion USD] for setting up the China South-South Climate Cooperation Fund to support other developing countries to combat climate change”.⁸⁸⁹

In addition to the developed countries’ special responsibility to assist developing countries to mitigate GHG emissions and adapt to climate change, developing countries have increasingly urged them to also bear a third kind of special responsibility: compensation for the losses and damage that climate change causes in developing countries in general and small island states in particular. This recalls the ambitious objectives of the UNCHE to develop a compensation framework for environmental harms. The Rio conference, unfortunately, diluted the original idea – although it promoted “expeditious” international cooperation on the development of “international law regarding liability and compensation for adverse effects of environmental damage”,⁸⁹⁰ it subordinated liability and compensation to states’ *national* legislation. According to the Rio Declaration, “(s)tates shall develop national law regarding liability and compensation for the victims of pollution and other environmental damage”.⁸⁹¹ Likewise, the International Law Commission issued “preventative rules” to prevent transboundary environmental damage in 1999, which is quite different from the original idea of “liability rules” facilitating compensation for victims of environmental damage.⁸⁹² For the time being, therefore, the no harm principle constitutes the most important rule in the context of climate change damage. It

⁸⁸⁷ UNFCCC 2015, Paragraph 54.

⁸⁸⁸ UNFCCC 2015, Article 9.

⁸⁸⁹ White House 2015a.

⁸⁹⁰ Rio Declaration on Environment and Development 1992, principle 13.

⁸⁹¹ Rio Declaration on Environment and Development 1992, Principle 13.

⁸⁹² Koivurova 2014, 175.

applies to all states but in accordance with the CBDR, it is largely recognized that developed countries have a better capacity to prevent environmental harm.⁸⁹³

The Warsaw International Mechanism for Loss and Damage associated with Climate Change Impacts (Loss and Damage Mechanism) was established in 2013 to enhance “knowledge and understanding of comprehensive risk management approaches to address loss and damage associated with the adverse effects of climate change, including slow onset impacts”.⁸⁹⁴ After long and heated debates, loss and damage received its own article in the Paris Agreement. Notably, COP21 did not only ask the Loss and Damage Mechanism to “establish a clearinghouse for risk transfer that serves as a repository for information on insurance and risk transfer” but also to “develop recommendations for integrated approaches to avert, minimize and address displacement related to the adverse impacts of climate change”.⁸⁹⁵ COP21 therefore acknowledged a special responsibility that is especially critical for international justice as it states that developed countries have to help poor countries cope with, for example, flood damage because it is the right thing to do, even though they themselves do not benefit from the assistance. Essentially, loss and damage assistance is very different from mitigation and adaptation assistance, which also serve developed countries’ own interests such as global emission reduction and the creation of business opportunities. At the insistence of the US, however, COP21 noted that the ratification of the agreement does not “involve or provide a basis for any liability or compensation”.⁸⁹⁶ COP22 in 2016 will review and (hopefully) adopt a decision on loss and damage.

The UNFCCC has not defined special responsibilities for great powers but all developed countries are assigned special responsibilities. However, this does not mean that all developed states are expected to shoulder similar responsibilities in practice. Small developed countries like Portugal or Cyprus are not under similar pressure to the US or the Britain to take action. Largely, this is because of their differentiated material capabilities and national circumstances, which has indeed been a key question in the negotiations process.⁸⁹⁷ Another reason is that great powers are expected to play a leadership role in global governance. This means that, whether or not climate change is governed in the UN Security Council, great

⁸⁹³ Voigt 2008, 17.

⁸⁹⁴ UNFCCC 2014b.

⁸⁹⁵ UNFCCC 2015a, Paragraph 49; 50.

⁸⁹⁶ UNFCCC 2015a, Paragraph 52.

⁸⁹⁷ Bukovansky et al. 2012, 131.

powers have a responsibility to lead the global effort to combat climate change. Hence the US has the greatest responsibility to lead but China cannot avoid its global responsibility either. In 2013, the two countries indeed recognized the important role of Sino-US climate cooperation as a “powerful example that can inspire the world”.⁸⁹⁸ In September 2014, president Obama linked climate responsibility and great power status by saying that the US and China “have a special responsibility to lead” the global efforts to tackle climate change because that is “what big nations have to do”.⁸⁹⁹ However, the recognition of great powers’ special climate responsibility has not transformed into the acceptance of legally binding emissions reductions target within the UNFCCC. Both China and the US have resisted legal obligations and emphasized nationally determined climate strategies instead.

The special climate responsibilities of developed countries are not accompanied by corresponding special rights or privileges. Nor do great powers have any privileges under the UNFCCC. This is probably one of the reasons why the US, which usually supports multilateral treaties if they contain exemptions for it, failed to ratify the Kyoto Protocol.⁹⁰⁰ Flexible mechanisms make it easier and cheaper for developed countries to fulfil their special responsibilities but they can hardly be understood as privileges. Besides, flexible mechanisms were negotiated three years after the CBDR was adopted in Rio.⁹⁰¹

7.2 “Green growth” and the enactment of climate responsibility

The concept of sustainable development cemented the close relationship between environmental policies and development. At first, sustainable development provided a very promising approach to development by emphasizing the importance of environmental protection in development policies and by paying a new kind of attention to the forward-looking intergenerational responsibility of states. From a “genuine ecological perspective”, however, there was a disappointing discursive shift from “sustainability” to “development” at the

⁸⁹⁸ White House 2013.

⁸⁹⁹ Obama 2014.

⁹⁰⁰ Chalecki 2009, 152.

⁹⁰¹ Bukovansky et al. 2012, 130.

Johannesburg Summit in 2002.⁹⁰² As Klaus Bosselmann puts it, “... while Rio aimed for sustainability to guide economic and social progress, Johannesburg aimed for economic and social progress to guide sustainability”.⁹⁰³ In addition, Bosselmann points out that “there is a qualitative difference between the environmental dimension and the social-economic dimension of sustainable development”, and the “former is the prerequisite for the latter”.⁹⁰⁴ That view would take a more ecocentric standing on sustainable development, acknowledging that the “natural sphere [of sustainable development] is paramount and cannot be compromised”.⁹⁰⁵ In reality, this is not how the international practice of state environmental responsibility views sustainability. In contrast, states take an anthropocentric approach to sustainability and see environmental protection as an integral part of sustainable development, not an absolute precondition for it.

Like environmental practices in general, climate responsibility is also closely linked to the practices of economic growth. China and the G77 countries played a central role in making economic development a key objective of climate responsibility. According to their Beijing Declaration in June 1991,

Environmental problems cannot be dealt with separately; they must be linked to the development processes, bringing the environmental concerns in line with the imperatives of economic growth and development. In this context, the right to development for the developing countries must be fully recognized.⁹⁰⁶

Consequently, the Rio Declaration highlights the importance of development whenever possible, and the UNFCCC underlines sustainable development and the right of developing countries to development. Interestingly, the UNFCCC also suggests that states “should cooperate to promote a supportive and open international economic system that would lead to sustainable economic growth and development in all Parties, particularly developing country Parties, thus enabling them better to address the problems of climate change”.⁹⁰⁷ It also warns that climate mitigation actions “should not constitute a means of arbitrary or

⁹⁰² Beyerlin & Marauhn 2011, 26.

⁹⁰³ Quoted in Beyerlin & Reichard 2003, 236.

⁹⁰⁴ Quoted in Beyerlin & Reichard 2003, 236.

⁹⁰⁵ Klaus Bosselmann, quoted in Beyerlin & Reichard 2003, 236.

⁹⁰⁶ Quoted in Sachs 1993, 7.

⁹⁰⁷ UNFCCC 1992, Article 3.

unjustifiable discrimination or a disguised restriction on international trade”.⁹⁰⁸ This formulation connotes the belief that the greater the economic wealth, the better a country’s capability to tackle climate change. When it comes to developing countries’ capabilities, this is no doubt true. But, is a liberal market economy really the key to climate change mitigation? Another important question is whether the economic development of developed countries is central to climate change mitigation. Can money solve the climate crisis? Is the problem really that developed countries do not have the financial resources and know-how to reduce emissions, or is the problem that they do not want to sacrifice their economic growth for environmental protection? In my understanding, the developed countries’ pursuit of continuous economic growth is the principal cause of environmental problems, not the solution.

From a neoliberalist perspective, however, it is possible to maintain continuous economic growth without destroying the planet’s ecosystems. Their solution is “climate capitalism”⁹⁰⁹ and the “decarbonization of the economy” through a “model which squares capitalism’s need for continual economic growth with substantial shifts away from carbon-based industrial development”.⁹¹⁰ Especially after the global financial crisis of 2008 and 2009, different kinds of initiatives and strategies for “green growth” started to evolve around the world.⁹¹¹ In general, the idea is that economic growth and sustainability are not compatible objectives but they can and should be integrated in order to “achieve social and economic development in a carbon-constrained world”.⁹¹² Green growth provides a “new paradigm of economic growth” and in order to support and diffuse it, the Global Green Growth Institute was established in 2012.⁹¹³ The institution’s mission is to help its member states’ transition “towards a green growth model by developing and implementing strategies that simultaneously achieve poverty reduction, social inclusion, environmental sustainability and economic growth”.⁹¹⁴

Conceptually, there is difference between “green growth” and “low carbon development”. The former refers to “sustainable consumption and production,

⁹⁰⁸ UNFCCC 1992, Article 3.

⁹⁰⁹ See, for example, Lovins & Cohen 2011, and for criticism, Speth 2008 and Parr 2013.

⁹¹⁰ Newell & Paterson 2010, 1.

⁹¹¹ Dent 2014, 59–60.

⁹¹² Urban & Nordensvärd 2013, 7.

⁹¹³ Global Green Growth Institute 2012.

⁹¹⁴ Global Green Growth Institute 2015.

greening business and markets, developing sustainable infrastructure, introducing green taxes and budget reforms as fiscal policies, investing in natural capital such as ecosystems, and developing and using indicators for eco-efficiency”.⁹¹⁵ Its focus is thus on achieving economic growth in an eco-friendly way and it is concerned with environmental sustainability in broader terms than just climate change.⁹¹⁶ The latter concept can be understood as similar to green growth: policies pursuing economic growth by producing less carbon emissions. In broader terms, however, it refers to a “development model that is based on climate-friendly low carbon energy and follows principles of sustainable development, makes a contribution to avoiding dangerous climate change and adopts patterns of low carbon consumption and production”.⁹¹⁷ Although it maintains that economic growth is central to development, it acknowledges the need to incorporate social and environmental factors into development policies.⁹¹⁸

There are many options for promoting low carbon development in practice.⁹¹⁹ One solution is to create markets in areas where they do not exist.⁹²⁰ It is not possible to create markets for public goods such as clean air, but states have indeed established markets for pollution by so-called “cap and trade” policies. Notably, the Kyoto Protocol formulated three market-based “flexible mechanisms”: emissions trading, joint implementation, and CDM. Many states, including China, have established or are in the process of establishing carbon tax or carbon trade systems nationally or regionally. On the one hand, market mechanisms are regarded as cost-effective, efficient means to reduce emissions, but on the other hand, they raise many normative questions, such as the following:

Is it unfair to require firms to purchase emission rights, when they invested in facilities at a time when emissions were free? Is it fair to use an emissions-trading scheme when an alternative method of controlling emissions might produce greater health benefits for disadvantaged communities? Is it fair to forego reasonable trading program modifications that could chip away at the disproportionate pollution burden suffered by many low-income and

⁹¹⁵ Urban & Nordensvärd 2013, 6.

⁹¹⁶ Urban & Nordensvärd 2013, 6.

⁹¹⁷ Urban & Nordensvärd 2013, 5.

⁹¹⁸ Urban & Nordensvärd 2013, 6.

⁹¹⁹ See Urban & Nordensvärd 2013 (part 6) for central issues related to low carbon development, such as energy, transportation, forestry and agricultural policies.

⁹²⁰ According to Harvey (2005, 2) these areas include land, water, education, health care, social security, and environmental pollution.

minority communities today? Should we be concerned that energy price increases related to an emissions trading system would place more of a burden on the poor than the rich because the poor spend a greater percentage of their income on basic energy needs?⁹²¹

Another solution lies in technological progress. Given its technocratic approach to nature, neoliberalism believes that advanced capitalism provides better resources and technologies to respond to environmental changes including climate change. Geoengineering⁹²² is especially regarded as a cost-effective and attractive way to respond to climate change. Several geo-engineering technologies have already been proposed, but it remains unclear how well they would work, and whether they have any (environmentally) harmful side effects. Morally speaking, however, geoengineering is a contested topic.⁹²³ For example, Stephen Gardiner warns that “we [the current generation, and especially citizens of affluent countries] should be especially cautious about arguments that appear to diminish our moral responsibilities”.⁹²⁴ From this perspective, it would be hence “better if countries could commit themselves not to resort to geoengineering” because then the “world would have no alternative but to reduce emissions”.⁹²⁵ Politically speaking, geoengineering is also an unresolved issue. As Scott Barrett puts it, the problem with geoengineering is not the “challenge posed by geoengineering is not how to get countries to do it” but how “to address the fundamental question of who should decide whether and how geoengineering should be attempted—a problem of governance”.⁹²⁶ Should geoengineering projects be carried out multilaterally, or can states act unilaterally, even if their projects potentially cause changes in other countries’ conditions of living?⁹²⁷ Because the potential for geoengineering is nevertheless huge, the rules of geoengineering practices must thus be negotiated urgently (or a commitment made to refrain from geoengineering). Perhaps a secondary institution is needed to govern geoengineering practices in the future.

⁹²¹ Farber 2012, 53.

⁹²² According to Scott Barrett’s (2008, 45) definition, geoengineering means “the deliberate modification of the climate by means other than by changing the atmospheric concentration of greenhouse gases”.

⁹²³ See, for example, Gardiner 2010 and Barrett 2008, 51.

⁹²⁴ Gardiner 2011, 345.

⁹²⁵ Barrett 2008, 46.

⁹²⁶ Barrett 2008, 53.

⁹²⁷ Steffen et al. 2011, 752.

Finally, critics of neoliberalism ask whether economic growth is imperative for development and well-being. In particular, does money bring happiness? While some economists would probably give a positive answer, most social scientists agree that GDP is not a sufficient measurement for development and citizens' well-being. If only focused on economic growth, other important factors of well-being are neglected. Amartya Sen's conception of development as a "process of expanding the real freedoms that people enjoy" provides probably the most sophisticated perspective on poverty and well-being.⁹²⁸ Moreover, the literature on happiness has identified various factors of well-being that may also be seen as, at least to some extent, universal: basic income, marriage and social relationships, employment, perceived health, religion and the quality of government.⁹²⁹ A clean environment, or "ecosystem services", can undoubtedly be added to the list. After one has reached a basic level of income, money does not increase happiness and freedom and social relations become more important for human well-being and happiness.⁹³⁰ Indeed, several studies have shown that the "constant preoccupation with growth has *not* helped Americans become any happier over the past 60 years despite the doubling and redoubling of the Gross Domestic Product".⁹³¹ It seems that China's economic miracle has not made Chinese citizens happier, either.⁹³²

It is not only happiness researchers, however, who question the idea that economic growth is essential for human well-being and prosperity. For example, then French President Nicholas Sarkozy established a Commission on the Measurement of Economic Performance and Social Progress in 2008 and asked some of the world's leading economists, namely Joseph Stiglitz, Amartya Sen and Jean Paul Fitoussi, to head the compilation of a report identifying the "limits of GDP as an indicator of economic performance and social progress".⁹³³ The Commission's report proposed that governments should no longer focus on measuring economic production but instead measure people's well-being in the

⁹²⁸ Sen 1999, 3.

⁹²⁹ Early economists and philosophers writing on happiness include Aristotle, Jeremy Bentham, John Stuart Mill and Adam Smith. After Richard Easterlin revisited the concept of happiness in the 1970s, there has been a burgeoning interest in research on happiness and well-being. Today, researchers tend to use the concepts of well-being and happiness interchangeably. For an extensive overview of questions related to happiness, see, for example, McMahan 2006.

⁹³⁰ See, for example, Hamilton 2004.

⁹³¹ Bok 2010, 207.

⁹³² Graham, Zhou & Zhang 2015.

⁹³³ Stiglitz, Sen & Fitoussi 2009, 7.

context of sustainability.⁹³⁴ It also gave recommendations on alternative ways to measure prosperity. Furthermore, Tim Jackson's book *Prosperity Without Growth* was published in 2009.⁹³⁵ Jackson argues that economic growth is not necessary for a capitalist society and introduces a "vision of prosperity as the ability to flourish as human beings – within the ecological limits of a finite planet".⁹³⁶

Certainly, criticism of the state fetish with economic growth is not novel but there have been critics of neoliberalism since its emergence.⁹³⁷ In the late 2000s, however, "degrowth" became a hot topic amongst academics and civil society. The first international degrowth conference was held in Paris in 2008, and it produced a "Declaration on Degrowth". Today, there is an active global "degrowth" movement.⁹³⁸ Theoretically, the concept of "degrowth" is debated but the different definitions agree that sustainability should not be linked to economic growth.⁹³⁹

7.3 Cosmopolitan climate responsibility

Although sovereignty is a cornerstone of international practices including climate responsibility, the capabilities of states to decrease environmental damage are rather limited in real life. States *per se* are not the principal contributors of greenhouse gases but people's material consumption is a key driver of climate change. Citizens and corporations make important consumption choices every day: they use electricity and heating, produce and consume goods, drive cars etc. which all cause emissions in the atmosphere. Hence non-state actors can make a great difference not only by setting pressure on the government, but also by choosing

⁹³⁴ The report defines that the key dimensions of well-being include material living standards (income, consumption and wealth); health, education; personal activities including work; a political voice and governance; social connections and relationships; environment (present and future conditions); and insecurity (of an economic as well as a physical nature) see Stiglitz, Sen & Fitoussi 2009, 14–15.

