

The London School of Economics and Political Science

**Strategic Concepts and Interest Groups in
China's Environmental Foreign Relations
(1984-2015)**

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Relations of the London School of Economics for the degree
of Doctor of Philosophy, London, September 2016.

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Abstract

This thesis introduces an overlooked perspective on Chinese foreign policy, that of interest groups. I use environmental foreign relations as a vantage point to examine how domestic interest groups exert influence on China's environmental foreign relations. The proposed theoretical framework, constructivist utilitarianism, provides a bridge between the constructivist school and rationalistic institutionalism in the IR debate to explain the discursive turn of the Chinese government in global environmental governance. The discursive turn refers to the changing attitudes towards environmental governance based on learning, shared experiences, and offering an alternative norm to replace liberal environmentalism.

The interest groups under scrutiny are line ministries, state-owned enterprises, environmental non-governmental organisations, local governors, and intellectuals. They each represent a distinct interest, and demonstrate different pathways for influencing foreign relations. The focus on domestic players supplements the traditional focus on international systemic factors to explain the behaviour of China on the global stage and in bilateral relations. The empirical chapters are organised according to three dimensions: international environmental treaty implementation, sharing the Chinese experience, and offering an alternative environmental norm. Each chapter focuses on one factor, in the following order: environmental diplomacy, the Chinese experience, and ecological civilisation. These three dimensions reflect the trend of the discursive turn, which is closely linked to China's desire to establish a good national image.

My findings show that interest groups in China utilise the strategic concepts of environmental diplomacy and the Chinese experience to maximise their interests. The emergence of the discourse of ecological civilisation creates space for different groups to jump onto the bandwagon by interpreting the concept in favour of their interests. In this process, identity politics becomes a mechanism by which to aggregate and rank domestic preferences in such a way that economic interests outweigh environmental ones at the state level. This thesis calls for more future research to examine other foreign relations issues through the lens of interest groups, to better comprehend the complex dynamics of China's role in the world.

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List of abbreviations

Asian Development Bank	ADB
Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa	BRICS
Build-Operate-Transfer	BOT
Carbon tetrachloride	CTC
Center for Environmental Education and Communications	CEEC
China Academic Journal Database	CNKI
China Biodiversity Conservation Action Plan	Action Plan
China Council for International Cooperation on Environment and Development	CCICED
China Environment News	CEN
China Institute of International Studies	CIIS
China International Center for Economic and Technical Exchanges	CICETE
China National Petroleum Corporation	CNPC
China's Country Programme for the Phaseout of Ozone Depleting Substances under the Montreal Protocol	Country Programme
Chinese Communist Party	CCP
Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference	CPPCC
Cholorofluorocarbon	CFC
Clean Development Mechanism	CDM
Conference of Parties	COP
Convention on Biological Diversity	CBD
Corporate social responsibility	CSR
Department of Foreign Assistance	DFA
Department of Outward Investment and Economic Cooperation	DOIEC
Directorate-General for Environment of the European Commission	DG Env
Ecological modernisation	EM
Environmental Management Plan	EMP
Environmental Non-government organisation	ENGO
Export and Import Bank of China	EXIM
Five Year Plan	FYP
Foreign direct investment	FDI

Global Environmental Facility	GEF
Global Environmental Institute	GEI
Government of Laos	GoL
Government-organised non-governmental organisation	GONGO
Group of Seven	G7
Guiyang Eco Forum Global	Guiyang Forum
High Net Wealth Individual	HNWI
Hydrochlorofluorocarbon	HCFC
Institute for Postmodern Development of China	IPDC
Institutional Innovation of Ecological Civilisation: Conceptual Understanding and Experience Reference	Institutional Innovation Report
Intellectual property rights	IPRs
International environmental agreement	IEA
International environmental non-governmental organisation	IENGO
Lao-China Centre for Sustainable Land and Natural Resources Management	Lao-China Land Project
Memorandum of Understanding	MOU
Ministry of Commerce	MOFCOM
Ministry of Environmental Protection	MEP
Ministry of Foreign Affairs	MOFA
Ministry of Foreign Trade and Economic Cooperation	MOFTEC
Ministry of Science and Technology	MOST
Multilateral environmental agreement	MEA
Multilateral Fund	MLF
Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency	MIGA
Nam Ngum 5 Ban Chim Village Biogas	The Biogas Project
Technology Promotion Project	
Nam Ngum 5 Hydropower Station	NN5
Nam Ngum 5 Power Company Ltd	NN5PC
National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans	NBSAP
National Development and Reform Commission	NDRC
National Land Management Authority	NLMA
Non-governmental organisation	NGO
Office of Financial Work Leading Group	OFWLG
Official Development Assistance	ODA
Opinions of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of	The Opinions

China and the State Council on Further Promoting the Development of Ecological Civilisation	
Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development	OECD
Outward foreign direct investment	OFDI
Ozone-depleting substances	ODSs
People's Republic of China	PRC
Sinohydro Corporation of China	Sinohydro
Social Action Plan	SAP
South-South Cooperation	SSC
Soviet Union	USSR
State Commission Environmental Protection	SCEP
State Development Planning Commission	SDPC
State Environmental Protection Agency	SEPA
State Environmental Protection Bureau	SEPB
State Forestry Administration	SFA
State-owned enterprise	SOE
The Central Leading Group for Comprehensive Deepening of Reforms	The leading group
The Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer	The Montreal Protocol
Township and village enterprises	TVEs
Traditional Chinese Medicine	TCM
United Nations Conference on Environment and Development	UNC/ Rio Summit
United Nations Conference on Human Environment	UNCHE
United Nations Development Programme	UNDP
United Nations Environment Programme	UNEP
United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change	UNFCCC
University of International Business and Economics	UIBE
World Trade Organisation	WTO

Chapter 1 Introduction

“It is harder to touch one’s interests than to touch their souls.”

--Qu Geping (Director of the State Environmental Agency)

1.1 Subject and context

This thesis poses the hypothesis that China’s policies towards global environmental governance can only be understood by taking into account the role of domestic interest groups. When I introduced this hypothesis to those who were interested in my research, my audience was puzzled about two sub-questions: are there any interest groups in China? And why do domestic groups matter in China’s foreign relations, considering China is an authoritarian regime featured by a top-down decision-making? In fact, interest groups are frequently criticised by the public in China, as they are seen as opposing political reform and as the root of stagnated environmental policy implementation. Yet, their image remains blurred and the discussion of their role in both China’s domestic and foreign policies is constrained¹, despite the fact that the role of domestic players has become increasingly relevant as diplomatic strategy has evolved from the covert United Front to the so-called “people-to-people” diplomacy² which is predicated on the perception that foreign relations cannot be sustained

¹ Yuwen Deng, “The Seven Vested Interest Groups in China,” *Chinascope*, no. 63 (April 24, 2013): 41.

² Shichen Wang, “China’s People-to-People Diplomacy and Its Importance to China-EU Relations,” in *UACES 45th Annual Conference* (UACES 45th Annual Conference, Bilbao, 2015), <http://www.uaces.org/documents/papers/1501/Wang.pdf>.

without public support³. Only by understanding how domestic groups take part in China's foreign relations can we better comprehend its role and behaviour in global environmental governance.

The quote above is in fact Qu Geping's answer to the question: "what is the biggest resistance and bottleneck in smog reduction"⁴. His reply addresses other environmental problems China faces. As the first director of the State Environmental Protection Agency⁵, the retired official identified vested interests as the "elephant in the room" regarding China's environmental governance. In a more frequently cited quote in an interview with the *Southern Weekend* 南方周末 newspaper in 2013, he goes so far as to warn that environmental issues are of equal importance to the battle against corruption, because both have potential to overthrow the Party-state and are matters of the very survival of the regime (original quote in Chinese: *buxiaochu huanjingwuran, bu baohu huanjing, yeyao wangdangwangguo* 不消除环境污染, 不保护好环境, 也要亡党亡国)⁶.

³ Zhiqun Zhu, "The Power of People-to-People Diplomacy in Japan-China Relations," *China Policy Institute: Analysis*, February 27, 2015, <https://cpianalysis.org/2015/02/27/the-power-of-people-to-people-diplomacy-in-japan-china-relations/>.

⁴ Lei 雷 Zheng 郑, "bu Bao Hu Hao Sheng Tai Huan Jing, Ye Yao Wang Dang Wang Guo 不保护好生态环境, 也要亡党亡国' [Ecological Crisis May Threaten the Survival of the Party-State]," *Qu Lu Wan Bao* 齐鲁晚报[*Qilu EveningNews*], March 24, 2014,

<http://epaper.qlwb.com.cn/qlwb/content/20140324/ArticelA04002FM.htm>.

⁵ Qu is the chief architect designing measures to integrate environmental protection policies with economic development, and his efforts in environmental governance made him to be the very first Chinese citizen who was awarded with United Nations Environment Programme Sasakawa Prize.

⁶ Geping 格平 Qu 曲, "Guo jia huan bao ju shou ren ju zhang: bu xiao chu huan jing wu ran hui wang dang wang guo" 国家环保局首任局长: 不消除环境污染会亡党亡国, [Ecological crisis may threaten the survival of the Party-state], interview by Tao 韶 Wang 汪 and Hongjun 红军 Zhu 朱, June 7, 2013,

http://news.ifeng.com/shendu/nfzm/detail_2013_06/07/26205127_0.shtml.

Qu Geping's warning might have struck a cacophonous chord in the "hymn" to China's economic achievements. Even if one disagrees with the claimed severity of the threat posed by environmental protection to the regime's survival, it is almost impossible to deny the fact that China is an environmentally-weak country (*huanjing ruoguo* 环境弱国), in contrast to its economic clout and military muscle. In an article titled "Environmental Problems Are Fully Weakening China" published in the Party-owned *Global Times* 环球时报, Feng Zhaokui, an expert in Sino-Japanese relations, clarified that the term "environmentally-weak country" acknowledges how the fragile ecology in China has a weakening effect on the country. Using the statistics from the World Bank, Chinese Academy of Science and State Environmental Protection Bureau in 2007, he demonstrates that the annual loss caused by environmental pollution occupies around 10% of GDP⁷. A more recent report by the National Audit Office seems to support Feng's worries about the economic loss related to environmental problems. The nationwide survey administered by the National Audit Office on 883 water pollution and treatment projects reveals that about \$2.5 billion worth of special funding has been "either ignored or misappropriated", with \$430 million unused, 40million wasted, and more than 9 million embezzled⁸. Economic loss due to environmental pollution results mainly from the efforts of various interest groups to preserve their

⁷ Zhaokui 昭奎 Feng 冯, "Huan Jing Wen Ti Zheng Quan Mian 'Ruo Hua' Zhong Guo 环境问题正全面'弱化'中国[Environmental Problems Are Comprehensively Weakening China]," *Huan Qiu Shi Bao* 环球时报 [*Global Times*], October 11, 2014, http://opinion.huanqiu.com/opinion_world/2014-10/5162705.html.

⁸"170 Duo Yi Shui Wu Ran Fang Zhi Zi Jin Wei You Xiao Shi Yong, Cun Zai Wei Ji Shi Bo Fu Zi Jin Xian Zhi Lang Fei Deng Wen ti'170 多亿水污染防治资金未有效使用 存在未及时拨付、资金闲置浪费等问题 [Ineffective Usage of Water Pollution Prevention Fund due to Idle Funds]," *Zhong Guo Huan Jing Bao* 中国环境报 [*China Environment News*], July 1, 2016, http://www.zhb.gov.cn/xxgk/hjyw/201607/t20160701_356570.shtml.

interests at the cost of the environment. To put this into perspective, the money wasted on water treatment alone is more than the GDP of sovereign states like Bhutan and Liberia⁹.

Both Qu Geping and Feng Zhaokui seem to contradict the optimistic evaluation of Thomas Friedman of the efficiency of a one-party autocracy, due to its ability to “impose the politically difficult but critically important policies needed to move a society forward in the 21st century”, which is based on his observation of the Chinese government’s investment in clean energy¹⁰. In fact, different views, whether optimistic or pessimistic, on China’s behaviour in environmental governance typify a paradoxical national image, featuring what Callahan summarises as a disjunction between great ambition and middling abilities¹¹. The contrast between a pessimistic self-evaluation of environmental performance by Chinese officials and commentators on the one hand and the optimism of Western journalists like Friedman on the other, results from their different conceptualisations of China’s political system. Whereas Friedman views China as an autocracy ruled by a small number of enlightened political elites who are able to mobilise resources to achieve what is good for the public, Qu and Fang see a much more complicated picture, in which a plurality of political actors play their parts in environmental governance, some promoting and others prohibiting environmental protection. The way Friedman understands China is used to highlight the shortcomings of the democratic system in the US, and therefore, the difference between autocratic regime and

⁹ The statistics of GDP is retrieved from the database of the World Bank.
<http://databank.worldbank.org/data/download/GDP.pdf>

¹⁰ Thomas L. Friedman, “Our One-Party Democracy,” *The New York Times*, September 8, 2009, <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/09/09/opinion/09friedman.html>.

¹¹ William Callahan, *China: The Pessoptimist Nation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010). p.199.

democracies is stressed, and even inflated. However, insiders such as Qu and Fang capture the common problem faced by both autocracies and democracies: the presence and influence of interest groups.

The relevance of various domestic groups in the political landscape in China is convincingly theorised by Lieberthal and Oksenberg as “a fragmented structure of authority”¹² in an onion-shaped decision making system, with a core group of the highest ranking leaders at the heart and line ministries implementing policies in the outer layer. Lieberthal and Oksenberg’s research is taken further by Andrew Mertha in the context of an increasingly pluralised authoritarian regime. The authoritarian regime 2.0 model, as Mertha terms it, includes previously excluded actors such as peripheral officials, journalists, and social organisations¹³. The system defined by Lieberthal and Oksenberg, together with Mertha, not only opens up the possibility of better understanding the domestic policy making process, but also establishes the research agenda for our understanding of Chinese foreign policy and how China portrays herself as a global power.

Perhaps the biggest contribution of the concept of fragmented authoritarianism studies to my research is the reminder that interests are diverse and groups or individuals see the same issue differently, based on their cost-benefit analysis. As far as environmental issues are concerned, the internal calculation yields relevance to international relations, starting from the individual level. Findings from the Hurun report “Immigration and the Chinese

¹² Kenneth Lieberthal and Michel Oksenberg, *Policy Making in China: Leaders, Structures, and Processes* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988), p.22.

¹³ Andrew Mertha, “Fragmented Authoritarianism 2.0’: Political Pluralization in the Chinese Policy Process,” *The China Quarterly* 200 (2009): p.997.

High Net Wealth Individual (HNWI) 2015” reveal that the top three reasons behind HNWI’s decisions to emigrate are issues of education (22%), environmental pollution (20%), and food safety (18%)¹⁴. That is to say, one fifth of HNWIs seek a new life abroad due to their concerns about environmental problems in China, and a polluted homeland has harmed their personal interests. The statistics reflect the salience of environmental pollution in individuals’ interest, and capture the trend of seeing emigration as a “solution” to the national environmental challenge.

The historical context for the rise of interest groups and new actors dates back to Deng Xiaoping’s Southern Tour in 1992, after which business interests started making inroads into political life. As the most influential reformist leader, Deng diluted the importance of ideological conflicts between socialism and capitalism, which helped to maintain the Communist Party’s monopoly on power¹⁵. As paraphrased by Deng’s former interpreter, Gao Zhikai, Deng’s 1992 speech claimed that “China had to refuse to be bogged down by ideological labelling and ossification”¹⁶ and should focus on development and prosperity. Deng’s speech was received as legitimating and encouraging the private pursuit of material wealth.

Deng’s speech encouraged people to enter the business world and pursue wealth (*xiahai* 下海). Statistics from the China Business Times suggests that more than 100,000 elite party members quit their “iron rice bowl” (*tie fanwan* 铁饭碗) and started their businesses. This batch of elite individuals was

¹⁴ “2015 zhong guo tou zi yi min bai pi shu2015 中国投资移民白皮书” [White paper on China’s investment emigrants in 2015], *Hurun report* 胡润百富. 2015.

<http://up.hurun.net/Hufiles/201512/201511/20151130101018776.pdf>.

¹⁵ Christopher Hughes, *Chinese Nationalism in the Global Era* (London: Routledge, 2006), p.49.

¹⁶ Zhikai Victor Gao, “Deng’s Pragmatic Heritage Example for Leaders Worldwide,” *Global Times*, February 5, 2012.

named after this critical year, the “1992 group” (jiu’er pai 九二派). They all had prominent positions in the government, which allowed them to translate political resources (experience, expertise, networks, etc) into advantage in the market economy. In this light, bureaucratic interests existing before 1992 were partly transformed into business interests. Furthermore, the 92 entrepreneurs represented a change of interests from the state to the private sphere. To a great extent, the Southern Tour paved the way for the development of interest groups in the Communist regime and made it possible for domestic groups representing different interests to participate in the political sphere systematically.

This growth of interest groups is parallel with the intensification of international environmental cooperation in the 1990s and the two became connected with the rise and development of the environmental protection industry. The government accepted the concept of an environmental protection industry as a new area for business in the process of environmental cooperation, and the new industry benefitted from foreign sources of funding and technology transfer. In the 1990s, around 15% of total spending on environmental management in China was from multilateral and bilateral sources and aid budgets¹⁷. The World Bank, Asian Development Bank and UNDP were the most important multilateral sources of funding. The former played a particularly active role in the building of environmental infrastructure, water supply, waste treatment and management. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) was the central organisation to provide grants for environmental

¹⁷ Bruce Tremayne and Penny de Waal, “Business Opportunities for Foreign Firms Related to China’s Environment,” *The China Quarterly* 156 (December 1998): p.1030.

projects focusing on training, environmental consulting and equipment procurement, in cooperation with the then Ministry of Foreign Trade and Economic Cooperation, now the Ministry of Commerce (MOFCOM). In addition, the process of international treaty implementation further promoted the growth of the environmental protection industry in China. The implementation of the Montreal Protocol, which will be elaborated in Chapter 5, epitomises how international funding to improve the environmental protection industry can be taken advantage of by interest groups.

In the early 1990s, the government defined this industry as the “sunrise” industry (*zhaoyang qiye* 朝阳企业), which enjoyed the privilege of governmental support and preferential policies. In the first environmental protection industry meeting in 1992, the government promised enterprises specialising in protecting the environment that the majority of environmental protection products would continue to be provided by domestic firms¹⁸. The China Environmental Protection Industry Association was established in 1993 to coordinate and guide the young industry and facilitate the role of the environmental protection industry as a window of international cooperation¹⁹.

In spite of the central government’s support, the environmental protection industry has traditionally been scattered and dominated by small-sized township and village enterprises (TVEs). Due to backward technology and a lack of resources, these are vulnerable to competition from multinational

¹⁸ “GATT Chuang Jin Guo Men Yi Hou GATT 闯进国门以后 [After GATT Entered China],” *China Environment News* 中国环境报, January 30, 1993.

¹⁹ Ting 霆 Chen 陈, “‘Zhong Guo Huan Bao Chan Ye Xie Hui Ming Ri Cheng Li: Zhao Yang Chan Ye Hu Huan Guo Jia Dui’ 中国环保产业协会明日成立：朝阳产业呼唤国家队 [The Establishment of the China Environmental Protection Industry Association: Sunrise Industry Calling for National Team],” *China Environment News* 中国环境报, March 4, 1993.

corporations. In the field of water treatment and management, for instance, the Chinese domestic market has been dominated by Vivendi (Veolia since 2003) and Suez Environment from France, and Thames Water from the United Kingdom²⁰. No domestic enterprises can compete with these foreign corporations due to their possession of advanced technology and considerable amounts of capital, which makes them preferable for local governments²¹. The expansion of multinational corporations in the Chinese water market ultimately reached such a degree that their efforts were described as a strategy to construct a “water empire” in an article published by the official Xinhua news agency in 2006²².

This foreign competition prompted decision-makers to adopt two strategies: the promulgation of protectionist policies for the domestic environmental protection industry; and the encouragement of the burgeoning sector to explore overseas markets, as part of the “Go Global” strategy. The primary destination for Chinese firms was developing countries, which could be used as a springboard for exploration of the overseas environmental protection market²³.

²⁰ “Yang Shui Wu Yong Ru Zhong Guo Shi chang’洋水务”涌入中国市场[Foreign Water Companies Are Occupying the Chinese Market],” *Shi Chang Bao* 市场报[Market Newspaper], February 7, 2001, <http://www.china.com.cn/chinese/2001/Feb/19676.htm>.

²¹ Yunxiao 云霄 Min 阎, “Yang Shui Wu Jin Jun Guo Nei Shui Wu Shi Chang Jiu Fen Bu Duan, Bei Zhi Tui Gao Shui Jia’洋水务进军国内水务市场纠纷不断 被指推高水价 [Foreign Water Companies Occupydomestic Market Accused of Raising the Water Bill],” *Zhong Guo Qi Ye Bao* 中国企业报[China Enterprise News], April 22, 2014, <http://finance.sina.com.cn/chanjing/cyxw/20140422/022718872196.shtml>.

²² “Yang Shui Wu Zhong Guo Mou Ju, Zai Hua Gou Jian Shui Wu Di Guo Lu Xian Tu”洋水务’中国谋局 在华构建‘水务帝国’路线图[The Plot of Foreign Water Companies, the Roadmap of the ‘Water Empire’ in China].” *Zhong Guo Jing Ying Bao* 中国经营报[China Business], September 3, 2006, http://news.xinhuanet.com/fortune/2006-09/23/content_5127217.htm.

²³ Yong 勇 Huang 黄, “fa Zhan Shuang Bian He Zuo, Jia Qiang Duo Bian He Zuo, Huan Jing Bao Hu Guo Ji He Zuo Fang Zhen Ping Shu’发展双边合作 加强多边合作: 环境保护国际合作方针评述 [Develop Bilateral Cooperation and Strengthen Bilateral Cooperation: Comments on International Environmental Cooperation],” *China Environment News*, February 15, 2003.

Fast forwarding to 2010, the State Council promulgated a decision which defines the energy saving and environmental protection industry as “emerging industries of strategic importance” (*zhanlüe xing xinxing chanye* 戰略性新兴产业). They are industries that will “lead the future social and economic development”, which will in turn help China to “seize the high ground in a new round of economic and technological development”²⁴. Comparing the Environmental Protection Law of 1989 with the revised one of 2015, one notable difference is the explicit presence of the environmental protection industry in articles 7 and 21 of the newer version. This policy change indicates the central government’s support for the scientific research of the industry and its willingness to use preferential policies to facilitate its development²⁵. Moreover, Chinese capital now targets lucrative and low-risk industries associated with the building of environmental protection infrastructure in developed countries. The most recent example is the 8.68% stake in Thames Water acquired by the China Investment Corporation, China’s \$410 billion-worth sovereign wealth fund²⁶.

The evolution of China’s environmental protection industry is thus a microcosm of the intertwined, yet competing domestic and foreign interests that are involved in international environmental cooperation. The industry in China is also, in itself, a reflection of the breakdown of the “national interest” implicit in the industrial development plan and hence a testimony to the

²⁴ State Council, *Decision of the State Council on Accelerating the Fostering and Development of Strategic Emerging Industries*, vol. No 32 [2010], 2010, <http://www.lawinfochina.com/display.aspx?ib=law&id=8570>.

²⁵ A clear comparison is available online: <http://www.croplifechina.org/china.pdf>

²⁶ Anousha Sakoui, “China Buys Stake in Thames Water,” *Financial Times*, January 20, 2012, <http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/7b19ca2e-42c0-11e1-b756-00144feab49a.html#axzz4ISkIEWem>.

broader relevance of domestic interest groups in foreign relations. Furthermore, the move from the initial process of learning from abroad to the stage of going abroad to compete shows how China's environmental international relations and its role in global environmental governance has moved from a process of input to output and from the role of benefactor to contributor, or even competitor.

1.2 The literature

One reason why the interest group perspective is neglected in the literature on China's role in the global environmental governance is the mainstream tendency to investigate the causal link between regime type and the environmental performance. The central debate in this strand of research is whether democracies or autocracies are more likely to display environmentally-friendly behaviour in the global environmental governance. Researchers advocating democracy tend to be more environmentally-friendly and have high expectations of the positive influence of political plurality on environmental governance. Payne, for example, outlines five values that are prevalent in democracies and help solve global ecological crisis: 1) Individual rights and the free dissemination of ideas make it easier for the public to participate and harder for those in power to cheat. 2) Regime responsiveness that results from elections and the political interest of politicians to get elected. 3) The ability of both officials and the public to learn from successful and failed experiences, like "policy laboratories", which also means that the universal

application of one democracy's experience to other contexts. 4) Democrats' faith in international organisations and a preference for using cooperation to solve shared problems. 5) Open markets, which are critical for shaping enterprise production through green consumerism²⁷. Fredriksson *et al*²⁸ further add that that the presence of lobby groups and electoral competition positively correlates with the stringency of environmental policies.

However, this optimistic view of democracy is challenged by the postulation that authoritarian regimes are more capable and efficient in addressing complex political and environmental issues, because autocrats can bypass the institutional constraints which may hinder leaders in democratic countries. Neumayer²⁹ thus delinks the correlation between democracy and environmental *outcomes*, although his findings do at least suggest a close connection between the nature of democracies and their *stance* on environmental commitment. Beeson goes further, and paints the "dispiriting reality" of the Asia-Pacific region that "authoritarian regimes - unattractive as they may be - may even prove more capable of responding to the complex political and environmental pressures in the region than some of its democracies"³⁰. This is because the issue of environmental protection requires state capacity, which is strengthened in authoritarian polities and weakened in democracies. Echoing Beeson's prediction is Leinaweafer's quantitative analysis of decisions by autocrats to ratify environmental treaties. He observes

²⁷ Rodger A. Payne, "Freedom and the Environment," *Journal of Democracy* 6, no. 3 (1995): pp.41–55.

²⁸ Per G. Fredriksson *et al.*, "Environmentalism, Democracy, and Pollution Control," *Journal of Environmental Economics and Management* 49, no. 2 (March 2005): pp.343–65.

²⁹ Eric Neumayer, "Do Democracies Exhibit Stronger International Environmental Commitment? A Cross-Country Analysis," *Journal of Peace Research* 39, no. 2 (2002): p.139.

³⁰ Mark Beeson, "The Coming of Environmental Authoritarianism," *Environmental Politics* 19, no. 2 (2010): p.276.

that dictators ratified up to 50% of environmental accords which autocracies were invited to join and that the key explanatory for this is the concern of dictators for political survival³¹. Hence “autocratic ratification” is in fact “environmental cooperation to prolong survival”³².

Both of the above perspectives, however, ignore intra-group variation, namely the differences within democratic countries and autocracies. Moving beyond this approach, Böhmelt deploys the theory of public goods to open the “black box” of autocracies³³, which breaks down into four types: one-party regime, personalist dictatorship, monarchy, and military rule. He then examines the role of environmental NGOs (ENGOS) in ratification of environmental international accords in each of these categories. His research is inspired by Bernauer and Koubi’s research on the provision of public goods in democracies and is predicated on the thesis that the size of the winning coalition explains the likelihood of political systems to provide environmental public goods³⁴. He observes a substantial variation among autocracies regarding the ENGOS’ role in autocracies’ commitment to environmental treaties, and argues that the NGO plays a more obvious role in personalist dictatorship, due to the small winning coalition size, which creates a significant margin for NGOs to exert influence.

³¹ Justin Leinaweaiver, “Autocratic Ratification: Environmental Cooperation to Prolong Survival,” SSRN Scholarly Paper (Rochester, NY: Social Science Research Network, June 15, 2012), p.37, <http://papers.ssrn.com/abstract=2084866>.

³² Ibid, p.1.

³³ Tobias Böhmelt, “Environmental Interest Groups and Authoritarian Regime Diversity,” *VOLUNTAS: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations* 26, no. 1 (December 10, 2013): pp.315–35.

³⁴ Thomas Bernauer and Vally Koubi, “Effects of Political Institutions on Air Quality,” *Ecological Economics* 68, no. 5 (March 15, 2009): pp.1355–65.

However, there are two flaws in this argument. One, which is identified by himself, is that while it may hold true that in a personal dictatorship, NGOs have a bigger *potential* to influence environmental commitment, their presence is very much subject to the hostile attitudes of autocrats in the beginning. Hence, the primary challenge is more one of survival than of influence. Secondly, he assumes that a one-party system is more likely to provide public goods because the size of the winning coalition is too big for the autocrat to afford to reward each ally. This assumption ignores the dynamics of issue linkage between environmental protection and economic development in developing countries, such as China. Environmental public goods are not the only public good in China and the improvement of economic conditions is also deemed as a public good. Therefore, to further improve his research, one must look at the ways in which interests are aligned within China. This leads us to the national Chinese discussion of how environmental interests are related to other interests.

Unlike the heavy emphasis placed on the correlation between regime type and environmental cooperation in the above approaches, research by Chinese scholars on environmental diplomacy tends to focus on national interests, business interests and China's role in global environmental governance.

National interests: these are understood as embedded in the conflict of interests between the Southern and Northern countries, or the developing and developed countries³⁵. Security and the national image are the two principal constituents of the national interest in the post-Cold War world order. The

³⁵ Haibin 海滨 Zhang, “‘zhong guo huan jing wai jiao chu tan’中国环境外交初探[A probe to China’s environmental diplomacy],” *北京大学学报(哲学社会科学版)Journal of Peking University(Humanities and Social Sciences)*, no. 05 (1993): pp.37–43.

latter plays an increasingly important role, as political ideological differences have been diluted and the “green image” has become a defining factor in how a state is perceived in the international community³⁶. National image matters to the Chinese government, as it demonstrates the international status of China as a rising power, which craves respect and prestige³⁷. An improvement in the national image may also dilute what is called the “China threat” thesis from the West and ensure a benign political environment in which to facilitate China’s “peaceful rise”³⁸.

This focus on national image building can be seen from the “new environmental diplomacy perspective” (*xin huanjing waijiaoguan* 新环境外交观) of Wu Zhaoxue and Li Yuanzhe³⁹. They contend that this “new” perspective aims at constructing a harmonious world based on mutual help and the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities. The novelty of environmental diplomacy is echoed by Pan Yue who suggests that a new strategy must be developed in line with Hu Jintao’s “scientific outlook of development”, the dominant ideological line at the time⁴⁰. Scholars like Yuan

³⁶ Yi 穆 Wang 王, “huan jing wai jiao yu zhong guo”环境外交与中国 [Environmental diplomacy and China],” 科技潮 [*Science and Culture*], no. 01 (2000): p.13.

³⁷ Jie 捷 Zheng 郑, “Zhong Guo Huan Jing Wai Jiao de Fa Zhan Li Cheng Ji Qi Zai Guo Ji She Hui Zhong de Di Wei He Zuo Yong”中国环境外交的发展历程及其在国际社会中的地位和作用 [The Course and Its International Status and Role of China Environmental Diplomacy],” 福建环境 [*Fujian Environment*] 1 (2001).

³⁸ Xiuqing 秀清 Guo 郭, “Xin Shi Ji Zhong Guo Huan Jing Wai Jiao de Li Shi Zhong Ren”新世纪中国环境外交的历史重任 [Historical Mission of China’s Environmental Diplomacy in the New Century],” 南京政治学院学报 [*Journal O F PLA Na Njing Institute of Politics*] 24, no. 4 (2008): pp.64-67.

³⁹ Zhaoxue 兆雪 Wu 吴 and Yuanzhe 渊喆 Li 李, “He Hu Di Qiu Jia Yuan Gou Jian He Xie Shi Jie-Jian Lun Zhong Guo Huan Jing Wai Jiao Guan”呵护地球家园、构建和谐世界——简论中国新环境外交观 [A Brief Discussion of the New Environmental Diplomacy Perspective],” 理论建设 [*Theory Research*] 1 (2008): pp.34-35.

⁴⁰ Yue 岳 Pan 潘, “Ke Xue Fa Zhan Yu Huan Jing Bao hu”科学发展与环境保护 [Scientific Outlook of Development and Environmental Protection],” Zi Guang Ge 紫光阁 4 (2008): p.23.

Lihong⁴¹ further propose adding Chinese characteristics to environmental diplomacy to use its political advantages to change the PRC's vulnerable position in the globalisation of capitalism. Ye Jing goes further, linking traditional culture with environmental diplomacy, and emphasises the unity between nature and human beings as the ecological view for promoting the CCP's orthodox foreign policy vision of a "harmonious world"⁴². No matter how new the perspective is, that China has a dual identity in global governance seems to be a consensus among academics. On the one hand, it is a developing country that is still in need of international assistance; on the other, the government portrays the image of a "responsible power" with the ambition of not only fulfilling commitments but also contributing more to global environmental governance⁴³.

Business interests: Around the time when China prepared to enter the WTO, discussion revolving around environmental diplomacy was shifting towards business interests with a particular concern about environmental trade barriers, or "green barriers". For instance, Zhu argues that the environmental management standard of ISO 14000 imposed by European countries may pose a challenge for China's exports and that Chinese enterprises should adopt this standard and seize the "green business opportunity" (*lǜse shangji* 绿色商机)⁴⁴.

⁴¹ Lihong 丽红 Yuan 原, "从环境外交困境看中国生态文明建设," *南京林业大学学报* [Journal of Nanjing Forestry University] 3: 2008.

⁴² Jing 静 Ye 叶, "Zhong Guo Chuan Tong Wen Hua Jing Shen Yu Dang Dai Zhong Guo Wai Jiao' 中国传统外交精神与当代中国外交 [Traditional Cultural Spirits and Modern Diplomacy of China]," *华中农业大学学报* [Journal of Huazhong Agricultural University] 5 (2008): pp.62-70.

⁴³ Zhengxiang 正祥 Pan 潘 and Xiaowen 小文 Wang 汪, "Shuang Chong Guo Jia Shen Fen Yu Zhong Guo Huan Jing Wai Jiao' 双重国家身份与中国环境外交 [Dual National Identity and China's Environmental Diplomacy]," *理论建设* [Theory Research] 2 (2012): pp.27-30.

⁴⁴ Zhenzhong 振中 Zhu 朱, "ISO14000 Ji Qi Dai Lai de Lü Se Shang ji'ISO14000 及其带来的'绿色'商机 [ISO14000 and the 'Green' Opportunities]," *商业研究* [Commercial Research] 1 (2000): pp.130-31.

Environmental cooperation was also expected by Chinese academics to be a diplomatic tool to solve trade disputes and references to the environment were held to be merely empty rhetoric⁴⁵. Zhu also highlights the role of transnational companies as bearers of higher environmental standards in global governance, which creates an intimate relationship between environmental cooperation and foreign trade and investment⁴⁶. Views on the relationship between environmental diplomacy and the green barrier have changed after more than ten years of discussion, however. Liu Dongguo from Renmin University, for example, refutes the idea that one must use diplomatic resources to “fight the battle of the green trade barrier”. Instead, the green transformation of the Chinese economy is the way to deal with non-tariff barriers⁴⁷. The thesis of using international pressure to improve the domestic economic structure is echoed by Yu Hongyuan, who suggests that environmental diplomacy is a catalyst for the new energy industry in China⁴⁸.

Whereas Chinese researchers focus on the pursuit of Chinese interests in environmental cooperation, the English-language literature provides a rich understanding of how multilateral, regional, and bilateral interests shape or facilitate reform in the environmental protection sector. Choi, for example,

⁴⁵ Zhong 仲, Xin 鑑, and Xiangdong 向东 Chen 陈. ““Huan Jing Bi Lei Dui Wo Guo Shang Pin Chu Kou de Ying Xiang Ji Dui Ce’环境壁垒对我国商品出口的影响及对策 [The Impact and Countermeasures of Environmental Barriers on the Export of China].” *中国流通经济[China Business and Market]*, no. 2 (2003): 46–50.

⁴⁶ Sumei 素梅 Zhu 朱, “Quan Qiu Huan Bao Ling Yu Zhong de Kua Guo Gong Si Ji Qi Huan Jing Wai Jiao’全球环保领域中的跨国公司及其环境外交 [MNCs in the Global Environmental Governance and Environmental Diplomacy],” *世界经济与政治[World Economics and Politics]* 5 (2000): pp.65–69.

⁴⁷ Dongguo 东国 Liu 刘, “Huan jing wai jiao zai lv se mao yi zhuan xing zhong de zuo yong’环境外交在绿色贸易转型中的作用 [The role of environmental diplomacy in green transformation of trade],” *绿叶 Green Leaf*, no. 11 (2011): pp.32–39.

⁴⁸ Hongyuan 宏源 Yu 于, “Quan Qiu Huan Jing Zhi Li Yu Huan Jing Wei Xie Lun: Zhong Guo de Tiao zhan’全球环境治理与‘环境威胁论’：中国的挑战[Global Environment Governance and the Thesis of Environmental Threat: Challenges of China],” *China Review*, March 18, 2010, <http://www.china-review.com/gath.asp?id=23763>.

highlights how regional interests in Northeast Asia require environmental reform within China, as its trans-border pollution poses threats to the sustainable development of neighbouring countries⁴⁹. The reason for this lies in the fact that China shares a land border with fourteen countries and rivers with fifteen countries⁵⁰.

Bilateral interest in China's environmental condition is also linked to its significant presence in global trade. Ellis and Turner, for example, use the case of US-China cooperation on food safety to explain why decision-makers in the US are motivated to improve food security in China. The global food trade ties the food security challenge in China with those in the US as problems travel with products. Consequently, the US benefited from "sowing the seeds" in China⁵¹. Katherine Morton further advances our understanding regarding the willingness to cooperate and address a more challenging question of how to efficiently use bilateral and multilateral efforts to maximise output down to the local level. The assumption in her book is that environmental protection reform in China serves donor countries' and organisations' interests, and hence the effectiveness of invested environmental protection projects is positively linked to international donors' interests⁵². To put it differently, enhancing environmental protection means not only making the effort to "tame the yellow dragon", but also to benefit the green donors.

⁴⁹ Yearn Hong Choi, "Cooperative Environmental Efforts in Northeast Asia: Assessment and Recommendations," *International Review for Environmental Strategies* 3, no. 1 (Summer 2002): pp.137-51.

⁵⁰ Gerald Chan, Pak K. Lee, and Lai-Ha Chan, "China's Environmental Governance: The Domestic - International Nexus," *Third World Quarterly* 29, no. 2 (March 2008): p,304.

⁵¹ Linden J. Ellis and Jennifer L. Turner, "Sowing the Seeds: Opportunities for U.S.-China Cooperation on Food Safety," *Wilson Center*, July 7, 2011, <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/publication-series/sowing-the-seeds-opportunities-for-us-china-cooperation-food-safety>.

⁵² Katherine. Morton, *International Aid and China's Environment: Taming the Yellow Dragon*, Routledge Studies--China in Transition; 25 (London, New York,: Routledge, 2005).

International sources of influence are indeed of critical importance, particularly in the early stage of environmental governance in China. Since the 1970s, the country has been socialised into the international environmental community through learning and integration with global trade, which has facilitated the upgrade of environmental standards⁵³. The permeation of globalisation through transnational linkages further prompts adjustment of industrial policies⁵⁴ in a way that new issues such as environmental protection are addressed. Lü Jie summarises the different patterns of interaction between environmental diplomacy and domestic environmental governance in developed and developing countries. The key difference is that in developed countries, appeals are made to export environmental awareness and use international cooperation to solve problems. Conversely, in developing countries, environmental awareness is imported and domestic political players absorb environmental protection, technology and international funding, which motivates environmental cooperation⁵⁵. His model, though arguably oversimplistic, has the virtue of making salient the way in which domestic interest groups adapt to international norms. Put differently, interest groups and environmental cooperation are connected not so much regarding how private interests are defended, or how global norms are observed. Instead, what is important is the way in which environmental cooperation influences the formation of interests groups and vice versa.

⁵³ Robert Falkner, "International Sources of Environmental Policy Change in China: The Case of Genetically Modified Food," *The Pacific Review* 19, no. 4 (December 1, 2006): pp.473–94.

⁵⁴ Christopher M. Dent, "Renewable Energy and East Asia's New Developmentalism: Towards a Low Carbon Future?," *The Pacific Review* 25, no. 5 (December 1, 2012): p.565.

⁵⁵ Jie 李 Lü 吕, "zhong guo huan jing wai jiao yu guo nei huan jing bao hu'中国环境外交与国内环境保护[China's environmental diplomacy and domestic environmental protection]," *中国人口.资源与环境[China population, resources and environment]*, no. 05 (2003): pp.16–20.

The focus of this research is thus to give domestic interests and interest groups equal value with international systematic factors, so as to understand the political dynamics of international environmental cooperation. With China's economic rise and ambition to portray itself as a leader in international environmental cooperation, it is increasingly important to examine not only how national leaders seek to derive benefits from environmental issues, but also how they manage to mobilise domestic resources behind the effort to make China a "green leader". Failure to factor in domestic group politics will result in understanding the gap between what China commits to and what it does as a *fait accompli*, instead of a subject to be scrutinised and a phenomenon to be explained. It is not to suggest that domestic groups are more important than international factors. Instead, this new perspective can be used to explain China's performance in global environmental governance. It also promises to shed light on the broader puzzle of the self-contradictory images of China as a "partial power", in the words of David Shambaugh⁵⁶.

This survey of the literature on China's domestic environmental governance, however, illustrates the puzzle of a discourse that is about interests yet lacks any focus on real interest groups. Lo and Leung, for example, highlight the permanent conflicts that take place between economic and environmental interests by analysing environmental governance through the lens of bureaucratic politics. It allows them to demonstrate that both central and local governments prioritise economic interests over environmental ones when the

⁵⁶ David Shambaugh, *China Goes Global: The Partial Power* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

two come into conflict⁵⁷. Another pair of interests is domestic versus foreign interests in terms of environmental protection, which can be seen from articles discussing civil society organisations. Lu Yiyi thus indicates the awkward position of NGOs in China's environmental governance due to their close relationship with foreign funding⁵⁸. In other words, NGOs face the challenge of balancing pressure from international donors and domestic interests, which makes their participation in local environmental governance increasingly difficult. Even though environmental interests are advocated, the policy initiative which reflects them is short-lived, and tends to be *ad hoc*. Li Wanxin examines the effort of environmental information transparency and environmental violation sanctions and concludes that coalitions or pressure groups are constrained when it comes to addressing particular concerns, and are not united by a belief which enables them to persist⁵⁹.

The issue-based and ephemeral nature of environmental coalitions is further worsened by the rotation mechanism of local cadres in China. Eaton and Kotska thus find that a high turnover of chief provincial governors prompts a short-time horizon of local cadres⁶⁰. As the leaders, usually party secretaries, decide on what priority is on their political agenda, the relationship between economic performance and political promotion leads to the habit of prioritising economic projects over environmental ones, and hence hinders the green

⁵⁷ Carlos Wing Hung Lo and Sai Wing Leung, "Environmental Agency and Public Opinion in Guangzhou: The Limits of a Popular Approach to Environmental Governance," *The China Quarterly* 163 (September 2000): pp.677-704.

⁵⁸ Yiyi Lu, "Environmental Civil Society and Governance in China," *International Journal of Environmental Studies* 64, no. 1 (February 1, 2007): pp.59-69.

⁵⁹ Wanxin Li, "Advocating Environmental Interests in China," *Administration & Society* 44, no. 6 (2012): pp.26-42.

⁶⁰ Sarah Eaton and Genia Kostka, "Authoritarian Environmentalism Undermined? Local Leaders' Time Horizons and Environmental Policy Implementation in China," *The China Quarterly* 218 (2014): pp.359-80.

initiatives advocated by the central government. Even though local governors have an environmental awareness or a long-time horizon, this does not mean that their concerns with the environment will be translated into concrete policies. Tong Yanqi conducted surveys in six Chinese cities, investigating the perception of local elites, including officials and enterprise managers, of environmental governance. The survey results suggest that there is little correlation between environmental awareness and policy supportive of environmental protection. The top three causes of poor implementation of environmental initiatives are 1) conflict with economic development; 2) enterprises' narrow interest; and 3) lack of environmental awareness among the public⁶¹.

Whereas the abovementioned research highlights the importance of interests in analysing environmental politics in China, the following efforts go one step further regarding identifying groups and their matching benefits. Researchers have also devoted time to exploring interests of different political groups. Zhou *et al* identify three logics of Chinese bureaucracies in environmental governance: 1) meeting targets; 2) building coalitions; 3) and providing incentives⁶². I regard these three logics as the political interests of government agencies because they reflect the criteria of local cadre's performance evaluation.

Mertha deploys the concept of policy entrepreneurs - those who are willing to invest their resources for a political decision which is in their favour - so as to identify who is important as the authoritarian regime becomes

⁶¹ Yanqi Tong, "Bureaucracy Meets the Environment: Elite Perceptions in Six Chinese Cities," *The China Quarterly* 189 (2007): pp.100-121.

⁶² Xueguang Zhou *et al.*, "A Behavioral Model of 'Muddling Through' in the Chinese Bureaucracy: The Case of Environmental Protection," *The China Journal*, no. 70 (August 2013): pp.124-127.

increasingly pluralised. He examines the issue of hydropower politics, and teases out three types of policy entrepreneurs: peripheral officials, journalists, and non-governmental organisations⁶³. The focus of Mertha, however, is on the strategy of issue framing used by policy entrepreneurs, which treats the ability of policy entrepreneurs to tell a compelling story as an independent variable to explain policy outcomes. However, one of the case studies he uses as a successful example of policy entrepreneurs changing policies, namely the Nu River Hydropower Station, also proves to be the same case that undermines his argument.

The Nu River controversy refers to the environmental campaign against the decision of the Yunnan government to dam the Nu River. In this case, environmental activists conveyed three key messages to the public: 1) The Nu River is a UNESCO world heritage site; 2) The project serves the interests of developers at the cost of those of residents; 3) Legal references are an important constituent of the controversy over the Nu River dam project⁶⁴. Environmental NGOs, both in Yunnan and Beijing, used these arguments to mobilise support and generate media attention on the Nu River project and their concerns finally arrived at the desk of former Premier Wen Jiabao, who decided to suspend the project after almost one year of the campaign. However, the dam has been secretly developed by China Huadian Corporation in the past decade. Sixty-six tributaries of the Nu River have been dammed by small hydropower stations and relocation and resettlement has taken place, while the

⁶³Andrew Mertha, “Fragmented Authoritarianism 2.0’: Political Pluralization in the Chinese Policy Process,” *The China Quarterly* 200 (2009): p.997.

⁶⁴Guobin Yang and Craig Calhoun, “Media, Civil Society, and the Rise of a Green Public Sphere in China,” in *China’s Embedded Activism: Opportunities and Constraints of a Social Movement*, Ho, Peter and Richard Louis Edmonds (eds.) (London and New York: Routledge, 2007), pp.69–88.

preparatory work has been conducted in secrecy⁶⁵. The behaviour of Huadian is further approved by National Energy Administration which issued a notice regarding the Lancang River Hydropower development (No. 257) which grants Huadian's responsibility for the Nujiang River hydropower stations⁶⁶, indicating that the Nu River controversy is operationalised despite the media exposure a decade ago.

It may seem to be an unfair criticism of Mertha's analysis in 2009, as he could not foresee the decision in 2012. However, the development of the Nu River project from being a controversy and symbol of the successful participation of environmental activists to a project which was resumed due to enormous economic interests reveals the weakness of framing as a method. It is somewhat misleading to focus only on how policy entrepreneurs frame the issues because it masks the importance of interests and generates the illusion of their irrelevance. Furthermore, it confirms the necessity to take a closer look at the interest alignment, particularly how environmental interests penetrate and become embedded within economic ones. Furthermore, the example of the Nu River project verifies the need to bring research on interest groups into work on China's environmental governance and foreign relations.

By looking through the lens of interest groups it is therefore possible to modify the current debate over whether international or domestic factors play a bigger role in environmental protection reform in China. Instead, the crucial question asked and addressed here is how private groups localise the international norm of environmental protection based on their interests.

⁶⁵ Debin 德宾 Liu 刘, "Nu Jiang Shui Dian Xiang Mu Shi Nian Hou Fu huo'怒江水电项目 10 年后复活[Resurrection of Nu Jiang Hydropower Station after 10-Year Halt]," *华夏时报[Huaxia Times]*, May 7, 2016, <http://news.sina.com.cn/c/nd/2016-05-07/doc-ifxryhhh1716308.shtml>.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

It should be stressed that interest groups, used in this research, are neutral. Rather than treating them as a necessary evil to environmental protection, I prefer to develop the premise that domestic interest groups in China can both promote and prohibit China's international environmental cooperation and national environmental protection reform. What is certain is that interest is the main driver, and yet what is uncertain is the impact of their calculation on domestic and international environmental governance. Interest groups can influence the policy making process as they have access, formal or informal, to decision-makers, and in the meantime, their pressure is a matter of the political survival of national leaders⁶⁷. The connection between the political future of autocratic rulers and the preferences of interest groups means that their fates are intertwined, which necessitates the forging of the political alliances that shape policy outcomes.

1.3 Puzzles to solve

This research seeks to solve two puzzles: one empirical and one theoretical. The empirical problem is how to understand a China that appears to be riddled with paradoxes when it comes to environmental governance: whereas Western scholars tend to laud China's international environmental governance, Chinese academics and officials are more alert over its capabilities to deal with domestic environmental problems. The contradictory behaviour of the Chinese government leads Zhang Haibin, a renowned expert in China's

⁶⁷ David Steinberg and Victor Shih, "Interest Group Influence in Authoritarian States: The Political Determinants of Chinese Exchange Rate Policy," *Comparative Political Studies* 45, no. 11 (2012): pp.1405–34.

environmental diplomacy, to state that “we are generous to the international community and outside world, but are mean to ourselves”. His comment is indicative of the contrast between the determination of the Chinese government in international environmental governance and the stagnant condition of environmental protection reform within China.

The theoretical puzzle is how to theorise the role of interest groups in China’s environmental foreign relations. Interest groups as a theoretical framework have been off the radar in the current scholarly work. When Carter and Mol compare the similarities and differences between China and other developed countries in environmental governance, interest groups are neither mentioned in the similarities nor the differences. Instead, the similarities between China and other industrialised countries are summarised to be “decentralisation and flexibility”, “shift away from hierarchical command-and-control system”, “hands-off approach to regulation” meaning an increasing role of the market; whereas the differences are “central role of the state”, “privatisation”, and, accordingly to Carter and Mol, a neglected and understudied “innovation” in China’s environmental governance⁶⁸. Nevertheless, the similarities Carter and Mol foreground point to the significance of interest groups as decentralisation, the waning command-and-control system, and increasing role of the market, all create space for non-state sectors to participate in policy-making and different interests to be considered in this process.

⁶⁸ Neil T. Carter and Arthur P. J. Mol, “China and the Environment: Domestic and Transnational Dynamics of a Future Hegemon,” *Environmental Politics* 15, no. 2 (April 1, 2006): p.333.

1.4 Case selection

As shown before, I divide the existing literature into two broad categories, depending on the main variables, to explain China's environmental foreign relations. One stream emphasises systemic factors and the other contends that domestic interests play a bigger role in the decision and realisation of environmental cooperation. Both streams examine questions such as how policies are *made* and treaties are *negotiated*, and yet these issues are just the beginning of China's integration into the international system and set our expectation of China's behaviour. This approach proves useful, and provides us with powerful insights into the motivation of key decision-makers to join the international environmental order. But the downside is that such an approach may lose the big picture. The question left unaddressed in these two strands is what happens next? Whereas "China has made impressive gains and developed a robust set of environmental laws" concerning legislation and standards-setting, when attention shifts towards enforcement and implementation, "the picture looks different"⁶⁹.

Cooperation is more than making policy and signing environmental treaties. This research is designed to address the gaps and broaden the scope of existing research by extending the focus to three dimensions: treaty implementation, accumulation of experiences, and provision of an alternative norm. In other words, what happens after the national leaders commit to environmental cooperation is equally important as what happens before, particularly in the following up activities of implementation, accumulating

⁶⁹ Phillip. Stalley, *Foreign Firms, Investment, and Environmental Regulation in the People's Republic of China* (Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, 2010), p.192.

experience, and ultimately establishing distinct discursive power. Although these three dimensions are not necessarily linear, and in no ways take place in a chronological manner, they represent a trend of the paradigm of cooperation between China and the outside world and indicate the increasing ambition of China on the global stage. Furthermore, these three dimensions reflect the changing role of China from “a passive and defensive participant” to “an active organiser”⁷⁰. Unlike the literature discussed in the preceding section, this research aims to examine what happens after policies are made, commitments are declared, treaties are signed, and the ruling elites set a foreign policy position. Instead of treating poor implementation as an obstacle of policy making, I regard it as a dependent variable, or something to be explained.

Domestic interest groups discussed in this thesis include line ministries, environmental non-governmental organisations (ENGOs), industrial sectors, State Owned Enterprises (SOEs), local governments, and intellectuals. Line ministries, the main venue where foreign policy is formulated and projects approved, seem to be a self-evident type of interest group and represents bureaucratic interests. It has also become a fashion to use “civil society” to study the linkage between China’s international environmental governance and domestic environmental reform, which will be elaborated in the theory chapter. Indeed, civil society literature offers valuable insights into our understanding of state-society relations. ENGOs attempt to contribute to a more sustained environmental foreign relation through their information, expertise, and the ability to localise international norms. Moreover, the ambition of Chinese

⁷⁰Joseph Y. S. Cheng, “China-ASEAN Economic Co-Operation and the Role of Provinces,” *Journal of Contemporary Asia* 43, no. 2 (May 1, 2013): pp.332.

ENGOS is not limited to influencing national governments, and, over time, they reach out to foreign territories, a trend dubbed as “NGOs Going Out”. Although their presence and influence remain weak, they have become a crucial component in China’s environmental relations⁷¹. Industrial sectors and SOEs’ role in environmental foreign relations are primarily on the dimension of implementation and business negotiation. However, their behaviour generates a significant impact on both the national image of China and on the credibility of China’s international commitments.

The importance of local governments is worth elaborating on here. As one type of interest group, local officials, in theory, represent interests that come within their jurisdiction. They can influence the central government in foreign relations by casting their perspectives on how local benefits can benefit from regional, bilateral, and multilateral cooperation. Joseph Cheng showcases the importance of provinces in regional economic cooperation as a platform to articulate the national interest and promote multi-polarity. Also, having provinces at the front of sub-regional cooperation allows China to “maintain a relatively low profile while seeking leadership and reducing external pressures”⁷². The second reason why local governments are an essential factor in environmental foreign relations comes from the projects which are implemented in various local jurisdictions, covering different levels of government: from Beijing to villages in backward provinces. Hence, local governments are not only a platform to implement international environmental initiatives, but also a place to generate Chinese experience from hands-on

⁷¹ Jennifer Hsu, Timothy Hildebrandt, and Reza Hasmath, “Going out’ or Staying in? The Expansion of Chinese NGOs in Africa,” *Development Policy Review* 34, no. 3 (2016): pp.423-39.

⁷² Cheng 2013, p.314.

implementation. For these two reasons, local governments are selected as an interest group that is under scrutiny, particularly in Chapter 7.

1.5 Research question

Growing out of the central hypothesis, the main research question this study aims to answer is how Chinese interest groups influence environmental foreign relations. I conceptualise environmental foreign relations across the spectrum which reflects the changing paradigms of environmental cooperation between China and the outside world. On one end of the spectrum is learning from best practice abroad, and on the other end is the provision of alternative methods, ideas, and norms which are claimed to be intrinsically Chinese. This spectrum is also indicative of the dual identity of the Chinese state in the global environmental governance: a follower and at the same time a prospective leader in global environmental governance. In accordance with this conceptualisation, this thesis examines three representative points along the spectrum, which can be understood as three dimensions of China's environmental foreign relations. They are treaty implementation, the development of the Chinese experience, and the provision of an alternative norm to replace liberal environmentalism. Treaty implementation is situated at the end of learning, as this is an effort to follow suit and comply with international environmental norms. On the other end is the provision of the alternative norm of "ecological civilisation". This notion, as will be discussed in Chapter 4, highlights the deployment of Chinese culture and philosophy in

pursuit of sustainable development. Between these two ends there is located the development of the Chinese experience, which reflects a process by which the best practice of environmental governance from abroad is localised in China. Moreover, through trial and error, various exercises provide ingredients of the Chinese experience in which a Chinese environmental norm such as “ecological civilisation” is grounded.

All these three dimensions involve a plurality of participants and groups which represent different interests. In order to answer the primary research question, three sub-questions are proposed to investigate three representative dimensions: how do interest groups influence China’s environmental foreign relations through 1) treaty implementation; 2) the development and deployment of the Chinese experience; 3) the provision of an alternative environmental norm.

To address the first sub-question, I assume that interest groups in China can influence environmental treaty implementation so that treaties that are in line with group interests are better implemented than those which challenge their interests. Hence, the first sub-question provides a possible answer as to (Chapter 5) why some international environmental treaties are more substantively implemented than others. The second sub-question is predicated upon the basis that the Chinese experience, as a practice and a discourse, encapsulates interests of groups which are active in overseas economic and political activities. Therefore, Chapter 6 investigates how interest groups define, interpret, and deploy the Chinese experience to facilitate their pursuit of interests abroad. The third sub-question looks at groups which actively participate in the definition and realisation of “ecological civilisation” and

examines how interest groups make the alternative norms malleable to their specific interests (Chapter 7).

1.6 Hypothesis

- Lead hypothesis: The effective development and implementation of policies related to China's environmental foreign relations depends on the correlation of those policies with the interests of particular domestic interest groups.
- Theoretical hypothesis (Chapter 2): Interest groups use ideational factors to legitimise their interest maximisation in ways that make identity politics aggregate the various preferences that shape environmental foreign relations.

1.7 Overview of my arguments

I argue that the apparent contradictions in China's domestic and international behaviour are a reflection of the bargaining of different domestic interest groups. By focusing on the dimensions of treaty implementation, the sharing of experience, and the provision of alternative norms, I identify the rationale underlying the ways in which domestic groups influence foreign relations. Industrial sectors and SOEs use environmental cooperation to enhance their competitiveness over foreign counterparts and open overseas markets; NGOs, on the other hand, strive to achieve relevance in foreign policy

making by assisting the Chinese government to launch bilateral projects to disseminate Chinese experience, and by facilitating SOEs in investing that experience overseas. While it would be over-simplistic to assert that ENGOs have a better idea than the government of how to initiate and implement environmental cooperation projects, their vision, expertise, and experience affords them a place in environmental foreign relations. In terms of line ministries, bureaucratic interests include achieving leadership position in the complex dynamic of environmental governance, acquisition of resources, and the inertia that prevents sharing power with other government departments. The local governor's interest in environmental foreign relations is to get the attention of the central government and international community, and to attract foreign investment to boost the local economy.

The interests of intellectuals are in slightly similar vein, regarding their desire to gain the attention of the major decision makers. Also, the political interest of intellectuals is to remind the national leaders of the political boundary of developmentalist policies.

In the process of coalition formation, the strategic concepts of environmental diplomacy and the Chinese experience, together with the composite ideology of ecological civilisation, justify interest groups' efforts to pursue their interests. However, the economic substance behind these concepts limits the extent to which China can convincingly project its green national image and its leadership position in global environmental governance.

Last but not least, my findings suggest that a lack of a shared environmental norms among domestic groups renders it inevitable that it is an economic identity that emerges and prevails in environmental cooperation. This

empirical observation results in the ranking and aggregation of different interests against the criteria of economic gain and loss rather than environmental norms. To provide an alternative norm to the current view on sustainable development, or the low-carbon economy, the Chinese government thus has to work with interest groups to find a way to go beyond this submission of policy to the narrow criteria of economic development.

1.8 Thesis outline

Chapter 2 starts by establishing a theoretical framework to examine how domestic groups influence foreign relations and to what degree interest groups in China play a role in China's international environmental cooperation. My approach to the theory chapter is to combine mainstream IR theory with an understanding of politics in China. It is of particular importance to understand how the concept of "*interest*" is perceived in China and what practical concerns arise in the analysis of the phenomenon of "interest groups" in an authoritarian regime. The benefit of such an approach is that it allows me to base my analytical framework on local conditions and expose the limitations of IR theories.

The starting point of the theoretical discussion is the rationalistic institutionalism advocated by Milner, as it suggests that there is a causal mechanism between domestic factors that shapes international cooperation. It is during the application of this rationalistic framework to China (which was originally tested against the cases in Great Britain and the United States), that

the ideational dimension and the issue of identity emerge as other two explanatory elements.

I then refer to Woodruff Smith's idea of a "composite ideology" and Jack Snyder's use of the logrolling model of decision-making to explore the interaction between ideas and interests. It allows the identity politics of China to be incorporated as a factor into the last section, to demonstrate that the biggest shortcoming of applying rationalist institutionalism to China is that institutions cannot aggregate domestic preferences. Rather, this depends on identity politics, meaning that the way in which China's role is articulated shapes decisions made about how China interacts with the rest of the world. At the end of this chapter, I propose a framework of constructivist utilitarianism to incorporate interests, ideas, and identity to explain China's performance in international environmental cooperation. The main theoretical argument is thus that ideas are used to justify interests and national identity is used to aggregate domestic preferences.

Chapter 3 goes on to explain the methodological tools I use to gather evidence, which are both quantitative and qualitative. Archival research was used primarily for Chapter 4, content analysis for Chapters 5 and 7, semi-structured interviews and comparative case studies for all the empirical chapters, and participant observation for Chapter 7. The justification for each method, together with their limitations, will be provided in this section.

Chapter 4 provides an overview of the interests, institutions, ideas, and identity politics that are related to environmental foreign relations. I find that the institutions in charge of environmental foreign relations are poorly established and far from being a platform that can effectively aggregate

domestic preferences. What is more important is to bypass institutional constraints to reach a certain objective. With regards to ideas and identity, strategic concepts are explained and the relationship between environmental protection and nationalism is explored.

As this thesis covers environmental foreign relations from 1984 to 2015, I roughly categorise three stages of China's engagement in environmental foreign relations: 1984 to 2000 as the phase of learning; 2000 to 2010 as the stage of pinpointing the problems and challenges of international cooperation; and from 2010 onwards Beijing puts more effort into projecting itself as a discursive power and hence works on the normative dimension of global environmental governance. In line with this categorisation, I choose three dimensions to reflect the changing attitudes towards China's role in the global environmental governance and examine how interest groups exert their influence in these three aspects. As mentioned above, these are treaty implementation, sharing the Chinese experience, and setting alternative norms.

Chapters 5 to 7 present three pairs of comparative case studies from the aspects of treaty implementation (Chapter 5), sharing Chinese experience (Chapter 6), and setting alternative norms (Chapter 7). Each empirical chapter illustrates a distinct pattern of interaction among interests, ideas, and identity and yet all verify that China's environmental foreign relations are fractured by the actions of interest groups. Interest groups relevant to these chapters include industrial sectors, government institutions, social organisations, SOEs, local governments and the academic community.

Chapter 5 investigates the empirical question of why some international environmental treaties are better implemented than others. It is predicated on

the assumption that implementation has political implications and is an important way for domestic actors to have their voices heard. It starts with a discussion of environmental diplomacy as a strategic concept in the ideational dimension, which is used to justify international cooperation. From this perspective, “environmental diplomacy” can be used to build compromise between nationalistic, inward-looking ideological concerns and the practical need to borrow from other countries’ experiences. While this justifies China’s willingness to engage in multilateral, bilateral, and regional platforms, however, it does not rationalise why domestic groups should follow the commitments that are made by the government. Consequently, domestic interests continue to play an active part in treaty implementation.

I use the implementation of the Montreal Protocol and Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) to examine what makes successful implementation possible and to tease out the important variable of domestic interests. This verifies the claim that groups that see direct benefits from treaty implementation are more likely to implement environmental agreements. The definitional issue of “better implementation” is solved by the category of enforcement versus compliance, as well as substantive versus procedural patterns of implementation. The distinction between compliance versus enforcement is made to differentiate governments’ efforts to regulate and interest groups’ desire to follow regulations. In this way, implementation can be understood as political, because non-implementation functions as a form of protest.

The distinction of substantive and procedural categories thus makes it possible to assess whether efforts serve the objectives of a particular

international agreement. I suggest that the tactic for building a compromise between global commitment and domestic opposition is to give preference to procedural performance over substantive efforts. The *pro forma* style of implementation that this implies reflects how domestic interests override the idea of environmental diplomacy. It, however, does not mean that the ideational dimension is not critical; instead, an “opponent” concept is deployed. This can be seen in the role played by the idea of intellectual property rights (IPRs) in the discussion of the Convention on Biological Diversity. IPRs functions as protective of the Chinese Traditional Medicine Industry, whereas CBD sets limits on it. Therefore, IPR as an idea is deemed to have a priority over environmental diplomacy. The reason why IPR “steals the thunder” of environmental diplomacy is that the former justifies the interests of a strategic industry, which plugs in the formation of national identity.

Chapter 6 process-traces Global Environmental Institution’s (GEI) overseas operation, which is aimed at sharing “Chinese experience” with other developing countries. Since the introduction of the Going Global policy, Chinese social organisations have been enthusiastic about facilitating Chinese companies’ adventures overseas and a wave of “Chinese NGOs going out” has become a new fashion, particularly since Chinese NGOs can be more active in international cooperation than at home. The primary asset of Chinese social organisations, despite their lack of resources and personnel, is their expertise, knowledge and professionalism. It is this that is boiled down to the formula of the “Chinese experience”. It reflects a mode of South-South Cooperation, as it is shared among other developing countries that consider China is the fastest-growing developing country in the world. GEI, sharing the same mentality,

proposed a sustainable land management project between the newly established National Land Management Authority in the neighbouring Laos and the Ministry of Commerce (MOFCOM), which hoped to share the experience of environmental governance in China with the impoverished neighbour. However, this project did not come into fruition, mainly because the officials from MOFCOM did not see the direct economic benefits from this project. Not being able to establish a government partnership, GEI works instead to cooperate with Sinohydro, a Chinese SOE investing hydropower station in Laos, with GEI advocating the need for Sinohydro to fulfil its Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) expectations.

