

How International Organizations Influence State Behaviour: A Comparative Study of Environmental Governance

Shiqian Zhu*

School of International Relations and Diplomacy, Beijing Foreign Studies University, Beijing, China

*Corresponding author: 202120116110@bfsu.edu.cn

Abstract. This paper conducts a comparative study of the World Bank and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) in environmental governance. It seeks to understand how international organizations influence the behavior of sovereign states and assesses the efficacy of different pathways to control. Ecological issues have garnered significant attention in a globalized world with complex challenges that require international cooperation. The World Bank, as a prominent financier, provides loans and technical support to developing countries for environmental projects. Conversely, as a specialized UN agency, UNEP influences environmental governance through policy advocacy, international cooperation, technical support, and ecological data provision. Comparatively, the World Bank emphasizes project implementation and financial aid, while UNEP focuses on policy guidance, international collaboration, and data-driven decision-making. Both organizations play crucial roles in advancing environmental sustainability and international cooperation. This research highlights the complementary nature of international organizations and their ability to provide comprehensive support to nations. It recognizes their positive contributions and acknowledges challenges like improving cooperation among international organizations and addressing emerging environmental issues. Understanding how these organizations shape state behavior is vital for effective global environmental governance, promoting sustainable development, and environmental protection.

Keywords: International Organizations, Environmental Governance, Sustainable Development; World Bank.

1. Introduction

International organizations play an essential role in global affairs, providing a platform for cooperation among States and resolving typical problems and challenges. However, the influence of international organizations is often questioned, and it is generally believed that the impact of international organizations on sovereign states is limited; however, actual cases and practices demonstrate that different international organizations exhibit significant differences in their influence on state behavior. This raises an important question: Through which paths do international organizations achieve impact on sovereign state behavior? And how do different ways of power differ in effectiveness and efficiency? This thesis explores these questions through a comparative study of the involvement of the World Bank and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) in environmental governance.

In the context of globalization, environmental issues have increasingly attracted the international community's attention. Well-functioning international institutions become indispensable when individual states, regardless of their economic or military might, confront transboundary problems that they cannot solve alone [1]. Because of the vast scale of ecological challenges, the multitude of nations implicated, and their impact on global security, environmental concerns have become the most pronounced illustration of the intricacy and interdependence characterizing the modern world. [2]. The rise of non-state actors and their unique role in global issues has made up for the lack of cooperation among sovereign states and become an emerging force in international environmental governance. Among the many international organizations actively involved in environmental control, the World Bank and UNEP, as influential international organizations, influence the behavior of sovereign states in global ecological management from different perspectives.

The World Bank is one of the largest sources of funds and knowledge for developing countries. Its participation in environmental governance mainly helps developing countries implement various projects, including ecological governance projects, by providing loans and financial support. The World Bank's role includes providing financial support, technical assistance, and policy advice and requiring project implementers to comply with specific environmental and social protection standards. By providing financial and expert support, the World Bank facilitates the implementation of national ecological projects. It improves environmental management capacity while emphasizing projects' economic viability and financial sustainability.

UNEP is the primary agency for environmental matters within the United Nations system. UNEP's core mission is to assist nations in transitioning towards low-carbon and resource-efficient economies, bolstering environmental governance and legal frameworks, safeguarding ecosystems, and furnishing evidence-based data for shaping policy choices. [3]. It advances the development and implementation of the international environmental agenda through policy advocacy, international cooperation, and technical support, contributing to enhancing national capacities in environmental management and sustainable development while providing critical ecological governance-related information and research support.

In summary, the World Bank and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), as international organizations with solid influence and representativeness, influence the environmental governance behavior of sovereign countries through different paths in environmental governance. Through in-depth research and comparison, people can better understand how international organizations influence the behavior of sovereign states and provide more practical guidance and inspiration for global environmental governance.