⁹³⁵ The book was an updated and expanded version of the report of the Sustainable Development Commission, available at <http://www.sd-commission.org.uk/publications.php?id=914>.

⁹³⁶ Jackson, T. 2009, 189.

⁹³⁷ For a review, see, for example, Fournier 2008.

⁹³⁸ See www.degrowth.org.

⁹³⁹ See, for example, Martínez-Alier et al. 2010.

low-carbon lifestyles and putting a government's decisions into practice.⁹⁴⁰ Again, there are strong incentives for free-riding: letting others pay the costs of climate change while continuing environmentally harmful consumption practices. To be effective, climate responsibility must thus be targeted towards all human-beings. Besides, it is not states themselves that are harmed by climate change, its adverse impacts endanger human well-being. Therefore, world society needs to be engaged in discussions specifying local vulnerabilities and potential adaptation approaches. Top-down, expert-driven adaptation strategies do not necessarily consider real human suffering and cannot therefore be really and truly fair.

Within and without the ES, cosmopolitanism usually refers to ideas of the moral primacy of universal society of humankind (or world society,⁹⁴¹ in ES terms), not to a world without states.⁹⁴² As it is based on the idea that every human-being is an “autonomous moral agent entitled to equal dignity and consideration”,⁹⁴³ cosmopolitanism takes individuals as the main concern of moral judgment. David Held identifies eight cosmopolitan principles which capture the paramount values of cosmopolitanism:

- (i) equal worth and dignity; (ii) active agency; (iii) personal responsibility and accountability; (iv) consent; (v) collective decision-making about public matter through voting procedures; (vi) inclusiveness and subsidiarity; (vii) avoidance of serious harm; and (viii) sustainability.⁹⁴⁴

As Held's third principle indicates, cosmopolitanism is not only about the rights of citizens, but also about their responsibilities. From a thin, pluralist perspective, citizens' responsibilities refer to their responsibilities to their respective state: in return for the benefits the citizens receive from the society and state, they have a moral “responsibility not to disrupt and destroy” it, even if they wish to change and correct its unjust practices.⁹⁴⁵ For example, citizens must respect the laws and regulations of the state, pay taxes and conduct military service.⁹⁴⁶ From a thick,

⁹⁴⁰ It can also be assumed that individuals can influence the environmental practices of corporations through their consumption choices.

⁹⁴¹ See, for example, Buzan 2004; Clark 2007; Williams 2005 and Williams 2014.

⁹⁴² Buzan 2014a, 118 and Held 2010, 67.

⁹⁴³ Held 2010, 15.

⁹⁴⁴ Held 2010, 69.

⁹⁴⁵ Watson 1982, 207.

⁹⁴⁶ Chapter II of the Constitution of People's Republic of China lists the “fundamental rights and duties” of Chinese citizens but makes no reference to the environment.

solidarist perspective, citizens' responsibilities are "defined by one's membership in the human race"⁹⁴⁷ because people are first and foremost "citizens of the world".⁹⁴⁸ Therefore they have responsibilities not only to their family members but also to their fellow human-beings no matter which state they happen to live in. At a minimum, people have a responsibility not to harm other humans. They "have to be aware of, and accountable for, the consequences of actions, direct or indirect, intended or unintended, which may radically restrict or delimit the choices of others".⁹⁴⁹ In environmental terms, this would mean that everyone has a general responsibility not to harm other people's right to a clean environment and a stable climate.

Since the 1970s, the environmental awakening of international society has produced a "powerful stimulus to the growth of a cosmopolitan consciousness".⁹⁵⁰ In particular, climate change has given momentum to the development of cosmopolitan responsibility and all sectors of civil society are increasingly active in their calls for global climate responsibility. For the time being, the Earth Charter, a civil society initiative launched in 2000, is the clearest articulation of cosmopolitan (environmental) responsibility. It declares that "it is imperative that we, the peoples of Earth, declare our responsibility to one another, to the greater community of life, and to future generations".⁹⁵¹

More than a half of world's population now lives in cities, and the number is expected to increase to 66 per cent by 2060.⁹⁵² In 2014, there were 28 "mega-cities" with more than 10 million inhabitants in the world and their number is estimated to increase to 41 by 2030.⁹⁵³ In the light of these statistics, it may not be a surprise that about 70 per cent of the world's GHG emissions are produced in cities. Thus, cities can and should make a substantive contribution to climate change mitigation plans. Without their efforts, both state and cosmopolitan climate responsibility cannot be effectively operationalized. Cities also play a central role in adaptation to climate change: They should protect their citizens from extreme weather events and other threats caused by climate change. Many cities have recognized their

⁹⁴⁷ Jackson 2000, 175.

⁹⁴⁸ Held 2010, 40.

⁹⁴⁹ Held 2010, 71.

⁹⁵⁰ Hurrell 1995, 147.

⁹⁵¹ Earth Charter, preamble.

⁹⁵² UN 2014.

⁹⁵³ UN 2014.

climate responsibility and at the 2014 Lima Conference, the Compact of Mayors was launched.⁹⁵⁴ Some of China's mega-cities have also started to implement climate change mitigation plans, as I will briefly discuss in chapter eight.

Prior to the 2015 Paris Conference, many transnational actors and groups called for an effective international climate agreement. Notably, Pope Francis' encyclical outlined that climate is a "common good, belonging to all and meant for all" and hence human-beings have a moral responsibility to prevent climate change.⁹⁵⁵ In his address to the 70th session of UN General Assembly in September 2015, the Pope also proclaimed the existence of the "right of the environment"⁹⁵⁶ and expressed his wished for "fundamental and effective" climate agreement at COP21.⁹⁵⁷ In October 2015, 154 religious and faith leaders around the world signed a joint climate statement, calling for a "fair, ambitious and binding global deal applicable to all countries".⁹⁵⁸ The business sector has also become more and more aware of the costs and risks of climate change. For example, major oil and gas corporations sent a letter to the UNFCCC Executive Secretary and the President of COP21 in June 2015, demanding governments reduce uncertainty and enhance investment in low carbon technologies by establishing carbon pricing systems around the world.⁹⁵⁹ Furthermore, fourteen of the world's largest corporations voiced their support of the Paris Conference and called for a "more balanced and durable multilateral framework guiding and strengthening national efforts to address climate change" in their joint statement in October 2015.⁹⁶⁰

From an international justice perspective, it would not be fair to hold the world's poor accountable for their subsistence emissions⁹⁶¹ and hence the CBDR principle should be applied to cosmopolitan responsibility as well. For most cosmopolitans, this means that rich people living in developed countries must shoulder special responsibility to respond climate change. Hence, they do not

⁹⁵⁴ See <http://www.compactofmayors.org>.

⁹⁵⁵ Francis 2015.

⁹⁵⁶ From an ecocentric responsibility point of view, it is notably that the Pope told the UN General Assembly that "every creature, particularly a living creature, has an intrinsic value, in its existence, its life, its beauty and its interdependence with other creatures" (Francis 2015).

⁹⁵⁷ Crux 2015.

⁹⁵⁸ Statement of Faith and Spiritual Leaders on the upcoming United Nations Climate Change Conference, COP21 in Paris 2015.

⁹⁵⁹ BP 2015.

⁹⁶⁰ Center for Climate and Energy Solutions 2015.

⁹⁶¹ See Shue 1993.

follow cosmopolitan logic but take a statist approach to the distribution of global responsibilities. In contrast, Paul G. Harris points out that if cosmopolitanism “by definition is about the fundamental moral equality of all people *regardless of nationality*”, it then should not “choose to ignore many people *because of their nationality*, despite those people’s role in causing climate change or indeed their ability to help effect its mitigation”.⁹⁶² It should be thus noted that not all citizens of developing countries are poor. There are millions of affluent people living in developing countries, and their lifestyles evidently contribute to GHG emissions. In China, for example, the number of affluent people is growing rapidly and they are “becoming new vanguards of global consumerism”.⁹⁶³ In 2013, China became the world’s third richest country in terms of household wealth and there were more people with personal wealth of above \$50 million than any other country outside the USA.⁹⁶⁴ Furthermore, the number of Chinese millionaires is estimated to almost double by 2018, raising it to 2.1 million.⁹⁶⁵ Quite simply, the existence of China’s new rich provides a consumption role model for middle-class consumers: they “inspire a broad-based cultural obsession with luxury consumption”, especially amongst urban salaried workers.⁹⁶⁶ Affluent people in China generally consume more than average Europeans – or even more than affluent Europeans because not only the rich but also the rising Chinese middle-class want to show off their money through the consumption of luxury goods. Car ownership, especially sports utility vehicles, is now a symbol of personal freedom, financial success and prestige for the affluent Chinese. Given that the per capita emissions of the richest 10 per cent of the Chinese are well above those of the poorest 10 per cent of Americans,⁹⁶⁷ is it fair that they can avoid climate responsibility just because they happen to be born and live in a developing country?

Harris proposes that polluter pays principle should not apply only to states, but to people as well.⁹⁶⁸ Like state responsibility, cosmopolitan responsibility should be related to one’s contribution to the problem and capabilities to act:

⁹⁶² Harris 2010, 112.

⁹⁶³ Gerth 2010, 36.

⁹⁶⁴ Credit Suisse Research Institute 2013, 48.

⁹⁶⁵ Credit Suisse Research Institute 2013, 43.

⁹⁶⁶ Gerth 2010, 47.

⁹⁶⁷ Harris 2011, 231.

⁹⁶⁸ Harris 2010, 142.

The affluent (even the very wealthy) in poor states are ignored by the climate change regime, whereas the poor in a number of rich states are obligated, via their states' obligations under the climate agreements, to bear the burdens of acting on climate change – even if they have contributed far less to it than affluent people in poor states who have no similar obligations, and even if they do not enjoy many of the fruits of the greenhouse gas pollution of their compatriots in the past – and even if they are harmed by those 'fruits'.⁹⁶⁹

For example, the traditional lifestyles of indigenous people living in affluent countries that contain parts of the Arctic are severely harmed by climate change, even though their contribution to climate change is likely to be far less than that of rich Chinese citizens. Therefore, cosmopolitan ethics should obligate each person who emits greenhouse gases to act (and to aid, if he or she is affluent) irrespective of nationality. In other words, "all things being equal, a poor person (measured by some reasonable standard of purchasing power parity) in Germany may be less obligated to act on climate change than is an affluent person in, say, China or Chile, if the former pollutes less".⁹⁷⁰

Although cosmopolitan responsibility seems a fair approach, it is not unproblematic. The operationalization of affluent people's responsibility is especially difficult. How is it possible to encourage or force them to act out their responsibility? In general, people are worried about climate change and acknowledge that something must be done to tackle it. However, environmental awareness does not necessarily lead to real actions: only a few people really take action and change their lifestyles in order to protect the climate. Although people know what they should do, they find multiple excuses for not doing it. For example, Robert E. Goodin identifies two types of excuses: The first one is the "libertarian excuse" that emphasizes people's freedom of actions: it is right that actions have to be taken, but it would not be right to force people to take measures to mitigate climate change.⁹⁷¹ The second excuse is the "no individual responsibility (or, more colloquially, the 'not my job') excuse": it is right that actions have to be taken, but "I have no individual responsibility in the matter"; it is someone else's business.⁹⁷² These excuses, of course, should not lead in people's inaction. As Goodin puts it:

⁹⁶⁹ Harris 2010, 131.

⁹⁷⁰ Harris 2010, 142.

⁹⁷¹ Goodin 1995, 29.

⁹⁷² Goodin 1995, 29.

What is no one's responsibility is everyone's. If it is right that something be done, and no one in particular has been assigned responsibility for doing it, then we are all responsible for seeing to it that it be done.⁹⁷³

There is a big risk of free-riding if the fulfilment of affluent people's cosmopolitan climate responsibility is based on their voluntary actions. If there are no regulations or incentives to change their consumption habits, would people really change? A real change in people's attitudes takes a long time and the climate crisis, unfortunately, does not grant us that kind of luxury. Some kind of global climate tax would be a more efficient and inclusive option but it would be very difficult to implement in practice. Moreover, human life is quite short and the current generation has not alone caused the contemporary problems, including climate change. It is, naturally, impossible to make previous generations shoulder their burden. Is it then fair that the current generation has to pay for emissions that they have not caused? Why should we pay more than the next generation is going to pay for the burden of the past? Again, the current generation has benefitted from the environmentally harmful development processes of the previous generations and the next generation is very likely going to benefit from the economic wealth produced by us. Does it mean that I should pay the burden of my parents' polluting activities because I benefit from the heritage they leave me? And, should my children pay even more? Would that be fair? In any case, our children are undoubtedly going to pay a heavy environmental price for our omissions and lack of action regarding environmental care.

Given these problems, states, as rather permanent constellations, seem to be on a more meaningful level for distributing responsibilities in international (climate) politics. In particular, the state-level allocation of cosmopolitan responsibility can guarantee long-term responses to climate change. It also seems to be more efficient to distribute cosmopolitan responsibilities by reforming the existing state-centric international society. There is no time to substitute cosmopolitan institutions such as a world government for states because climate change calls for urgent action.⁹⁷⁴ Therefore, we should treat states as facilitators of citizens' rights and responsibilities.⁹⁷⁵ Harris suggests that global climate justice should be put into practice through a cosmopolitan corollary which would aspire to the creation of

⁹⁷³ Goodin 1995, 32.

⁹⁷⁴ The ES, however, provides fruitful theoretical standpoints for the consideration of how world society could be organized to promote and operationalize cosmopolitan climate responsibilities.

⁹⁷⁵ See also Harris 2010, 160 and Buzan 2015, 115.

two fundamental changes in international climate practices. First, it should trigger a “change in the official discourse so that it acknowledges and affirms the rights and duties of all people in the context of climate change”. Second, it should incorporate “human rights and responsibilities into international agreements on climate change”.⁹⁷⁶ These changes would mean that “people become the primary objects and explicit ends” of international climate practices.⁹⁷⁷ The key for a global climate covenant is hence not “how states can, at best, implement cosmopolitan principles” but rather “how states can help [affluent] *persons* implement cosmopolitan duties and enjoy related rights”.⁹⁷⁸ Global climate justice could be realized through a global climate tax, for example, but it is probably more efficient (and realistic) to enforce it via national government. At national level, climate justice means that governments should make sure that their climate policies target the burden towards affluent citizens, and do not impede the life of less wealthy population groups. One way to do that is to regulate and tax “luxury emissions”. Another way is to use incentives, such as rebates and subsidies, to encourage affluent people to choose more eco-friendly lifestyles. As discussed in the previous section, a much needed change in affluent people’s lifestyles is that they should redefine wealth as “well-being” instead of “well-having”.⁹⁷⁹

I propose that the traditional state-centric view of international society, which assumes that only states have international (environmental) rights and responsibilities, should be supplanted by cosmopolitan notions of environmental responsibility.⁹⁸⁰ This is not a new idea.⁹⁸¹ As early as 1972, international society recognized that individuals have environmental rights and responsibilities. In contrast to the traditional international law that exclusively governs states, the Stockholm resolutions were also directed towards world society, i.e. citizens, communities, enterprises and institutions on every level. Paragraph 7 declares:

To achieve this environmental goal will demand the acceptance of responsibility by citizens and communities and by enterprises and institutions at every level, all sharing equitably in common efforts.

⁹⁷⁶ Harris 2010, 163.

⁹⁷⁷ Harris 2010, 163.

⁹⁷⁸ Harris 2010, 164 (emphasis in original).

⁹⁷⁹ Sachs 2000.

⁹⁸⁰ See also Harris 2010, 156–181.

⁹⁸¹ See Wilson et al. (2016, 107–108) where Tonny Brems Knudsen points out that individuals have not been just objects but subjects of rights and responsibilities under international humanitarian law since before the WWII.

Individuals in all walks of life as well as organizations in many fields, by their values and the sum of their actions, will shape the world environment of the future.⁹⁸²

As noted earlier, Stockholm Principle 1 was the first piece of international law addressing the environmental rights and responsibilities of individuals:

Man has the fundamental right to freedom, equality and adequate conditions of life, in an environment of a quality that permits a life of dignity and well-being, and he bears a solemn responsibility to protect and improve the environment for present and future generations.⁹⁸³

Moreover, the World Charter for Nature addressed the rights and responsibilities of individuals but it did it so in a weightier tone than the Stockholm resolutions. It asserted the right of public participation in decision-making concerning to the environment and demanded that people “shall have access to means of redress when their environment has suffered damage or degradation”.⁹⁸⁴ Furthermore, it declared that “Each person has a duty to act in accordance with the provisions of the present Charter; acting individually, in association with others or through participation in the political process, each person shall strive to ensure that the objectives and requirements of the present Charter are met”.⁹⁸⁵ Evidently, it is questionable whether even the most tolerant and progressive governments could comply with these moral precepts. Nevertheless, many states have written a citizen’s responsibility to protect or defend the environment into their constitution.⁹⁸⁶ It is not clear, however, what the legal significance of these constitutional provisions is and how can they be enforced in reality.⁹⁸⁷

The Rio Declaration acknowledged that “Environmental issues are best handled with the participation of all concerned citizens, at the relevant level”⁹⁸⁸ but did not

⁹⁸² Declaration of the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment 1972, paragraph 7.