The reason why Sinohydro was willing to partner with GEI derives from GEI's experience in biogas digester installation. In addition, GEI's assistance in environmental and social action not only lowers the risk of Sinohydro but accumulates the latter's experience in overseas investment. The aborted project of GEI and MOFCOM and the cooperation between GEI and Sinohydro point to the conclusion that Chinese experience is not an unconditionally convenience concept for the Chinese government to advocate: on the one hand, it justifies GEI's efforts to contribute to environmental foreign relations; and on the other hand, it draws the attention to the fact that the government institutions are very inexperienced in environmental cooperation and hence have to share power with actors that are traditionally excluded from foreign relations.

Chapter 7 builds on the findings of Chapters 5 and 6 by further examining how interest groups fight for the interpretation of one single concept so as to ensure their preferences are reflected. Instead of using the term "strategic concept", however, I deploy the idea of a "composite ideology" to

scrutinise the nature of “ecological civilisation”, due to its comprehensive features and the appearance of an alternative norm. Various players are at play in the complex game of ecological civilisation. Bureaucracies such as MEP and NDRC fought over the leadership position. Leftist and bureaucrats argue over the boundary of developmentalism. Last but not least, local governors compete with each other to secure high-quality investment by implementing ecological civilisation. I observe the rise of new, weak interest groups and their tactic of using international attention to promote their domestic agenda. The ideational dimension is particularly salient in this chapter particularly when a political slogan is in the embryonic stage, which leaves space for different interest groups to influence its interpretation. Whether their preferences find a place in foreign policy remains to be seen, but a more direct consequence is that each has garnered its international audience, and together, they represent different images and transmit different messages of China to the outside world.

Chapter 8 concludes with a summary of the findings, limitations and suggestions for future research, theoretical implications and policy recommendations.

Chapter 2 Theoretical framework

2.1 “Foreign relations” as subject field

This research situates itself between Foreign Policy Analysis (FPA) and International Relations (IR). FPA is what Hudson calls “actor-specific theory and the Ground of International Relations”⁷³. Unlike previous research, this paper does not examine how foreign policy is made by closed-door elite negotiation, and confine the focus to a limited number of decision makers. Instead, what interests me is how domestic players influence the motivation and performance of China’s environmental cooperation in the process of implementation. Implementation is largely ignored in FPA, as observed and reflected upon by Alden and Aran⁷⁴. Yet the importance of implementation is articulated by Clarke namely that “implementation is in itself a highly political part of the decision process”, rather than purely “technical or administrative in nature”⁷⁵.

Implementation is political because it engenders policy change. The connection between policy implementation and policy change used here is inspired by Kellee Tsai’s analytical framework of adaptive informal institutions in her case study of private entrepreneurs in China. Adaptive informal institutions refer to “responses to the chasm between formal institutions and practical interests and desires”⁷⁶. She argues that even in authoritarian regimes,

⁷³Valerie M. Hudson, “Foreign Policy Analysis: Actor-Specific Theory and the Ground of International Relations,” *Foreign Policy Analysis* 1, no. 1 (February 4, 2005): p.1.

⁷⁴ Chris Alden and Amnon Aran, *Foreign Policy Analysis: New Approaches* (New York: Routledge, 2011), p.111.

⁷⁵ Michael Clarke, “Foreign Policy Implementation: Problems and Approaches,” *British Journal of International Studies* 5, no. 2 (1979): p.114.

⁷⁶ Tsai Kellee, *Capitalism without Democracy* (Ithaca and London, 2007), p.39.

institutions are “not simply imposed and enforced by state agents and other proprietors of formal institutions”, but “depend on human interaction for their survival and transformation”, bringing the “*relational and interactive* ontology”⁷⁷ to our understanding of institutions and how to explain “regime durability amid change”⁷⁸. What Tsai contributes to the study of Foreign Policy is that policy formulation is not the end point, and the way in which policy changes gradually through implementation helps us to develop a more realistic expectation regarding the fate of a negotiated policy and national stance. More importantly, acknowledging the salience of the implementation of policy affords a better understanding of how domestic players play their part in foreign affairs.

In this respect, foreign *policy* is not the primary focus of this research. Rather, it is the formulation of the broader set of foreign *relations* that is more relevant to the research question of how domestic groups play their part in China’s international cooperation. The *relational* dimension has two connotations: first, it refers to relations among domestic and international players, which are expected to be a useful constituent of inter-state relations; second and more abstractly, it acknowledges the relationship between policy formulation and implementation, the interaction of which engenders change.

⁷⁷ Ibid, p.36.

⁷⁸ Ibid, p.27.

2.2 Explanatory factors: Interests, Ideas, Institutions and Identity

2.2.1 Rationalist institutionalism (RI)

The rationalist institutionalist research agenda, proposed by Milner aims to take domestic factors seriously in the field of International Relations⁷⁹. Whereas Kenneth Waltz distinguishes international and domestic factors⁸⁰, Milner argues, a decade later, that “each of the international factors logically works through domestic variables to have an impact on a state’s preferences and policies”⁸¹. In her previous work, Milner surveys mainstream IR approaches, which explain why countries cooperate primarily by international forces and categorises them into four types: “the distribution of power”, “sense of threat”, “structure of the game among states”, and “the existence of international regimes”⁸². She criticises these four theses as being built upon a false assumption that all states act and react to a similar situation in the same way, and as a consequence, the differences among states are glossed over.

⁷⁹ Helen V. Milner, “Rationalizing Politics: The Emerging Synthesis of International, American, and Comparative Politics,” *International Organization* 52, no. 4 (1998): pp.759–86.

⁸⁰ Kenneth N. Waltz (Kenneth Neal), *Theory of International Politics*, 1st ed. (Boston, Mass: McGraw-Hill, 1979), p.65.

⁸¹ Helen Milner, “Domestic and International Sources of Cooperation: Oil Politics in the 1940s and 1970s,” *The International Spectator* 24, no. 3–4 (July 1, 1989): p.142.

⁸² The distribution of power refers to Keohane’s (1984) hegemonic stability theory in which cooperation is more likely when and where a hegemon exists. The sense of threat thesis derives from balance of power ideas and is based on the logic that the presence of a common enemy drives states together (Walt, 1987). Game theory takes into account of three systemic variables: the nature of the game, the number of players, and the number of iterations. This is inspired by Putnam’s two-level game. International regime theory contends that the principles, rules, norms, and procedures of international regimes lead to a convergence of actors’ expectations, and spur cooperation (Krasner 1982). See Robert O. Keohane, *After Hegemony: Cooperation and Discord in the World Political Economy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984); Stephen M. Walt, *The Origins of Alliances*, Cornell Studies in Security Affairs (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1987); Robert Putnam, “Diplomacy and Domestic Politics: The Logic of Two-Level Games,” *International Organization* 42, no. 3 (1988): 427–60; Stephen D. Krasner, “Regimes and the Limits of Realism: Regimes as Autonomous Variables,” *International Organization* 36, no. 02 (March 1982): pp.497–510.

Moreover, Milner theorises international cooperation through the dimensions of domestic preferences (Interests), domestic distribution of power (Institutions) and information distribution (Information)⁸³. She argues that states cooperate not merely because of international pressure, but as an extension of domestic bargaining and interaction of preferences. By bringing domestic actors, in her case executive, legislative and interest groups, to the agenda of explaining international cooperation, Milner further questions the realist assumption that the international system is *anarchic*. Instead, anarchy and hierarchy may be seen to be two poles of any political system, domestic and international, and the international system is *polyarchic*, meaning that “actors’ preferences differ” and “decision making must be shared”⁸⁴.

The assumption that underpins rationalist institutionalism is that institutions are expected to “aggregate diverse preferences into a collective outcome”⁸⁵ depending on the norms, rules, and procedures of institutions. The strength of the assumption regarding the institution-interests nexus is that it allows the rationalist institutionalist model to be applied to other political contexts. Nonetheless, the downside, as acknowledged by Milner herself, is whether the importance of institutions questions the capability of institutions to aggregate preferences.

The following efforts are made to explore how to operationalise rational institutionalism by examining units of analysis based on discussions about the configuration of China’s state-society relations in the context of the Party-State authoritarian regime. I identify three candidates as the unit of analysis: civil

⁸³ Helen V. Milner, *Interests, Institutions, and Information: Domestic Politics and International Relations* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997).

⁸⁴ Milner 1998, p.774.

⁸⁵ Ibid, p.780.

society, policy network and interest groups. All three are premised on the political plurality and de-centralisation of power in China since the Reform and Open Policy, and differ in ways which they break down state-society relations into manageable units.

2.2.1.1 Unit of Analysis: Civil Society

The study of civil society groups in China is controversial because it is liable to generate expectations of political transformation and ignites hopes of change in the authoritarian regime⁸⁶. For instance, the broad usage of the Internet by the Chinese is said to “energise” civil society and arguably contribute to China’s democratisation⁸⁷. The concept of civil society as a means of understanding the changing state-society dynamics in the environmental governance has a level of appeal among both Chinese and Western scholars⁸⁸. At the same time, the degree to which environmental organisations reinvigorate civil society and bring change to the political reality in China is contested. Whereas some argue for a positive change brought about by environmental activists and organisations albeit with political constraints⁸⁹, others would

⁸⁶ See Philip C.C Huang, “Public Sphere/Civil Society in China: The Third Realm Between State and Society,” *Modern China* 19, no. 216–40 (1993); Timothy Brook and Michael B Frolic, *Civil Society in China* (Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe, 1997)

⁸⁷ See Guobin Yang, “Global Environmentalism Hits China: International and Domestic Groups Forces to Combat Environmental Woes” (Yale Global Online, February 4, 2004), <http://yaleglobal.yale.edu/content/global-environmentalism-hits-china>; Guobin Yang, “Environmental NGOs and Institutional Dynamics in China,” *China Quarterly* 181 (2005): pp.46–66.

⁸⁸ Fengshi Wu, “Environmental Politics in China: An Issue Area in Review,” *Journal of Chinese Political Science* 14 (2009): p.391.

⁸⁹ See Tony Saich, “Negotiating the State: The Development of Social Organizations in China,” *The China Quarterly* 161 (March 2000): pp.124–41; Jennifer L Turner, “Small Government, Big and Green Society: Emerging Partnership to Solve Environmental Problems,” *Harvard Asia Quarterly* 8, no. 2 (2004): pp.4–13; Erping 尔平 Li 黎, “Zhen Jiu Fa Huan Bao NGO Can Yu Huan Jing Zheng Ce de Zhi Du an Pai’ 针灸法环保 NGO 参与环境政策的制度安排 [Needle Therapy: Institutional Settings for Environmental NGO to Participate in Environmental Protection],” *Journal of Public Management* 4, no. 1 (2007): pp.78–83; Xufeng 旭峰 Zhu 朱, “Zhuan Xing Qi Zhong Guo Huan Jing Zhi Li de Di Qu Cha Yi: Huan Jing Gong Min She Hui Bu Zhong Yao Ma? 转型

rather support the claim that environmental organisations are co-opted to the existing political system, and the primary task for these organisations is to adapt to, not to oppose the authoritarian regime⁹⁰.

The critique of applying the value-laden concept of civil society to an authoritarian regime derives mostly from the question of autonomy. Treating Government-organised NGOs (GONGOs) as a subject epitomises the concerns of autonomy. GONGOs were created in 1998 by the national government to provide jobs for laid-off government officials and staff in SOEs, and the organisation was used as a magnet to attract foreign aid, talents and technology⁹¹. What GONGOs reflect on is beyond the question of autonomy; instead, they beg the question of power distribution between state and non-state actors.

The institutional set-up to regulate civil society actors provides a vantage point in terms of how the state manages and controls non-state actors. Hildebrandt observes that the procedures for registering social organisations are so complicated that many NGOs prefer not to register. The unregistered status of social groups places them in an indefensible position, as they are more vulnerable to local government control, which further limits their capabilities

期中国环境治理的地区差异：环境公民社会不重要吗？[Regional Disparity in Environmental Governance of China in Transition: Isn't Environmental Civil Society Important]," *Comparative Economic and Social Institutions* 137 (2008): pp.76–83; Jessica C. Teets, *Civil Society under Authoritarianism: The China Model* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

⁹⁰ See Lo and Leung 2001; Peter Ho, "Greening without Conflict? Environmentalism and Civil Society in China," *Development and Change* 32, no. 5 (2001): pp.893–921; Jiang Ru, *Environmental NGOs in China: The Interplay of State Controls, Agency Interests and NGO Strategies* (Stanford University, 2004); Lu 2007; Peter Ho and Richard Louis Edmonds, "Perspectives of Time and Change Rethinking Embedded Environmental Activism in China," *China Information* 21, no. 2 (July 1, 2007): pp.331–44.

⁹¹ Fengshi Wu, "Environmental GONGO Autonomy: Unintended Consequences of State Strategies in China," *The Good Society* 12, no. 1 (2003): p.36.

and the scope of their political activities⁹². Social organisations must be affiliated with a governmental agency and operate within the purview of the state apparatus. The most recent example of limiting NGO's role through legislation is the passage of the Management of Foreign NGOs' Activities within Mainland China adopted by the 12th National People's Congress in April 2016. The Law grants more power to public security organs to limit the funding and sets a harshly high threshold of registration, such as the consent of a Chinese supervisory unit, which effectively screens out many foreign NGOs from even registering⁹³. Ironically, the law uses the banner of legal protection to repress the development of NGO and the passage of this law typifies how vulnerable social organisations are in the current institutional setup. The practical concern of social organisations is thus not autonomy, but the resources which can be used in the limited political space.

This leads to an increasing focus on the dimension of policy, which revolves around the question of how actors and groups within the authoritarian regime influence policy-making and implementation. Personal charisma as an explanatory factor constitutes one stream of civil society studies⁹⁴. Perhaps there is no more telling example of personal charisma than Liang Congjie, the founder of China's first environmental NGO, "Friends of Nature". Liang has been

⁹² Timothy Hildebrandt, "The Political Economy of Social Organization Registration in China," *The China Quarterly* 208 (2011): pp.970-89.

⁹³ Deutsche Welle, "Zai Hua Jing Wai NGO Guan Li Fa: Yi Bao Hu Zhi Ming Jin Xing Qu di'在华境外 NGO 管理法：以保护之名进行取缔[Management of Foreign NGO's Activities within Mainland China: Banning Them in the Name of Protection]," *DW.COM*, September 3, 2015.

⁹⁴ See Jean C. Oi, "Communism and Clientelism: Rural Politics in China," *World Politics* 37, no. 2 (1985): 238-66; Jonathan Schwartz, "Environmental NGOs in China: Roles and Limits," *Pacific Affairs* 77, no. 1 (2004): 28-48; Yang 2005; Mertha 2009; Jiang Ru and Leonard Ortolano, "Development of Citizen-Organized Environmental NGOs in China," *VOLUNTAS: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations* 20, no. 2 (2009): pp.141-68; Anthony J. Spires, "Contingent Symbiosis and Civil Society in an Authoritarian State: Understanding the Survival of China's Grassroots NGOs 1," *American Journal of Sociology* 117, no. 1 (2011): pp.1-45.

in the committee of Population Resources and Environment under the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference since 1989. Having witnessed the worsening ecological condition of China, he established the first ENGO in 1993, which was warmly welcomed by governmental officials⁹⁵. Liang's distinguished family background facilitates his cause of environmental protection: the son of Liang Sicheng (the “father” of modern Chinese architecture) and Lin Huiyin (renowned modern architect and writer), and the grandson of Liang Qichao, the most significant reformist philosopher and a leader of the Hundred Days' Reform during the late Qing dynasty. Liang's efforts, together with his family background, augment the aura surrounding him and represent the ardent enthusiasm of patriotic intellectuals.

Hildebrandt contextualises and incorporates the personal factors into the opportunity structure. He adds other dimensions including the political opportunities created by government policies and economic opportunities, such as funding sources⁹⁶. Whereas Hildebrandt demonstrates *where* the opportunities are, Mertha and Teets identify strategies used by social organisations, addressing the question of *how* to seize the opportunity and influence the decision-making process. Mertha focuses on issue framing, articulation and amplification⁹⁷, as a strategy for traditionally excluded actors to gain access to the decision making process. Teets, meanwhile, observes two channels through which a social organisation's messages come to be heard more effectively, namely, information dissemination and interpersonal

⁹⁵ Elizabeth Economy, *The River Runs Black: The Environmental Challenge to China's Future* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 2004), p.103.

⁹⁶ Timothy Hildebrandt, *Social Organizations and the Authoritarian State in China* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

⁹⁷ Mertha 2009, p.998.

connections⁹⁸. She construes a model of consultative authoritarianism that can capture the interaction between social organisations and local governments as the ability of the former to create “positive learning experiences”, which for the latter results in a new type of state-society relationship.

The literature mentioned above offers an insightful examination of the role of social organisation, its limitations, strategies and influence on the authoritarian regime. Such empirical observations and analytical frameworks discount the importance of institutions as alternative factors, while making factors such as individual charisma and networks are more empirically salient. What we observe is not the institution as a mechanism to aggregate domestic preferences, but rather, as an obstacle which prevents a diversity of preferences and which must be overcome by informal channels. In fact, NGOs in China are confined to provide services and social welfare to the disadvantaged. By institutional design, which is not in support of social organisations, their ability to represent and express interests is neglected, if not repressed. The institutional bias is sharply observed by Howell regarding how the idea of civil society is translated into Chinese, reflecting the localisation of this concept to the political context⁹⁹.

He Baogang documents how Chinese intellectuals wrestle with the idea and the essence of civil society through the process of translation, and observes different emphases¹⁰⁰. Chinese scholars offer three translations, depicting a nuanced cognitive diversity and various functions of civil society. The first

⁹⁸ Teets 2014, p.145.

⁹⁹ Jude Howell, “Civil Society, Corporatism and Capitalism in China,” *Journal of Comparative Asian Development* 11, no. 2 (December 1, 2012): p.275.

¹⁰⁰ Baogang He, *The Democratic Implications of Civil Society in China* (Basingstoke: MacMillan Press, 1997).

attempt to comprehend this notion is an emphasis on the urban population and business relations. Shen Yue, for instance, terms the burgeoning social organisations as “townspeople society” (*shimin shehui* 市民社会) ¹⁰¹. An alternative conceptualisation is that of “*gongmin shehui*” 公民社会, as interpreted by Liu Zhiguang and Wang Suli ¹⁰². *Gong* means public and *gongmin* translates to citizens. *Gongmin shehui* generates a sense of public sphere expounded by Jürgen Habermas ¹⁰³. This translation demonstrates intellectuals' yearning for a public domain in which individual rights and equality may be promoted. This translation has its caveats though. Calling the Chinese citizens, instead of masses which is preferred in the official lingo, irritates the Communist Party elites because it empowers the people. It was thus forbidden in 2011 to discuss citizens and civil society in official Chinese newspapers ¹⁰⁴. *Gongmin* has been replaced by *gonggong* 公共 (public) to avoid the implication of empowered citizens. The third translation is *minjianshehui* 民间社会, adding a confrontational dimension. *Minjianshehui* pits civil society against the state, and puts civil society beyond the control of the Communist Party. Chen Kuide, a prominent Chinese scholar who was forced into exile due to the 1989 Tiananmen crackdown, enshrines the principle of independence from the state within his discussion of China's civil society. ¹⁰⁵ Inspired by the Solidarity movement in Poland, Chen's conceptualisation regards civil society as

¹⁰¹ Cited by He 1997, p.61.

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ Jürgen. Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere an Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1992).

¹⁰⁴ Shan Shi, “Zhong Xuan Bu Jin meI Ti Shi Yong “Gong Min She Hui” 中宣部禁媒体使用公民社会 [Ministry of Propaganda Prohibits Media from Using 'Civil Society'],” *Free Radio Asia*, January 5, 2011, <http://www.rfa.org/mandarin/yataibaodao/gongmin-01052011164342.html>.

¹⁰⁵ Cited in He 1997, p.232.

antithetical to despotism. From *shimin shehui* to *minjianshehui*, the term is increasingly politicised, and yet the concrete interest that civil society represents remains blurred; once the interest is clearer, it is banned. As a result, civil society organisations are preferably called “social organisations”, and are expected to shoulder some social responsibilities that the state is unable to conduct.

For analytical purposes, and in order to maximise the benefits of civil society discussion to this research, I draw on Howell’s definition of civil society as “the realm of independent civic association around shared concerns through deliberative processes and actions” to allow an in-depth analysis of “a range of organizational forms that vary in their degree of formality”¹⁰⁶ and their influence on China’s foreign relations.

2.2.1.2 Unit of Analysis: Interest Groups

Howell calls for the need to bring capitalism into the civil society discussion to get out of the binary frame of state versus society and scrutinise the role of the market in the transitional period. To operationalise this direction, I include interest groups in the “realm of independent civil association” to fill the gap between civil society organisations and organisations that can represent special interests. The value of group politics and the interest group perspective is underestimated in the study of China’s politics. It is partly because the very idea of special interest is traditionally neither justified nor recognised in the political culture of China as people were instilled with the

¹⁰⁶ Howell 2012, p.273.

tenet that “it was improper and dangerous to assert self-interest in making any claims upon the political system”¹⁰⁷.

However, the cultural taboo does not help us to understand the dynamics of political activities in contemporary China and the group perspective transcends cultural barriers. Interest groups might be culturally downplayed, and yet their political significance cannot be neglected. Indeed, Bentley states that “all phenomena of government are phenomena of groups pressing one another, forming one another, and pushing out new groups and group representatives to mediate the adjustments”¹⁰⁸.

Deriving from studies of American politics, the study of interest groups looks at “the organisation, aggregation, articulation, and intermediation of societal interests that seek to shape public policies”¹⁰⁹. The hallmarks of interest groups, accordingly, are organisational, political interests and informality¹¹⁰. The power of interest groups derives from the type of interest and resource endowment¹¹¹. Interest group is categorised by Clive based on the criterion of membership, highlighting the identity of individual members such as farmers

¹⁰⁷ Lucian Pye, *The Spirit of Chinese Politics* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, and London, England: Harvard University Press, 1992),p.16.

¹⁰⁸ Arthur Fisher Bentley, *The Process of Government: A Study of Social Pressures* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1908),p. 269.

¹⁰⁹ Jan Beyers, Rainer Eising, and William Maloney, “Researching Interest Group Politics in Europe and Elsewhere: Much We Study, Little We Know?” *West European Politics* 31, no. 6 (2008): p.1103.

¹¹⁰ Ibid, p.1106.

¹¹¹ Rainer Eising, “Institutional Context, Organizational Resources and Strategic Choices Explaining Interest Group Access in the European Union,” *European Union Politics* 8, no. 3 (2007): pp.329–62.

and students, organisational interests such as trade associations, and institutional interests like government agencies¹¹².

Interest groups are thus a universal phenomenon and a particularly useful perspective for understanding authoritarian regimes. Since the 1980s, in fact, the study of politics in China has been inspired by interest groups in the Soviet Union (USSR). For instance, Waller categorises the USSR and China as the communist regime type, and differentiates the role of interest groups from those in liberal democracy. Instead of being pressure groups as in liberal democracies, they interact within “a wide...almost ubiquitous governmental administration”¹¹³. Scholars applying group politics in the communist countries thus jettison the assumption that each communist regime is a unitary actor. Furthermore, the group perspective places the fragmentation of political power at the forefront in highly-controlled states like the Soviet Union and China¹¹⁴. Lieberthal and Oksenberg systematically examine the fragmented structure of authority under the category of “fragmented authoritarianism”. They observe four tiers of policy making from core to periphery, and stress the salience of consensus building as a consequence of fragmented authority¹¹⁵.

The highlighting of fragmentation redefines the milieu of decision-making, as policy making is made in a “complex and multi-levelled” environment and involves building coalitions among those who share similar

¹¹² Thomas. S Clive, “Introduction: The Study of Interest Groups,” in *Research Guide to U.S. and International Interest Groups* (Westport: Praeger Publishers, 2004), pp.4-5.

¹¹³ Michael Waller, “Communist Politics and the Group Process: Some Comparative Conclusions,” in *Groups and Politics in the People’s Republic of China* (Cardiff: University College Cardiff Press, 1984), p.198.

¹¹⁴ David S.G. Goodman, “Provincial Party First Secretaries in National Politics: A Categoric or a Political Group?,” in *Group and Politics in the People’s Republic of China*, ed. David S.G. Goodman (Cardiff: University College Cardiff Press, 1984), pp.68-82.

¹¹⁵ Lieberthal and Oksenberg 1998.

interests and beliefs¹¹⁶. Research thus proceeds to investigate the role of the individual, social organisation, business groups and the state apparatus, as well as different levels of government, so as to present the dynamic decision-making process. The function of key individuals includes “political broker and middleman” such as local governors in Goodman’s analysis¹¹⁷. Individuals like provincial leaders in China thus need on the one hand to “win recognition from central leaders” and on the other hand, to satisfy local constituencies¹¹⁸. Jakobson and Knox draw our attention to new foreign policy actors in China against the backdrop of fragmented authoritarianism. Included are business elites, military staff, academia and research institutions, media, and civil society organisations. They are, however, not suggesting that these new actors can directly influence foreign policy. Rather, their presence sets hurdles for coordinating foreign policy making and, to some extent, complicates the calculation of the “national interest” as domestic preferences have to be taken into account by decision makers¹¹⁹.

This fragmented nature of authority raises the question of how central government manages decentralised policy making and to what extent it should get involved. Brodsgaard contends that decision making can be integrated via personnel control, specifically incorporating business groups in the nomenklatura system. This response is against the backdrop of economic reform and the emergence of new interest groups which “derived legitimacy by

¹¹⁶ Donald R. Kelley, “Environmental Policy-Making in the USSR: The Role of Industrial and Environmental Interest Groups,” *Soviet Studies* 28, no. 4 (1976): p.587.

¹¹⁷ Goodman 1984, p.72.

¹¹⁸ Zhiyue Bo, “Economic Performance and Political Mobility: Chinese Provincial Leaders,” *Journal of Contemporary China* 5, no. 12 (1996): p.154.

¹¹⁹ Linda Jakobson and Dean Knox, “New Foreign Policy Actors in China,” SIPRI Policy Paper (Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, September 26, 2010), <http://books.sipri.org/files/PP/SIPRIPP26.pdf>, pp.24-46.

symbolising China's economic rise"¹²⁰. The nomenklatura system, as an institutional design from the Soviet Union, ties up the economic interests of business groups with political careers so tightly that economic liberalisation is kept under political control.

Instead of arguing for this kind of "integrated fragmentation thesis", Harrison and Kostka look at the balancing of priorities and the alignment of interests in China and India¹²¹. They argue that a strong authoritarianism with a high degree of decentralisation determines that the Chinese government takes a state-signalling approach. This means that the national government provides guidelines and targets to steer policy implementation. In contrast, India adopts a market-plus approach using the mechanism of price to motivate energy-efficient industries. Different players sharing a common interest form an informal coalition, balance priorities, and collectively push forward certain policies. The state-signalling approach indicates that the state's capabilities to micro-manage policies are limited, and it is up to domestic groups to respond to those signals.

The above valuable insights into the nature of politics in an authoritarian regime lead me to choose interest group perspective as a unit of analysis as the first step to apply rationalistic institutionalism to the context of China. The survey of civil society literature demonstrates that environmental governance in China involves a plurality of state and non-state actors. The role of institutions, is, however, discounted due to the common usage of informal

¹²⁰ Kjeld Erik Brodsgaard, "Politics and Business Group Formation in China: The Party in Control?" *The China Quarterly* 211 (2012): p.633.

¹²¹ Tom Harrison and Genia Kostka, "Balancing Priorities, Aligning Interests: Developing Mitigation Capacity in China and India," *Comparative Political Studies* 47, no. 3 (2014): pp.450-80.

channels for non-state actors to express their concerns. Furthermore, institutions are far from a mechanism to aggregate domestic preferences as civil society organisations are reduced to service providers and their articulation of interests are muted. Instead of labelling social organisations as civil society actors, I regard them as interest groups, and examine how the interests of business groups and bureaucracies are maximised, reconciled, or compromised.

2.2.1.3 Definition of Interest and Categorisation of Interest Groups

An additional advantage of using interest groups as the unit of analysis is that it helps to enhance sensitivity to the cultural context. This is because there has been an intense debate in China over the implications of the rise of new interest groups, which has generated a body of academic analysis in Chinese. The fact that this debate is taking place at all is *prima facia* evidence that the topic is of political importance in China.

The definition of “interest”, when translated into Chinese as *liyi* 利益, is contested among Chinese scholars as Chen Shuisheng summarises¹²². Hong Yuanpeng and Gao Fan offer a comprehensive overview of current interpretations which respectively conceptualises interests as 1) benefit; 2)need; 3)value; 4)rights; 5)capability, 6)relationship/*guanxi*¹²³. The first thesis that interest is “benefit” derives from the etymology of the word, as interest is translated into a word comprising two Chinese characters: *li* 利 and *yi* 益. The first character 利 refers to the action of using farm tools to harvest crops and

¹²² Shuisheng 水生 Chen 陈, “Zhong Guo Gong Gong Zheng Ce Guo Cheng Zhong Li Yi Ji Tuan de Xing Dong Luo ji” 中国公共政策过程中利益集团的行动逻辑[*The Logics of Interests Groups in Public Policy Making*] (Shanghai: Fudan University Press, 2012), pp.153-155.

¹²³ Yuanpeng 远朋 Hong 洪 and Fan 帆 Gao 高, “Guan yu she hui li yi wen ti de wen xian zong shu”关于社会利益问题的文献综述[*Literature Review of Social Interests*],” 社会科学研究[*Social Sciences Research*], no. 02 (2008): pp.73-81.

collect fruits, and its extended meaning is a useful device for human beings. The second character 益 is a phonetic loan character, or interchangeable character, of 溢 which means overflow and thereby 益 expresses the increase in quantity. Putting these two characters together, *liyi* 利益 is directly translated into increased benefits¹²⁴.

One step beyond the etymological understanding is the second claim that interest is a need, both materialistic and spiritual¹²⁵. The third thesis is built upon the argument of need and argues that interest is the realisation and recognition of values which determines the degree of satisfaction of various needs¹²⁶. The value/interest connection introduces subjectivity and a sense of personal judgement to the discussion of “interest”. The fourth claim is the flipside of the previous one, which links interest with rights, and argues that the realisation of benefits is intimately associated with the arrangements of rights. Interests, according to this understanding, are the fundamental motivation of human behaviour¹²⁷. We can contextualise the value and rights theses in the structure-agency dichotomy: the former emphasises the role of the agency with a highlighted importance of subjectivity and judgment, whereas the latter perceives interest as a structure within which rights can be exercised and protected.

¹²⁴ Ibid, p.73.

¹²⁵ Yuanpeng 远朋 Hong 洪, “*Jing Ji Li Yi Guan Xi Tong Lun: She Hui Zhu Yi Shi Chang Jing Ji de Li Yi Guan Xi Yan Jiu*”*经济利益关系系统论：社会主义市场经济的利益关系研究* [Theory of Economic Interest Relations: Research About Interest Groups in Socialist Market Economy] (Shanghai: Fudan University Press, 1999), p.2.

¹²⁶ Xinmin 新民 Chen 陈, “*De Guo Gong Fa Xue Ji Chu Li Lun*”*德国公法学基础理论* [Basic Theory of German Law] (Jinan: Shandong People's Press, 2001).

¹²⁷ Hannian 汉年 Zheng 征 and Qun 群 Zhang 章, “*‘Li yi quan li de jia zhi wei du-quan li ben yuan jie xi zhi yi’ 利益:权利的价值维度—权利本原解析之一*” [Interest: the value dimension of rights], *国家教育行政学院学报* [Journal of National Academy of Education Administration], no. 07 (2006): pp.33-39.

The fifth thesis explores the question of what makes the realisation of interests possible, and points to the dimension of capabilities¹²⁸. This interpretation extends etymological deconstruction of interest, *liyi*, by understanding the first character *li* not only as a fact of using farm tools, but also the *ability* to do so to achieve harvests, or generally, goals. The final interpretation pays extra attention to the relational aspect of interest, and contends that the societal attribute of interest is the relationship and network (*guanxi* 关系)¹²⁹. The sociological interpretation of interest foregrounds the process within which a network is formulated to realise particular interests inevitably through the exchange of social capital.

Two observations from the Chinese academic discussion of defining interest emerge: interests have a normative dimension, as they involve a subjective judgment; and secondly, the relational aspect plays an important part in the realisation of certain interests. These various and yet interrelated conceptualisations of interest within the Chinese academic community are boiled down by Chen Shuisheng to two generic categorisations: materialistic and “value-related” (*jiazhixing* 价值性) interest¹³⁰. The problem with this categorisation is that although it is succinct and overarching, his terminology of value-related is misleading. Within the value-related category are both materialistically-oriented elements of power, prestige, social status, and influence, and normative factors such as beliefs.

¹²⁸ Zheng 政 Yu 余, “Zong He Jing Ji Li Yi lun”综合经济利益论[*On Economic Interest*] (Shanghai: Fudan University Press, 1999), p.29.

¹²⁹ Weiguang 伟光 Wang 王, “Li Yi lun”利益论[*On Interest*] (Beijing: People’s Press, 2001), p.74.

¹³⁰ Chen 2012, p.155.

Therefore, to clarify the different understandings of interest without emphasising the differences within them, I decide to categorise them along the line of materialistic and value-based interests from three perspectives: economic, political, and social. Economic interests can be measured in monetary terms. One good example of economic interest is profitability for enterprises or commercial venues obtained by local governments. Political interests, on the hand, refer to the capabilities, resources, and access to the policy-making sphere and epitomising this dimension are power, prestige, and influence. Social interests are largely normative and attend to public goods. A telling example of social interest would be environmental social organisations' advocacy of better living quality and less pollution for the general public.

In the process of categorising interest groups, it is interesting to notice that the undercurrent of the academic debate revolving around categorisation is whether interest groups are a positive or negative force of reform in China. The answer is essential for discussing how to incorporate them into the political system. To be specific, interest groups, in general, are seen as natural development which might bring positive outcomes to the reform, whereas vested interest groups (*jideliyijituan* 既得利益集团) are detrimental to both reform and the very survival of the Party-State.

Deng Yuwen thus perceives vested interest groups as a small proportion of people in the privileged classes who possess and control public power and resources¹³¹. The goal for this kind of interest group is to maintain vested interests regarding money and power. There are three criteria to decide which invested interest groups are. The first criterion is that they manage to “plunder”

¹³¹ Deng 2013.

or take the majority of benefits due to Reform and Opening Policy. The second standard is that further political reform will damage the group's vested interest, which explains their lack of interest in political reform. The third benchmark is the capability of these groups to steer reform in their preferred direction: namely, more economic reform and less political reform.

Built upon these three criteria, Deng outlines seven vested interest groups in China and exemplifies the economic landscape of interest groups. The first group refers to powerful government agencies and departments in which the power to control and allocate resources gives rise to peculiar departmental and individual interests, resulting in rent-seeking and corruption. The second group is local government and cadres which the central government finds difficult to constrain, as their parochial interests differ from the national. Usually, local interests are in the form of the personal gains of local governors by corruption and commodifying their power through projects related to urbanisation, attracting investment, land transaction and real estate.

The next type of vested interest group is Central State-Owned Enterprises (*yangqi* 央企) and their senior management. SOEs usually control the critical and strategic industries of China, such as energy. Unlike Brodsgaard's argument about central government's capabilities to control SOEs, SOEs have taken advantage of political, economic, and financial privileges to maximise their profits and draw up policy supporting their narrow interests, instead of the public good. Deng uses the example of PetroChina Company and Sinopec to demonstrate how SOEs have formed a unique and even hereditary system as the employment decision is dictated by nepotism, namely, whether

the candidate's family works in this sector plays a predominant role in the recruitment decision.

The fourth vested interest group is transnational capital and its Chinese agents, or "foreign compradors" (*yang maiban* 洋买办). These foreign compradors are composed of political elites who use top-level connections to act as agents for transnational corporations, epitomising the marriage between power and capital. Deng singles out real estate developers as the fifth group, because the real estate industry becomes a pillar industry in the majority of local jurisdictions. It reallocates national income, and has become a hotbed of rent-seeking and corruption. The sixth group is made up of private entrepreneurs whose success story is inevitably intertwined with power collusion. The last group is composed of those experts and scholars affiliated with the above mentioned six groups, who use their knowledge resources and expertise, to provide a service to other interest groups. Deng contends that the above listed vested interest groups are in direct opposition to the public's interest, and are the primary obstacle to socio-political reform. 'Vested interest groups' is thus a pejorative term, whereas 'interest group' is a neutral term, as long as the members in interest groups defend their interests within the legal framework.

The emergence of an interest group as a "healthy" development which generates possibilities of socio-political reform is echoed by renowned economist and a former diplomat Zhang Yuyan. He contends that emerging new interest groups may bring policy change to deepen market reform, although their behaviours are geared towards defending and maximising their narrow interests. His reason is that new interest groups may bring competition and

reinvogerate the market economy. In other words, an open market is an unintended benefit brought about by emerging interests groups, as their endeavours to maximise their interests have a spill-over effect to the macroeconomic structure. The condition Zhang sets to make this prediction is that countries in economic transition, as the interests reshuffle, will shatter the old and traditional interest groups in the planned economy and inject new energy into the market economy¹³².

In line with Zhang's sympathy with interest groups, Liu distinguishes interest groups from vested interest groups as the former result from collective interest, and can be an element facilitating the reform and sustaining of the political system, whereas vested interest groups are highly exclusive and narrow their interests to such an extreme that no one but they, and their family members can benefit from their interests maximisation¹³³. These conceptual differences between vested interest groups and interest groups are important, because they are related to how we define what is to be included as interest groups and the assumption of the role of interest groups vis-à-vis the public good.

The conceptualisation of interest groups is informed by the existing literature, in which Chinese scholars explore how to modify the non-Chinese concept to the political context in China. According to Chen Shuisheng, Wang Huning is one of the few scholars who used the concept of the interest group¹³⁴. The most influential scholar in China as a close advisor to leaders from Jiang

¹³² Yuyan 宇燕 Zhang 张, "Li Yi Ji Tuan Yu Zhi Du Fei Zhong xing'利益集团与制度非中性 [Interest Groups and the Bias of Institutions]," *Reform* 2 (1994): p.104.

¹³³ Yanchang 彦昌 Liu 刘, *Jujiao Zhongguo Jide Liyi Jituan* 聚焦中国既得利益集团[*An Examination of Vested Interest Groups in China*] (Beijing: The Central Party School Publishing House, 2007), p.44.

¹³⁴ Chen 2012, 133.

Zemin's era to Xi Jinping and originally famous for his political theory of Neo-authoritarianism, Wang wrote in 1987 that interest groups are those with special interests, who attempted to maximise their special interest via their activities. He thus implicitly conflates interest groups and vested interest groups. Wang Puqu takes the analysis further by specifying the strategy of exerting pressure as a defining feature of the way interest groups influence the government¹³⁵. Mao Shoulong further pinpoints the objectives of interest groups as influencing policy *making*¹³⁶.

Instead of narrowing down policy making to the desired output of interest groups, I prefer not to set limits and conditions to the scope of their political activities. It means that no matter whether groups aim to make favourable policy or bring policy change, as long as groups whose members sharing common interest and objectives *collectively express their interests and attempt to maximise them*, they are counted as interest groups. The ability to influence policy is one barometer indicating the effectiveness of interest groups, but should not be an obstacle for us to understand how and why interest groups function, not only in China but also in China's international cooperation, even if they do not influence the policy outcome. This is based on the assumption that policy changes gradually. It is of vital importance in tracing the evolution of interest groups, instead of assuming they have a single goal when shaping policy. This broad definition of interest groups sets the boundary of inclusion and the following categorisation of interest group specifies the criterion of how one interest group differs from another.

¹³⁵ Puqu 浦劬 Wang 王, "Zhengzhixue Jichu" 政治学基础 (*Foundations of Political Science*) (Beijing: Peking University Press, 1995), p.292.

¹³⁶ Shoulong 首龙 Mao 毛, *Zhengzhi Shehuixue* 政治社会学 [*Political Sociology*] (Beijing: Chinese Academy of Social Sciences Press, 2001), p.233.

Chinese academics divide interest groups based on broad criteria such as class and social strata and interests deriving from the Reform and Open Policy¹³⁷, and detailed benchmarks such as objectives, organisational degree, and functions. For instance, Yang Jisheng summarises five classes based upon income, power, and reputation: upper, mid-upper, middle, mid-lower, and lower classes¹³⁸. The assumption behind this categorisation is that the interest of each class is given and fixed. Li Qiang has captured the fluidity of interests especially as the Reform Policy, and classifies society along the spectrum of benefit versus harm, due to this new economic initiative¹³⁹. But a more nuanced classification is provided by Wang Shiyi in the light of interest reconfiguration since 1978. These include: *basic* class including the state apparatus management, workers, farmers, and professionals; *emerging* class including management and technical personnel of private enterprises, foreign venture firms, freelancers, and agencies; *reviving* class including self-employed (*getihu* 个体户) and private entrepreneurs; and the *marginalised* class including laid-off workers and retired staff¹⁴⁰.

Based on the objectives of organisations, interest groups are divided into *economic, socio-political, public, and government* interest groups¹⁴¹. Xia also sees differences from the perspectives of organisational degree, and classifies

¹³⁷ Chen 2012, p.139.

¹³⁸ Jisheng 继绳 Yang 杨, “Zhongguo Dangdai Jieceng Jiegou de Zongti Fenxi” 中国当代阶层结构的总体分析[An Overall Analysis of Class Structure in Contemporary China],” *China Social Science Quarterly* Autumn (1999).

¹³⁹ Qiang 强 Li 李, “Dangqian Zhongguo Shehui de Sige Liyi Qunti 当前中国社会的四个利益团体 [The Four Main Social Groups in Contemporary China],” *Academic Forum* 3 (2000): pp.5-19.

¹⁴⁰ Shiyi 世谊 Wang 王, “Dangdai Zhongguo Shehui Jieceng Jiegou de Bianhua Xintan 当代中国社会阶层结构的变化新探[Exploration of Changes of Social Structure in Contemporary China],” *Social Sciences* 6 (2003): pp.42-51.

¹⁴¹ Xunliang 训良 Xia 夏, “Shehuizhuyi Chuji Jieduan Liyi Jituan Lun 社会主义初级阶段利益集团论 [On Interest Groups in the Primary Stage of Socialism],” *Jiangxi Social Sciences* 3 (1989).

interest groups as *informal, non-associational, institutional, and associational*. A crisper categorisation offered by Yang Guangbin and Li Yuejun who differentiate groups based on the functional aspect: *institutionalised, enterprised, associational, and unorganised* interest groups¹⁴².

Bearing these views in mind, I will use social strata and class categorisation as the beginning of my analysis in my next chapter regarding the domestic context within which interest groups emerge. I will borrow Chen Shuisheng's categorisation which is informed by the above Chinese research. Based on the objectives and organisational features, Chen Shuisheng identifies four types of interest group: *enterprise-interest groups* (such as real estate, telecommunication, and energy), *association-interest groups* (such as industry association and commerce chambers), *institutional interest groups* (bureaucracies), and *public interest groups* (such as environmental organisation)¹⁴³. This categorisation is particularly useful when studying the subject of international environmental cooperation, because it allows us to examine all relevant actors without losing focus, and more interestingly, conflicts within these four groups help us explain how domestic conflict is linked to international cooperation.

By using Chinese definitions of interest and a categorisation of interest groups to delineate the unit of analysis, two observations emerge to challenge the assumption of rationalist institutionalism: the lack of space to incorporate the ideational dimension, which will be shown to be empirically salient, and overconfidence that institutions are useful in aggregating domestic preferences.

¹⁴² Guangbin 杨 and Yuejun 李, “zhongguo Zhengzhi Guochengzhong de Liyi Jituan Jiqi Zhili’中国政治过程中的利益集团及其治理 [Interests Groups in China’s Political Progress and Its Management],” *Academia Bimestris* 2 (2008): pp.55–72.

¹⁴³ Chen 2012, p.140.

Although the ideational aspect is missing in rationalist institutionalism, it is salient in the definition of “interest”, and is needed to justify the existence of interest groups in a political context where interest groups are “morally and culturally vulnerable”. Moreover, the ability of institutions to aggregate preferences is discounted, because of the prevalence of informal channels through which diverse interests are mediated and reconciled.

Two questions thus arise from this section: 1) how are interest groups formed through the interaction between ideas and interests; and 2) what aggregates domestic preferences, if not institutions. Having said this, I do not seek to jettison the rationalistic approach. Rather, the next sections are aimed at advancing the framework and better adapting it to the context in China.

2.2.2 The Ideational Dimension in Foreign Relations

A practical concern of interest groups poses a neglected question to the Chinese research community which understands and welcomes their emergence: how to deal with the negative attitude of the national leaders towards them? Jing Yuejin observes that in CCP General Secretary Zhao Ziyang's working report in 1988, he acknowledged the inevitability of interest groups to emerge due to conflicts of interests. In contrast, when interest groups reappeared in Jiang Zemin's speech in 2001, it was iterated in a negative light, used interchangeably with the notion of vested interest group¹⁴⁴. This raises the question of how, under an authoritarian regime whose political culture

¹⁴⁴ Yuejin Jing, “Interest-Based Politics in Current China: Challenges & Prospects” (Brookings Institute, May 9, 2011), http://www.brookings.edu/~/media/events/2011/5/09-china-governance/20110509_yuejin_presentation.pdf.

discriminates against the idea of the interest group, is it possible to justify an interest group's efforts to maximise its interests without being seen as causing harm to the Party-State.

The distrust of national leaders of interest groups foregrounds the importance of the ideational aspect, insofar as it speaks to the beliefs of political elites. Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith argue that “common beliefs, instead of common interests, function as a glue to hold coalitions together”¹⁴⁵ in their frequently cited Advocacy Coalition Approach derived from their analysis of the environmental policy at Lake Tahoe. They visualise the structure of belief systems in the mind of the ruling elites; normative and ontological tenets at the heart of the system; policy stance and strategies as the second-tier; and instrumental and information-related beliefs at the periphery. Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith also ask a more fundamental question than Milner, which is what kind of information is deemed essential: that is to say, what conditions information selection. Their approach represents a radical departure from treating the institution as the unit of analysis and replaces it with policy subsystems as a vehicle to aggregate preferences, which directly contradicts the assumptions of rationalist institutionalism.

In the same year, Goldstein and Keohane published their edited book *Ideas and Foreign Policy: Beliefs, Institutions, and Political Change* to explore ideas in foreign policy. They identified three pathways for ideas to influence foreign policies: road maps, focal points, and institutionalisation. Ideas as a road map refers to the business of conducting policies in an ideologically correct way

¹⁴⁵ Paul A Sabatier and Hank C Jenkins-Smith, *Policy Change and Learning: An Advocacy Coalition Approach* (Boulder, Colo: Westview Press, 1993), p.233.

because the chosen idea limits choices¹⁴⁶. The focal point is the function of ideas to “define cooperative solutions or act as coalitional glue to facilitate the cohesion of particular groups”¹⁴⁷. When ideas are institutionalised, their lives are prolonged, and they can have an impact, although no one genuinely believes in them. Hence, instead of arguing whether national leaders believe in certain ideas, the question is whether idea gets the job done. This view of the role of ideas in foreign policy is supplemented by chapters with concrete case studies. For instance, Garrett and Weingast conclude that ideas provide motivation, reasons for collective action, and needs mechanisms to translate ideas to actions in real life¹⁴⁸, stressing that “ideas are not self-implementing” and it is “their utility in helping actors achieve their desired ends under prevailing constraints”¹⁴⁹. The prevailing restriction, in the case of interest groups in China, is the national leaders’ suspicion. Hence, the role of academia and intellectuals is critical regarding framing the political relevance and salience of certain interest groups to ease the anxiety of the ruling elites.

Goldstein and Keohane and their colleagues, in the process of theorising the ideational dimension in foreign policy, argue that it is “changes in the underlying conditions, rather than changes in ideas themselves, [that] can alter the impact of ideas on policy”¹⁵⁰. This sets conditions and distances ideas from policy change. Ruggie thus criticises Goldstein and Keohane’s efforts as “neo-utilitarian” by which he means that there is an intellectual convergence in the

¹⁴⁶ Judith Goldstein and Robert O Keohane, *Ideas and Foreign Policy: Beliefs, Institutions, and Political Change* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993), p.12.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid, p.18.

¹⁴⁸ Geoffrey Garrett and Barry R Weingast, “Ideas, Interests, and Institutions: Constructing the European Community’s Internal Market,” in *Ideas and Foreign Policy* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1993), pp.203-204.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid, p.178.

¹⁵⁰ Goldstein and Keohane 1993, p.25.

1980s between neorealism and neoliberal institutionalism around the premises that “ideational factors are rendered in strictly instrumental terms, useful or not to self-regarding individuals in the pursuit of typically material interests”¹⁵¹. Ruggie points out that what Goldstein and Keohane achieve is limited to “how individuals go about their business”, instead of the social constructivist concern of “what happens before the neo-utilitarian model kicks in”¹⁵².

The following discussion examines the “neo-utilitarian” approach in the 1980s and 90s to gauge their explanatory power and limitations. It does so by looking at concepts that have used for understanding ideational factors and interest group politics in late-industrialising societies, namely the concept of a composite ideology used by Woodruff Smith and the logrolling model proposed by Jack Snyder.

2.2.2.1 Composite Ideology

According to Geertz, ideology may be comprehended concerning functions¹⁵³, structures¹⁵⁴, and a cultural system¹⁵⁵. The structural aspect of an ideology means that the philosophical roots of ideology are a blueprint of the political architect, displayed in Marxism and Liberalism for instance. The sociological layer of the ideology has neo-utilitarian underpinnings, as the ideology is depicted as “a mask and a weapon” to pursue the individual interest,

¹⁵¹ John Gerard Ruggie, “What Makes the World Hang Together? Neo-Utilitarianism and the Social Constructivist Challenge,” *International Organization* 52, no. 4 (1998): p.855.

¹⁵² Ibid, p.867.

¹⁵³ Karl Mannheim, *Ideology and Utopia an Introduction to the Sociology of Knowledge*, With a preface by Louis Wirth (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1954).

¹⁵⁴ Daniel Bell, *The End of Ideology: On the Exhaustion of Political Ideas in the Fifties : With “The Resumption of History in the New Century”* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1962).

¹⁵⁵ Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays* (New York: Basic Books, 1973).

and “a symptom and a remedy”, which means a “symbolic outlet for emotional disturbances generated by social disequilibrium”¹⁵⁶.

Woodruff Smith, influenced by Geertz, treats ideology as “a set of ideas employed to facilitate the accomplishment of political action and to justify particular social orders-past, present, or future-by associating such actions and orders with a notion of the general good”¹⁵⁷. He thus prefers to examine ideology through the lens of function, and reveals the potential of ideology to be used as “a disguise for the particular interests of social classes and groups of political participants or as a means of transforming narrow interest into a general, objective-seeming worldview”¹⁵⁸.

The characteristics of ideology in the modern political system, according to Smith, are that it is *composite or aggregate*, which is why he uses the term *composite ideology*¹⁵⁹. Composite ideology constitutes a diversity of ideas, because it not only addresses the social transformation from the past to the future, but also attends to contradicting interests. Constituents in the composite ideology are independent of each other before being included. The logical connections between each element are loose and artificially contingent on “similarities in image and impression, non-rigorous analogies, the employment of symbols, and similarities in descriptive language”¹⁶⁰. The weak logical structure is strengthened by a perpetual repetition of two discrete statements until they sound as though they belong to each other. Furthermore, each component of the composite ideology justifies other elements, and is meanwhile

¹⁵⁶ Ibid, pp.201-204.

¹⁵⁷ Woodruff D. Smith, *The Ideological Origins of Nazi Imperialism* (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), p.14.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid, p.13.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid, p.14.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid, p.15.

justified by them. That is to say, a composite ideology is not falsifiable and therefore detached from reality. The illogicality and inaccuracy in the composite ideology must be hidden. When there is a problem with the ideology, a scapegoat is necessary to shoulder the unfavourable consequences. The absence of a sound logic, meanwhile, is compensated for by “emotional images and ill-defined vocabulary”¹⁶¹.

A composite ideology, despite and ironically precisely because of its logical frailty, is intended for action, and capable of being used for popular mobilisation. Smith views the relationship between ideology and action as a two-way communication, in which ideology justifies actions and actions can reinforce and consolidate the ideology. The reason why ideology has the potential to mobilise the public is that it contains unsophisticated and accessible ideas. A composite ideology construes a sharply defined reality with a crystal clear identification of the problem and the diagnosis of the society. Sinologists such as Lucian Pye contend that the purpose of ideology in China is to “make reality safe”. When reality is full of confrontation and disorder, it can be perceived as peaceful and harmonious¹⁶².

Nationalism is the epitome of such a composite ideology. Since the 1990s, it has been used as “a spiritual instrument” to guide “the reform and to control enormous changes resulting from the reform policy”¹⁶³. The manipulation of nationalism is not only for internal control, but also engenders foreign policy implications. Jessica Chen Weiss convincingly demonstrates that nationalism

¹⁶¹ Ibid, p.17.

¹⁶² Pye 1992, p.31.

¹⁶³ John Wong and Yongnian Zheng, “Nationalism and Its Dilemma: Chinese Responses to Embassy Bombing,” in *Reform, Legitimacy and Dilemmas: China’s Politics and Society*, Wang, Gungwu and Zheng Yongnian(eds.) (Singapore: World Scientific, 2000), p.325.

and anti-foreign protests are used by the ruling elites to signal their “domestic vulnerability”, resulting in the perception of instability which pushes other countries to make concessions¹⁶⁴. She uses this logic to explain the practice of tolerance and repression of the People’s Republic towards nationalist protest. The composite ideology of nationalism comes at a cost. Hughes observes a *geopolitik* turn of nationalistic narrative, developed from the ethnic dimension of nationalism which reduces citizens to members of “a politicised ethnic groups defined by common culture and descent, shared historical experiences and usually a common language”¹⁶⁵. The *geopolitik* nationalism is used to undermine a pragmatic version of nationalism, which calls for a peaceful environment for the sake of economic development, and the liberal nationalism which calls for expanding individual rights and openness to the outside world, exposing the aggressive side of the “double-edged sword”, a metaphor used to describe nationalism and its unintended politicised consequences.

The example of nationalism is used to demonstrate the purpose of a composite ideology, which is to reach a *consensus* among conflicting parties without addressing real problems. It disguises reality and construes an illusion that is supported by myths. The weakness in a composite ideology does not prevent it from being successful in reaching a consensus. When an ideology achieves its purpose, it can “take on a life of its own over time”¹⁶⁶ and the

¹⁶⁴ Jessica Chen Weiss, “Authoritarian Signaling, Mass Audiences, and Nationalist Protest in China,” *International Organization* 67, no. 1 (2013): p.1.

¹⁶⁵ Suisheng Zhao, *A Nation-State by Construction: Dynamics of Modern Chinese Nationalism* (Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, 2004), 21 cited by Christopher Hughes, “Reclassifying Chinese Nationalism: The Geopolitik Turn,” *Journal of Contemporary China* 20, no. 71 (2011): p.607.

¹⁶⁶ Smith 1986, p.17.

longevity of a composite ideology further relies on socialisation and education in a society.

2.2.2.2 Logrolling

To better understand the process by which a consensus is reached, Jack Snyder's logrolling model sheds light on the question of how different groups put aside their various interests, form coalitions, reach consensus, and thus influence foreign policy. Snyder borrows the term of logrolling from American politics literature, primarily meaning "give and take", "compromise", "trading", and "the adjustment of interests"¹⁶⁷. Snyder reconceptualises it as a process by which the parochial interest is justified and repackaged as the general interest, enabling this narrow-minded interest to "hijack national policy"¹⁶⁸. He analyses the case of Japan and Germany from the late nineteenth century till the Second World War, the United States since 1945, and the Soviet Union since the 1930s, and Britain. His model explains how a narrow and irrational imperialist interest group can dominate the agenda and propaganda, not because of the persuasiveness of their appeal, but because of their capacity to form a coalition via logrolling and to re-formulate their special interests as an ostensible benefit for all the people.

The process of logrolling not only rationalises the pursuit of parochial interests, but also transfers the costs to the greater public and persuades the public to accept this cost. Coalition managers are important in this process. There are two strategies. The first is the straight logroll, a situation in which "each major group in the ruling coalition gets what it wants on the issue it cares

¹⁶⁷ Bentley 1908, p.370.

¹⁶⁸ Jack Snyder, *Myths of Empire: Domestic Politics and International Ambition* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1991), p.17.

about most”¹⁶⁹, with a typical example of the Wilhelmian coalition between industrialists, farmers, army and navy. The second is called the creative straddle. This is when all interest groups are too weak to form a stable coalition, so coalition managers use ideology bundled with myths to change the preference of individual groups to make logrolls feasible. Policy entrepreneurs devise “a creative synthesis” which is claimed to be beneficial for every group. A classic example is Hitler’s technique of persuading the whole of Germany to pursue “foreign adventures”¹⁷⁰. In reality, the straight roll also needs an ideology to sustain the coalition by exaggerating the benefit of logrolling.

The effectiveness of logrolling is contingent on domestic structure. Snyder categorises political systems into cartelised, unitary and democratic systems while acknowledging that there is no pure form, and that all polities are hybrid. The cartelised system and cartelised groups are dominant in the logrolling process for three reasons. First, groups in a cartelised system have compact or concentrated interests. Each member benefits from a significant share and hence has a strong incentive to strive for a common goal. Secondly, a concentration of resources leads to a concentration of knowledge. A monopoly of information and a manipulation of propaganda hinges on local expertise as well as organisational and material basis. The third explanation is that a close tie to the state apparatus grants interest groups with political advantages. Interest groups thus cooperate with national leaders to create political myths. In the case of empires, such myths allow interest groups to make a profit out of

¹⁶⁹ Ibid, p.313.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid, p.314.

war, whereas national leaders can benefit from “nationalism, social solidarity, and social mobilisation that go along with it”¹⁷¹.

2.2.2.3. Idea-interest nexus

The biggest contribution of Snyder is that he uses coalition politics in the “systemic, bureaucratic, or individual-level” manner and a modified rational choice theory to link domestic sources to foreign policy and the international behaviour of states¹⁷². This helps to explain under what conditions interest groups are politically active. Whereas Snyder uses domestic structures as a variable, explaining under which condition it is more efficient for interest groups to form a powerful coalition, I will use the domestic structure as a context within which the needs of interest groups emerge and their survival and thriving is possible, in the next chapter.

Although Snyder offers a clear and strong analytical edge to explain expansionist foreign policy, it is necessary to pinpoint the flaws in his argument to further our understanding regarding the role of ideology. One self-contradiction in Snyder’s book is his view on the importance of ideas. On the one hand, ideas empower and rationalise interests. On the other hand, Snyder dilutes the significance of ideas by emphasising the mechanism of logrolling, in which groups get their interests maximised. Ideas are treated as a medium between interest and action and a “by-product” of the logrolling process¹⁷³. This shortcoming of Snyder’s analysis primarily results from his scope and primary concern, which is to explain expansive foreign policy. It is almost inevitable that

¹⁷¹ Ibid, p.15.

¹⁷² Jack Levy, “Book Review: Myths of Empire: Domestic Politics and International Ambition,” *The American Political Science Review* 86, no. 3 (1992): p.851.

¹⁷³ Snyder 1991, p.111.

the role of ideational factors is downplayed in the logrolling process as the assumption threading through the whole book is that interest influences foreign policy. Yet one contribution which he, perhaps unconsciously, introduces is to augment the role of ideas through the need for domestic groups to justify their interests. The fact that ideas justify interests allows ideas and interests to share the stage as explanatory elements.

2.2.3 Social Constructivism

The applicability of Snyder and Smith's work to environmental policy may be subject to modification, due to their choice of case and the differing degree of interdependence they attribute to the individual state and the outside world. In the age of globalisation, environmental cooperation revolves around the domestic-international nexus¹⁷⁴. The international interaction generates identities and (re)defines interests that go with them. When criticising the neo-utilitarian approach, Ruggie emphasises that constructivists instead contend that "identities and interests of actors are socially constructed", and furthermore, "they must share the stage with a whole host of other ideational factors that emanate from the human capacity and will"¹⁷⁵. He points out that neo-utilitarianism cannot answer two critical questions: "how the constituent actors-in international relations, territorial states-came to acquire their current identity and the interests that are assumed to go along with it" and how to

¹⁷⁴ Gerald Chan, Pak K. Lee, and Lai-Ha Chan, "China's Environmental Governance: The Domestic - International Nexus," *Third World Quarterly* 29, no. 2 (March 2008): pp.291-314.

¹⁷⁵ Ruggie 1998, p.856.

comprehend the “generic identities and interests of specific states *qua* states”¹⁷⁶.

In this light, social constructivism and its emphasis on identity have a particular relevance in our understanding how Chinese political actors define their interests when the country is integrated with the outside world and how identity aggregates interests.

In bringing identity, culture and norms to Chinese foreign policy, Johnston argues that China has demonstrated a consistent *realpolitik* strategic culture in the Maoist period¹⁷⁷. One particularly useful concept from his article is that of “ranked preferences”. Instead of seeing options as a menu of choices with equal weight, ranked preferences reflect the cultural element and strategic weighing of each choice. The action of weighing belongs partly to the process of aggregating preferences, and involves the search for the identity of a state and its position within the international system.

Qin Yaqing articulates the importance of identity in Chinese foreign policy by saying “the heart of Chinese foreign policy thus is not a security dilemma between great powers, but an identity dilemma within China as people ask ‘who is China’ and ‘what kind of world does it want’”¹⁷⁸. Underlying China’s search for identity is the Essence (*ti* 体)/Function (*yong* 用) dichotomy, flagged up by Hughes reflecting the mentality among Chinese political actors to use the foreign substance to serve the Chinese essence to balance political orthodoxy

¹⁷⁶ Ibid, p.863.

¹⁷⁷ Alastair Iain Johnston, “Cultural Realism and Strategy in Maoist China,” in *The Culture of National Security: Norms and Identity in World Politics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), pp.216–68.

¹⁷⁸ Qin 奎, Yaqing 亚青. “Guoji Guanxi Lilun Zhongguo Pai Shengcheng de Keneng He Biran 国际关系理论中国派生成的可能和必然 [The Chinese School of International Relations Theory: Possibility and Necessity].” *Shijie Jingji Yu Zhengzhi* 3 (2006): 13, cited by William A. Callahan, “Identity and Security in China: The Negative Soft Power of the China Dream,” *Politics* 35, no. 3–4 (November 1, 2015): p.219.

with functional learning from abroad¹⁷⁹. As China as a state is increasingly integrated with the international system as observed by Johnston, domestic debates about China's identity matter and the micro-process of socialisation merits attention¹⁸⁰. David Shambaugh offers a comprehensive overview of the domestic debate regarding China's identity, which not only weighs up preferences, but also provides a platform to aggregate different preferences¹⁸¹.

Shambaugh treats domestic perceptions of China's international identity as a variable to explain China's global impact, and captures seven schools harbouring distinctive opinions about China's relations with the outside world and different views of the international order, and different priorities and interests for China. I will build on Shambaugh's useful categorisation, and add a particular layer of environmental issues to present the domestic debate on China's environmental foreign relations and demonstrate the intimate relationship between domestic interest and China's national image in the case of environmental foreign relations. My method of gauging the views of different schools of thought on environmental issues is based on the main argument and logic of each, as supported by their representative statements and opinions on China's stance in international environmental cooperation.

2.2.3.1 Identities and Preferences

Shambaugh's categorisation is based on the degree of trust in the international order. Situated on one pole of the spectrum is nativism regarding

¹⁷⁹ Christopher Hughes, "The Enduring Function of the Substance/Essence (Ti/Yong) Dichotomy in Chinese Nationalism," in *China Orders the World: Normative Soft Power and Foreign Policy*, Callahan, William and Elena Barabantseva (eds.) (Washington D.C.: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 2011), pp.118–42.

¹⁸⁰ Alastair Iain Johnston, *Social States :China in International Institutions, 1980-2000* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2008).

¹⁸¹ Shambaugh, 2013.

the West as evil, and on the other end is globalists or liberal institutionalist, advocating further cooperation as well as taking responsibilities, with the five schools in the middle, respectively: realism, the major power school, Asia first, the Global South, and the globalists.

The perception of *nativists* of the international community is principally guided by distrust and conspiracy theory, which sees international multilateral involvement as a trap to contain China's development. They are against globalisation which is thought of as a new form of imperialism and they criticise the Reform and Opening Policy for corrupting China's culture with foreign influence. Consequently, the defining characteristics of this school are that it is conservative and xenophobic. Reflecting the logic on environmental diplomacy, which will be discussed in Chapter 5, is the deep-rooted doubt of environmental protection as a genuine international norm and the belief that environmental protection is another tool of the "West" to control, contain, and weaken China.

One representative nativist, as identified by Shambaugh, is Wang Xiaodong, one of the authors of *Unhappy China*¹⁸². Wang published an article to assess China's environmental diplomacy on *Green Leaf* (*lüye* 绿叶), the monthly journal dedicated to environmental issues and affiliated with the Ministry of Environmental Protection. He asserted that a fundamental problem is China's ideological difference with other countries, not environmental pollution in China. Environmental issues, following Wang's logic, are the veneer of the long-fought ideological battle and environmental diplomacy is "nothing but competing for natural resources". To prevent external forces from using

¹⁸² This was a bestseller book in 1996 venting left-wing nationalistic dissatisfaction with the influence of Western countries, particularly the United States, on China, and which called for a firmer and stronger stance of Chinese foreign policy.

environmental protection to exploit China, the Chinese government needs to win over the Chinese public and the elites who fail to realise that China is making an excessive concession and wielding its economic clout to get a better deal in environmental negotiations. Not only does Wang refute environmental protection as an international norm, but he divorces China's environmental performance from the country's international image and insists that every country is judged by its power, which could be augmented by collaboration with other developing countries¹⁸³.