2. Literature Review

The role of international organizations in global affairs is paramount, providing a platform for cooperation among nations to address common problems and challenges. However, the influence of international organizations is often questioned due to the retention of sovereignty by member states, enabling them to determine their actions independently. While it is generally believed that the influence of international organizations on sovereign states is limited, practical cases demonstrate significant variations in the impact of different international organizations on state behavior. This raises a fundamental question: through what pathways do international organizations affect the behavior of sovereign states, and what risks are associated with this influence?

To delve into this question, this paper conducts a comparative study of the involvement of the World Bank and UNEP in environmental governance. Against the backdrop of globalization, environmental issues have gained increasing attention from the international community. Due to the wide-reaching impact of environmental challenges, the involvement of numerous nations, and susceptibility to global security dynamics, international ecological cooperation exhibits characteristics of complexity, long-term engagement, and arduousness. The emergence of non-state actors and their unique role in international matters has bridged the gaps in sovereign nation capabilities, constituting a novel force in global environmental cooperation. Consequently, non-state actors have garnered significant attention and extensive research in the international community. International organizations play a pivotal role in environmental governance, with the World Bank and the United Nations Environment Programme serving as representative entities that influence the behavior of sovereign states in global ecological management from different perspectives.

However, current research highlights existing issues and limitations in the realm of international organizations influencing sovereign state behavior. Firstly, despite providing a cooperative platform, international organizations' members retain sovereignty, potentially causing some nations to prioritize domestic interests in decision-making, consequently diminishing the efficacy of collaboration (Abbott & Snidal, 2009; Bulkeley et al., 2014). Secondly, the influence of international organizations is constrained by the extent of member state participation and adherence, possibly leading to decisions

influenced by a minority of countries while ignoring the needs of others (Biermann et al., 2009). Moreover, the influence of international organizations in shaping state behavior may underscore their agendas, potentially resulting in policy inconsistencies with member states' realities.

Current research explores how international organizations influence sovereign state behavior and unveils the associated pathways and risks. Nevertheless, these areas of study continue to present challenges and limitations. Firstly, despite in-depth explorations into the influence mechanisms of international organizations, systematic comparative research still needs to be lacking, especially concerning different types of international organizations (Bulkeley et al., 2014). Secondly, existing research primarily concentrates on the mechanisms through which international organizations exert influence, with limited attention paid to the potential risks, particularly regarding their impact on sovereign states (Abbott & Snidal, 2009). Furthermore, there needs to be more comparative research focusing on the engagement of specific international organizations in domestic and global environmental governance.

Globally, research on how international organizations influence sovereign state behavior is increasing. International research primarily centers around the influence of international organizations' governance structures and decision-making mechanisms on state behavior. However, these studies often need a comprehensive comparative analysis, particularly concerning the efficacy of different types of international organizations (Biermann et al., 2009). While some studies examine the role of international organizations in environmental governance, more research must be conducted on the various pathways and risks associated with influencing ecological policy.

In conclusion, the influence of international organizations on sovereign state behavior is a complex and far-reaching area of study. Despite significant advancements in existing research, gaps in comparative analysis and a comprehensive understanding of the associated risks persist. Future research could fill these gaps by conducting thorough comparative studies of different international organizations' influence pathways and risks in environmental governance. This will offer a more comprehensive understanding of the mechanisms through which international organizations exert influence and provide valuable insights into global environmental management.

3. The Role and Impact of the World Bank on Environmental Governance

The World Bank is one of the world's largest sources of finance and knowledge for developing countries, working to reduce global poverty and promote shared prosperity and sustainable development [4]. The World Bank supports national development projects, including those related to environmental governance, through loans, technical assistance, and policy advice. It consistently serves as an acknowledged intellectual leader, frequently shaping the global discourse on matters of development. Moreover, it fulfills a crucial research and advisory role in relation to emerging nations. [5]. At the same time, the World Bank Group is the largest provider of multilateral climate finance to developing countries, having increased financing to record levels in the past two years [6].

