

Analysis of China's Role and Motivation in the Global Environmental Governance System Based on Neo-liberalism and Realism

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Abstract. With the gradual deterioration of the earth's environment, global environmental problems have become an important issue that the whole world urgently needs to solve. Nowadays, globalization cooperation among countries has been carried out in-depth and is no longer limited to the traditional economic and cultural fields. Non-traditional security issues have gradually become the mainstream of cooperation among countries. China's motivation to participate in environmental governance in the context of globalization is particularly important. This paper will use a theoretical plus case study approach to analyse their motivations to draw conclusions about the issue. At the same time, analysing China's motives for participating in global environmental governance helps us to better understand the logic of China's behaviour and its role in global governance today. The paper figured out that China has its behavioural logic, what China should do next is to let western countries know its logic and enhance cooperation in the environmental field with other entities.

Keywords: Global environmental governance, international cooperation, Neo-liberalism, Realism, China's role.

1. Introduction

With the intensification of global warming, extreme weather has caused great losses to many countries. The UN has recognized the importance of global climate governance. In recent decades, China has gradually grown into a superpower. As the world's largest carbon emitter and the world's second-largest economy, China's participation in the process of global environmental governance has extremely far-reaching significance.

For more than ten years, China has also used propaganda machines to spread its environmental protection ideas and environmental protection methods. We have noticed that Chinese officials tend to use grand narrative rhetoric to explain why they need to increase their participation in global environmental governance. This rhetoric often has strong ideological and political inclinations, making it easy for researchers to ignore the underlying logic of China's behavior and role in global environmental governance. In addition, the research on China's participation in global environmental governance started relatively late, and China has been trying to explain its behavior in its own words, resulting in less objective and pragmatic research on China's related fields in the West. As Chinese researchers, we have an innate advantage in researching such issues.

It is recognized that China's behavior is difficult to explain with a single theory. Against the background of the game of great powers, China has been quite pragmatic in some areas while constantly promoting its ideology. Against the background that the United States regards China as a strategic competitor, China is forced to regard the United States as an adversary. Global environmental governance is one of the battlefields where the two powers compete for hegemony. Under this background, this paper will try to analyze and answer the motivation of China's active participation in the role of global environmental governance from these two perspectives based on the latest time node, taking realism and liberalism as two theoretical directions.

It is worth mentioning that this study is phased. In this article, the authors will try to use Western language to analyze China's role and purpose in global environmental governance with words that "the West can understand". We believe that this research will help the West to further understand China and help to further communicate with the West in China, strengthen cooperation, enhance mutual trust, and manage differences. In order to better understand China's participation, this research will both use realism and neoliberalism to analyze the motivation for China's participation.

2. Theoretical Foundation

2.1. Brief Introduction of Neoliberalism

Neoliberalism is a product of the development of liberalism in the capitalist world. New liberalism first appeared in Joseph Nye's article "*Neorealism and Neoliberalism*" published in *World Politics* [1]. Neo-liberalism was born in the process of the debate with Neorealism. The theoretical confrontation between the two theories explained their basic viewpoints. For example, the modern monetary school, the supply school, the rational expectations school, and the London school are all famous branches of neoliberal theory.

The concept of neoliberalism was introduced by *Richard Rosecrance* in his book review of *The Rise of the Trading Nation*. It emphasizes non-power factors in international relations, such as the changing capacity to communicate and cooperate and the interdependent processes of the global system. In terms of research methodology, the neoliberals use a approach which is a system-process level method that emphasizes power patterns in the interaction of players in the research system [2].

2.2. Introduction of Realism

People have always tended to use liberalism to explain or analyze the issue of global environmental governance. However, under the current background of great power competition, global environmental governance has its realistic side. In this case, China has its realistic consideration participating in global environmental governance.

The concept of power and the concept of national interests are the most important connotations in the theory of realism. According to realism, power and national interests defined by power are the center component of international affairs and the most essential content pursued by the state. Hans J Morgenthau pointed out that international politics is a power struggle, just like all other politics [3].

The representative of offensive realism John Mearsheimer says in his book that power could be seen as the currency of politics of big-power, and states must compete for it. What currency is to commerce, power is to international relations [4]. Therefore, rational states are always keen to pursue the maximization of their power and strive to become at the top of the international power pyramid, thereby eliminating any possibility of being challenged by opponents.