Wang's comments on environmental protection epitomises the left-wing nativist interpretation of international environmental protection and he is far from being alone. In 2010, Gou Hongyang published his book *Low Carbon Plot* and pictured global climate negotiations as a smokeless war complicated by diverse international, national, and subnational interests and impregnated with conflicts. Gou warned that a carbon tax and tariff would lock developing countries into a permanently disadvantageous position in the international economic order¹⁸⁴. Gou's book and Wang's article echo and summarise the nativists' doubt in environmental protection. In sum, they argue that China as an ideologically different country should define its interests in opposition to the Western rhetoric, due to conflicting interests. By portraying China and its relation to the world in the nativist light, environmental protection becomes a non-issue and is irrelevant to domestic preferences.

¹⁸³ Xiaodong 小东 Wang 王, “Zai Huanjing Waijiao Zhong Zhengqu Zuida de Guojia liyi”在环境外交中争取最大的国家利益[Fight to Maximise the National Interest in Environmental Diplomacy],”绿叶 *Green Leaf* 4 (May 4, 2008), <http://lvyezazhi.blog.sohu.com/86385571.html>.

¹⁸⁴ Hong Yang 红洋 Gou 勾, “Ditan Yinmou” 低碳阴谋 *Low Carbon Plot* (Taiyuan: Shanxi Economics Press, 2010).

The *realist* school, also referred to by Shambaugh as pragmatic nationalists, is pessimistic about the international system, if not as suspicious as nativists. They share a narrow understanding of the national interest and dismiss transnational issues based on the “China first” tenet. It is not surprising that environmental protection does not weigh much in this literature. In similar vein to nativists, environmental issues are either deployed as an opportunity to cooperate with the United States, in other words, as an ice-breaker issue to resume dialogue, as realist scholar Sheng Dingli suggests¹⁸⁵, or they are seen as tools to contain China, as mentioned by Zhang Ruizhuang. Environmental protection is never at the heart of this school, due to the “soft nature” of the issue, vis-à-vis economic clout and military build-up¹⁸⁶.

The *major power, Asia first, and the Global South* schools address a common question of which partner is a priority for China, and is most directly linked to its national interests. Each school has a different answer. On the surface, these three schools select who to partner with in terms of international environmental cooperation. Although these three schools disagree on the priority of China’s foreign policy, all of them are of direct relevance to environmental issues. The *major power* school sees cooperation with superpowers, such as the United States, Russia and the European Union, as the “key of the keys”, largely due to the science and technology from the States, energy resources and military equipment from Russia, and the EU’s generous

¹⁸⁵ Dingli 丁立 Shen 沈, “Shen Dingli: wushi de zouxiang qiang er bu ba lixiang”沈丁立：务实地走向强而不霸理想 Shen Dingli: Towards the ideal of being strong but not hegemonic, interview by Zhaoying 钊颖 Xu 许, January 17, 2011, <http://www.yicai.com/news/656644.html>.

¹⁸⁶ Ruizhuang 睿壮 Zhang 张, “‘Chonggu Zhongguo Waijiao Suochu Zhi Guoji Huanjing-Heping Yu Fazhan Bingfei Dangdai Shijie zhuti’重估中国外交所处之国际环境——和平与发展并非当代世界主题[Re-Evaluate the International Environment of Chinese Foreign Policy-Peace and Development Are Not the Mainstream],” *中国外交国际环境 Chinese Foreign Affairs and International Environment* 1 (2001), <http://www.cssm.org.cn/view.php?id=31300>.

offer of trade, investment and technology transfer to China¹⁸⁷. The major power school is endorsed by a rich literature on the environmental cooperation between China and the US on climate change¹⁸⁸, China and Russia on energy¹⁸⁹, China and the European Union¹⁹⁰.

The *Asia first* school, instead, reckons that proximity does matter, and according to Zhu Feng, “every power must protect its own yard”¹⁹¹. Guided by neighbourhood diplomacy (*zhoubian waijiao* 周边外交), China takes a more proactive approach to its peripheries with a mixture of bilateral and regional cooperation. Instead of interpreting the *Asia first* school through the lens of the core-periphery hierarchy, it is more accurate to depict regional cooperation as dynamic interdependence and characterised by a high degree of issue linkage. This is particularly the case when China and its neighbouring countries face common problems. As Dent rightfully points out, the energy security concerns shared by East Asian countries is leading to an increasing convergence between their energy and environmental diplomacies¹⁹². This allows the *Asia First* school to have a broader appeal.

The *Global South* school plays the card of China, having been colonised and a victim of imperialism and portrays China as a revisionist power, rather

¹⁸⁷ Shambaugh 2013,pp.34-36.

¹⁸⁸ Economy, Elizabeth. *The River Runs Black: The Environmental Challenge to China's Future*. Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 2004.

¹⁸⁹ Richard Weitz, “China-Russia Security Relations: Strategic Parallelism Without Partnership or Passion?” *Current Politics and Economics of Russia, Eastern and Central Europe* 26, no. 6 (2011): pp.659–762.

¹⁹⁰ See Pietro De Mattei, “Sino-European Energy, Environmental and Climate Change Diplomacy” (Ph.D., University of Cambridge, 2012), <http://ethos.bl.uk/OrderDetails.do?uin=uk.bl.ethos.610458>; Diarmuid Torney, *European Climate Leadership in Question: Policies toward China and India*, Earth System Governance (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 2015).

¹⁹¹ Zhu Feng cited by Shambaugh 2013, p.37.

¹⁹² Christopher Dent, “Understanding the Energy Diplomacies of East Asian States,” *Modern Asian Studies* 47, no. 3 (May 2013): pp.935–67.

than a status quo power. China should not only insist on its identity as a developing country but also, in solidarity with other Southern countries, call for the restructuring of the currently partial international order to “redistribute financial resources, institutional influence, and power from North to South”¹⁹³. The relevance of this school for China’s participation in global environmental governance is particularly evident in China’s insistence that it is a developing country and its continuing efforts to request international funding and technology transfers from the industrialised countries as a way to compensate the Southern countries.

The *selective multilateralists*, the sixth school, refers to “an internationalist vision of realists”. They differ from liberal internationalists because they see global involvement *per se* as a tactic for China to benefit. Influenced by the realists, they are alarmed at the institutional trap set by the West in multilateral institutions; meanwhile, they depict China as a responsible power, not a “self-interested free rider”¹⁹⁴. The *selective multilateralist* approach reflects the “do some things” approach without being deceived into shouldering more responsibilities. Environmental cooperation is thus a fine line for the Chinese government to walk due to the co-existence of limited trust in the multilateral institution and the desire to act as a responsible power. The representative thinker mentioned by Shambaugh, Chang Gong, did not specify his stance on environmental foreign relations. Yet this thought can be used to weave the liberal norm of environmental protection into the realist fabric.

¹⁹³ Shambaugh, p.39.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid, p.40.

On the other end of the spectrum are the *globalists* or *liberal institutionalists*. Premised on the interdependence among countries in the context of globalisation, they ask for an even greater responsibility for China in global governance and are far less critical of multilateral institutions such as the United Nations than are *selective multilateralists*. In sharp contrast to the *realists*, transnational issues such as environmental protection are high on the agenda of *globalists*. The representative voice of the *globalists*, Jin Canrong, observes that as more expectation is given to China it leads to more responsibilities which the ruling elites are not yet ready to take on. High expectations are also present in China's involvement in environmental governance, particularly on climate change issues. How to meet the expectations and translate transnational problems into China's soft power and eventually leadership is a key concern of *globalists*. I am not suggesting that the *globalists* regard environmental protection as a norm or principle. They also see it through the lens of strategic importance. Jin Canrong, for example, analyses Obama's environmental policy as a strategy to create a "bubble of renewable energy" and generate a new economic locomotive, and Obama's emphasis on renewable energy research and investment is a smart choice because it is a trend of the future¹⁹⁵. In other words, environmental diplomacy is a concept of increasing strategic value in foreign policy and international relations.

Having examined the domestic discussion regarding China's international identity and linking this to its corresponding role in global environmental governance, we find that the common ground which is agreed on

¹⁹⁵ Jin 金, Canrong 灿荣. "Zhongmei Guanxi Yu Huanjing waijiao'中美关系与环境外交[Sino-US Relations and Environmental Diplomacy]." 绿叶 Green Leaf, 2009.

by all schools is the need for a strategic, interest-based perspective on environmental issues, rather than seeing environmental issues as a norm. That is to say, what *nativists* and *globalists* disagree with is the degree to which China participates in international environmental cooperation, instead of whether environmental protection *per se* is a means or an end.

2.3 Analytical framework: constructivist utilitarianism

The last section of this chapter introduces the approach of constructivist utilitarianism as an attempt to assemble the interaction between interests, ideas, institutions and identities, aiming to shed light on more than just the empirical aspects of China's international environmental cooperation.

This chapter began with an overview of the rational institutionalist school of IR as a means of challenging the realist assumption of the state as a unitary actor, and the discussion has emphasised the importance of domestic preferences and how institutions, interests, and information are used to explain international cooperation. In the process of applying rational institutionalism to the context of China, the weakness of Milner's assumption that the *institution* is the aggregating mechanism of various domestic preferences has been shown. I thus echo what Helen Milner acknowledges, in her defence of rational institutionalism, namely that institutions are political means to realise one's preferences, and I see institutions as a *platform*, not a mechanism¹⁹⁶.

This points to the need to resort to the constructivist school when looking at China, which emphasises the mutual construction of interest and

¹⁹⁶ Milner 1998, p.784.

identity as Chinese actors see the lack of “discursive power” and the ideological difference between China and the West as an obstacle to fulfilling China’s “national interest”. In other words, the normative dimension and the question of China’s identity in the world constitute and interweave with its national interest. Norms are important as they “frame the parameters of policy debate on given issues and concurrently introduce constraints to decision making as well, under certain circumstances, changes in actor preferences”¹⁹⁷.

This identity is expressed through strategic concepts which then converge into a composite ideology. Strategic concepts are featured by “simple dichotomies” to justify foreign policies *ex post facto*¹⁹⁸. Strategic concepts in this research are “environmental diplomacy” (Chapter 5) and the “Chinese experience” (Chapter 6). Composite ideology is a conglomerate of strategic concepts and its aim is to achieve consensus among different interest groups. The composite ideology here is “ecological civilisation” which will be elaborated in Chapter 7.

I thus argue that what aggregates domestic preferences is more than institutions, but also the identity politics and norms which condition preferences. The interaction between domestic interests and external factors thus becomes strategic. To better comprehend the subject of China’s international cooperation, I combine John Ruggie’s critique of neo-utilitarianism and promotion of social constructivism, published in the same issue with Milner’s development of rational institutionalism. By engaging with the

¹⁹⁷ Chris Alden and Daniel Large, “On Becoming a Norms Maker: Chinese Foreign Policy, Norms Evolution and the Challenges of Security in Africa,” *The China Quarterly* 221 (March 2015): p.126.

¹⁹⁸ Synder, pp.60 and 306.

literature on the role of ideas in foreign policy and social constructivism, I seek to give ideas academic weight in the assessment of how domestic groups influence environmental cooperation.

I thus propose a framework of *constructivist utilitarianism* to marry the salience of domestic preferences advocated in rational institutionalism to the assumption that interests and identity are mutually constructed. I argue that ideas and interests must share the stage because ideas justify interests and the process of legitimization makes ideas not only a veneer of interest but also their building blocks. Identity, in addition to institutions, is a platform to aggregate domestic preferences because it weighs different foreign relation preferences. In saying this, I am not suggesting that institutions are irrelevant, nor do I abandon the observation that ideas are used instrumentally to serve one's interests. Instead, I attempt to nuance our understanding of how domestic preferences are aggregated to inform foreign relations, in forms of cooperation, non-cooperation, or even conflict. This is a particularly useful tool for us to understand the apparent *contradictions* in a state's international engagement, between its statements and actions, and between earlier and later stances. One point of clarification is that I argue that in China, foreign policy decision-making is not fragmented, but that what is fragmented is the broader sphere of foreign relations conducted by a plurality of actors and through which a diversity of messages and national images are sent out from China to the international audience.

The following chapter 3 explains the methodology deployed in this thesis. Chapter 4 will survey the interests, ideas, and identities in China's environmental governance and delineate the three case studies under scrutiny:

environmental treaty implementation, sharing the Chinese experience, and making an alternative norm. In this way it will be possible to unpack the motives, pattern, and performance of China in international environmental cooperation.

Chapter 3 Methodology

3.1 Research objectives and questions

To operationalise my theoretical framework, I selected three dimensions in which the central research question comes under closer scrutiny: treaty implementation, sharing Chinese experience, and setting an alternative norm. These three dimensions have been intentionally chosen to reflect the changing attitudes of Chinese political players towards learning from abroad, generating experiences based on learning and adaptation, and eventually, providing an alternative norm to establish China's leadership position.

These three dimensions inspire three inter-related sub-questions which seek to shed light on the efforts to understand why and how domestic interest groups matter in China's environmental foreign relations. 1) Why are some international environmental treaties better implemented than others; 2) how interest groups define, interpret, and deploy the Chinese experience to facilitate their pursuit of overseas interests; 3) how interest groups make the alternative norm malleable to their specific interests.

The first question will bring implementation back to our understanding of foreign relations, which affords us a means of understanding the drivers of successful implementation and the impact of the degree of implementation on China's role in future cooperation. The second question explores a frequently mentioned, if understudied buzzword, the "Chinese experience", and goes beyond how Chinese players learn from the international community, namely, what China as a state has to teach others with its own learning experience. The

final question speaks to the concern that China is providing a set of alternative values to challenge the liberal world order, and adopts a pragmatic approach to using the recently proposed “ecological civilisation” to shed light on the intention of domestic groups to promote it to the outside community and, moreover, its limitation.

3.2 An overview of methods used: quantitative and qualitative

I use a combination of quantitative methods to present a broad picture and a qualitative approach to provide in-depth analysis. I use archival research for Chapter 3 with the intention to provide an overview of China's environmental foreign relations and how it is presented to the public, including domestic groups. Content analysis functions as a useful quantitative tool to survey various databases used in empirical chapters 5 and 7. Questions which are raised from the use of quantitative methods are further inquired into by the use of semi-structured interviews conducted in strict anonymity, as requested. The findings from empirical chapters derive from comparative case studies which allow me to tease out explanatory factors based on different outcomes and to map out patterns of domestic groups' influence on foreign relations. Lastly, participant observation plays a small, complementary part in my analysis in Chapter 7. How each method is used and their limitations will be explained in further detail in the following section.

3.3 Archival research

I use archival research primarily for Chapter 4 to provide a broad context to China's environmental foreign relations. The method of digging into archives is not sufficiently used by political scientists due to their preference for "theoretical innovation" over "discovery of new information", and the obsession with the present, not the past, as observed by Diamant. Yet this method will help us to "look at old issues in new ways"¹⁹⁹, and to "draw attention to aspects of the state and society that are easily brushed under the carpet in sources that pay more attention to elites"²⁰⁰. It is precisely because of the new insights we discover through archival research that we are better able to "ground and fill out abstract ideas in messy reality and local interpretations"²⁰¹.

In this light, I conducted archival research from May to July 2015 in the National Library of China located in Beijing. I chose the *China Environment News* (*zhongguo huanjingbao* 中国环境报) from 1984 to present as the corpus of text. This is because this newspaper is the only nationwide, official media outlet to introduce and interpret environmental policies in the past three decades, and to reflect domestic debates, discussion, and analyses regarding China's environmental foreign relations. It reports on domestic environmental legislation, challenges, important international events, the most recent technological developments and information, and so on. It has become a platform for international cooperation not only in terms of Chinese journalists gathering information from other countries but also as a window on the outside

¹⁹⁹ Neil Diamant, "Why Archives?", in *Contemporary Chinese Politics: New Sources, Methods, and Field Strategies* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p.38.

²⁰⁰ Ibid, p.36.

²⁰¹ Ibid, p.35.

world to know the progress made in the Chinese government's environmental governance. The range of audience is, however, limited because it is a Chinese language newspaper, and consequently it is not taken seriously enough in the English-language academic research.

The newspaper is stored in the format of microform, which requires a Microfilm Reader. The database is open to the public and an almost complete collection of all the papers, with one section in 1987 and one in 1989 missing, which the librarians cannot offer an explanation for. It is time-consuming to print all the relevant pages and the library regulates a quota of daily photocopy pages. Therefore, I categorise the articles while reading them and focus my attention on articles related to environmental relations with keywords such as "international cooperation", "bilateral cooperation", "diplomacy", "trans-border", "foreign capital", and such like. I have indexed relevant article titles and key messages, and therefore, when I need to read a particular article again, it is faster for me to locate it.

The advantage of the archival analysis of *China Environment News (CEN)* is that the content provides a general trend towards understanding China's environmental relations from 1984 onwards. In addition, actors involved in foreign relations emerge with their concerns, preferences, and demands. It is also a publicly available document to which both Chinese and foreign researchers have equal access. The disadvantage of surveying the newspaper is that its breadth weakens in-depth analysis. In addition, the nature of this press as an official media outlet is inclined to propagate political orthodoxy and to educate the general public with the upshot that environmental protection is painted with a rosy imagination. Despite this, such material is still useful to

identify the *trend* of environmental foreign relations. However, we also need a tool to examine the deeper implications of this pattern, which leads to the method of content analysis.

3.4 Content Analysis

Content analysis is “a research technique for making replicable and valid inferences by systematically identifying specified characteristics of the message”²⁰². By coding and analysing data, this method was aimed to explore covert meanings in selected texts. This quantitative method allows one to observe trends, patterns, and developments and address “what” and “how” questions, based on *a priori* research design.

I deploy this method primarily in two of the empirical chapters (Chapter 5 and 7) to identify, respectively, implementation patterns (Chapter 5) and the pattern of academic efforts to theorise ecological civilisation (Chapter 7). In Chapter 5, I categorise implementation as procedural and substantive, and use content analysis to code the efforts of different domestic groups to implement the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), with the aim to understand the implementation pattern of CBD in China. The database is the first four of China’s National Reports on the Implementation of CBD submitted by the National Environment Protection Agency to the CBD secretariat from 1997 to 2008. The nature and purpose of these reports are to “describe the work China has done in conservation and sustainable utilization of biodiversity since it ratified CBD, in

²⁰² Klaus Krippendorff, *Content Analysis: An Introduction to Its Methodology* (London: Sage, 1980), p.21.

particular, the progress in implementing...CBD" ²⁰³. The most recent national report, the fifth, is excluded from the body, as it was submitted in 2014, after the introduction of the Aichi target and does not fall within the time framework of Chapter 5 comparison. All national reports are available to download from the official website of CBD under the category of "National Reports and NBSAPs". The length of each report ranges from 110 to 232 pages. I logged over 200 entries regarding implementation efforts and coded them into procedural and substantive efforts. Content analysis helped me establish the finding that CBD implementation in China is mostly procedural. More details will be provided in Chapter 5.

The purpose of using content analysis in Chapter 7 was to answer the question of how academics in China theorise the very new concept of ecological civilisation and to gauge its connection with political dogma. I conducted keyword search in the database of "China Academic Journals Full-text Database" (CNKI) and obtained over 5000 articles which attempted to theorise ecological civilisation through the perspectives of Marxism, culture, and economics. As shown in Chapter 7, Marxism occupied a predominant position in the Chinese scholars' theorisation efforts.

One major limitation of content analysis is that it cannot address "why" questions or suggest any causal relations. To compensate for this shortcoming, this research also employs interviews and comparative case studies to explore issues which are addressed neither by content analysis nor archival research.

²⁰³ National Environment Protection Agency, "China's National Report on Implementation of the Convention on Biological Diversity" (Beijing, December 1997), "Forward".

3.5 Interview

Semi-structured interviews were used to further understand the “why” question and obtain primary information for Chapters 6 and 7. I conducted 2 pilot interviews in August 2013 in Beijing, one with an NGO officer and another with an official working in the Ministry of Environmental Protection. The purpose of a pilot interview was to gauge the political sensitivity of the selected topic and the feasibility to obtain primary data regarding the role of interest groups in China’s environmental foreign relations.

The majority of interviews were administered from April 2015 to May 2016 in London, Beijing, and Vientiane. As most of the interviewees requested strict anonymity, I could only present them in the broad category of NGO officer, party officials, government officials, International NGO officer, consultants, and scholars, shown in the table 4-1. An exception to the principle of anonymity was the interviewees mentioned in Chapter 6, in which the organisation of Global Environmental Institute is examined. I interviewed 6 current officers, 1 former officers, one prominent Chinese scholar who requests for anonymity, and the executive director Mrs Jin Jiaman, as all of them had been directly and indirectly related to GEI’s operation in Laos. Overall, I conducted 35 interviews, via Skype, telephone, Wechat, and face-to-face. The following table summarises the date and length of interview, with the interviewee’s identity indicated by their position and affiliation.

Table 3-1 List of Interviews

Date	Interviewee Place	Form and Duration
2013/8/12	GEI officer 5	Face-to-face

&		60 minutes
2015/6/12		
2013/8/13	Ministry of Environmental Protection official 1 Beijing	Face-to-face 50 minutes
2013/8/13	GEI officer 1 Beijing	Face-to-face 46 minutes
2015/4/14	IENGO 1 London	Face-to-face 56minutes
2015/4/30	IENGO 2 London	Face-to-face 36minutes
2015/5/7	IENGO3 London	Face-to-face 45 minutes
2015/6/3	ENGO officer 1 Beijing	Wechat communication
2015/6/3	Private entrepreneur Beijing	Wechat communication
2015/6/11	GEI officer 2 Beijing	Face-to-face 50 minutes
2015/6/12	GEI officer 3& 4	Face-to-face 1hour 13 minutes
2015/6/17	GEI officer 6 Beijing	Face-to-face 43 minutes
2015/6/17	ENGO officer 2 Beijing	Wechat communication
2015/7/2	Ministry of Commerce official 1 Beijing	Telephone 19minutes
2015/7/7	IENGO 4 Beijing	Face-to-face 30 minutes
2015/7/13	Consultant 1 Beijing	Face-to-face 1 hour 10 minutes
2015/7/21	Consultant 2 Beijing	Face-to-face 1 hour
2015/7/23	GEI executive director Beijing	Face-to-face 50 minutes
2015/7/23	IENGO 5 Beijing	Face-to-face 1 hour
2015/7/23	IENGO 6 Beijing	Face-to-face 50 minutes
2015/7/27	Ministry of Commerce official 2	Face-to-face

	Beijing	40 minutes
2015/7/29	State Forestry Administration official 1 Beijing	Email conversation
2015/8/3	Scholar 1 Sydney	Skype 30 minutes
2015/8/7	State Forestry Administration official 2	Telephone 28 minutes
2015/11/26	Former GEI officer 1 London	Skype 41 minutes
2016/3/13	National Development and Reform Commission officer 1 Beijing	Face-to-face 41 minutes
2016/3/21	Party official 1 Beijing	Face-to-face 54 minutes
2016/3/26	Scholar 2 Vientiane	Face-to-face 1 hour 17 minutes
2016/3/27	Chinese Embassy in Laos officer 1&2 Vientiane	Telephone 4 minutes
2016/3/30	Former Vice Minister of National Land Management Agency (Lao) Vientiane	Telephone 5 minutes
2016/3/30	Ministry of Investment and Planning Official 1 (Lao) Vientiane	Face-to-face 45 minutes
2016/4/5	Chinese academic from Peking University Beijing	Wechat communication
2016/4/14	Party diplomat Beijing	Face-to-face 2 hours 27 minutes
2016/4/28	Ministry of Environmental Protection official 2 Beijing	Face-to-face 1 hour 24 minutes

These interviews allowed me to gather valuable insights and obtain primary data. My interviewees were eager to share both information and practical interviewing tactics with me. For instance, one of my interviewees spent two hours discussing how China might fix its international image on the global stage through environmental leadership. Before each of my interviews, I

conducted a background search of the interviewee and sent them the list of questions which were tailored to their position and expertise. The advantage of analysing a popular buzzword such as “ecological civilisation” was that interviewees regarded it as less sensitive, and hence were willing to talk about it. Some of my interviewees even encouraged me to be an ambassador for the concept of ecological civilisation and to “persuade” foreigners to accept the Chinese norm. For sensitive topics such as “interest groups”, I adopted a conversational interview style, as suggested by Lily Tsai, as this “gives respondents power and control” and generates a “sense of equality” which was “critical to the willingness of the interviewees to volunteer truthful information on political[ly] sensitive topics”²⁰⁴.

All interviews were conducted in either English or Chinese. During my field trip to Vientiane, I used English to interview, as I did not speak Lao. It would have been ideal to hire a Lao interpreter to interview residents near the project site, as is explained in Chapter 6. However, the dam site was guarded by the Lao army and a series of attacks targeted against Chinese tourists shortly before my field research rendered the site visit particularly dangerous. Given the fact that my focus in the thesis was how *Chinese* domestic groups influence foreign relations I decided there was no need to risk my personal safety.

Whereas the majority of interviewees were very cooperative and generous in sharing their insights, there were nevertheless several limitations which need to be flagged up. The first was the difficulty of getting an interview opportunity with representatives from the SOEs. In Chapter 6, on the role of

²⁰⁴ Lily Tsai, “Quantitative Research and Issues of Political Sensitivity in Rural China,” in *Contemporary Chinese Politics: New Sources, Methods, and Field Strategies* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p.264.

SOEs, Sinohydro, comes under scrutiny. I assumed that it would be easy for me to secure an interview with SOEs, as the project discussed was deemed to be a success and a model template for implementing Corporate Social Responsibility. During the interview with one GEI officer, the name of the Sinohydro officer who was in charge of the dam project was mentioned. However, this officer declined my request to obtain the contact of the mentioned Sinohydro representative. Instead, I talked to another international environmental organisation (IENGO) who had had contacts with that SOE in the past. The IENGO officer shared the view that an interview with SOE staff would be tricky, particularly so during the anti-corruption campaign launched by President Xi Jinping. However, a useful tip that officer shared with me was to use the email address template in that SOE for contact. I followed this advice and sent three emails to the Sinohydro officer, and received no reply. As I was unable to talk to the Sinohydro representative in any format, I had to resort to internal newsletters, reports, and stories of individuals (one about the CEO of the Nam Ngum 5 Company, and the other about an ordinary worker's wedding) to obtain stories from the side of Sinohydro. I also attempted to contact the Laotian consultancy that wrote the environmental and social action plan for Sinohydro, but the consultancy did not respond to my email and telephone calls.

Another limitation, surprisingly, was related to my identity as an overseas Chinese student. One interviewee told me that nowadays government officials are more suspicious of overseas Chinese students like me because we are considered as spies working for foreign governments. Like foreign researchers, I thus had to be affiliated to a local university in order to win the trust of government officials. Hence, I applied for an exchange partnership

bursary from LSE and gained the opportunity to study at Peking University from March to May in 2016. It thus turned out to be qualitatively easier for me to secure interviews, particularly with government officials. Through personal network and affiliation with Peking University, I managed to interview officials from the Ministry of Commerce, the State Forestry Administration, the National Reform and Development Commission, the Ministry of Environmental Protection, the Central Party School, and the International Department of the Communist Party Central Committee, with two telephone interviews and one interview based on an email conversation.

3.6 Participant observation

The unforeseen difficulties in securing interviews drove me to reach other means to capture the whole story. Participant observation was premised on the assumption of naturalism, namely, “[T]he nearer we get to the conditions in which [the people we are studying] actually do attribute meanings to objects and events, the more accurate our description of those meanings are likely to be”²⁰⁵. For instance, in the section of the intellectual versus bureaucrats’ debate in Chapter 7, I adopted participant observation to understand the debate, the logic, and the mentality of scholars and government officials when faced with a new political slogan to interpret. This was done by participating in internal workshops while I was in Beijing. The content was not directly quoted, but the discussion itself inspired the structure and the main argument that leftist

²⁰⁵ Howard S Becker, “The Epistemology of Qualitative Research,” in *Ethnography and Human Development: Context and Meaning in Social Inquiry* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), p.58.

intellectuals had to resort to in party organisations to promote their socialist agenda.

3.7 Comparative Case Studies

A case study as a method is described by Gerring as “the intensive study of a single case where the purpose of that study is-at least in part-to shed light on a larger class of cases”²⁰⁶. Features of a case study include small-N, thick description, utilisation of particular types of evidence, intertwined cases and contexts, and the usage of triangulation. Although a case study allows us to investigate the attributes of a single phenomenon or event, it incorporates both quantitative and qualitative techniques to gather and analyse evidence²⁰⁷. In order to locate the causal mechanism, it is almost inevitable for researchers to see case studies as a comparative lens. In fact, the comparative method is most suited to the many variables and a small number of cases. The purpose of using comparison is, by controlling other variables, to identify sufficient and necessary conditions, and ideally identify the scope of conditions which trigger causal mechanisms. Along Mill’s method of difference, comparison allows us to identify crucial differences which explains different outcomes and gets closer to the causal mechanism²⁰⁸. Based on our observation derived from comparison, it is possible for us to achieve “concept formation”²⁰⁹ and the fact that the

²⁰⁶ John Gerring, *Case Study Research Principles and Practices* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p.20.

²⁰⁷ Robert K. Yin, *Case Study Research: Design and Methods* (SAGE Publications, 2013), p.33.

²⁰⁸ Gerring 2006.

²⁰⁹ David Collier, “The Comparative Method,” in *Political Science: The State of the Discipline II* (Washington, D.C.: American Political Science Association, 1993), p.105.

formation is based on specific cases on the ground, a “conceptual stretch”, describing the inability of a concept to suit new cases when applied to a wider range of cases, is minimised²¹⁰. As comparative case study investigates small-N cases, the action of defining cases makes generalisation possible²¹¹.

The empirical chapters of this thesis (5-7) employ comparative case studies to investigate the causal mechanism in which domestic groups influence environmental foreign relations in terms of international treaty implementation, sharing Chinese experience, and setting alternative ecological norms. In line with Mill’s method of difference, namely to identify crucial differences so as to explain different outcomes, Chapter 5 examines the Montreal Protocol and Convention on Biological Diversity, two international treaties sharing similarities and yet with varying degrees of implementation. This is used to explore the conditions under which treaties are better implemented, and under which circumstances interests, ideas and identity are key independent variables. Chapter 6 process-traces a Chinese environmental NGO’s operation in Laos and answers the question of why this organisation initiated project A but ended up by operating project B; both are related to the Chinese experience, but the nature of these projects differs. This chapter is a within-case analysis to reveal the interplay between the idea of Chinese experience and the interest of various groups.

The last empirical chapter focuses on the diffusion of the norm of ecological civilisation by scrutinising three pairs of political players: the

²¹⁰ Giovanni Sartori, ed., *Social Science Concepts: A Systematic Analysis* (Beverly Hills, CA: Sage, 1984).

²¹¹ John Gerring, “What Is a Case Study and What Is It Good For?,” *The American Political Science Review* 98, no. 2 (2004): pp.341–54.

bureaucrats, leftists and local governors from impoverished jurisdictions in China. Unlike Chapter 5, Chapter 7 follows Mill's method of similarity. The question asked is why, in spite of their different positions, they all converge on promoting ecological civilisation to the international audience. An examination of these three sets of actors not only affords us an understanding of the rationale behind their active promotion of ecological civilisation but also reveals a shared concern.

The empirical chapters span a period from 1985 to 2015, three decades of development of environmental foreign relations. An overview of these three cases not only allows me to compare cases across time and space, but also across properties and ultimately to make generalisations more possible. Regarding the limitation of generalisation, it bears a mention that the case study selected in Chapter 6 is a micro-level analysis of how one single Chinese environmental organisation plays a part in sharing the Chinese experience. The dilemmas and difficulties faced may not cause inconvenience to powerful bureaucracies such as Ministry of Commerce. However, what is generalizable from the efforts of GEI is how the concept of Chinese experience is tied to material interests in foreign relations, which is exactly the purpose of conducting the comparative case study.

3.8 Scope of the research and limitation

Use of the abovementioned mixed methods – archival research, content analysis, semi-structured interviews, participant observation, and comparative

case studies – allows me to better address the what, how, and why questions. Moreover, this research tries to set the agenda for future academic work examining interest groups' role in China's foreign relations. Due to the four-year time constraint, the scope of this research is necessarily limited to how domestic groups help shape China's environmental foreign relations. It is not a bilateral relationship analysis as the selected dimensions (treaty implementation, sharing Chinese experience, and norm-setting) place predominant focus on the Chinese players. The external factors are not in the spotlight because previous research has demonstrated, on many fronts, how systemic factors influence cooperation. The new contribution this research aims to make is to examine China from inside out, and to explore possible breakthroughs in our understanding of not only Chinese foreign policy, but also its foreign relations in general.

Chapter 4 Contextualising institutions, ideas, and identity in Chinese environmental foreign relations

4.1 Introduction

This chapter first discusses the three stages through which China's environmental foreign relations have evolved, based on the archival research of the *China Environmental News*. Secondly, it demonstrates the institutions designed for the management of environmental foreign relations. The following section looks at how environment-related interests are framed, namely, the ideational dimension underpinning paradigms of China's behaviour in environmental cooperation. The last section explores the role of identity politics in China's international environmental cooperation, with a particular focus on the complex relationship between environmental protection and nationalism.

4.2 Three stages of China's environmental foreign relations

The formative stage of China's environmental foreign relations started in 1984 and culminated in 2000, with preparation for entering the World Trade Organisation (WTO) and the launching of the "Going Global Strategy". This was a phase that embraced environmental protection as a national strategy and involved learning from bilateral, regional and multilateral environmental cooperation. It was also a period when the term "environmental diplomacy" was widely used to refer to environmental foreign relations, so that it

frequently appears on *CEN*. The key message in this stage is that international environmental cooperation is inevitable, and that China can benefit from foreign technology and assistance. During this phase, two peaks of environmental diplomacy may be identified: 1992 and 1998.

Liu Xiaojun and Chen Ting summarise environmental diplomacy in the first stage as “hot and effective”²¹², giving the example of intensified exchanges and visits between officials from the State Environmental Protection Administration and foreign experts, the signing of international environmental accords, participation in regional and bilateral cooperation, and the establishment of CCICED. The then directors of SEPA, Qu Geping and Xie Zhenhua, actively participated in the discussion of environmental diplomacy. The institutional collaboration between SEPA and MOFA is reflected in the writings of environmental diplomacy by officials from both institutions: Wang Guangya (vice minister of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs), Wang Zhijia (Chinese representative in UNEP), Pan Jiahua (a senior officer in UNDP’s Beijing office), and Liu Huaqiu (director of Central Foreign Affairs Small Leading Group).

Whereas the first stage witnessed China’s integration with global environmental governance, the second stage, after 2000, was one of spotting problems and challenges and was impregnated with suspicion towards the normative foundations of environmental cooperation. While entry into the WTO signified further integration with the world economic order and more competition from foreign firms inside China, the Going Global Strategy encouraged Chinese companies to explore international markets. This meant

²¹² Xiaojun 刘晓军 and Ting 霆陈, “‘Woguo Huanjing Waijiao Re Er You Xiao’我国环境外交热而有效 [Environmental Diplomacy in Our Country Is Hot and Effective],” *中国环境报* [China Environment News], January 14, 1993.

that the question of how to coordinate foreign trade and environmental protection dominated the discussion on CEN. The “green barrier” (*lüse bilei* 绿色壁垒) became the centre of discussion. It refers to restrictions on trade brought about by environmental regulations and embeds environmental issues in foreign trade. Environmental diplomacy was perceived as a means to fend off “environmental colonialism” in which developed countries used environmental protection to set non-tariff trade barriers and export their foreign waste to China²¹³.

This linkage brought officials in charge of foreign trade into the field of environmental foreign relations. The former Ministry of Foreign Trade and Economic Cooperation (MFTEC), now Ministry of Commerce, represented national economic interests in environmental foreign relations. In 2002, an international seminar on the economic and ecological opportunities and challenges posed by China’s entry into the WTO was thus co-hosted by SEPA and MFTEC to explore ways to integrate foreign trade and environmental protection in accordance with WTO regulations²¹⁴.

The debate over trade and the environment had the effect of sharpening the conflict of interests between developed and developing countries, and creating solidarity among the states of what came to be known as the ‘Global South’. For instance, in 2004 the UNDP cooperated with MOFCOM on South-South Cooperation and allocated US\$1.6 million to a three-year project. The then Vice Minister of Commerce, Wei Jianguo, pointed out that South-South

²¹³ Keguo 克国 Li 李, “Jingti Huanjing Zhimin zhuyi”警惕环境殖民主义[Be Wary of Environmental Colonialism],” *中国环境报[China Environment News]*, September 14, 2001.

²¹⁴ Songqiao 松乔 Duan 段, “Rang Jingmao Fazhan Yu Huanjing Baohu Xianghu Cujin’让经贸发展与环境保护相互促进 [Let Economic and Trade and Environmental Protection Develop Together],” *中国环境报[China Environment News]*, May 22, 2002.

Cooperation was the cornerstone of Chinese foreign policy, which implied that MOFCOM has a critically important role to play in the broader scope of foreign relations²¹⁵. The emergence of South-South Cooperation was also important for Chinese companies that were “going out” and felt that “markets of developed countries are already occupied with highly competitive multinationals, and we (Chinese companies) can only pick up those undesirable projects in developing countries”²¹⁶.

The fact that MOFCOM guided and influenced the scope and direction of Chinese outward FDI made it an important player in environmental foreign relations. The global financial crisis of 2008 was a watershed in this respect because China’s outbound investment witnessed its biggest ever increase, jumping from \$26.5 to \$55.9 billion²¹⁷. In 2013, China was ranked as one of the top three investors in the world, hitting a flow of \$100 billion. Chinese investors left their footprints in 184 countries. By 2013, 15,300 domestic investors had set up 25, 400 enterprises abroad that involved almost two million staff²¹⁸. The speed and scale of China’s outward foreign direct investment (OFDI) indicate that domestic interest groups in China have a direct bearing on the international market. Furthermore, they can be seen to start to play a role in China’s foreign-policy making. In other words, the actions of Chinese companies began to have implications well beyond the borders of the PRC.

²¹⁵ Xiaoqing 小青 Zhang, “UNDP Yu Zhongguo Xieshou Gongcu Nannan hezuo’UNDP 与中国携手共促南南合作[UNDP and China Jointly Promote South-South Cooperation],” *中国环境报[China Environment News]*, July 9, 2004.

²¹⁶ Ministry of Commerce official 1, interview by author, telephone, July 2, 2015.

²¹⁷ Min Ye, “China Invests Overseas: Regulation and Representation,” *Modern China Studies* 21, no. 1 (2014): p.189.

²¹⁸ MOFCOM, “Joint Report on Statistics of China’s Outbound FDI 2013 Released” (Beijing, September 12, 2014), <http://english.mofcom.gov.cn/article/newsrelease/significantnews/201409/20140900727958.shtml>.

The legacy of this second stage is that the field environmental foreign relations is dominated by the economic power of nation-states. In other words, environmental issues are an instrument of which economically powerful states contain the development of poorer countries. Questions of national image and discursive power have thus become relevant and crucial for facilitating the development of environmental diplomacy.

This can be seen in in the third stage, from 2010 onwards, environmental foreign relations have been increasingly linked to China's national image and discursive power²¹⁹. Environmental issues are used to remedy the damage on the national image in the aftermath of the Tiananmen Incident of June 1989 and help China rejoin the international community. However, the elevated importance of national image in environmental issues has changed the way in which Chinese political actors define the challenges of China's participation in global environmental governance. Instead of regarding severe domestic pollution as the key rationale for international environmental cooperation, the stress on national image tends to establish the logic that a better image induces more discursive power for China to defend the national interest. The implication, therefore, is that *showing* the international community how devoted the Chinese government is to fix global environmental crisis is seen as important if not more than action-based implementation. In other words, the key concern for China is more about "being liked" than "being green". Consequently, the contrast between the green image China displays and the domestic environmental problems, with smog as the most recent example, may

²¹⁹ Qiu Jin 秋晋 Zhang 张, "Ruhe Shuli Fu Zeren de Huanjing Daguo xingxiang'如何树立负责任的环境大国形象[How to Establish the Image of Responsible Environmental Super Power]," *中国环境报[China Environment News]*, April 25, 2011.

prove that without on-the-ground evidence of improved environmental quality within China, the “green image” is more contested than convincing.

The above three stages illustrate how the trend of China’s environmental foreign relations has been shaped by learning from the outside world, adjusting so as to ensure the protection of its economic interests, and ultimately taking a leading role on behalf of other developing countries. The following section presents the institutional set-up and strategic concepts of environmental foreign relations that this has generated. Each part indicates the formation of a different paradigm for China’s role in international environmental cooperation: namely from environmental diplomacy through “Chinese experience” and to Chinese culture.

4.3 Institutions: scattered and weak

I depict the three phases by looking at the actions and statements of the Ministry of Environmental Protection, the MOFA and MOFCOM as they dominate the discussion on environmental foreign relations on *CEN*. It does not mean that they have a monopoly on international environmental cooperation. Other ministries have corresponding international partners and delegate their departments for international cooperation to attend to environmental issues in their specific fields. The National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC), for example, is another important government agency and the hub of climate change policies. Suffice it to say that environmental foreign relations are scattered in various government departments with different preferences. My

empirical chapters will compensate for the narrow focus of *CEN* and illustrate the bureaucratic involvement and competition based on specific issues.

The duties and responsibilities of environmental governance have in fact been shared across a diversity of government institutions since the 1980s. “Division of labour” is the underlying logic of the absence of a leading institution, despite the establishment of SEPA in 1998. For instance, *CEN* reprinted a speech by Li Peng in which he allocated natural environmental management to agriculture, fisheries, forestry, water conservation, mining, and oceanic departments; industrial pollution to industry and transportation departments, and suggested that economic departments should not treat environmental protection as an “extra burden”²²⁰. In fact, the 1980s had already witnessed a wave of existing institutions “jumping on the bandwagon” of environmental protection issues. The cross-departmental cooperation is manifest in an increased sense of urgency and responsibility for the Ministry of Chemistry and Industry in 1984²²¹, research and development activities on environmental protection in the short-lived Ministry of Arms Industry in 1984²²², and the efforts of the People’s Liberation Army²²³, Ministry of Aerospace Industry²²⁴,

²²⁰ Peng Li, “‘Bumen fengong’部门分工[Division of Labour among Departments],” *中国环境报[China Environment News]*, January 3, 1984.

²²¹ “Huagongbu Zengqiang Huanbao de Jinpogan He zerengan’化工部增强环保的紧迫感和责任感[Ministry of Chemistry and Industry Strengthened the Sense of Urgency and Responsibility to Protect the Environment],” *中国环境报[China Environment News]*, February 7, 1984.

²²² Siyu 思宇 Li 李, “Bingqigongyebu Wuxiang Huanbao Keyan Chengguo Huode Guojia famingjiang’兵器工业部五项环保科研成果获得国家发明奖[Ministry of Arms Industry’s Environmental Protection Research Output Awarded with National Invention Award],” *中国环境报[China Environment News]*, March 27, 1984.

²²³ Zhaozhi 兆志 Wang 王 and Ruilin 瑞林 Yang 杨, “Jiefangjun Erpao Qiangdiao Gaohao Huanjing Lvhua Gongzuo’解放军二炮强调搞好环境绿化工作 [PLA Stresses the Importance of Environmental Protection],” *中国环境报[China Environment News]*, March 27, 1984.

²²⁴ Yuling 育灵 Sun 孙, “Hangkong Gongyebu Jueding Nachu Zijin Yongyu Huanbao Zhili gongcheng’航空工业部决定拿出资金用于环保治理工程[Ministry of Aerospace Industry Decided to Allocate Fund to Environmental Protection Management Projects],” *中国环境报[China Environment News]*, April 3, 1984.

and the Navy on environmental protection²²⁵, supported by the Ministry of Finance²²⁶. This approach to environmental protection also came from the Ministry of Urban and Rural Construction and Environmental Protection, the State Commission for Planning, the State Science Commission, State Economic Commission, Ministry of Finance, and the Chinese Construction Bank²²⁷. The State Council Environmental Protection Commission, created in 1984, was thus composed of 25 people from 24 different ministries.

The institutional setup created in the 1980s has not changed over the past three decades, leading academic research to dwell on the weakness of institutional capabilities for protecting the environment. Jahiel identifies the main duties of the different kinds of government agencies expected to attend to environmental issues. The National People's Congress Committee on Natural Resources and Environmental Protection is intended to draft and amend environmental laws; the State Environmental Protection Administration participates in environmental policy formulation, assists in drafting legislation, supervises environmental management, works on environmental education, and coordinates international environmental exchanges. Its subordinate bureaux and offices are responsible for enforcing environmental laws and policies, setting standards for local pollution, investigating on-the-ground environmental accidents, and mediating environmental disputes. Commissions

²²⁵ Rizhen 日珍 Cong 从, “‘Haijun Lingdao Yaoqiu Budui Renzhen Guanche Haiyang baohufa’海军领导要求部队认真贯彻海洋环保法[Navy Leaders Request a Careful Implementation of Marine Environment Protection Law],” *中国环境报[China Environment News]*, April 3, 1984.

²²⁶ “‘Caizheng Caiwu Bumen Yao Jiji Zhichi Huanjing Baohu Gongzuo’财政财务部门要积极支持环境保护工作 [Departments of Finance Should Actively Support Environmental Protection],” *中国环境报[China Environment News]*, April 24, 1984.

²²⁷ “‘Huanbao Jingfei laiyuan’环保经费来源[Sources of Environmental Protection Avenue],” *中国环境报[China Environment News]*, June 20, 1984.

on environmental protection are usually inter-ministerial and composed of senior officials from the environmental department and other related stakeholder departments, such as planning and economic. There are environmental offices in industrial ministries and their tasks are to oversee industry-specific pollutants and wastes and to formulate “industry-specific waste treatment regulations and procedures.”²²⁸ The environmental protection industry that emerged in the late 1980s is also composed of companies that produce and sell environmental protection equipment to industries and governments. Research programmes and monitor stations have also been set up to raise public environmental awareness and collect data and information for the reference of environmental agencies.

Despite environmental protection penetrating various institutions, however, they are either too weak to fight for environmental interests or too constrained when they are non-governmental actors. Even though the environmental institution agencies were upgraded to ministerial level in 1998, Jahiel shows that two obstacles still haunt environmental governance: the inadequate authority of environmental agencies and poor coordination among institutions. For instance, Hildebrandt points out that to overcome institutional barriers, one has to resort to personal charisma and individual networks to enable environmental appeals to be taken into consideration²²⁹.

The conduct of environmental foreign relations appears to be limited to a few key ministries and is issue-based. Regarding negotiation, the final say, theoretically, resides with the MOFA, the State Development Planning

²²⁸ Abigail Jahiel, “The Organization of Environmental Protection in China,” *The China Quarterly* 156 (1998): pp.757–87.

²²⁹ Hildebrandt 2013,

Commission, and the Ministry of Science and Technology²³⁰. However, as the following empirical chapters demonstrate, this is not always the case. Leadership in foreign environmental relations is not always monopolised by MOFA, for example. Chen observes that the weakness of MOFA. Whereas MOFA is in charge of negotiations, the NDRC is responsible for policy formulation, the Ministry of Science and Technology deals with technology and concrete projects, and the there is also joint participation by the Ministry of Environmental Protection, State Forestry Administration, State Meteorological Administration, Ministry of Water Resources, and MOFCOM²³¹. Indeed, the playing field of environmental foreign relations is crowded with either no leader or one with limited power. As chapter 5 demonstrates, no less than 16 ministries are involved in implementing the Montreal Protocol, and 18 are related to implementing the Convention on Biological Diversity. This fragmentation of agencies is also manifest in climate change implementation, with the climate change research programme in 1989 encompassing 40 projects, 20 ministries, and 500 experts²³².

This fragmentation leads to competition among bureaucracies over international resources. Yu Hongyuan thus uses the example of the Global Environmental Facility's role in China's climate change policy to demonstrate parochial ministerial interest. He lists 11 ministries and their divergent

²³⁰ Jahiel 1998.

²³¹ Ye 瞿 Chen 陈, “Zhongguo Ruanshili Jianshezhong de Huanjing Waijiao yinsu’中国软实力建设中的环境外交因素[The Environmental Diplomacy Element in China's Construction of Soft Power],” *People's Daily-Theory*, July 6, 2010,
<http://theory.people.com.cn/BIG5/166866/12089481.html>.

²³² Elizabeth Economy, “Chinese Policy-Making and Global Climate Change: Two-Front Diplomacy and the International Community,” in *The Internationalization of Environmental Protection*, Schreurs, Miranda and Elizabeth Economy (eds) (Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p.24.

interests and preferences²³³. For instance, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is concerned with international norms and laws and aims to reach consensus between UNFCCC and domestic bureaucracies. The Ministry of Science and Technology controls the transfer of funds and technology and hopes that more GEF funding can be distributed for the development of science and technology. The Ministry of Agriculture strives for more funding for research on the agricultural development strategy, and SEPA wants more resources into environmental science and legislation. The division of labour among ministries suggested by Li Peng thus evolves into a competition for international resources and the pursuit of narrow bureaucratic interests. Yu's case study of climate change policy is thus a microcosm that reflects the plurality and weakness of the institutions of China's environmental foreign relations. As explained in the theoretical discussion in Chapter 2, institutions are too weak to aggregate domestic preferences and divide preferences instead.

4.4 Ideational Paradigms of China's role in Global Environmental Governance

4.4.1 Revival of Socialism

Carter and Mol observe that "with the perception of China as a superpower-in-the-making, attention is shifting from the role of foreign

²³³ Hongyuan Yu, *Global Warming and China's Environmental Diplomacy* (New York: Nova Science Publishers, Inc, 2008), pp.81-94.

assistance on domestic environmental reform to China's outward role in global environmental politics"²³⁴. Their words mean that, in addition to *defending* national interests in environmental cooperation, the Chinese government is expected to contribute its share, commensurate with its capabilities.

Socialism is important in China's environmental foreign relations not because the political system resembles one of a socialist entity, but because it is "a symbol of patriotic loyalty" by the Chinese leaders under the Reform and Opening Policy about the introduction of "technological and market orthodoxies of globalisation"²³⁵. At the heart of the discussion of Socialism, therefore, is not whether the Chinese political system is *genuinely* socialist. Instead, political actors explore how socialism can be used to differentiate China from other capitalist countries. Furthermore, how can the paradigm of socialism with Chinese characteristics suggest the political advantage of the Chinese regime.

Xia Guang, the director of Policy Research Centre for Environment and Economy in the Ministry of Environmental Protection, highlights the political advantage of socialism is thus noteworthy when it comes to environmental protection²³⁶. The linkage between Socialism and environmental issues traces back to the introduction of Eco-socialism to China in the 1980s and its development in the 1990s. With more academic work being available in China, the twenty-first century has so far witnessed a remarkable interest in doing research on the topic in both universities and the Party²³⁷.

²³⁴ Neil T. Carter and Arthur P. J. Mol, "China and the Environment: Domestic and Transnational Dynamics of a Future Hegemon," *Environmental Politics* 15, no. 2 (April 1, 2006): p.339.

²³⁵ Hughes 2006, pp.6-7.

²³⁶ Guang 光 Xia 夏, "Lun Huanjing Baohu de Guojia liliang'论环境保护的国家力量[On the State Power to Protect the Environment]," *中国环境报[China Environment News]*, August 7, 2009.

²³⁷ Rui-hua Kang and Yun-Lin Nie, "Ecosocialism in China," *Journal of Xinyang Normal University* 29, no. 3 (2009): p.4.

Literature in the eco-socialism discourse tends to focus on the role of science and technology and the political system in environmental governance. Eco-socialism thus discards technological determinism and gives science and technology a political purpose. This can be seen in the work of socialist scholars outside China, such as Ted Benton who asserts that the “environmental crisis was to be seen not as the result of industry or population but as a consequence of the specifically capitalist form of organisation of economic life”²³⁸. Therefore, science and technology, according to the ends they serve, may be categorised as having either a capitalist form or a socialist form²³⁹. The ecological crisis does not result from technology *per se*.

In a similar vein, it is said to be untrue that science and technology can automatically solve the problem of environmental deterioration. Instead, it is held that it is the capitalist application of science and technology, which is based on the exploitation of both nature and labour, which accounts for the ecological crisis. Chinese scholars favour this idea because Eco-socialism orchestrates a harmonious symphony with the notes of a China’s rocketing market economy, a strong yearning for scientific and technological advancement and an urgent need to protect the environment²⁴⁰. Science and technology in the process of industrialisation can thus be used to maintain the legitimacy derived from the economic achievements of the Communist Party. However, according to the former vice minister of Environmental Protection, Pan Yue, science and technology imported from abroad can never be completely relied upon, because

²³⁸ Ted Benton, *The Greening of Marxism* (New York: Guildford Press, 1996), p.7.

²³⁹ André Gorz, *Capitalism, socialism, ecology*, Chris Turner translated (London ; New York : ; Verso, 1994).

²⁴⁰ Ning 宁 Fang 房, “Shengtai Shehui Zhuyi de Xianshi Yu weilai’生态社会主义的现实与未来 [The Reality and Future of Eco-Socialism],” *科学对社会的影响 Impact of Science on Society*, April 2006, <http://www.sinoss.net/2012/0211/39330.html>.

it does not necessarily fit China's situation - especially its low GDP *per capita*. Therefore, the Communists claim to be able to socialise science and technology and utilise it to serve a socialist purpose.

In fact, Pan regards environmental protection as the best policy area in which to experiment with socialist democracy and the rule of law, as environmental issues are not the most politically sensitive and have an impact on diverse interest groups and stakeholders²⁴¹. It is worth noting here that Pan Yue's mentioning of democracy appears to contravene the academic critique of democracy as not a sufficient or necessary condition of better environmental governance. Such a view is expressed by Pan Nini, a researcher at Chongqing University and columnist of the right-wing nationalism news outlet *Guancha* 观察, who declares that democracy cannot solve environmental problems and that waves of environmental protests are driven by conflicts of interests, instead of moral judgments²⁴².

This distrust of Western models and the emphasis on socialism points to the significance of appealing to the "Chinese experience" when reconciling different interests along the development-environment nexus. The emphasis on such experience frequently appears on *CEN*. Qu Geping states in 1990, for example, that the Chinese experience includes the use of small hydropower, desert control, small watershed management, biological control, and briquette

²⁴¹ Pan Yue 1998.

²⁴² Nini 妮妮 Pan 潘, "Huanbao Jiubuliao Minzhu, Minzhu Ye Jiubuliao huanbao'环保救不了'民主', '民主'也救不了环保[Environmental Protection and Democracy Are Not Solution to Each Other]," 观察者 *Guancha*, February 1, 2013, http://www.guancha.cn/PanNiNi/2013_02_01_124517.shtml.

technology²⁴³. In a conversation with the renowned executive director of UNEP, Dr Mostafa Kamal Tolba, Qu says that China's vast territory and its rich flora and fauna could allow UNEP to "experiment" in environmental governance in ways that would allow different actors in China to generate new experience²⁴⁴. Such experience is important because it provides a medium that allows the Chinese government to draw the international community's attention. When Chinese media representatives participated in an Asia-Pacific NGO and Media Environmental Promotion seminar in Bangkok, they thus wrote that China's unique environmental protection experience contributes to the well-being of the mankind, which is something that foreigners do not due to the language barrier²⁴⁵.

The Chinese experience is not only used for the Chinese government to promote its efforts in environmental protection to the international community, but also as a medium for the outside world to engage with China. For instance, former UNEP director Dr Tolba lauded the legislation and strict enforcement of environmental laws in 1992, and asserted that the Chinese experience was unique²⁴⁶. Claiming the uniqueness of the Chinese experience has two implications: first, the experience of the developed countries cannot be directly applied to China; and second, one cannot impose the Chinese experience to other developing countries. As a result, the paradox is that the Chinese

²⁴³ Geping 格平 Qu 曲, "Zhongguo Dui Quanqiu Huanjing Wenti Chi Jiji lichang' 中国对全球环境问题持积极立场 [China Takes a Positive Stance towards Global Environmental Crisis]," *中国环境报/China Environment News*, March 24, 1990.

²⁴⁴ Ibid.

²⁴⁵ Zhongguo xinwen daibiaotuan 中国新闻代表团 [China Press Delegation], "Zhongguo Yao Zai Huanjing Wenti Shang Fachu Ziji de shengyin' 中国要在环境问题上发出自己的声音 [China Should Voice Its Own Voice on Environmental Problems]," *中国环境报/China Environment News*, 1208 1990.

²⁴⁶ Jinyu 金余 Wang 王, "Zhongguo de Jingyan Shi Duyiwuer de' 中国的经验是独一无二的 [Chinese Experience Is Unique]," *中国环境报/China Environment News*, December 24, 1992.

experience is not defined by its capability of being generalised, but by its nature of not being replicable due to the emphasis on special national conditions.

4.4.2 Yearning for modernisation

The desire to modernise China so that it becomes a wealthy and powerful nation has long motivated its integration with the outside world. Environmental cooperation is no exception to this. Chinese people have experienced the modernisation project since the mid-nineteenth century and it was further intensified with the foundation of the People's Republic. The first Premier, Zhou Enlai, iterated the goals of Four Modernisations in 1963, targeting agriculture, industry, national defence, and science and technology. Concrete policies began to be implemented after Deng Xiaoping assumed power and launched Reform and Opening in 1978. The scope of the Four Modernisation expanded in the 1990s to incorporate most dimensions of the economy, society, politics and culture²⁴⁷. The environment was first included in the official definition of modernisation in the late 2000s. A watershed document was the China Modernisation Report 2007, which indicated “an urgent and timely effort to insert ecological rationality into the modernisation discourse, policy-making, and practice in China”²⁴⁸.

The theory of ecological modernisation (EM) has developed into five streams in Europe, as categorised by Murphy²⁴⁹, which are different from the Chinese interpretation. The first is represented by Joseph Huber, the founding

²⁴⁷ Lei Zhang, Arthur P.J. Mol, and David A. Sonnenfeld, “The Interpretation of Ecological Modernisation in China,” *Environmental Politics* 16, no. 4 (2007): p.660.

²⁴⁸ Ibid, p.662.

²⁴⁹ Joseph Murphy, “Ecological Modernisation,” *Geoforum* 31, no. 1 (2000): pp.1–8.

father of the EM school, who proposes that the advancement of science and technology can solve environmental problems and that “the dirty and ugly industrial caterpillar will transform into an ecological butterfly”²⁵⁰. The second branch, while acknowledging the strong influence of science, emphasises the macroeconomic structure, arguing for a restructuring of national economies from resource-intensive to knowledge-intensive industries²⁵¹. Shifting attention from economy to institutions, the third school of thoughts foregrounds the issue of equity, capacity building, and citizen empowerment²⁵². The last two strands argue respectively that ecological civilisation is a political strategy and a discursive construct, and challenge the assumption of the previous three, namely that economic prosperity and environmental improvement can be simultaneously achieved if the right policies are made and implemented. According to these perspectives, EM is a political strategy to question the usefulness of using modernisation to solve environmental problems. The most obvious function of this term is to highlight the importance of the government in minimising the conflict between environmental protection and economic development, thereby integrating environmental elements into the overall policy framework²⁵³. The last school deconstructs EM even further by arguing

²⁵⁰ Huber 1985, 20 quoted by Arthur P.J Mol, *The Refinement of Production: Ecological Modernisation Theory and the Chemical Industry* (Utrecht: International Books, 1995), p.37.

²⁵¹ Representative works are Martin Jänicke, *Preventive Environmental Policy as Ecological Modernisation and Structural Policy* (Berlin: Wissenschaftszentrum Berlin, 1985); Udo E Simonis, “Ecological Modernization of Industrial Society: Three Strategic Elements,” *International Social Science Journal* 41, no. 3 (1989): pp.347–61; Andrew Gouldson and Joseph Murphy, “Ecological Modernisation: Restructuring Industrial Economies,” *The Political Quarterly* 68, no. B (1997): p.75.

²⁵² Gert Spaargaren and Arthur Mol, “Sociology, Environment and Modernity: Ecological Modernisation as a Theory of Social Change,” *Society and Natural Resources* 5, no. 4 (1992): pp.323–44.

²⁵³ See Albert Weale, *The New Politics of Pollution* (Manchester, UK: New York, NY, USA: Manchester University Press, 1992); Sonja Boehmer-Christiansen and Helmut Weidner, *The Politics of Reducing Vehicle Emissions in Britain and Germany* (London: Cassell, 1995).

that it should be based on “credible and attractive storylines” in which “the regulation of the environment appears as a positive-sum game; pollution is a matter of inefficiency, nature is a balance that should be respected, anticipation is better than cure”²⁵⁴.

Noting the various approaches to ecological civilisation, Zhang *et al.* observe that China’s 2007 Modernisation Report is heavy on the economic-technological dimension, with no recognition of political modernisation in environmental governance. EM with Chinese characteristics is thus described by Zhang *et al* as the “technological-economic dimension of sustainable development, without entering too much into relations with equity, equality, citizen empowerment and the like”²⁵⁵. The way in which EM is used, therefore, reflects the technical and managerial approach to finding solutions to environmental problems. This has implications for foreign relations because the high salience of science and technology for the Chinese government’s modernisation project justifies its requests for technology transfer and for taking action after scientific research proves this to be necessary. To borrow the words of Economy, the Chinese government can take advantage of science and technology from developed countries without being liberal²⁵⁶.

The other important difference from the European streams of thinking that Zhang *et al.* identify is the issue of decentralisation in ecological modernisation. While decentralisation is favoured as an effective way to achieve equity in the European literature of ecological modernisation, it is seen as an obstacle to environmental protection in China because it does not match the

²⁵⁴ Maarten A. Hager, *The Politics of Environmental Discourse: Ecological Modernization and the Policy Process* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), p.64.

²⁵⁵ Zhang *et al* 2006, p.664.

²⁵⁶ Economy 1997, p.39.

political landscape. Professor Hong Dayong of Renmin University thus argues that a decentralised political system will provide fewer incentives for local governors to prioritise environmental management, as they will be driven to pursue parochial economic interest and to represent vested interest groups²⁵⁷.

The distrust of local officials and the confidence that national leaders have a better idea of how to serve the public good thus renders a decentralised system less desirable.

Hong's argument is indicative of the necessity of a stronger role for the state in the process of ecological modernisation. The emphasis on the state dovetails with Dent's theory of new developmentalism, which synthesises ecological modernisation with the theory of state capacity²⁵⁸. The common ground between EM and state capacity is the emphasis on state effectiveness during the process of transformative economic development. This linkage is of particular significance as it explains the political motivation for the central government to deploy the theme of ecological civilisation. Since the economic reform, the national government has been losing its grip on the speed and nature of modernisation on local jurisdictions²⁵⁹. The incorporation of the ecological element into modernisation provides needed momentum for the central government to chart a new path to sustainable development and maintain the leading role in economic transformation.

²⁵⁷ Dayong Hong, "Modernisation Theory through the Lens of Chinese Practice," *Social Sciences in China Press*, 2012, p.96.

²⁵⁸ Christopher M Dent. *Renewable Energy in East Asia: Towards a New Developmentalism*. Routledge Contemporary Asia Series 50. London : New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2014, p.63.

²⁵⁹ See Gabriella Montinola, Yingyi Qian, and Barry R. Weingast. "Federalism, Chinese Style: The Political Basis for Economic Success in China." *World Politics* 48, no. 1 (1995): 50–81.

The Chinese adaptation of the European concept of EM is preoccupied with technological advancement and the consolidation of state power. It should not mislead us into believing that modernisation is the only solution to environmental problems. Modernity is but one side of the coin, and the other side is tradition and culture. This constitutes the third paradigm used in environmental governance, and increasingly so in environmental foreign relations.

4.4.3 Resorting to Chinese culture

Political actors in China are not satisfied to follow the Western theory and Western models and try to define their own, not merely to refine those of foreigners. The recently-emerged idea of “ecological civilisation”, which will be explained in further detail in Chapter 7, is one of the many efforts by which Chinese political groups try to incorporate cultural elements in environmental governance and foreign relations. This reference to traditional culture and philosophy is an effort to search for the roots for environmental awareness domestically, and to showcase sources of discursive power which the Chinese find desirable. Shapiro has teased out Confucianism, Buddhism, and Daoism as philosophical inputs into Chinese environmental awareness. Confucianism, according to Shapiro, is anthropocentric and takes a utilitarian and pragmatic approach in order that the exploitation of nature is normalised²⁶⁰. Buddhism, on the other hand, is more bio-centric, advocating reverence for life and

²⁶⁰ Judith Shapiro, *Mao's War Against Nature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), p.214.

vegetarianism. Daoism further equates human beings with nature and corresponds to a deep ecological movement. The strategy of highlighting the resonance between environmental protection and the Chinese view of nature can be not only used to mobilise domestic support to protect the environment as Shapiro demonstrates, it could also be a tool to fulfil diplomatic objectives.

Robert Weller scrutinises the interaction between old and new concepts so as to understand how countries respond to the globalisation of environmental awareness. He observes that China and Taiwan were “the heirs of the unstinting dedication to modernity that characterised the dominant stream of Chinese intellectuals from the early twentieth century on” and adopt a pro-development discourse which reduces nature to a “resource to be mined” and an “obstacle to be conquered”²⁶¹. He further judges that an older Chinese environmental discourse has not yet posed a challenge to current global discourses. Even if alternative and creative native green discourses emerge, they will not be aimed to compete against current global discourses.