⁹⁸³ Declaration of the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment 1972, principle 1.

⁹⁸⁴ The UN General Assembly 1982.

⁹⁸⁵ The UN General Assembly 1982.

⁹⁸⁶ See May & Daly 2015, Appendix B. Chapter I, Article 9 of China’s constitution recognizes citizens’ environmental responsibility in the context of rational use of natural resources. It states: “The State ensures the rational use of natural resources and protects rare animals and plants. Appropriation or damaging of natural resources by any organization or individual by whatever means is prohibited.”

⁹⁸⁷ May & Daly 2015, 73.

⁹⁸⁸ Rio Declaration on Environment and Development 1992, Principle 10.

specify the environmental responsibilities of individuals. The UNFCCC exclusively focused on state responsibility. Within the UNFCCC framework, the Non-State Actor Zone for Climate Action was launched at the Lima Conference in 2014. It aims to support climate negotiations through the registration of the climate action commitments of corporations, investors, cities and subnational regions. The COP21 in Paris also recognized the “need to strengthen knowledge, technologies, practices and efforts of local communities and indigenous peoples related to addressing and responding to climate change” and welcomed civil society, the private sector, financial institutions, cities and other subnational authorities to address and respond to climate change.⁹⁸⁹ There is already a large number of communities of practices developing alternative or complementary bilateral and transnational (both public and private) ways to deal with climate change outside of multilateral climate negotiations. Matthew J. Hoffmann, for example, identifies 58 initiatives, or what he calls “experiments”, on climate change at all level of political organization and argues that they can provide the world with effective and legitimate responses to climate crisis.⁹⁹⁰

In their initiative to draft a Universal Declaration of Human Responsibilities as a complement to the Universal Declaration on Human Rights, the InterAction Council noticed that, “If we have a right to benefit from the earth's bounty, then we have the obligation to respect, care for and restore the earth and its natural resources”.⁹⁹¹ As a result of the initiative, the UN General Assembly adopted the Declaration on the Right and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognized Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms in 1998, in which it acknowledged the cosmopolitan responsibility to promote and protect human rights, but did not mention the environment at all.⁹⁹² Evidently, cosmopolitan climate responsibility remains only an emerging, weak international practice.

⁹⁸⁹ UNFCCC 2015a, paragraphs 134; 136.

⁹⁹⁰ Hoffmann 2011.

⁹⁹¹ InterAction Council 1997.

⁹⁹² UN General Assembly 1998.

7.4 Climate responsibility's potential for a new standard of civilization

As concluded in the previous chapter, it seems that climate responsibility has now passed Holsti's three stages of institutionalization⁹⁹³ and now constitutes an institutionalized international practice. However, it is not clear whether it has proceeded to the stage of assimilation where a new practice becomes "new normal" and its rules become so widely accepted that they are taken for granted and embedded in other social practices. At that stage, the participants perceive the rules of practice legitimate and worthy of being obeyed due to an "internal sense of moral obligation".⁹⁹⁴ Although it is not crystal clear that climate responsibility has proceeded to this stage, this section investigates the potential of climate responsibility to achieve a status of "standard of civilization" in the future.

By 1905, a "standard of civilization" emerged as a practice which was used by many societies, both Western and non-Western, to differentiate between the "civilized" and "non-civilized" or "barbarians".⁹⁹⁵ The differentiation was made with a quite racist ranking system, and the rules of practice defined what kind of requirements states must meet in order to become accepted, "civilized" members of international society. As the international society of that time was very European, the "standard of civilization" was firmly rooted in the European norms and values, especially Christianity. Gerrit W. Gong, who was the pioneer in using the concept in the field of IR, lists five requirements, or responsibilities, that "civilized" states must fulfil during the 19th and the early 20th century. First, they had to guarantee basic rights, as understood in the West, for foreign nationals; second, they had to have an effective government; third, they had to have a Western-style domestic law and obey international law; fourth, they had to establish diplomatic relations with other "civilized" countries; fifth, they had to accept the norms and practices of "civilized" European international society.⁹⁹⁶ Those who did not fulfil the five requirements were "barbarians" and their colonialization was thus justified.

⁹⁹³ Holsti 2004, 144–145.

⁹⁹⁴ Hurd 1999, 387.

⁹⁹⁵ For the historical development of the concept, see Gong 1984b, 24–53 and Buzan 2014b, 581–584.

⁹⁹⁶ Gong 1984b, 14–21.

After WWII, “the right of independence and sovereign equality” become fundamental international principles, and the requirements for the entry of a state to international society were abolished.⁹⁹⁷ Although the “standard of civilization” was no longer used as an explicit legal idea after decolonialization, the practice did not disappear. Today, it continues to live in practices of international law, for instance. As David Fidler points out, states and international organizations promote “universal” ideas such as human rights, the rule of law and good governance in order to “impose liberal, globalized civilization on the world”.⁹⁹⁸ Within the ES, solidarists, such as R. John Vincent, Nicholas J. Wheeler and Tim Dunne, have promoted such a human rights doctrine globally.⁹⁹⁹ From the practice approach point of view, however, the doctrine of human rights is a (Western) practice that started to evolve after the horrors of WWII and which has now achieved somewhat the status of a “new standard of civilization”. As Fidler puts it:

The international lawyer's reluctance to approach the SOC [“the standard of civilization”] is understandable; but, when we analyze what is happening today in international law, it is hard not to see a process that echoes what took place under the old SOC: the values and principles of Western civilization are (1) being held up as the rallying point for global action; and (2) being used as criteria to judge the performance and legitimacy of “backward” countries.¹⁰⁰⁰

The “features of the New Standard of Civilization”,¹⁰⁰¹ indeed form a normative basis to Western criticism of contemporary China. Although China is a member of international society, it has not become an accepted member of all international clubs, such as the great power club, because it does not fulfil the requirements of the “New Standard of Civilization”. As China is not a democratic country, it is not part of “us” but belongs to “others”.¹⁰⁰²

Despite its “Westernness”, the concept of “standard of civilization” could provide food for thought on environmental ethics. I believe that climate responsibility has great potential to become a new “standard of civilization”. This

⁹⁹⁷ Buzan 2014b, 585.

⁹⁹⁸ Fidler 2001, 139.

⁹⁹⁹ See also Donnelly 1998.

¹⁰⁰⁰ Fidler 2001, 146.

¹⁰⁰¹ See Fidler 2001, 150.

¹⁰⁰² See Zhang 2011a.

is not, however, an entirely novel idea. The possession of an environmental policy became a status symbol already during the years preceding the Stockholm Conference: it became a piece of “evidence that a nation belonged among the more advanced or advancing states of the world and not among the backward nations”.¹⁰⁰³ Today, environmental protection is a routine aspect of any “civilized” state’s practices, without a doubt. While it is also now clear that climate change is happening, it has not yet caused significant changes in the practices of states or the general public’s life.

In contrast to other “standards of civilization” such as human rights and democracy, climate responsibility is not a Western concept as such. As climate practices are a pragmatic attempt to respond to a “real-world” problem, they are not about the colonial pursuit of the expansion of Western (philosophical) practices. This does not mean that the evolution of climate practices would not include the use of power, at least in discursive means. In contrast to the traditional Western versus the rest of the world framing of the concept, climate responsibility does not aim to spread racist views or Western ideas but it aims to construct a genuinely global standard of conduct. There is a wide North–South gap but the placing of blame is the other way around when compared to previous “standards of civilization”. Regarding climate responsibility, it is usually non-Western states that attempt to advance the more ambitious principles of responsibility and urge industrialized countries to fulfil their responsibility. Hence it is more or less developed countries that are seen as failing to live up to the “standard of civilization” in the sense of climate responsibility.

¹⁰⁰³ Caldwell 1990, 46, 49.

8 Climate change responsibility with Chinese characteristics

Each state more or less shapes the international practices that it takes part in. In line with China's growing international status, its influence on international practices has increased. As discussed in chapter four, not even isolated Maoist China was simply a rule-taker in international (environmental) politics, but it did provide its own interpretation of rules of practices. This chapter explores how the Chinese government has interpreted international practices of climate responsibility and how those interpretations have guided China's climate policies. The interpretations have also shaped international climate practices. China's position during international climate negotiations has been remarkably consistent since the early 1970s. Its standpoints and policies formulated at the UNCHE are more or less the same it has defended at the UNFCCC, including the post-Kyoto climate negotiations. Therefore, there is no need to elaborate on China's role in each and every COP; an outline of the evolution of the Chinese position is adequate for the purposes of this study. Finally, this chapter looks at how China has enabled its climate responsibility.

8.1 China's definitions of climate change responsibility

It seems that amongst the political leaders of China, there is no dispute about climate change. For China, climate change is a development problem: it is an "issue involving both environment and development, but it is ultimately an issue of development".¹⁰⁰⁴ This definition has two aspects: climate change is caused by the historic development of developed countries and it poses a severe obstacle to the development of developing countries. Therefore, the Chinese government argues that the "ultimate solution to climate change can only be achieved through

¹⁰⁰⁴ National Development and Reform Commission 2007.

common sustainable development of all countries”.¹⁰⁰⁵ According to my interpretation, this approach has two implications for China’s position within international climate politics. First, developed countries have to change their consumption path so that it becomes more sustainable and they also have to implement effective emissions reduction. Second, developing countries have to adapt themselves – with the help of developed countries – to climate change in order to achieve a better level of development, despite the severe effects of climate change. The Chinese view is also very technocratic: the government believes that “technology innovation and transfer are the basis and support for addressing climate change”.¹⁰⁰⁶ The idea follows the environmental Kuznets curve: the higher the development stage a state has achieved, the more capability to mitigate and adapt to climate change it has due to greater resources and better access to the technologies for coping with climate change.¹⁰⁰⁷

The Chinese government believes that climate change is a “challenge faced by the entire world” and thus can only be solved by “extensive international cooperation”.¹⁰⁰⁸ Therefore it has taken part in the UNFCCC negotiations right from the beginning, i.e. the late 1980s. Recently, the Chinese government has also started to recognize the security impacts of climate change. It believes that China is “one of the countries most vulnerable to the adverse impact of climate change”.¹⁰⁰⁹ However, China does not securitize climate change.¹⁰¹⁰ It opposes formal discussions on climate change at the UN Security Council because it does not operate under the CBDR principle and its decision-making is not based on universal participation. For China, it is important that the voices of all the developing countries are heard.¹⁰¹¹

China has not expressed what the ultimate objective of its climate practices is. The Chinese government strictly denies being responsible for causing climate change, and refuses to commit to binding emission reductions before developed countries shoulder their historic responsibility. From the Chinese vantage point,

¹⁰⁰⁵ Xie 2010.

¹⁰⁰⁶ Information Office of the State Council of the People’s Republic of China 2008.

¹⁰⁰⁷ For an introduction to, and criticism of, the environmental Kuznets curve, see, for example, Stern 2004.

¹⁰⁰⁸ Information Office of the State Council of the People’s Republic of China 2008.

¹⁰⁰⁹ National Development and Reform Commission 2012.

¹⁰¹⁰ Vuori 2015.

¹⁰¹¹ Wang 2011.

global responsibility thus depends on a state's development stage rather than the global impacts of a state's practices. Responsibility should be allocated on the basis of an emissions-per-GDP standard for three reasons. First, it underlines the historic responsibility of developed countries. Second, it exempts developing countries from liability and gives them assistance. Last, but not least, it suits China's situation very well as fast development reduces emission intensity, even if absolute emissions continue to increase. However, China has not indicated when it would achieve such a high development stage that it would assume more global responsibility.

8.2 China's identity and status in international climate negotiations

The status and image of a state have been important sources of power for centuries. During the Cold War, IR in general and realists in particular put a lot of emphasis on prestige, image, and reputation because they were regarded as important factors for the international balance of power and national security. For example, Hans Morgenthau stated that the image or "the mental picture – that is, our prestige" – that others have formed of us "determinates what we are as members of society". He argued that individuals and states seek reputation because "in the struggle for existence and power...what others think about us is as important as what we actually are".¹⁰¹² Equally, Robert Jervis argues that states continuously project desired images to achieve their objectives more easily. He defines the image of an actor as "those of his beliefs about the other that affect his predictions of how the other will behave under various circumstances". The image of a state influences the predictions other states make about its behaviour and thus determinates other states' policies towards it. A good image may generate trust and cooperation whereas a bad one may produce hostile reactions and subsequently decrease the security of a state.¹⁰¹³ In the globalized world, however, hard factors, such as military power, no longer play very important roles in national image building. The significance of a state's reputation of credibility and responsibility has become a more important factor in national image building as states wish to be seen as responsible members of international society. The negative costs of the

¹⁰¹² Morgenthau 1993, 84–93.

¹⁰¹³ Jervis 1970, 5–8.

reputation of non-credibility are incalculable. For example, being labelled a “rogue state” in international relations causes significant harm to a state’s credibility, legitimacy and international image. Credibility, i.e. to be believed, is a significant source of attraction and soft power.¹⁰¹⁴ As Deng puts it, the “dignity you [a state] enjoy in the international community, the respect you have, your legitimacy at home and abroad, has a lot to do with the degree to which you discharge the positive responsibilities of sovereignty”.¹⁰¹⁵

Presently, there is a scholarly consensus that national image building is an important part of Chinese foreign policy. For instance, Yong Deng states that the Chinese government has actively projected the state’s international status “as it were the most desirable value, the one that leads to power, security, and respect”.¹⁰¹⁶ In addition, Peter Hays Gries argues that nationalism, which he defines as “any behaviour designed to restore, maintain, or advance public images of the nation”, is “a key – if not *the* key – motivator of Chinese foreign policy”.¹⁰¹⁷ The so-called Century of Humiliation (1839-1949) and the unfair dispossession of China’s status as the most sophisticated civilization in the world is also considered central to Chinese national identity and an important motivator of why the Chinese are eager to restore the state’s respectable status internationally. As Alastair Iain Johnston notes, it is difficult to say “where exactly this concern about image or reputation comes from, or how image is to be turned into a cost or benefit”.¹⁰¹⁸ From the ES perspective, one of the benefits of a responsible image would be to become accepted as a member of the “great power club” which should bring China more international rights.

As discussed earlier, Chinese academics and the political elite have not agreed on the scope of China’s global responsibility. The main reason for this is that both Chinese political leaders and the general public believe that “China is a nation with a dual-identity”; it is both a developing country and a major power.¹⁰¹⁹ The Chinese argumentation in international climate politics reflects this dichotomy by building up a very dualist image for the state. On the one hand, the Chinese government responds to the Western expectations by emphasizing the state’s active and

¹⁰¹⁴ Nye 2004, 31 and Evans 1990.

¹⁰¹⁵ Deng 2010, 21.

¹⁰¹⁶ Deng 2008, 8.

¹⁰¹⁷ Gries 2005, 103–105.

¹⁰¹⁸ Johnston 1998, 560.

¹⁰¹⁹ Wu 2001, 293.

cooperative image as a “responsible major country”. On the other hand, the government highlights China’s image as a “poor developing country”. Both images seek to accomplish the Chinese government’s broader domestic and diplomatic agendas at once. The rhetoric of “responsible major country” recognizes that by establishing a good reputation, China can increase its international status and thus pursue its national interests more easily. The rhetoric of “poor victim” underlines China’s developing country status and need for foreign assistance, technology transfer and foreign investment.¹⁰²⁰

8.2.1 Responsible major country

As a response to the China threat, the pursuit of a favourable international image, or face¹⁰²¹, is a central motivator of the Chinese foreign policy.¹⁰²² On the one hand, the Chinese government wants to assure the world that China is not a threat and that other states will benefit from its development as well. On the other hand, the Chinese government seeks to gain “face” globally because it means “maintaining authority” and the state’s national honour, which is central to the CCP’s domestic legitimacy. Losing face would mean “losing status and the ability to pursue instrumental goals”.¹⁰²³ Because China was not a significant contributor to many environmental problems before the late 1990s, its international image building was an important driver of China’s participation in the UNCHE and the UNCED.¹⁰²⁴

Clearly, China’s climate policy is also partly motivated by international pressure. As Johnston explains, “the more international criticism China meets or is likely to meet on some issue of international cooperation the more likely it will try to find ways to minimize this criticism through incrementally substantive cooperative commitments.”¹⁰²⁵ Because the Chinese government wants to be seen as a responsible international citizen, it assures other states that it does not pose an economic, political or environmental threat to other states and instead works

¹⁰²⁰ See also Kopra 2012.

¹⁰²¹ In Chinese culture, the concept of face is often used to describe human concerns over honour, respect or the image of oneself presented to others.

¹⁰²² See, for example, Brady 2012b; Deng 2008; Kopra 2012 and Wang 2005.

¹⁰²³ Gries 2004, 24.