In addition to power, another core theory repeatedly emphasized by realism is national interest, which is considered to be the basic motive for a country's foreign behavior. The country's foreign policy has always been carried out around the country's interests. The realist view of national interests' advocates taking national interests as the ultimate goal of a country's foreign policy formulation, which means that a country should maintain and pursue the maximization of its interests as much as possible. Morgenthau believes that as long as the world is still politically constituted and structured by sovereignty, then in fact the eventual language in the field of international politics can only be national interests. The only criterion for foreign policy is the realization of national interests [5].

According to Morgenthau, foreign policy seeks to secure their survival or identity is the vital components of the national interests. There are three parts of identity which are the physical identity, political identity and cultural identity [6]. Whether a country is qualified to participate in global environmental governance symbolizes whether it enjoys a high level of political identity in the world [7].

The specific characteristics of Neoliberalism and Realism can be seen in Table 1.

Table 1. Characteristics of Neoliberalism and Realism

	Neoliberalism	Realism
About Anarchy	Neoliberalism admits but does not consider anarchy to be a significant constraint on the state	In the absence of night watchmen, anarchy will inevitably lead to competition between countries
International Cooperation	Positive attitude, Inter-state cooperation is normal even in anarchy	International cooperation is acceptable, but international cooperation is to achieve their interests
Purpose of country involvement in cooperation	To obtain absolute returns, i.e. only to consider only whether you benefit	To achieve the interests of the state, and to maximize power
The role of the international system	International system can effectively address the anarchy of the international community.	It is inevitable that great powers compete for hegemony under anarchy, and small countries will become vassals of great powers

3. Case Study

3.1. Case Description

In this article, the Kubuqi Desert, a desert located in Inner Mongolia, China, is an outstanding example of China's participation in global environmental governance. September 12 (Xinhua) -- The United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) has praised China for its work in greening one of its most fearsome deserts. The Kubuqi Desert covers 18,600 square kilometers, making it the seventh largest desert in China. By 2016, after 27 years of control, 6,000 square kilometers of the Kubuqi Desert had been afforested, and 11,000 square kilometers of desertification had been controlled. One-third of the Kubuqi Desert has been afforested [8].

The Kubuqi Desert mainly grows sand xerophytic herbs such as licorice, and desert living cistanche algae, which can be used in industry as well as windbreak and sand-fixation. The output value of the licorice industry reached 4 billion yuan. Moreover, because of the long-term cultivation of legumes such as licorice, the "biological nitrogen fixation" effect caused biological crusts and centimeter-thick black soil to appear in some deserts, which initially had agricultural conditions [9].

Clean energy has also been set up in the Kubuqi Desert. The first phase of the 1000MWp 110MWp ecological photovoltaic project has been connected to the grid and generated 650,000 kWh of electricity per day. The second phase of the 200MWp ecological photovoltaic poverty alleviation project is under construction.

The Kubuqi Desert has developed the Mongolian "agritainment" with desert characteristics. The annual per capita income of the people in the more than 100,000 sand areas has increased from less than 2,000 yuan to nearly 10,000 yuan, and some of them have reached more than 30,000 yuan.

Restored ecosystems increase biodiversity. The project is estimated to be worth 349 million yuan in biodiversity conservation. In total, the Kubuqi project has generated more than 500 billion yuan in revenue, the report said. The project has also lifted more than 100,000 local people out of poverty and created more than a million jobs.

3.2. Case Analysis

3.2.1. Analysis from Neo-liberalism Perspective

China's participation in global environmental governance is the best example of international cooperation in liberalism, putting the world issue of the environment under the framework of international mechanisms and treaties.

From the perspective of Neoliberalism, it argues that nations are rational, and the international community is in a state of anarchy, but the effect of this state on the country is not too severe. Neoliberals believe that nations can collaborate smoothly and successfully, for instance, the success of EU integration, the existence and the success of it continued to operate for many years. Furthermore,

Neoliberalism usually focuses on economic and environmental issues, and it believes that economic cooperation is more likely to lead to international cooperation and thus to world peace [10].

At present, the Kubuqi Desert has a treatment area of more than 6,000 square kilometers and a greening area of more than 3,200 square kilometers. In the process of governance for decades, China has implemented an environmental governance system with the government as the leader, enterprises as the main body, and social organizations and the public as participants.