Although Weller convincingly points out the limitation of Chinese environmental discourse to replace Western concepts, however, China’s leaders do in fact aspire to portray the country as a power with a normative contribution to make. Hughes suggests a critical evaluation of how “tradition” and “culture” are constructed in the political project which highlights the Chinese way²⁶². Indeed, as illustrated in the three stages of environmental foreign relations, they have increasingly shifted attention towards the national image and discursive power (*huayuquan* 话语权). This is thus becoming is a key

²⁶¹ Robert Weller, *Discovering Nature: Globalisation and Environmental Culture in China and Taiwan* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p.164.

²⁶² Christopher Hughes, “Militarism and the China Model: The Case of National Defense Education,” *Journal of Contemporary China*, 2016, p.14.

obstacle to furthering foreign relations as the importance of cultural and traditional elements in the Chinese environmental concept gets more prominent.

The exercise of discursive power can be seen, according to Breslin, as a measure to “sinicise” an imported concept, and a sinicised interpretation will tend to focus more on the most important and imminent challenges China faces²⁶³. Having the ability to define what are the most pressing issues, instead of being told by foreign countries and multilateral organisations thus grows out of the second phase of environmental foreign relations, in which environmental issues are seen as an instrument used by developed countries to exploit resources and dominate the global trade. In other words, “environmental protection” is said to reveal the hypocrisy of the super powers. What China has learnt from this is that economic strength can be used to exert soft power over others. This disillusionment with the normative underpinning of environmentalism from the West yields two reactions: dissatisfaction with the current environmental discourse; and a conscious and explicit usage of Chinese versions of environmental norms to defend national interests, instead of for solving environmental problems. In the process, environmental diplomacy can be used explicitly by the Chinese government to occupy the moral high ground in the international community, and hence enhance the national image and status of China²⁶⁴.

The above analysis demonstrates that the ideational dimension used in environmental foreign relations is more of a diplomatic project for the Chinese

²⁶³ Shaun Breslin, “Debating Human Security in China: Towards Discursive Power?,” *Journal of Contemporary Asia* 45, no. 2 (April 3, 2015): p.259.

²⁶⁴ Chen 2010.

government to demonstrate its political superiority, acquire international scientific and technological advance, and improve its national image than part of a committed effort to fix global environmental problems. The following examination of the disjointed relationship between environmental protection and nationalism provides further evidence that domestic preferences are aggregated and ranked not against a universal environmental identity, but against a national economic one.

4.5 Environmental nationalism as a possibility?

4.5.1 Theoretical connection

All three strategic concepts discussed above touch upon the linkage between environmental protection and nationalism. This is because they prioritise defence of the national interest, claim the political superiority of “socialism with Chinese characteristics”, and resort to tradition and Chinese culture to construct an alternative set of norms. That there can be a connection between the environment and nationalism should not be surprising, as it is natural for the individual to “love his birthplace or the place of his childhood sojourn, its surroundings, its climate, the contours of hills and valleys of rivers and trees” as “we are all subject to the immense power of habitude”²⁶⁵.

A systematic theorisation of the connection between nationalism and ecological value is seen in Avner De-Shalit’s analysis of how nationalism

²⁶⁵ Hans Kohn, *The Idea of Nationalism: A Study in Its Origins and Backgrounds*, (New York: Macmillan, 1956), p.5.

accommodates and hinders ecological value promotion. The reasons why nationalism benefits environmental protection are three-fold. First, the solidarity and responsibility advocated by nationalism transform the calculating individual into a citizen who wants to take care of what is perceived to be the common good. The second reason is that nationalism arouses the duty of the public towards the past. De-Shalit uses the example of heritage preservation as a physical vehicle for national myth and history to assert that our consciousness of the past nurtures the discourse of environmental protection. Thirdly (and related to the second reason) is the sense of responsibility towards future generations advocated by nationalism²⁶⁶.

All these reasons focus on the individual level. When it comes to the collective level, though, De-Shalit sees conflicts between nationalism and ecological values. The first tension is between the national interest in nationalist rhetoric on the one hand and the global and local interest in environmentalism on the other, typified by the slogan “think globally-act locally”. The second issue revolves around the question of national borders. Whereas nationalists regard borders as a holy demarcation between Us and the Other, environmental activists try to break the hurdles set by national boundaries because the problems they are concerned with are most of the time transboundary.

²⁶⁶ Avner de-Shalit, “Nationalism,” in *Political Theory and the Ecological Challenge* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp.75–90.

4.5.2 Environmentalism and patriotism on CEN

In Chinese environmental discourse, the connection between environmental protection and nationalism is complicated. Domestically, nationalism is used to raise environmental awareness among the public. However, in terms of foreign relations, nationalistic rhetoric is deployed to prioritise economic interest over environmental protection based on the assumption that the West uses environmental issues to undermine developing countries. This is particularly evident in the first two stages of China's environmental foreign relations as shown on CEN.

Wang Wenxing, a renowned environmental chemist, recalled China's first overseas trip which sought to solve environmental problems. Eleven delegates travelled to Britain in 1973 to learn about pollution control. The delegates had to revise their report many times to avoid being seen as xenophiles (*chongyang meiwai* 崇洋媚外)²⁶⁷. The mentality of the delegates reflects the "foreign" side of environmental protection and how loyalty constrains the way experts report to the national leaders. A more explicit negative linkage between nationalism and environmental protection is articulated by Li Keguo, who is an environmental activist and educator. He warns against the possibility of "environmental imperialism"- by which he means countries using environmental protection to set non-tariff trade barriers, plunder resources, transfer polluted industries, and export waste. Instead of dismissing environmental protection, Li proposes a solution to deal with potential environmental imperialism through the active conduct of

²⁶⁷ Wenxing 文兴 Wang 王, "Woguo de Diyici Jingwai Huanjing kaocha'我国的第一次境外环境考察[The First Overseas Environmental Investigation Trip of Our Country]," *中国环境报[China Environment News]*, September 4, 1993.

environmental diplomacy, an enforced environmental education, and the strengthening of technology²⁶⁸. Cui Fengshan, a military commentator, further links environmental issues with military strategy and argues that regional environmental problems may lead to violent conflicts and the environmental threat becomes another excuse, apart from human rights, to interfere with Chinese domestic affairs²⁶⁹.

The relation between environmental protection and nationalism is, however, interpreted differently when the purpose is to educate the public. This can be seen in an article entitled “Environmental protection in the national anthem” published in 2000 by Guo Geng, an active environmental activist devoted to animal conservation. He claims that environmental protection *is* patriotism (*huanbao jiushi aiguo* 环保就是爱国) and the common enemy of all patriots is the “economic and cultural invasion” in the form of technological determinism, materialism, and consumerism. He attempts to “wake up” the patriots through the national anthem and advocates that environmental protection is an indispensable element of patriotism²⁷⁰. The connection between patriotism and environmental protection does, therefore, have some appeal among environmental activists. In one article exploring how non-governmental environmental organisations can exert their talent, the authors

²⁶⁸ Li 2001, p.3.

²⁶⁹ Fengshan 凤山 Cui 崔, “Queli Huanjing Junshi Zhanlue Xin linian’确立环境军事战略新理念 [Confirm the New Concept of Environment-Military Strategy],” *中国环境报[China Environment News]*, January 18, 2002.

²⁷⁰ Geng 耕 Guo 郭, “Guogesheng Zhong de huanbao’国歌声中的环保[Environmental Protection in the National Anthem],” *中国环境报[China Environment News]*, March 22, 2000.

conclude that patriotism is the precondition and pragmatism is the foundation²⁷¹.

These two cited articles echo a strong element of learning about and caring for the natural features of the motherland in civic education. In recent years, environmental protection has been incorporated in the College Entrance Exam (*gaokao*) 高考 in Chinese provinces²⁷² in various subjects: Reader (*yuwen*) 语文, geography, and politics. The rhetoric currently advocated by the CCP which highlights environmental protection-nationalism nexus and depicts an aesthetic appreciation of Chinese landscape is “beautiful China” (*meili zhongguo* 美丽中国). *Meili zhongguo*, originally the Chinese translation for a BBC-CCTV jointly produced documentary *Wild China*, is now used as a name of a tourism iPhone App²⁷³ dedicated to sightseeing in Chinese cities. Moreover, it is a name of a Hong Kong listed company which specialises in environmental protection investment, construction, and operation²⁷⁴. This indicates the penetration of environment-nationalism to the business world.

Juxtaposing these two interpretations of the environment-nationalism nexus points to a very unique and somehow schizophrenic trait of how environmental protection is perceived within the nationalistic rhetoric. On the

²⁷¹ Yanling 雁凌 Zhou 周, Yingde 英德 Ji 季, and Xuepeng 学鹏 Wang 王, “Minjian Huanbao Zuzhi Ruhe Dazhan hongtu’民间环保组织如何大展宏图[How Can Social Organisations Use Their Talents],” 中国环境报[*China Environment News*], December 9, 2014.

²⁷² Yujing 玉静 Jing 荆, “Jinnian Gaokao Ti Huanbao Zhi Duoshao’今年高考题 环保知多少 [Environmental Element in This Year’s College Entrance Exam],” 中国环境报[*China Environment News*], June 28, 2010.

²⁷³ Beijing ChuangYiFengTong Information Technology Co., Ltd, “Meili Zhongguo: Zai APP Stores Shang de Neirong’美丽中国：在 App Store 上的内容[Beautiful China: Content in App Store],” *App Store*, April 10, 2016, <https://itunes.apple.com/cn/app/mei-li-zhong-guo/id577660010?mt=8>.

²⁷⁴ “Beautiful China-About Us-Company Profile,” accessed August 6, 2016, <http://www.beautifulchina.com.hk/e/action/ShowInfo.php?classid=11&id=56>.

one hand, environmental protection is linked to the flora and fauna of the motherland and reflects the love of one's nation. On the other hand, the fact that environmental protection is an imported concept generates conspiracy-based suspicion which limits China's environmental commitments in the global environmental governance. This contradiction can be seen as a gap between the positive environment-nationalism nexus on the individual level and the negative connection on the state level, echoing de-Shalit's theorisation.

To highlight the special linkage between environmental protection and nationalism and comprehend the cautious attitudes towards environmental issues in China, the following brief section presents some classical analysis from other countries regarding the environment-nationalism connection and the caveats of this nexus.

4.5.3 Lessons from USSR and Latvia

Established links between environmental protection and nationalism can be found from insightful case studies of the former Soviet Union and Latvia, among others. Ziegler provides evidence that environmental participation in the former Soviet Union contains a stark populist element and are interwoven with nationalistic movements, in which civic elements were highlighted. Moscow's economic, agricultural and energy policies engender severe ramification on account of environmental pollution and health problems²⁷⁵. In the Baltic states, environmental issues have been pushed by separatism into a rallying point for

²⁷⁵ Charles Ziegler, "Political Participation, Nationalism, and Environmental Politics in the USSR," in *The Soviet Environment: Problems, Policies and Politics*, Steward, John (ed.) (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992), pp.24-39.

nationalism. Generally, “ecological issues have served as focal points for voluntary political participation”²⁷⁶ and environmental appeals dovetail the request for the rule of law, civil rights, and accountability of the government. The USSR’s environmental movements were not only about civic awakening but also related to an emotional reaction to Moscow’s mismanagement and the adverse impact on the aesthetic, symbolic, and culturally-significant homeland and landscape. The example of Lake Baikal- “a unique, even spiritual symbol for Russians and Buryats - being polluted by effluent from cellulose plants and Moscow’s mismanagement, typifies the political power of the environmental protection-nationalism nexus²⁷⁷.

This is not to suggest that love of the national landscape will automatically mobilise public support to protect the environment and remind the public of their national identities. Antony D Smith argues that it is landscape attached to an ethnic element and shared memory that is able to instigate emotion among the population²⁷⁸. Katrina Schwartz illustrates the importance of the ethnic constituent, and its connection with civic participation with the fascinating case of the National Awakening Movement in Latvia. The key dynamic in her work is the internationalist (outward) and peasantist (inward) perception of the “nature and nation nexus”²⁷⁹. She defines the ethnoscape as “a cultivated landscape of labour that mutually constitutes and is constituted by

²⁷⁶ Ibid, p.37.

²⁷⁷ Ibid.

²⁷⁸ Anthony Smith, “Nation and Ethnoscape,” in *Myths and Memories of the Nation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp.149–62.

²⁷⁹ Katrina Schwartz, *Nature and National Identity After Communism* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2006), p.9

the national character and serves as a reservoir of national history and ethnographic uniqueness”²⁸⁰.

The lessons in the USSR and Latvia demonstrate not only how intimate the relationship between nationalistic sentiment and environmental awareness is but also how dangerous environmental degradation could be to the political legitimacy of an autocratic regime. Perhaps one reason why the Chinese national leaders do not couple environmental protection and nationalism, even though it may make environmental education and governance easier, is that they are concerned and anxious about the potential for environmental nationalism to challenge their own legitimacy to rule.

²⁸⁰ Ibid. She observes that during the first national awakening movement in Latvia from 1800 to the 1850s, there were two forms of Latvian nationalism, inward-looking and outward-looking (Ibid, 8). Inspired by Johann Gottfried Herder and his romanticist thinking, national entrepreneurs sought authenticity from the countryside because farmers were too isolated to be corrupted by cosmopolitan cities. In the 19th century, nation-builders went down to the provinces to garner and research folk songs, poems, peasants' customs and vernacular usage. Ardent passion and strenuous efforts were made to fend off the hegemonic German, Austrian or Turkish culture and defend an authentic Latvianess. The outward perspective, a flipside interpretation, depicts Latvia as a cosmopolitan middleman, bridging the East and the West. After 1918, the bourgeois ruling elites shifted the internationalist discourse towards the idea of Latvia as a “nation of farmers” (Ibid). The purpose was to shield Latvian identity from the influence of Soviet Bolshevism. Radical land reform was launched by the leaders to connect the national character closely to peasant values. Closeness to nature became the critical Latvianess and the “nation of farmers” were revived in the dominant discourse with a nostalgic atmosphere against the backdrop of annexation by the Soviet Union. A shift from aesthetic attachment to the primordial landscape towards environmental participation was detected in the third national awakening movement. Soviet rule was characterised as imposing ruthless industrialisation at the expense of the Latvian ecosystem, yielding to the Latvian Great Tree Liberation Movement in the mid-1970s. Schwartz laments that “Soviet technocratic utilitarianism had crowded out the primordial Latvian sensitivity to nature” (2007, 279). The tree is not only a national-ethnic symbol in Latvia, but also exemplifies the mismanagement of the country by Moscow. It is at this point that the ethnocultural and civic element of nationalism converge into an environmental nationalistic identity.

4.5.4 Political legitimacy in question

Environmental issues have the potential to undermine the political legitimacy of the one-party regime for two reasons. First, environmental pollution is costly and discounts the economic achievements of the country. Research from the 1980s to 2000s conducted by academics, officials and the World Bank estimates that the cost of pollution in China occupies 3%-18% of GDP²⁸¹. The cost is not only in financial terms, because environmental pollution is also a matter of life and death. Air pollution alone contributes to about 1.2 million premature death in China each year²⁸². The most recent OECD report “the economic consequences of air pollution” compares projected GDP losses among countries and concludes that air pollution will hit China hardest at a cost of around 2.5% of GDP, due to extra health costs, lower productivity and reduced farm output. This is even worse than, Russia, with less than 2% of GDP loss²⁸³. Such costs can only weaken the legitimacy of the ruling elite, which is largely premised on economic performance²⁸⁴. In fact, a recent opinion poll conducted in thirty-four Chinese cities on urban citizens’ attitudes towards environmental protection reveals that seventy-seven percent of respondents believe that environmental protection is more important than economic

²⁸¹ Zhao 赵 Lingyun 凌云, “Zhongguo tese shengtai wenming jianshe daolu” 中国特色生态文明建设道路[*The road to ecological civilisation with Chinese characteristics*] (中国财政经济出版社 [Chinese financial & Economic Publishing House], 2014), p.10.

²⁸² Eleanor Albert and Beina Xu, “China’s Environmental Crisis,” *Council on Foreign Relations*, 2016, <http://www.cfr.org/china/chinas-environmental-crisis/p12608>.

²⁸³ OECD, “The Economic Consequences of Outdoor Air Pollution,” 2016, <http://www.oecd.org/environment/the-economic-consequences-of-outdoor-air-pollution-9789264257474-en.htm>.

²⁸⁴ Dingxin Zhao, “The Mandate of Heaven and Performance Legitimation in Historical and Contemporary China,” *American Behavioral Scientist*, 53, no. 3 (2009): pp.416–33.

development, with only eleven percent arguing the opposite²⁸⁵. Furthermore, environmental problems cause social instability. The number of complaint letters on environmental disputes has increased eight times in the decade from 1996 to 2005. Environmental protests have steadily increased by an annual rate of twenty-nine percent²⁸⁶.

The second reason why environmental issues can be detrimental to Chinese rulers is that one of the fundamental core concepts of political legitimacy in Chinese traditional political culture is the Mandate of Heaven (*tianming* 天命), together with rule by virtue, popular consent, and legality²⁸⁷. According to the theory of the Mandate of Heaven the responsibility of the emperor was to “ensure that society expressed its natural order which was an aspect of the cosmic order of humanity, heaven, and earth”²⁸⁸. Preserving harmony with the natural order was thus crucial to governance, and managing agriculture established the material base of political legitimacy. This was sometimes specified in considerable detail, as when the *Lost Book of Zhou* prohibited hunting animals and felling trees in March because it was the time of the beginning of new life. The Mandate of Heaven, therefore, had the potential to both legitimise and de-legitimise the rulers. It not only justified authority but also granted the right to rebel against despotic and incapable emperors²⁸⁹.

²⁸⁵ Yang 杨 Zhong 钟, “‘Zhongguo Chengshi Jumin Huanbao Taidu diaocha’中国城市居民环保态度调查[A Survey of Chinese Urban Residents’ Attitudes towards Environmental Protection],” *Phoenix*, May 12, 2014, http://news.ifeng.com/a/20140512/40261602_1.shtml.

²⁸⁶ Chaofei 朝飞 Yang 杨, “Zhongguo Lvse Jingji Fazhan Jizhi He Zhengce Chuangxin yanjiu”中国绿色经济发展机制和政策创新研究[*The Mechanism of Green Economic Development and Policy Innovation*] (Beijing: China Environmental Science Press, 2012), p.25.

²⁸⁷ Baogang Guo, “Political Legitimacy and China’s Transition,” *Journal of Chinese Political Science* 8, no. 1-25 (2003), pp.4-5.

²⁸⁸ Myron L Cohen, “Religion in a State Society: China,” *Asia: Case Studies in the Social Sciences, Living in the Chines Cosmos: Understanding Religion in Late-Imperial China (1644-1911)*, 1992, p.3.

²⁸⁹ Zhao 2009, p. 419.

People would know when the ruler had lost the mandate because there would be natural disasters such as droughts, floods, earthquakes, and epidemics.

The ancient source of political legitimacy is still salient at a rhetorical level nowadays, revolving around the legitimacy of the CCP. During the Tiananmen Student Protest in 1989, the protesters argued that the Communist Party had lost the Heavenly Mandate and hence justified their “rebellion”²⁹⁰. Falungong, a dissenting religious group in China, contended that the natural disaster of the flood in 1998 was an omen from Heaven, depriving the current regime of its mandate. Chinese orthodox scholars try to argue the opposite. Cao Jinqing, a famous professor of Sociology, for example, contends that the CCP has sustained the mandate via rapid economic growth. The challenges and responsibility are now to ensure sustainable development²⁹¹, without upsetting the balance of nature and by galvanising the Chinese government into environmental governance. Cao’s remarks merit attention because he diminishes the direct connection between the environment and legitimacy by adding the economic dimension, thereby conditioning the relationship between the former two with economic achievements.

The Communist Party and its leaders thus tread a fine line between environmental protection and nationalism, due to concerns about legitimacy. The perspective of locating environmental protection to political legitimacy also explains the prevalence of conspiracy theory which underpins the

²⁹⁰ Elizabeth Perry, “Challenging the Mandate of Heaven: Popular Protest in Modern China,” *Critical Asian Studies* 33, no. 2 (2001): pp.163–80.

²⁹¹ Jinqing 锦清 Cao 曹, “Bainian fuxing:guanyu zhongguo gongchandang de tianming duihua”百年复兴：关于中国共产党的“天命”的对话[A conversation about the Mandate of Heaven], interview by Ya 雅 Ma 玛, July 9, 2013, <http://theory.people.com.cn/n/2013/0709/c143844-22133471-4.html>.

environmental foreign relations in China as nationalism is a mechanism to defend economic interests in environmental negotiation. The following party line rhetoric list in the table illustrates that the projection of an environment-related image for the Party is framed with reference to the economy. It also shows how it is an economic rather than environmental version of national identity that is used to aggregate domestic preferences when forging environmental foreign relations.

Table 4-1 Official green rhetoric in China

Period	International context	Party Line Rhetoric	Action
1949-1972	1960s global modern environmental movement.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People will conquer nature (<i>rending shengtian</i> 人定胜天) • <i>Yu Gong Yi Shan</i>; 愚公移山 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Great Leap Forward • Cultural Revolution
1972-1990	1972 United Nations Conference on the Human Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overall and rational planning, reduction of harm, a reliance on the masses and both the protection of the environment and the enriching of the people. • “putting protection first and combining prevention with control”; • “Making the cause of pollution responsible for treating it” • “intensifying environmental management” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1972 China participates in the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment in Stockholm; • 1973 First National Conference on Environmental Protection • 1989 Environmental Protection Law
1990-2003	1992 Earth Summit in Rio and Rio Declaration 1997 Kyoto Protocol 2001 China entry in WTO 2002 Johannesburg Summit and Johannesburg Declaration on Sustainable Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sustainable development; • The word “environment” appeared in the 15th National Congress Report in 1997 in the context of “huge environmental and resource pressures caused by population growth and economic development was listed as a major difficulty for the nation’s future”; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1992 China sends a delegation to the Earth Summit; • 1994 adoption of Agenda 21; • Ninth Five Year Plan: sustainable development as a national development strategy; • 1997 publication of the National

			<p>Sustainable Development Report;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public protests over environmental issues increased 29% annually since 1996 (Men Si, 2012)
2003-2007	2009 the UN Climate Summit in Copenhagen 2010 Cancun COP-16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jiang Zemin (16th Party Congress 2003): circular economy; • Hu Jintao 2003: scientific view of development (<i>kexuefazhan guan</i> 科学发展观) • Green GDP • Wen Jiabao 2005 the “two oriented society” resources-efficient and environmentally friendly • Power-saving and emissions-reduction popular in an industrialising China 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2005 first batch of circular economy trials in ten provinces • 2008 Circular Economy Promotion Law • 2006 government sets targets for energy intensity and emissions of pollutant.
2007-present	2012 UNCSD in Rio de Janeiro	Hu Jintao 2007: ecological civilisation	2012 53 trial projects of ecological civilisation.

Source: based on Meng Si, 2012.

In this table, the only exception that might indicate a direct linkage between environmental protection and nationalism is the “ecological civilisation” proposed by then President Hu Jintao. Chapter 7 will be of importance in this regard because it will examine to what extent ecological civilisation represents a green identity in the ranking of domestic preferences. It also indicates that the nature of Chinese nationalist discourse is changing as

China becomes more powerful in the world, and is reflected in the way it is used in environmental diplomacy.

The discussion of the identity dimension demonstrates the economic logic underpinning the green discourse, and observes how environmental-related interests are constructed around Chinese nationalism. That is to say, the Chinese state may appear green on global environmental governance. However, the calculation of environmental cooperation derives from economic gains such as securing international funding and opening overseas markets, which will be elaborated in the following three empirical chapters.

Chapter 5 Strategic Concepts and Interest Grouping in Treaty Implementation: A comparison of the Montreal Protocol and the Convention on Biological Diversity

5.1 Main argument

The main strategic concept in this chapter is that of environmental diplomacy as a foreign policy tool used to facilitate domestic interests. The implementation of environmental treaties is a very important aspect within environmental diplomacy to demonstrate China's intention to cooperate with the international community and to restructure domestic interest group alignment. The analysis of the successful implementation of the Montreal Protocol and the failed attempt to implement the Convention on Biological Diversity highlights the salience of sectors and ministries in terms of operationalising international environmental cooperation. Domestic interest groups have the potential to be catalysts for, or hindrances to realising China's international commitments.

5.2 Context and Structure of this chapter

China's engagement in global environmental governance, driven by international pressure, started with a form of international environmental *cooperation* in the 1970s. The landmark event which indicated the presence of the Chinese government in the joint efforts to tackle global environmental

problems was the 1972 United Nations Conference on Human Environment (UNCHE). Zhou Enlai, the first Premier and Foreign Minister of the People's Republic, accepted the invitation from the Fourth UN Secretary-General Kurt Waldheim and led a delegation of over twenty representatives to attend this conference with an unprecedented focus on the environment. The fact that the Chinese government sent such a high-level delegation demonstrated the acceptance within the leadership that environmental problems were not only problems of Capitalist countries, but also Socialist regimes like China, indicating a gradual shift from ideological explanation of the environmental crisis towards a pragmatic and managerial approach. The consequence of the UNCHE, according to the first Director of the State Environmental Protection Administration Qu Geping, is that it "enlightened the officials who were out of touch with reality and blinded by political dogma"²⁹².

Yet in the broad context of the Cold War, it was difficult to disentangle environmental cooperation from ideological struggle. The ideological competition between the United States and the Soviet Union engendered an unintended benefit: making environmental cooperation possible and reaching environmental agreements more likely²⁹³. This is largely because the leadership in the USSR used environmental cooperation to project an image of cooperativeness and a platform to showcase the achievements of the Communist regime, suggesting the calculated enthusiasm of the Soviets in

²⁹² Libo He, "Zhou Enlai Wei Xinzongguo Huanbao Shiye Dianji'周恩来为新中国环保事业奠基 [Zhou Enlai Paved the Foundation of the Environmental Protection Cause in the New People's Republic]," *Communist Party of China News*, 2010, <http://dangshi.people.com.cn/GB/144956/11827363.html>.

²⁹³ Stephen Brain, "The Appeal of Appearing Green: Soviet-American Ideological Competition and Cold War Environmental Diplomacy," *Cold War History*, 2014, 1.

environmental protection²⁹⁴. In similar vein, the Chinese government used UN conferences as an opportunity to fight the ideological battle and meanwhile demonstrate its willingness to participate²⁹⁵. This is evident in China's stance in the 1972 UNCHE negotiation, in which the representative of China highlighted that the main reasons for environmental pollution were "the policy of plunder, aggression and war carried out by Imperialist, Colonialist, and Neo-colonialist countries, especially by the super-Powers", appearing in the same section which ended with the remark that "China was willing to participate in the common endeavour"²⁹⁶.

The co-existence between ideology and pragmatism in foreign relations related to environmental protection posed two challenges to China's exposure and participation in global affairs: first, it raised the need to create a conceptual mechanism to ensure that international cooperation serves the ideological end in the context of the Communism versus Capitalism binary; and second, China's commitments on the global stage had to resonate with domestic performance. That is to say, international commitments were to be realised and fulfilled through domestic implementation, rather than via a blank cheque. The first question will be further elaborated in the second section, which introduces "environmental diplomacy" as the conceptual mechanism to reconcile international cooperation with national and domestic interests. The second

²⁹⁴ The literature on the hypocritical attitude of Soviets towards environmental protection is rich. See Robert G. Darst, *Smokestack Diplomacy: Cooperation and Conflict in East-West Environmental Politics* (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 2001); Marshall I. Goldman, *The Spoils of Progress: Environmental Pollution in the Soviet Union* (Cambridge Mass; London: MIT Press, 1972); Philip Rust. Pryde, *Conservation in the Soviet Union* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1972).

²⁹⁵ Michel Oksenberg and Elizabeth Economy, "China: Implementation Under Economic Growth and Market Reform," in *Engaging Countries: Strengthening Compliance with International Environmental Accords* (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1998), pp.353–94.

²⁹⁶ United Nations, "Report of the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment" (Stockholm, June 5, 1972), <http://www.un-documents.net/aconf48-14r1.pdf>, p.63.

question will be unravelled though a closer look at the perspective of international environmental treaty implementation.

Implementing international treaties occupies an important part of the early stage of international environmental cooperation. Indeed, the Chinese government has actively signed, accessed, and ratified international environmental agreements since 1980. According to the statistics in the International Environmental Agreements(IEA) Database Project, which dates back to three treaties signed in the republican era and includes latest entry into force in 2015, China has taken action on 356 multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs) with 44 signatures, 85 ratification, accession and succession and 334 entries into force²⁹⁷. These actions relate China to a wide range of global environmental issues, including Antarctic affairs, biodiversity, climate change, desertification, endangered species, environmental modification, hazardous wastes, ozone layer protection, seaborne pollution, wetlands, timber and whaling²⁹⁸.

Although the Chinese government's commitment to these agreements makes a difference, their effect is contingent upon the extent to which IEAs are implemented. Oksenberg and Economy identified determinants of successful implementation largely through the lens of the bureaucratic politics model. According to this, a powerful implementing agency and the status of its head are likely to prompt successful implementation, whereas bureaucratic infighting

²⁹⁷ For the full list of multilateral environmental agreements (MEPs) China has taken membership actions, see. Ronald B. Mitchell, "MEAs to Which China Has Taken Membership Actions," *International Environmental Agreements (IEA) Database Project*, http://iea.uoregon.edu/page.php?query=country_members&country_preferred=China.

²⁹⁸ Central Intelligence Agency, "Environment - International Agreements," The World Factbook, *The World Factbook*, (n.d.), <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/fields/2033.html>.

inhibits effective enforcement. Responsibility accorded to the designated implementing agency engenders success, whereas lack of incentive and funds leads to failure²⁹⁹. It must be noted that bureaucrats represent one type of stakeholder whose primary task is enforcement. The other side of the implementation is that of compliance, which remains to be examined. In an attempt to further Oksenberg and Economy's analysis, this chapter will also examine the compliance stakeholders and their interaction with the bureaucratic forces.

The following section selects two cases of treaty implementation: The Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer (or the Montreal Protocol) and the Convention on Biological Diversity, the former deemed as a successful practice and the latter as ineffective. The Chinese government ratified the Montreal Protocol in 1991 and CBD in 1993. Given that "success" is measured on the basis of fulfilling objectives, China has achieved its goals ahead of time in the Montreal Protocol, whereas implementing CBD is problem-laden. This contradicts the Chinese government's effort to appear more of a leader in the area of biodiversity. The puzzle this chapter tries to solve is why one treaty is more effectively implemented than another, and how treaty implementation, in turn, influences China's role in international environmental governance.

5.3 Environmental Diplomacy as a strategic concept

The term "environmental diplomacy" was proposed subsequent to the *de facto* practice of this concept. Although China's participation in the 1972 UNCHE

²⁹⁹ Oksenberg and Economy 1998.

is recognised as the beginning of international environmental cooperation, environmental diplomacy was first articulated in October 1989 at the Sixteenth Meeting of the State Commission Environmental Protection (SCEP) by its then Director and State Councillor Song Jian³⁰⁰. The purpose of environmental diplomacy is to effectively defend the national interests in the midst of intensified multilateral, bilateral, and regional environmental cooperation. The fate of a new term is, to a large degree, correlated to the status of the articulator. Song Jian played a critical role in the promotion of environmental diplomacy as the guiding strategy of China's environmental foreign relations. A Soviet-trained military scientist and specialist in cybernetics and a protégé of Qian Xuesen, who was Mao Zedong's trusted science advisor, Song rose to an influential post in China's Ministry of National Defence in 1960³⁰¹ and had been the Chairman of the State Science and Technology Commission from 1984 to 1993. His authority in policy making derives from a mixture of his position as SCEP's director, his scientific background, and his awareness of the irreconcilable conflict between developing and developed countries shaped by his experiences in national defence. Song's suggestion regarding environmental diplomacy led to the inclusion of Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the SCEP and the institutional set-up of environmental experts in the Department of Treaty and Law and the Department of International Organisations and Conferences.

Environmental diplomacy functions first and foremost as a path to a unified principle of the Chinese government in international environmental cooperation. In fact, SCEP passed and released "The Principle Stance of China

³⁰⁰ Economy 2004, pp.196-197.

³⁰¹ Mara Hvistendahl, "Of Population Projections and Projectiles," *Science* 329, no. 5998 (September 17, 2010): p.1460.

regarding Global Environmental Problems" in 1990 at the Eighteenth Meeting of the SCEP. Eight principles were listed as fundamental: 1) "manage the relationship between environmental protection and economic development; 2) clarify that the main responsibility of international environmental problem is on the shoulders of the developed countries; 3) defend sovereignty over natural resources and the non-interference principle with highlighted emphasis on opposition to interference in domestic affairs with the excuse of environmental protection; 4) acknowledge the necessity of the participation of developing countries; 5) fully consider the special conditions and needs of developing countries; 6) stress that environmental protection shall not be the precondition of foreign aid and not be the excuse for new trade barriers; 7) emphasise the duties of developed countries to provide additional funding and technology transfer on preferential and non-commercial conditions; 8) indicate the necessity to reinforce international environmental legislation" ³⁰² .The establishment of these principles placed international environmental cooperation at the highest level of the diplomatic agenda in the 1990s³⁰³. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs' participation in SCEP was to ensure that the Chinese environmental negotiation did not infringe national sovereignty, did not grant Taiwan international status, minimised China's financial obligations, and guaranteed the maximisation of technology transfer³⁰⁴. The unified principles

³⁰² State Council Commission of Environmental Protection 国务院环委会, "Zhongguo Guanyu Quanqiu Wentishi de yuanzechang'中国关于全球环境问题的原则立场[The Principles and Stance of China Regarding Global Environmental Governance]," 1990, <http://www.ep898.com/view1.asp?id=1073>.

³⁰³ Gang Chen, *Politics of China's Environmental Protection: Problems and Progress* (World Scientific, 2009), p.59.

³⁰⁴ Oksenberg and Economy 1984, p.84.

provide a strategic framework within which different domestic political actors interact with the outside world on environmental cooperation.

Furthermore, environmental diplomacy is useful to break the ice, and is intimately linked to the timing of its introduction³⁰⁵. In the wake of the June 4th 1989 Tiananmen crackdown, Chinese foreign policy was challenged by economic sanctions and the freezing of foreign investment. The United States imposed diplomatic and economic sanctions, including the suspension of arms sales and top-level official visits to China. The Bush Administration liaised with the Group of Seven (G7) countries to impose economic sanctions as a response to the regime's repression and violation of human rights³⁰⁶. In addition, international financial institutions like the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank halted loans to China, thereby contributing to a 22% decrease in direct foreign investment to China in the first half of 1990 and a 40% decrease in foreign lending in the single year of 1989³⁰⁷. The international community's reaction to the Tiananmen crackdown stirred domestic debate in Chinese foreign policy, and led to the prominence of what Harding calls "tough internationalists". The view of tough internationalists, typified by the then Premier Li Peng, were moving along the spectrum between "flexibility of reformers" and "intransigence of hard-liners" and the defining character of this school was faith in "China's ability to pursue international relationships on

³⁰⁵ Haibin 海滨 Zhang 张, "lun zhongguo huanjing waijiao de shijian jiqi zuoyong'论中国环境外交的实践及其作用[On the practice and role of environmental diplomacy]," *guoji zhengzhi [international politics]* 3 (1998).

³⁰⁶ Saori N Katada, "Why Did Japan Suspend Foreign Aid to China? Japan's Foreign Aid Decision-Making and Sources of Aid Sanction," *Social Science Japan Journal* 4, no. 1 (April 1, 2001): pp.42-43.

³⁰⁷ Harry Harding, "The Impact of Tiananmen on China's Foreign Policy" (Washington: The National Bureau of Asian and Soviet Research, 1990), <http://www.nbr.org/publications/nbranalysis/pdf/vol1no3.pdf>, p.5.

favourable terms”³⁰⁸. Underpinning the tough internationalist approach was the interdependence between China and the “West”: China needs access to foreign capital, technology and markets to realise modernisation. Meanwhile, the “West” will benefit from the partnership with China in trade and investment.

In the context of a tough internationalist setting, environmental diplomacy was a strategic concept deployed to practice a tough internationalist approach. Epitomising the strategic dimension of environmental diplomacy was the relationship with Japan in the aftermath of Tiananmen. As a member of the G7, Japan suspended Official Development Assistance (ODA), a five-year package of loans worth US\$ 5.4 billion albeit reluctantly and under international peer pressure³⁰⁹. The ruling party in Japan, the Liberal Democratic Party, oscillated between pressure from the Bush Administration to continue freezing foreign aid to China³¹⁰ and the demands of domestic business groups for lifting the economic sanctions exerted on China³¹¹. Meanwhile, tough internationalists in China proposed the solution to the international economic sanctions: overtures to Japan to break the Western solidarity against China³¹². Tokyo’s engagement policy towards China dovetails with Beijing’s strategy to play the “Japan card”. In fact, Japan was the first G7 country to lift its freeze on the third yen loan package as early as August 1989. Coincidentally, both countries started to support environmental diplomacy in 1989. The Japanese

³⁰⁸ Ibid, p. 9.

³⁰⁹ Katada, p.39.

³¹⁰ The US National Security Advisor Brent Scowcroft warned the former Japanese Foreign Minister Hiroshi Mitsuzuka not to restore the credits too quickly, see Quansheng Zhao, *Interpreting Chinese Foreign Policy: The Micro-Macro Linkage Approach* (Oxford University Press, 1996), p.165.

³¹¹ Katada 2001.

³¹² Harding 1990.

Diplomatic Bluebook 1990³¹³ covering activities from August 1989 to July 1990 underscored the increasing environmental consideration in Japan's Bilateral ODA. Furthermore, the first ODA charter listed "environmental consideration" as one of the basic guidelines and philosophies of Japan's ODA³¹⁴. By 1998, Japan has the largest bilateral aid programme to China with a considerable number of project containing environmental component³¹⁵.

Although there were no causal relations between environmental diplomacy and the lift of economic sanction and pressure from the US played a greater role in Japan's decision, suffice it to say that environmental diplomacy had become an integral part of the international political economy and was intimately linked to concerns of trade and investment. As a consequence, the Chinese government's emphasis on funding, technology transfer and investment was not peculiar. Instead, it is a constant declaration and reminder that environmental diplomacy embeds the international liberal norm of environmental cooperation in the realist context within which rational calculation of national interest dominates. Indeed, the Japanese government's environmental aid to China results from concerns about trans-border pollution from China to its territory, and there is little doubt that Japan can benefit from a less polluted China³¹⁶.

The above mentioned delicate relations between Japan and China, when juxtaposed with the tension with the United States, point to the fact that

³¹³ Ministry of Foreign Affairs Japan, "Diplomatic Bluebook 1990," accessed February 10, 2016, <http://www.mofa.go.jp/policy/other/bluebook/1990/1990-contents.htm>.

³¹⁴ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, "1. History of Official Development Assistance," *Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan*, 1994, <http://www.mofa.go.jp/policy/oda/summary/1994/1.html>.

³¹⁵ Tremayne and de Waal 1998, p.1031.

³¹⁶ Ryokichi Hirono, "Japan's Environmental Cooperation with China during the Last Two Decades," *Asia-Pacific Review* 14, no. 2 (2007): pp.1-16.

environmental diplomacy is a political project of tough internationalists. Evidence supporting this claim includes the enthusiasm in the environmental diplomacy of Li Peng, who, according to Harding, epitomised the tough internationalist in China's international relations³¹⁷. Perhaps the best example of Li Peng's salience in environmental diplomacy is his speech in the 1992 UNCED, known as the Rio Summit, which dramatically boosted the development of environmental diplomacy. He declared the stances and principles of environmental diplomacy, and compressed the abovementioned Eight Principles passed by SCEP into five points: 1) coordination between environmental protection and economic development; 2) bigger environmental protection responsibilities on the shoulder of developed countries; 3) national sovereignty as the cornerstone of cooperation; 4) peace and stability; and 5) the consideration of realistic national interests and the long-term interest of the world, by which he meant that the international community should understand and support the environmental problems plaguing developing countries and cater to their reasonable requests³¹⁸. The flagship institution of environmental diplomacy, mentioned in Li Peng's speech as a testimony to the willingness and determination of the Chinese government, is the China Council for International Cooperation on Environment and Development (CCICED) established in 1992 in cooperation with the Canadian government. Composed of ministerial or vice-ministerial rank experts and international experts, CCICED is uncommon, as it is encouraged to criticise government policies regarding the environment and

³¹⁷ Harding 1990, p.9.

³¹⁸ State Council, "Zhonghua Renmin Gongheguo Guowuyuan gongbao" 中华人民共和国国务院公报[Gazette of the State Council]," June 12, 1992, <http://www.gov.cn/gongbao/shuju/1992/gwyb199215.pdf>.

development³¹⁹. “Li Peng fully supported the idea of CCICED from the beginning as he understood the importance of extensively listening to the opinions of domestic and foreign experts” , recalled by Qu Geping, the first Director of the State Environmental Protection Bureau on the forefront of environmental diplomacy³²⁰.

Making high-profile speeches and signing international environmental accords demonstrates China’s willingness to cooperate; however, it is the degree of treaty implementation and compliance that plays a vital role in the Chinese government’s leverage to secure international funding and technology transfer, and in the long term increases the credibility and bargaining power of the Chinese delegation in international environmental negotiations. In many ways, a successful implementation of international accords dovetails the two cornerstones of tough internationalist beliefs: China’s chances to benefit from interaction with the outside world and its ability to make the interaction in its favour. Paradoxically, the effectiveness of treaty implementation is not dictated by the top national leaders, although accession to it is largely the case³²¹ In fact, the Convention on Biological Diversity, which will be explained in further detail in the next section, was signed by Li Peng himself in the Rio Summit but was poorly implemented. In comparison, the Montreal Protocol was widely regarded as a successful case in China’s treaty implementation practice, and even ignites hope in the Chinese leadership position, not only in phasing out

³¹⁹ Jonathan Schwartz, “Canada’s Role in Chinese Environmental Protection,” *Canadian Foreign Policy Journal* 10, no. 2 (January 1, 2003): p.137.

³²⁰ CCICED, “Guohehui 20 zhounian’国合会 20 周年 [20th Anniversary of CCICED],” 2011, <http://www.cciced.net/zcyj/yxbg/201210/P020121023540981360649.pdf>.

³²¹ Oksenberg and Economy, 1998

ozone depletion substances but also in the related issue area of climate change³²².

An even more intriguing question emerges from the interaction between the strategic concept of environmental diplomacy and treaty implementation, which will be elaborated in more detail in the following section. The negotiation of the Montreal Protocol began in 1987, two years before environmental diplomacy was proposed, whereas the decision to familiarise China with biodiversity conservation through CBD was after the concept was introduced. Before China adopted CBD, the State Council summoned a Coordinating Group on Establishing the Biodiversity Convention which included thirteen ministries and agencies with SEPA as a leading agency³²³. An intuitive expectation is that a treaty signed in the height of environmental diplomacy and by the then Premier is more likely to be implemented than one signed earlier. Yet the outcome is counterintuitive, and the presence of environmental diplomacy is not necessarily an omen for the implementation of an effective international environmental agreement. Therefore, a more challenging question that this chapter aims to address is why environmental diplomacy fails to push for an effective treaty implementation, shedding light on the broad question of how different actors and players play a role in China's foreign environmental relations.

³²² Yan Jun, Ian J. Porter, and Stephen O. Andersen, "The Harmony of Civilization and Prosperity for All: Selected Papers of Beijing Forum (2009-2010) Chinese Political, Social and Economic Leadership in Protection of the Stratospheric Ozone Layer, Climate, and Biosecurity: A Montreal Protocol Case Study," *Procedia - Social and Behavioural Sciences* 77 (April 22, 2013): pp.237-46,

³²³ Lester Ross, "China: Environmental Protection, Domestic Policy Trends, Patterns of Participation in Regimes and Compliance with International Norms," *The China Quarterly* 156 (1998): pp.809-35.

5.4 A tale of Two Treaties: Montreal Protocol and Convention on Biological Diversity

Both the Montreal Protocol and the Convention on Biological Diversity were ratified in the early 1990s, a period regarded by Zhang Haibin, leading expert in the study of environmental diplomacy, as the peak of environmental diplomacy³²⁴. I borrow Stalley's approach to scrutinising two dimensions of implementation: enforcement and compliance, the former indicating how stringent the government is, and the latter looking at the performance of various involved groups and actors³²⁵. The aspect of compliance is further divided into substantive compliance, evaluated based on the achievement of the objectives of treaties and procedural compliance which provides a "legal and institutional framework for satisfying substantive requirement", including establishment of institutions and report of data and information³²⁶. Instead of nuancing compliance as substantive versus procedural, I modify the word differentiation to implementation, to distinguish patterns of action in these two compared cases. Stalley and Zhao categorise the process of implementation based on a different basis: Stalley adopts the perspective of actors (government versus industry) whereas Zhao employs a more abstract means versus end dichotomy. Their different methods lead to the two-by-two matrix, shown below, which is to structure the evaluation of the degree of implementation of the Montreal Protocol and CBD. The benefit of this matrix is that it not only unravels the dimension on which a treaty is more effectively implemented, but

³²⁴ Zhang 1998

³²⁵ Stalley 2010, Chapter 4 and 5.

³²⁶ Jimin Zhao, "Implementing International Environmental Treaties in Developing Countries: China's Compliance with the Montreal Protocol," *Global Environmental Politics* 5, no. 1 (February 21, 2005): p.60.

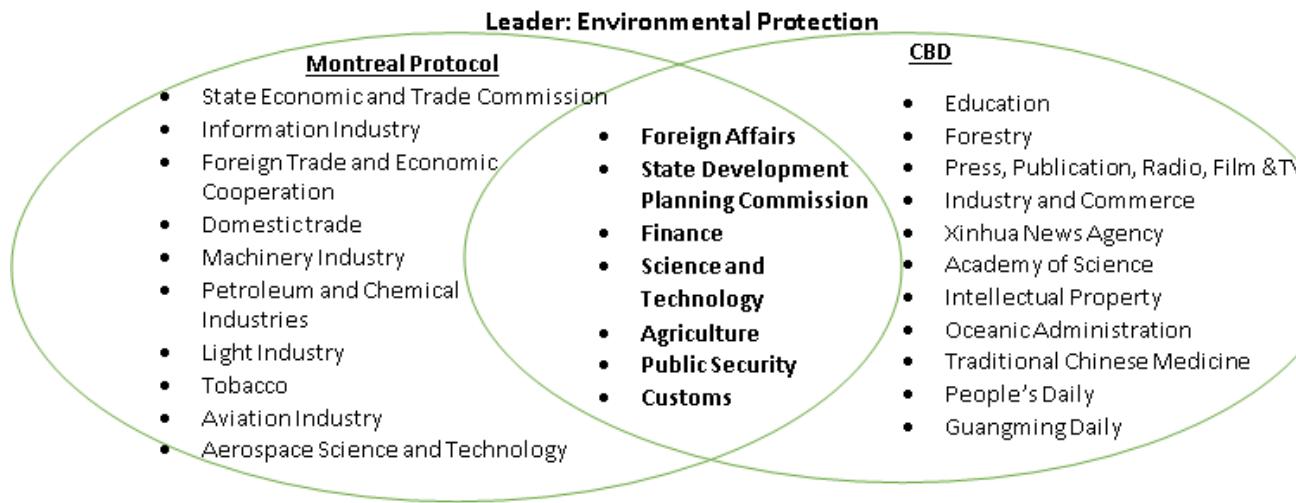
engenders the implication of the treaty implementation on the concept of environmental diplomacy.

Table 5-1 Matrix of Implementation

	Enforcement agency (e.g. government)	Compliance agency (e.g. industry, firms)
Procedural		
Substantive		

Implementing both the Protocol and the Convention is characterised by a strong determination of enforcement, with a leading agency and cross-ministerial coordination. The following Venn diagram displays various government agencies involved in the enforcement, and highlights seven institutions working on both treaties in the middle of this diagram. The leading agency of both treaty implementation is the State Environmental Protection Administration, now Ministry of Environmental Protection since 2008. The overlapping agencies indicate the commonality of the nature of these two treaties: both as a matter of foreign policy, finance, development and planning, science and technology, agriculture, public security, and customs.

Figure 5-1 Implementing Agencies of the Montreal Protocol and CBD



Source: compiled by the author based on information on the official website of "Ozone Action in China" (http://www.ozone.org.cn/gywm/200712/t20071227_15668.html) and "Coordination working group for China's implementation of CBD" (http://sts.mep.gov.cn/swdyx_1/guanli/200607/t20060725_91254.htm) <http://www.7c.gov.cn/color/DisplayPages/download/pdf/06chin.pdf>

The Venn diagram also demonstrates how these two treaties address divergent issues. The enforcement agencies designed for the Montreal Protocol are dominated by industry-related departments, including petroleum and chemical, light industry, tobacco, and aviation, whereas although the industry of traditional Chinese medicine is relevant, the focus of CBD implementation seems to lie in media, communication and education, with three mouthpiece news outlets involved. Conversely, the differences and complexities of implementing these treaties are acknowledged and elaborated later. A comparison of these two cases of different outcomes regarding implementation focuses on the interaction among involved actors and groups and affords us the opportunity to identify overlooked explanatory factors. In other words, the process within which various actors interact and coordinate to meet the objective, and the match between enforcement and compliance stakeholders, renders them comparable.

The objective of the Montreal Treaty in general is to control and set a timetable for countries to phase out ozone-depleting substances (ODS), and chemicals that destroy the ozone layer. Controlled substances include cholorofluorocarbon (CFCs), halons, other fully halogenated CFCs, carbon tetrachloride, methyl chloroform, hydrochlorofluorocarbons (HCFCs), Hydrobromofluorocarbons, methyl bromide, and bromochloromethane. China as an Article 5 country, defined in the treaty as a developing country whose annual calculated level of consumption of ODS is less than 0.3 kilograms per capita on the date of the entry into force of the Protocol³²⁷. This means it is granted more time, together with funding and technology, to fulfil the objectives. The ultimate purpose of the Convention of Biological Diversity is threefold, as enshrined in Article 1: “the conservation of biological diversity, the sustainable use of its components, and the fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising out of the utilization of genetic resources”³²⁸. Similar with the Montreal Treaty, CBD entitles developing countries funding, technology transfer, training, and allows each member state to develop national strategies and plans in line with their national conditions and capabilities³²⁹. In this light, I use the objectives identified in the national plan for both treaties.

China’s Country Programme for the Phaseout of Ozone Depleting Substances under the Montreal Protocol (Country Programme) was issued in 1993 and revised five years later, as part of meeting the requirements set by the Multilateral Fund, established in 1991 to offer financial and technical assistance

³²⁷ Ozone secretariat, *The Montreal Protocol on Substances That Deplete the Ozone Layer*, <http://ozone.unep.org/pdfs/Montreal-Protocol2000.pdf>.

³²⁸ United Nations, *Convention on Biological Diversity*, 1992,

<https://www.cbd.int/doc/legal/cbd-en.pdf>, Article1, p.3.

³²⁹ Ibid, p.5.

to Article 5 countries. The 1993 Country Programme set the deadline of reducing ODS consumption and production to no more than the 1991 level to 1996, three years earlier than the targets the Protocol set for Article 5 countries. China did not meet its own ambitious target, because the production level exceeds the 1991 level by 94 percent and the consumption is 65% greater³³⁰. The leading agency to implement the Montreal Protocol, SEPA, thus conducted a review of ODS reduction efforts and existing data and revised the approaches and the objectives. The Protocol required Article 5 countries to freeze CFCs and halon consumption and production at average 1995-1997 level by 1999 and 2002. The revised Country Programme identified the ODS production, consumption, production phaseout and consumption phaseout plans for 1999, 2005, 2007, and 2010³³¹. Furthermore, the Country Programme set objectives for those sectors involved, including foam, industrial and commercial refrigeration, electronic appliances, halon, aerosol spray, automobile air-conditioning, and tobacco. After 1997, the ODS reduction efforts were recognised as a great success. China not only achieved more but also reached its objectives ahead of time. The amount of reduction of the consumption and production levels of CFCs and methyl bromide is 15% to 25% greater than that set in the objective. The consumption and production levels of halon and CTC were cut down below the average 1995-1997 levels, four years and three years, respectively, before the timeline of the Protocol³³². Chinese efforts to phase out ODS were recognised by the World Bank and the Ozone Secretariat. The former

³³⁰ Zhao 2005, p.62.

³³¹ “Zhongguo Zhubu Taotai Xiaohao Chouyangceng Wuzhi Guojia fangan’中国逐步淘汰消耗臭氧层物质国家方案[China’s Country Programme for the Phaseout of Ozone Depleting Substances under the Montreal Protocol],” 1999,

<http://www.gdep.gov.cn/hbhzbhcyc/kpzc/201009/P020100928529142327713.pdf>.

³³² Zhao 2005, p.63.

awarded its annual Green Award to Xie Zhenhua, the Environmental Minister, for his leadership in 2003 and the latter recognised China as an “outstanding National Ozone Unit”³³³.

The national plan to implement CBD, China Biodiversity Conservation Action Plan (the “Action Plan” hereafter) was issued and promoted by the State Council in 1994, a procedural implementation of Article 6 of the CBD³³⁴. The Action Plan proposed seven objectives through operating 26 actions and 18 priority projects. The seven objectives were 1) to strengthen fundamental studies on biodiversity and 2) to improve the network of national nature reserves and other protected areas; 3) to protect wild species significant to biodiversity; 4) to protect the genetic resources of crops and domesticated animals; 5) to establish In-situ conservation outside nature reserves; 6) to establish national network of biodiversity information and monitoring; 7) to coordinate biodiversity conservation with sustainable development³³⁵.

The objectives themselves strongly emphasise the procedural dimension of implementation, the most noticeable achievements being at the procedural level and focused on the dimension of enforcement. Cai Lei, a key biodiversity expert and official of Biodiversity Office under SEPA in the field of CBD implementation summarised China’s achievements as the establishment of a cross-ministerial coordination mechanism, strengthening of the legal framework, establishment of biodiversity schedules, and improvement of the

³³³ Ibid.

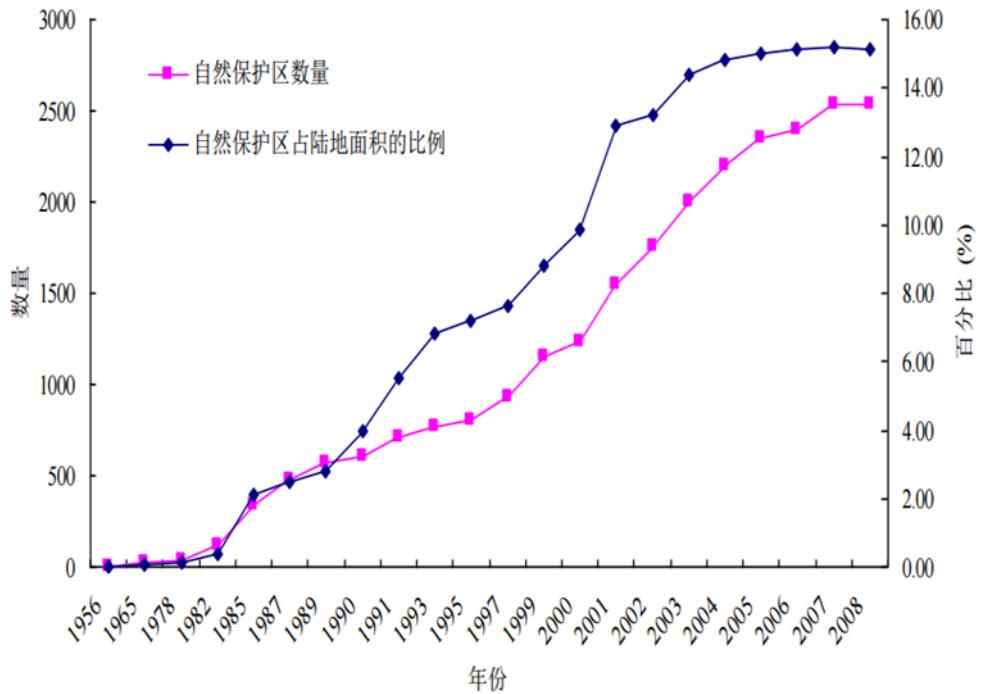
³³⁴ National Environment Protection Agency, “China’s National Report on Implementation of the Convention on Biological Diversity” (Beijing, December 1997), p.3.

³³⁵ Ibid, pp.26-30.

management of nature reserves³³⁶. More than a dozen pieces of biodiversity legislation were promulgated within the decade of implementing the Action Plan. Up until 2006, more than two thousand Nature Reserves have been established, with 1593 designated regions for natural ecosystem protection (forest, grassland, desert, wetland, and marine ecosystems), 669 protected areas for wildlife, and 133 for natural remains. A trend towards an increasing number and percentage of Nature Reserves, respectively represented by the purple and blue line in Figure 4.2, is presented by Xue Dayuan who has participated in the drafting, negotiation, and implementation of the CBD and Chief Scientist for Biodiversity at the Nanjing Institute of Environmental Sciences.

Figure 5-2 Number and Percentage of Nature Reserves in China from 1956-2008

³³⁶ Lei 蕤 Cai 蔡, “Zhongguo Shengwu Duoyangxing Baohu Zhanlue Yu Xingdong jihua’中国生物多样性保护战略与行动计划[The Strategy and Action Plan of China’s Biodiversity Preservation],” October 17, 2007.



Source: <http://aseanbiodiversity.org/caec/downloadables/presentations/the-practice-to-develop.pdf>

However, establishing a great number of Nature Reserves does not automatically address the issue of biodiversity loss. In sharp contrast to the abovementioned achievements, China faces enormous challenges in biodiversity conservation. Scientists from the Chinese Academy of Agricultural Science observe in their research project “The Current Situation and Protection of China’s Biological Genetic Resources” that the decrease of biological species is at an alarming rate and equivalent to the listing of endangered species on a daily basis³³⁷. The “main culprit” to blame is, surprisingly, researchers who carried out scientific projects with their foreign counterparts abroad, speculates Xue Dayuan. Whereas genetic biological resources offer only one vantage point of the poor implementation of CBD, the record of wildlife is another example.

³³⁷ Jian 健 Li 李, “Woguo Wuzhong Liushi Zhuangkuang Shouci Pilu’我国物种流失状况首次披露 [The Situation of China’s Biodiversity Revealed],” *People’s Daily*, January 19, 2005, <http://politics.people.com.cn/GB/1026/3129443.html>.

According to the “Living Planet Report China 2015” by WWF, the population of China’s terrestrial vertebrates dropped by almost 50% in the three decades from 1970 to 2010³³⁸, and the period 1955 to 2010 saw an 83.8% shrinkage in the population of primate species. These two statistics, among others, are evidence to support WWF’s claim that China is “one of the countries with the world’s richest biodiversity, yet it is also one of the countries that has experienced the greatest biodiversity loss”³³⁹. The co-existence of intensive government-led procedural implementation and incapability of preserving biodiversity, the first and foremost objective of CBD, raises the question of how effective enforcement is in substantive terms, and leads to a revision of the 1994 Action Plan.

In 2010, the Ministry of Environmental Protection released the China National Biodiversity Conservation Strategy and Action Plan (2011-2030) (or NBCSAP) to address new challenges, identify updated overall objectives, strategic tasks and priorities for the next two decades³⁴⁰. The launch of NBCSAP acknowledged the fact that the original Action Plan did not fully represent the third objective of CBD: the equitable sharing of its benefits³⁴¹. The way NBCSAP addresses problems and challenges facing biodiversity conservation in China provides the reason for the paradox between a strong enforcement and a

³³⁸ Gaoli Xie et al., “Living Planet China 2015” (WWF China, 2015), http://d2ouvy59p0dg6k.cloudfront.net/downloads/living_planet_report_china_2015_fin.pdf, p.4.

³³⁹ Ibid, p.4.

³⁴⁰ Huanjing baohu bu 环境保护部[Ministry of Environmental Protection], “Guanyu Yinfafa Zhongguo Shengwu Duoyangxing Baohu Zhanlue Xingdong Yu Jihua 2011-2030 de Tongzhi”关于印发《中国生物多样性保护战略与行动计划》(2011-2030 年)的通知[Notice on the Circulation of China National Biodiversity Conservation Strategy and Action Plan (2011-2030)], vol. huanfa[2010], 2010,

http://www.mep.gov.cn/gkml/hbb/bwj/201009/t20100921_194841.htm.

³⁴¹ Dayuan Xue and Lei Cai, “China National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan” (Singapore, January 13, 2008).

disappointing substantive achievement. Primary problems include absence of monitoring and warning system on biodiversity, inadequate investment in biodiversity both in terms of scientific input, capacity building and funding, and overexploitation of biological resources³⁴². Furthermore, Xue Dayuan points out the limitation of the current rate of implementation, I refer to this pattern as enforcement-style and procedure-dominated, due to the absence of local authorities, sector-based participation, and poor compliance³⁴³.

In short, the Montreal Protocol represents a pattern of implementation from both the enforcement and compliance dimensions and achieves both procedural and substantive goals, whereas CBD is characterised by impressive procedural achievement together with a disappointing substantive performance, marked by strong enforcement and weak compliance. For the purposes of comparison, the cut-off point is the year of 2010 to evaluate the Action Plan for CBD and the Country Programme for the Montreal Protocol. It is both a deadline for the ozone-depletion substance phase out plan and a year in which the Ministry of Environmental Protection officially recognised the importance of sectors in the NBCSAP, in which new goals have been set. In addition, the Chinese government began to change its approach, as indicated in the fourth National Report on the Implementation of the CBD in 2008, towards sector-based³⁴⁴. This was to address severe biodiversity losses, replicating the approaches deployed in the Montreal Protocol implementation. The next section will explain the actors involved in each cell of the matrix for both

³⁴² "China National Biodiversity Conservation Strategy and Action Plan (2011-2030)," 2010,8.

³⁴³ Xue 2014.

³⁴⁴ Ministry of Environmental Protection, "China's Fourth National Report on Implementation of the Convention on Biological Diversity," November 2008, 8.

treaties, and explore how interest groups' politics function as an explanation of why certain international treaties are more effectively implemented than others.

5.5 Unravelling implementation patterns

The following analysis presents the implementation patterns of the Montreal Protocol and CBD along the two-dimensional categorisation, one based on agent and the other on the means versus end binary. This addresses the question of how different actors and players facilitate or hinder the procedural and substantive dimensions of international treaty implementation. Data used for analysis are from secondary sources, due to the rich existing literature on individual treaty implementation, such as Zhao Jimin's work on the Montreal Protocol and Xue Dayuan's publications in Chinese on the implementation of CBD. The gap filled in this research is a much overlooked comparative perspective of these two representative cases. Amongst others, national reports to the Ozone Secretariat and the Secretariat of CBD will be used to map out relevant actors and groups. The official websites "Ozone Action in China" and "Biodiversity Clearing-House Mechanism of China"³⁴⁵, respectively for the Montreal Protocol and CBD, together with the journal *Biodiversity Science*, which are fully accessible to the public, offer a significant amount of data in terms of scientific debate, sectorial concerns, and practical issues which are overlooked in the official reports. The following part is divided into two sub-

³⁴⁵ Clearing-House Mechanism, or CHM, is primarily an information service platform to facilitate scientific and technical cooperation, knowledge sharing, information exchange between Parties and partners. It is based on Decision X15 passed in the tenth Conference of Parties 2010. Although this platform is established after 2010, beyond the timeframe of this chapter, it contains useful database and relevant regulations and assessment.

sections: procedural and substantive enforcement stakeholders, and procedural and substantive compliance stakeholders. The enforcement agent refers, albeit not exclusively, to government institutions, and the compliance agent is composed of various non-government actors such as industries, media, and the general public. In each sub-section, the Montreal Protocol and the CBD will be discussed together for the purposes of comparison and contrast. The difference between a procedural and substantive stakeholder is determined by how directly they are related to the end of the treaties, as opposed to the means, or to use a blunter expression, *pro forma*, activities. It is, however, possible for one single agency to carry both procedural and substantive responsibilities. For instance, the Ministry of Environmental Protection manages both substantive and procedural implementation tasks. The substantive task includes stipulation of the ODS catalogue and investigation of the data of production, import, export and consumption submitted by industries, and the procedural responsibilities are reporting to the Multilateral Fund (MLF)³⁴⁶.

5.5.1 Enforcement: procedural versus substantive

The Montreal Protocol enforcers are listed on the official website “Ozone Action in China”. All seventeen government institutions address substantive issues, and three are in charge of procedural implementation, and three agencies: State Environmental Administration, Ministry of Finance, General

³⁴⁶ “‘Xiangguan Bumen zhize’相关部门职责[Responsibilities and Duties of Relevant Departments],” 中国保护臭氧层行动[*Ozone Action in China*], December 27, 2007, http://www.ozone.org.cn/gywm/200712/t20071227_15667.html.

Administration of Customs are both procedural and substantive enforcers. Substantive enforcers work on concrete areas directly addressing the Protocol implementation. For instance, the Ministry of Agriculture attended to the phasing out of methyl bromide, while the Ministry of Public Security took care of the usage and management of halon and researched for a substitute. Enforcement of the Protocol is therefore characterised by a heavy emphasis on the substantive dimension and a clear division of labour among enforcing agents. A full list of enforcement stakeholders for the Montreal Protocol is summarised in the following table.