¹⁰²⁴ Economy 1998, 269.

¹⁰²⁵ Johnston 1998, 559.

“unremittingly” in order to achieve harmony and welfare all over the world. To improve its international image, China has started to launch white papers on climate change which all emphasize China’s responsible and constructive role in international negotiations on climate. In particular, as a response to criticism after COP15, it issued a white paper which explicitly states that China played a “key role in breaking the negotiation deadlock and promoting consensus among all the parties” in Copenhagen.¹⁰²⁶ Furthermore, the paper highlighted China’s top leaders’ vigorous efforts in international climate negotiations by describing President Hu’s countless meetings and “important speeches to promote consensus in the international community to address the climate change issue” and Premier Wen’s “outstanding contributions” to the Copenhagen Conference.¹⁰²⁷ Other annual white papers also assure that China has not shirked its climate responsibilities. They emphasize that China was the first developing country to formulate and implement the National Climate Change Program and underline that China is “working hard” and takes “ambiguous”, “unswerving” and “serious” efforts to mitigate climate change. For example, China’s 2011 white paper on peaceful development stated that China is “one of the countries which have made the greatest efforts in energy saving and emission reduction and which have made the fastest progress in developing new and renewable energy sources in recent years”.¹⁰²⁸

From a realist vantage point, actions are important pieces of evidence of political commitment and credibility whereas “words are cheap and not inherently credible”.¹⁰²⁹ Also Chaïm Perelman argues that “past acts contribute to the good or bad reputation of the agent”.¹⁰³⁰ He states that argumentation by giving examples is “to presuppose the existence of certain regularities of which the examples provide concretization”.¹⁰³¹ Presenting only one example is not very convincing, but if a speaker gives “a number of examples of the same sort”, the argumentation may “move from the specific case toward a generalization”.¹⁰³² In other words, a series of examples may reduce the audience’s potential doubts about the speaker’s

¹⁰²⁶ Information Office of the State Council of the People’s Republic of China 2011b.

¹⁰²⁷ Information Office of the State Council of the People’s Republic of China 2011b.

¹⁰²⁸ Information Office of the State Council of the People’s Republic of China 2011a.

¹⁰²⁹ See, for example, Schelling 1966, 150.

¹⁰³⁰ Perelman 1982, 93.

¹⁰³¹ Perelman 1982, 106.

¹⁰³² Perelman 1982, 106.

argumentation. This could be why the Chinese government continuously provides material evidence of its responsibility by demonstrating voluntary climate actions it has already implemented and by presenting calculations on how many tons of CO₂ it has managed to avoid emitting due to having taken these actions. Indeed, China's Chief Climate Negotiator Minister Xie Zhenhua acknowledges that: "All of these efforts clearly indicate that the Government of China will be trying its best to make positive efforts to address climate change in a responsible manner".¹⁰³³ As a material artefact of its responsibility, China had its first ever Pavilion representing its actions and policies to tackle climate change at the 2011 Durban Climate Change Conference.¹⁰³⁴

To soften its international image, the Chinese government consistently reiterates the concept of harmony in international politics, including climate policy negotiations. It has made various efforts to "replace socialist ideas and absorb Confucianism as a dominant ideology in China".¹⁰³⁵ The government no longer speaks of Marxism or communism, perhaps because both concepts are often regarded as hyponyms of "totalitarianism".¹⁰³⁶ In contrast, it aims to consolidate solidarity and togetherness in international climate negotiations by choosing solidarist metaphors. For example, the government emphasizes that the "Chinese nation has always held such beliefs as 'peace is most precious', 'harmony without uniformity', 'peace among all nations' and 'universal love and non-aggression'".¹⁰³⁷ "Our homeland" and "Mother Earth" can be regarded as universal values that "play an important role in argumentation because they allow us to present specific values, those upon which specific groups reach agreement, as more determined aspects of these universal values".¹⁰³⁸ For instance, China declared at the Copenhagen Conference that "China's policies, measures and actions to combat climate change, demonstrating China's seriousness and deep sense of responsibility for the survival and development of mankind and the future of our Mother Earth".¹⁰³⁹

¹⁰³³ Xie 2007.

¹⁰³⁴ *People's Daily* 2011.

¹⁰³⁵ Cho & Jeong 2008, 471.

¹⁰³⁶ Fairclough 1989, 116.

¹⁰³⁷ Xi 2014a.

¹⁰³⁸ Perelman 1982, 26–27.

¹⁰³⁹ Delegation of China 2009.

As it is becoming wealthier and wealthier, China has more capacity and a greater incentive to focus on a wider range of issues than just its own immediate poverty alleviation. During the last decades, the Chinese government has begun to pay more and more attention to its relations with developing countries. It has generated a lot of goodwill by representing itself as a defender of the developing world's interests and by offering loans and grants, debt relief, weapon sales, student scholarships and help in infrastructure projects such as roads, schools and housing in African, Southeast Asian, and Latin American states. By using strong solidarist rhetoric, China has managed to build up a favourable national image as an "old and true friend of African people" among African citizens. For example, China's Foreign Minister Wang Yi declared in 2013: "My brothers and sisters from developing countries, please remember that we are all family and when you need China, China will always be there, ready to help".¹⁰⁴⁰ As a sincere friend of developing countries, the Chinese climate policy reiterates the government's willingness to provide assistance "within its ability" to help developing countries to "improve their capability to mitigate and adapt to climate change".¹⁰⁴¹ As mentioned before, China has indeed promised to establish a fund to support developing countries' climate change policies.

As a result of its South–South cooperation, China has achieved an important degree of soft power, particularly in the Southeast Asian region where soft power includes "economic benefits, shared norms and values, cooperation on non-traditional issues, infatuation with new China, the mutual benefits of tourism and education, diplomacy and style, and networking and reciprocal obligations within ethnic Chinese communities".¹⁰⁴² In contrast to American soft power, China's soft power is interactive and it "derives from Beijing's courtship and what regional neighbors perceive as mutual benefits".¹⁰⁴³ China's soft power, however, is often dismissed at the global level because Chinese political ideals and policies do not normally match American ideals and values such as human rights and democracy. In contrast, an important source of China's soft power is the state's successful development model and new diplomacy. At the same time, China's "friendship

¹⁰⁴⁰ Wang 2013.

¹⁰⁴¹ Information Office of the State Council of the People's Republic of China 2011b.

¹⁰⁴² Percival 2007, 111–113.

¹⁰⁴³ Percival 2007, 111–113.

with various dictators” decreases its status and prestige among other international powers.¹⁰⁴⁴

When speaking of its global responsibilities, the Chinese government often refers to its size. It calls itself a responsible big country (负责任大国), albeit the Chinese conception could also be translated as “responsible great power”. According to President Xi Jinping, “Being a big country means shouldering greater responsibilities for regional and world peace and development, as opposed to seeking greater monopoly over regional and world affairs”.¹⁰⁴⁵ Only recently, China has started to refer to itself as a major power in international negotiations on climate. In September 2014, Special Envoy Zhang Gaoli declared at the UN Climate Summit: “responding to climate change is what China needs to do to achieve sustainable development at home as well as to fulfil its due international obligation as a responsible major country”.¹⁰⁴⁶ At the 2014 APEC, Xi also announced that as “its overall national strength grows, China will be both capable and willing to provide more public goods for the Asia-Pacific and the world”.¹⁰⁴⁷ He did not specify what he meant by “public goods” but clean air is a typical example of goods that everyone can consume without decreasing availability to others. Indeed, a few days later Xi Jinping and President Obama announced their joint climate actions. On the one hand, the National Climate Change Plan (2014-2020) confirmed China’s great power responsibility in climate change mitigation; on the other hand, it defended the state’s “legitimate development rights and interests”.¹⁰⁴⁸ At the Paris Conference in 2015, China’s Head of the State (instead of the premier) took part in the negotiations for the first time and represented China as a determined facilitator of international climate agreement.

As a “responsible major power”, the Chinese government recognizes that it cannot follow the industrialization path of developed countries. It announced that it will “never repeat it” but “will adopt comprehensive policies to slow down the speed of emission growth and to try to reach emission peak as early as possible”.¹⁰⁴⁹ Despite its emerging self-identification as a great power, however, China continues to emphasize its developing country status and the development

¹⁰⁴⁴ Ding 2008, 201–202.

¹⁰⁴⁵ Xi 2015b.

¹⁰⁴⁶ Zhang, 2014.

¹⁰⁴⁷ Xi 2014b.

¹⁰⁴⁸ National Development and Reform Commission 2014, 4–5.

¹⁰⁴⁹ Xie 2010.

first principle. For instance, China's INDC published in June 2015 described China as a developing country and made no reference to great power responsibility. Evidently, China's role in international climate politics continues to be directed by its developing country identity, which is demonstrated in the next section.

8.2.2 Developing country status

Since the beginning of climate negotiations, China has presented itself as a leader of developing countries and called for international equity on historical grounds. Although China is no longer a very typical member of the developing countries, it continues to represent itself as a poor developing country by aligning its climate politics with that of all the developing countries' (the G77) interests in international climate negotiations and by using rhetoric intended to entwine their interests with its own. It stresses its friendship with developing countries and argues that "China has never separated itself from other developing countries and will never do so".¹⁰⁵⁰ It also seeks to differentiate itself from Western countries by emphasizing its common history with developing countries as victims of Western colonialism and exploitation. To some extent, China's climate discourse has thus been affected by the burden of "the Century of Shame". For a long time, the government indicated that China was not a capable actor but a powerless, poor country unable to tackle the "unprecedented" difficulties caused by climate change. As an innocent "victim", China "faced" both the severe consequences of climate change and the unfair policies of developed countries, whereas developed countries are dominant actors who should take action. As China's then Premier Wen Jiabao put it in 2008,

If we look at the world history of development, we will see that developed countries encountered their resource and environmental challenges in phases in the course of 200 years of industrialization. But we are confronted with the challenges all at the same time. In addition, we have to address in a much shorter timeframe the issue of energy conservation and pollution control which has taken developed countries decades to tackle after their economies became highly developed. The difficulties we face are therefore unprecedented.¹⁰⁵¹

¹⁰⁵⁰ Wang 2013.

¹⁰⁵¹ Wen 2008.

If we suppose that developing countries have a right to develop, we must also suppose that they have a right to produce greenhouse gases above the per capita subsistence emissions level. There are 128 million rural Chinese living under the country's poverty line of \$1.25 a day. That is why the Chinese government considers economic development its main priority in all policies because it has to "complete the historical task of industrialization and urbanization".¹⁰⁵² For China, this has been a key issue in international climate negotiations, and the CBDR principle, climate finance and technology transfer continues to have a central position in China's agenda in international climate negotiations. It seems that the Chinese government wants to receive financial and technological assistance from developed countries but does not want to explicitly ask those countries for them. It is rhetorically more convincing to speak of the needs of all the developing countries as a group, rather than just China's own requirements because developed countries cannot deny the existence of the assistance needs of the group as a whole. If developed countries admit the role of funding and technology transfer as key actions to mitigate climate change in developing countries, it also means assistance and CDM credits to China – as it is still categorized as a developing country.

However, China is no longer a "very poor" country and its enormous GHG emissions inevitably cause unavoidable losses and damage in poor developing countries. Its participation in the G77 is becoming more and more questionable. Naturally, the Chinese government wants to ensure that it will not be left alone in international negotiations. Therefore, it has increased cooperation with other emerging powers and major emitters.¹⁰⁵³ Both the BASIC and LMDC groups provide important support for China, which does not want to have legally binding emission reductions nor abdicate its financial and technological benefits. For example, they help to polish China's international image by offering:

[A] platform for both pushing a hard line as a collective rather than an individual, as was seen during COP 15 [the UNFCCC Copenhagen Conference in 2009], and providing cover for China by preventing it from being seen as the only recalcitrant state, which was not particularly successful at COP 15.¹⁰⁵⁴

¹⁰⁵² Information Office of the State Council of the People's Republic of China 2011b.

¹⁰⁵³ See, for example, Hochstetler & Milkoreit 2014 and Hallding et al. 2011.

¹⁰⁵⁴ Hallding et al. 2011.

From China's point of view, there is a big difference between the nature of emissions in developed and developing countries. In accordance with Henry Shue's principles of international climate justice, introduced in chapter seven, China discursively distinguishes two categories of emissions: developed countries' excessive and unjustified "luxury emissions" and developing countries' "subsistence emissions". As China's former President Hu Jintao describes, a "significant share of China's total emissions fall under the category of subsistence emissions necessary to meet people's basic needs".¹⁰⁵⁵ By highlighting the value of development, the Chinese government has cemented disincentives to set binding emission requirements for it. Per capita emissions are indeed lower in China than in many developed countries. For instance, China emitted 7.6 tons of CO₂ per capita in 2014, while the US emitted 16.5 tons, Canada 15.9 tons and Australia 17.3 tons per capita.¹⁰⁵⁶ At the same time, China's per capita emissions are now at the same level with the EU and the consumption behaviour of the China's emerging middle class poses a big challenge to the state's low carbon future.

In addition, China states that it is not fair to criticize its total greenhouse gas emissions because a significant proportion of them are "offshore emissions" which are produced in China but only due to the consumption needs of developed countries. As China's Foreign Ministry spokesman, Qin Gang, said in 2007:

The developed countries move a lot of manufacturing industry into China. A lot of the things you wear, you use, you eat are produced in China. On the one hand, you shall increase the production in China, on the other hand you criticize China on the emission reduction issue.¹⁰⁵⁷

Many studies have indeed shown that due to China's export-driven development strategy, the lion's share of its emissions increase has been caused by "offshore emissions". For instance, Wang and Watson calculate that 23 per cent of China's CO₂ emissions were caused by manufacturing goods exported to Western consumers in 2004.¹⁰⁵⁸ In addition, Guan and colleagues point out that half of China's emissions increase between 2002 and 2005 was caused by export

¹⁰⁵⁵ Hu 2008.

¹⁰⁵⁶ PBL Netherlands Environmental Assessment Agency 2015, 31.

¹⁰⁵⁷ Quoted in New York Times 2007.

¹⁰⁵⁸ Wang & Watson 2007.

production, such as electronics, metals, chemicals, and textile production.¹⁰⁵⁹ At the same time, some developed countries seemed to have managed slow-downs or even cut backs to their greenhouse gas emissions – but apparently only because they had outsourced their factories and emissions to “pollution-heavens”, in, say, China. For example, when taking into account imported consumption-based emissions, the total emissions of the United Kingdom (UK) have increased by approximately 10 per cent since 1993, although territorial emissions have decreased during the last couple of decades. Around 30 per cent of the UK’s imported emissions are caused by imports from Asian developing economies and half of this is from China.¹⁰⁶⁰ This makes the UK one of the largest net importers of emissions, while China is the largest net exporter.

The Chinese media has taken a very straightforward position and argued that global expectations of China’s responsibility should be closely linked to the state’s development stage. As a *People’s Daily Online* columnist Li Hongmei puts it, “China is still a developing country feeding a large population and has to be responsible for the well being [sic] of its own people before benefitting others.”¹⁰⁶¹ Furthermore, *China Daily* argues that:

(N)ational strength and international status should determine the international responsibilities China should accept. Given China's developing country reality and the current West-dominated world order, it is far-fetched, if not ill-timed, to demand that the country undertake duties that are beyond its prowess.¹⁰⁶²

Some Chinese journalists have warned that Western calls for China to take on greater responsibility is an attempt to hinder China’s economic development in order to advance their own national interests and to pass on their own responsibilities to China:

(T)he concept of 'great powers' responsibility' is defined by the Western world completely on the conditions of satisfying its own needs and interests. Simply put, whether to be responsible for the world, from the Western

¹⁰⁵⁹ Guan et al. 2009.

¹⁰⁶⁰ Committee on Climate Change 2013, 9.

¹⁰⁶¹ Li 2009.

¹⁰⁶² *China Daily* 2010a.

perspectives, is literally evaluated by how much responsibility you have assumed for the West.¹⁰⁶³

The strategic point of the "China economic responsibility" theory lies in some Western countries' attempt to distract world attention from facts and burden Beijing with more responsibilities that it should not and could not shoulder. In other words, some Western countries are too eager to shirk their responsibilities and pass on their burden to China.¹⁰⁶⁴

Some western countries have been throwing out various "China responsibility" theories after the global financial crisis. These responsibilities form a system that seem to grant China a responsibility to save the world.... Some western countries are also exaggerating China's position as the world's largest greenhouse gas producer and are asking it to shoulder obligatory requirements of emission cuts; at the same time these countries don't want China to enjoy preferential treatments available to developing countries. They believe that China's demand for "common but differentiated responsibilities" is an attempt to shed responsibility.¹⁰⁶⁵

For China, as all these examples illustrate, the most important factor in international climate politics is its developing country status, not its major power identity. As Xie Zhenhua, China's chief negotiator to the UN climate change talks, puts it, it would be "unfair and unreasonable to hold China to absolute cuts in emissions at the present stage, when its per capita GDP stands at just 5,000 US dollars".¹⁰⁶⁶ The next section investigates how this perspective has guided China's position at the UNFCCC.

8.3 Drivers of China's participation in and commitment to the UNFCCC

When the practice of climate responsibility began to evolve, China played a marginal role in international relations, both in terms of GHG emissions and international status. Between the Stockholm and Rio Conferences, however, China's role in international environmental politics gained substantial leverage. On

¹⁰⁶³ Li 2009.