The World Bank's environmental governance engagement is reflected in its project support and capacity building. A representative example is the Hebei Air Pollution Prevention and Control Program (HAPPCP), which demonstrates how the World Bank, as a non-state actor, can influence national environmental governance practices.

The HAPPCP is designed to address the severe air pollution problems that Hebei has long faced. Located in northern China, the province is affected by industrial activities and energy consumption, making it one of China's most heavily polluted regions. Key elements of the project include improving air quality, reducing air pollutant emissions, increasing the cleanliness of industry and energy production, promoting the use of green energy, and strengthening regulation and enforcement. Through these measures, the project aims to “reduce emissions of specific air pollutants in the key sectors in Hebei” [7].

The World Bank is involved in HAPPCP, primarily through the provision of financial support and expertise. The World Bank provided significant loan funds to the project to improve the cleanup of

the industrial and energy sectors and promote the development of clean energy. In addition, the World Bank's team of experts worked with the Hebei Provincial Government and relevant stakeholders to provide technical and policy advice to help formulate and implement air pollution control policies. According to a World Bank report released in February 2021, the project has achieved significant results. The Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei region saw an average population-weighted PM2.5 decline of about 33 percent in 2019. Hebei Province saw a drop of about 35 percent (the target was initially set at 25 percent). The effectiveness of the single target for key pollutant emissions from key industries in Hebei Province was assessed as "high," with quantitative targets far exceeding the established targets and reforms being effective.

The World Bank played a crucial role as a non-state actor in the project. First, the World Bank's financial support helped the Hebei Provincial Government advance its air pollution prevention program and reduce pollution emissions in the region. The International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD) extended a loan amounting to \$500 million, while the Pollution Management and Environmental Health (PMEH) Trust Fund, funded by Germany and Norway, allocated \$3.4 million to offer technical support for the implementation of global best practices [8]. Second, the World Bank's expertise and technical support have improved the government's capacity in environmental management, including monitoring, data collection, and policy development. This helped ensure that ecological standards were implemented in the project and positively impacted the environment. In addition, the World Bank's involvement added international recognition and sustainability to the project, attracted the participation of other international organizations and investors, and strengthened the power of international cooperation to address global environmental issues. Hebei Province's air pollution prevention and control initiatives have received support from several development cooperation agencies. In addition to the WB loan, the Asian Development Bank (ADB) provided a \$300 million policy loan, and Kreditanstalt für Wiederaufbau (KfW) provided €150 million in co-financing.

In summary, HAPPCP is a prominent case demonstrating how the World Bank, as a non-state actor, can influence a country's environmental governance behavior through financial support and expertise transfer. This cooperation is of great significance in addressing the serious problem of air pollution, and it also provides a successful example for the international community of how international organizations can play a vital role in the environmental field and promote the common goals of sustainable development and environmental protection.

4. The Role and Impact of the UNEP on Environmental Governance

UNEP is one of the foremost global authorities on environmental matters. Its primary goal is to inspire, educate, and assist nations and communities in enhancing their quality of life while safeguarding the well-being of future generations. For more than half a century, UNEP has collaborated with governments, civil society, the private sector, and other United Nations bodies to confront the most urgent environmental issues facing humanity [9]. Unlike the World Bank, which helps primarily through aid funding, UNEP's primary responsibility is to provide policy advice and technical support to promote global environmental protection and sustainable development.

In environmental governance, the role of UNEP is manifested in several ways. First, UNEP is committed to providing ecological policy advice and advocacy to advance the global environmental agenda. Through in-depth research and detailed reports, UNEP encourages countries to adopt more environmentally friendly policies and actions to address global environmental challenges. Second, UNEP plays an essential role in assisting countries to work together to address global environmental issues by promoting international cooperation. UNEP supports developing and implementing international environmental agreements, such as the Paris Agreement and the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), among other essential contracts. In addition, UNEP also helps developing countries improve their capacity for environmental management and sustainable development through technology and knowledge transfer, including support in ecological monitoring,

resource management, and environmental education. Finally, UNEP plays a crucial role in environmental information and research, not only by collecting, analyzing, and disseminating information on the state of the global environment but also by providing policymakers with essential data on environmental trends so that policies and actions can be formulated accordingly.