Table 5-2 Enforcing Agents in the Montreal Protocol

	Agent	Duties
Procedural	Ministry of Environmental Protection	Report project progress to the Secretariat and the Multilateral Fund; Investigate , compile and supervise the data submitted by firms, industries, and Customs;
	Ministry of Finance	Manage Multilateral Fund
	General Customs Administration	Classify the harmonised system code to regulate controlled ODS products flow; Collect data

Substantive	Ministry of Environmental Protection	Oversee the implementation of the Protocol and Country Programme; Formulate the list of controlled ODS; Formulate details of international cooperation;
	Ministry of Foreign Affairs	Manage Ozone-related foreign affairs and legal issues
	Ministry of Finance	Formulate taxation policies
	Ministry of Agriculture	Manage the use of methyl bromide Formulate phaseout plan of methyl bromide
	State Development and Planning Commission	Plan and Control ODS production, import, export, and consumption; Formulate taxation policies
	State Economic and Trade Commission	Plan and Control ODS production, import, export, and consumption; Formulate taxation policies; Phaseout aerosols for medical use;
	Ministry of Science and Technology	Plan, Organise, Implement and Manage ODS substitute technology and demonstration projects for new

		products
	Ministry of Public Security	Phase out halon used in fire extinguisher; Manage halon substitute research, production, usage, and recycle
	Ministry of Information Industry	Phase out production and consumption of ODS in solvent
	General Customs Administration	Formulate import and export policy of ODS-related products
	Ministry of Foreign Trade and Economic Cooperation	Formulate quota system for ODS products; Issue import and export licenses in line with the quota system
	State Domestic Trade Administration	Manage the production and usage of commercial small-sized refrigeration; Coordinate the recycle of CFCs
	State Machinery Industry Administration	Phase out ODS in air-conditioning
	Petroleum and Chemical Industries Administration	Manage non-halon controlled substances
	State Light Industry Administration	Manage household refrigerators, air-conditioner compressor; aerosol products; foam;

	State Tobacco Administration	Manage ODS-related tobacco expansion production
	China Aviation Industry Corporation& China Aeroscience and Technology Corporation	Manage and phase out ODS within the respective company

Source: ozone action in China

http://www.ozone.org.cn/gywm/200712/t20071227_15667.html

The CBD implementation, like the issue of biodiversity, is full of complexity and there is no list of enforcers and their duties in a straightforward way as that in the website of Ozone Action in China. Consequently, I obtain data of CBD enforcers from the first four national reports on the Implementation of CBD submitted to the Secretariat every three or four years from 1997 to 2008, fitting neatly to the selected timeframe. I logged 211 entries of the implementation efforts from relevant government departments and ministries. Each, according to their proximity to the objectives of CBD, was coded by me as either a procedural or substantive effort, which will be elaborated with more concrete examples. These enforcement efforts are presented in different formats of policy, namely, Circular, Decision, Programme, Strategy, Plan/Scheme, Regulation, Recommendation, Notice, Method, Advice, and List/Directory. All “regulations” are marked with substantive efforts, as their enactment directly benefits the conservation of biodiversity, and all “list/directory” are marked with procedural endeavours, as by nature their functions are to provide information and facilitate policy formulation.

However, I am not suggesting that by looking at the nature of the documents, one can dictate whether it is a procedural or substantive action. Notices are mixed with both categories. For instance, the Notice issued by the then State Administration of Industry and Commerce entitling above-county-level departments to impose administrative punishment on those who pose a danger and threat to wild animals is a substantive move, as it casts impact on behaviour down to the local level with the direct purpose of protecting wild animals. In contrast, the Notice issued by the then National Environmental Protection Agency on strengthening environmental protection in the tourism sector does not point directly to biodiversity preservation, and confirms a lack of concrete measures to be taken, and hence is regarded as procedural.

To explain why some notices or other policy types are more substantive than others, it is necessary to examine *who* released them. The following chart offers a snapshot of the distribution of procedural and substantive efforts within individual enforcing agent. As Figure 5-3 clearly demonstrates, the most dominant ministries are Ministry of Forestry (now State Forestry Administration), National Environmental Protection Agency (now Ministry of Environmental Protection), and Ministry of Agriculture. Altogether, the amount of implementation efforts of these three institutions takes up 64% of the total. In contrast with these three dominating enforcers, the other three which are included in Figure 4.1 are absent from the picture of enforcement: Xinhua News Agency, People's Daily, and Guangming Daily. Rather than categorising them as an enforcing agent, the term compliance agent is more appropriate. They are largely absent in the national reports, and the only mention of them is their

involvement in the publicity activity “Tram-century Environmental Trip Around China”, a campaign with educational purposes.

Figure 5-3 Substantive versus Procedural Enforcers CBD

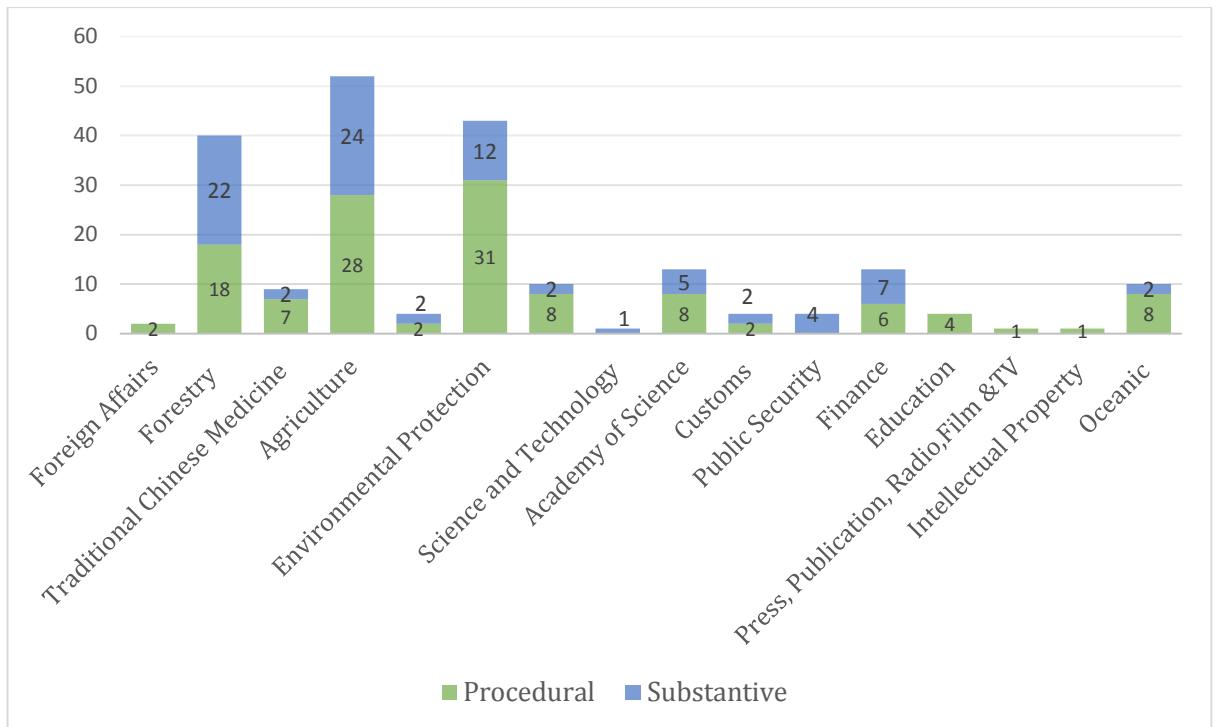


Figure 5-3 also shows that ministries such as Foreign Affairs, Education, Press, Publication, Radio, Film & TV, and Intellectual Property contribute purely in a procedural sense to CBD implementation. The role of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, for instance, is to formulate China Country Study for Biodiversity as well as review and approve a draft national report. For the Ministry of Education, one of its contributions is to establish a National Base for Science and Technology Education of Youth. On the other hand, the Ministry of Science and Technology and Ministry of Public Security are 100% substantive enforcers, even based on a small number of efforts. The Ministry of Public Security promulgated two circulars, one regulation and one action plan. Both of these circulars address the issue of illegal hunting and the sale of terrestrial

wild animals, one on “Adapting to the Situation to Better Prohibit Illegal Hunting and Sale of Terrestrial Wild Animals” and the other entitled “Urgent Circular on Stern Blow Policy on Actions of Illegal Hunting, Operation and Use of Wild Aquatic Animals” issued in 2003. The regulation is about jurisdiction in regards to criminal cases of terrestrial wild animals and case filing. The plan, in which both Ministry of Public Security and Science and Technology were involved in, together with other ministries, is the China Action Plan for Biodiversity Conservation. This functions as a roadmap for China as a country to fulfil the objectives listed in the Convention, and hence is regarded as a substantive approach to implementation.

The functions of ministries of Forestry, Agriculture and Environmental Protection, on the other hand, are more complicated than those mentioned above. The former two strike a balance between substantive and procedural actions, and the latter is more skewed towards the procedural dimension. One explanation for the procedural pattern of MEP is its task of collecting information and establishing a database to inform biodiversity-related policy formulation. For instance, MEP established a National Committee for Assessing Nature Reserves in 1992, which led to the “Notice on Strengthening the Ecological Management of Natural Resources Exploitation Activities” in 1994, a further notice on “Strengthening Management of Nature Reserves” three years later, and finally in 2004 a “Circular on Issues Related to Strengthening the Management of Nature Reserves”. With the support of UNEP, the then State Environmental Protection Administration set up a United Beijing Centre for Networking of Environmental Protection. One highlight epitomising the

procedural task of MEP was to organise activities to celebrate the International Day for Biodiversity on May 22nd as enshrined in the Convention itself.

A final point to highlight from Figure 5-3 is the level of overlapping responsibilities shared by ministries, which is different from the Montreal Protocol implementation pattern, marked as it is by a clear division of labour. The issues of wild animals and plant, alien species and nature reserves, for instance, fall under the umbrella of the ministries of Forestry, Agriculture, and Environmental Protection. In fact, all three carried out the “Decision of Commending the National Advanced Institutions and Advanced Individuals for the Management of Nature Reserves” as an incentive to improve the management of nature reserves. As far as alien species are concerned, the Ministry of Forestry issued a circular calling for an improvement of the guarding and management of harmful alien species in 2002. A follow-up circular was introduced by the Ministry of Agriculture in 2003 on conducting pilot action of eliminating poison and removing the harm caused by invasive alien species and consequently launched a national campaign on Eliminating Invasive Alien Species in 100 Counties of Ten Provinces that same year. The Ministry of Environmental Protection also marked out its territory by releasing a circular on Strengthening the Prevention and Control of Invasive Alien Species of China.

Table 5-2 and Figure 5-3 together present the implementation patterns, from the aspect of enforcement along the spectrum of procedural versus substantive, of the Montreal Protocol and CBD: the former featured by a substantive focus and the latter dominated by procedural efforts. There are several possible explanations for the differences in enforcement pattern. The

first lies in the way that objectives were formulated in the Country Programme for the Montreal Protocol and the Action Plan of CBD, specifying how the international conventions will be localised and their national priorities in line with national conditions. Among the seven objectives listed in the Action Plan of CBD, three are entirely oriented towards obtaining information, the very first objective being to improve studies on biodiversity, matched with two actions of assessments of the economic value of biodiversity and establishment of a biological geographical zoning system. The other objective is intimately associated with procedural endeavour, and addresses the issue of wild species protection, and calls for seven concrete procedural actions from an assessment of the situation of wildlife to the launch of research to support the implementation. In comparison, the Country Programme is more straightforward, and in line with the expectation of the Protocol on Article 5 countries and lists a specific number of ODS to be either phased out or frozen, the timeline of reaching these targets and the main technologies of substitutes for each of the nine industries involved in ODS production and consumption.

The motivation of the Chinese government to be crystal clear about how the Protocol's target will be met derives from the desire to obtain funding from the MLF, which is the second difference between Montreal Protocol and CBD; that is to say, the availability of an international funding body designed to implement a given international treaty. The creation of the MLF in 1991 is regarded as an environmental diplomatic achievement of the Chinese government to represent the interests of developing countries and a triumph in negotiations, as the delegates from China and India were able to persuade the World Bank to set up a multilateral fund for Article 5 countries, based on the

principle of additionality³⁴⁷. Under the auspices of the MLF, the Chinese government has obtained US\$80 million to conduct ODS phaseout activities in eighteen sectors, leading to a total phaseout of 100,000 tonnes of ODS production and 110,000 tonnes of ODS consumption³⁴⁸. On the contrary, no special fund was set up to implement the single Convention of Biodiversity Conservation and the financial mechanism stirred bigger controversy in the CBD negotiation than the creation of the MLF. Article 21 of the CBD reconciles the demand from the developing countries for funding and technology transfer with the concerns from industrialised countries like the United Kingdom, about the ramifications of the financial mechanism. As a result, in 1991, the Global Environmental Facility (GEF) was set up as a pilot programme and the Convention's interim financial mechanism which disburses developing countries as to defray the costs of implementation efforts³⁴⁹.

Whereas the two reasons: objectives and international funding, explain the differences of implementation patterns of these two treaties, they do not adequately account for the specific pattern of each, namely, procedural versus substantive. The enforcement versus compliance dimension offers a better explanation: the pairing of enforcement and compliance agents explains why one treaty is more substantively implemented than the other. As shown in Figure 5-3, an intuitive observation is that when the enforcers perform

³⁴⁷ Larry Stammer, "Chinese Delegates to Seek Beijing's Approval for Pact to Protect Ozone," *Los Angeles Times*, June 29, 1990, sec. A8, http://articles.latimes.com/1990-06-29/news/mn-656_1_ozone-layer and Oksenberg and Economy 1998.

³⁴⁸ Environmental Convention Implementation Technical Center, "Vienna Convention and Montreal Protocol," *Foreign Economic Cooperation Office, MEP*, accessed February 26, 2016, http://www.mepfeco.org.cn/ywly/gjly/wyn_mtle/.

³⁴⁹ Kal Raustiala, "Domestic Institutions and International Regulatory Cooperation: Comparative Responses to the Convention on Biological Diversity," *World Politics* 49, no. 4 (1997): pp.482-509.

procedurally, the implementation pattern tends to be procedural. However, a subtler message from the very same figure is why despite the fact that substantive efforts occupy one third of the overall CBD enforcement efforts, the overall pattern is procedural? To address this question, the other side of the story, which is the compliance side, must be unravelled.

5.5.2 Compliance: procedural versus substantive

The key difference between the compliance side of these two treaties is the so-called sector approach. This allocates funding from international organisations to designated sectors, instead of to individual projects, or a project-by-project approach. The sector-approach is used in the compliance of the Montreal Protocol from 1997 and functions like a silver bullet leading to China's accelerating substantive achievements in reducing the production and consumption of ODS³⁵⁰. Based on the cost-effectiveness principle, researchers from Peking University devised a mechanism for combining policy measures and economic incentives, and cut the red tape for the MLF Executive Committee by allowing it to approve a phaseout plan for an entire sector. This considers the total cost, with the purpose of both attracting MLF funding and mobilising relevant sectors in a country as big as China. The research team was led by Tang Xiaoyan, chief environmental scientist, who put the issue of ozone depletion on the political agenda. She attracted the attention of the State Science and Technology Commission, and played an indispensable role in the decision to accede, negotiate, and implement the Protocol. The advantage of a sector

³⁵⁰ Zhao 2005, p.66.

approach in comparison to project-by-project one is a lowered cost of implementation for the funding body. Estimation from the World Bank suggests that the sector approach saved almost a third of the overall cost of the phaseout³⁵¹.

Fourteen sectors have been identified as complying agents, with each sector guided by a sector-specific phaseout plan: halon, CFC production, foam, mobile air conditioning, tobacco, carbon tetrachloride (CTC) production, household refrigeration, industrial and commercial refrigeration, aerosol sprays, methyl bromide, solvent, TCA production, and refrigeration maintenance. In order to ensure that international funding is used effectively, sectors are matched with either government institutions or a combination of government agencies and specific associations to monitor the progress of phaseout: to name but three examples, the halon sector is paired with Ministry of Public Security; the working group to monitor CFCs production is composed of officials from the State Environmental Protection Agency (SEPB) and the former State Petroleum and Chemical Industry Administration; and sectors involving the participation of associations are sector monitored by SEPB and the China Plastics Processing Industry Association, and household refrigeration enforced by the special working group composed of experts from SEPB and China Household Electronical Appliances Association. In addition to sectors, the implementation pinpointed the involved enterprises. The size of the foam sector is the largest, with over three hundred enterprises participating in the phase out of CFCs,

³⁵¹ Yan Bo 薄, “Huanjing zhishi yu duobian waijiao”环境知识与多边环境外交[Environmental knowledge and multilateral environmental diplomacy],” *Fudan guoji guanxi pinglun* 复旦国际关系评论[Fudan International Studies Review], 2006, p.283.

whereas the smallest sector is that of methyl bromide production, with three enterprises.

The first sector to experiment with the “sector approach” was that of halon, a substance widely used in the firefighting industry, commonly in two forms: halon 1211 used in hand-held extinguishers, and halon 1301 found in built-in systems. By 1997, over ninety enterprises produced halon extinguishers and extinguishing systems. Under the project-by-project approach, the firefighting industry obtained USD 4.677 million from the MLF, yet the overall sectoral phaseout lagged, largely due to the large number and mixed type of enterprises. Consequently, as early as 1995 the overall sectoral phaseout strategy was deliberated on and formulated. The whole halon sector was granted USD 62 million from the MLF in November 1997, a benchmark not only for China, but also for the world, as the first ODS sectoral phaseout plan. Within less than two years, the halon sector achieved a net reduction of 6,000 tonnes of halon 1211, and met the Protocol’s goal of freezing the production and consumption of halon³⁵². Furthermore, the sector-approach is a cost-effective measure to reduce halons as it saved, for the MLF, between a quarter to a third of the cost of implementing halon projects, compared to the project-by-project approach³⁵³. Because of the success of the halon sector, seven other sectors emulated this approach to effectively meet the substantive objective of the Protocol.

Compared to the sector-approach compliance pattern, CBD compliance is characterised by the loose involvement of a plurality of actors, which I teased

³⁵² Zhao 2005, p.69.

³⁵³ Ibid.

out from the four national reports. In the first national report (1997), five sectors were pinpointed as being relevant to biodiversity conservation: agricultural, pharmaceutical, forestry, breeding of wild animals, and tourism³⁵⁴. The second national report (2001) was submitted in the form of a questionnaire, and although it was claimed that biodiversity was distributed to major sectors, only two sectors appeared in the report: biotechnology and the agricultural industry³⁵⁵. More encouragement of private sectors' participation in the CBD implementation is found in the third national report (2005) which highlighted one major challenge of complying with CBD as insufficient "mainstreaming" and "integration" of biodiversity issues into other sectors, and expanded the reach of CBD. The urban construction industry is associated with biodiversity conservation through the Tenth Five Year Plan, which established an expectation of the urban per capita public green belt to eight square meters and an 89000 square kilometres' occupation of national key scenic points³⁵⁶.

The industry of Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) is another one that is directly connected to biodiversity conservation, due to the fact that its ingredient comes from natural wild herbal resources and even endangered animals, using around 1000 plant and 36 animal species, among them the tigers, rhinoceroses and sea horses, all categorised as endangered animals³⁵⁷. Among

³⁵⁴ National Environment Protection Agency, "China's National Report on Implementation of the Convention on Biological Diversity" (Beijing, December 1997).

³⁵⁵ State Environmental Protection Administration of China, "China's Second National Report on Implementation of the Convention on Biological Diversity" (Beijing, 2001).

³⁵⁶ State Environmental Protection Administration of China, "China's Third National Report on Implementation of the Convention on Biological Diversity" (Beijing, December 15, 2005).

³⁵⁷ "Traditional Chinese Medicine and Endangered Animals - Advocacy for Animals," accessed June 27, 2016, <http://advocacy.britannica.com/blog/advocacy/2007/10/traditional-chinese-medicine-and-endangered-animals/>.

the medicinal animals and plants, 80% are wildlife³⁵⁸. To tackle the negative impact of traditional medicine on biodiversity, a Development Outline on Modernization of Traditional Chinese Medicine was promulgated in 2002 with the task of cultivating new varieties of traditional Chinese medicine, as well as working on the substitutes of rare and endangered medicinal resources. Yet the key issues of Chinese medicine in the report are intellectual property rights, a concern dating back to 1993 when China passed the patent law on traditional medicine usage and pharmaceutical products in response to bio-piracy, and as an effort endorsed by the government to “protect Chinese culture and knowledge”, and meanwhile “enter into international trade agreements”³⁵⁹. In other words, traditional medicine is not only framed as a biodiversity-related issue, but also as an epitome of traditional knowledge. The emphasis on prospective knowledge also dovetails with the procedural approach to compliance in regards to traditional Chinese medicine, as in the third national report, studies of Chinese medicine standards and compilations of traditional medicine information used in ethnic minorities occupy a large percentage of the efforts. To a large extent, the negative impact of traditional medicine was neutralised or offset by its value as traditional knowledge. Efforts to justify traditional medicine go as far as to highlight the strengthened international cooperation between China and over fifty countries such as US, Canada, France. The upshot is a justification of the government’s support of the powerful pharmaceutical enterprises to conduct technological cooperation with foreign

³⁵⁸ Xiaoqian Li, Jiaona Wang, and Yonghua Su, “Does the Utilization of Traditional Chinese Herbs Threaten the Biodiversity?,” *Journal of Chinese Integrative Medicine* 5, no. 4 (2007): pp.363–67.

³⁵⁹ Helmut K. Anheier and Yudhishthir Raj Isar, *Cultures and Globalization: Conflicts and Tensions* (SAGE, 2007), p.420.

counterparts largely because the industrial chain of planting and breeding medicinal biological resources was immature.

The third national report also discusses the biotechnological industry strategy and has encouraged R&D cooperation between Chinese biotechnological firms and their foreign counterpart to facilitate technology transfer and upgrade.

Before China submitted its fourth national report in 2008, the Eighth Conference of Parties was held in 2006 in the Brazilian city of Curitiba. In COP8, private-sector engagement is for the first time included in the single Decision VIII/17³⁶⁰. The Decision stressed that the private sector has been the least engaged, yet has generated the biggest impacts on biodiversity, and the biodiversity-relevant expertise and technological resources could positively facilitate the compliance of the Convention, rendering public-private partnership a desirable option³⁶¹. The fourth national report from China directly reflected the decision of COP8, and dedicates a whole section to the private sector. It sets out two priorities: confirmation and publicity of the commercial benefits of biodiversity, and the best practice of communication³⁶². The report systematically outlines major sectors: agriculture, forestry, urban and rural development, marine, water resources, education, science and technology, poverty alleviation and development, and others including land and resources management, commerce, customs, traditional Chinese medicine management sector, and intellectual property management.

³⁶⁰ Aihua Wang, Jianyong Wu, and Jixin Liu, "Business and Biodiversity: A Review of the Negotiation Progress of a New Issue under the Convention on Biological Diversity," *Biodiversity Science* 23, no. 5 (2015): pp.689–94.

³⁶¹ UNEP, "COP 8 Decision VIII/17 Private-Sector Engagement," *Convention on Biological Diversity*, March 20, 2006, <https://www.cbd.int/decision/cop/default.shtml?id=11031>.

³⁶² Wang, Wu and Liu 2015.

Whereas this gesture is laudable, the way it perceives engaging private sectors does not fit directly with the public-private partnership. One experience of the public-private partnership is strict law enforcement, supported by the fact that over 98% of administration violations cases in the forestry sector from 2001 to 2007 were investigated and prosecuted and the Customs executed 773 persons involved in the smuggling of, altogether, 478 rare animals and products, 59 rare plants and products. While there are “stick” policies on the one hand, there are also “carrot” policies such as the campaign for “national garden cities” led by the Ministry of Housing and Urban-Rural Development³⁶³. The “carrot and stick” policy, however, overlooks the intrinsic desire of sectors and industries to maximise their commercial profits, and continuing the command-style compliance is simply not effective.

5.5.3 Matching compliance and enforcement

Comparing the compliance pattern of the Protocol and the Convention as substantive and procedural, it is not difficult to observe that the compliance stakeholder involved in the Protocol achieved both procedural and substantive objectives, whereas those in the Convention have rarely done so. Procedurally, there is a lack of information about the involved industries and the resources they have, and even the commercial benefits associated with biodiversity are not present. Poor procedural compliance partly explains the equally poor substantive compliance, because of lack of motivation and concrete interests to

³⁶³ China’s Fourth National Report on Implementation of the Convention on Biological Diversity.

fulfil the goal of the Convention. In addition, the degree of pairing or partnership between enforcement and compliance agents, namely government institutions and sectors, simply augments the contrast between procedural and substantive efforts. The following table 5-3 demonstrates the linkage between enforcement and compliance agents in implementing these two treaties.

The government-sector interaction pattern in the implementation of the Montreal Protocol is best summarised as a strong leadership of SEPB and a clear division of labour among various relevant ministries, in the format of 1:1 or 2:1 cooperation. The only exception is the production of methyl bromide, an ozone-depletion substance extensively used as a pesticide and effective soil sterilant, and this sector is monitored by five government institutions. In comparison, the very idea of “sector” used in CBD is very lax, and unlike the detailed knowledge of sectoral information indicated in the Montreal Protocol, the “sectors” mentioned in the CBD national reports are self-evident.

The relationship between enforcement and the sectors is more supportive than regulative. For instance, the biotechnology industry receives generous backing from the government: the State Economic Commission pinpointed biotechnology studies as a key area for support from 1996 to 2000; the State Science and Technology Commission outlined major technologies to be developed in conservation and biotechnology; the State Patent Administration grants biotechnology patent protection; the Chinese Academy of Science is at the forefront of biotechnology research, together with the China National Centre for Biotechnology Development under the Ministry of Science and Technology. What is missing in the national report is any mention of investment in the biotechnology industry. For five consecutive years, from 1999, the Chinese

government allocated RMB2.5 billion and attracted RMB24 billion social capital to 287 projects with the purpose of industrialising biotechnology³⁶⁴.

Furthermore, while the fourth national report highlights the importance of the sectoral approach, the content does not indicate how enterprises and industries can be encouraged to comply, but still adopts an enforcement-focused approach. One representative example is the marine sector, and concrete measures to integrate biodiversity into marine strategies are “strengthening the establishment and management of marine protected areas”, “energetically protecting the environment of islands and islets”, “conducting marine ecological surveys”, “actively carrying out marine ecological restoration”, and “strengthening examination and approval of use of sea areas and assessment of the environmental impacts of marine projects”³⁶⁵.

The sole actor in the marine sector, unsurprisingly, is the State Oceanic Administration, once again an enforcement agent performing more like a compliance agent. Fisheries are not even included in the marine sector, not to mention the vast number of fishermen. To a large degree, the “sectors” used in the Montreal Protocol refer to companies and industries, or non-state actors, whereas the sectors perceived in the CBD are not significantly different from the enforcement actors.

³⁶⁴ Zhang 张 and Zhang 张, “Woguo shengwu jishu chanye fazhan yu chanye zhengce luxiantu gouxiang’我国生物技术产业发展与产业政策路线图构想[The development and policy roadmap of the biotechnology industry in China].”

³⁶⁵ China’s Fourth CBD national report, pp.37-38.

Table 5-3 Matching Enforcement and Compliance Stakeholders: the Montreal Protocol and CBD

The Montreal Protocol		Convention on Biological Diversity	
Ministry of Public Security	Halon Sector	State Administration of Traditional Chinese Medicine & State Intellectual Property Office	Traditional Chinese Medicine Industry
SEPB & State Petroleum and Chemical Industry Administration	CFCs Sector	State Forestry Administration (SFA)	Forestry Sector
SEPB& China Plastics Processing Industry Association	Foam sector	State Tourism Administration SEPB& SFA & Ministry of Commerce & Finance	Tourism Sector
SEPB& State Administration of Machinery Industry	Mobile Air Conditioning Sector	State Economic Commission & State Science and Technology Commission & State Patent Administration & Chinese Academy of Science; Ministry of Agriculture	Biotechnology Industry
SEPB& State Tobacco Monopoly Administration	Tobacco Sector	Ministry of Agriculture	Agricultural Sector

SEPB	CTC Sector (production)	Ministry of Urban and Rural Housing and Development	Urban and Rural Development Sector
SEPB & China Household Electronical Appliances Association	Household Refrigeration Sector	Other mentioned but not specified sectors: Marine Biodiversity, Water Resources, Education, Science and Technology, Poverty Alleviation and Development, Land and Resources Management, Commerce, Customs, Intellectual Property Management, breeding of wild animals	
SEPB	Industrial and Commercial Refrigeration		
SEPB& State Food and Drugs Administration	Aerosol Spray Sector		
SEPB& Ministry of Agriculture& State Tobacco Monopoly Administration & State Administration of Grain & General Administration of Quality Supervision, Inspection and Quarantine & General Administration of Customs & Ministry of Commerce	Methyl Bromide Sector		
SEPB & Ministry of Information Industry	Solvent Sector		
SEPB & China National Chemical Construction Corporation	TCA Production Sector		
SEPB & Association of	Refrigeration		

Automobile Manufacturers	Maintenance Sector	
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It is worth noting that China is not the only country to fail to meet CBD objectives. In fact, none of the Parties did so. Hence the 2010 Aichi target was introduced, bearing in mind the biggest problem of the previous efforts: that biodiversity is not mainstreamed in each country's economic-socio-political developments. The expectation of the Convention derives largely from the high-profile commitments the Chinese government made back in 1992, when the then premier signed it. The assumption is that authoritarian regimes could achieve better in environmental governance because of their capability to concentrate resources for ambitious projects and causes (*jizhong liliang ban dashi* 集中力量办大事). However, a comparison of the implementation pattern of the Protocol and the Convention challenges the assumption and optimistic judgment, and the following analysis linking the implementation pattern back to the strategic concept of environmental diplomacy will demonstrate that domestic groups have acted as a constraint to the capability of the Chinese government to fulfil the objectives, and furthermore, to the very function of environmental diplomacy as a strategic concept.

5.6 Environmental diplomacy and treaty implementation: the relationship between government and industry

Considering enforcement versus compliance stakeholders in this way merely highlights the significance of both the government and (often neglected)

industries and sectors in fulfilling China's international commitment. It addresses the first question of why one treaty is more effectively implemented than another by arguing that the participation of industries and sectors as compliance stakeholders is a key explanatory factor to explain the different outcomes of the compared treaties. However, to answer the second question of why the absence of a strategic concept is correlated with effective treaty implementation, whereas the presence of it is associated with partially failed implementation, a more fundamental needs to be asked, namely whether the strategic concept of environmental diplomacy matters at all.

This challenging question requires a closer look at the interplay between the government and specific industries in the two agreements. In the Montreal Protocol case, I choose the refrigeration sector which started ODS-reduction activities even before the Chinese government ratified the Protocol. Suffice it to say that it is in the interests of the refrigeration sector to comply with the Protocol. As far as the CBD is concerned, the industry of Traditional Chinese Medicine has been selected as the primary concern because this industry is framed as an intellectual property rights issue, which is more related to commercial interests than biodiversity conservation. That is to say, the situation of Traditional Chinese Medicine represents a typical scenario faced by other sectors in CBD compliance: lack of commercial interest and motivation.

The refrigeration sector's interests in the Montreal Protocol derive primarily from market demand. Refrigerator manufacturers considered that if the Montreal Protocol had not been ratified, they would not have been able to

export their products to countries that were Parties to the Protocol³⁶⁶. Access to the European market motivates Chinese refrigerator manufacturers to adopt non-CFC technology and conduct reduced-CFC technologies. Before China ratified the Protocol, Chinese household refrigerator exports dropped by 58%³⁶⁷, as European consumers preferred CFC-free refrigerators with environmental labels. In order to compete in the European market, leading refrigerator manufacturers asked the National Environmental Protection Agency to promulgate an environmental labelling programme. The connection between reduced-CFC technology and profits from the experiences of exporting to the European market *also* generate domestic implication, or the so-called California effect: exporters from low-standard countries have to adopt higher and more stringent environmental standards in order to access higher standard markets. These exporters have the potential to pressure the government for stronger regulation to ensure that they remain competitive in domestic trade³⁶⁸.

Directly benefiting from the cleaner technology of non-CFC are enterprises such as Xinfei Refrigerator Company. Xinfei, with the capital invested by Hong Leong Asia Limited from Singapore, started investing in and promoting “green non-CFC” refrigerator in China in 1996 and consequently boosted the sales from 0.8 to 1.2 million units, joining the ranking of top three refrigerator brands³⁶⁹. In 2002, the domestic market share of Xinfai was as high as 18.9%. The anxiety of losing to domestic competitors like Xinfai and multinational corporations entering China epitomises the attitude of the

³⁶⁶ Zhao and Ortolano, “Implementing the Montreal Protocol in China: Use of Cleaner Technology in Two Industrial Sectors.”

³⁶⁷ French 1997, p.165. Cited by Zhao and Orlando, pp.504.

³⁶⁸ Stalley 2010, p.47.

³⁶⁹ Chen 陈 and Zhang 张 Xin 鑫, *Tongxing guanggaojie de 9ben huzhao* 通行广告界的 9 本护照 [Nine tips for advertising] (Beijing: Tsinghua University Press, 2006), pp.171-172.

refrigerator manufacturers and motivates, with over two thirds of them phraseology switching to or in the process of change to non-CFC technologies by the end of 1997³⁷⁰. The refrigeration sector benefited from the MLF funding and joint venture to update their technology and accelerate industrial upgrade. All the enterprises granted with MFL funding completed their tasks and phased out a total of over 8500 tonnes of CFCs³⁷¹.

The refrigeration sector example thus suggests that ODS reduction was a major issue in the industry and hence the compliance stakeholders were motivated to implement the Protocol. The Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) sector paints a different picture, however. Although TCM was listed in the CBD national reports as an important sector, the issue of biodiversity was not regarded as critical, and was even seen as an obstacle to the export of the industry. Even the attitudes of the Chinese government institutions to the TCM industry have moved from regulative to protective. This can be seen from national reports regarding this sector. The first report in 1997 listed the sector policy of traditional medicine (1991-2000) and highlighted equal importance between conservation and protection, and strictly constrained any behaviour which damage wild herbal resources. The regulative tone is replaced by a supportive one in the third report as it links TCM closely with intellectual property rights protection. The 2002 “Development Outline on Modernization of Traditional Chinese Medicine” (2002-2010) confirms TCM as being an important strategic industry (*zhongda zhanlue chanye* 重大战略产业)³⁷² and

³⁷⁰ Zhao and Ortolano, p.515.

³⁷¹ “‘Xiangmu yilan’项目一览[An Overview of Projects]” (Ozone Action in China), accessed February 20, 2016, <http://www.ozone.org.cn/hytt/jyzlh/>.

³⁷² “*Zhongyao Xiandaihua Fazhan gangyao*” 中药现代化发展纲要 [*Outline of the Modernisation of Chinese Medicine*], 2002.

aims to expand China's meagre share in the international medicinal market. According to the TCM industry report in 2005, the value of "foreign Chinese medicine" (*yang zhongyao* 洋中药) imported to China is over US\$2.6 billion and its market share in China was more than a quarter in the year of 2003³⁷³. As far as exports are concerned, China's TCM industry performed even worse, on the verge of embarrassment in the eyes of some experts. According to Xue Dayuan and Cailei, Japanese Chinese medicine products occupied 80% of the global Chinese medicine market, and Koreans 10%. As "the Chinese medicine super power" (*zhongyao daguo* 中药大国), China only shared around five percent of the market, rendering "protecting traditional knowledge" and "defending sovereignty" pressing tasks³⁷⁴.

The "embarrassing" situation by which China did not dominate the international Traditional Chinese Medicine market results largely from a lack of awareness of intellectual property rights (IPRs) within the industry. In the 2004 TCM industry report, a section on IPRs was singled out. One frequently cited example to indicate the embarrassing situation of the TCM industry was the Kyushin (heart tonic pills) manufactured by Kyushin Pharmaceutical CO.Ltd. This Japanese company emulated the Chinese medicine *Liushen wan* 六神丸 (literally translated as "pills made from six magical ingredients") used as a cardiac stimulant with ingredients of musk, toad venom, borneo camphor, bezoar, pearl, realgar, and camphor. The irony is that the "knockoff" pills made

³⁷³ China Economic Information Network, "'Zhongguo Zhongyao Hangye Fenxi baogao'中国中药行业分析报告[Analysis and Report of Chinese Traditional Medicine Sector]," February 2006, <http://www1.cei.gov.cn/doc/hyc8110/2006021329521.pdf>, 26.

³⁷⁴ Dayuan 达元 Xue 薛 and Lei 蕤 Cai 蔡, "'Shengwu duoyangxing gongyue xin redian: chuantong zhishibaohu' 《生物多样性公约》新热点:传统知识保护[New hot issue in CBD: protection of traditional knowledge]," 环境保护[Environmental protection], no. 24 (2006): p.74.

in Japan are sold popularly in the global market and their sales per year are equal to the overall annual export of Chinese Traditional Medicine from China³⁷⁵. In sharp contrast to Japanese pharmaceutical companies' awareness of intellectual property rights is the lack of it within Chinese enterprises. One in every four Chinese pharmaceutical enterprises has registered trademarks and pharmaceutical patents of foreign enterprises in China, occupying over 80% of overall medicinal high-technology fields.

The issue of biodiversity conservation is much more marginalised in the agenda of the TCM industry, compared with the importance of clean technology (reduced-CFC and non-CFC technology) to the refrigeration section. Perhaps no one has articulated the direct opposition between biodiversity conservation and TCM industry louder than Zhang Gongyao, who advocated abolition of Traditional Chinese Medicine in the name of Biodiversity Conservation in his controversial article “Farewell to Traditional Chinese Medicine and Remedies”³⁷⁶, stirring a heated discussion regarding the future of the TCM industry. Zhang's argument was quickly refuted by Zhang Qi, an environmentalist who had studied abroad³⁷⁷, and those who promoted the abolition of Chinese medicine were labelled by Zhang Qi as “national nihilists”³⁷⁸. Even seven years after Zhang Gongyao's article was published,

³⁷⁵ China Economic Information Network, “‘Zhongguo Zhongyao Hangye Fenxi baogao’中国中药行业分析报告[Analysis and Report of Chinese Traditional Medicine Sector],” May 2004, <http://www1.cei.gov.cn/doc/hyc8110/2004053000941.pdf>, p.15.

³⁷⁶ Gongyao 功耀 Zhang 张, “Gaobie Zhongyi zhongyao’告别中医中药[Farewell to Traditional Chinese Medicine and Remedies]” 2006, <http://www.xys.org/xys/ebooks/others/science/dajia7/zhongyi37.txt>.

³⁷⁷ Qi 琦 Zhang 章, “Zhongguo Zhongyi Xianzhuang Yu Huohou Chengyin fenxi’中国中医药现状与落后成因分析[The Current Situation and Reasons of Backwardness of Chinese Traditional Medicine],” 人民政协报[The CPPCC News], October 10, 2006, <http://finance.people.com.cn/GB/67543/4900445.html>.

³⁷⁸ Ibid.

scholars continue to harp on about the fallacies, to be precise, 120 fallacies, in his article, and argue that the TCM's impact on biodiversity is trivial, and biodiversity should not be an excuse for its advocates³⁷⁹. What the continued quarrel suggests is that the very issue of biodiversity is frail when faced by a weak industry, and even more so when confronted by nationalistic appeals for protection.

5.7 Conclusion

This chapter has shown that both the government and industries play an important role in the international environmental treaty implementation to the extent that institutional limitations are offset by different patterns of implementation and compliance. The procedural implementation, as shown in the case of CBD, epitomises the weakness of institutions to incorporate and aggregate domestic preferences, as recognised in the constructivist utilitarianism framework. To nuance the assessment of the implementation of the Montreal Protocol and the Convention on Biological Diversity, I would rather replace the success versus failure dimension with one of substantive versus procedural success, as this more accurately captures the dimension within which the achievements are made and factors in the different nature of the two issues under discussion: ozone layer protection and biodiversity conservation. I argue that the Protocol is implemented both procedurally and

³⁷⁹ Feng 锋 Yan 颜 and Lijie 丽婕 Xu 徐, “Zhang Gongyao gaobie zhongyi zhongyao wen miuwu 120 ze’张功耀‘告别中医中药’文谬误 120 则[120 Mistakes of ‘Farewell to Traditional Chinese Medicine’ article],” *北京科技大学学报* [Journal of Beijing University of Science and Technology], no. 04 (2013): pp.54–68.

substantively, whereas the CBD is only implemented procedurally. To explain the difference in implementation patterns, I argue that the degree of commercial interest attached to the environmental treaty is related to the procedural versus substantive outcome. To be specific, treaties with direct commercial interests brought to sectors are more likely to be implemented both substantively and procedurally, while those without commercial interests or where this is a conflict of interests are at best implemented procedurally.

The procedural pattern of treaty implementation echoes what Zhou *et al* called “symbolic compliance” which is “decoupled from the process of actually meeting targets”. This behavioural pattern of implementation derives from “the logic of meeting targets” which “induces coping behaviours such as selective implementation... and the pursuit of short-run gains at the expense of long-term benefits”³⁸⁰. The model Zhou *et al* used is based on the study of intermediate-level bureaus which “play the double role of enforcing policy mandates given by higher authorities and administering incentives to their subordinates in the policy implementation process”³⁸¹. This characteristic is also shared within ministries which are sandwiched between the higher authority and their subordinate. Indeed, the findings in this chapter resonate their model of muddling through, “characterized by a reactive response to multiple pressures, constant readjustments and a focus on short-term gains”³⁸².

If institutions are a medium for bureaucrats to “muddle through”, this lead to the question of what mechanism incorporates domestic interests and prioritises one interest at the expense of another. The strategic usage of

³⁸⁰ Zhou *et al* 2013, p.125.

³⁸¹ Ibid, p.145.

³⁸² Ibid, p.120.

environmental diplomacy and the role of nationalism sheds some light on this enquiry. It is ironic and empirically intriguing that the Montreal Protocol negotiated before the introduction of environmental diplomacy is better implemented than the Convention signed at the height of the environmental diplomacy discourse. The expectation that a treaty will be better implemented when a strategic concept is in place is built upon a misunderstanding that environmental diplomacy means a bigger commitment to environmental protection. It is precisely this contradiction that highlights that environmental diplomacy is a diplomatic tool which uses environmental issues to achieve foreign policy goals, and more specifically, allows tough internationalists to pursue the dual objectives of interacting with the international community and making sure that international cooperation is in China's favour. At this point, the categorisation of procedural versus substantive implementation bears particular relevance because the procedural element demonstrates the willingness of the Chinese government to cooperate and fulfil its commitments, and the substantive dimension further tests the extent to which this demonstration is translated into actions devoted to the objectives and norms set in the international treaty and to power to offset pressure from domestic industries.

The mechanism that incorporates and aggregates the preferences of domestic interest groups is the identification of specific industries with nationalism. The key concern for industries involved in the treaties is to not only become a competitive sector but also one which serves the vaguely defined national strategy. What the comparative case studies suggest is that for the Montreal Protocol, the domestic sectors, particularly the refrigeration industry,

called for accession and ratification of the Protocol to ensure their export competitiveness in the European market, whereas the Traditional Chinese Medicine Industry, even though it did not create noise itself, was protected under the traditional knowledge frame and intellectual property rights, and listed as a strategic industry supported by the government. In other words, CBD raises more awareness of IPRs than biodiversity in the Traditional Chinese Medicine sector. Biodiversity being marginalised is not peculiar to the situation of China, and is actually identified as the main reason in the 2010 Aichi Targets when none of countries achieved substantive implementation. Whereas the opposition from interest groups from the US, e.g. biotechnology industry is explicit, the unwillingness to constrain TCM development due to the concerns of biodiversity conservation is more implicit, albeit present, through the issue reframing. Procedural implementation and the issue of reframing are ingredients for tough internationalists to ensure that a cooperative China is alert to the potential harm of its interests, particularly industrial interests. In a nutshell, the economic nationalistic identity is attributed to Chinese sectors in international environmental treaty implementation. The usage of environmental diplomacy as a strategic concept is a barometer of the ranking and weighing of domestic preferences.

This chapter's focus on treaty implementation merely reveals one aspect of China's participation in international environmental governance. Chinese players are not satisfied with the identity of a developing country which receive funding and technology transfer from the developed countries. Furthermore, they attempt to portray the state as a leader among developing countries, sharing its experiences and offering financial assistance to other countries. The

following chapter will analyse the role that different groups play in China's foreign relations when China is not merely a follower, but also a leader. More interestingly, how do social organisations play a part in the Chinese government's efforts to lead?

Chapter 6 Strategic concept of the “Chinese experience”: a comparison of two South-South Cooperation projects

6.1 Main argument

The ‘Chinese experience’ is a catchphrase that is frequently used but has been infrequently studied in the literature of South-South Cooperation. Yet it is a useful tool to assess the impact of China as a rising Southern power. In this paper, I examine Chinese political players’ deployment of ‘Chinese experience’ in South-South bilateral projects, highlighting the state-society complex and the fragmented nature of South-South Cooperation. I choose two case studies for comparison: the Lao-China Centre for Sustainable Land and Natural Resources Management (2008-2009) and the Nam Ngum 5 Ban Chim Village Biogas Technology Promotion Project (2009-2010). A comparison of these two cases’ is a litmus test of whether China has experience, and if yes, whose? I find that the Chinese social organisation is more willing to use ‘Chinese experience’ than government agencies. However, the former’s role is much limited in an institutional setup underpinned by state-centric logic. Hence, those who do not possess ‘Chinese experience’ are making the decisions, whereas those who possess it are excluded from the process, resulting in a situation of ‘Chinese inexperience’. The political implication of ‘Chinese inexperience’ is we are not so much facing an era of ever increasing South-South Cooperation, but South-South Conflict.

6.2 Context and structure of this chapter

In 2014, Professor Justin Yifu Lin, a renowned economist and former senior Vice President of the World Bank, published an article in the *Global Times* entitled ‘African countries are the best places to test “Chinese experience”’³⁸³. Lin cast doubt on the universality of the Western model, and highlighted the relevance of ‘Chinese experience’ of economic development to African countries. For instance, he instructed the Ethiopian government to establish special economic zones, replicating the practice of China’s Reform and Opening policy. Lin’s confidence in ‘Chinese experience’ is echoed in President Xi Jinping’s speech at the China-Africa Business Forum in Johannesburg in 2015. He stated that ‘It is China’s sincere hope to share “Chinese experience” with African countries’ in Africa’s industrialisation, and that a path ‘can only be found by African people’s own practice and exploration’³⁸⁴. The signal from both Professor Lin and President Xi is that ‘Chinese experience’ is increasingly salient in South-South Cooperation. In contrast to capital and technology, ‘Chinese experience’ is a soft notion and an intangible asset of this biggest developing country³⁸⁵. The emphasis on ‘Chinese experience’ indicates a shift from ‘What China should do’ to ‘What China has to offer’; that is from a normative

³⁸³ Yifu Justin 毅夫林, “Feizhou Guojia Shi Jianyan Zhongguo Jingyan de Zuihao Difang”*非洲国家是检验中国经验的最好地方* [African Countries Are the Best Places to Test ‘Chinese Experiences’], *Global Times*, December 11, 2014, http://opinion.huanqiu.com/1152/2014-12/5234631_2.html.

³⁸⁴ Jinping 近平习, “Xieshou Gongjin, Puxie Zhongfei Hezuo Xin Pianzhang”*携手共进谱写中非合作新篇章* [Working Together to Write a New Chapter in China-Africa Cooperation], *People’s Daily*, December 4, 2015, <http://politics.people.com.cn/n/2015/1205/c1024-27892564.html>.

³⁸⁵ Yiping 一平 Zhou 周, “Quanqiu nannan hezuo yu zhongguo jingyan”*全球南南合作与中国经验* [Global South-South Cooperation and Chinese experience], interview by Shulin 树林 Li 李, 2012, <http://www.guanliguancha.com/zhuanti/Article/ShowArticle.asp?ArticleID=164>.

expectation to a pragmatic approach. Moreover, it is a shift from generating experiences domestically towards promoting them with foreign countries.

This trend of increasing emphasis on ‘Chinese experience’ contributes to the existing debate among academics and journalists within the South-South Cooperation literature as to whether the Global South is transforming³⁸⁶ or replicating the existing world order³⁸⁷. In the wake of the 2008 financial crisis, academics such as Pieterse stressed the emancipatory nature of South-South Cooperation, and have argued for a global re-balancing process, in which the hegemony of the North is challenged and the old order recalibrated³⁸⁸. Binding the Southern countries together is ‘their common experience, and rejection, of the neoliberal development model’³⁸⁹. China, as the “bellwether” among the BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa) is expected to play a major role in this re-balancing of power³⁹⁰. Other scholars disagree with the optimistic view of transformative impact of Southern countries and, instead contextualising the rise of Southern countries in global capitalism. William Robinson argues that Southern powers are not offering an alternative to global capitalism, but are integrating into, thereby replicating a “brutal, exploitative” world order³⁹¹. The book *BRICS: an anti-capitalist critique* edited by Bond and

³⁸⁶ See Jan Nederveen Pieterse, “Global Rebalancing: Crisis and the East–South Turn,” *Development and Change* 42, no. 1 (2011): 22–48; Radhika Desai, “The Brics Are Building a Challenge to Western Economic Supremacy,” *The Guardian*, April 2, 2013, <http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2013/apr/02/brics-challenge-western-supremacy>; Walden Bello, “The BRICS: Challengers to the Global Status Quo,” *Foreign Policy In Focus*, August 29, 2014, <http://fpif.org/brics-challengers-global-status-quo>;

³⁸⁷ See Patrick Bond, “BRICS:’Anti-Imperialist’ or ‘Sub-Imperialist,’” *International Journal of Socialist Renewal*, March 20, 2013, <http://links.org.au/node/3265>; Patrick Bond and Ana Garcia, *BRICS: An Anti-Capitalist Critique* (Pluto Press, 2015); William I. Robinson, “The Transnational State and the BRICS: A Global Capitalism Perspective,” *Third World Quarterly* 36, no. 1 (2015): pp.1–21.

³⁸⁸ Pieterse 2011.

³⁸⁹ Desai 2013.

³⁹⁰ Bello 2014.

³⁹¹ Robinson 2015, p.18.

Garcia employs Marxist theories such as 'sub-imperialism' to detract from the hope that BRICS are charting a path toward a more just global economic order³⁹². Instead, BRICS "talk anti-imperialist but walk sub-imperialist", 'doing deputy-sheriff duty for global corporations and neoliberal ideologues, while controlling their own angry populaces as well as their hinterlands through a more formidable security apparatus', as Bond vividly describes³⁹³. The emergence of the North-South-South triangular collaboration in the late 1990s instrumentalises the South-South Cooperation to legitimate and enhance neoliberalism³⁹⁴.

This debate is built upon the assumption that the North and the South are opposite binaries and developing countries are either emancipated or imprisoned. This binary assumption is inevitable because the "South" is a relational concept targeted against the inequality created by the Northern countries³⁹⁵. Suffice it to say that the term "South" is used strategically as a "mobilising symbol and ideological expression of the range of shared development challenges" facing governments of developing countries³⁹⁶. To argue whether the South is transforming or replicating the global capitalist order is contingent upon evidence regarding the intention of political elites³⁹⁷. However, the new reality in which the border between the South and North is

³⁹² Bond and Garcia 2015.

³⁹³ Bond 2013.

³⁹⁴ Michelle Morais de Sá e Silva, "South-South Cooperation: Past and Present – Conceptualization and Practice," in *South-South Cooperation in Education and Development*, edited by Linda Chisholm and Gita Steiner-Khamsi (New York: Teachers College Press, 2009).

³⁹⁵ Linda Chisholm, "Introduction: Rhetoric, Realities, and Reasons," in *South-South Cooperation in Education and Development*, edited by Linda Chisholm and Gita Steiner-Khamsi (New York: Teachers College Press, 2009), pp.1–13.

³⁹⁶ Marco Antonio Vieira and Chris Alden, "India, Brazil, and South Africa (IBSA): South-South Cooperation and the Paradox of Regional Leadership," *Global Governance* 17, no. 4 (December 2011): p.510.

practically blurred, yet, discursively stressed leads to a different agenda setting regarding the increasingly polarised field of South-South Cooperation. The chasm between emancipatory expectations and Marxist anti-capitalist critique needs to be filled by a middle-ground.

6.3 Chinese experience as a strategic concept

‘Chinese experience’ as a strategic concept merits academic attention as it is a potential candidate for this ‘middle ground’. It challenges the basic premise of the binary thinking of the hegemonic North and the protesting South because ‘Chinese experience’ itself is derived from China’s benefiting from the North and the global capital on multiple fronts. In his memoir *Breaking through*, Li Lanqing, the former Vice Premier of the State Council in charge of foreign trade (1998-2003), stresses that foreign capital has played a vital role in China’s Reform and Opening-up policy³⁹⁸. In fact, foreign-invested enterprises starting in 1980 have had a great impact on China’s macro-economy, and been effectively made China into the manufacturing hub of Asia. In 1996, foreign-invested enterprises accounted for 40% of China’s foreign trade³⁹⁹. Although China is intimately interwoven with foreign capital and the existing economic order, it is far from being a spokesperson or defender of this system as Chinese political leaders regard the current international system as unfair and unequal.

³⁹⁷ Kevin Gray and Barry K Gills, “Introduction: South–South Cooperation and the Rise of the Global South,” *Third World Quarterly* 37, no. 4 (2016): pp.557–74.

³⁹⁸ Lanqing Li, *Breaking through : The Birth of China’s Opening-up Policy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), p.240.

³⁹⁹ Yasheng Huang, “Why Is There So Much Demand for Foreign Equity Capital in China? An Institutional and Policy Perspective,” in *Working Paper 99-04* (Weatherhead Center for International Affairs, Harvard University, 1999).

As the former President of China Hu Jintao stated in his speech at the General Debate of the 64th Session of the UN General Assembly, 'Without the development and equal participation of developing countries, there cannot be common prosperity in the world, nor a more just and equitable international economic order'⁴⁰⁰.

The dual identity of China as both a beneficiary and a disadvantaged state brings to light what Bruce Gilley terms 'a creative Third World', referring to 'cooperative diplomatic and political strategies to advance their interests in the international system, strategies that in many ways borrow from and make use of the forms and rules put in place by the West'⁴⁰¹. Although Gilley himself acknowledges that this categorisation is an oversimplification, his contribution is to accord pragmatism the same importance as a traditional ideological lens inspired by the Latin American studies in regards to the debate about the influence of the Global South on the world order.

'Chinese experience' echoes the pragmatic approach, and furthermore recognises the fragmented nature of South-South Cooperation within developing countries, offering a new perspective to the state-centric dominated field. 'Experience' is personal, micro, down-to-project level and will ultimately be abstracted to a model and a policy toolkit. It is a fundamental question to examine whose experience and what experience matter, and to understand how the state as a whole makes use of 'Chinese experience' for the national interest. The role of agents is well documented and sophisticatedly analysed in the

⁴⁰⁰ Jintao Hu, "Unite as One and Work for a Bright Future," *Statement by President Hu Jintao at the General Debate of the 64th Session of the UN General Assembly*, September 23, 2009, <http://www.china-un.org/eng/gdxw/t606150.htm>.

⁴⁰¹ Bruce Gilley, "The Challenge of the Creative Third World," *Third World Quarterly* 36, no. 8 (2015): p.1406.

existing literature including multilateral organisations such as the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development⁴⁰², regional organisations such as Latin America and the Caribbean⁴⁰³, or prominent world leader such as Ban Ki-Moon's role in South Korea's strategy towards Africa⁴⁰⁴. This state-centric, top-down approach reveals the ideational and strategic dimension of South-South Cooperation.

The emphasis on Chinese experience is traced back to the legacy of Mao Zedong thought with the essence of "to seek truth from facts", "the mass line", and "independence"⁴⁰⁵. Hughes observes that "to seek truth from facts" outweighed thought emancipation as a safer formula because its indication is that "China's problems have to be found in Chinese experience and not in foreign teaching"⁴⁰⁶. 'Chinese experience', therefore, cannot be thought of or proposed. It is based on actions and concrete projects. It can only be generated, filtered or felt. In other words, it is President Xi who advocates 'Chinese experience', but it is different groups involved in South-South Cooperation with concrete skills, knowledge, and impressions that interpret what this catchphrase means. Hence, it is important to view China's South-South Cooperation through the lens of a state-society complex. The special collection of articles in the *Third World Quarterly* in 2013 attempts to introduce this state-society complexity. Gray and Murphy encourage contributors to examine how domestic structures, actors and dynamics influence the behaviour of rising

⁴⁰² Brainslav Gosovic, "The Resurgence of South-South Cooperation," *Third World Quarterly* 37, no. 4 (2016): pp.733-43.

⁴⁰³ World Food Programme, "Compilation of South-South and Triangular Cooperation (SSTC) Experiences 2008-2014" (United Nations, 2015), <http://documents.wfp.org/stellent/groups/public/documents/resources/wfp278993.pdf>.

⁴⁰⁴ Soyeun Kim and Kevin Gray, "Overseas Development Aid as Spatial Fix? Examining South Korea's Africa Policy," *Third World Quarterly* 37, no. 4 (2016): pp.649-64.

powers⁴⁰⁷. Mark Beeson's article in this special collection attempts to address this challenging question through a case study of China. He argues that judging from public opinion and surveys of Chinese businessmen, the China model, which is a mixture of free market and authoritarian regime, has "reasonably secure" foundations⁴⁰⁸. This finding is an important start to answering the question of how the China model is received. Yet this paper tries to go one step further to answer the question of how 'Chinese experience' is interpreted and used by different domestic groups. In this process, domestic political players are not merely passive recipients or justifiers of 'Chinese experience' or the 'China model', but spoke(wo)men of this notion. One difficulty in conducting this kind of research is rightfully pointed out by Beeson, namely that Chinese foreign policy is 'notoriously opaque' and 'difficult to decipher'⁴⁰⁹. Therefore, a different approach is attempted in the present study. Rather than considering government institutions such as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, I look at this question through the lens of social organisations and process-trace what they encounter if they are involved in South-South Cooperation.

Before introducing the two cases, it is necessary to gain an overview of the institutional arrangement of South-South Cooperation which sets the stage for the agent's activities. South-South Cooperation is distributed among different governmental institutions. As South-South Cooperation is traditionally bundled with foreign aid and investment, the most powerful hands-on ministry in this matter is the Ministry of Commerce (MOFCOM). Foreign aid is supervised

⁴⁰⁵ Hughes 2006, p.14.

⁴⁰⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁷ Kevin Gray and Graig N Murphy, "Introduction: Rising Powers and the Future of Global Governance," *Third World Quarterly* 34, no. 2 (2013): pp.183–93.

⁴⁰⁸ Mark Beeson, "Can China Lead," *Third World Quarterly* 34, no. 2 (2013): p.240.

by the Department of Foreign Assistance⁴¹⁰ (DFA) and foreign investment by the Department of Outward Investment and Economic Cooperation (DOIEC). The only official platform of South-South Cooperation, “China SSC Network” is housed in the China International Centre for Economic and Technical Exchanges (CICETE), directly subordinate to MOFCOM⁴¹¹. The NDRC is another important government institution which is primarily concerned with climate change-related South-South Cooperation⁴¹². Regarding the role of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA), this organisation sets out the principles of South-South Cooperation: equality, reciprocity, pragmatism, diversity, and progress. It emphasises that although China’s aid is limited, it is “sincere and unconditional”⁴¹³.

Compared to MOFCOM, other ministries possess less power to the extent that their roles are complementary to MOFCOM, if not ornamental. For instance, the MOFA is merely an advisory body to MOFCOM and coordinates with “relevant government departments according to the overall diplomatic planning”, “report” and “give suggestions to the CPC Central Committee and the State Council”. As far as environmental cooperation is concerned, CICETE jointly hosts the “Human Resource Development Cooperation Framework” revolving

⁴⁰⁹ Ibid, p.241.

⁴¹⁰ In other literature, DFA is translated to Department of Aid to Foreign Countries (DAFC), e.g. Martyn Davies *et al.*, “How China Delivers Development Assistance to Africa” (Beijing: Centre for Chinese Studies, University of Stellenbosch, 2008),

http://www.ccs.org.za/downloads/DFID_FA_Final.pdf; or Department of Foreign Aid, see Deborah Brautigam, “Aid ‘With Chinese Characteristics’: Chinese Foreign Aid And Development Finance Meet the OECD-DAC Aid Regime,” *Journal of International Development* 23, no. 5 (2011): pp.752–64. I adopt the official translation as displayed on the MOFCOM website: <http://yws.mofcom.gov.cn/>.

⁴¹¹ “About Us,” About us, *China SSC Network*, <http://www.ecdc.net.cn/aboutus/info.aspx?ClassID=3&PageID=1>.

⁴¹² NDRC officer 1, interview by author, face-to-face, March 13, 2016.

around Foreign Aid, together with the Centre for Environmental Education and Communications (CEEC) under the MEP. Till 2013, CEEC has held 28 seminars for 659 senior officials working on environmental protection from 104 developing countries⁴¹⁴. Those seminar efforts function as “a carrier of external propaganda of cultural soft power in the field of environmental protection”, and indicate China as a “responsible big country”.

The lopsided power distribution among ministries not only discounts the capacity of each relevant ministry but also makes it difficult to formulate a coherent SSC environmental strategy. The fact that SSC is monopolised by MOFCOM indicates the ultimate goal of SSC is the national economic interest. However, economic gain is only one dimension of the national interest and neglecting the importance of the political and diplomatic dimensions of the national interest will, in turn, create hurdles in the pursuit of economic interests. Foreign aid expert Yu Nanping suggests that foreign aid not be dominated by MOFCOM for two reasons. Firstly, without a coherent strategy, SSC cannot serve the overall national interest. Secondly, because the strategy of SSC remains to be constructed, there is space for organisations outside the state apparatus to make their contribution⁴¹⁵.

Indeed, as foreign investment is married to other issues such as environmental protection, traditionally excluded actors in South-South

⁴¹³ Ministry of Foreign Affairs, “Zhongguo Dui Nannan Hezuo de Lichang’ 中国对南南合作的立场[China’s Stance on South-South Cooperation],” http://www.mfa.gov.cn/web/ziliao_674904/tytj_674911/zcwj_674915/t3468.shtml.

⁴¹⁴Center for Environmental Education and Communications, MEP, “fujian:2013feizhou Guojia Lvxing Guoji Huanjing Gongyue Nengli yanxiuban’附件：2013 年非洲国家履行国际环境公约能力研修班[Attachment: Capacity Building Courses for African Countries to Implement Environmental Treaties 2013],” 2013.

Cooperation are now invited to contribute their part to a friendly foreign relation based on a good image of China. Alden and Hughes observe that a “new type of strategic partnership” is proposed to invite a plurality of Chinese actors to consolidate person-to-person connection and stretch the influence from the ruling elite to grassroots⁴¹⁶.

I have selected two micro-level projects from 2008 to 2010, just after the 2008 financial crisis and the beginning of the discussion of BRICS. These two cases present a rare opportunity to examine state-society configuration, because both involves to different degree the Chinese non-governmental organisation. These two cases are both related to sustainable development, and are concerned with environmental issues. The environmental element within these two cases speaks to Thomas Muhr’s claim that South-South cooperation is likely to pave the way for environmental and socially sustainable development⁴¹⁷. A comparison of these two cases will shed light on the question of how ‘Chinese experience’ was perceived by different domestic groups before it became a catchphrase of the top national leader, reflecting these groups’ attitudes and interpretation of this current buzzword. It also provides valuable insights into the question of how sustainable South-South projects is, or tends to be.

⁴¹⁵ Nanping 南平 Yu 余, “‘Zhongguo Duiwai Yuanzhu Buying Zaiyou Shangwubu Zhudao’中国对外援助不应再由商务部主导 [Foreign Aid Should Not Be Dominated by MOFCOM],” *Financial Times [Chinese]*, July 1, 2013, <http://www.ftchinese.com/story/001051164>.

⁴¹⁶ Chris Alden and Christopher Hughes, “Harmony and Discord in China’s Africa Strategy: Some Implications for Foreign Policy,” *The China Quarterly* 199 (2009): pp.563–84.

⁴¹⁷ Thomas Muhr, “Beyond ‘BRICS’: Ten Theses on South-South Cooperation in the Twenty-First Century,” *Third World Quarterly* 37, no. 4 (2016): pp.630–48.

6.4 The Lao-China Land Project: muted ‘Chinese experience’

The two selected projects help us trace how a Chinese environmental organisation proposes a creative South-South project, at the heart of which is sustainable development, which ended up with assisting a foreign investment project. ‘The Lao-China Centre for Sustainable Land and Natural Resources Management’ (2008-2009) is aimed to improve the governance capacity of the National Land Management Authority which is established in 2006 under the Lao cabinet. This project never came into fruition, but the organisation that initiated this project achieved a reasonable level of success in the second project, ‘the Nam Ngum 5 Ban Chim Biogas Technology Promotion Project’ (2009-2010), a Corporate Social Responsibility project. The following analysis will identify different levels of experience and explain under what circumstances ‘Chinese experience’ matters.

The most important player in these two cases is that of the Global Environmental Institute. It is one of the first social organisations within China which explicitly identifies South-South Cooperation as one of its primary concerns⁴¹⁸. Established in 2004 with support from the start-up sponsor in the United States, the Blue Moon Fund, it adopts a market-based and policy-oriented approach to solve environmental problems within China, and furthermore, to share Chinese experience with other developing countries. The focus on South-South results largely from Dr Zhang Jiqiang, the director of the China Programme in the Blue Moon Fund, and Mrs Jin Jiaman, the executive director of GEI. Described as a visionary thinker by GEI staff, Dr Zhang sees

⁴¹⁸ “About GEI,” *Global Environmental Institute*, <http://www.geichina.org/index.php?controller=Articles&action=View&aid=2>.

China as a laboratory for sustainable development, which allows GEI to investigate what is working within China, and then to share the experiences with other developing countries⁴¹⁹. Mrs Jin Jiaman has two decades of experiences as an official in the Chinese government, non-governmental organisations and international organisation in the field of environmental protection. Both Dr Zhang and Mrs Jin have rich experience in working with the Chinese government, and are strongly committed to bringing positive change to the establishment, a prerequisite for their creative projects and strategic thinking. What distinguishes GEI from other environmental organisations is that GEI exports the so-called Chinese experience to other developing countries. In other words, whereas Chinese and foreign NGOs operate in China, GEI goes further and applies what is successful in China abroad. Indeed, it is the very first Chinese local organisation to operate overseas. The difference between GEI and the government is that the former is forward thinking, and explores what the government has not yet but could achieve in five years' time⁴²⁰. In this way, GEI accumulates experiences before the government does.