¹⁰⁶⁴ *China Daily* 2010b.

¹⁰⁶⁵ *Xinhua* 2010.

¹⁰⁶⁶ *Xinhua* 2012b.

the one hand, the world started to understand China's important role in global environmental change: Although China remained a poor country, its large size and population gave it significant influence over environmental issues that had started to evolve from local pollution problems to global problems that urged international cooperation. On the other hand, China itself realized its "environmental power" and it started to participate in international environmental negotiations on a regular basis.

At first, China's participation was motivated by calculations. The Chinese government learned that it was in its interest to participate in the formulation of international environmental practices: participation was seen as a great opportunity for foreign aid and technology transfer, for instance.¹⁰⁶⁷ International environmental organizations also offered valuable training for Chinese officials and scientists, which helped them to solve domestic environmental problems.¹⁰⁶⁸ Besides, it was more beneficial to take part in the process of making the rules of international (environmental) practices than to just comply with rules made by others. The Chinese government also wanted to drive Taiwan out of international organizations and defend the PRC's status as the legitimate representative of China at the international level. Moreover, the Tiananmen incident of 4 June 1989 had a major effect on China's interest in international environmental politics as the Chinese government saw environmental issues as soft enough to polish the state's international image and as a chance to re-join international society.¹⁰⁶⁹ Quickly after the incident, China showed its willingness to involve itself in international environmental cooperation when more than 120 Chinese environmental groups paid a visit to their counterparts abroad. In addition, foreign delegations from over fifty states were welcomed to China in 1990 alone.¹⁰⁷⁰ As a result of the fear of international isolation, China also increased its cooperation with developing countries after the Tiananmen incident.¹⁰⁷¹

The first report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, published in 1990, generated political will in China to take part in international efforts to prevent climate change. While officials from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs emphasized China's developing country status and developed countries'

¹⁰⁶⁷ Kobayashi 2005, 95–96.

¹⁰⁶⁸ Economy 1998, 274.

¹⁰⁶⁹ Harrington 2005, 110.

¹⁰⁷⁰ Shouqiut & Voigtsi 1993, 24.

¹⁰⁷¹ Kobayashi 2005, 96.

responsibilities, the most common perspective was that China should contribute to international climate politics because it was a member of international society and “primarily because the PRC, too, would be affected”.¹⁰⁷² Although the view was largely based on calculations, it also indicated the increasing belief amongst the Chinese that climate change is a serious threat locally and globally. Indeed, a more solidarist perspective was also expressed: China, as a member of international society, had a responsibility to contribute to global environmental problems.¹⁰⁷³ As China decided to actively participate in climate negotiations and took a leadership role amongst developing countries, the state’s official position in the negotiations incorporated a synthesis of all those three perspectives. The official position, however, more or less ignored the most solidarist perspectives, such as the following, expressed by Song Jian, then chair of the State Science and Technology Commission, in 1991:

As we develop the economy, we must guarantee a balanced ecological environment and maintain in good order our natural resources so that future generations will have their rightful heritage. To this end, we should be ready to pay more or, if necessary, slow down the economic development.¹⁰⁷⁴

Today, the Chinese government strictly regards the UNFCCC and its Kyoto Protocol as the “most authoritative, universal and comprehensive international framework for coping with climate change”.¹⁰⁷⁵ Although China takes an active part in regional and sectional climate cooperation, it underlines that all informal or small-scale consultations must be “supplements to rather than substitutes for the negotiation process of the UNFCCC and the Kyoto Protocol”, which formulate “the basic framework and legal foundation of international cooperation for addressing climate change”.¹⁰⁷⁶ From the realist vantage point, China’s motives in highlighting the UN system are clear: the Chinese government wants to preserve its privilege of having a permanent seat on the UN Security Council, to restrain US hegemony and to support the CBDR principle, which guarantees that developing countries including China do not have to make legally binding GHG emission reductions. However, from the ES viewpoint, China’s increasing participation in

¹⁰⁷² Economy 1998, 271.

¹⁰⁷³ Economy 1998, 271.

¹⁰⁷⁴ Quoted in Economy 1998, 276.

¹⁰⁷⁵ Information Office of the State Council of the People’s Republic of China 2008.

¹⁰⁷⁶ Information Office of the State Council of the People’s Republic of China 2011b.

multilateral cooperation supports the assumption that China has fully integrated into international society and is willing to shoulder more responsibility on global issues.

In 2006, China overtook the US in total greenhouse gas emissions and became the biggest CO₂ emitter in the world. This raised China's leverage in international climate negotiations as it got, in addition to the US, a "position to make or break" international climate agreement.¹⁰⁷⁷ To polish its international image, which was severely damaged at the Copenhagen Conference, China has taken on a more constructive role in international climate negotiations since 2009. Although it stated in 2010 that China "could not and should not" set a carbon cap¹⁰⁷⁸, the Chinese government made a NAMA commitment as follows:

China will endeavor to lower its carbon dioxide emissions per unit of GDB by 40-45% by 2020 compared to the 2005 level, increase the share of non-fossil fuels in primary energy consumption to around 15% by 2020 and increase forest coverage by 40 million hectares and forest stock volume by 1.3 billion cubic meters by 2020 from the 2005 levels.¹⁰⁷⁹

By the time of the 2015 Paris Conference, China's position in international climate negotiations had gradually transformed. Prior to the COP21, China announced important commitments to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions. In November 2014, China and the US made a historic agreement in which China announced it will halt the growth of its CO₂ emissions around 2030.¹⁰⁸⁰ This means that China no longer focuses on reducing relative "carbon intensity" but has instead pledged to make a reduction in its absolute emissions. The statement sent a strong signal to international society that both the US and China acknowledge their responsibility to lead international efforts to tackle climate change, and that an international climate treaty was possible. In June 2015, China published its INDC to the UNFCCC in which it reiterated the target of peaking CO₂ emissions around 2030 and pledged to reduce its carbon intensity, i.e. the amount of CO₂ per unit of GDP, by 60 to 65 per cent from its 2005 level by 2030.¹⁰⁸¹ In addition, the government committed to increasing the share of non-fossil fuels in primary

¹⁰⁷⁷ Harris 2013, 76.

¹⁰⁷⁸ Lan 2010.

¹⁰⁷⁹ Su 2010.

¹⁰⁸⁰ White House 2014.

¹⁰⁸¹ National Development and Reform Commission 2015, 5.

energy consumption to around 20 per cent while increasing the forest stock volume by around 4.5 billion cubic meters above the 2005 level.¹⁰⁸² China's INDC, however, does not set a cap for emissions and does not specify how much Chinese emissions will grow before they peak. Nor does China have a long-term goal which would explain how much and by when the government would expect to reduce greenhouse gas emissions after 2030. Instead, it stresses the CBDR and reminds developed countries of their historic responsibility to “undertake ambitious economy wide absolute quantified emissions reduction targets by 2030”¹⁰⁸³ and “provide support for developing countries to formulate and implement national adaptation plans as well as other related projects”.¹⁰⁸⁴

The Chinese government assures other states that China's INDCs is not only motivated by national interests but also by the government's “sense of responsibility to fully engage in global governance, to forge a community of shared destiny for humankind and to promote common development for all human beings”.¹⁰⁸⁵ Either way, China will achieve co-benefits from the INDC as it helps it to reduce its reliance on coal for power generation, decrease air pollution and hence prevent 100,000 premature deaths annually, and create an additional half-a-million full-time “green jobs” in the renewable energy sector in China.¹⁰⁸⁶ Again, China's INDC does not explain why or how it is fair and ambitious, which would be needed to inspire the ambitious climate policies of other states as China's “irresponsibility” has often been used as an excuse for the inaction of developed countries. A day after the publication of China's INDC, China's National Center for Climate Change Strategy and International Cooperation published a commentary demonstrating that China has nevertheless considered the ethical dimensions of the INDC. For example, the commentary describes the ambition and economic, technological and social challenges of climate policies. It also highlights China's developing country status. It suggests that if the state manages to curb emissions at a faster rate after 2030, China's long-term development path will be consistent with the objective of limiting the global average temperature increase to below 2 °C.¹⁰⁸⁷ In contrast, the Climate Action Tracker, an independent

¹⁰⁸² National Development and Reform Commission 2015, 5.

¹⁰⁸³ National Development and Reform Commission 2015, 17.

¹⁰⁸⁴ National Development and Reform Commission 2015, 18.

¹⁰⁸⁵ National Development and Reform Commission 2015, 2.

¹⁰⁸⁶ Höhne et al. 2015, 21.

¹⁰⁸⁷ Fu, Ji & Liu 2015, 7–8.

scientific analysis team representing four research organizations, argues that China's INDC is not going to limit global warming to below 2 °C, unless other states commit to more ambitious emissions reductions than China. Therefore, the Climate Action Tracker gives China a rating “medium with inadequate carbon intensity targets”.¹⁰⁸⁸

8.4 Domestic enactment of China's climate responsibility

Because actions are “always a constitutive part of any practice”¹⁰⁸⁹, we must look at how China has demonstrated its notions of responsibility by actions in real life. The discourse of responsibility is only the other half of climate responsibility and the implementation of responsibility is the first and foremost priority. Otherwise, responsibility remains only beautiful words on pieces of paper. The UNFCCC, however, does not specify how states have to implement their climate responsibility but asks them to take “appropriate” action in the context of their national circumstances.¹⁰⁹⁰ It is up to each state to decide what kind of policies it undertakes in order to fulfil and enact its responsibility. A state may choose market mechanisms, such as carbon trade and taxation; technological solutions, such as carbon capture and storage; voluntary and mandatory emission limits; education; etc. The final section of this chapter explores what kind of policies and actions China has chosen in order to realize its climate responsibility and what kind of domestic institutions it has established to organize and monitor the implementation of climate policies.

8.4.1 Institutionalization of climate responsibility

In 1971 the PRC became a member of the UN and in the very same year it set up a leading small group for environmental protection under the State Council. Thus, China's first environmental policy body was established “in direct and urgent response to an impending international conference” before the PRC became a

¹⁰⁸⁸ Climate Action Tracker 2015.

¹⁰⁸⁹ Adler & Pouliot 2011, 6.

¹⁰⁹⁰ The UNFCCC 1992, Article 3.

member of UN.¹⁰⁹¹ China also attended the Stockholm Conference although the other countries of the “Communist Bloc” withdrew from the preparatory process and the final conference because they were “angry that East Germany was prevented from participating”.¹⁰⁹² Participation in the UNCHE was seen as a good opportunity to re-establish China’s economic and diplomatic ties with the rest of the world.¹⁰⁹³ The UNCHE also provided the impetus for China to create an environmental policy, and the CCP acknowledged the need for the inclusion of environmental protection in the national planning process. Although environmental protection did not have its own chapter before the sixth Five-Year Plan (1981-85), China set up its first environmental regulations in 1973.¹⁰⁹⁴ In the same year, China also held the first national conference on environmental protection, where a “firm decision was taken on the need for environmental safekeeping”.¹⁰⁹⁵ In 1974, China established the small Environmental Protection Office under the State Council.¹⁰⁹⁶

In 1978, environmental protection was added to the Constitution of the People's Republic of China: According to article 11 of 1978 Constitution, “the state protects the environment and natural resources, and prevents and eliminates pollution and other hazards to the public”.¹⁰⁹⁷ China also passed the Environmental Protection Law (for trial use) in 1979. Political and economic reforms gave impetus to environmental policies, and during the 1980s, many new environmental laws were issued.¹⁰⁹⁸ The constitutional promise of environmental responsibility was expanded on in article 26 of 1982 Constitution, which declares:

The State protects and improves the environment in which people live and the ecological environment. It prevents and controls pollution and other public hazards.¹⁰⁹⁹

¹⁰⁹¹ Ross 1999, 297–298.

¹⁰⁹² Elliott 1998, 11.

¹⁰⁹³ Kobayashi 2005, 94.

¹⁰⁹⁴ Ross 1999, 298–299.

¹⁰⁹⁵ Palmer 1998, 790.

¹⁰⁹⁶ Ross 1999, 298.

¹⁰⁹⁷ Palmer 1998, 791.

¹⁰⁹⁸ About the development of Chinese environmental law, see, for example, Chen G. 2009 and Palmer 1998.

¹⁰⁹⁹ The Constitution of the People's Republic of China can be founded online http://www.npc.gov.cn/englishnpc/Law/2007-12/05/content_1381903.htm.

Interestingly, the article differentiates between “the environment in which people live” and “the ecological environment” which gives an impression that human beings are not an integrated part of the latter.

Knowledge is also important for participation in social practices. Until 1990, climate change was mostly of interest to developed countries as they had contributed the majority of the scientific research on climate and had the most advanced institutional arrangements to deal with environmental issues.¹¹⁰⁰ China had no resources for ambitious scientific research on climate before 1987 when the US Department of Energy and the Chinese Academy of Science agreed on a joint climate change research project. In line with the bilateral scientific exchange, a Chinese National Climate Committee was established in the same year, respectively.¹¹⁰¹ During the period preceding and following the UNCED the Chinese government established new organizations to address and respond both to domestic and global environmental problems. Between 1990 and 2000, the government almost doubled its environmental spending.¹¹⁰²

The China Meteorological Administration was responsible for advising the Chinese government about climate change issues in the international arena until 1998. After that, the role was given to the powerful State Development and Planning Commission (renamed the National Development and Reform Commission, NDRC, in 2003), which indicated that climate change was being transformed from a scientific issue into a political and economic problem. The Office of the National Climate Change Coordination Committee was established in 1998 and since 2003 the Energy Bureau of the NDRC has had the main responsibility for China’s energy industry. The Office of National Energy Leading Group under the NDRC was established in 2005 and a Leading Small Group on climate change and energy saving in 2007.¹¹⁰³ In 2008, China upgraded the State Environmental Protection Administration to a full-fledged Ministry of Environmental Protection which is not only responsible for organizing national environmental policies and preventing pollution but its mission is also to “...shoulder and materialize the responsibility for achieving national target on emission reduction”.¹¹⁰⁴ The Ministry of Environmental Protection and the

¹¹⁰⁰ Bodansky 2001, 28.

¹¹⁰¹ Schroeder 2009, 57.

¹¹⁰² Harrington 2005, 102.

¹¹⁰³ Heggelund, Andresen & Fritzen Buan 2010, 237–238.

¹¹⁰⁴ Ministry of Environmental Protection, 2008.

Ministry of Science and Technology participate in China's climate diplomacy but the "hardliner" Ministry of Foreign Affairs plays a central role.¹¹⁰⁵ As the NDRC continues to set the domestic agenda on economic, energy and climate policies, it is no surprise that climate policy has been seen through the lenses of economic development and energy, and the principle of "development first" is highly emphasized.

The participation of citizens, NGOs, and other interested organizations in (foreign) policy decision-making processes continues to be limited in China. China's first environmental NGO, the Friends of Nature, was officially registered in 1994. Today, there are more than 3,500 environmental NGOs¹¹⁰⁶ that have the China Civil Climate Action Network (CCAN) as the umbrella organization for the NGOs active in climate politics. Environmental NGOs are nowadays quite well tolerated and play an important role in raising public awareness on climate change and environmental problems in China. Previously, only government think-tanks and research institutions were invited to participate in (environmental) policy making processes but it seems the government is now opening some of the processes up to NGOs as well. For example, the CCAN took an active part in the formulation of China's National Climate Law by organizing workshops, meetings with government officials and by submitting a recommendation paper to the National Development and Reform Commission that is in charge of preparing climate change law.¹¹⁰⁷

In general, China's governmental structure remains fragmented, both horizontally and vertically. There are overlapping, and competing bureaucracies at every level of administration, the rule of law is rather weak and the central government's authority is often inadequate at local level.¹¹⁰⁸ This may change in the future as the government has decided to harmonize currently fragmented "duties and responsibilities for environmental protection" to one single institution and establish a wide range of market-based instruments, such as a "green" finance system, environmental taxes and pollution trading systems to promote the construction of ecological civilization.¹¹⁰⁹

¹¹⁰⁵ Heggelund, Andresen & Fritzen Buan 2010, 239.

¹¹⁰⁶ Liu 2012.

¹¹⁰⁷ CCAN 2011.

¹¹⁰⁸ Shapiro 2012, 59.

¹¹⁰⁹ *Xinhua* 2015b.

8.4.2 Low carbon development and climate change mitigation

The concept of sustainable development was a key issue at the UNCED although there was no consensus how it should be achieved in real life.¹¹¹⁰ After the UNCED, China also quickly adopted the concept although it seemed to focus on the economic side of the sustainable development. In 1996, the ninth Five Year Plan confirmed sustainable development as a national development strategy.¹¹¹¹ The focus was, however, on economically sustainable development and environmental protection was seen merely as a tool to achieve economic development. According to then Chinese Premier Li Peng, China should “rationally develop and utilize resources and protect the ecological environment so as to achieve a coordinated and sustainable economic and social development”.¹¹¹² China was among the first countries to formulate an Agenda 21 in accordance with the UNCED. China’s Agenda 21 proposed a comprehensive approach to environmental protection by integrating policies such as economic development, industrialization, population control, agriculture, energy production, education, health and sanitation, disaster management, and the protection of the atmosphere, including climate policy.¹¹¹³ This demonstrates that there was no dispute on climate change even in the early stages of climate protection and that the Chinese government took the issue seriously.