UNEP's involvement in a range of actions to address methane emissions is a critical case study for analyzing UNEP's involvement in national environmental governance. UNEP's involvement in methane emissions has included the establishment of the International Methane Emission Observatory to monitor methane emissions and the promotion of the Global Methane Pledge, which seeks to reduce the emissions of oil and gas, oil and water by 2030, and to reduce the emissions of oil and gas, oil and water by 2030, and to reduce the emissions of oil and gas, oil and water by 2030. The Global Methane Pledge aims to reduce methane emissions from the oil and gas, agriculture, and waste sectors by 30 percent by 2030. In addition, the Climate and Clean Air Coalition (CCAC) provides national roadmaps to support countries in achieving this commitment, setting clear targets for countries.

With UNEP's involvement, the Methane Reduction Initiative has achieved significant results. The International Methane Emission Observatory (IMEO), which aims to support global methane emission reductions and contribute to the goals of the Global Methane Commitment, has 150 countries signed up to the commitment as of November 2022. More than 50 countries are developing national-level methane action plans, demonstrating that the Observatory plays an active role in international cooperation on emissions reductions. In addition, the Climate and Clean Air Coalition has provided national roadmaps in support of the Commitment, setting more ambitious emission reduction targets for some countries. The Observatory also launched the Methane Alert and Response System (MARS). This satellite system facilitates the timely detection of climate-warming-related gas emissions and provides an effective tool for governments and businesses.

At the same time, over 80 oil and gas enterprises have pledged to gauge and diminish methane emissions via the Oil and Gas Methane Partnership 2.0, thereby making additional contributions to the goals of reducing emissions. [10].

UNEP has positively impacted countries' environmental governance behavior as a non-state entity by providing technical support, data monitoring, and international coordination. It assists countries in monitoring and reporting methane emissions and promotes the adoption of practical measures to reduce methane emissions by providing clear targets and national roadmaps. In addition, UNEP's actions have encouraged the proactive participation of businesses, making environmental protection a common goal across national borders and further strengthening international cooperation and coordination in environmental governance. This case highlights the critical role of international organizations in advancing the global environmental agenda and provides a successful example of international environmental cooperation.

5. Comparing the Roles of the World Bank and UNEP in Environmental Governance

The World Bank and UNEP have different positions and roles in environmental governance. The mission of the World Bank as an international financial institution is to reduce global poverty and promote shared prosperity and sustainable development. To achieve this goal, the World Bank supports national development projects, including those related to environmental governance, by providing loans, technical assistance, and policy advice. The World Bank supports countries in implementing ecological policies through financial support and transfer of expertise.

As a specialized agency of the United Nations, UNEP's role emphasizes providing policy advice, assisting international cooperation, technical support, and environmental information provision. UNEP promotes global ecological protection and sustainable development by monitoring environmental trends, advocating environmental policies, and supporting international environmental agreements.

Regarding pathways and mechanisms, the World Bank supports environmental governance projects mainly by providing loan funds and expertise. It offers financial support to countries to help improve environmental management and reduce environmental impacts. The World Bank emphasizes the ecological sustainability of projects and encourages governments to implement environmental policies and comply with international agreements. A case in point is the HAPPCP, in which the World Bank provided significant loan funds to improve the clean-up of the industrial and energy sectors and promote clean energy development. In addition, the World Bank's team of experts worked with the Hebei provincial government and relevant stakeholders to provide technical and policy advice to help formulate and implement air pollution prevention policies. This collaborative approach allowed the World Bank to play a vital role in the project, promoting national environmental governance behavior.