In the process of sand control, establish a multi-directional and multi-channel benefit linkage mechanism, encourage and guide the majority of local farmers and herdsmen to integrate into the sand control and ecological industry chain by planting trees and forests, developing special planting and breeding projects, and other channels to achieve both sand control and prosperity. This reflects the goal of enabling cooperation through the creation of mechanisms in neoliberalism.

3.2.2. Analysis from Realism View

This part tries to analyze and demonstrate the motivation of China's active participation in global environmental governance from the perspective of realism.

China is the world's second-largest economy and the largest emitter, and China's environmental governance policies will undoubtedly have a profound impact on global environmental governance. In addition, China's international discourse power is currently on the rise. China is clear that if China can play an active role in the process of global environmental governance and promote the development of the global environmental governance process, it will greatly enhance China's international influence and soft power at the policy level. What China is concerned about is whether countries in the world can follow the "Chinese will" and "Chinese-style rules" to advance the issue of global environmental governance. China is also using its propaganda machine to spread its message of environmental protection and its methods. China is keen to explain environmental governance in its own words. When it comes to environmental governance in China, people often think of the official Chinese expression (from Chinese leader Xi Jinping, 2005 Zhejiang) that "lucid waters and lush mountains are invaluable assets". This is China's influence on global environmental governance and reshapes global environmental governance rules in the very first step. It contains some kind of Chinese political propaganda, namely the so-called community with a shared future for mankind. The realist view tends to see China's participation in global governance as a service to its politics.

Moreover, there is also an important reason. The most important issue in current international relations is the Chinese hegemony challenging the American hegemony and the process of China and the United States competing for power with each other. As the challenger of the international system and the prevailing international order, China is trying to take an opposite path or a distinct method of global governance to that of the United States. In addition, as opposed to soft power from a liberal perspective, China's participation in global environmental governance has its hard power aspect. Permanent membership of the United Nations Security Council is the symbol of supreme power in the world. As one of the five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council. For one thing, China has far more power than any other non-permanent member. On the other hand, China's hard power is not far behind that of other ordinary members of the Security Council. In particular, China has been trying to catch up with the United States for nearly a decade. In the Trump era, the United States has withdrawn from the global environmental governance system to a certain extent, which has created opportunities for China to attain more power in global governance. It is worthy to notice that although the existing international rules are facing many challenges, the basic framework and structure have not been fundamentally overturned. What has changed is only the lineup or order of the main regulators. China seized this opportunity to grab a lot of power under the UN-led global environmental system, including the power to set the rules of global environmental governance, in the state of US disengagement.

4. Discussion

4.1. Realism Prospect

If the United States returns to the global environmental agreement system framed by the United Nations and takes the lead. China will break away from this system and try to selectively incorporate the provisions of international multilateral environmental agreements into trade agreements it dominates, and then reshape the rules of global environmental governance with the help of bilateral and multilateral trade agreements, just as former US President Trump did the same. That's the prediction from the realism aspect.

4.2. Neoliberalism View

China should also strengthen cooperation and communication with countries on other environmental issues. This will not only help solve the world's environmental problems but also make the world more peaceful through cooperation. Because Neo-liberal perspectives help deal with non-traditional security issues.

5. Conclusion

When examining China's engagement in global governance, a single theoretical approach often fails to capture the full picture of Chinese motives and objectives. Neo-liberalism and realism are the two theories selected in this paper. The combination of the two theories can better understand China's current contribution to global governance.

About China's contribution to the global environmental governance, which part of China's interests must be considered, for example, to get more right of speech in the global environmental governance rules and dominance, break the rules made by the western countries before, and so on, at the same time, China also cares about the behavior of protecting the environment itself, as well as actively solve the environmental problems around the world.

Facing increasingly severe national and global environmental problems, China needs to clarify its interests in global environmental governance and strengthen its awareness of global environmental governance. As the largest developing country in the world, China should take a more active part in international affairs in line with the interests of the Chinese people and people in the world. At the same time, we should act in accordance with international thinking, improve the research of corresponding projects, and formulate scientific policies for China's participation in global environmental governance, so that more Western countries can understand China's position and viewpoint.

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