China’s climate policy is very closely linked to the state’s energy policy. A sufficient energy supply is naturally vital for meeting any state’s basic needs, but it is particularly important for ensuring the continuation of China’s economic growth, which is mostly based on fuel-intensive heavy industry. In the early 2000s, China started to examine how it could modernize in a more sustainable way and hence alleviate social and environmental problems caused by its development model.¹¹¹⁴ To ensure energy supply, the government launched a series of policies and measures to decrease dependency on (imported) fossil fuels and to promote the production of non-fossil energy, especially hydropower and nuclear energy. In particular, the concepts of scientific development and harmonious society were taken as ideological guidelines of the state’s development policies. Since 2003, the

¹¹¹⁰ See Hopwood, Mellor & O’Brien 2005.

¹¹¹¹ Li 1995.

¹¹¹² Li 1995.

¹¹¹³ China’s Agenda 21.

¹¹¹⁴ Dent 2014, 57.

Chinese government has also made serious efforts to decrease energy demand by promoting energy conservation and energy efficiency. The government has closed ineffective power plants and small or outdated industrial factories, promoted the development of modern, energy-saving technology and products and established national standards to improve automotive fuel economy, for instance.

China's 11th Five-Year Plan (2006–2010) declared that there is a “big change in the relationship between the environment and development” in China.¹¹¹⁵ It addressed “three transformations” which encapsulate China's commitment to balance economic growth with environmental protection.¹¹¹⁶ The first two transformations shift away the prioritization of economic development over environmental protection to have an equal emphasis on both. The third transformation, which I think China is now currently experiencing, results from “mainly employing administrative methods to protect the environment into comprehensive application of legal, economic, technical and necessary administrative methods to address environmental problems”.¹¹¹⁷ The 11th Five-Year Plan also noted that “economic growth is not the equivalent of economic development”¹¹¹⁸ but environmental protection is a “key task for modern development”.¹¹¹⁹ Therefore, the concepts of harmonious society and scientific development formed the foundation of the plan.¹¹²⁰ Since then, special attention has been paid to the “greening of the economy” and the development of “green jobs”, for instance.¹¹²¹

Since the late 2000s, the Chinese government has implemented many policies to reduce the country's greenhouse gas emissions. In June 2007, the government published its first comprehensive climate policy document entitled the National Climate Change Programme, which pledged that “China will implement its fundamental national policy of resources conservation and environmental protection to develop a circular economy, protect the ecological environment and accelerate the construction of a resource-conservative and environmentally-friendly

¹¹¹⁵ Ministry of Environmental Protection 2007.

¹¹¹⁶ Ministry of Environmental Protection 2007.

¹¹¹⁷ Ministry of Environmental Protection 2007.

¹¹¹⁸ Fan 2006, 710.

¹¹¹⁹ Ministry of Environmental Protection 2007.

¹¹²⁰ Fan 2006, 709.

¹¹²¹ Pan, Ma & Zhang 2011.

society”.¹¹²² China also promised to “strive to control its greenhouse gas emissions, enhance its capacity to adapt to climate change and promote the harmonious development between economy, population, resources and the environment”.¹¹²³ Today, China fully supports the use of the mechanisms under the Kyoto Protocol, especially the CDM which coincides with China’s economic development and energy interests. It has established an institutional basis for CDM projects.¹¹²⁴ The CDM can contribute to China’s sustainable development and it indeed seems like an auspicious way to reduce GHG emissions in China.¹¹²⁵

In his report to the 17th Party Congress in 2007, President Hu Jintao promised that China will “make new contributions to protecting the global climate” and “will implement the responsibility system for conserving energy and reducing emissions”.¹¹²⁶ Consequently, the government issued the first white paper on climate change in 2008 and the National People's Congress of China Standing Committee passed a resolution on actively responding to climate change in August 2009. It was the first climate change resolution adopted by China’s top legislature body and it underlined the principle of scientific development and vowed to strengthen China's legal framework for climate change.¹¹²⁷ The resolution declared:

To response to climate change is an important opportunity and challenge for China’s economic and social development. To actively respond to climate change is of great importance to China’s overall economic and social development and people’s vital interests, and significant to human survival and the development of all countries.¹¹²⁸

In November 2009, China announced a “voluntary” but “nationally binding” target to reduce carbon emission intensity per unit of GDP in 2020 by 40–45 per cent of that in 2005. It was estimated that the target would prevent greenhouse gas emissions from doubling by 2020.¹¹²⁹ In March 2011, the target was incorporated into the 12th Five-Year Program (2011–2015), which decided to cut energy

¹¹²² National Development and Reform Commission 2007.

¹¹²³ National Development and Reform Commission 2007.

¹¹²⁴ Heggelund, Andresen & Fritzen Buan 2010, 246.

¹¹²⁵ Heggelund, Andresen & Fritzen Buan 2010, 247.

¹¹²⁶ Hu 2007.

¹¹²⁷ Standing Committee of the National People's Congress 2009.

¹¹²⁸ Standing Committee of the National People's Congress 2009 (the author’s translation).

¹¹²⁹ *Xinhua* 2009.

consumption per unit of GDP by 16 per cent by 2015, and CO₂ emissions by 17 per cent. In addition, the proportion of non-fossil fuels in the overall primary energy consumption was raised to 11.4 per cent (compared to 8.3 per cent in 2010). Both a climate change law and a carbon tax are also planned to be introduced. In June 2012, China issued preliminary carbon emission trading system regulations and launched pilot programs in five major cities (Beijing, Tianjin, Shanghai, Chongqing and Shenzhen) and two provinces (Guangdong and Hubei).¹¹³⁰ The government plans to expand the carbon trading system nationwide in 2017.

After the 18th national congress in 2012, China has actively pursued the building up of an ecological civilization. The construction of an ecological civilization is also an important objective of China's climate policies.¹¹³¹ In 2014, the Chinese Premier Li Keqiang “declared war” on pollution. The government will first focus on reducing the levels of particles PM_{2.5} and PM₁₀ in the atmosphere by improving energy efficiency, raising the proportion of electricity generated by renewables and nuclear power, developing low-carbon technology, reducing vehicle exhaust emissions and by shutting down outdated industrial plants and energy producers.¹¹³² All of these efforts will no doubt have positive effects on climate change mitigation as well. To improve energy security, China has invested a lot in renewable energy. The Energy Development Strategy Action Plan (2014–2020) includes, for the first time, a cap on national coal consumption by 2020, and pledges to raise the share of non-fossil fuels in the total primary energy mix to 15 per cent by 2020 from 9.8 per cent in 2013.¹¹³³

In 2014, the State Council approved China's National Climate Change Plan (2014–2020), which introduces various measures to reduce the growth of greenhouse gas emissions, promote low carbon development plans, improve the state's adaptation to climate change and increase international cooperation on the climate. In particular, the plan focused on efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in the industrial sector and the construction industry. While it did not set a binding, nationwide emission reduction target, it seeks to reduce CO₂ emissions per unit of industrial added value in 2020 by 50 per cent below 2005 levels.¹¹³⁴

¹¹³⁰ Lan 2015.

¹¹³¹ National Development and Reform Commission 2014, 3.

¹¹³² Li 2014.

¹¹³³ *Xinhua* 2014b.

¹¹³⁴ National Development and Reform Commission 2014, 10.

Notably, the plan pledges to stabilize the total carbon emissions of the steel and cement sectors by 2020 at 2015 levels.¹¹³⁵ On the one hand, the target sent a positive signal about the government's strong commitment to climate change mitigation. On the other hand, it was questioned whether it could actually be really implemented due to the lack of coordination and motivation amongst other government sectors outside of the NRDC.¹¹³⁶ If implemented, however, the target would halt China's rapid emissions growth. In the construction industry, the plan promotes low carbon technologies and materials and aims for half of new urban buildings to be "green" in 2020.¹¹³⁷ Other efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions include promoting of the use of renewables, improving energy efficiency, controlling emissions in transportation and agriculture, increasing carbon sinks and promoting low carbon lifestyles, etc.¹¹³⁸ In addition, China has great potential for carbon dioxide capture and storage (CSS)¹¹³⁹, and it is now the world's biggest investor in CSS technology.¹¹⁴⁰ Less attention, however, is being paid to the emissions caused by road transportation, which has turned out to be the most difficult sector in emissions reduction in the EU and the US. As the number of vehicles may even more than triple by the end of next decade, China's oil consumption is expected to rise sharply and therefore it may result in China's emissions not peaking until 2030.¹¹⁴¹

As discussed previously, the Integrated Reform Plan for Promoting Ecological Progress published in 2015 introduced a comprehensive environmental strategy of "eight systems" for promoting ecological civilization. Regarding climate change mitigation, the plan announced ambitious objectives to be achieved by 2020. First, it pledged that a "system for controlling total national carbon emissions and a mechanism for breaking down the responsibility for implementation will be gradually established",¹¹⁴² which can be interpreted as a commitment to adopting an absolute emission reduction target after 2020. Second, it declared that "subsidies

¹¹³⁵ National Development and Reform Commission 2014, 11.

¹¹³⁶ Liu & ClimateWire 2014.

¹¹³⁷ National Development and Reform Commission 2014, 13.

¹¹³⁸ For further information, see the National Development and Reform Commission 2014 and annual white papers on China's climate policies and actions issued by the NDRC.

¹¹³⁹ Dahowski et al. 2009.

¹¹⁴⁰ Garnaut 2013.

¹¹⁴¹ Zheng et al. 2015.

¹¹⁴² *Xinhua* 2015b.

for all fossil fuels will be phased out”.¹¹⁴³ This would be a great example for the rest of the world as states now spend about 5 trillion USD a year to subsidize the consumption of fossil fuels, which is “over four-times the value of subsidies to renewable energy and more than four times the amount invested globally in improving energy efficiency”.¹¹⁴⁴ Third, the plan promised to invest more in the development of renewable energy sources, and establish a “mechanism for effectively increasing forest, grassland, wetland, and ocean carbon sinks”.¹¹⁴⁵

Some Chinese cities and provinces have also made very ambitious plans to respond to climate change. At the US–China Climate Leaders Summit held in Los Angeles, California on September 2015, eleven Chinese cities and provinces committed to peaking their GHG emissions before the national target of 2030 and decided to establish the Alliance of Peaking Pioneer Cities. In particular, two of the biggest cities, Beijing and Guangzhou, pledged to peak CO₂ emissions by the end of or around 2020.¹¹⁴⁶ As the fact sheet of the White House notes:

The commitment of so many of its largest cities to early peaking highlights China’s resolve to take comprehensive action across all levels of government to achieve its national target, put forth in last year’s Joint Announcement on Climate Change, to make best efforts to peak its emissions earlier than 2030.¹¹⁴⁷

8.4.3 Adaptation to climate change

The Chinese government is increasingly aware of the adverse effects of climate change in China. In 2006, Chinese scientists published the first National Assessment Report on Climate Change. Consequently, in 2007, China’s first National Climate Change Program recognized that the climate was already changing in China: the average surface temperature had already increased between 0.5 and 0.8 °C during the 20th century, mountain glaciers were melting at an accelerated rate, the frequency and intensity of heatwaves had increased in the Northern provinces, and heavy precipitation had increased in the Southern

¹¹⁴³ *Xinhua* 2015b.

¹¹⁴⁴ IEA 2014.

¹¹⁴⁵ *Xinhua* 2015b.

¹¹⁴⁶ U.S.–China Climate Leaders’ Declaration 2015.

¹¹⁴⁷ White House 2015b.

provinces. In addition, many Chinese rivers had dried up due to accelerate economic and population growth. In the future, there will be even more critical water shortages and decreased agricultural output because of climate change, particularly in the Northern provinces. Therefore, the National Climate Change Program acknowledged that it is essential to “place equal emphasis on both mitigation and adaptation” but given China’s developing country status, adaptation is a “more present and imminent task” than mitigation.¹¹⁴⁸ Since then, the government has pursued the enhancement of the country’s adaptation capacity by integrating adaptation plans into China’s overall development policies.¹¹⁴⁹

In 2012, the 710-page Second National Assessment Report on Climate Change was published. In the following year, the Chinese government issued its first nationwide climate change adaptation strategy, warning that the whole of Chinese society is ill-prepared to deal with serious threats posed by climate change. The strategy informed the population that the Chinese government “attaches a great importance to climate change adaptation, integrating it to national economic and social development plans”.¹¹⁵⁰ Taking “significantly enhanced adaptation capacity” as the ultimate goal, the plan outlined a wide range of measures to be implemented by 2020 in order to protect water, forest and soil resources, safeguard agricultural output, strengthen infrastructure, improve risk management systems, increase public awareness and establish institutional mechanisms, etc.¹¹⁵¹ Furthermore, China’s INDC stated in 2015 that the state:

[W]ill continue to proactively adapt to climate change by enhancing mechanisms and capacities to effectively defend against climate change risks in key areas such as agriculture, forestry and water resources, as well as in cities, coastal and ecologically vulnerable areas and to progressively strengthen early warning and emergency response systems and disaster prevention and reduction mechanisms.¹¹⁵²

China’s Third National Assessment Report on Climate Change was published in 2015. Approximately 550 scientists and experts took part in the three-year

¹¹⁴⁸ National Development and Reform Commission 2007.

¹¹⁴⁹ National Development and Reform Commission 2007, see also China’s annual white papers on climate policies and actions.

¹¹⁵⁰ National Development and Reform Commission 2013 (the author’s translation).

¹¹⁵¹ National Development and Reform Commission 2013.

¹¹⁵² National Development and Reform Commission 2015.

compilation process of the 900 page report which was published only in Chinese. According to the report, average temperatures across China have risen between 0.9 °C and 1.4 °C since 1909 and the coastal sea level has by increased 2.9 mm per year between 1980 and 2012, both numbers show that the climate is changing at a faster rate in China than globally. The report estimates that by the end of the century, average temperatures will rise between 1.3 and 5.0 °C in China, even if the global goal of limiting global temperature rises within 2 °C.¹¹⁵³ In particular, many of China's mega-cities, such as Shanghai, Tianjin and Hong Kong, are located in coastal areas and are at high risk of flooding due to rising sea levels. It is argued that China will suffer the most from the business as usual trend of global warming and gain the most from limiting warming to 2 °C, respectively.¹¹⁵⁴ No doubt these findings will provide the Chinese government with strong domestic incentives to curb emissions and pay more attention to adapting to climate change.

¹¹⁵³ China Climate Change Info-Net 2015.

¹¹⁵⁴ Strauss, Kulp & Levermann 2015, 10.

9 Conclusions and discussion

Environmental norms have slowly but steadily integrated into international society during the last forty years. There has been a profound normative change in international society as states have created a complex set of rules and institutions to sustain and organize environmental practices. Therefore, the answer to Jackson's question "Can international society be green?"¹¹⁵⁵ seems to be positive because many environmental treaties and organizations enjoy almost universal support, and states, including great powers, participate in environmental diplomacy routinely. International society has also succeeded in developing important rules, such as the CBDR, for the distribution of special (climate) responsibilities amongst states. However, has international society fully adopted practices of environmental responsibility – especially climate responsibility – as one of its institutions? The creation of international environmental law and organizations does not necessarily mean that states have internalized the concept of environmental responsibility and will truly enact their climate responsibility. If we look at the trend of how environmental degradation aggravates and climate change accelerates, it is very difficult to give a positive answer to Jackson's question. International society has also failed to promote genuine international justice: real human suffering has not been alleviated but social disparities continue to grow locally and globally. There is undoubtedly an urgent need to transform international climate practices. A more balanced human–nature relationship is needed to achieve genuine change. To use Steffen and his colleagues' words: "We are the first generation with widespread knowledge of how our activities influence the Earth System, and thus the first generation with the power and the responsibility to change our relationship with the planet".¹¹⁵⁶

Before discussing how international climate practices should be reorganized, let me briefly summarize the theoretical and empirical contributions of this study and conclude the major successes and challenges of climate responsibility.

¹¹⁵⁵ Jackson 1996.

¹¹⁵⁶ Steffen et al. 2011, 757.

9.1 International practice of climate responsibility: The English School perspective

In this study, I have made two general contributions to the ES theory. First, I have contributed to the English School's continuing debate on the definitions and roles of institutions in international society through the lenses of the practice approach. Second, I have demonstrated that agency is an important driver of change in and of international society. Traditionally, ES scholars have not been very interested in secondary institutions – they have tended to believe it is the job of regime theorists to research instrumental secondary institutions. Recent studies, including this one, have, however, identified that secondary institutions have a constitutive role in international society. I suggest that we must differentiate between the institutionalization of primary and secondary institutions. They both emerge and evolve through international practices. Primary institutions institutionalize via an unintentional process and do not usually evolve from a single international practice but they are constellations of diverse practices.¹¹⁵⁷ Hence primary institutions do not set up a constitutional order but a normative framework. In contrast, secondary institutions are intentionally designed and reformed by means of diplomacy within the limits of the established international rules and primary institutions. The institutionalization of secondary institution is an active power-based institution-building process in which individual actors' preferences and intentions mould the "content" of practice. The role of state and non-state agency is thus pivotal in the evolution of international practices because powerful actors aim to define the rules of practices in a way that serves their (domestic) interests and values. Again, international practices also produce agents and shape their identities and interests.