In contrast, UNEP influences national environmental governance behavior primarily through technical support, data monitoring, and international coordination. It does not provide direct financial support but assists countries in improving their capacity for environmental management and sustainable development. UNEP supports ecological protection through knowledge transfer and policy advice. A crucial case is UNEP's involvement in addressing methane emissions, which includes the establishment of the International Methane Emissions Observatory (IMEO), which contributes to the realization of global methane emission reduction commitments. UNEP encourages countries to take practical measures to reduce methane emissions by monitoring and reporting on methane emissions and by providing clear targets and national roadmaps. In addition, UNEP's actions have encouraged the proactive participation of businesses, making environmental protection a common goal across national borders and strengthening international cooperation and coordination in environmental governance.

We can draw some important insights by comparing the role and influence of the World Bank and UNEP in environmental governance. First, different institutions have different positions and functions that can complement each other. The World Bank's financial support and transfer of expertise can accelerate the implementation of environmental projects, while UNEP's policy advice and technical support can help improve national ecological management capacity. Therefore, cooperation and synergy among international organizations can have a more significant impact when solving complex environmental problems.

Second, international organizations have played a key role in environmental governance, positively impacting the country and providing successful examples for the international community. The World Bank's HAPPCP demonstrates how financial support and transfer of expertise can influence national environmental governance behavior. At the same time, the case of UNEP's involvement in addressing methane emissions highlights the critical role of international organizations in advancing the global environmental agenda. It provides a successful example of international environmental cooperation.

Finally, the success stories of both institutions demonstrate that international organizations can help countries achieve environmental sustainability and advance the common goals of sustainable development and environmental protection. They provide financial and resource support to governments and offer powerful tools for addressing global environmental issues through knowledge transfer, policy advice, and international cooperation. Therefore, international organizations' role is crucial in addressing global environmental challenges and should be given due attention and support.

6. Conclusion

Through a comparative study of the involvement of the World Bank and UNEP in environmental governance, this thesis provides insights into the different pathways and mechanisms of how international organizations influence the behavior of sovereign States. To summarize, the World Bank and UNEP play critical roles in environmental governance, and despite the differences in the pathways

and modalities of their positions, both provide essential support to states in ecological sustainability and protection.

The World Bank has accelerated the implementation of environmental projects, improved environmental management capacity, and emphasized the economic viability of projects by providing financial support and transferring expertise. In HAPPCP, the World Bank's loan funds and technical support from a team of experts facilitated the successful implementation of the project, which achieved significant environmental results. UNEP has promoted global ecological protection and sustainable development primarily through policy advice, technical support, and the provision of environmental information. UNEP's case of participation in addressing methane emissions demonstrates its active role in international environmental cooperation, promoting national adoption of emission reduction measures and facilitating cross-border corporate participation.

In the comparative study, different international organizations have different strengths and positioning, which can complement each other and provide more comprehensive support to the country. In addition, the success stories of international organizations in environmental governance offer meaningful examples to the international community, demonstrating that international cooperation and coordination is an effective way to address global environmental issues.

However, despite the positive role played by the World Bank and UNEP in environmental governance, several challenges and research gaps still need to be addressed. For example, issues such as how to better coordinate cooperation among different international organizations to achieve more significant synergies and how to address emerging environmental challenges still require in-depth research and study. In addition, the influence of international organizations is also affected by the global political and economic landscape, so more research is needed to understand the role and impact of international organizations in different contexts.

In conclusion, international organizations play an essential role in environmental governance, influencing the behavior of sovereign states through different paths and mechanisms. Studying these influence paths and mechanisms can provide more practical guidance and insights for global environmental governance and promote the realization of the common goals of sustainable development and environmental protection. In future research, collaboration mechanisms among international organizations and how to address emerging environmental challenges can be further explored to enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of international organizations in environmental governance. This will help to strengthen international cooperation in environmental protection and jointly address global environmental challenges.

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