The first South-South Cooperation project of the GEI was the Sri Lanka Biogas Commercialisation Project, launched in July 2005⁴²¹. GEI opened its local office to implement the project in 2006. It became the very first foreign NGO authorised by the Sri Lankan government since Sri Lanka gained independence in 1947, and the very first international NGO to obtain financial support from the Sri Lankan government⁴²². GEI collaborated with the Ministry of Livestock

⁴¹⁹ Former GEI officer 1, interview by author, Skype, November 26, 2015.

⁴²⁰ GEI officer, face-to-face, June 17, 2015.

⁴²¹ Global Environmental Institute, "GEI Annual Report 2005" (Beijing: GEI, 2005), <http://www.geichina.org/index.php?controller=Articles&action=View&aid=30>.

⁴²² Ibid.

of Sri Lanka. The aim of this project was to introduce the latest made-in-China biogas technology to Sri Lanka and furthermore, to develop a business model in which livestock waste is transformed into renewable energy. The business model is drawn from GEI's previous experiments and experience in rural Sichuan and Yunnan⁴²³. One key lesson from Sri Lanka for GEI is that it not only has a role to play in South-South Cooperation projects, but also that it has hands-on experience. Hence, GEI has initiated a second overseas project in Laos.

The Lao-China Sustainable Land and Natural Resources Project (2008-2009) is a government-to-government initiative, in which GEI assisted the National Land Management Authority (NLMA) in applying for foreign aid from the Ministry of Commerce in China. Based on the 2008 annual report of GEI and an interview with Mrs Jin Jiaman, it seems that the objective of this government-to-government project is fourfold. The first purpose is to help the NLMA to use the 'Chinese experience' to "establish regulations on land and resources management" via capacity building⁴²⁴. Related to the first purpose, part of this funding request is also dedicated to conducting a survey of the land and forests in Laos and moreover collecting information on natural resources in the country. These previous two goals lead to the third one, which is to inform Chinese enterprises investing overseas of the environmental conditions of the host country and to provide guidelines for the environmental behaviour of the Chinese enterprises operating in Laos. The linkage of foreign aid and foreign investment implicit in this arrangement is manifest and will be elaborated on later. The last and most ambitious purpose is to "increase the innovative

⁴²³ Former GEI officer 1, interview by author, Skype, November 26, 2015.

capacities of Chinese NGOs in implementing projects on China's foreign aid" and ultimately to "encourage positive change in China's overseas aid"⁴²⁵. The last purpose is particularly pressing because the Chinese government has neither strategic planning, nor the capacity to evaluate the current aid system⁴²⁶.

The focus on forestry and natural resources in Laos in GEI's proposal is largely driven by Chinese domestic need for timber products. In the aftermath of the massive floods in 1998, the then Premier Zhu Rongji introduced logging ban originally covering seven Chinese provinces along the Yangtze and Yellow Rivers and further reaching ten more provinces. Furthermore, the State Forestry Administration implemented Natural Forest Conservation Programme which has been drafted for two years and introduced in 1998 as the floods added urgency to the new programme⁴²⁷. However, with the rising demand for forest products in China leads to rising prices of them which boosts timber imports from countries with lax regulation to prohibit illegal logging and trading⁴²⁸. Consequently, deforestation has been displaced from China into other regions, especially, Southeast Asian countries. Laos is among the countries which China imports forest products from. Since the "New Economic Mechanism" was introduced in Laos in 1986, the forestry industry has been encouraged to be export-driven. The regulation on commercial logging is lax and "short-lived". It is difficult to gauge from the official data how much timber China imports from Laos because part of the export volume is calculated as

⁴²⁴ Global Environmental Institute, "GEI Annual Report 2008" (Beijing: GEI, 2008), <http://www.geichina.org/index.php?controller=Articles&action=View&aid=30>.

⁴²⁵ Ibid.

⁴²⁶ Carol Lancaster, "The Chinese Aid System" (Center for Global Development, 2007).

⁴²⁷ Graeme Lang, "Forests, Floods, and the Environmental State in China," *Organization & Environment* 15, no. 2 (June 2002): pp.109–30.

Thailand's timber exports, because of the logging ban implemented in Thailand in natural forests in 1989 rendered insufficient plantation for exports and the gap compensated by forests cut in Cambodia, Burma and Laos⁴²⁹. Laos seems to be an eager partner for Chinese companies with a less strict environmental regulation.

GEI opted to apply for foreign aid to launch this proposal. It collaborated with Zhejiang University, the Chinese Academy for Environmental Planning under the MPA, Information Centre of Ministry of Land and Resources, China Institute of International Studies (CIIS), University of International Business and Economics (UIBE) and government officials from Laos. The joint decision was to apply for a concessional loan from the Chinese government⁴³⁰. The fact that a sustainable project is married to a concessional loan merits attention because sustainability is a new focus of concessional loan projects. The 2011 White Paper on China's foreign aid stated that by 2009, 61% of the total concessional loans were given to infrastructure projects, 16.1% to industry and 8.9% to energy and resource exploitation⁴³¹. The Lao-China Land project explicitly emphasises information collection and capacity building to facilitate land and natural resources management. GEI's contribution to the foreign aid system is to complement, not replicate or duplicate, the projects carried out by government agencies. Furthermore, GEI aims to bring change to the foreign aid

⁴²⁸ Graeme Lang and Cathy Hiu Wan Chan, "China's Impact on Forests in Southeast Asia," *Journal of Contemporary Asia* 36, no. 2 (January 1, 2006): pp.167–94.

⁴²⁹ Chunquan Zhu, Rodney Taylor, and Guoqiang Feng, "China's Wood Market, Trade and the Environment" (Monmouth: WWF International, 2004),

<http://awsassets.panda.org/downloads/chinawoodmarkettradeenvironment.pdf>.

⁴³⁰ There are three forms of foreign aid: grant, zero-interest loans and concessional loans.

⁴³¹ MOFCOM, "Zhongguo de Duiwai Yuanzhu Baipishu Fabu'中国的对外援助白皮书发布 [Release of the White Paper on China's Foreign Assistance]," *China News*, April 21, 2011, http://www.chinanews.com/gn/2011/04-21/2989430_6.shtml.

system by implementing innovative projects and “holding the hands of MOFCOM” on the road of sustainability⁴³².

The process of the Lao-China Land project is divided into two phases under two different names. The first phase has the title “the Lao-China Cooperation Centre for Sustainable Land and Natural Resources Management”. This is modelled upon the Sino-Japan Friendship Environmental Protection Centre, established in 1996 with the support of Japan’s ODA, and is aimed to conduct scientific research, collect and manage information and personnel training to improve environmental governance. Indeed, one GEI project manager in the Lao-China Land project team has worked with the Ministry of Environmental Protection, and has been personally involved in the design process of Sino-Japan Friendship Environmental Protection Centre. The skills and experiences of that individual official in the Sino-Japan Centre are important to the decision of GEI to establish an information centre in Vientiane⁴³³. In this case, ‘Chinese experience’ is drawn from a North-South project and is associated with the individual’s work experience.

During the first phase, GEI and the NLMA signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on August 18th, 2008. Immediately after the ceremony, the NLMA and GEI submitted the proposal to the Chinese ambassador to Laos H.E. Pan Guangxue and the commercial attaché from MOFCOM Chen Hangao. According to the official procedure, the embassy screens the request from the recipient government (NLMA in this case), and if it sees the proposal as being appropriate, the embassy will pass it onto MOFA and MOFCOM in Beijing⁴³⁴. In

⁴³² Former GEI officer 1, interview by author, Skype, November 26, 2015.

⁴³³ GEI officer, face-to-face, June 17, 2015.

⁴³⁴ Davies *et al*, 2008.

this case, the Chinese embassy in Laos gave this project approval as both the ambassador and the commercial attaché “acknowledged the importance, urgency and feasibility of the project and offered helpful suggestions”⁴³⁵. The details of the subsequent development are neither publicly accessible, nor discussed during my interviews with GEI staff. When I conducted my field trip in Vientiane in 2016, the officers working in the Chinese Embassy in charge of economics and trade told me that they were unaware of this project largely because those in charge of the project had been either transferred to other posts or retired. Moreover, there was no record in the Embassy about this project. I phoned the then vice minister of NLMA, Dr Akhom Tounalom and he did know much of this project as “my Chinese colleagues did much of the work”⁴³⁶. The message conveyed in the brief phone interview confirms the initiative taken on the Chinese side and officials in Lao government did not get much involved apart from approving the project.

Decision-making within MOFCOM is unknown. However, the feedback from MOFCOM on this proposal revealed the concerns of MOFCOM, and led to the second phase of the Lao-China project. The key message in the feedback from MOFCOM was that the Lao-China project, as proposed in 2008, did not contain visible economic profitability, and, therefore, GEI should modify the proposal by including more evidence of economic benefits, instead of “merely” collecting information and capacity building. Neither MOFA nor the State Council, which has the final veto, was mentioned as MOFCOM took the lead when the proposal arrived in Beijing. As a result, in the second phase of this

⁴³⁵ GEI annual report 2008, 38.

⁴³⁶ Akhom Tounalom, interview by author, telephone, March 30, 2016.

project, GEI not only changed the name of the project, but also shifted its focus. In order to highlight the economic element in this project, the project title was changed to “Sustainable Utilization and Market Oriented Management of National Land Resources in Lao PDR”. Furthermore, emphasis on information gathering was removed, as were efforts to facilitate the Laotian government to survey national resources and establish natural reserves. This marked the sidelining of environmental issues in this project. To some extent, sustainable development became the “icing on the cake” of a profit-driven project, aiming to open the Laotian land market for Chinese enterprises. This is in fact the opposite of what GEI proposed. Whereas GEI aimed to share the land management governance experience with NLMA and set limits on land exploitation, MOFOM requested the opposite.

This change did not stop GEI from exploring opportunities to make a contribution to SSC. Indeed, in the second phase, GEI played an active part in liaising with all the relevant players in order to apply for a concessional loan and managed to include itself in the official procedure of the concessional loan application, even though political actors like GEI were originally excluded from this process⁴³⁷. For instance, GEI established communication channels with MOFCOM, Export and Import Bank of China (EXIM), Chinese exporters, and the Laotian government, to the extent that it paved the way for cooperation among the players. GEI managed to modify the official procedure by merging steps in the procedure. In the official procedure, the beneficiary country firstly needs to contact China EXIM, and EXIM communicates the idea with MOFCOM. This is,

⁴³⁷ See appendix II and III for a visualisation examination of how GEI is incorporated in the application process: appendix I is the official procedure of concessional loan, and appendix II demonstrates how GEI situates itself in this procedure.

followed by a meeting between MOFCOM and the beneficiary country. But instead of the above, GEI invited officers from EXIM and MOFCOM at the same time, so that GEI not only participated in the discussion between EXIM and MOFCOM, but also had the opportunity to elaborate to both sides on the importance of this project. Mrs Jin quotes a comment from an officer working at China EXIM: 'it is a great project. However, it is unprecedented and we have no experience in facilitating this kind of project'⁴³⁸. It is in this meeting that the focus of this revised project shifted towards the establishment of a "land use rights exchange market"⁴³⁹. The ability of GEI to modify the procedure is indicative of the flexible nature of institutions and the possibilities to bypass the official requirements to inform the government of this project and put it on MOFCOM's agenda.

Having had nominal support from MOFCOM and EXIM, GEI approached the China Construction International Corporation as the Chinese exporter requested in the official procedure of concessional loan application. Furthermore, GEI became the "foreign contractor/client", functioning as an implementer of this project. In the end, GEI submitted its revised proposal to NLMA. In this proposal, the project requested funding worth US\$31.5 million⁴⁴⁰. With the effort of the NLMA and the secretary to the Prime Minister, this project came to be the second prioritised project in Lao's governmental request for China's foreign assistance in that year⁴⁴¹. This is an indication that the Lao-China Land project received substantial support from the Laotian side.

⁴³⁸ Jiaman Jin, interview by author, face-to-face, July 23, 2015.

⁴³⁹ Global Environmental Institute, "GEI Annual Report 2009" (Beijing: GEI, 2009), <http://www.geichina.org/index.php?controller=Articles&action=View&aid=30>.

⁴⁴⁰ GEI 2009 annual report, 34.

⁴⁴¹ Jiaman Jin, interview by author, face-to-face, July 23, 2015.

The outcome of the application came as a disappointment to GEI and the Laotian government. Although the proposal requested US\$ 31.5 million US dollars for the Laotian government, only a mere tenth (2 million US\$) was granted to this project for capacity building workshops⁴⁴². The information centre, key to the promotion of sustainability, was completely shelved because MOFCOM did not see the economic value of gathering information and even more inconveniently, the information collected in the Chinese-funded centre was highly likely to create hurdles for the Chinese enterprises to exploit natural resources in Laos⁴⁴³. In the end, MOFCOM decided to let the in-house unit run the capacity building workshops, and “invited” NLMA officials to attend. Effectively the money spent by MOFCOM went back into its own pocket⁴⁴⁴.

This sustainable development project’s failure directly challenges the notion of ‘Chinese experience’, frequently mentioned by GEI and then ignored by MOFCOM. This is expected to filter out practices learnt from developed countries, and furthermore, to define what is *appropriate* for the developing countries in terms of balancing economic development and environmental governance. The question which emerges from the Lao-China land project is “*whose* experiences matter?”. In the Lao-China Land project, the Chinese experience referred largely to that of GEI: its experiences in incorporating a market-based approach to advise policy recommendations to the government and to operate in the overseas setting. As far as the government agency is concerned, MOFCOM is not a ministry that has experience in environmental

⁴⁴² Ibid.

⁴⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴⁴ Ibid.

governance. Mrs Jin Jiaman reflects that the fact that collaboration with the State Forestry Administration may yield a different⁴⁴⁵.

The paradox of the Chinese experience, however, was that GEI's own experience reflected the inexperience of MOFCOM. As far as Lao-China was concerned, the Department of Foreign Aid in MOFCOM was unfamiliar with the innovative approach of GEI to interweave sustainability with foreign aid. The original idea of establishing an information centre received little sympathy from MOFCOM officials, and so was downsized and simplified to the supply of hardware (a building), instead of software (a platform to exchange information for environmental governance). What is clear from this is that the "Chinese experience" in the Lao-China Land project was contested because it did not serve the interests of the MOFCOM. This finding suggests the irony that the government-initiated catchphrase of "Chinese experience" cannot be realised by the Chinese government itself. To explain this irony, it is necessary to examine the specific interests involved in this project.

6.4.1 Interest dimension

The Lao-China project reveals not only the importance of explicit interests of players directly involved in the project, but also the relevance of indirect interests. Explicit and direct interests are those of MOFCOM, the NLMA of Laos, and GEI, whereas implicit and indirect interests refer to those of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the State Forestry Administration, which will be explained in the latter part of this section.

⁴⁴⁵ Ibid.

MOFCOM: The interests of MOFCOM in the Lao-China Land project are twofold: economic profitability and political dominance in the foreign aid system. The discounted element of sustainability and the stress on the importance of economic benefits indicates the preference of MOFCOM. In the perception of MOFCOM officials, foreign aid is used to open the foreign market which would otherwise be difficult to occupy because of the dominance of Western countries which have a richer experience in foreign aid⁴⁴⁶. Although foreign aid and foreign assistance are allocated to two different departments in MOFCOM, the linkage between these two is “natural” for MOFCOM officials.

Apart from economic profitability, political dominance in the foreign aid system is another dimension of ministerial interest. The “innovative change” of GEI put the issues of sustainability, environmental governance, and information management to the fore. This change requests expertise from other ministries such as the Ministry of Environmental Protection and the State Forest Administration. Moreover, what GEI has demonstrated through pushing the Lao-China project this far is that there *is* a role for non-governmental organisations to play in the foreign aid system. The reluctance of MOFCOM to materialise the innovation from a proposal to a model project reflects the unwillingness and incapability of MOFCOM to share power with other political players.

GEI: The primary interest of GEI, as a social organisation, is a mixture of political and social interests. Political interest is to get access to the policy making process and to bring policy change through implementing existing policy framework. Social interest refers to sustainable usage of natural

⁴⁴⁶ Ministry of Commerce official 2, interview by author, face-to-face, July 27, 2015.

resources in Laos. Both the executive manager of GEI and programme leader of the Blue Moon Fund are aware that it is more difficult to parachute a policy initiative than to modify the existing ones. As a consequence, the Lao-China project works within the establishment (*tizhinei* 体制内) by following the discourse of South-South Cooperation, playing within the official procedures, and collaborating closely with Chinese government agencies. Apart from the political interest, there is an economic aspect of GEI's interest. If the Lao-China project is fully funded, GEI would be allocated to some funding so as to implement the capacity building and workshop training.

Laotian government (GoL): The question of interests in the Laotian government is beyond the scope of this chapter. But it is fair to say that the Lao-China Land project was derived from the need of Laos. This project fits in the National Socio-Economic Development Plan (2006-2010). Three strategies were identified to achieve the goal of sustainable utility of natural resources and protection of the environment: "the management of natural resources by means of increased participation and protection", "the institutional framework and its capacity by means of strengthening it and raising public awareness and political commitment", "the environmental management in industrial and construction sectors"⁴⁴⁷. These three strategies are to a varying degree reflected in the Lao-China projects.

Alternative governmental partners: The next two players' role in this project is implicit and indirect. But they could have become candidates to form a coalition with GEI. The key decision makers in the Chinese Embassy in Laos,

specifically the ambassador and the economic attaché, provided insights to the original proposal of the Lao-China project and praised the attempt made by the GEI. With their assistance, the proposal was submitted to MOFCOM and MOFA for further consideration. The role of MOFA is ambiguous as it is neither elaborated in the narrative of GEI nor mentioned in the interviews.

One other ministry which was mentioned in the interview as an alternative government partner is the State Forestry Administration (SFA). This is because at the heart of the original Lao-China Land project was natural resources, specifically forestry. The executive director of GEI, Ms Jin Jiaman, reflected that one reason the Lao-China project failed was that they chose MOFCOM as the primary partner. She speculated that working with SFA might bring a different outcome because the original proposal overlapped with the responsibility of the SFA. In terms of foreign aid funding, the SFA could negotiate with MOFCOM, instead of GEI persuading MOFCOM to support a project which did not serve its interests. Therefore, the interest for ministries like SFA was political, namely sharing power with MOFCOM in the foreign aid system.

6.5 The Biogas project: instrumentalising ‘Chinese experience’

The second project of GEI in Laos reveals the relation between GEI and SOE in terms of the Chinese experience: in this case, SOE’s inexperience and

⁴⁴⁷ Committee for Planning and Investment, “National Socio-Economic Development Plan (2006-2010) ,” 2006,
[http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTPRS1/Resources/LAO_PRSP2\(Oct2008\).pdf](http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTPRS1/Resources/LAO_PRSP2(Oct2008).pdf).

GEI's experience together lead to a coalition presented in the form of a model demonstration project. The Biogas project, in which GEI assisted a State-owned Enterprise to conduct a Corporate Social Responsibility project, is a sub-project under the Nam Ngum 5 Hydropower Station (the NN5). Although Chinese hydraulic companies have rich experience in big-scale hydropower projects, albeit with controversy like Three Gorges Dams and Nu River, large-scale hydro-electric projects are regarded as what China is experienced in⁴⁴⁸, the NN5 was somehow new as being the first overseas dam-building project using the financing model of Build-Operate-Transfer (BOT). BOT is by and large "a start-up business venture where private organisations undertake development and operation of a facility normally done by the government"⁴⁴⁹. It offers the government with the opportunity to outsource public projects to the private sector due to lack of public funds and the availability of private initiative and funding. NN5 is the first BOT project between a Chinese company and a foreign government, and hence is treated with great caution. The motivation for Chinese companies to opt for BOT as contracts of this kind are regarded as more profitably in the long run⁴⁵⁰. A Memorandum of Understanding was signed in 2004 between the Laotian government, or the Principal, and the Sinohydro Corporation of China (Sinohydro), the concessionaire. This was a joint venture between Sinohydro and Electricite du Laos (EdL), the former holding 85% share and the latter 15%. Sinohydro received a concession from the National

⁴⁴⁸ Carter and Mol 2006, p.337.

⁴⁴⁹ Sebastiaan Menheere and Spiro Pollalis, *Case Studies on Build Operate Transfer* (Edison: Delft University of Technology, 1996),

<http://www.gsd.harvard.edu/images/content/5/3/538865/fac-pub-pollalis-bot-part-1.pdf>, p.8.

⁴⁵⁰ Tao Hu, Min Chen, and Yanyang Wu, "Analysis of Key Players in China's Outward Foreign Direct Investment Based on the Conceptual Matrix-Part II: Case Study in Southeast Asia,"

Bank of China (US\$140 million), the investor, to finance, design, and operate this hydropower station, a public facility project. After 25 years, the ownership of this project will be transferred from Sinohydro to the Laotian government. The rest of the financing comes from Sinohydro Corporation (US\$54 million) and EdL (US\$6million)⁴⁵¹. The operator is Nam Ngum 5 Power Company Ltd.

Although the Nam Ngum 5 project started as early as 2004, it was only in 2008 that GEI became involved in this investment project. NN5 bears a symbolic importance, as it is portrayed as a “model” for further overseas hydraulic investment in Laos. It is a small-scale project to generate ‘Chinese experience’. This project manager of NN5 has conducted many innovative attempts. Sinohydro was the first Chinese SOE to require a political risk insurance guarantee from the Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency (MIGA) of the World Bank. Because of the stringent requirements of MIGA in regards to social and environmental evaluation, it is possible for the public to access detailed information about the NN5 project. Furthermore, the NN5 project was the first attempt to register under the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM)⁴⁵². These efforts demonstrate Sinohydro’s ambition to portray a green image in overseas investment.

Moreover, Sinohydro did not expect to be supervised by international organisations. International Rivers liaised with GEI and WWF (Beijing) to discuss environmental concerns with Sinohydro. The environmental concerns

⁴⁵¹ Environmental and Social Risk Management of Chinese Transnational Corporations (Yale School of Forestry and Environmental Studies and WWF, 2015).

⁴⁵² Vientiane Times, “Nam Ngum 5 Hydropower Project Begins,” *International Rivers*, April 30, 2008, <https://www.internationalrivers.org/resources/nam-ngum-5-hydropower-project-begins-2930>.

of WWF and International Rivers are not unfounded, particularly due to the Chinese government's attempts to transfer environmental pollution to developing countries in Africa and Southeast Asia⁴⁵³. GEI, as a Chinese NGO, enjoyed a relative advantage in the discussion with Sinohydro, particularly because of the perception of Sinohydro staff that international organisations lacked objectivity⁴⁵⁴. Although International Rivers initiated the discussion, it is GEI which in the end cooperated with Sinohydro in a hands-on manner. Having understood that Sinohydro needed hands-on experiences to fulfil its social and environmental responsibilities, GEI began its fieldwork and operation in Laos in 2009. It offered assistance to Sinohydro regarding community development and environmental protection. GEI signed a memorandum of cooperation with the Laotian branch of Sinohydro, the Nam Ngum 5 Power Company Ltd (NN5PC) in 2010. GEI and Sinohydro shared the costs and responsibilities. Whereas GEI recruited and paid the biogas experts, Sinohydro was in charge the costs of building materials and equipment. The budget of this project is \$72,100, with 30% allocated to GEI and 70% to Sinohydro⁴⁵⁵. The purpose of Biogas was to bring two benefits to the affected Ban Chim. First, the construction of biogas pool and installation of biogas lamps solves the problem of electricity in the village. Second, it protects the forest by replacing the use of firewood with livestock manure to generate energy for cooking and heating.

⁴⁵² Guofen Han, "Haiwai Touzi Shichang de Tuohuangzhe-Ji Gongsi Laodong Mofan Zhong Haixiang" 海外投资市场的拓荒者-记公司劳动模范钟海祥 [The Explorer of Overseas Market-On Model Colleague Zhong Haixiang], *Sinohydro Corporation*, July 15, 2015.

⁴⁵³ Alden and Hughes 2009.

⁴⁵⁴ GEI officer 1, interview by author, face-to-face, August 13, 2013.

⁴⁵⁵ Lihong Kong, "Laos' Ban Chim Village: The First Partnership Between a Chinese NGO and a Chinese Company Overseas," *China Development Brief*, June 5, 2012, <http://www.chinadevelopmentbrief.org.cn/news-13619.html>.

This Biogas project drew on GEI's experiences in Sri Lanka and its previous experiments in Yunnan and Sichuan. GEI operated in the identified affected village called Ban Chim. The location of Ban Chim has strategic importance for Sinohydro. The Luang Prabang 413 Army is stationed in Ban Chim to guarantee the regional security of this hydropower plant⁴⁵⁶. The stationed army also created hurdles for researchers like me to get access to the dam site. In Ban Chim, 49 households are estimated to lose about 50 hectares of rice paddy fields because of the NN5. The dam inundated the arable land of 35 families, together with grazing land⁴⁵⁷. The local consultancy firm Dongsay conducted a survey among affected persons and flagged up their top three concerns: livestock, cash crop plantation, and non-timber forest production⁴⁵⁸. Another interest of Ban Chim was access to electricity. Although the hydropower project is aimed at generating electricity for Laotian domestic use, the villagers in Ban Chim cannot enjoy the electricity that is produced, because the village is off-grid. As a consequence, another method must be contemplated to solve the paradox of generating electricity for the off-grid village. The way in which GEI helped Ban Chim was to take advantage of livestock manure and make it into biogas. By transferring biogas to the off-the-grid village, the problem of electricity would also be solved. GEI invited biogas experts from

⁴⁵⁶ Mei Li, “Laowo Nan’e 5 Fadian Gongsi Xiezhu Dangdi Jundui Xiushan junying’老挝南俄 5 发电公司协助当地军队修缮军营 [Laos Nam Ngum 5 Power Station Assisted Local Army to Fix Military Camp],” *Power China Resources LTD*, December 30, 2015, <http://pr.powerchina.cn/g163/s1109/t2943.aspx>.

⁴⁵⁷ Dongsay Company LTD, “Lao PDR - Nam Ngum 5 Hydropower Project : Environmental Management Plan (Vol. 3) : Update of Social Action Plan,” 2007, http://www-wds.worldbank.org/external/default/WDSContentServer/WDSP/IB/2007/11/27/000020439_20071127164555/Rendered/PDF/E17600v30Updat1s01Final020071111151.pdf.

⁴⁵⁸ Ibid, p.16.

China to teach villagers in Ban Chim to construct and use biofuel digesters and distributed instruction manual in Lao and Chinese to villagers⁴⁵⁹.

GEI's involvement in the NN5 project was recognised by Sinohydro in its official website through the rhetoric of Corporate Social Responsibility, particularly related to social and environmental responsibilities⁴⁶⁰. CSR has been used as a remedy for Chinese problems in overseas investment destinations⁴⁶¹. I asked the project manager of GEI, what would happen if GEI had not been involved in this biogas project. He said that 'because Sinohydro had close to zero experience in local community settlement, and it was extremely understaffed, only one part-time officer in charge of CSR-related matter, they would not be able to be as professional like us'⁴⁶². 'Chinese experience', in this case, ties in closely with the interests of Sinohydro, and is purely commercial. The nature of Sinohydro as an SOE dictated that its primary goal was economic profit. All these efforts are orchestrated to open the foreign market, establish a responsible image of for Sinohydro and maintain a long-term partnership with the government in destination countries. Indeed, the manager of Nam Ngum 5 Power Company Ltd, Zhong Haixiang, negotiated with the Government of Laos to construct a cascade of seven dam projects along the most important river in Lao, the Nam Ou River, to maximise the investment interest of Sinohydro⁴⁶³. Sinohydro Corporation has a ten-year construction

⁴⁵⁹ GEI officer 1, interview by author, face-to-face, August 13, 2013.

⁴⁶⁰ Sunwen Luo, "Laowo Nane 5 Fadian Gongsi Jiji Lvxing Shehui Zeren Bing Xiezhu Quanqiu Huanjing Yanjiusuo Yuanman Wancheng Zhaoqi Xiangmu Huifang gongzuo'老挝南俄 5 发电公司积极履行社会责任并协助全球环境研究所圆满完成沼气项目回访工作 [NN5 Company Actively Practice Social Responsibility and Assist Global Environmental Institute with the Reviewing Process of Biogas Project]," *Sinohydro Corporation*, March 12, 2014, <http://sr.sinohydro.com/g163/s927/t1415.aspx>.

⁴⁶¹ Alden and Hughes 2009.

⁴⁶² GEI officer 6, face-to-face, June 17, 2015.

⁴⁶³ Han 2015.

period to build a \$2 billion project financed by the China Development Bank. The cascade of dams has an annual generating capacity of around 5000 GWh⁴⁶⁴, ten times the size of Nam Ngum 5. This series of seven dam projects is also under the build-operate-transfer model, as with the much smaller-scale Nam Ngum 5 project. 89 villages will be displaced⁴⁶⁵. This is because Nam Ngum 5 hydropower station did not involve resettlement of local residents. The 'Chinese experience' is thus more Sinohydro's experience to operate BOT-model dam projects in Laos than a means of establishing rapport with local communities and cater to local needs. The following section explains concrete interests in this project.

6.5.1 Interest dimension

Sinohydro: The nature of Sinohydro as a State-Owned Enterprise (SOE) dictated that its primary goal was economic profit. In the specific case of outward foreign investment, typified in the Nam Ngum 5 Hydropower project, the means to achieve economic gains lies in the international competitiveness of Sinohydro. There were two reasons why Sinohydro also attended to environmental issues: international competitiveness and the requirement from the Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency (MIGA).

One of the biggest differences between the domestic and international business environments in which SOEs like Sinohydro operate is the importance

⁴⁶⁴ "Laos' Nam Ou Cascade Hydropower Project Starts Electricity Generation," *Xinhua News*, November 30, 2015, http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2015-11/30/c_134866619.htm.

⁴⁶⁵ International Rivers, "Nam Ou River," <https://www.internationalrivers.org/campaigns/nam-ou-river>.

of CSR and its direct linkage with the profit of SOEs. In order to adapt to a different business environment, Sinohydro has not only tried to register under the Clean Development Mechanism, but also cooperated with GEI to implement the compensation plan in the affected Ban Chim village. All those efforts are orchestrated to open the foreign market, establish a responsible image for Sinohydro and maintain a long-term partnership with the government in the destination countries.

Another reason why Sinohydro paid particular attention to the social and environmental impact of this hydropower station is that it requested MIGA to provide a political risk insurance guarantee, the first time for a Chinese SOE. As MIGA requires “stringent environmental and social conduct” of the enterprises, Sinohydro was willing to expose information about the project and to ask a consultancy, in this case, Dongsay Company, to collect data for the environmental management plan (EMP) and social action plan (SAP).

MOFCOM: The interest of MOFCOM in the NN5 project is less direct than that in the Lao-China Land project. The objective of MOFCOM was to encourage SOEs and private enterprises to invest overseas. This could be seen from a series of administrative and institutional reforms carried out since the introduction of the “Going Global policy” in the 2000s. Those reforms cut the red tape in the approval process and simplified the application procedure for Chinese companies⁴⁶⁶. The ministerial interest of MOFCOM, in the case of Nam Ngum 5, was therefore to facilitate Sinohydro to open the hydraulic market in Laos.

⁴⁶⁶ Wenbin Huang and Andreas Wilkes, “Analysis of China’s Overseas Investment Policies” (Center for International Forestry Research, 2011).

GEI: The interest of GEI is based less on financial gain and therefore more political than economic. Since 2007, GEI has initiated an “integrated policy package” to regulate the environmental and social behaviours of Chinese overseas enterprises.” The NN5 project is one case study from which lessons and experiences could be distilled in GEI’s policy package. The most direct interest of GEI, in this case, was policy-oriented. Indeed, GEI’s interest was contingent upon its capacities to mediate between the affected villages and Sinohydro. On the one hand, GEI aimed to improve the livelihood of the affected villagers and minimise the negative impact of the dam on the forest ecosystems⁴⁶⁷. On the other hand, it helped Sinohydro to implement its SAP and therefore facilitated the construction of the NN5 hydropower station. In the long term, a good practice of CSR in the NN5 case should pave way for Sinohydro’s future investments.

GoL: The interest of the Laotian government is energy security which is reflected in the national strategy to become the “battery of the region”⁴⁶⁸. Nam Ngum 5 Hydropower Project is part of the strategy to “develop the supply of electricity in the rural areas of the country” adopted by the Government of Laos⁴⁶⁹. By 2020, GoL aims to electrify 90% of households, including 30% powered by renewable energy, 10%-12% by biofuel, and the remaining by imported fossil fuel. The NN5 project is a strategic project because the electricity generated domestically will reduce the cost of importing power from Vietnam. In order to facilitate the construction of the NN5 hydropower station,

⁴⁶⁷ Kong 2012.

⁴⁶⁸ Dent 2014, 235.

⁴⁶⁹ Sinohydro Corporation Limited, “Nam Ngum 5 Hydropower Project: Update of Environmental Management,” September 2007, http://www.miga.org/documents/EMP_for_NamN5_HPP_in_Laos.pdf.

different ministries and levels of governments were involved. Six committees were established to ensure sustainable compensation and community development: namely, environmental management, resettlement and compensation, forest clearing, grievance management, district work, and village development. Four levels of the GoL were involved: national, provincial, district, and village⁴⁷⁰.

International organisations: International environmental organisations functioned as a pressure group and monitoring bodies. A coalition of NGOs, including International Rivers and WWF, was established calling on Sinohydro to establish “a world-class environmental policy”. As a consequence, Sinohydro invited Peter Bosshard, International Rivers’ Policy Director to discuss this matter and Sinohydro agreed to draft an environmental policy⁴⁷¹. Sinohydro is advanced in terms of environmental policies, compared to other Chinese SOEs⁴⁷². Different from GEI, International Rivers and WWF did not implement groundwork such as the construction of a biogas pool in the Ban Chim village. Instead, they pressurised Sinohydro to make an environmental and social commitment in the destination country.

⁴⁷⁰ Sinohydro and Dongsay Company LTD, “Update of Environmental Impact Assessment,” September 2007.

⁴⁷¹ Pichamon Yeophantong, “China, Corporate Responsibility and the Contentious Politics of Hydropower Development” (The Global Economic Governance Programme, University of Oxford, 2013),

http://www.globaleconomicgovernance.org/sites/geg/files/Yeophantong_GEG%20WP%202013_82.pdf.

⁴⁷² IENGO officer 5 and IENGO officer 6, interview by author, face-to-face, July 23, 2015.

6.6 “Chinese experience” and South-South Cooperation: government, NGO, and SOE

The paradox of the Chinese experience, though, was that GEI’s own experience reflected the inexperience of Chinese government agencies. As far as the Lao-China was concerned, the Department of Foreign Assistance in MOFCOM was unfamiliar with the innovative approach of GEI to interweave sustainability with foreign aid. The original idea of establishing an information centre received little sympathy from MOFCOM officials, so was downsized and simplified to the supply of hardware (a building), instead of software (a platform to exchange information for environmental governance). What is clear is that from this is that the “Chinese experience” in the Lao-China Land project was contested because it did not serve the interests for the MOFCOM. This finding suggests the irony that the government-initiated catchphrase of “Chinese experience” cannot be realised by the Chinese government itself.

However, the fact that GEI used this concept to launch foreign aid policy is indicative of domestic group’s efforts to project an image different from that of MOFCOM and represents Chinese social forces who are environmentally and socially conscious. The “Chinese experience” engenders space for domestic actors to initiate and implement international cooperation because the concept itself is fragmented. The director of International Cooperation Office in the Academy of Macroeconomics Research in NDRC pinpoints concrete areas as testimony to Chinese experience: infrastructure; poverty reduction; scale effect during industrialisation; and cautious attitudes towards environmental issues. However, the defining feature of the Chinese experience is it must factor in other countries’ local conditions so as to be adapted to other countries, in other

words, the “Chinese experience” is a suggestion that every country must “cross the river by feeling the stones”, a rhetoric for trial and error⁴⁷³.

Behind the usage of the idea of Chinese experience is the common practice of the coalition between SOEs and ruling elites in the destination countries. Dauvergne observes that “both domestic and foreign firms continue to rely on networks of state and local allies to skirt regulations”⁴⁷⁴. The “Chinese experience”, as something to share between foreign company and the local ruling elites, justifies the profit-driven operation of Chinese SOEs and dilutes the fact of the purely commercial activity. The Chinese experience, contemplated by GEI, is sustainable land management and environmental legislation to ensure it. GEI’s experience creates a hurdle for SOEs like Sinohydro because the environmental regulations will deprive the opportunity for Chinese companies to work secretly with the local government and profit from lax environmental regulation. Hence, SOEs’ Chinese experience to build dams overrides GEI’s “Chinese experience” to pressure the government into sustainable land management.

Under the concept of “Chinese experience”, three elements are identified in the abovementioned analysis: information, market, and corporate social responsibility (CSR). Both MOFCOM and GEI agreed that the collection of information was to serve Chinese companies investing overseas. For example, Ms Jin Jiaman from GEI argued one of the biggest problems for Chinese companies investing on foreign territory was information asymmetry. The Lao-

⁴⁷³ NDRC officer 1, interview by author, face-to-face, March 13, 2016.

⁴⁷⁴ Peter Dauvergne and Peter Newell, “The Environmental Challenge of Loggers in the Asia-Pacific,” in *The Business of Global Environmental Governance*, ed. David L. Levy (Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 2005), p.191.

China Land project involved the Chinese government in the very beginning of collecting information about natural resources in Laos. The benefit of this approach was to transmit the information to Chinese enterprises and hence circumvent potential environmental risks. In the Lao-China project case, the relevance of information to foreign aid was contested. But as we proceed to the NN5 Biogas project later, what is more critical is the conflict between information and the private interest. In other words, the information collected in the Lao-China Land project may create a hurdle for the SOE to pursue its private interest.

The market was the common ground for GEI and MOFCOM. GEI's approach was to use the market mechanism to promote environmental protection in developing countries. Though the very idea of market mechanisms is not native to China, the insistence of economic development against the backdrop of rising environmental awareness is shared by various political players in China. The question, however, is who the market is supposed to serve? Even though both GEI and MOFCOM agreed that foreign aid helped Chinese companies' future investment by opening foreign markets, their targeted industries differed. The biggest benefactor of GEI's proposal is the timber industry because the information collected is concerned with the distribution of natural resources, forestry in particular, and the planning of conservation areas which would enlighten the selection of locations by Chinese timber enterprises. MOFCOM's major concerns were construction industries, however. As one officer in MOFCOM articulated clearly, the Western countries have occupied their territory by means of colonialism, and Chinese companies as latecomers must give destination countries foreign aid to open the market. Infrastructure

was seen as a good showcase industry and a way to exhibit the advanced technology and low cost of Chinese-invested projects. As a result, it is a convenient way to use the infrastructure industry to open the market.

CSR is particularly relevant in Chinese overseas investment in developing countries because of the insufficient environmental and social regulations in the destination countries. In developed countries, the strict environmental regulations raise the threshold of Chinese investment. Once Chinese enterprises are allowed to invest in developed countries, they are protected by local laws. In contrast, it is easier for Chinese enterprises to invest in developing countries. However, Chinese companies are vulnerable to political, environmental and social risks. As a consequence, practicing CSR is a way for Chinese companies to minimise the risks of investing in developing countries.

CSR is firstly deployed to link Chinese enterprises with the national image of the PRC. There is a consensus among Chinese officials, NGO groups, and Chinese enterprises' representatives that negative reports of any specific Chinese overseas investment tarnish the image of China as a country. In this sense, Chinese enterprises are regarded as Chinese ambassadors⁴⁷⁵. Based on the image of Chinese enterprises as ambassadors, CSR is further employed as a tool to exert pressure on SOEs and also for NGOs to play a part in Chinese overseas investment. Operating in the international business environment, SOEs are monitored by international organisations and foreign political groups. This is different from the domestic business environment in China where the local government protects, not pressurises, SOEs.

⁴⁷⁵ Peter Bosshard, "Is the World's Biggest Dam Builder Willing to Change?," *China Dialogue*, December 16, 2014, <https://www.chinadialogue.net/blog/7605-Is-the-world-s-biggest-dam-builder-willing-to-change-/en>.

The role of Chinese NGOs, therefore, is to facilitate SOE's entrance into a foreign market and demonstrate good practice. In the NN5 case, there was only one part-time member of staff attending to CSR-related matters, incommensurate with the ambition of social and environmental management as listed in the EMP and SAP. GEI offered hands-on practice in the biogas project to implement the commitment of Sinohydro in the NN5. Since the NN5 project, the CSR team was established and equipped with over twenty staff.

6.6.1 Logrolling

Two alliances are identified in the logrolling process, one between Sinohydro and GEI, and the other between international organisations and GEI. Sinohydro employed human power and hands-on experience of GEI to establish a good corporate image. Sinohydro needed assistance from GEI because it lacked experience, manpower and capacity. Outsourcing the biogas project in Ban Chim village to GEI established a good and detailed example of how to fulfil CSR and improve the livelihood of local communities. In exchange, GEI got an opportunity to directly operate in the NN5 project. The experience and lessons drawn from this case study were included in GEI's "integrated policy package", aimed to inform the environmental policy of Chinese overseas investment. Indeed, the NN5 case was included in the GEI publication *Going Global: the Environmental and Social Challenges of China's Investment, Trade and Aid Abroad*⁴⁷⁶.

⁴⁷⁶ Global Environmental Institute, *Going Global: The Environmental and Social Challenges of China's Investment, Trade and Aid Abroad* (Beijing: China Environmental Science Press, 2013).

Another alliance is between GEI and International Rivers. Both shared the belief that Chinese enterprises had responsibility for local community and the ecosystem in the destination country. International Rivers functioned as a pressure group and used the strategy of name and shame to raise Sinohydro's awareness of the environmental and social consequences of their overseas investment. Differently, GEI portrayed itself in the NN5 project as a service provider to Sinohydro. If International Rivers pressurised Sinohydro to make commitments, GEI's role was to fulfil them via hands-on project management. GEI sent experts to teach Ban Chim villagers how to use biogas and how to build biogas digesters. It printed leaflets, both in Chinese and Laotian, to disseminate knowledge in the deprived mountainous region in northern Laos.

The communication between GEI, the GoL and Ban Chim villagers remained unclear due to the language barrier as well as a lack of information. But broadly, the promotion of biofuel technology fitted the overall national energy strategy to safeguard energy security. Villagers in Ban Chim got free biogas digesters and learnt how to use them. According to GEI officer, the biogas project made life a lot easier for the Ban Chim villagers⁴⁷⁷. In the Biogas project, each interested party got what it wanted. The outcome was to use CSR to expand the business of Sinohydro in Laos. However, what is implied in GEI's operations in Laos from 2008 to 2011?

The contrast between the aborted Lao-China Land project and the praised Biogas project in the NN5 case raised two question: what is the role of GEI in foreign aid and foreign investment and whose interest is served under the strategic concept of the Chinese experience? The above analyses of these

two cases demonstrated that GEI as a Chinese NGO could play a part in assisting SOEs with the implementation of CSR. However, GEI's efforts to initiate a government-to-government cooperation of sustainable development were rendered in vain by MOFCOM. There is, therefore, a discursive hierarchy within the elements entailed in SSC, resulting from the relationship between foreign aid and foreign investment.

Foreign aid projects are aimed to clear barriers to Chinese companies' overseas investment. These barriers include Chinese companies being a late comer in the foreign market, the lack of international competitiveness of Chinese companies, and the standards set by developed countries which limit the scope of the economic activities of Chinese companies. In addition, hydropower companies like Sinohydro are "young in a commercial sense when compared to the centenarian oil and gas industries"⁴⁷⁸. Therefore, foreign aid projects are expected to be a model project demonstrating the capabilities and professional practice of Chinese companies as well as their low cost. In foreign aid projects, the recipient countries use the standards (e.g. technology) set by China and have a chance to compare the cost-benefit between China and Western countries. By showcasing that Chinese companies are capable and not as expensive as Western companies, the former could sell Chinese standards and win the trust of the destination countries⁴⁷⁹.

The relationship between foreign aid and foreign investment further sheds light on what SSC entails. Four discursive elements in SSC are identified in this chapter: Chinese experience, information, market, and CSR. Chinese

⁴⁷⁷ Kong 2012.

⁴⁷⁸ Dent 2012, p.567.

⁴⁷⁹ Ministry of Commerce official 2, interview by author, face-to-face, July 27, 2015.

experience, as frequently referred to by GEI in the Lao-China project, was contested. MOFCOM dismissed the very notion of a Chinese experience because the proposed project was not conventional, or in other words, MOFCOM had almost no experience in implementing a project of this kind. However, GEI perceived itself as having *experiences* as it had successfully launched another overseas project in Sri Lanka back in 2005. The experience of GEI includes how, as a Chinese NGO, it could operate overseas and establish a partnership with foreign governments. This is a powerful leverage for GEI to convince MOFCOM and the GoL of its capability and relevance to foreign aid projects. In sum, the Chinese experience serves the interest of GEI, but not that of MOFCOM. However, in the Biogas project, the Chinese experience served the interests of Sinohydro. It lowered the costs of Sinohydro to try a new project, even though it had little experience in community development in the destination country. Once the Chinese experience is translated into concrete value, it thus becomes an enabling factor. In other words, the reason why the Biogas project was successfully implemented was because the Chinese experience was where the interests of Sinohydro and GEI converged.

The discursive element of information is another disputed notion. Particularly when the information which benefits one project does not necessarily benefit the other. The Lao-China Land project was aimed at collecting information to serve the interests of the timber industry in China. GEI identified that information was the solution to the problem of illegal logging, and therefore, proposed to assist the Laotian government to survey the national land and natural resources. However, the primary concern of illegal logging was not the focus of MOFCOM. Furthermore, as illustrated in the NN5 project, the

information collected about the land and natural resources in Laos might create inconvenience for the hydropower industry. As International Rivers criticised, the EIA of the NN5 did not address the cumulative impacts of a cascade of dams (NN5 being one of them) on the environment. In fact, in the Validation Report submitted for the CDM application, the validator insisted that cumulative impact was not worth serious consideration⁴⁸⁰. It would be both an irony and embarrassment if the information collected in the Lao-China Land project sponsored by MOFCOM suggests that a series of Chinese-invested dams prior to the NN5 will aggregate generate negative impacts on the ecosystem and biodiversity in Laos. The safest option for MOFCOM was, as it did, to abort the inconvenient Lao-China Land project.

The above two elements, Chinese experience and information, are riddled with controversy. In contrast, the notions of the market and CSR were comparatively well-received. As explained earlier, for both MOFCOM and Chinese companies, the very idea of foreign aid is to gain access to the foreign market. As far as GEI is concerned, the mission of this social organisation was to provide market-based solutions to solve environmental problems. In the Lao-China land project, the revised grant proposal, as explained earlier, changed the focus of information to that of a “land use rights exchange market”. The market is where the interests of MOFCOM and GEI converge in the Lao-China Land project.

The fact that there is an emerging consensus on the importance of CSR poses an interest alliance between SOEs and environmental organisations like

⁴⁸⁰ Tania Lee, “Request for the CDM Executive Board to Review the Project 9038: Nam Ngum 5,” CDM: Form for Submission of “A Letter to the Board” (International Rivers, February 8, 2012), http://www.internationalrivers.org/files/attached-files/cdm_intlrivers_project9038.pdf.

GEI. On the one hand, the social and environmental responsibility emphasised in CSR pushes the enterprises to cooperate with environmental organisations, particularly when SOEs are in the early stage of establishing a CSR team and implementing CSR commitments. SOEs operating inside China rely on the Chinese government to deal with issues such as resettlement and compensation. Automatically, they replicate the way they conducted business domestically to overseas. This invites criticisms from international monitoring bodies. Moreover, the reliance on the government backfires if there is regime change. One example of this is the suspension of the Myitsone dam in Myanmar. The change of government renders government-business ties vulnerable and costly. As a consequence, SOEs must learn how to implement CSR commitments without overreliance on the government. The neutrality and capability of GEI helped SOEs with CSR and in the long term the economic interest. In turn, GEI secured its political interests.

In sum, what SSC entails in these two projects is defined by the market and CSR than by the Chinese experience and access to information. This serves the interest of MOFCOM and SOEs. As for GEI, its political interest is empowered in some respects and constrained in others by forging a partnership with the government of the destination country and Chinese SOEs.

6.7 China (in)experience and the Economic and Political Implication

In regards to these two cases, we see that 'Chinese experience' is predominantly economic, rather than political and is only remotely related to

environmental protection. Both the Ministry of Commerce and Sinohydro present themselves in the identity of businessmen, and have the perception that economic interest *is* national interest. However, this not only undermines the very essence of South-South Cooperation and replicates the Northern practice, but devalues the ‘Chinese experience’ which covers more than economic dimension. I interviewed the national technical advisor of foreign aid in Laos, Dr Khennevong⁴⁸¹, asking him what the Government of Laos wishes to learn from ‘Chinese experience’. He said:

One thing from my research and my work experience with the Ministry of Planning and Investment is that the Government of Laos wants to learn from China how to be a one-party state that manages the market-oriented economy. Whether it is successful or not is something else. What the government (of Laos) wants to prove to the world is that you do not need a multi-party country to manage its economy. The Lao government is strongly committed to managing a one-party state and meanwhile opening its economy. The government believes that Laos is a small country and it does not need a multi-party system. Look at China, with billions of people it can still manage.

This quote leads us to unpack the question of the ‘Chinese experience’ of what? For GEI, ‘Chinese experience’ seeks to use a market mechanism to solve environmental problems and influence policy-making in the current political system. This is linked with Chinese political actors’ ability to adapt what is learned from the Northern countries to China, seek a path suitable for China and other developing countries, and develop a policy package which can be applied to countries with similar problems with China. It is geared towards problem-solving and policy formulation. In contrast, for the Ministry of Commerce, ‘Chinese experience’ is a way to open foreign markets. It is more about other countries experiencing China’s foreign aid and consequently helping Chinese enterprises invest overseas. The insistence on the tied aid approach to tackling

⁴⁸¹ Phanthanousone Khennavong, interview by author, face-to-face, March 30, 2016.

the problem of the disadvantage of Chinese companies due to lack of experience is illustrated by one official from the Ministry of Commerce who stated⁴⁸²:

Western countries who have colonised recipient countries have developed a lot of experiences and have a strong presence in those countries. Host countries use the standards of Western countries which created hurdles for Chinese enterprises for purely commercial projects. Foreign aid helped Chinese companies to open the market by giving them something free. When the host countries experience cooperation with Chinese companies and realise that the quality is as good as that of Europe, then the market is wide open to Chinese investors.

As far as Sinohydro is concerned, 'Chinese experience' justifies its further overseas investment and facilitates long-term partnership with local government, creating a stable environment to generate profit.

All the jigsaws put together establish 'China's inexperience' in South-South Cooperation. GEI having and advocating 'Chinese experience' is excluded from making a contribution to South-South foreign aid project. The Ministry of Commerce, the major body supervising and approving South-South project, is not interested in the 'Chinese experience'. Sinohydro takes an instrumental approach to this ill-defined notion to maximise its benefits. This Chinese inexperience, together with the big scale of influx of Chinese workers and Chinese funding is impregnated with political and diplomatic ramifications. At the beginning of 2016, three cases of Chinese citizens being attacked in Laos drew attention from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, because this is highly unusual in "politically-stable Laos". However, the spokesperson denied that Chinese citizens were the target of attack⁴⁸³. Zhu Zhenming, an expert on

⁴⁸² Ministry of Commerce official 2, interview by author, face-to-face, July 27, 2015.

⁴⁸³ Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Waijiaobu Fayanren Hua Chunying Zhuchi Lixing Jizhehui 外交部发言人华春莹主持理性记者会[Spokesperson of Ministry of Foreign Affairs Hua Chunying Hosts Routine Press Conference]," March 24, 2016, http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/web/fyrbt_673021/t1350452.shtml.

Southeast Asia, does not rule out the possible scenario that local residents become dissatisfied with Chinese rapid and upscale investments in Laos⁴⁸⁴. Coincidentally, one of the incidents took place in a logging camp located in the same county as Ban Chim.

The reality of the 'Chinese inexperience' largely results from the domestic structure, the limited space of social organisations in the domestic domain cast a default limit to their ambitions and creative project overseas. Moreover, experiences of different political players are not abstracted to a model or a policy toolkit which can be emulated by other developing countries. Each ministry has its own experience and preference. Without coordination, the more projects Chinese political players conduct, the more fragmented 'Chinese experience' is.

6.8 Conclusion

The discussion of the 'Chinese experience' reveals that the sphere of environmental foreign relations is fragmented as the stage is shared by a plurality of actors which convey different national images to the international community. The increasingly salient notion in South-South Cooperation epitomises the ambition of various Chinese groups to prove the capabilities and intentions of Southern countries to influence the world order, and also suggests the potential of China to take up the leadership role. The binary between the

⁴⁸⁴ Ou Yang and Wang Zhang, "Zhongguo Gongmin Zai Laowo Zao Qiangji Waijiaobu:yi Tichu Jiaoshe Yaoqiu Yancheng Xiongshou 中国公民在老挝遭枪击外交部已提出交涉要求严惩凶手 [Chinese Citizens Were Attacked in Laos, MOFA Urges to Severely Punish Criminals]," *Global Times*, March 25, 2016, <http://world.huanqiu.com/exclusive/2016-03/8767721.html>.

North and South is less relevant than the dichotomy between the state and society as the “Chinese experience” comprises and absorbs the best practices from the developed world. Both projects have traces of Northern practice, the Lao-China Land project modelling upon the Sino-Japan Friendship Environmental Protection Centre and the biogas project working on the northern concept of corporate social responsibilities. The binary between state and society is particularly visible regarding the question of ‘whose experience’ matter in the rhetoric of ‘Chinese experience’. It seems, from the case studies that ministerial experience and even inexperience is more important than the experience of social organisations, no matter how relevant the latter is to the national strategy. The binary between the SOE and social organisation is less distinct, as the latter functions as a service provider to the former, facilitating the commercial interests of Chinese SOEs investing overseas.

This finding suggests that SSC projects were dominated by economic concerns, despite the fact that both of the analysed projects appeared to pay some attention to environmental concerns which are aimed to achieve diplomatic objectives. The comparison of these two case studies challenges the very assumption that South-South Cooperation is a pre-requisite for building an environmentally-friendly society as SSC is not fundamentally different from the collaboration between the South and the North. The logic chain between South-South cooperation and sustainability is weak and requires a more careful exploration of how sustainability can fix the uneven power distribution between developed and developing countries. Only where environmental protection is attached to the concrete interests of certain powerful domestic groups can South-South Cooperation transcend the deadlock experienced in the

North-South Cooperation: the pressing need of economic development and the equally pressing call to solve the environmental crisis.

The two SSC projects further confirm the limitations of institutions in terms of reflecting and coalescing various interests of domestic groups. For instance, GEI circumvents official procedures for approving foreign aid projects with the assistance of its interpersonal network in the Lao-China Land case. The collaboration between GEI and Sinohydro reveals that the institutional setup of CSR did not exist until GEI intervened in the overseas project. The Chinese experience, in general, is weakly institutionalised primarily because it is open to various interpretations.

The consequence of this weak institutionalisation is the ability of interest groups to shape the focus of SSC, thus highlighting the importance of identity and strategic concepts in decision-making. Both GEI projects lean towards economic logic rather than environmental concerns for two reasons. First, SSC-related affairs are allocated under MOFCOM, particularly foreign aid and foreign assistance. The focus of MOFCOM is intrinsically about commerce and trade. It is neither in the expertise nor in the interest of MOFCOM to represent environmental interests in overseas business projects. The monopolisation of MOFCOM in SSC is changing, however. In 2014, the Chinese government intended to establish a South-South Fund to deal with climate change, as confirmed by the vice-chair of the National Development and Reform Commission⁴⁸⁵. In 2015, President Xi Jinping announced that the Chinese government would allocate \$3.1 billion to establish a Climate Change SSC Fund

⁴⁸⁵ Qin Liu, "How NGOs Can Help Chinese Firms Do Better Overseas," *China Dialogue*, September 5, 2014, <https://www.chinadialogue.net/article/show/single/en/7292-How-NGOs-can-help-Chinese-firms-do-better-overseas>.

and, furthermore, a centre to share the experiences of countries⁴⁸⁶. This change may be indicative of the beginning of setting up an institutional infrastructure to effectively rationalise and integrate domestic preferences.

The second reason why identity becomes a mechanism to represent domestic interests is linked to the semiotic aspect of “experience” which tends to be idiosyncratic. The question of whose ‘experience’ matters depends on the preferences and interests of related domestic groups. As Lancaster points out, many vested interest groups in China are ‘involved in the existing aid system which is one reason why such systems throughout the world have usually proven hard to change in fundamental ways’⁴⁸⁷. Hence, understanding how different domestic interest groups work under the South-South Cooperation framework to obtain their parochial interests is one direction for the research community.

The different identities of GEI explain why it failed in the foreign aid project but succeeded in the foreign investment one. The Lao-China Land Project positions GEI as a globalist player which uses the Chinese government’s ambition to become a leader to protect the environment in Laos. In contrast, the collaboration between GEI and Sinohydro depicts the former as a trustworthy Chinese social organisation which facilitates the overseas expansion of the business of a Chinese SOE. Although GEI attempted to persuade the officials in MOFCOM that the land project would eventually benefit the Chinese timber industry, the bureaucratic mind-set and the practice of routine fail to reflect this novel representation and approach to foreign aid. However, the creative

⁴⁸⁶ BBC, “Xi Jinping: China Establishes South- South Cooperation Fund Worth \$2 Billion,” *BBC 中文网*, September 26, 2015,

suggestion of GEI is adopted by Sinohydro in the NN5 dam construction. The differing results suggest that GEI's experience is filtered through its identity which further designates specific experience to SOE's business interests.

The constructivist utilitarianist approach to SSC points to the question of how to reconcile Chinese NGOs' identity and efficiently incorporate their experiences to the broad notion of the Chinese experience. It seems that GEI might be a bridge to channel the demands of the Lao government and the supply of the Chinese government. Furthermore, GEI represents a very different and unique identity from the Chinese government agency. In the eyes of destination country players, Chinese NGOs may be more neutral and professional than the Chinese government, yet more knowledgeable of the Chinese situation compared to their Western counterparts. Most importantly, GEI as an environmental NGO can effectively mediate the developmental issue and environmental concerns. The incorporation of societal actors' interest requires not only institutional recognition, but more importantly, the acceptance of their unique identities.

http://www.bbc.com/zhongwen/trad/world/2015/09/150926_un_xijinping.
⁴⁸⁷ Lancaster 2007, p.6.

Chapter 7 Composite Ideology of Ecological Civilisation and interest re-grouping through norm-setting

7.1 Main argument

This chapter examines the role of domestic groups in China's engagement in international environmental cooperation from the perspective of norm-setting. In global environmental governance, China has been a follower and a "student" trying to benefit from foreign funding and the latest technology as well as being expected to fulfil its commitments such as cutting carbon emissions and enforcing environmental regulations. The notion of "ecological civilisation" (eco-civilisation) appears to challenge the liberal environmentalism in the global environmental governance. Furthermore, China's interest in norms development and promotion indicate that it is taking a proactive role in the international system⁴⁸⁸. Eco-civilisation contains elements of environmental diplomacy and the Chinese experience which are discussed in the previous two chapters, and furthermore, it foregrounds the "Chinese-ness" in the discourse. It is regarded as a composite ideology and interest groups compete for its interpretation so as to make this ideology in favour of their respective interests. The proposal of eco-civilisation reflects interest-regrouping and the rise of weak interest groups. In this chapter, interest groups are MEP, leftist intellectuals, and economically backward provinces.

⁴⁸⁸ Alden and Large 2015, p.125.

7.2 Context and Structure of the chapter

China remains low-profile until a notion which appears to be distinctively Chinese, albeit vaguely-defined, draws the attention from the international society: ecological civilisation (*shengtai wenming* 生态文明), or eco-civilisation for short⁴⁸⁹. Eco-civilisation was officially introduced in 2007 by the then president, Hu Jintao, in the Seventeenth Communist Party of China (CPC) Congress report in the section of “new requirement to realise a well-off society”⁴⁹⁰. Furthermore, in the Eighteenth CPC Congress, in 2012, the Party Constitution was revised and one noticeable revision was the inclusion of “eco-civilisation”. This marked its elevation to a prominent place in the overall blueprint of “the cause of Socialism with Chinese characteristics”, together with the goals of economic, political, cultural and social development⁴⁹¹.

This promotion of eco-civilisation signals “a peak” of the Party’s rhetoric on environmental issues, and reflects changing attitudes of the ruling elites towards environmental problems⁴⁹². The first environmental slogan which was agreed at the first environmental protection conference in 1973 called for “overall and rational planning, reduction of harm, a reliance on the masses, and the task to protect the environment and enrich the people”⁴⁹³. A decade later, environmental protection was confirmed as a basic national policy. The catch

⁴⁸⁹ Sam Geall, “Interpreting Ecological Civilisation (part One),” *China Dialogue*, July 6, 2015, <https://www.chinadialogue.net/article/show/single/en/8018-Ecological-civilisation-vision-for-a-greener-China-part-one->.

⁴⁹⁰ People’s Daily, “Hu Jintao Zai Zhongguo Gongchandang Di Shiqici Quanguo Daibiao Dahui Shang de Baogao’胡锦涛在中国共产党第是其次全国代表大会上的报告 [Hu Jintao’s Report in the Seventeenth National Congress of the Communist Party of China]” (Beijing, October 25, 2007), <http://cpc.people.com.cn/GB/104019/104099/6429414.html>.

⁴⁹¹ Eighteenth Party Congress Secretariat staff, “Shibada dui dangzhang zuole naxie xiugai”十八大对党章作了哪些修改[What changes are made to the Party Constitution], interview by Xinhua News Agency, 2012, <http://dangshi.people.com.cn/n/2012/1128/c234123-19723444.html>.

⁴⁹² Meng Si 2012.

⁴⁹³ Ibid.

phrase in the 1990s was “sustainable development”, as highlighted by the ninth Five Year Plan (FYP) which was confirmed sustainable as a national development strategy. The new millennium saw an ever-growing vocabulary of green discourses such as the “circular economy” (2003), green GDP (2003), the “resource-conserving and environmentally-friendly society” (2005), and a low carbon economy (2010). The notion of eco-civilisation appears to be an encompassing ideology which aims to integrate all of these existing approaches to environmental protection within an overall green discourse.

The emphasis on eco-civilisation sends two signals, primarily to domestic and the other to international audiences. For domestic purposes, it is a signal that the Party Central and those in the high echelon are determined to ameliorate environmental crisis by defining environmental protection in a decidedly political frame, which ties the fate of the ruling party with the achievement of eco-civilisation. As far as the international audience is concerned, the Chinese government attempts to respond to the expectation from the international society of its contribution to global environmental governance. Furthermore, the hope projected on eco-civilisation is to reverse the negative images of China perceived by the international community. This point was made quite vividly by one of my interviewees, who talked of the change from China as a “bad boy” to a “responsible power”⁴⁹⁴. The attention of building a good image for China is a top priority of foreign policy strategy under the leadership of Xi Jinping⁴⁹⁵.

⁴⁹⁴ Party diplomat, interview by author, face-to-face, April 14, 2016.

⁴⁹⁵ Ibid.

Whereas the signal is there, however, the message is intentionally vague. Since the concept was proposed in 2007, the most commonly asked question is still “what does ecological civilisation mean”⁴⁹⁶? Meanwhile, domestic groups have started promoting this concept to the outside world, including ministries, the academic community, and municipal governments. This kind of external promotion started to occur even before the Ministry of Foreign Affairs lists eco-civilisation on its agenda, not to mention the development of a coherent stance on norm-setting in global environmental governance⁴⁹⁷. This leads to a situation in which domestic debates on a catchphrase of eco-civilisation have an impact on the international community and non-traditional diplomatic actors start to promote a Chinese norm before a domestic consensus is arrived at. Furthermore, the promotion of eco-civilisation provides an illuminating case study to understand the question of the rationale of domestic actors to engage in international environmental cooperation, in the absence of international pressure. It has the potential to bring new light to the debate of to what degree international pressure or domestic drives provide a sound explanation of the decision to cooperate.

This chapter explores such questions by looking at why certain domestic groups are motivated to promote the political slogan to the outside world and how their efforts influence China’s engagement in international environmental cooperation. It first examines eco-civilisation through the lens of a composite ideology which engenders opportunities for different groups to deploy for their

⁴⁹⁶ It is particularly striking when I was invited to an academic conference in Peking University in 2015 where the most prominent scholars and officials gave presentations about ecological civilisation and after each speaker’s presentation, the question of the definition of eco-civilisation emerged repeatedly.

⁴⁹⁷ Party diplomat, interview by author, face-to-face, April 14, 2016.

own purposes. The second part uses three case studies for a close look at the interest, resources, and strategies for concerned groups. The findings suggest that norm promotion is a by-product of domestic groups competing for political and economic resources. Lastly, the chapter attempts to address the question of the effectiveness of domestic groups' efforts to promote a norm to the international audience.

7.3 Ecological Civilisation as a Composite Ideology

Over the course of my fieldwork, I have explored the very question of whether ecological civilisation is a contested ideology. On the one hand, a Chinese academic I interviewed –a leading expert in eco-civilisation in Peking University–asserts that eco-civilisation is an ideology to justify the legitimacy of the current leadership and the ruling party⁴⁹⁸; on the other hand, an official from Ministry of Environmental Protection insists that “regarding eco-civilisation as an ideology only ruins this idea” because it provides fertile soil for the growth of the conspiracy theory that China has the ambition to export its civilisation and ideology to the outside world⁴⁹⁹. The very debate revolving around whether eco-civilisation is an ideology does, ironically, verify that the political slogan of eco-civilisation is, on many fronts, an ideology, more so, if we examine this concept against the features of “composite ideology” discussed in the theory chapter.