Consequently, I propose that the ES should pay more attention to both secondary institutions and agents' domestic practices. I argue that secondary institutions function as bridging practices between primary institutions and day-to-day politics with regard to international and world society. Although the establishment of secondary institutions is a pragmatic solution to negotiate to whom, why and how issue-specific international responsibilities should be distributed, it may cause more fundamental change in international society. By taking part in the workings of secondary institutions agents can induce the

¹¹⁵⁷ Palmujoki 2015.

emergence of new, potentially more solidarist practices – and eventually primary institutions.

Furthermore, I have criticized traditional understandings of state sovereignty. I have suggested that we should redefine it in accordance with Francis M. Deng's conception "sovereignty as responsibility". In particular, we should not focus on state-centric responsibilities but define and distribute state responsibilities in a more solidarist manner. In addition to inter-state responsibilities, governments are always responsible for the well-being of individuals: from a thinner, pluralist perspective they are chiefly responsible for the citizens of their own state; from a thicker, solidarist perspective, they have responsibilities for the well-being of all human beings around the world. The thickest perspective acknowledges that states have responsibilities for the well-being of the planet as well. While taking a state-centric approach, I have demonstrated in this study that all three "traditions" of the ES are clearly important levels of analysis for climate responsibility. First, states have important roles for setting and reforming domestic environmental regulation, standards, subsidies and taxation, etc. and hence can influence their citizens' environmental awareness, attitudes and actions. Second, international society sets the international framework for global environmental management by negotiating and putting into effect international treaties. Third, world society's influence in both the construction of international practices and the position of individual states in international politics is crucial, albeit largely dismissed by ES. In the end, it is citizens' – and corporate – responsibility to do what they can do to reduce their GHG emissions and to get their government to fulfil their climate responsibility.¹¹⁵⁸

The key purpose of this study, however, has been to provide the ES with normative and historical observations on the international practice of climate responsibility. By emphasizing the practice approach to responsibility, I have not meant to ignore many meanings and dimensions of responsibility. Both the legal and moral conceptions of responsibility are important when analysing the scope of state responsibility, especially from a historic perspective. However, they are not sufficient and constructive views alone because they do not recognize that states can only fulfil their forward-looking responsibilities by joining with others in the socially organized practices of international society.¹¹⁵⁹ In other words, responsibility does not only look retrospectively towards the past, although it

¹¹⁵⁸ See Broome 2012, 73–96.

¹¹⁵⁹ See also Young 2006, 123.

largely consists of elements derived from legal and moral ethics. For example, a perspective that focuses only on the past will not recognize that the current population of developed countries is not the sole cause of climate change, and that the contemporary and future world society faces the problem together. All of us will benefit from climate change mitigation – and we will all suffer from the failure to reduce emissions. That is why cosmopolitan responsibility is crucial to the future of climate practices. Even if individual states, or the whole international society, fail to shoulder their climate responsibility, this does not mean that affluent people can ignore their cosmopolitan responsibility to prevent environmental degradation and reduce emissions. This reminds us of the most quintessential question related to climate responsibility: How can we ensure that climate responsibility is not just empty rhetoric and that both states and affluent individuals will demonstrate their responsibility by taking effective action as soon as possible?

Identities play an important role when defining and distributing responsibilities globally. The possession of great capabilities (power or wealth), for example, does not necessarily mean that a powerful state acts responsibly. Identities and values help to understand why some relatively small states, such as Sweden, have taken on more global responsibilities than their more powerful counterparts. The identity of a sole great power would also partly guide whether or not and what kind of global responsibilities a hegemon would be willing to shoulder. The way new practices are adopted influences how deeply, if at all, they are incorporated into the identities of the practitioners. In the case of coercion, a practice is hardly internalized and incorporated to identity and hence the practitioner is not likely to assume the responsibilities allocated by the practice. Self-interest is not a sufficient motivator to assign responsibilities either. It is only when participants believe the practice is legitimate, that they are willing to shoulder their fair share of responsibility. The legitimacy of the (rules of a) practice is hence essential to action.

Given my interest in the historical evolution of international practices, I have traced the early developments of the rules of the practice of climate responsibility at length. In so doing, my aim has been to denaturalize the taken-for-granted ideas related to climate diplomacy. International practices do not emerge from thin air, nor can they be traced to a single treaty. The 1992 Rio Conference marked an important venue for the institutionalization of environmental norms but it would be mistaken to assume it was in Rio where the practice of climate responsibility began to evolve. I have shown that we must look further into the past and analyse the myriad international environmental treaties and conferences since the 1970s (and before). If climate responsibility was being built, the first building blocks were

assembled in 1972 – already before than the broader architecture was drawn in the formulation of the UNFCCC in 1992. For the very same reason, I also briefly explored ancient China’s and Maoist China’s environmental practices. They form the ideological basis from which contemporary ideas of climate responsibility have been developed in China. Besides, as I have demonstrated, China’s stance during international environmental negotiations has not changed much since 1972. The other reason for my historic emphasis was to demonstrate that isolated Maoist China was not a norm-taker but a norm-maker in international environmental practices.

I have demonstrated that climate responsibility fulfils all three requirements of Schatzki’s integrative practice¹¹⁶⁰: 1) there is “practical understanding” about the causes and effects of climate change and, at least to some extent, a shared understanding on how to identify those who bear the biggest responsibility to take the required action to climate change and what would count as a responsible response to climate change; 2) there are collectively agreed rules on how states should distribute and act out climate responsibility, and some of these rules are formalized in international (soft) law; and 3) it has a “teleoaffective structure”: It is a goal-oriented practice holding its “ends, purposes, projects, and tasks” to avoid the adverse effects of climate change.¹¹⁶¹ Climate change mitigation (and reporting on materialized climate actions) is now perceived as a general responsibility of all states. But, can climate responsibility be identified as a primary institution of international society? In the light of this study, climate responsibility indeed seems to fulfil the qualifications of a primary institution listed by Friedner Parrat¹¹⁶² because it is a truly international, routinized practice with norms and rules, it is consciously upheld and endorsed by a critical mass of states and it has remained quite stable over time. It is also embodied in and shapes many global and domestic practices simultaneously. Clearly, it remains only an emerging primary institution as there are still wide disputes about its rules and it clashes with established institutions. From the ES perspective, however, the disputes do not make it weaker but indicate that climate responsibility is gradually becoming a weightier international practice.

At the moment, climate responsibility is very a state-centric practice. It focuses on interstate responsibilities: states’ obligations to reduce emissions and to provide

¹¹⁶⁰ Schatzki 1996, 98–110.

¹¹⁶¹ Schatzki 1996, 101.

¹¹⁶² Friedner Parrat 2014, 10.

assistance to poorer states. Although it takes a very anthropocentric approach to nature, it is not a very humanist practice either. It gives no clear recognition of the environmental rights of the people. Needless to say, climate responsibility does not take nature as moral referent object but largely dismisses its rights. While climate responsibility has not made international society ecocentric, its emergence nevertheless indicates a profound normative change in international society – even as hard a pluralist primary institution as great power management has been shaped by climate responsibility. Hence, climate responsibility is evidently an established international practice, which even the most powerful states must take part in if they wish to be and be seen as “good international citizens”. That is why all the participants have continued to take part in the negotiations although they did not accept or later withdrew from the Kyoto Protocol. None of the participants have simply walked away from the climate negotiations despite the widespread discord and pointed criticism of each other’s contribution.

The UNFCCC is the most important secondary institution related to climate change. It was negotiated very quickly, in about two years, which indicates two points. On the one hand, it demonstrates universal concern over and willingness to tackle climate change amongst states. On the other hand, it illustrates that the UNFCCC was not seen as a powerful practice that would limit national interests of states. In this sense, it not a big surprise that while the UNFCCC enjoys the near universal participation from the world’s states, the later negotiations on the Kyoto protocol and especially on the post-Kyoto protocol were much more difficult negotiation processes. As the negotiations pursued the setting up of legally binding emission reduction targets for individual states, they challenged the established institutions of international society and put states’ sovereignty and national interests at risk. However, the difficulties of the post-Kyoto negotiations prove that UNFCCC has gained and is likely to gain more strength in the future. If it was an unimportant and weak practice, why would it be so contested?¹¹⁶³

For the time being, the UNFCCC has not managed to construct a thick international society and many central issues, such as finance and compensation, remain unsolved.¹¹⁶⁴ Apart from general ideas of state responsibility, there are no liability rules for causing environmental harm, for instance. Besides, how could you even compensate for the damage caused to future generations or the planet Earth? Even though the UNFCCC has not succeeded in decelerating climate change, it is

¹¹⁶³ See also Sending & Neumann 2011, 236.

¹¹⁶⁴ See also Palmujoki 2013, 191–192.

definitely not insignificant. The importance of secondary institutions is that they provide a social forum where states and non-state actors can have a dialogue, which, at best, may increase their, and also the general public's, environmental awareness and willingness to tighten the rules of environmental governance. In other words, the UNFCCC creates a political framework where state and non-state actors can negotiate on more effective and ambitious climate agreements and hence perform better in the future. It functions as a bridging practice between the emerging primary institution of climate responsibility and national climate practices. If the UNFCCC breaks up, there is no alternative effective forum to advocate international commitments, and there is no time to establish such a new forum. Again, the UNFCCC has no intrinsic value as such, and it could – and some may say it should – be displaced by post-national climate practices in the future.

The UNFCCC is not the only platform of international climate action but there are increasing signs of the emergence of a cosmopolitan climate responsibility. On the one hand, the wide number of non-governmental climate initiatives and organizations indicate the UNFCCC's weakness in resolving the climate crisis and the failure of states to shoulder their climate responsibility, which thus calls for alternative approaches. On the other hand, the active participation of non-state actors demonstrates that world society is very convinced of the urgency of climate change and without its participation climate change mitigation is likely to fail. Hence, from the ES perspective, the fragmentation and diversification of climate governance is not necessarily a weakness but “indicates a common understanding and a ‘thick’ interpretation” of climate responsibility.¹¹⁶⁵ In other words, private and public initiatives outside the UNFCCC do not only offer multiple and potentially more efficient channels to organize and enact climate responsibility, they also engage the broader participation of both state and non-state actors.¹¹⁶⁶ A critical question is whether or not climate responsibility will develop as a “standard of civilization” which defines and validates the practices of “civilized” members of international society as well as world society in the future.

¹¹⁶⁵ Palmujoki 2013, 195.

¹¹⁶⁶ Palmujoki 2013, 192.

9.2 China's notions of climate responsibility

This study has not intended to assess China's responsibility by any philosophical or legal criteria but look at the Chinese government's evolving notions of national responsibilities and interpretations of international climate responsibility. From this vantage point, China cannot be seen as "irresponsible" in international climate politics because it has constructed very comprehensive climate practices from scratch since the late 1970s. It has also participated in international cooperation on climate change and done more voluntarily than international law requires of it. Today, Chinese political leaders and the general public widely agree that China's economic miracle has come at a high environmental price.¹¹⁶⁷ They recognize that they – and the planet – cannot afford to follow the Western model of industrialization which is based on the "pollute first, clean up later" mentality.¹¹⁶⁸ The government is thus aware that the state must integrate environmental protection, emission reduction, and energy conservation into the overall development target. This is important for the legitimacy of the party as well because environmental degradation is one of the key reasons for social discontent in China.

For a long time, China's conception of climate responsibility was very retrospective; it focused exclusively on examining historic responsibility. This view naturally emphasized the historic responsibility of developed countries and assigned less – and even no – responsibility to developing countries including China. Compared to its standpoints at the UNCHE and the UNCED, China's role within contemporary international climate politics has changed radically. "Responsibility" has indeed penetrated into the CCP's lexicon. Although the referent objects of China's climate responsibility are chiefly the party-state and the Chinese nation, not humankind or the environment *per se*, China no longer focuses only on national responsibilities. It seems that China is increasingly identifying itself as a great power, which by definition comes with great responsibilities. This identity change is especially visible in the context of international financial governance, where China has established new, alternative multilateral organizations.

¹¹⁶⁷ For a comprehensive overview of China's environmental problems, see, for example, Shapiro 2012.

¹¹⁶⁸ Xie 2010.

In general, the Chinese government has become “more proactive, more engaged, and more flexible” in international climate negotiations since the Bali Conference in 2008.¹¹⁶⁹ In its domestic development plans, environmental protection has received more important consideration than ever before. In international climate negotiations, however, China’s new notions of environmental responsibility have not been translated into aspiring commitments. Although it has committed to have peaked the growth of carbon emissions by 2030, the Chinese government continues to refuse to sign a legally binding carbon emissions reductions target. In contrast, China underlines its developing country status and holds fast to the CBDR principle. It aligns its interests in conjunction with other developing countries. For China, therefore, international justice continues to be historical. According to China’s “development first” principle, developing countries do not have an obligation to control emissions before they achieve a certain level of development. The claim is naturally justified from the least developed countries’ point of view but one can wonder if China is a typical representative of developing countries. Nevertheless, the Chinese government assures us that China is a “responsible developing country” that takes climate change very seriously but has no historic responsibility for climate change mitigation.¹¹⁷⁰

Participation in a practice is not itself a “resolution to perform any particular substantive action”.¹¹⁷¹ Thus, there is no direct link between participation in international practices and state behaviour. Therefore, I have paid particular attention to the relationship between interests, identity and responsibility. In short, China’s participation in international climate practices is motivated by both self-interest calculations and belief. It seems that China’s main interests in international climate politics include the protection of its sovereignty and the promotion of its economic development by acquiring CDM projects, technology transfers and other foreign aid. The Chinese tend to believe that technological progress combined with capitalist efficiency, demand and motivation can solve all environmental problems. Because a low carbon economy constitutes the core of China’s climate practices, China’s climate policy pays a great deal of attention to sustainable development and technology transfer. It is often said that China has made no progress in tackling climate change. In the light of this study, this is not true. As coping with

¹¹⁶⁹ Liang 2010, 68.

¹¹⁷⁰ See also Kopra 2012.

¹¹⁷¹ Oakeshott 1975, 58.

environmental degradation is one of the biggest challenges that contemporary China faces, the Chinese government has no choice but to take climate change seriously. From the climate change mitigation perspective, the motives of emissions reductions are not important. What matters is that China is seriously aiming to build up an “ecological civilization”. Only time will tell whether eco-civilization remains a mainly party rhetoric device or whether it has a real political influence in transforming China’s development path.

If one wants to evaluate whether or not China’s conception of climate responsibility is ethically acceptable, it is useful to look at whether China is doing something that could be viewed as irresponsible. In other words, we can gain a better understanding of Chinese practices, perceptions and objectives by highlighting what China “is *not* doing”.¹¹⁷² First, China does not promote its political objectives through aggressive means but participates in international multilateral negotiations. Second, it does not promote a radically alternative order regionally or globally, instead it supports international institutions. Third, it does not pursue confrontation with the US but it seeks to actively build peaceful great power relationships. Fourth, it does not dispute climate change but has integrated climate change plans into the state’s overall policy strategies. Since Zoellick’s speech in 2005, however, Western countries have urged China to become a “responsible stakeholder” and shoulder more global responsibilities including climate change responsibility, which indicates that China is not yet a “responsible stakeholder”. As Chen Zhimin points out, “undertaking and demanding international responsibility are both noble causes”.¹¹⁷³ Hence it is not wrong to ask China to shoulder more global responsibility as it will “help enhance the awareness of responsibility” amongst the political elite and general public in China.¹¹⁷⁴ At the same time, a couple of important aspects should be remembered when criticizing China’s climate (ir)responsibility. First, it should be noted that per capita emissions are much lower in China than the US and many other developed countries. Second, the lion’s share of China’s increasing greenhouse gas emissions are caused by exports to the West. This means that Western consumers are partly responsible for increasing emissions in China. Finally, all states have national responsibilities and they cannot assume international responsibilities that are beyond their capabilities economically or politically. This is a central argument of China’s climate discourse:

¹¹⁷² Medeiros 2009, 213 (emphasis in original).

¹¹⁷³ Chen Z. 2009, 26.

¹¹⁷⁴ Chen Z. 2009, 26.

China argues that international expectations of its global responsibility should be closely linked to its development stage.

China's permanent seat on the UN Security Council brings special responsibilities to the Chinese government. From this vantage point, it can be argued that China has a moral duty to carry more responsibility than minor states and it cannot escape its obligation to make strong climate change mitigation policies. Although China recognizes that great powers have great responsibilities, it does not unequivocally define itself as one in the context of climate politics. In contrast, it describes itself as a responsible major or big power, referring to its large size and population. Because China's national identity is in flux, it has been domestically very difficult to agree on the scope of China's global responsibility. On the one hand, many Chinese think that the state should take on more international responsibilities. On the other hand, China's identity as the leader of developing world has "sometimes forced it to be more uncooperative in international environmental affairs that it would actually like to be".¹¹⁷⁵ Although many rural people remain poor in China, many urban citizens are extremely wealthy and their lifestyles are as – or even more – unsustainable than those of Western individuals. At its current level of development, China's wealth and ability to take on ambitious climate actions will continue to increase and make it more and more difficult for the Chinese government to assure the world that it is one of the developing countries. If the state can afford to hold an extravagant Olympics (twice) and to go to space, how can it not afford to mitigate climate change?