⁴⁹⁸ Chinese academic from Peking University, interview by author, Wechat, April 5, 2016.

⁴⁹⁹ Ministry of Environmental Protection official 2, interview by author, face-to-face, April 28, 2016.

Briefly recalling what is discussed in Chapter 2, a composite ideology is a “congeries of ideas connected to each other to form what are purported (usually wrongly) to be logically coherent intellectual wholes”⁵⁰⁰. Smith identifies five characteristics of a composite ideology. The first two commonplaces of a composite ideology are a loose logical connection and a circular pattern of reasoning and justification. The constituent ideas within a composite ideology “were originally independent of each other”⁵⁰¹ but supported each other to the extent that the ideology as an intellectual whole is insulated from external evidence and takes on a life of its own.

The essential conflict eco-civilisation aims to address is between economic growth development and environmental protection and this conflict is reinterpreted in the rhetoric of eco-civilisation as a harmonious coexistence. This can be seen in a defining policy document of eco-civilisation is “Opinions of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China and the State Council on Further Promoting the Development of Ecological Civilisation” (or “the Opinions”) introduced in 2015 which “systematically addresses the obstacles to effective policy by setting out standards, mechanisms and assessments”⁵⁰² and moreover, provides a timetable and roadmap to implement eco-civilisation⁵⁰³. Included under the banner of eco-civilisation are the national policies of “resource conservation and environmental protection”, “green, circular, and low-carbon development”, “ecological culture”, “green lifestyle”, and “beautiful

⁵⁰⁰ Smith 1986, p.14.

⁵⁰¹ Ibid.

⁵⁰² Geall 2015.

⁵⁰³ NDRC, “Xu Shaoshi Jiedu ‘Guanyu Jiakuai Tuijin Shengtai Wenming Jianshe de yijian”徐绍史解读关于加快推进生态文明建设的意见[Xu Shaoshi Interpreting ‘Opinions of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China and the State Council on Further Promoting the

China”⁵⁰⁴. The conceptual hierarchy within eco-civilisation is listed in the “basic principle” section: “resource conservation and environmental protection” is the guideline which is realised by the means of “green, circular, and low-carbon development”, motivated by “deeper reform and innovation” with a combined efforts of the market and the state, and supported by ecological culture which incorporates eco-civilisation into the Socialist core value system. This narrative is a discursive compromise in which both environmental protection and economic development are priorities that can mutually benefit each other over the course of constructing eco-civilisation.

This assumption of a co-existence of economic growth and environmental protection leads to the third and fourth features of a composite ideology: usage of simplistic ideas and the effect of displacement. The simplification of originally complicated ideas is aimed to achieve the “low common denominator of understanding” to produce “clear-cut, simple diagnoses of what is wrong with society and how, in straightforward, pragmatic terms, things can be changed”⁵⁰⁵. To make the simplistic ideas convincing is to distract the audience’s attention to another time or other places. Smith refers to imperialist displacement as a geographic focus which justified overseas colonies in the Nazi imperialism ideology. The displacement regarding eco-civilisation is, however, cognitive, reflected in the salience of traditional Chinese culture which is another important rhetoric constituent of eco-civilisation. The upshot of this

Development of Ecological Civilization’],” May 6, 2015,
<http://money.163.com/15/0506/10/AOU6L8UB00253B0H.html>.

⁵⁰⁴ State Council, “*Zhonggongzhongyang Guowuyuan Jiakuai Tujin Shengtai Wenming Jianshe de Yijian*”中共中央国务院关于加快推进生态文明建设的意见 [*Opinions of the Central Committee of CCP and the State Council on Accelerating the Promotion of Ecological Civilisation*, 2015, http://paper.people.com.cn/rmrb/html/2015-05/06/nw.D110000renmrb_20150506_3-01.htm.

cognitive displacement is a reframing of the environmental problem through the lens of culture, which not only legitimates a culturally-specific solution but also establishes a culturally-rooted confidence in the ruling party to manage the environmental crisis.

The way Chinese culture is treated in eco-civilisation echoes the third and fourth features of a composite ideology. The cultural essence of eco-civilisation has changed from being the unity between human beings and nature (*tianrenheyi* 天人合一) to the so-called “two mountains theory” (*Liangshan lun* 两山论) advocated by Xi Jinping. “*Tianrenheyi*”, as a version of Confucian thought, has been widely discussed and debated. The linkage between “*tianrenheyi*” and eco-civilisation is made manifest in the political discussion by Pan Yue in his article “Eco-Civilisation will Promote the Construction of Socialism with Chinese Characteristics”⁵⁰⁶. Yet, different interpretations of this Confucian thought lead to a contradictory conclusion regarding the relationship between “*tianrenheyi*” and effective environmental governance.

Li Zehou, a reputed Chinese Marxist philosopher, applies this ancient philosophy in the context of an industrialising China. He equates *tianrenheyi* with humanisation in the Marxist language. He predicts that *tianrenheyi* fits the era of post-industrialisation in which nature is restored and protected with the advancement of material civilisation⁵⁰⁷. Li Zehou’s understanding of *tianrenheyi* through the lens of Marxism links this ancient wisdom with morality to

⁵⁰⁵Smith, p.15.

⁵⁰⁶ Yue 岳 Pan 潘, “Shengtai Wenming Jiang Cujin Zhongguo Tese Shehui Zhuyi jianshe’生态文明将促进中国特色社会主义建设[Eco-Civilisation Will Promote the Construction of Socialism with Chinese Characteristics],” *Xinhua News Agency Outlook Weekly*, October 22, 2007.

⁵⁰⁷ Zehou 泽厚 Li 李, “Zhongguo Gudai sixiangshi”*中国古代思想史*[*History of Chinese Ancient History*] (Beijing: People’s Press, 1985), p.321.

manufacture a global image of this Confucian state as a moral power in terms of environmental protection. However, one cannot take the connection between *tianrenheyi* and environmental government as granted. The Nobel Peace Prize laureate Liu Xiaobo contends that *tianrenheyi* and environmental protection is of fundamental contradictions⁵⁰⁸. Liu criticises Li Zehou's far-fetched efforts to revitalise Chinese tradition with Marxism and ignores the close tie between *tianrenheyi* and the endorsement of the feudal society. Liu insists that *tianrenheyi* requires an absolute obedience to nature and generates an over reliance of ancient Chinese on emperors. Modern environmentalism acknowledges that human beings are separate from nature, and recognise the conflicts between human beings and their environs. Consequently, environmentalism advocates a thorough understanding of nature and explores how nature can benefit the survival of human beings. *Tianrenheyi*, on the other hand, cultivates passive Chinese incapable of facing the challenges from nature. Locating Liu's argument to environmental pollution in current China, this passivity of Chinese is not a solution to but a problem of environmental crisis. The intellectual debate among two greatest thinkers in the contemporary China indicates that ancient wisdom is usually massaged to fit the political agenda and each interpretation is more political than cultural.

A further simplification of the cultural dimension in eco-civilisation is Xi Jinping's two mountains theory translated as "lucid waters and lush mountains are invaluable assets", employing the images of "golden and silver mountains" and "green mountains" in the original Chinese phrase to convey the belief that

⁵⁰⁸ Xiaobo 刘晓波, "Xuanze de Pipan:yu Sixiang Lingxiu Li Zehou de duihua" 选择的批判: 与思想领袖李泽厚的对话 [Criticism of the Choice: Dialogues with Li Zehou] (Taipei: East Books,

economy and the environment can harmoniously coexist and that a good environment can be translated into an economic advantage⁵⁰⁹. The two mountain theory is quickly echoed in the academic community, and by local governors, entrepreneurs, and other domestic political actors.

The last characteristic of a composite ideology is that it is oriented towards action. The relationship between action and ideology is symbiotic in that ideas justify actions, and actions further legitimate ideas. In other words, the action is both a means and an end for political ideology. Eco-civilisation calls for local governments to explore a new development path and encourages demonstration zones to generate a template of eco-civilisation guided growth. In this respect it is significant that the name of such zones changes from “Ecology demonstration zone” (*shengtai shifanqu* 生态示范区) in 1995 to echo the national strategy of sustainable development at that time, through “ecology construction demonstration zone” (*shengtai jianshe shifanqu* 生态建设示范区) in 2009, to “ecological civilisation construction demonstration zone” (*shengtai wenming jianshe shifanqu* 生态文明建设示范区) approved by the

1987), p.229.

⁵⁰⁹ Xi Jinping has deployed this phrase when he was the governor of Zhejiang province. This can be seen in the book *zhijiang xinyu*, which compiles 232 short speeches of Xi Jinping in Zhejiang Daily. Xi first uses this phrase in 2003, which was not linked to ecological civilisation at all, to argue that environmental protection relies on voluntary behaviours. The more relevant article was written in 2005 using exactly the same phrase. In this article, Xi suggests that it is possible to make “green waters and mountains” into “gold and silver mountains”. In other words, the environmental and ecological advantage can be translated into eco-agriculture, eco-industry, and eco-tourism. Consequently, natural resources can generate fortune for provincial governments such as Zhejiang. He further links this rhetoric to “scientific outlook on development” in two of his articles written in 2006. He explains that this rhetoric reflects the transformation of economy growth mode. “The ‘two mountains’ theory is an ecological culture and a concept of development”. See Jinping Xi, “*Zhijiang xinyu*”之江新语[Zhijiang Comments] (Zhejiang People's Publishing House, 2007), p.21, p.148, p.174, p.202.

Party Central in 2013 to implement ecological civilisation⁵¹⁰. This zonal dimension of eco-civilisation reflects the cluster effect which is a strategy deployed in developmental states in East Asia, including China⁵¹¹.

In addition to such changes, the associated demonstration projects are fragmented and ministries have overlapping responsibilities and functions. Although the Ministry of Environmental Protection is in charge of the “ecological civilisation construction demonstration zone”, six other ministries are allocated with the tasks to approve and facilitate projects. The National Development and Reform Committee, Ministry of Finance, Ministry of National Land and Resources, Ministry of Water Resources, Ministry of Agriculture, and the State Forestry Administration all jointly approve, oversee and monitor “ecological civilisation pilot demonstration zones” (*shengtai wenming xianxing shifanqu* 生态文明先行示范区), aiming to generate a template that can be replicated and emulated nationwide. The co-existence of differently-titled demonstration projects gives us an inkling of what happens when a political slogan is hastily converted into action through the implementation of projects.

The trajectory of eco-civilisation as a composite ideology is different from Smith’s example of how German imperialist ideology developed in the period of late-industrialisation. What is distinct in this case is the signalling from the above. Once eco-civilisation is articulated by the highest authority, the President, different groups study the essence of a particular phrase and turn a slogan into concrete policies and seek benefits from the new catchphrase. It is

⁵¹⁰ Ganjie 干杰 Li 李, “Shiying Xinchangtai Lizu Zhuzhendi:yi Gaige Chuangxin Tuidong Shengtai Wenming Buduan Tisheng’适应新常态 立足主阵地 以改革创新推动生态文明水平不断提升 [Adapt to New Normal, Stand on the Main Battlefield: Promote Ecological Civilisation Thorough Reform and Innovation]” (Ecological Civilisation Forum Chengdu, Chengdu, 2014).

⁵¹¹ Dent 2012, p.237.

necessary to clarify that domestic groups do not shape the meaning of eco-civilisation from the beginning. Instead, it is in the process of cognitive learning, interpretation and implementation that the preferences of certain groups are reflected in eco-civilisation.

7.4 Interests, coalition, and strategies

7.4.1 Signalling from above

To understand why the Communist Party leaders signal the importance of eco-civilisation, it is important to examine how it can be used to appeal to interest groups with various material interests. The most visible and direct link is found between President Xi Jinping's family members and the green industry. Xi Jinping's second wife, Peng Liyuan, has been the anti-smoking ambassador since 2009⁵¹². The brother of Xi Jinping, Xi Yuanping, claims the title of the President of International Energy Conservation Environmental Protection Association⁵¹³. His niece, Hiu Ng, is one founding member of Fairklima Website which specialises in strategic social responsibility, low carbon real estate, sustainable infrastructure, and sustainable financial systems⁵¹⁴. Xi's older sister, Qi Qiaoqiao, has invested in the field of real estate but her most successful investment is Hiconics Drive Technology Co., Ltd, together with her daughter,

⁵¹² Deng Londa, "Scientists Team up to Cut Smoking," *China Daily USA*, April 19, 2016, http://usa.chinadaily.com.cn/epaper/2016-04/19/content_24660248.htm.

⁵¹³ Willy Wo-Lap Lam, *Chinese Politics in the Era of Xi Jinping: Renaissance, Reform, Or Retrogression?* (Routledge, 2015), p.39.

Zhang Yannan. Hiconics is an expert in energy conservation technology and Zhang holds 8% of the stock of Hiconics with an investment of RMB4.35 million. The value of this company has quadrupled since 2009⁵¹⁵.

The connection between Xi Jinping's family and the green industry does not, however, suggest that his determination to promote eco-civilisation is purely self-motivated. In fact, Xi has insisted that his family members should keep a distance from their investments under his leadership⁵¹⁶. However, it can also be argued that environmental policy is less sensitive than many other areas because it does not appear to present a direct conflict between the of interests of the president and his family and the public good, which is to develop clean industry and serve the cause of environmental protection. This poses an intriguing situation in which the national leaders' family interest is no longer in sharp contrast with those of the public. This seems to be a departure from the era of Jiang Zemin and Li Peng in which the national leaders' family and friends monopolised oil and coal industries, constituting a special vested interest group whose interests were in direct conflict with the public good.

Another motive for the leadership to promote eco-civilisation is that it is linked to Xi Jinping's determination to consolidate his power. From this perspective, eco-civilisation is a means to facilitate Xi's flagship anti-corruption campaign, which is used to purge rivals from the Party. A vigorous discussion of this linkage of environmental protection and elite power struggle was thus triggered by an influential documentary film, released on February 28, 2015,

⁵¹⁴ "FairKlima Capital," accessed May 23, 2016, <https://www.linkedin.com/company/fairklima-capital>.

⁵¹⁵ Yu 瑜 Gao 高, "'Zhongnanhai Yinggai Chengwei Caichan Gongshi de chuangkou'中南海应该成为财产公示的窗口[Zhongnanhai Must Be the Window to Publicise the Personal Wealth]," *China in Perspective*, June 17, 2012, <http://www.chinainperspective.com/ArtShow.aspx?AID=16746>.

called *Under the Dome*⁵¹⁷. The 103-minute documentary on China's smog received 75 million clicks on Chinese video streaming sites within one day. Chai's documentary pinpoints the "culprit" to be responsible for the chronic air pollution and public health crisis: the energy sector, in particular coal and oil. It explains that 60% of air pollution in China results from burning coal and oil. Eco-civilisation thus becomes the site of a battle between public health and vested interests. "Under the Dome" opens the Pandora box of interest group conflicts, identifying the tug of war between oil and coal cliques and the public environmental interests. It was shown three days before the annual meeting of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference and five days before the annual meeting of National People's Congress. This timing fed speculation that Chai's project is intimately linked to Xi's political agenda.

The documentary reminds people of the downfall of Zhou Yongkang, the former member of the Standing Committee of the Politburo. Zhou has been described by the *Financial Times* as "untouchable and all-powerful", dominating a sprawling network in the energy and oil industry, national security system, and in Sichuan province⁵¹⁸. The demise of Zhou exposed the exclusive and secretive nature of the oil industry and verified the intimate collision between money and politics. He had been the *de facto* boss of the China National Petroleum Corporation (CNPC) and had taken advantage of his position to

⁵¹⁶ Ibid.

⁵¹⁷ Jing 静 Chai 柴, "Qiongdi zhixia" 穹顶之下 *Under the Dome*, 2015, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rB6TA5g7Pg0>.

⁵¹⁸ Caixin, "'Zhou Yongkang de Hong Yu Hei 44'周永康的红与黑四十四‘你懂的’[The Red and Black of Zhou Yongkang, No.44]," *Caixin*, October 22, 2014, <http://china.caixin.com/2014-10-22/100742048.html>.

benefit his family⁵¹⁹. Zhou was positioned at the heart of the oil industry and nurtured almost unrivalled corruption⁵²⁰. The consequence of Zhou's disgrace, whether intended or unintended, is that a vested interest group that opposes a strict environmental policy and its enforcement was shattered and a process of re-grouping is under way.

The Hong Kong-based commentator, Joseph Lian Yizheng, sheds some light on this process when he observes that the Communist Party uses factional power struggle to push forward environmental protection. He warns that the use of environmental protection as a means to achieve ultimate authority is not sustainable because the craving for "unlimited money and power" renders environmental protection as another hotbed for corruption⁵²¹. A legitimate question is whether toppling down vested interest groups in the polluted industry is driven by the public interest, or reflects efforts to find another investment sector, the green industry in this case, to maximise the red capital. The combination of red capital and green industry makes it even more urgent to emphasise the normative dimension of eco-civilisation and highlight its salience to the public good instead of merely narrow interest. This encourages political actors to volunteer to emphasise the normative dimension of eco-civilisation.

⁵¹⁹ "How Much Wealth Had Zhou Yongkang's Family Amassed before the Former Security Tsar's Fall?," *South China Morning Post*, accessed May 23, 2016, <http://www.scmp.com/news/china/article/1568634/keeping-it-family>.

⁵²⁰ Caixin Datanews, "Zhou Yongkang de Ren Yu cai'周永康的人与财[The Network and Wealth of Zhou Yongkang]," November 17, 2014, <http://datanews.caixin.com/2014/zhoushicailu/index.html>.

⁵²¹ Joseph Yizheng 乙錚 Lian 練, "Jie Quandou Gao Huanbao Kao Zhuanzhi Shi Nancheng'借權鬥搞環保 靠專制事難成[Use Power Struggle to Protect the Environment, Dictatorship Would Not Help]," 信報財經新聞, March 5, 2015, <http://www1.hkej.com/dailynews/commentary/article/1000010/%E5%80%9F%E6%AC%8A%E9%AC%A5%E6%90%9E%E7%92%B0%E4%BF%9D+%E9%9D%A0%E5%B0%88%E5%8B%8B%E4%BA%8B%E9%9B%A3%E6%88%90>.

Understanding the nature of the discourse they articulate thus requires an overview of their motives.

7.4.2 The Rise of New Interest Groups

In the process of interest re-grouping, the rise of new interest groups may indicate an opportunity for conventionally weak groups to enlarge their share of power and benefits. To understand what is meant by “strong” and “weak” in this context, it is useful to introduce actors in pairs, each of member of which attempts to take advantage of eco-civilisation to pursue their preferences. The first pair is on the ministerial level, namely the Ministry of Environmental Protection and the National Development and Reform Commission. Both are important ministries that operationalise eco-civilisation policies but the former has less power than the latter in the decision-making process. This is because the NDRC has an institutional advantage over MEP in formulating policy, shown by the fact that it drafted the abovementioned “Opinions” document.

The director of NDRC, Xu Shaoshi, is also one of the co-leaders in the Reform Taskforce for the Promotion of Economic Development and Ecological Progress within the “Central Leading Group for Comprehensive Deepening Reforms (*zhongyang quanmian shenhua gaige lingdao xiaozu* 中央全面深化改革领导小组)” set up by Xi Jinping in 2013⁵²². In other words, Xu Shaoshi, as the director of NDRC, is directly in charge of eco-civilisation policy on the highest

level, whereas the Minister of Environmental Protection does not enjoy this privilege. However, the tremendous power enjoyed by Xu Shaoshi, does not automatically determine NDRC's institutional leadership position in shaping and promoting eco-civilisation. There is, in fact, no document from Party Central to indicate which ministry is the leader in the project of eco-civilisation. This lack of a leader, moreover, generates hope within the MEP that it might itself be the leader, as its functions and responsibilities are self-evidently related to eco-civilisation⁵²³.

The second pair of actors is composed of leftist intelligentsia and bureaucrats. The former include scholars with expertise in Eco-Marxism, Eco-Socialism, and post-modernism. They are academics who contend that the theorising of the slogan through the lens of Marxism and postmodernism is critical for maintaining the political legitimacy of the Communist Party of China. The bureaucrats, however, distance themselves from ideological interpretation or colouring the political slogan, because they deem ideology to be irrelevant, or even a hindrance, to policy making. In terms of policy-making, academics are in a weaker position. Yet they can somehow incorporate their ideas into the policy framework through informal channels. The academic community has no interest in competing with bureaucrats. Instead, it is political influence that they pursue.

The third pair of actors shifts to the local level: local governors and officials in the central government. One of the central messages of eco-civilisation is to transform the economic development template in ways that can

⁵²² Ningzhu Zhu, "President Xi to Head Leading Group for Overall Reform," December 30, 2013, http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/china/2013-12/30/c_133007127.htm.

create an opportunity for impoverished provinces to catch up with their prosperous counterparts. The most typical example is Guizhou province which has been at the frontline of experimenting with eco-civilisation. This has involved associating with the new slogan, and attracting international attention by holding a trendy eco-civilisation themed conference. Eco-civilisation thus becomes a card to play for boosting local economic development with the assistance of a good environment. Their practice seems to be a perfect illustration of how Xi Jinping interprets eco-civilisation as “green mountains and waters are gold and silver mountains 绿水青山就是金山银山”.

7.5 Bureaucratic interests: Ministry of Environmental Protection and National Reform and Development Commission

Ministries are thus at the forefront to operationalise eco-civilisation. Just as when environmental protection was introduced to China in 1972 and then scattered to various ministries as shown in graph 7-1, eco-civilisation now penetrates to a plurality of ministries and to a large degree replicates the existing structure of environmental protection as demonstrated in figure 7-2. Although the following two structures strike a resemblance, the slightly new element in the structure of the eco-civilisation policy system is Xi Jinping's own attempt, from a comparatively early stage, to centralise and coordinate the project within “the Central Leading Group for Comprehensive Deepening of Reforms (or the leading group)”. It is composed of a 27-strong group, the

⁵²³ Ministry of Environmental Protection official 2, interview by author, face-to-face, April 28,

majority of whom are Politburo members. Its task is to formulate and implement policy, systematically reforming the “economic, political, cultural, social, and environmental sectors”⁵²⁴. Within this leading group there is a Reform Taskforce for the Promotion of Economic Development and Ecological Progress, co-led by Xu Shaoshi and Liu He, the director of the NDRC and the director of Office of Financial Work Leading Group (OFWLG)⁵²⁵. The primary reason for having a financial work leading group in this area is that the reform of ecological civilisation will touch upon certain ministerial interests. The dilemma is best described by Yang Weimin, the deputy director of the OFWLG, who states that “if you ask a ministry to conduct surgery on itself, it is difficult and unrealistic to ask them to cut themselves open. The purpose of the OFWLG is to coordinate different opinions from ministries and departments and reach consensus”⁵²⁶.

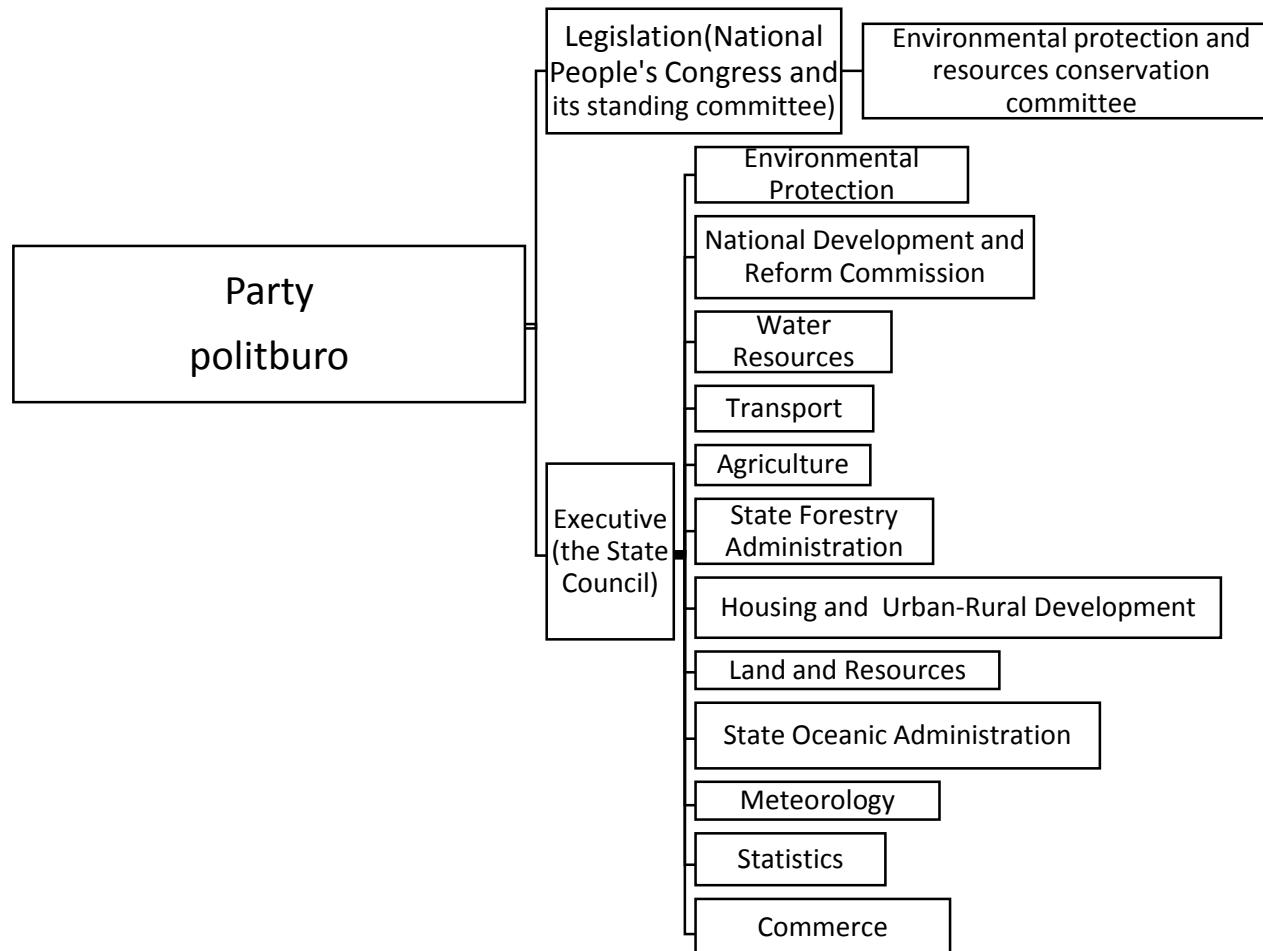
2016.

⁵²⁴ Zhu 2013.

⁵²⁵ Highlighted in the second graph are the connections between the small leading group and ministries.

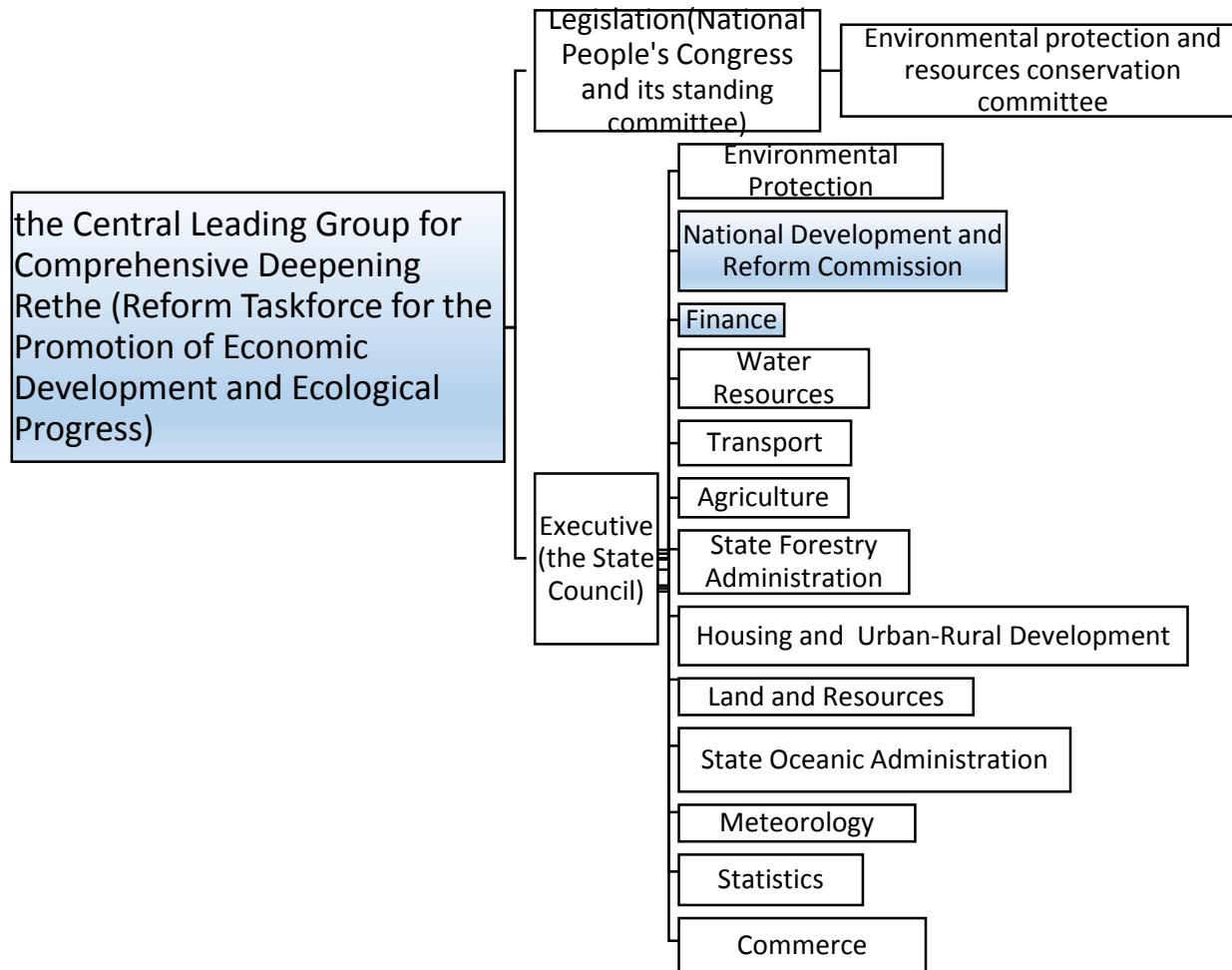
⁵²⁶ Weimin 伟民 Yang 杨, “shengtai wenming tizhi gaige bupa chuji bumen liyi”生态文明体制改革不怕初级部门利益[The Reform of Ecological Civilisation System is not afraid of ministerial interests], interview by Qinghui Pang 庞, October 5, 2015, <http://finance.sina.com.cn/leadership/mroll/20151008/105823418056.shtml>.

Figure 7-1 China's Environmental Policy System: limited plurality under the control of the Party



Source: Ran *China's local environmental politics*, 2015, 41.

Figure 7-2 China's eco-civilisation system: a replication of the environmental protection policy system



Source: compiled by the author based on "the Opinion" and 2015 UNEP report

This kind of structure is needed because the coordination among ministries is almost non-existent and each ministry understands and operationalises eco-civilisation in accordance with their own expertise, main functions and responsibilities. The position of the MEP is particularly delicate. On the one hand, from the historical perspective, environmental protection is given an unprecedented level of salience and the MEP shoulders more expectations and responsibilities than other ministries. On the other hand, although the MEP is the main “battlefield” of eco-civilisation policy, it is weak and “toothless”⁵²⁷. The introduction of eco-civilisation is very much a process in which hopes have arisen within the MEP, only to be followed by disillusion as more power is distributed to the NDRC. Moreover, the previously fragmented and decentralised environmental protection structure has been replicated rather than reformed, let alone restructured.

The ministerial interest referred to here is, therefore, attaining the leadership position to coordinate the implementation of eco-civilisation, leading to the status of authority and the obtainment of resources. The interpretation of eco-civilisation differs, although not necessarily conflicts, between the NDRC and the MEP. As the macroeconomic management agency under the State Council, the NDRC’s primary concern is delivering the overall national economic and social development strategies highlighted in its functions. This includes formulating annual development plans, guiding the restructuring of economic systems, coordinating industrial policies, and setting and adjusting the prices of critical commodities like oil and electricity⁵²⁸. Hence, the language of eco-

⁵²⁷ Ministry of Environmental Protection official 2, interview by author, face-to-face, April 28, 2016.

⁵²⁸ NDRC, “Main Functions of the NDRC,” <http://en.ndrc.gov.cn/mfndrc/>.

civilisation circulating within the NDRC is tied closely with the needs of the economy. As a consequence, the leadership competition between the NDRC and the MEP, to a large degree, is underpinned by the debate on the role of the state and the market in the reconfiguration between environmental protection and economic development.

In fact, in the early entries under the eco-civilisation category from 2010 to 2013 on the website of the NDRC's Department of Resources Conservation and Environmental Protection, eco-civilisation is not mentioned and the entire discussion under this category was focused on the circular economy (*xunhuanjingji* 循环经济), energy-saving and emissions reduction (*jienengjianpai* 节能减排). A more formal showcasing of the NDRC's emphasis on the economy lies in the text of "the Opinions on Further Promoting Eco-civilisation" drafted by itself and promulgated by the Party Central and the State Council. The economy is mentioned 27 times, industry 25 times, the market 15 times, and development 67 times; this is in comparison to 12 mentions of environmental protection, 13 of pollution prevention and control, 9 of policy, and 8 of law enforcement. This document is thus a snapshot of what the highest authority agrees with the NDRC regarding eco-civilisation. It offers a vantage point for understanding how the composite ideology of eco-civilisation involves building a compromise between different bureaucratic actors, within which the distinct approach taken by the MEP plays a weak role.

The MEP is different from the NDRC in that it stresses the importance of law enforcement and the centrality of the government in addressing environmental problems. As a consequence, the MEP's vocabulary of eco-

civilisation is distinguished by terms of government accountability, incorporating environmental barometers in the cadre evaluation system, law enforcement, and environmental responsibility. The centrality of the government in the MEP's interpretation of eco-civilisation is also manifest in the opinions expressed by MEP officials. For example, the director of the Policy Research Centre for the Environment and Economy of the MEP, Dr Xia Guang, claims that forming a responsibility chain of "the critical minority" of Party and government cadres, is the key to building eco-civilisation⁵²⁹. The relationship between the NDRC and the MEP regarding eco-civilisation can thus be understood as the relationship between policy formulation by the former and oversight and law enforcement by the latter.

This power asymmetry, however, provides a strong motivation for the MEP to take a leading position in building eco-civilisation. As Ran Ran observes, the environmental system in general, from central to local level, is plagued by the paradox of unlimited responsibilities and limited power⁵³⁰. The national leaders' high-profile advocate of eco-civilisation, however, gives the MEP reasons to hope that it can change the existing structure and accrue more power and resources for itself. As it is difficult to compete for access to the decision-making process within the NDRC, the MEP adopts an outward strategy, using international platforms to maximise its share of the power. This involves promoting eco-civilisation to the international audience, particularly to its

⁵²⁹ Guang 光 Xia 夏, “Zhuazhu Guanjian Shaoshu, Rang Shengtai Huanbao Gongzuo Ying qilai” 抓住‘关键少数’，让生态环保工作硬起来 [Focus on the Critical Minority, Strengthen Environmental Protection], 环境战略与政策研究专报 [Journal of Environmental Strategy and Policy Research], 2015, <http://www.prcee.org/kw/hjzlyzcxjbg/253909.shtml>.

⁵³⁰ Ran 2015, pp.64-65.

international partners, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the European Commission's Directorate-General for the Environment.

The strategy is a modified version of what Keck and Sikkink term a "boomerang pattern of influence", in which domestic groups appeal to the outside world to exert pressure on their own government and ultimately bring change to the existing political situation⁵³¹. In the case of eco-civilisation, MEP officials reckon that advocating eco-civilisation to the international community will please national leaders and demonstrate the MEP's competence in representing eco-civilisation on the global stage. The accumulated international attention on (and hopefully recognition of) China's eco-civilisation will generate a domestic effect, which lends the MEP more power and moves it towards a leadership position.

The effectiveness of such a "boomerang pattern of influence" is premised on the condition that the international promotion of the concept attracts the attention of the higher-ranking authorities, who will in turn respond to the appeal of the actors deploying this method. The mentality of bureaucrats in the case of eco-civilisation promotion resonates with Jakobson and Manuel's finding that "many actors...compete for the favour of higher-ranking bodies, ultimately Xi Jinping", who is now the "sole coordinator of Chinese foreign and security policy"⁵³². The advantage of the MEP's outward strategy is that no other ministry is competing with it in the international community to promote eco-civilisation. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, for instance, has not yet

⁵³¹ Margaret E. Keck and Kathryn Sikkink, *Activists Beyond Borders: Advocacy Networks in International Politics* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1998), p.13.

⁵³² Linda Jakobson and Ryan Manuel, "How Are Foreign Policy Decisions Made in China?" *Asia & the Pacific Policy Studies* 3, no. 1 (January 1, 2016): pp.106-108.

prioritised eco-civilisation in its agenda⁵³³. The position of being “first” gives the MEP greater opportunities to be more visible and achieve recognition from the national leadership.

This dynamic can be seen from the way in which the MEP partners with the United Nations Environment Programme and the European Commission to mobilise resources in its favour by explaining the concept of eco-civilisation, collecting information on good practices from Europe, and sharing experience of the Chinese path to sustainable development. The first time high-level international promotion of eco-civilisation was initiated and conducted by the MEP was in the 27th Session of the UNEP Governing Council in 2013, in the wake of the Rio+20 UN Conference on Sustainable Development. The original proposal was to introduce a new resolution exclusively on “ecological civilisation” to showcase the determination of China’s current leadership to tackle domestic environmental problems and to further make a contribution to international environmental governance.

Given the fact that China has rarely been seen as a discursive power, particularly in the international environmental community, the ambition of advocating a phrase containing the confusing word “civilisation” was guaranteed to arouse the suspicion of other delegations. The Chinese delegates, mainly from the MEP, were thus challenged with questions such as “What do you want?” and “Can you decide the future of our civilisation?”⁵³⁴ In fact, the choice of the term “civilisation” resulted from the fact that the main audience

⁵³³Party diplomat, interview by author, face-to-face, April 14, 2016.

⁵³⁴ Ministry of Environmental Protection official 2, interview by author, face-to-face, April 28, 2016.

for eco-civilisation discourse is domestic⁵³⁵. However, used in an international forum, the same phrase causes confusion and generates the impression that “eco-civilisation” is ideologically driven and conceals an aggressive attempt to export a political agenda⁵³⁶. The negotiation process on the resolution thus took longer than expected and as a compromise, ecological civilisation was included, together with three other country-specific concepts, in Decision 27/8, “Green economy in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication” as practices of “green economy” in the framework of South-South Cooperation⁵³⁷.

The Chinese position is implicit in the action in Decision 27/8, which is to “request the Executive Director of the UNEP...to collect such initiatives, endeavours, practices and experiences on different approaches, visions, models and tools...”, where “such initiatives” refers to different approaches and experiences countries adopt, in accordance with the national contexts, including “ecological civilisation”. The MEP’s efforts to incorporate “eco-civilisation” in the platform of an international organisation in the format of a resolution have been rewarded by a three-year funding worth \$6 million donated from China’s Ministry of Finance to the UNEP⁵³⁸. The output of this project is a report with the title of “Multiple pathways to sustainable development” which is presented

⁵³⁵ Party diplomat, interview by author, face-to-face, April 14, 2016.

⁵³⁶ Hai Yu *et al.*, “Shengtai Wenming Guoji Xuanchuan:xianzhuang,wenti Ji Lujing’ [International Ecological Civilization International Propaganda: Current Situation, Problems and Path],” *China Environment News*, September 29, 2015, <http://www.prcee.org/wz/253698.shtml>.

⁵³⁷ Decision is included in Helsinki Commission’s report which also documents part of the process and its reaction. See Helsinki Commission, “Coordination and Information Related to the Implementation of the Ecosystem Approach and Related Policies,” May 4, 2013, https://portal.helcom.fi/Archive/Shared%20Documents/GEAR%204-2013_4-4%20UNEP%20Governing%20Council%20Decisions.pdf.

⁵³⁸ Ministry of Environmental Protection official 2, interview by author, face-to-face, April 28, 2016.

by UNEP's Economic and Trade Branch⁵³⁹. This is the first time that an international organisation, instead of a Chinese ministry, has endorsed the idea of eco-civilisations and advocated it to other countries, a symbolic international recognition of this made-in-China concept.

The irony, however, is that the MEP's domestic emphasis on governance and law enforcement regarding eco-civilisation ended up with putting the "green economy" and "sustainable development" at the heart of the UNEP's understanding and endorsement of the concept. This, to a certain degree, echoes the emphasis of the NDRC. The paradox is the inevitable outcome of recognising the green economy and sustainable development as international norms. The most effective way for the new phrase to be accepted and understood is ultimately to indicate that it is a specifically *Chinese* practice of sustainable development and a *Chinese* way for developing a green economy. The MEP thus has to find another platform to elaborate its interpretation in a way that specifies more clearly the role of state governance.

If the MEP's dialogue with the UNEP proposes the existence of "eco-civilisation" and its relevance to the international community in general, its conversation with the EU is more specific insofar as it emphasises more explicitly the MEP's preference for the role of institution-building, governance capability, and strict law and regulation enforcement, which ultimately implies the urgent need to expand the power of the MEP itself. This can be seen in the flagship EU-MEP cooperation project, namely "The Institutional Innovation of

⁵³⁹ United Nations Environment Programme, "Multiple Pathways to Sustainable Development: Initial Findings From the Global South," 2015, <http://www.unep.org/greenconomy/Portals/88/documents/GEI%20Highlights/MultiplePathwaysSustainableDevelopment.pdf>.

Ecological Civilisation” that commenced in February 2014. This is part of the EU-China Policy Dialogues Support Facility II, cofounded by the EU and the Chinese government. Within this, the MEP is partnered with the Directorate-General for Environment (DG Env) of the European Commission⁵⁴⁰. The implementer is the MEP’s Policy Research Center for the Environment and Economy, the same centre which played an active role in the Decision 27/8 negotiation. The purpose of the project is to “promote the strategic exchange and cooperation between China and the EU in the environment and development” and to “push for the institutional innovation and policy application of eco-civilisation on the national and local level”, so as to “provide support to the mainstreaming of the environment to economic and social development” and to “offer the experiences of the EU and China for the sake of global sustainable development”⁵⁴¹.

The output of the project is the report “Institutional Innovation of Ecological Civilization: Conceptual Understanding and Experience Reference” (or “Institutional Innovation Report”) in which state governance (*guojia zhili* 国家治理) is stressed and regarded as an essential factor of eco-civilisation. One section exclusively explains the difference between the “green economy” and “eco-civilisation”. Whereas the UNEP Decision 27/8 subjugated eco-civilisation to the green economy, the Institutional Innovation report clarifies that the green economy is actually a part of eco-civilisation. The former is a set of

⁵⁴⁰ “EU-China Sectoral Dialogues and the EU-China PDSF,” *EU-China Policy Dialogues Support Facility II*, 2014, <http://www.eu-chinapdsf.org/EN/viewNews.asp?NewsId=869>.

⁵⁴¹ Hai Yu *et al.*, “Institutional Innovation of Ecological Civilization: Conceptual Understanding and Experience Reference” (EU-China Policy Dialogues Support Facility II, November 2014).

international principles on economic and social activities; the latter is a concrete strategy and policy⁵⁴².

As its title suggests, the MEP's interpretation of eco-civilisation is that it is an institutional arrangement and a form of governance capability, instead of the market mechanism that is emphasised by the NDRC. It uses the example of Guiyang, a vanguard locality in China that is implementing ecological civilisation to demonstrate the importance of having a leading agency endowed with authority and resources to ensure the execution of eco-civilisation. By generalising from Guiyang's experience, though, the MEP-EU report is able to suggest the need for a more powerful MEP with abundant resources as an institutional priority of eco-civilisation. The ambition of the report is thus to push the MEP's agenda for policy formulation. It thus identifies its audience in the beginning of the report as the key policy and decision makers of eco-civilisation, specifically pinpointing the China Council for International Cooperation on Environment and Development (CCICED). This is significant, because the CCICED is China's most prestigious and highest-level advisory board, employing both Chinese and foreign experts. This makes it a kind of international platform that offers policy recommendations directly to top-level national leaders. In fact, the members of the council have the rank of vice minister at least⁵⁴³. Yet the CCICED was itself involved in the production of and completion of the Institutional Innovation Report.

One month after the release of the Report, CCICED published its own special report, titled "Research on Environmental Protection Institutional

⁵⁴² Ibid, p.10.

⁵⁴³ Economy 2007, p.196.

Innovation under the Context of Ecological Civilisation”⁵⁴⁴. This further highlights the importance of governance and particularly environmental government. In fact, in the 42-page report, environmental governance appears 117 times, compared to 19 mentions of the market. The report requests more authority, resources and capabilities for the MEP, which it sees as commensurate with its duties and responsibilities⁵⁴⁵. Moreover, the CCICED’s report hints at dissatisfaction with the NDRC’s leadership by suggesting that the State Council should establish an overarching agency to coordinate the different ministries and departments⁵⁴⁶. These specific CCIED policy recommendations are eventually included in the “Integrated Reform Plan for Promoting Ecological Progress” introduced by the Party Central and the State Council⁵⁴⁷, which is indicative of the transition of eco-civilisation from an ideational dimension to the operational level. The outlines of the CCICED’s suggestions were then modified and incorporated into the top-level policy design that was approved by the Politburo⁵⁴⁸.

⁵⁴⁴ This report is cofounded by the government of China (\$32700), Canada (\$53216), Australia (\$11478), Sweden (\$108933), and Germany (\$139250). CCICED, “2014nian Gongzuo Baogao ‘2014 年工作报告[2014 Annual Report]” (Beijing: CCICED, December 1, 2014), <http://www.cciced.net/ztbd/nh/2014/download/201411/P020141125564749166897.pdf>.

⁵⁴⁵ 中国环境与发展国际合作委员会 CCICED, “Shengtai Wenming Jianshe Beijing Xia de Huanjing Baohu Zhidu Tixi Chuangxin yanjiu’生态文明建设背景下的环境保护制度体系创新研究[Institutional Innovation of Environmental Protection in the Context of Ecological Civilisation],” 2014, <http://www.cciced.net/zcyj/ztbg/ztcgb/201504/P020150413384340568925.pdf>, iv.

⁵⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁴⁷ “Zhonggong Zhongyang Guowuyuan Yinfā ‘Shengtai Wenming Tizhi Gaige Zongti Fang’” 中共中央国务院印发生态文明体制改革总体方案[CPC Central Committee and State Council circulate Integrated Reform Plan for Promoting Ecological Progress],” *Xinhua News*, September 21, 2015, http://www.gov.cn/guowuyuan/2015-09/21/content_2936327.htm.

⁵⁴⁸ CCICED, “Zhongguo Huanjing Yu Fazhan Zhongyao Zhengce Jinzhan Yu Guohehui Zhengcejianyi yingxiang(2014-15)’中国环境与发展重要政策进展与国合会政策建议影响(2014-15)[Important Policies of China’s Environment and Development and the Policy Impact of CCICED]” (Beijing: CCICED, 2015), <http://www.cciced.net/zcyj/yxbg/201512/P020151204556082832901.pdf>.

From the UNEP's resolution and the EU-China policy dialogue to CCICED's report, we can thus trace the process of the MEP's efforts to use the concept of eco-civilisation to augment its political power and attempt to occupy the leadership position in shaping and delivering the policy. Being in a disadvantageous position, the strategy of the MEP has been to use the context created by the discourse of eco-civilisation to expand its ministerial power. This has involved the strategy of promoting the concept to the outside world, which generates sufficient attention and momentum to have its requests heard.

In other words, the promotion of the Chinese norm of eco-civilisation derives from the MEP's bureaucratic struggle with other powerful ministries, specifically the NDRC. International environmental cooperation, in this case, is a means to build and consolidate the MEP's leadership position. Luckily for the MEP, the CCICED has been able to help because it has direct access to the top national leaders and its suggestions can be incorporated into a definitive policy document. This raises the question of how other interest groups can achieve their ambitions by using eco-civilisation without the help of a formal institution to channel their suggestions to the national leaders.

7.6 Intelligentsia: when idealism is heard

This ministerial power struggle reflects the relationship between state and market: the NDRC emphasising the market mechanisms while the MEP calls for stricter governance. However, the underpinning logic shared by them is the developmentalist approach to sustainable growth. At the heart of

developmentalism is the accentuated importance of “state capacity”, which is expected to “bring about prosperity-generating transformative change”⁵⁴⁹, as Dent succinctly summarises. More explicit differences also appear between bureaucrats and the academics who provide the theoretical foundation of eco-civilisation. These are along the lines of realism versus idealist interpretations of eco-civilisation, ideology versus pragmatism, and essentially address the relationship between the party and the state and question the developmentalist approach to environmental protection. Over the course of my fieldwork, I have found that every time I tell my bureaucrat interviewees about the academic efforts to theorise eco-civilisation, their reaction is a predictable and almost universal disdain: “*Their* understanding of eco-civilisation has nothing to do with the policies we are talking about,” one interviewee working in MEP scoffed⁵⁵⁰. The “they” referred to by the MEP official are Marxists who theorise eco-civilisation under the framework of Marxism and Socialism and constitute an important intellectual community in promoting the study of eco-civilisation.

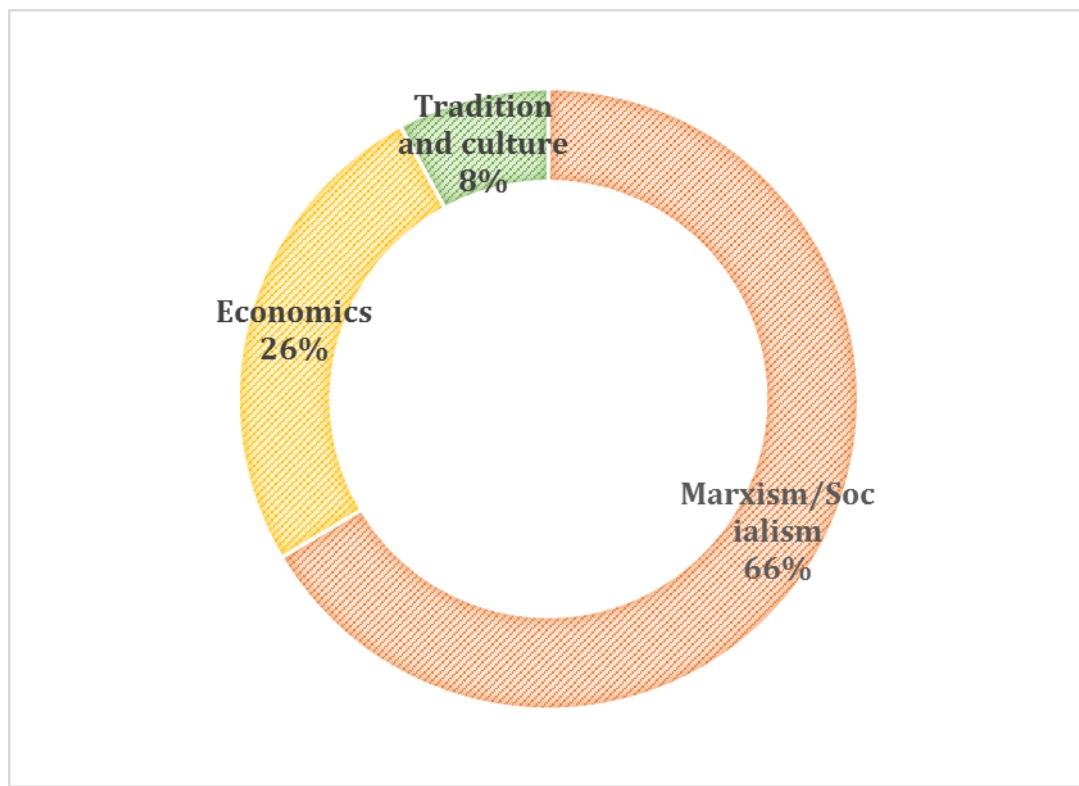
The following graph, based on data retrieved from “China Academic Journals Full-text Database”, visualises the weight of Marxism and Socialism in theorising eco-civilisation among Chinese intellectuals. I obtained 5601 articles which attempt to theorise eco-civilisation by keyword searching. I further coded this corpus of text into the category of “Marxism and Socialism” (including keywords “Marx” and “Engels”), “Economics”, and “Tradition and Culture” (including keyword postmodernism) based on the keyword of each article. As shown in Figure 7-3, “Marxism and Socialism” occupy two thirds of

⁵⁴⁹ Dent 2012, p.564.

⁵⁵⁰ Ministry of Environmental Protection official 2, interview by author, face-to-face, April 28, 2016.

all the scholarly efforts to theorise eco-civilisation, more than the broad category of “Economics”. This pattern raises the question of why orthodox of Marxism and Socialism is relevant and what interest do leftist scholars have in making this theoretical connection.

Figure 7-3 Theorising Eco-civilisation in Chinese academic community



Source: compiled by the author

“Environmental protection will be marginalised if it is detached from Socialism”, asserts Fang Ning, the director of Institute of Political Science, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, predicting the convergence of environmental protection and Socialism, in his phrase “green is turning red”⁵⁵¹. Underpinning his claim is the theory of eco-socialism inspired by the green movement in the capitalist societies which was imported to China in the 1980s but received little scholarly attention or interest at that time⁵⁵². The logic behind the connection of ecological civilisation and Socialism further clarified by Pan Yue, as follows: “environmental problems are rooted in Capitalism,

⁵⁵¹ Fang Ning 2006.

⁵⁵² Kang and Nie 2009.

ecological civilisation is the future of all the mankind, and therefore Socialism as an alternative to Capitalism which is the culprit of ecological crisis, is the only path to ecological civilisation”⁵⁵³. This quote is particularly important of Pan’s political status. A trained historian and journalist who became vice minister of Environmental Protection, Pan was reputed for his high-profile environmental campaign including the experiment of Green GDP. He was then transferred to a party organisation, the Central Academy of Socialism, arguably due to being involved in a corruption scandal. Pan’s statement, though lack theoretical rigour, demonstrates the discursive possibility to mould eco-civilisation to fit the shape of political orthodox.

Discord takes place, however, when this ideological discussion of eco-civilisation causes inconvenience to bureaucrats who need to promote the concept to an international audience. When I asked one of my bureaucrat interviewees “whether it is desirable to link Socialism with eco-civilisation”, he laughed and replied, “Definitely not. Other countries are already scared of the ‘civilisation’ part in the wording of eco-civilisation. They will be scared to death if the civilisation turns out to be Socialist”⁵⁵⁴. Who then is advocating the ideological dimension of eco-civilisation? Who is their audience and what is their motivation?

The main advocates of linking Marxism and Socialism to eco-civilisation include academics not only specialising in the philosophy of Marxism and Socialism, but also experts on environmentalism and the political strategies of

⁵⁵³ Yue 岳 Pan 潘, “Yi Makesi Zhuyi Shengtaiguan Zhidao Shengtai Wenming jianshe’以马克思主义生态观指导生态文明建设[Guide Eco-Civilisation Construction with Marxist Ecological View],” *中国环境报 China Environment News*, 2012,

<http://politics.people.com.cn/n/2012/1227/c1027-20035210.html>.

⁵⁵⁴ Ministry of Environmental Protection official 2, interview by author, face-to-face, April 28, 2016.

green parties in capitalist societies. They are inspired by eco-socialist scholars such as James O'Connor, who describes the capitalist debacle as a "marriage broker between socialism and ecology"⁵⁵⁵ and Andre Gorz who reflects on the use of science and technology to achieve "an optimum quality of life" instead of "the maximisation of profitability"⁵⁵⁶. The leading Eco-Marxist Huan Qingzhi from the School of Marxism at Peking University epitomises the consensus within the academic circle that "the crux of China's environmental problem is the one-dimensional economic ideology of modernisation and development, and obsession of developmentalism"⁵⁵⁷.

Such scholars resemble but are different from what David Shambaugh categorises as "nativists" who chant that the West is evil and claim that exposing China to international multilateral involvement has corrupted its culture and damaged its socialist integrity⁵⁵⁸. The main difference is that the former, reflecting on the current development model, are less optimistic and more critical of the role of technology in environmental governance⁵⁵⁹. Instead, they propose a mixture of the planned economy and market mechanisms to help developing countries tackle environmental problems⁵⁶⁰. Unlike nativists, eco-socialist academics tend to be less hostile to the "capitalist" countries and set conditions for interactions with the international community.

⁵⁵⁵ James O'Connor, "Red-Green Politics," in *Green on Red: Evolving Ecological Socialism* (Winnipeg: Halifax, N.S : Society for Social Studies, 1993), p.20.

⁵⁵⁶ Gorz 1994,p.8.

⁵⁵⁷ Qingzhi Huan, "Terminating the Growth Without Boundary," *Green Leaf*, no. 10 (2009): pp.114-21.

⁵⁵⁸ Shambaugh 2013.

⁵⁵⁹ Hua-Jie Cai, "The New Exploration of the Historical Position of Ecosocialism," *Journal of Fujian Normal University (Philosophy and Social Science Edition)* 178, no. 1 (2013): pp.7-12.

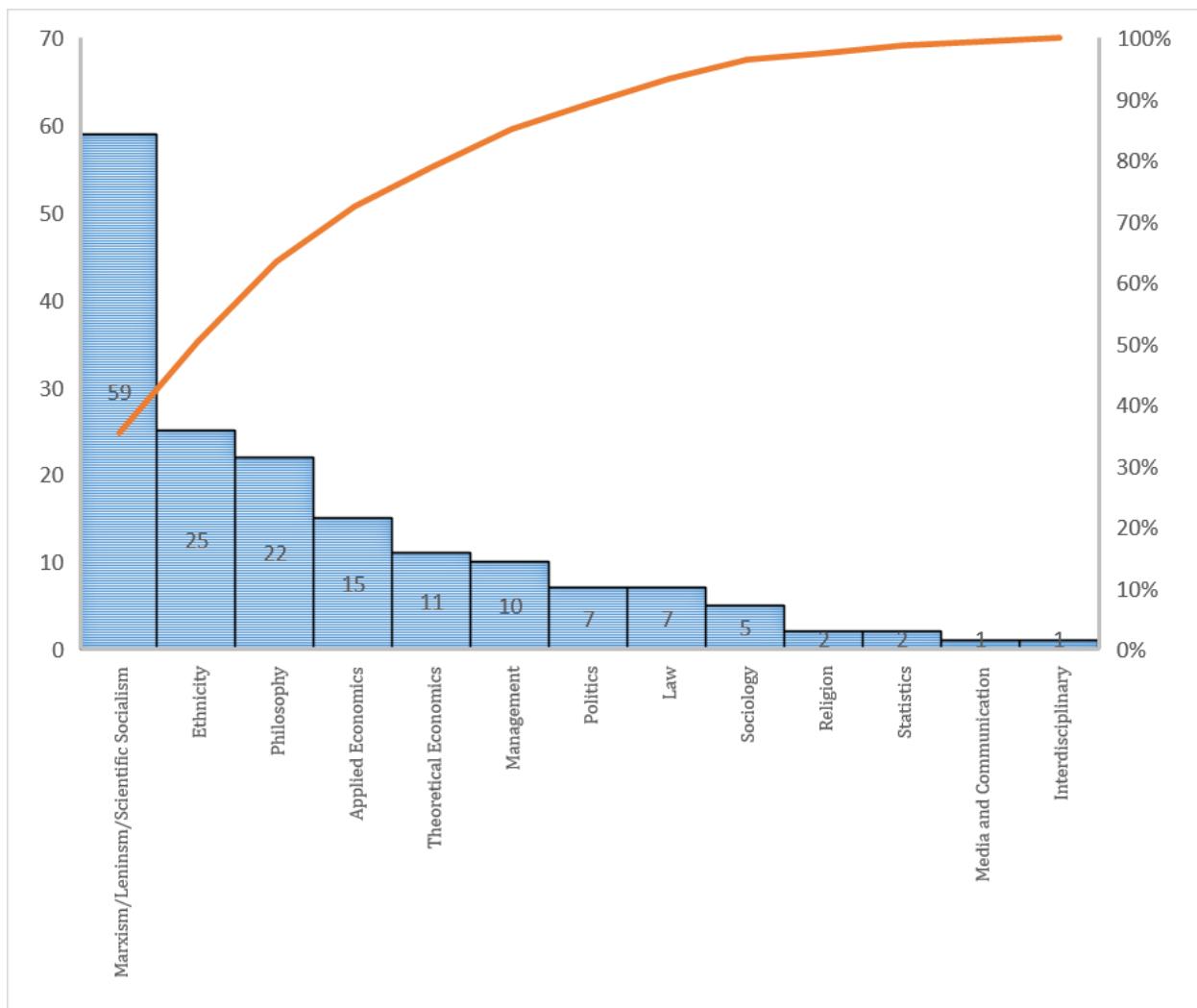
⁵⁶⁰ Ren-sheng Liu, "On the Relationships between Marx and Ecology in the Western Marxism," *Journal of Yanbian University (Social Science)* 36, no. 1 (2003): pp.5-9.

Their real dilemma is that their theories cannot be translated into concrete policies. Instead, they use eco-socialism as an instrument to critique the obsession with development for worsening the ecological crisis and, more fundamentally, for contravening the political values of the country, as enshrined in the first article of the Constitution, which stipulates that China is “a *socialist state under the people’s democratic dictatorship*”⁵⁶¹. What benefit can leftist scholars derive from harping on the connections between the nominal ideology of Socialism and eco-civilisation? The most superficial answer is that they hope to take advantage of the political momentum generated by eco-civilisation to rejuvenate the political dogma. This claim is not completely unfounded. Among over 180 projects⁵⁶² on eco-civilisation funded by the National Planning Office of Philosophy and Social Science, more than a third are concentrated in the discipline of Marxism, Leninism and Scientific Socialism, as shown in the following graph. Moreover, projects that come under the category of “philosophy” also take Marxism as the lens to theorise eco-civilisation. This indicates the mainstreaming of Marxism and Socialism in research on eco-civilisation. However, the relationship between eco-civilisation and socialism is also two-directional because the deployment of socialism can also offer the opportunity to highlight and foreground the environmental elements that are marginalised in the more general thinking about developmentalism.

⁵⁶¹ National People’s Congress, *Constitution of People’s Republic of China*, 1982, http://www.npc.gov.cn/englishnpc/Constitution/node_2825.htm.

⁵⁶² The total number of funded projects is 182 and 16 are in the category of “zhongda xiangmu” (very important project) which is not associated with any discipline, hence excluded from the graph.

Figure 7-4 The National Planning of Philosophy and Social Science Funded Research Projects on Eco-civilisation



Source: compiled by the author based on the project database on the official website of the national planning office.

The idea that socialism is a powerful weapon to protect the environment is echoed in the remarks of one of the leading eco-civilisation experts, shedding some light on the question of the motivation of leftist scholars:

We know we are radical in terms of questioning the common practice of environmental governance and challenging the capitalist logic. Our opinions are filtered out in the policy making process. However, why is our work needed

while it is impossible for us to propose concrete policy recommendations from our research? Because we can tell our decision-makers, how far developmentalism can go in China as we see clearly its limitations and the caveats of having developmentalism unbalanced by any other ideology⁵⁶³.

One way to interpret this is to see leftist scholars not so much as helping the state to govern but more as helping the party to maintain control. To put it differently, they are intellectual referees who whistle to warn against an excessive focus on developmentalism.

As a consequence, eco-socialist scholars attempt to guide the direction of eco-civilisation along the lines of socialism and their channels of influence are through the party system and informal networks. For instance, leading scholars like Huan Qingzhi are invited to lecture at the Central Party School to the special class on eco-civilisation, which is composed of high-level local officials. This does not suggest that local officials share the belief and Marxist approach to eco-civilisation, but more importantly that an informal network of Marxist scholars and local cadres is established to facilitate the communication and exchange of information among them. Apart from the party school, the channel through party system also includes organisations such as the Central Compilation and Translation Bureau, which has the primary responsibility to “compile and translate key works of Marxism and research the theory of

⁵⁶³ Qingzhi Huan, “Remarks on the Necessity of Eco-Marxism” (Seminar on Eco-civilisation, Peking University, March 8, 2016).

Marxism and its current development”⁵⁶⁴, all the while stressing that Marxism should be the guiding principle underpinning the cause of eco-civilisation⁵⁶⁵.

Marxism and Socialism is like liquor: a small amount is pleasant but an overdose can yield negative consequences. The caveat of emphasising the relevance of socialism in eco-civilisation is its potential to challenge the legitimacy of the Party-State which is vulnerable as its practice deviates from the ideological dogma. In fact, the leftist intellectuals of the former Soviet Union were the most critical of the socialist regime and were, instigators of revolutionary change in the political system⁵⁶⁶. Having learnt from the collapse of the USSR and to dilute the “liquor”, the rise of “*indigenisation*” in China functions as a balancer when applying Western theories by insisting on the “uniqueness” of China’s political system and the necessity to build “Chinese” approaches to serving the government⁵⁶⁷. The indigenisation not only justifies Chinese practice of Marxism but also foregrounds the action of interpretation.

To offset the potential for any backfiring effect from leftists, Chinese postmodernists suggest using the combination of Chinese traditional culture and Marxism to lay an ideological foundation for eco-socialism. This academic appeal can be found in the article co-authored by Wang Zhihe, the director of the Center for Constructive Postmodern Studies and his colleagues. In an article titled “The Ecological Civilisation Debate in China: The Role of Ecological

⁵⁶⁴ ““Zhongyang Bianyiju jianjie’中央编译局简介[Introduction of the Central Compilation and Translation Bureau],” Central Compilation and Translation Bureau, www.cctb.net.

⁵⁶⁵ Rensheng 仁胜 Liu 刘, “Shengtai Makesi Zhuyi, shengtai Shehui Zhuyi Yu Zhongguo Shengtai Wenming jianshe’生态马克思主义、生态社会主义与中国生态文明建设[Eco-Marxism, Eco-Socialism and China’s Eco-Civilisation],” 编译参阅[*Compilation Reference*], 2010, http://www.cctb.net/zjxz/expertarticle1/201012/t20101208_288554.htm.

⁵⁶⁶ Stephen Noakes, “The Role of Political Science in China: Intellectuals and Authoritarian Resilience,” *Political Science Quarterly* 129, no. 2 (2014): p.239.

⁵⁶⁷ Ibid, p.249.

Marxism and Constructive Postmodernism - Beyond the Predicament of Legislation", Wang and his co-authors call for a "joint effort of ecological Marxists, constructive postmodernists, and radical environmentalists" which will make it possible to "create a new civilisation: an ecological civilisation which will benefit China and the world as a whole"⁵⁶⁸. The contribution of constructive postmodernists represented by Wang and his colleagues is threefold: to rethink modernisation and development; to provide a philosophical foundation of ecological civilisation; and more distinctly, to "help the Chinese people revalue their own traditional ecological wisdom"⁵⁶⁹.

Although Wang and his co-authors pit postmodernism against ecological Marxism, postmodernism is not a mainstream approach in the study of eco-civilisation. Eco-Marxism and Eco-Socialism are far more prevalent, as shown in Figure 7-3. In the CNKI database, the number of articles adopting postmodernism as a tool to theorise eco-civilisation is just 14, whereas the number of those applying Marxism and Socialism amount to 3724. There is no need to discuss the substantial relevance of constructive postmodernism in this chapter, because its advocates, like Wang Zhihe, believe that it is effective to use international academic conferences to demonstrate their intellectual input and align with internationally renowned scholars in ways that allow them to gain the attention of high-level officials in China.

This can be seen in their activities at the key international academic event promoting eco-civilisation, the "International Forum on Ecological Civilization", or "Claremont Forum", so-called because it is held in the famous

⁵⁶⁸ Zhihe Wang, Huili He, and Meijun Fan, "The Ecological Civilization Debate in China: The Role of Ecological Marxism and Constructive Postmodernism-Beyond the Predicament of Legislation," *Monthly Review* 66, no. 6 (November 2014): p.56.

⁵⁶⁹ Ibid, pp.54-55.

Californian eco-city of Claremont. Its primary organiser and initiator is the Institute for Postmodern Development of China (IPDC), which, as it claims, “weds the best Chinese and Western resources to identify global pathways toward ecological civilisation”⁵⁷⁰. The Forum commenced in 2006, even before ecological civilisation was officially included in the party document. Wang Zhihe is a founding member of IPDC and secured an institutional partnership with the Central Compilation and Translation Bureau from its inception. The Forum is also co-sponsored by one of the Bureau’s subdivisions, the China Center for Marxism and China’s Current Affairs. Another partner of the IPDC is the Chinese Academy of Governance, a State Council institution training senior cadres⁵⁷¹.

Although this kind of institutional cooperation does not grant constructive postmodernism an entry into the policy-making process, the network derived from the Claremont Forum creates access to national leaders and gets their recognition. For instance, the importance of the Forum was recognised by Jiang Chunyun⁵⁷², a former vice premier who is currently the general-counsel for Chinese Ecological Civilisation Research and Promotion, the first State Council-approved social organisation related to the promotion of eco-civilisation. Furthermore, Jiang met IPDC’s Founding President Professor John B Cobb, Jr., whom Jiang lauded for his and IPDC’s efforts to promote eco-civilisation on a worldwide scale. Though Cobb is known as a reputed environmentalist and philosopher, it is his avid belief in Chinese culture and his

⁵⁷⁰ The Institute for the Postmodern Development of China, “Our Mission,” <http://postmodernchina.org/about-us/our-mission/>.

⁵⁷¹ The Institute for the Postmodern Development of China, “Our Partners,” <http://postmodernchina.org/about-us/our-partners/>.

⁵⁷² Institute for Postmodern Development of China, “‘Shengtai Wenming Guoji luntan’生态文明国际论坛[Eco-Civilisation International Forum],” 2006, <http://postmodernchina.org/ch/our-work/programs/conference-series/international-forum-on-ecological-civilization/>.

claim that “China is the most likely place to achieve ecological civilisation in the world”⁵⁷³ that interests a national leader like Jiang.

What Cobb represents is an international audience that is remarkably different from the UNEP delegates discussed above. Instead of being suspicious of the political agenda hidden behind the phrase “eco-civilisation”, academics like Cobb are keen to explore alternative ways of thinking to the dominant modernisation theory. Cobb himself sold his house and funded the IPDC as a convincing statement of his commitment to combining theory with practice⁵⁷⁴. His hope, however, is more based on his disillusionment with the American consumerist lifestyle than his genuine belief in and knowledge of how eco-civilisation is used in China. Yet, allying with such an internationally renowned professor not only provides an intellectual justification of the appropriateness of Marxism and postmodernism in the theorisation of eco-civilisation, but also facilitates a network of academics – albeit loosely organised - who exchange their academic work and seek solutions to influence top national leaders in ways that can ensure that eco-civilisation goes down the right path. This kind of network that links them to party cadres is vital for having the views of the intelligentsia heard and articulated by top-ranking leaders.

The efforts of Marxist and post-modernist scholars echo the “road maps” function of ideas in Goldstein and Keohane’s work discussed in the theoretical chapter. Their concern is to make sure that eco-civilisation policies are

⁵⁷³ John B Cobb, “Zhongguo Shi Dangjin Shiji Zuiyou Keneng Shixian Shengtai Wenming de Difang [China Is the Mostly Likely Place to Achieve Ecological Civilisation in the World],” trans. Yunxian Liu, *Journal of China Executive Leadership Academy Pudong* 4, no. 3 (2010): pp.5–10.

⁵⁷⁴ Zhihai 志海 Sun 孙, “Shengtai Wenming Jianshe Guizai zhixingheyi’ 生态文明建设贵在知行合一 [The Important Part of Eco-Civilisation Is the Consistency between Words and Actions],” *Guangming Daily*, 2016, http://epaper.gmw.cn/gmrb/html/2016-07/10/nw.D110000gmrb_20160710_3-03.htm.

conducted in an ideologically acceptable way and that the leftist intellectuals aim to set a limit to the development-driven policy frameworks. Even if what they advocate is too theoretical, abstract, and philosophical to be presented in the form of concrete policies, their role to demarcate the boundary of ecocivilisation remains relevant, and even influential through informal channels and the Party system, rather than through the government institutions.

7.7 Guiyang: Eco Forum (Guiyang) for city promotion

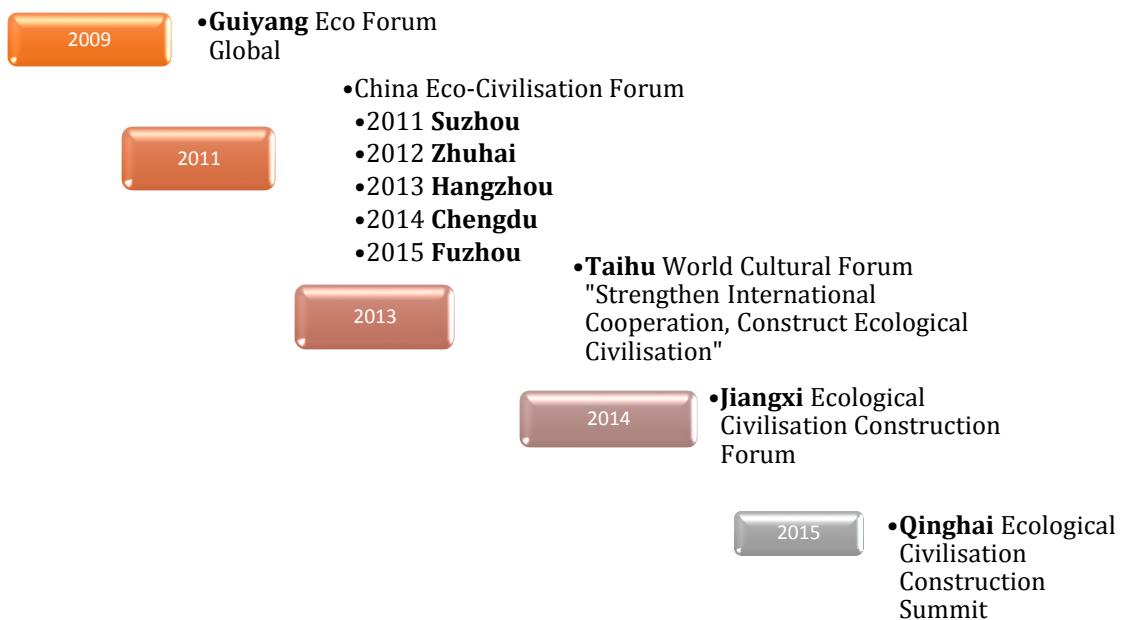
If the first two pairs address horizontal power relations, the last one examines the vertical dimension: national and local government. In the context of the introduction of a new political slogan, the relationship between the central and local government is more symbiotic than competitive: the central government needs local governments' support to implement its policy, while local governments see new policy initiatives as an opportunity to obtain resources from the central government and to boost local development⁵⁷⁵. The role of local governors, particularly the party-secretaries of cities, becomes even more relevant when it comes to environmental issues. They are the "number-one leader" (*yibashou* 一把手) who penetrate all levels of local environmental policy implementation, from setting the strategic objectives for his/her term, setting the policy agenda, overseeing personnel arrangement, and mediating conflicts⁵⁷⁶.

⁵⁷⁵ Ran Ran 2015.

⁵⁷⁶ Ibid, pp.66-67.

Whereas the existing literature offers a rich understanding of how local cadres influence local environmental policy implementation, the question of how they use the international platform to facilitate their initiatives remains understudied. This is worth paying attention to because it sheds light on two questions. First, which localities receive preferential treatment? Second, how limited resources from the central government are allocated in the context of competition among provinces and municipalities? From this perspective, international eco-civilisation conferences are a way for local governments to attract attention. The following figure demonstrates how local governments attach themselves to eco-civilisation conferences and the resulting phenomenon of the cloning conferences. Secondly, the links between local cadres and international forums shed light on how international actors affect the implementation of eco-civilisation projects.

Figure 7-5 Eco-civilisation conferences in various localities (2007-2015)



Source: compiled by the author.

As shown in Figure 5, the first locally held international eco-civilisation conference took place in 2009 at Guiyang, the capital of Guizhou province in Southwest China. The fact that Guiyang initiated the trend of eco-civilisation challenges the correlation between the degree of industrialisation and environmental awareness. The common wisdom accepted in local governments in China is that economic prosperity comes before environmental protection (*xian wenbao, zai huanbao* 先温饱再环保) and the common practice in the local level of governments is that “pollution comes before control” (*xianwuran, houzhili* 先污染后治理). Yet the province of Guizhou was only at the early stage of industrialisation back in 2004, as shown in the following table. It has remained one of the most economically backward provinces of China since then. According to the *China Statistics Yearbook 2006*, the GDP per capita in Guizhou ranked the lowest at RMB 5052, only one tenth of the figure of Shanghai, which

ranked highest⁵⁷⁷. Considering this economic backwardness, the embrace of ecological civilisation of Guiyang may be described as the “green leap forward” and can be seen as a litmus test of whether it is possible to avoid the environmentally-unfriendly path of development and, instead, provide an alternative template that would be worthy of the name of “ecological civilisation”.

Table 7-1 A comparison of industrialisation process across China (2004)

Provinces and Municipalities (31)		
Stage		
Post-industrialisation		Shanghai, Beijing
Late industrialisation	Latter stage	Tianjin
	Early stage	Guangdong, Zhejiang, Jiangsu
Mid industrialisation	Latter stage	Shandong
	Early stage	Liaoning, Fujian, Shanxi, Jilin, Heilongjiang, Hebei
Early industrialisation	Latter stage	Inner Mongolia, Ningxia, Hubei, Chongqing, Shanxi, Qinghai, Xinjiang, Yunnan, Hunan, Henan, Gansu, Jiangxi, Anhui, Sichuan, Hainan

⁵⁷⁷ 国家统计局 National Statistics Bureau, “‘Zhongguo Tongji Nianjian 2006’中国统计年鉴-2006 [China Yearbook 2006],” 2006, <http://www.stats.gov.cn/tjsj/ndsj/2006/indexce.htm>.

	Early stage	Guangxi, Guizhou
Pre-industrialisation		Tibet

Source: Chen Jiagui, Huang Qunhui, Zhong Hongwu(2006)⁵⁷⁸,

The Guiyang Eco Forum Global (or the Guiyang Forum) 贵阳国际生态文明论坛 started in 2009 in the context of the provincial strategic goal of “Environmental Establishment of the Province” (*huanjing lisheng* 环境立省)⁵⁷⁹. It invites prominent politicians and academics to draw national and international attention. The summary of each annual conference is crystallised to establish a so-called “Guiyang Consensus”, providing a focal point for different actors to contribute to the cause of eco-civilisation. More specifically, it establishes a network of central government, scientists, local cadres, scholars, entrepreneurs and the media to jointly cooperate under the banner of eco-civilisation. For instance, the 2009 Guiyang Consensus noted that cities are critical for the environment, technology is the cornerstone, enterprises are the main battlefield, education is the root, while the media is important for conveying the soft power of China⁵⁸⁰. This consensus is further underpinned by

⁵⁷⁸ Jiagui 佳贵 Chen 陈, Qunhui 群慧 Huang 黄, and Hongwu 宏武 Zhong 钟, “Zhongguo Diqu Gongyehua Jincheng de Zonghe Pingjia Yu Tezheng fenxi’中国地区工业化进程的综合评价与特征分析[A Comprehensive Evaluation and Trait Analysis of the Regional Industrialisation Process in China],” *经济研究[Economic Study]*, 2006.

⁵⁷⁹ Xie 邪 Zhu 朱, “Guizhou:huanjing Lisheng Zhanlue Jiakua Shengtai Jingji Quanmian fazhan’贵州:环境立省战略加快生态经济社会全面发展[Guizhou: Environmental Establishment of the Province Accelerate the Full Development of Ecology, Economy, and Society],” *贵州日报[Guizhou Daily]*, July 11, 2008, <http://unn.people.com.cn/GB/14772/21738/7499270.html>.

⁵⁸⁰ “Guiyang Consensus” (Eco-Global Forum Guiyang, 2009), <http://www.efglobal.org/Upload/201405/c57232a45cc74e65a1ffd9fe94158fb5.pdf>.

the concerns of local development and industrial transformation. The key concept of the 2009 consensus is the “green economy”, followed by the 2010 focus on “green growth”, which is specified more clearly in the 2011 commitment to low carbon development. This high-profile promotion of ecocivilisation to the global audience cannot be taken as a simple acceptance of an environmentally-friendly norm which is diffused from the Party central to the local level, however. Instead, it indicates a way to leverage international attention to benefit from the new concept, especially in areas such as the promotion of cadres and special interests.

This can be seen by looking at the crucial role played in environmental governance by the municipal Party-Secretary. The Guiyang Forum has thus benefitted from the vision, approach, and strategy of Li Jun, the Party-Secretary of Guiyang from 2007-2013 due to his expertise in the field of communication and propaganda. A Master in Classical Chinese Language and Literature with a PhD in Politics and Economics, Li advocates the marriage between Chinese traditional culture and sustainable development. After graduation, he started his career in the Ministry of Culture and transferred to the General Office of the Central Committee of the Communist Party, working on propaganda and the United Front strategy for a decade⁵⁸¹. Li thus knows well how to perform in ways that can catch the attention from central government for Guiyang and mobilise an international audience to increase the competitiveness of the city

⁵⁸¹ Meanwhile, Li Jun was the secretary to Li Ruihuan, a reformer in the Politburo from 1989-2002.

he governs. The Eco Global Forum is thus one of his strategic projects for exploring a new development path for an economically backward province⁵⁸².

The initiative of Li Jun also has been recognised by Li Zhanshu, the Party-Secretary of Guizhou Province from 2010-2012. Li Zhanshu endorsed the idea of ecologically-oriented industrialisation and was lauded by the media as the “hope of Guizhou’s poverty eradication” and brought the “energy of Guizhou’s opening and reform”⁵⁸³. The fact that Li was on good terms with Xi Jinping was particularly convenient for the promotion of the Guiyang Eco Forum. In 2013, Xi sent a congratulatory letter to the Forum, which stated that “walking towards the era of eco-civilisation and constructing a beautiful China are important contents of the China Dream” by furthering green development, sustainable development, and low carbon development⁵⁸⁴. In addition to such approval from China’s President, the State Council and the Party Central issued a paper on “The State Council’s Opinions on Further Promoting Good and Quick Economic and Social Development of Guizhou”⁵⁸⁵. According to Li Jun, this demonstrates the support from the central government for the development of Guizhou and is a generous gift to the populace of the province⁵⁸⁶. It is

⁵⁸² The forum followed his footsteps when he was transferred to Hainan as the Provincial Party Secretary as Hainan became the first *chief* guest province in the Eco-Global Forum Guiyang.

⁵⁸³ Xianmin Wang, “Jujiao Guizhou Zhenxing de Juecezhe Li Zhanshu 聚焦贵州振兴的决策者栗战书 [Focus on the Decision Maker behind Guizhou’s Prosperity: Li Zhanshu],” *Outlook China*, August 29, 2012, http://www.outlookchina.net/template/news_page.asp?id=5642.

⁵⁸⁴ “Xi Jinping Zhi Shengtai Wenming Guiyang Guoji Luntan 2013nian Nianhui de hexin’习近平致生态文明贵阳国际论坛 2013 年年会的贺信 [Congraluation from Xi Jinping to Eco-Global Forum Guiyang],” *Xinhua News Agency*, July 20, 2013, http://news.xinhuanet.com/politics/2013-07/20/c_116619687.htm.

⁵⁸⁵ State Council, *Guowuyuan Guanyu Jinyibu Cujin Guizhou Jingji Shehui Youhaoyoukuai Fazhan de Ruogan yijian* 国务院关于进一步促进贵州经济社会又好又快发展的意见 [State Council’s Opinions On Further Promoting Good And Quick Economic and Social Development of Guizhou], *Guofa*, vol. 2, 2012, http://www.gov.cn/zwgk/2012-01/16/content_2045519.htm.

⁵⁸⁶ “Li Jun Yaoqiu Geji Ge Bumen Shenru Xuexi Guanche Guofa 2zhao wenjian’ 李军要求各级各部门深入学习贯彻国发 2 号文件 [Li Jun Requested All Levels of Governments to Study and

particularly important for confirming the leading position of Guiyang government in the application of eco-civilisation to make Guiyang the national ecological civilisation city. According to one interviewee, this makes Guiyang a “special ecological zone”, which is analogous to the existing “special economic zones”⁵⁸⁷.

A municipal party-secretary who values the importance of an international audience and a provincial leader who has a good relationship with the President do not fully explain the competitiveness of Guiyang in the show of eco-civilisation, however, because the limelight might easily move to other cities. Figure 7-5 already shows that the model of hosting international conference is replicated in other local jurisdictions. Of particular significance is that the Guiyang Forum was officially recognised by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs as an international conference and moreover, as a legitimate platform to articulate the China's voice to the international audience⁵⁸⁸. Behind this is the figure of Dai Bingguo, former Secretary-General of the Foreign Affairs Leading Small Group, vice Minister of Foreign Affairs and, more relevantly, someone who grew up in an impoverished village in Guizhou. Dai's motivation to promote Eco Global Guiyang derives from his emotional attachment to his home province and his belief in the importance of ecology, and hence, he is determined to assist in the “grand show” of the Guiyang Forum to increase the

Implement No.2 Document],” *Guizhou News*, February 6, 2012,
http://www.gygov.gov.cn/art/2012/2/6/art_12062_369395.html.

⁵⁸⁷ Ministry of Environmental Protection official 1, face-to-face, August 12, 2013.

⁵⁸⁸ “Li Jun Canjia Shengtai Wenming Guiyang Guoji Luntan Guizhousheng Fuwu Baozhang Gongzuo Lingdao Xiaozu Diyici Huiyi ’李军参加生态文明贵阳国际路南贵州省服务保障工作领导小组第一次会议[Li Jun Attends the First Logistic Conference to Prepare for Eco Global Guiyang],” *Guizhou Daily*, April 12, 2013,
<http://dangjian.people.com.cn/n/2013/0412/c132289-21116639.html>.

fame and popularity of Guiyang⁵⁸⁹. When discussing “interests”, it is important to note that Dai has no material or political interest in taking this stand because he was scheduled to retire in 2013. Instead, it brings him a sense of achievement and fulfilment in being able to use his position to contribute to his own province. The payback from the Forum is that Guiyang becomes an exemplar recognised and promoted at various international occasions. In the 2015 UNEP report on “multiple pathways to sustainable development”, discussed earlier in this chapter, Guiyang’s experiences are thus deemed to “offer valuable lessons for other regions in China as well as for other development countries”⁵⁹⁰ based on the fact that it had managed to improve environmental quality while achieving an average annual GDP growth rate of 14.7% from 2006-2011⁵⁹¹.

International cooperation between local jurisdictions and foreign countries is categorically important for local governors. Zweig describes local governors having “a feverish demand for global linkages” due to a “fear of being left behind”⁵⁹². The limelight created by the Forum, however, not only promotes environmental values. It also attracts high-quality investment to the least developed areas. Eco Forum Global is thus hailed by Li Jun as an important vehicle to attract enterprises and investment (*zhaoshang yinzi*) 招商引资 to

⁵⁸⁹ Shaoting 邵庭 Xu 许, “Zhao Kezhi Baihui Dai Bingguo Bing Huijian Shengtai Wenming Guiyang Guoji Luntan Guoji Zixunhui Daibiao’赵克志拜会戴秉国并会见生态文明贵阳国际论坛国际咨询会代表 [Zhao Kezhi Met Dai Bingguo and Received Delegates from Eco Global Forum International Advisory Board],” *Guiyang Daily*, June 28, 2015, <http://www.gz.chinanews.com/content/2015/06-29/54180.shtml>.

⁵⁹⁰ UNEP 2015, p.13.

⁵⁹¹ Ibid, p.6.

⁵⁹² David Zweig, *Internationalizing China: Domestic Interests and Global Linkages*, Cornell Studies in Political Economy (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2002), p.44.

boost local development⁵⁹³. In other words, the benefits of eco-civilisation to this South-western inland city are opportunities and platforms to promote its image and generate popularity in ways that invite either foreign enterprises or enterprises from other provinces to prosper in and contribute to Guiyang. The capability of local jurisdictions to attract investment is crucial and the coastal provinces in the East have done qualitatively better than the western part of China. Tseng and Zebreg reveal that from 1983 to 1998, eastern provinces obtained 88% of foreign direct investment, and in sharp contrast, the number for western provinces was only 3.3%⁵⁹⁴.

Officials organising the Forum, including those in the local environmental bureau, are actually indifferent to the idea of eco-civilisation and regard it more as a political task than an idea that they are personally keen on⁵⁹⁵. The question of whether the message of eco-civilisation gets recognised by the international audience remains to be examined. For instance, when I met Jeffery Sachs in London, who was invited to attend the 2014 Guiyang Forum as a distinguished guest, to talk about the idea of eco-civilisation, he showed no interest in or knowledge of the concept⁵⁹⁶.

The most concrete achievement of the Forum is reflected and summarised in the language of investment attraction, presented by the increased number of enterprises, investments and projects moving to Guiyang. In the 2011 Guiyang Forum, for instance, 15 projects of the worth of RMB5.678

⁵⁹³ Guizhou Daily 2013.

⁵⁹⁴ Wanda Tseng, Harm Zebreg, and Markus Rodlauer, "Foreign Direct Investment in China: Some Lessons for Other Countries," in *China: Competing in the Global Economy*, ed. Wanda Tseng (Washington, DC: International Monetary Fund, 2003), pp.70-71.

⁵⁹⁵ Volunteer at Eco-Global Forum Guiyang, interview by Author, Wechat, March 25, 2016.

⁵⁹⁶ Jeffrey Sachs, Brief interview after his public lecture The Age of Sustainable Development" at the London School of Economics, February 4, 2015.

billion were introduced to the city, covering tourism, low carbon industry, logistics, and solid waste disposal companies⁵⁹⁷. The amount of investment value doubled to RMB12.4 billion the next year⁵⁹⁸, indicating that the Forum was one of the major platforms to bring business and investment to the city. Guiyang tops the 2015 China emerging city rankings from the Economist Intelligence Unit⁵⁹⁹. It ranked first in terms of foreign direct investment, mainly from Taiwan and Hong Kong⁶⁰⁰. In general, the *Economist*, like many domestic observers, projects hope on Guiyang as a rising star with an innovative approach to growth, policy support from the government, and a political slogan to translate opportunities into a strategic plan of local economic development driven by the locomotive of investment and the need for poverty reduction.

7.8 Conclusion

This chapter has explored how the concept of eco-civilisation can be understood as a composite ideology that facilitates the process of the reconfiguring of political and material interests and enables the strengthening of conventionally weak domestic groups. Whereas the first two empirical

⁵⁹⁷ Taishi Wang, “2011shengtai Wenming Guiyang Huiyi Zhaoshang Yinzi Xiangmu qianyue’2011 生态文明贵阳会议招商引资项目签约[Signing Contracts with Investors in 2011 Eco-Forum Glocal Guiyang],” *Guizhou Daily*, July 18, 2011, <http://news.gog.cn/system/2011/07/18/011143010.shtml>.

⁵⁹⁸ Xingguo Shi, “2012 Shengtai Wenming Guiyang Huiyi shouri: Guiyang Qianxia 124yi Zhaoshangyinzi dadan’2012 生态文明贵阳会议首日:贵阳签下 124 亿招商引资大单[First Day of Guiyang Eco-Forum: Deal with 12.4billion Sealed],” *Guizhou Daily*, July 27, 2012, <http://zx.gyu.cn/nr.jsp?urltype=news.NewsContentUrl&wbtreeid=1673&wbnewsid=2820&archive=0>.

⁵⁹⁹ The Economist Intelligence Unit, “Rising Stars, Fading Comets: China Emerging City Rankings, 2015” (The Economist, 2015), <http://parkinternationalexport.com/wp-content/uploads/China-emerging-city-rankings-English-Version.pdf>, p.8.

⁶⁰⁰ Ibid, p.16.

chapters indicate that the institutions are weak, this chapter reveals the efforts by conventionally weak groups to use norms to augment their share of power in the existing institutional structure. Eco-civilisation offers a crucial momentum for weak groups as it indicates the transformation of the economic structure and provides an opportunity for them to align their identities with the national image depicted in the eco-civilisation discourse. MEP, leftist scholars and economically-backward provinces modify the developmentalist logic with environmental awareness. In this way, they represent different interests compared to stronger groups and this difference is in line with the signal from the top echelon of the leadership.

The identity of weak groups is critical because it is a way for them to signify their willingness to follow the lead and draw attention from the top leadership. Attention is a scarce resource which various groups in China compete for. It is because attention is limited, groups develop attention management and a competition for attention may induce behaviour which cannot be explained by rationality⁶⁰¹. Zhou *et al* use attention allocation to demonstrate how central government uses mechanism such as inspection, cadre evaluation, and reviews to draw the attention of local governments. The findings in this chapter illustrate the other side of the story: that different interest groups compete for attention from the central government via international cooperation.

The strategy of weak domestic groups involves using the international audience to compete for the attention of the national leadership, which is believed to be beneficial for maximising the interests of different groups. The

⁶⁰¹ Zhou *et al* 2013, p.128.

MEP uses the platforms of the UNEP and the EU-China Policy Dialogue to increase its ministerial power by showcasing its willingness and capability to defend eco-civilisation and lead the cause of eco-civilisation. The leftist scholars deploy international academic conferences to establish their political relevance and build informal channels through which their intellectual input is received by the party organisation and functions as a guiding principle for policy-making. The case of Guiyang has been used to epitomise the green development of an economically-backward locality by showcasing its progressive actions and visions to the world through the Eco Forum Global, thereby promoting the city and attracting investment by suggesting that economic growth can be achieved without sacrificing the environment.

The efforts of the MEP, leftist scholars and Guiyang to shine the global limelight on eco-civilisation raise the question of why domestic groups, in the absence of international pressure, are motivated to promote Chinese environmental norms. The composite ideology of eco-civilisation is intended to incorporate various interests to the extent that different domestic groups see benefits from this economic transformation towards sustainability. In the process in which the idea of eco-civilisation is translated into action, domestic groups maximise their own political and economic interests, which would otherwise be difficult to achieve. For the governor of Guiyang, the rapid growth of local GDP is the driving force of the genesis of the Guiyang Forum. For the MEP, eco-civilisation is useful for building relationships with ministerial leadership, access to policy making, obtaining authority and resources. The political interest of the leftist intelligentsia is more nuanced and subtle, namely gaining political relevance and influence over policy-making that may lead to a

political career. Another form of political interest that of retired officials such as Jiang Chunyun and Dai Bingguo, who act as a bridge linking different players and thereby gain a genuine sense of achievement and fulfilment. Eco-civilisation thus becomes a hook on which such figures can hang a political legacy.

Understanding eco-civilisation as shaped by interest groups raises the question as to whether it can also be seen as a genuine Chinese environmental norm. It certainly has the appearance of a norm that suggests China's ambition to be a leader in a new phase of civilisation for the whole of humanity. It appears to propose a philosophical challenge to the existing paradigm of liberal environmentalism which is interconnected with consumerism. Furthermore, eco-civilisation casts doubt on the unconditional reliance on technology and the market to solve problems. Its pilot project in Guiyang showcases an alternative way to economic development in which enlightened local governors embrace environmentalism which is based on Chinese philosophy.

Yet, the power of this norm is also limited by the competition among different interest groups, shown by the way in which it is domestically contested and in which it becomes linguistically confused in an international context. So far, the focus of domestic groups on eco-civilisation is on the question of how to take advantage of this vanguard concept, which is still open to interpretation. It has been effectively used by weak interest groups to connect their specific interests with the identity they attach to themselves. The effectiveness of domestic groups in the transmission of a Chinese norm is thus limited to raising the visibility of eco-civilisation instead of gaining its acceptance, not to mention securing its popularity. To what extent is eco-civilisation a norm remains to be seen, but what is clear, as demonstrated in this

chapter, is that it is an example of a composite ideology used to justify domestic preferences, particularly that of the emerging and traditionally weak interest groups.

Chapter 8 Conclusion

8.1 Introduction

The previous chapter detailed how different interest groups, from line ministries to NGOs, exert their influence on China's environmental foreign relations. This provides evidence to support the central hypothesis of this thesis that China's environmental foreign relations correlates with the interest of particular domestic groups. The main finding echos the political pluralism literature suggesting the co-existence of diverse interests. What is special in the case of China, compared to other authoritarian regimes, is the intricate interplay among interests, ideas, and identity. The weakness of institutions limits their capacity to reflect and incorporate interests. Instead, domestic groups find an alternative medium to prioritise their interests: identity. As the empirical cases suggest, identity is a platform on which various interests are presented and ranked. As a consequence, the language of the bargaining process is tuned to either economic or environmental identity, both of which nonetheless are framed in the nationalistic light.

It is evident that China's foreign relations are undergoing a process of political pluralisation. Domestic groups play an active role in implementing international accords, accumulating experience for international exchanges and promoting an alternative environmental norm to an international audience. This concluding chapter now takes a step back and seeks to locate these findings within the bigger picture in terms of the empirical context, new knowledge in the relevant literature, and theoretical contributions in the field of

IR. I first discuss the empirical implications of this research, and in the process of doing so, I explain how I contribute to the existing literature on China's environmental foreign relations and suggest directions for future research.

Building on the empirical findings, my theoretical contribution explores how the case of China contributes to the IR debate on the interaction among interests, ideas, and identity. I proposed the framework of constructivist utilitarianism to bridge the gap between rationalistic institutionalism and constructivism, which allows us to better understand the question of how to understand China's environmental cooperation behaviour. In addition, this framework addresses the question of the intricate interaction between interests, ideas, and identity in environmental cooperation for other developing countries, such as Brazil. This new framework is important, therefore, as it explains how developing countries exert their influence on the international order.

8.2 Summary and extension

I start with the simple suggestion that interest groups should not be treated by academics and practitioners as a taboo in domestic and global environmental governance. Regarding the realm of environmental protection merely as a normative issue masks much of the real political dynamics that lie beneath the surface. The downside of conceptualising environmental issues through a normative lens is that it fuels conspiracy theory which asserts that environmental protection is an excuse used by developed countries to contain developing countries, a recurring theme from the early period of environmental

foreign relations in the 1980s till present. Instead, it is better to understand that environmental protection itself is not always treated as a national interest; rather, the various economic, diplomatic, and trade interests hiding behind the curtain are the only genuine interest for states. In other words, environmental cooperation is evaluated against the non-environmental interests of states.

This logic is manifest in the empirical chapters of this thesis. In Chapter Four, it is argued that whether environmental accords can be substantively, and not merely procedurally, implemented, is contingent upon whether industrial sectors can open the overseas market. Environmental cooperation is thus tied tightly to exports and anticipated profitability. Chapter Five concludes in similar vein as Chinese experience is used to facilitate Chinese enterprises to invest overseas, instead of bringing policy change to foreign aid policy in the direction of sustainability. Chapter Six echoes this finding, and points out how local government calculates how to use international exposure to attract foreign capital and investment. Although entry into foreign markets (particularly those with higher environmental standards), investment overseas, and the attraction of foreign capital, are likely to improve environmental conditions within China, it is equally possible for them to increase environmental pollution. The key concern, therefore, is how interest groups perceive environmental interests in accordance with their own preferences.

First and foremost, the findings suggest that environmental organisations will benefit from insisting on the importance of the environment as a national interest which they themselves represent, which makes them into an interest group. Although environmental and economic interests do not necessarily conflict, they cannot be equated with each other. Indeed, because of

the lack of other groups that see the environment as a vital interest, the domestic role of environmental organisations is reduced to providing services that are outsourced by the government. This pattern can be seen in the efforts of NGOs to take part in the “Going out” strategy. This is illustrated in Chapter Six, which looks at the case of how GEI offered assistance to facilitate a grant application between the Laotian government agency and the Chinese ministries. More specifically, GEI intended to help MOFCOM jump outside the box of traditional foreign aid patterns, with its heavy emphasis on infrastructure combined with little effort to engage in sustainable projects. In this way, it attempted to use the implementation of an environmental protection bilateral cooperation agreement to bring gradual change to the broader foreign aid strategy. On the other hand, the failure of GEI to launch a sustainable cooperation bilateral project proves the limitation of replicating the service-providing mode of cooperation between environmental organisations and bureaucracies. At the heart of the failure is the fundamental mismatch between what kind of service is needed and what is important in foreign aid projects.

When GEI refers to interest it is via the rhetoric of Chinese experience, in the sense of using environmental diplomacy to establish a positive image for the Chinese government. However, this rhetoric is weak when faced with the bureaucratic monopolising of decisions regarding foreign aid projects and the streamlining of line ministries that approve applications. Moreover, it challenges the interest of GEI’s primary partner, MOFCOM. As a result of this, GEI’s executive director proposed an alternative government partner which could envision the benefits of cooperating with GEI. The way to interpret this hindsight is that environmental organisations, in order to play a bigger role in

environmental foreign relations, should first identify what the environmental interest is, and then form a coalition with ministries sharing a similar interest. In this way, a new-type of government-to-government cooperation becomes more likely.

The rationale for local governments is to understand environmental interests as coming from the desire to secure more “green opportunities” for local development. Moreover, there are benefits from being seen to take a lead in the competition between localities by wielding the environmental card. The case of Guiyang demonstrates the strategy of local governors to draw the attention of the central government via hosting international conferences to promote a special Chinese interpretation of environmental protection. The project of an Eco-Global Guiyang is thus seen by lower-level officials as a political task within the local jurisdiction, which is important for an economically-backward place to attract foreign investment and capital.

Moreover, building a good reputation for environmental protection can in itself represent a way of attracting foreign investment. Contrary to the perception that local governments lower environmental standards and relax environmental regulation to attract corporate investment⁶⁰², Guiyang’s model establishes criteria for inward investment that encourage environmentally-friendly firms, or those that can both boost the local economy and protect environment. The ecological courts, demonstration zones, and the environmental protection industry invited to Guiyang⁶⁰³ all attest to the attempt

⁶⁰² Phillip Stalley, “Can Trade Green China? Participation in the Global Economy and the Environmental Performance of Chinese Firms,” *Journal of Contemporary China* 18, no. 61 (September 1, 2009): pp.567–90.

⁶⁰³ Yun Huang, “The Reproducible Mode of Ecological Civilization of Guiyang,” *World Environment*, no. 5 (2014): pp.20–22.

of local governors to conduct the experiment of ecological civilisation and to ensure that the green card does not induce grey developments which lead to environmental pollution.

The fact that environmental interest becomes relevant when it is linked to pecuniary benefit suggests that the criteria for ranking interest groups preferences is economic. This can be explained by a weak governance foundation, which intentionally dilutes the fundamental difference between economic and environmental interests. It is a legacy of the ecological modernisation mindset shared by the national leaders which emphasises the compatibility rather than the conflict between economic development and environmental protection. This ostensible harmony between rapid development and environmental protection takes on a life of its own as the only option to incorporate environmental issues to the broad development agenda and garner supports from various domestic interest groups. This bias towards economic development at the expense of environmental concerns is present in other developing countries. What makes the case of China distinctive is the paradoxical role of the state. Persistent authoritarianism co-exists with a high degree of de-centralisation in the process of political pluralisation. Hence, China uses a state-signalling approach to steer policy in a direction which is in line with national strategy. Developing countries like India and Brazil, in contrast, resort to the market to align interests and navigate the economy towards sustainability⁶⁰⁴. The consequence of this difference is that it is easier for

⁶⁰⁴ Harrison and Kostka, 2014; Kathryn Hochstetler and Genia Kostka. "Wind and Solar Power in Brazil and China: Interests, State-Business Relations, and Policy Outcomes." *Global Environmental Politics* 15, no. 3 (June 15, 2015): 74-94.

domestic groups in China to highjack national policy and justify their pursuit of parochial interests.

SOEs represent one type of interest group that influences environmental foreign relations by launching and operationalising concrete projects overseas. They are treated in this thesis as being important interest groups primarily because of their investment in infrastructure and energy sectors. As Chapter Six argues, the environmental cost of this is tightly integrated with their ability to consolidate their trade relations with foreign governments and to expand their market share. The findings suggest that SOEs take environmental interest into consideration in investment decisions and project operation, as the business environment abroad differs from that in China insofar as it is the responsibility of the company to resolve conflicts of interest.

In China, on the other hand, SOEs are protected and nurtured by local governments, and disputes with local residents are dealt with by local officials. In contrast, overseas SOEs are subject to oversight from NGOs, often negative exposure in the global media, pressure from local residents and activists, and the legislation and regulation of destination countries. Environmental issues are mostly portrayed as a challenge and ignorance of environmental issues will cause huge economic loss. In this light, WWF China⁶⁰⁵ uses examples of failed investment in the sectors of hydropower and mining in Southeast Asia and Latin America to promote stakeholder analysis, which incorporates social, political, and environmental dimensions, to assess the risk of overseas investment. The case study of Sinohydro demonstrates that this makes it possible for SOEs to

⁶⁰⁵ "Environmental And Social Risk Management of Chinese Transnational Corporations" (Beijing: WWF, 2015), http://www.wwfchina.org/content/press/publication/2015/Yale-WWF_final.pdf.

turn environmental issues into a positive concept which in turn generates more investment opportunities, with the assistance of NGOs and the realisation of CSR. This is not to say that environmental interests will become a primary concern of SOEs, to the extent that profitability becomes less important. Instead, SOEs can play an active role in environmental foreign relations through their own business conduct and hence contribute to the representation of a green national image at the front line.

Chapter Five shows how scholars play a crucial part in aspects ranging from the decision to join the Montreal Protocol to the practical details of planning and implementation. The research team at Peking University, which was led by Professor Tang Xiaoyan, managed to change the way international funding was allocated in China away from an individual project approach to the sectoral approach. Whereas Chapter Five depicts a direct and decisive influence of intellectuals on China's environmental foreign relations, however, the case of ecological civilisation promotion in chapter 7 suggests a more complicated picture. Leftist scholars endorsing socialism and Chinese culture regard themselves as representative of environmental interests, largely because their eco-socialism theories set constraints on the dominant logic of developmentalism. Their path to influencing policies is less direct and mainly occurs through the party system, instead of government agencies. Although their influence appears to be trivial, the connection between socialism and environmental protection has the potential to challenge the claimed "political advantage" referred to in the rhetoric of Chinese representatives on the global stage. Furthermore, leftists' criticism might undermine the "good image" that

the government tries to portray by exposing China's environmentally destructive development pattern.

The difference between the degree of influence of scholars like Tang Xiaoyan and the leftist scholars lies largely in their academic disciplines. Tang and her research team are regarded as scientists whose role is recognised in the existing literature on environmental foreign relations⁶⁰⁶. In contrast, leftist scholars are seen by bureaucrats as sycophants who seek to please national leaders by inflating the power of China on the global stage. This comparison points to the trend of bureaucracies in charge of environmental foreign relations to place a heavy emphasis on scientific input and to expect academics to provide direct policy suggestions to the government, instead of challenging the current mode of development. As a consequence, although leftist and postmodernist intellectuals are able to attract some sympathy from a select international audience which facilitates the promotion of ecological civilisation, failure to incorporate their suggestions in policy shows that their domestic efforts do not have much traction.

It is evident that intellectuals and ministries represent different interests, the latter being widely perceived as more pragmatic. Line ministries, in this research, are also treated as one type of interest group. Instead of seeing them through the eyes of bureaucratic politics, though, I prefer to examine their role through the lens of interest groups, as this allows us to better examine how they interact with other groups. The immediate interests of ministries are to obtain more of the power and resources allocated by the central government. Efforts to

⁶⁰⁶See Sheila Jasanoff, *The Fifth Branch : Science Advisers as Policymakers* (Cambridge, Mass ; London: Harvard University Press, 1990); Economy 1997.

maximise ministerial interest include positive behaviour to compete for the leadership position, as Chapter Seven demonstrates, and negative behaviour to prevent other ministries from sharing their monopoly on power, as illustrated by the example of MOFCOM in Chapter 6.

The fragmentation of authority over environmental cooperation creates competition over leadership among ministries involved in this policy area. This is particularly the case when the central government attempts to advocate an alternative norm to the international community, which allows the MEP to gain a leading position in international cooperation. Paradoxically, the MEP represents not only environmental interests, but also economic interests. Its interpretation of the rhetoric of ecological civilisation thus reflects the increasing assimilation of environmental interests into the logic of developmentalism. Combined with an institutional set up in which not a single government agency represents environmental interests, the seeds of eternal competition among state apparatus are sown, rendering coordination difficult.

The above approach has broader implications for understanding Chinese foreign policy. By looking at how interest groups play a role in the shaping of foreign relations it is possible to explore how an authoritarian state like China can make use of domestic groups to achieve diplomatic objectives in a range of areas. A recent example is the so-called “cabbage strategy” (*baoxincai zhanlüe* 包心菜战略) deployed in the South China Sea disputes between China and the Philippines. This term was introduced by Major General Zhang Zhaozhong to visualise China’s strategy to claim sovereignty over disputed islands. It involves wrapping the contested areas “layer by layer like a cabbage” by fishermen, fishing administration ships, marine surveillance ships and navy warships in

the outermost layer⁶⁰⁷. This originally aimed to cut off supplies to the “invading troops” of the Philippines. More importantly, it stations domestic interest groups - the fishermen -, at the forefront of the geopolitical hotspot. The primary reason why fishermen risk fishing in disputed areas is that the fishing stock in the South Sea is huge, and it is increasingly difficult to conduct offshore fishing⁶⁰⁸.

Sending fishermen to a disputed island is only the first step in manufacturing domestic interests to achieve diplomatic goals. The next step is to develop “economy, tourism, marine fishery and marine protection”, according to General Zhang. Indeed, the high-ranking officials in charge of foreign affairs from Hainan province are liaising with the School of Hospitality and Tourism Management in the University of Surrey, the best for this subject in the United Kingdom, regarding how to combine eco-tourism with diplomacy. The Chinese government thus not only deploys interest groups but also creates and manufactures domestic interests that can be used to pursue foreign policy objectives. In addition, the linkage between environmental protection and territorial sovereignty provides another fascinating case to examine the coalition formation among different groups and generates an avenue of fruitful research.

⁶⁰⁷ Kai Yee Chan, “China Boasts of Strategy to ‘recover’ Islands Occupied by Philippines,” *China Daily Mail*, May 28, 2013, <https://chinadailymail.com/2013/05/28/china-boasts-of-strategy-to-recover-islands-occupied-by-philippines/>.

⁶⁰⁸ Initium Media, “Women Hui Chiguang Haiyang Ma: Cong Taipingyang Dao Xifei, Liang'an Yuye Quanqing diaocha’我們會吃光海洋嗎？從太平洋到西非，兩岸漁業全景調查[Will We Eat up the Ocean? From the Pacific to West Africa, a Paronomic Investigation of the Fishing Industries across the Straits],” August 25, 2016, <https://theinitium.com/project/20160825-taiwan-fisheries-web/>.

8.3 Theoretical implications

This thesis makes a contribution to the development of theory by proposing the use of constructivist utilitarianism, which expands, modifies and synthesises components of rationalist institutionalism and constructivism based on empirical evidence from China. It thus provides an analytical framework that not only contributes to our understanding of Chinese foreign policy but also contributes to the IR debate over the interaction of interests, ideas, and identity.

The basic argument is that domestic players shape foreign relations by deploying ideas—in this research, “environmental diplomacy”, the “Chinese experience”, and “ecological civilisation”—in order to justify their pursuit of interests. Furthermore, the interpretation of these ideas is strategic because they are used to identify special interests with the general problem of China’s participation in the international community. Whereas all three acknowledge that the constant challenge of China’s role in global environmental governance is the alarming level of domestic environmental pollution and ecological damage, the shift from environmental diplomacy towards the building of ecological civilisation indicates a change of emphasis in the way in which international cooperation is understood and deployed.

The rhetoric of environmental diplomacy suggests that the lack of funding and technology is the primary difficulty, and hence resources from multilateral, regional, and bilateral relations are seen as a solution to the problem. The endeavour to obtain resources, however, develops the relevance of the “Chinese experience”. Although technology and funding remain critical, the combination of the foreign way with Chinese national conditions is of

growing importance. In this sense, the imported idea of environmental diplomacy is sinicised to become one that emphasises a special kind of experience, the nature of which is to ensure that international resources serve the interests of China. The most recent development in this evolution of policy rhetoric echoes the “constructivist” use of power by Chinese political actors. In this respect, one of the most pressing problems underpinning the interpretation of ecological civilisation is that of national image. The fact that China has not yet become a leader in global environmental governance is said to essentially arise from the fact that it is crippled by a poor national image, which is tarnished by international media coverage and damaged by the authoritarian stereotype.

Domestic interest groups will tend to embrace environmental cooperation when they expect their interests to be maximised, however. Even though environmental foreign policy is made by national leaders, such groups may still exert their influence via implementation. As demonstrated in Chapter Five, meeting the demands of concrete sectoral interests leads to a substantive pattern of implementation of the Montreal Protocol. In contrast, an international environmental accord that challenges sectoral interests is likely to be implemented only on a procedural level instead of substantively. The distinction between substantive and procedural patterns of implementation thus reveals the weakness of using institutions to aggregate domestic preferences.

This means that it is misleading to assume that the establishment of institutions means a full commitment to the environment. Instead, they are set up as a way to boost the number of procedural acts that are gestures to show

the international community the efforts that the Chinese government is making. A substantive type of implementation, on the other hand, is linked with the active participation of interest groups and meets the demands of domestic preferences. In this light, institutions can actually have a negative impact because they are not designed to *aggregate* domestic preferences, but result in *segmenting* them. This is in direct contradiction with the assumptions of Milner's rationalistic institutionalism. It is a phenomenon that is further demonstrated by the case of MOFCOM's rejection of GEI's suggestion to include environmental interests in foreign aid that is covered in Chapter Six. The reaction of MOFCOM reflects the fact that the capability of this ministry to incorporate other interests is limited, due to the ossified and inflexible understanding of the interest that the specific ministry represents.

The argument put forward in this thesis thus provides a better explanation than rationalistic institutionalism for why the Chinese government emphasises the "Chinese characteristics" of its environmental cooperation, which is epitomised by the emergence of "ecological civilisation" discussed in Chapter Seven. This is because the focus of rationalistic institutionalism is placed on institutions, interests, and information while assuming that interests and information are objective and "out there". The concept of "ecological civilisation" does not reflect a clear conception of interests, however, particularly when interest groups jump on the bandwagon when using this term and try to interpret it in their own favour. Moreover, the information factor matters less in the political slogan of ecological civilisation. More important is the question of what gives rise to changing attitudes towards global environmental governance?

It is tempting to assert that China's economic power may eventually turn to discursive influence. However, as the difficulty in Chinese overseas investment demonstrates, it would be premature to bundle the realist perception of power in with one based on normative power. Although Chinese academics and officials believe that when China is economically strong, she will be more persuasive and have more international followers, the case of environmental cooperation suggests a more complicated picture.

Instead of regarding the promotion of Chinese-ness as a natural next step after showcasing its economic might, my findings suggest that the Chinese government is trying to make use of environmental cooperation to benefit interest groups. This entails devising a nationalistic rhetoric that can be used to persuade both the domestic and the international audience to prioritise some special interests by elevating them to the status of the national interest. In this way, identity politics becomes a mechanism that can be used to rank and prioritise domestic preferences.

While this perspective verifies the claim that interests are socially constructed, it is not the aim of this research to simply confirm constructivism. By testing theories against the empirical evidence it is possible to refine theory by proposing that constructivist utilitarianism can explain why the actions of certain domestic interests are more important in foreign relations than others, which is a gap left by both rationalist institutionalists and constructivism.

The proposed theoretical framework of constructivist utilitarianism also provides an explanation for the "nationalistic turn" of environmental cooperation. By bridging rationalistic institutionalism and constructivism, it is possible to explain how interests are constructed and ranked around identities,

while the identity dimension is also underpinned by utilitarian logic as it serves the maximisation of national interests. By breaking down the boundary between utilitarianism and constructivism, it is possible to allow for the importance of both the intersubjective understanding of interests and a utilitarian perception of norms.

Bringing together “constructivist” and “utilitarianism” may seem to be contradictory, as the latter undermines the importance of ideas and identity as stressed by the former. However, my findings suggest that the observable utilitarian behaviours of states and domestic interest groups are conditioned by identities, images, and the ideational dimension of policy-making. In addition, identity can be adjusted in accordance to domestic preferences. The hierarchy between interests and identities that is assumed in both rationalistic institutionalism and constructivism is undermined by the evidence presented in the empirical chapters. Instead, identities and interests can be seen to be mutually conditioned. The ranking and prioritisation of domestic preferences via the deployment of the ideational dimension, and the desire to pursue national interests on the global stage is intimately linked to how the state presents itself to the outside world. In this way, the nationalistic element of environmental cooperation not only serves diplomatic goals, but is also important for the aggregation of domestic preferences.

I have identified two mechanisms through which identities aggregate and rank domestic preferences, which, in turn allow interest groups to influence environmental foreign relations: the mechanism of distraction and the proof of capability. The first mechanism draws from my observations of the Traditional Chinese Medicine industry in the implementation of CBD. During the process of

implementing this international accord, this industry was protected by the state and listed as a strategic industry whose fate is closely linked to that of national interest. The nationalistic element was most evident when an environmental activist criticised the advocacy that traditional Chinese medicine should be banned to protect biological diversity as being a kind of “nationalistic nihilism”. This criticism reflected the perception that the importance of traditional Chinese medicine outweighs that of biological diversity. This individual view is mirrored by the Chinese government’s reaction to the adverse impact of traditional Chinese medicine on biodiversity. Shown in the earlier discussion in Chapter Five, the biggest problem of the traditional Chinese medicine industry, according to the national reports submitted to the CBD Secretariat, is not the use of wildlife as ingredients. Instead, a more pressing issue is Intellectual Property Rights, as the whole industrial sector suffers from a lack of patents and a small market share of the traditional medicine market has been “invaded” by Japanese and Korean pharmaceutical corporations. The fact that these corporations are Japanese and Korean generates an enhanced sense of nationalistic sympathy and humiliation, which is used to drum up support for the domestic industry. Hence nationalism can be used to prioritise the domestic sector’s interest, and is used to avoid the negative impact of biodiversity protection on the industry. In this way, nationalistic identity justifies the trend of protectionist policy towards the Traditional Chinese Medicine industry, which constrains the degree of implementation of the CBD and China’s fulfilment of its international commitments.

The second mechanism in which identity is deployed to weigh different preferences is through the proof of capability, a process which convinces

decision-makers that China is able to contribute more to the environmental governance and hence strengthens the confidence of the state to be a responsible power. The case of articulating a “Chinese experience” illustrates how this mechanism works. Environmental NGO’s nationalistic logic is such that the possibility of China’s leadership position among developing countries is contingent upon its ability to share this special experience with other developing states. This nationalistic component, based upon national pride, is used to encourage a pattern of environmental cooperation in which China takes more responsibility. SOEs are thus given a leading role in deploying the discourse in the hope that the success of the Chinese experience in fulfilling environmental and social responsibilities can establish the green image that Chinese companies need to further explore overseas markets.

The above two mechanisms both tend to argue for more environmental cooperation. However, their logics differ. On the one hand, NGOs aim to use environmental cooperation to establish and consolidate the international leadership of China. On the other, the primary concern of SOEs is to pursue commercial interests, which requires establishing long-term partnerships that can strengthen the acceptance of environmental responsibilities and the need for more environmental cooperation so long as this leads to economic benefits. In the foreseeable future, using the Chinese experience to assert global leadership in environmental governance will thus be a growing trend in China’s attempts to woo the international community. This also provides insights into the way that nationalism can be used to aggregate domestic preferences and how this may change with the convergence of economic and environmental interests.

Analysis of the discourse of ecological civilisation verifies this tendency and suggests a future in which China is no longer satisfied with the dominant discourse of sustainable development that is centred on themes such as the low carbon economy, and other concepts invented in the West. Even after three decades of exposure to the international environmental community, the conspiracy theory that the West uses environmental discourse to undermine developing countries still prevails. This nationalistic sentiment towards environmental protection is underpinned by the perceived connection between discourse and interest among Chinese political actors, who believe that whoever owns the discourse can benefit the most from international cooperation. The Chinese government is no longer content with having interest “imposed” on it, to borrow Yu Hongyuan’s⁶⁰⁹ description of the hierarchy between domestic and international interests.

The emergence of ecological civilisation thus indicates the efforts of Beijing to achieve greater discursive power, so that it can define environmental interests in accordance with national conditions. The need to use the concept of ecological civilisation in the discourse of environmental cooperation arises from the need of the government to protect the domestic interests that make up the national interest. Various interest groups can thus bandwagon on the political slogan, which is gradually evolving into a composite ideology that can appeal to various domestic interests. Every interest group has different motives for participating in environmental cooperation, but the commonality is the intention to take advantage of international cooperation to maximise their domestic preferences and the hope that China has more authority to interpret a

⁶⁰⁹ Yu 2008.

norm which is defined by itself. To a certain degree, the interpretation of norms overrides the importance of institutions and regulations.

The mechanisms of distraction and proof of capability allow me to add another channel through which the dimensions of ideational factors and identity politics influence foreign relations, on top of the layering and ranking of preferences in the model of Keohane and Goldstein. Who we are and how we see others not only conditions what our interests are, but also guides us regarding how we proceed in terms of achieving those interests. The importance of ranking is predicated on the assumption that multiple interests exist and interests keep changing. Following this logic, the prioritisation of preferences reflects the temporality of interests.

In order to fully understand who benefits more from international environmental cooperation, the factor of *attention*, which recurs in the empirical discussion, is also worth flagging up as a direction for future research. Under circumstances where weak institutions are not capable of establishing the ranking of domestic preferences, it can be expected that interest groups will compete with each other to gain the attention of the ruling elite. The attention of national leaders is relative, as focusing attention on one domestic interest group may imply the neglect of others. The relationship between international cooperation and attention is thus paradoxical, as the former can be both a means and end to gaining the latter. This can be seen in the scenario where interest groups use the ability to mobilise international resources to maximise their domestic share of attention, shown in the case of the Guiyang local government. In the case of MOFCOM, however, the existing attention of the political elite is used to prohibit international cooperation. The challenge thus

becomes how to understand the role of “attention” in explaining the influence of domestic interest groups on foreign relations. Is it an independent variable that leads to the incorporation of specific interests into the national agenda? Or is it an intervening variable that is used to set the conditions by which group level dynamics are reflected at the state-level of behaviour?

8.4 Policy implication

Regarding the understanding of Chinese foreign policy more broadly, constructivist utilitarianism may be used as a way to conceptualise China’s role on the global stage. That is to say, my research suggests that China is a constructivist utilitarian power because various domestic interest groups seek interest maximisation through foreign relations, while also exerting discursive influence for the Chinese government on the ideational and normative sphere of the international community. Interest groups are thus utilitarian insofar as they see foreign relations as an avenue to pursue special benefits, and they are constructivist because they see the obstacle of achieving their goals is the lack of discursive power. Whether or not they believe in the ideas they articulate, the most relevant function of the ideational dimension is to establish the discursive power of China by demonstrating and justifying the new element it brings to international norm making.

Ironically, in this process, the Chinese government is reproducing the “hypocrisy” of the developed countries. The Chinese norm may be Chinese and socialism in rhetoric but it is more like capitalism and the model used by

developed countries in practice. The rhetoric might be greener but the practice is driven by economic interests. In other words, while China may claim to be an alternative model, it is merely replicating what already exists. The only difference is that by constructing this “alternative”, the Chinese government assumes the power to interpret and judge that is needed to become a leader in the international community.

This research is not the first attempt to tackle the contradiction between utilitarian intention and constructive ambition in China’s foreign relations. Callahan, for example, describes China as a “pessoptimist” country⁶¹⁰ that is characterised by the coexistence of positive and negative dynamics. A more articulate capturing of the contradicting attributes in China may be found in Shambaugh, when he describes China as:

... confident but insecure, assertive but hesitant, occasionally arrogant but usually modest, a sense of entitlement growing out of historical victimisation, risk-averse but increasingly engaged, a cautious internationalism combined with strong nationalism and deeply embedded parochialism⁶¹¹.

Shambaugh observes that China is undergoing an “identity crisis”⁶¹² regarding its globalised role. His conclusion, however, is drawn from a cross-issue examination of the economic, cultural, and security dimensions of China’s global impact. My project, based as it is on China’s environmental foreign relations, echoes this complexity. However, this complexity is not merely a cross issue one: for instance, China is culturally arrogant but economically modest. The

⁶¹⁰ Callahan 2010.

⁶¹¹ Shambaugh 2013, p.316.

⁶¹² Ibid.

contradiction is inherent as a globalised China needs to deal with different domestic interest groups, and the national leaders' intention to use ideas and norms to maximise the national interest and achieve diplomatic goal gives rise to the awkward *nouveau riche* image of China which is trying to buy the elements that constitute a good image. In many ways, the idea of an "identity crisis" seems to lack the nuanced complexity of the challenge that China faces. I would argue that it is the difficulty of adjusting between the need of identity and those of special domestic interests that explains the contradictory presentation of China on the global stage.

Environmental cooperation is just one piece of the puzzle of creating a good image for China. The Chinese government is establishing funds to allocate grants and loans to developing countries and investing in the green sector in the developed countries. MOFCOM and the MEP are hosting workshops to invite leaders in developing countries to share their experience in environmental governance and, more importantly, exhibit China's leadership in sustainable development. The specially arranged sightseeing sessions and dumpling-making activities in those foreign aid training workshops indicate that environmental cooperation⁶¹³ may be closely linked to the desire of the Chinese government to be liked by other countries, if not imitated, because the Chinese experience is still too vague, loose, and sometimes easily dismissed.

The linkage between environmental cooperation and good image puts interest groups into a special position. This is because they can use the promotion of a good image to instrumentalise environmental cooperation in

⁶¹³ Zhijie Liu and Yunfeng Shi, "Build International Environmental Protection Friendship Bridge with Considerate and Warmhearted: Foreign Aid Training Project of CEEC" (World Environment, 2014), http://www.wem.org.cn/images/20140820/201403_tbdbd_yw.pdf.

ways that legitimise the pursuit of their selfish interests. Two scenarios emerge from this: on the one hand, interest groups can use environmental cooperation as a shield to hide environmentally-unfriendly conduct or the transfer of pollution to other countries; on the other hand, their interests are conditioned by the bandwagonning around environmental protection and are transformed to incorporate environmental concerns that may be against their selfish interests. Thus, returning to Qu Geping's predicament that "it is more difficult to touch one's interests than to touch their souls" with which this thesis began, my findings suggest that interests and ideals need not always be dichotomous.

Finally, two policy recommendations may be presented based on the findings of this thesis. The first is the need to consolidate the priority of environmental interests by confirming an authoritative institution as a leader in the shaping of environmental foreign relations. The MOFA is not a candidate for this role because it represents comprehensive diplomatic interests and is too understaffed to take on the responsibility for promoting environmental interests. The most suitable candidate is the MEP, as it is expected to be the place with the most evident and prominent environmental interests and has been active and experienced in environmental cooperation. The MEP, however, is not supposed to represent economic interests. Yet this does not mean that it should not use economic leverage to punish polluters. On the contrary, economic sanctions are the means to defend the environmental interests of the country and guard against pollution-transferring MNCs. Things may change with the establishment of the Leading Group for the Comprehensive Deepening of Reform in 2013, headed by President Xi Jinping himself. As noted above, one branch of this group is dedicated to attending to ecological civilisation. However,

it is too early to tell to what degree this top-level design reflects the presence of a leading agency that can genuinely represent the interests of the environment.

Secondly, it is of critical importance to bring NGOs to our attention when analysing Chinese foreign relations, insofar as they increasingly constitute a type of interest group that may achieve the objective of using environmental cooperation to give China a more positive image. The current problem is that they are “free ranging” ambassadors who are striving mainly to clarify what they see as the distorted reports in the international media and to provide a positive story of China’s global role in environmental governance. Most of the time, their suggestions are appreciated, but not incorporated. A mechanism to channel NGOs’ experience proves to be not only necessary, but also pressing, as GEI’s encounter with MOFCOM demonstrates. NGOs provide abundant opportunities for the Chinese government and companies to use environmental cooperation to achieve long-term economic benefits. However, these opportunities have been missed, as NGOs are perceived domestically as foreign agents and viewed with suspicion. In this way, the legal protection of NGOs domestically is beneficial to establish bonds of trust between ardent and experienced Chinese NGOs and other interest groups that have a stake in the shaping of environmental foreign relations.

In conclusion, environmental issues can be said to function like a mirror in which an eager but cautious image of China is reflected. Regardless of how China performs in global environmental governance, it is undeniable that it needs environmental cooperation more than ever. The future of China’s domination of the world order is perhaps not imminent, but the efforts of various groups and actors in China to take a leading role in environmental

governance are increasingly evident. Rather than seeing special interests as a threat to the PRC regime, as implied by Qu Geping, this thesis has explored the ways in which their influence can be channelled in constructive ways into the shaping of China's foreign relations.

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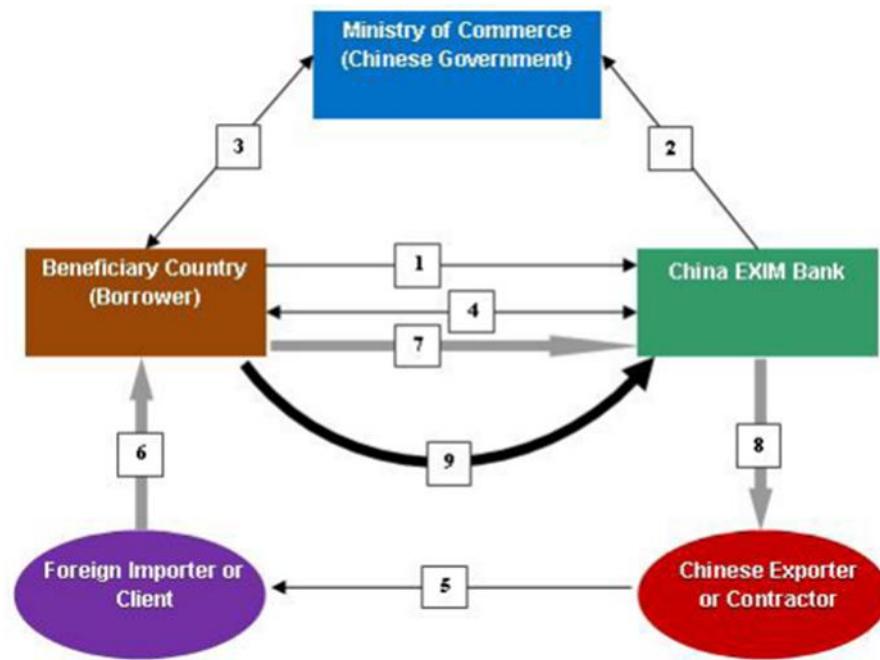
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Appendix I. Official procedure of Concessional Loan application (Chapter 5)



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Appendix II. GEI variation of the Concessional Loan Application