Consequently, many China-watchers have already suggested that China should abandon its victim identity based on "the Century of Shame". For instance, Jin Canrong suggests that China should "establish and adjust the great power mentality"¹¹⁷⁶ which means that China should proactively and voluntarily take on international responsibilities.¹¹⁷⁷ Jin's conception of a great power status is hence firmly interlocked with great responsibilities: "What's more, a country with great power mentality should be responsible and sympathetic over the weak, advocate equality and justice and work for the well-being of the people and the peace of the world".¹¹⁷⁸ The issue of climate change could provide China with an opportunity to prove to the world its emerging global leadership. Given that China has

¹¹⁷⁵ Kobayashi 2005, 88.

¹¹⁷⁶ Jin 2011, 6–7.

¹¹⁷⁷ Jin 2011, 11–12.

¹¹⁷⁸ Jin 2011, 7.

published its major climate commitments in joint statements with the US, it indeed seems that it has made them in reference to its great power status.¹¹⁷⁹ To some extent, China's role at the Paris Climate Conference also indicated that China is now increasingly living up to its emerging great power identity.

Although the conception of "great power responsibility" is undoubtedly a Western discourse, it is not insignificant for China. It certainly constrains China's policies because the Chinese government's need to maintain or save the state's face is an important factor in political decision-making. The Chinese government does not want to be perceived as a threat but wishes to be seen as a "responsible stakeholder" instead. However, it should be noted that "while China will listen to what others say, it will balance this listening with watching what others do".¹¹⁸⁰ Without the developed countries', especially the US's, serious commitments and ambitious climate mitigation strategies, China will continue to focus on a developing country status and remain unlikely to bear more international responsibility. Apart from financial assistance and technology transfer, there is little that developed countries can do to help China fulfil its climate responsibility. What they can do, however, is to advance their genuine understanding of the Chinese way of thinking and acting. Developed countries should not continuously focus on blaming China for its irresponsibility, but should respect the efforts of the Chinese government because placing blame does not usually consolidate the mutual trust needed in international cooperation. By "giving face" to the Chinese and by recognizing China's progress in several policy areas including environmental issues and also by allowing China to play a more important role in international politics, developed countries could encourage the Chinese government to shoulder more responsibility for contemporary global issues. "Carrots" are important because, in the end, in addition to the US, China is the only country in which national policy can make a global difference.

¹¹⁷⁹ See White House 2014 and White House 2015a.

¹¹⁸⁰ Raine 2009.

9.3 Final remarks on the challenges and prospects of climate responsibility

Some argue that the system of sovereign states itself is the biggest obstacle to effective environmental protection, and hence moving beyond state-centric international society is the precondition for the genuine assimilation of climate responsibility.¹¹⁸¹ I argue that sovereignty per se is not the principal reason why international society is failing to respond to climate change and other global environmental threats. Any other universal political order, whether some kind of world government or cosmopolitan world society, would face exactly the same environmental threats as the international society of states is now facing. Besides, there is no evidence that a world government or world society would be somehow more solidarist or ecocentric than a state-centric international society but they would also be shaped by power struggles and the self-interest calculations of individuals.¹¹⁸² Without a minimum international order it would be very difficult to respond to climate change and organize some kind of mitigation action. If relatively small units like states find it difficult to agree on effective political actions, how would larger units be able to make a difference?

Yet, I agree that the contemporary international society is too state-centric: It focuses too much on *interstate* relations and justice. Although human rights have taken root in international practices, the object of state responsibility is still too often other states or international agreements, not the well-being of people. The key problem is hence not the system of states but the pluralist approach to sovereignty. To be functional in a global era, sovereignty must be redefined in more solidarist terms. As Perrez points out, if “sovereignty is understood as embracing the authority and responsibility to cooperate then it remains an invaluable concept enabling an effective promotion of peace, prosperity and well-being in an increasingly interdependent and complex world”.¹¹⁸³ Moreover, climate change should be increasingly discussed in the context of human rights. This also means that international climate negotiations should pay more attention to adaptation to climate change. If a healthy environment and stable climate system are defined in terms of human rights, then each individual should have the right to adaptation as well.

¹¹⁸¹ See, for example, Falk 1972 and Harris 2013.

¹¹⁸² Williams (2005) indeed points out that world society is probably pluralist.

¹¹⁸³ Perrez 2000, 343.

I suggest that the principal obstacle to assimilating states' climate responsibility is their unswerving faith in continued economic growth. It is related to the fact that the environment itself has no independent standing in international practices; it has no rights and states have no responsibility for its well-being as such. Practices of economic growth have legitimized very technocratic ideas of nature and promoted policies based on cost-benefit calculations, not on genuine value consideration. No doubt there is an urgent need for the decarbonization of the global economy.¹¹⁸⁴ On the one hand, it can be argued that neoliberalist practices have already started to transform along with the entrenchment of climate responsibility. For example, new markets have been created for GHG emissions, which indeed challenge the basic logic of neoliberalism as carbon markets do not exist for their own sake, but for instrumental reasons to reduce emissions. On the other hand, climate responsibility has been constrained to allow economic growth in order to gain international recognition and to diffuse. This has led to compromises and decreased the ambition of climate mitigation plans.

There is clearly a lack of a comprehensive value discussion within international society. For example, does the world worship money, or should we prioritize other values such as (human) life itself, for which a clean environment and climate stability is undoubtedly essential? And what is the intrinsic value of nature? The belief that economic growth increases prosperity is a social construction, not a given fact of life. Therefore, to quote Bosselmann, "It is time for our political institutions to shed their exclusively economically imagined mandate and adopt an ethic of care for the commons".¹¹⁸⁵ Conceptions of "progress" and "development" should hence not only be defined in economic terms but more broadly. From a solidarist perspective, as John Barry suggests, a "conception of progress which does not harm the earth is a superior and more desirable social goal than any for which the preservation of the non-human world is not a major consideration".¹¹⁸⁶

Again, climate change indeed builds momentum for the emergence of a cosmopolitan world society. Although the material consumption of (affluent) individuals is the key source of GHG emissions, contemporary world politics tends to ignore the role of world society. For example, international environmental treaties seek to define the obligations and responsibilities of *states*, not those of *individuals* – or more broadly, those of *cities* as the majority of people now live in

¹¹⁸⁴ See, for example, Newell & Paterson 2010 and Urban & Nordensvärd 2013.

¹¹⁸⁵ Bosselmann 2015, 178.

¹¹⁸⁶ Barry 1999, 67.

cities. Neither IR scholars nor diplomats have discussed the environmental responsibilities of individuals in great depth although one of the most critical questions of our time is how to embolden and mobilize civil society to fulfil their cosmopolitan climate responsibility. States, for their part, play an important role in the empowerment of civil society: They must create and promote practices which actualize cosmopolitan responsibility. In other words, states are needed to mediate solidarist responsibilities not only among themselves, but also among affluent citizens. To use words of Harris, “states and their international organisations ought to enable global citizenship, at least in the context of climate change, alongside national citizenship”.¹¹⁸⁷

While the CBDR was defined as the key rule of the UNFCCC, it seems that distribution of climate responsibility is now changing. Climate change mitigation is no longer only a special responsibility of developed countries, it is becoming a general responsibility of all states. On the one hand, this change indicates that mitigation is seen as a cosmopolitan responsibility of all human beings, regardless of where they happen to live. On the other hand, the focus is still on states and genuine global justice has not materialized. Instead of affluent people being blamed – as they should be – for causing climate change, the poorer citizens of every society are likely to end up paying a higher price of their state’s climate policies. For example, emission reductions are likely to increase energy prices, and low-income citizens spend a relatively bigger portion of their budget on electricity and heating than affluent citizens.¹¹⁸⁸ Therefore, I agree with Harris who suggests that the CBDR *among people* (instead of that of *among countries*) would better capture the global role of affluent (Chinese) individuals, and therefore pay more attention to ethics and justice issues globally.¹¹⁸⁹ For practical reasons, the special responsibility of affluent people would probably be best allocated through cities.

As an answer to the weaknesses of climate responsibility, I propose that international climate practices should be transformed in three fundamental ways. First, the object of climate responsibility should be redefined. Instead of focusing on states’ national interests and rights, climate responsibility should take the well-being of both human beings and nature as an ultimate goal. In particular, economic growth should not be an overriding objective of international practices, instead the dimensions of human well-being should be reassessed in a broader terms. That

¹¹⁸⁷ Harris 2010, 168.

¹¹⁸⁸ See, for example, Farber 2012.

¹¹⁸⁹ Harris 2010.

would also mean international society should respect the intrinsic value of nature as human well-being is highly dependent on the condition of the planet Earth: We are a part of nature, not separate from it. Perhaps a new global covenant would be needed to renew ideas about the human–nature relationship and state responsibility. In particular, if we recognize the intrinsic value of nature, a legal framework defining the rights of nature and protecting the environment *per se* could be valuable. The Earth Charter could provide such a covenant with an enlightened basis and help us create a better society for both humans and non-humans.¹¹⁹⁰

Second, the subject of climate responsibility should also be redefined. Although states remain the most important political actors, international society should not exclusively focus on their role and responsibilities. As evident, states have not been individually or collectively able to prevent or stop environmental degradation. That is why we should not only focus on state responsibility but pay more attention to the role of affluent individuals. Future climate negotiations should hence address how states and international organizations can promote and facilitate cosmopolitan responsibility. Finally, climate responsibility should not be distributed exclusively on the basis of the “supply-side” contribution to climate change but should also pay attention to the “demand-side”. At present, international climate politics tends to focus on the territorial emissions of states, which means that the UNFCCC penalizes countries that produce goods rather than the countries (or more accurately, individuals) that consume them. If these “offshore emissions” were officially acknowledged, it would make international negotiations fairer, generate trust, and may increase China’s willingness to take a more active role in global efforts to mitigate climate change. That is why I suggest that future climate negotiations should pay more attention to the amounts affluent individuals consume rather than the total emissions caused by the production of a state.

Clearly, it is not enough to point out the *need for change* as a critical question is: what are *the drivers of the change* that is needed? What or who could generate the change needed to assume climate responsibility and how? Unfortunately, as James Speth notes, the “surest path to widespread cultural change is a cataclysmic event that profoundly affects shared values and delegitimizes the status quo and existing leadership.”¹¹⁹¹ A fundamental change in and of international practices would hence require such a disastrous and abrupt climate crisis as that pictured by the

¹¹⁹⁰ See also Bosselmann 2015.

¹¹⁹¹ Speth 2008, 211.

Hollywood movie “The Day after Tomorrow”. However, the securitization of climate change is not necessarily a desirable trend. It could lead to a more pluralist international society in which more powerful states could use environmental threats as an excuse to interfere with other states’ internal affairs. Recognizing this, Margaret Beckett, President of the UN Security Council in 2007, defined climate change as “not a matter of narrow national security” but about “our collective security in a fragile and increasingly interdependent world”.¹¹⁹² From this perspective, the securitization of climate change could thus expand solidarist cooperation: “climate change can bring us together, if we have the wisdom to prevent it from driving us apart”.¹¹⁹³ It would promote a global “we-feeling” amongst political leaders and citizens and give impetus to global efforts to prevent harmful climate change. If – or when – the climate crisis becomes more tangible and its adverse effects harm people and nature around the world, it will not be very difficult to imagine that those who reduce their emissions are regarded as “civilized” and those who continue polluting in a business-as-usual style are seen as “uncivilized”.¹¹⁹⁴ If that happens, other international practices are likely to change as well. For example, the mandate of the UN Security Council may be redefined, and the practices of economic growth may have to be stood aside if climate responsibility receives a higher normative standing in the world.

Although I have emphasized the central role of secondary institutions in the processes of defining and distributing global responsibilities, I do not maintain that they are the key to state responsibility. Secondary institutions and international law represent the *minimum*, not the *maximum*, standard of conduct in international relations. Besides, they cannot guarantee that states and individuals change their environmentally harmful practices and polluting lifestyles. Laws cannot force people to obey them, and not even authoritarian governments, such as the Chinese, can achieve widespread compliance simply by issuing a policy or law. In contrast, I argue that states ought to do more than fulfil minimum responsibility in order to be responsible international citizens. They have a forward-looking responsibility to prevent harms and improve international security and human well-being even though they are not to blame for the previous activities that have initially caused the current problems. This idea is captured by the “responsibility to protect” principle. States are responsible for making sure that their contribution to

¹¹⁹² UN 2007.

¹¹⁹³ Beckett quoted in UN 2007.

¹¹⁹⁴ This view is shared by Buzan 2014b, 590–591.

international practices sustains international society, or changes it by making its practices less unjust.¹¹⁹⁵ This means that states have an ultimate responsibility to join in collective action together with non-state actors to reform and change unjust or otherwise harmful international practices whether or not they can be held responsible for causing the state of affairs or whether they have legally determined responsibilities regarding specific international contracts. Sometimes international responsibilities conflict with the short-term national interests of states but governments should not shy away from their responsibility to respond to the common needs of humankind in the long run.

Thus, what the world needs is a paradigm shift that creates a new ecological consciousness and solidarist morals. Vaclav Havel has eloquently described this need for a fundamental change in contemporary international society.

It's fascinating to me how preoccupied people are today with catastrophic prognoses, how books containing evidence of impending crises become bestsellers, but how very little account we take of these threats in our everyday activities...What could change the direction of today's civilization? It is my deep conviction that the only option is a change in the sphere of the spirit, in the sphere of human conscience. It's not enough to invent new machines, new regulations, new institutions. We must develop a new understanding of the true purpose of our existence on this Earth. Only by making such a fundamental shift will we be able to create new models of behaviour and a new set of values for the planet.¹¹⁹⁶

If climate change is defined as a “crisis of the spirit”¹¹⁹⁷ – as both Havel and I believe it should – then the genuine entrenchment of climate responsibility is contingent on the communiqués of global leaders and role models. From this perspective, Pope Francis's encyclical,¹¹⁹⁸ the joint climate statement of religious and faith leaders around the world,¹¹⁹⁹ as well as the increasing number of celebrities participating in environmental campaigns are very auspicious signs. They may have a strong impact on civil society's environmental awareness and discourse

¹¹⁹⁵ There is, however, no simple answer about what it means to be less unjust but it is naturally a political and ethical question.

¹¹⁹⁶ Quoted by Speth 2008, 200.

¹¹⁹⁷ Speth 2008, 200.

¹¹⁹⁸ Francis 2015.

¹¹⁹⁹ Statement of Faith and Spiritual Leaders on the upcoming United Nations Climate Change Conference, COP21 in Paris 2015.

on climate change.¹²⁰⁰ And, if civil society views climate change mitigation as a moral responsibility, it is likely to have a profound influence on international (climate) practices as well.

Due to the state-centric features of international society, state agency and that of great powers is an essential driver of change in international society. Therefore, the leadership of China and the US will be especially crucial for building the political will needed to strengthen climate responsibility. In particular, China plays an increasingly important role in the potential evolution of climate responsibility to a “standard of civilization”. It has great potential for acting as a role model for climate responsibility if it manages to build up an ecological civilization and modernize without recklessly increasing GHG emissions. It has already introduced new concepts related to state responsibility, namely ecological civilization and a new type of great power relationship, both of which have the potential to transform international practices. Although I have not explored ancient Chinese conceptions of the human–nature relationship in depth, this does not mean they are insignificant for contemporary Chinese (climate) practices or international society in general. In contrast, I suggest that IR scholars should pay more attention to traditional Chinese philosophy because it could provide scholars with interesting and fresh ideas. For instance, Kubin suggests that in global era, the “Chinese view of *natura naturans* and the Christian concept of *natura naturata* could complement one another so that nature becomes both the real and the spiritual home of man”.¹²⁰¹ In particular, Daoism and Buddhism could provide fruitful ideas for environmental practices locally and globally. For the time being, however, they seem to have had little effect on Chinese attitudes or behaviour towards nature, and it is not likely that they will increase their popularity in the Chinese political spheres as they form “too radical an alternative to the Communist Party’s statist tradition of remolding nature”.¹²⁰² In contrast, Confucianism’s anthropocentrism could be “well tempered through incorporating a Daoist sense of humility and understanding of humans as part of nature, an approach articulated by a surprising number of educated young Chinese”.¹²⁰³ From the perspective of climate responsibility, an important question is whether China’s new conceptions of

¹²⁰⁰ In China, for example, the baseball celebrity Yao Ming and movie star Jackie Chan have had an influential role in WildAid’s successful campaign against shark fin soup.

¹²⁰¹ Kubin 2012, 524.

¹²⁰² Shapiro 2001, 214.

¹²⁰³ Shapiro 2001, 214.

responsibility or philosophical traditions are going to have a genuine global influence in the defining of great power responsibilities and/or providing the world with new ideas about the human–nature relationship.

Almost a hundred years ago, Eagleton concluded his masterpiece on state responsibility with the following words:

It is not a question of whether a state must submit to greater and greater responsibility under international law – that is inevitable. The only remaining question is as to the most efficient machinery for interpreting, administering, and enforcing that responsibility.¹²⁰⁴

Today, this question could not be more pressing and timely.

¹²⁰⁴ Eagleton 1928, 229.

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