

## China's environmental foreign relations

By Heidi Wang-Kaeding. Routledge, 134 pages. Hardback, £96.00, ISBN-13: 9780367712327. Ebook, £29.59, ISBN-13: 9781003149927.

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(Received 13 May 2021; accepted 15 May 2021)

Heidi Wang-Kaeding's slender and well-written monograph, *China's Environmental Foreign Relations*, seeks to analyze how China's domestic forces influence the country's outward-facing relationships, particularly with respect to the environment. The opacity of China's policy-making apparatus and its top-down authoritarian approach make it difficult to explain why some outcomes seem more successful than others. Thus, the premise of the book is extremely interesting and makes a valuable contribution.

Two short opening chapters establish the monograph's parameters. The first surveys the literature on interest groups, differentiating among the individual, social organizations, business groups, and the state bureaucracy, or, alternatively, among economic, socio-political, public, and government sectors. If there is a shortcoming to this choice of groupings it is that it presents China's state bureaucratic institutions as monolithic. It elides the importance of the struggles of the Ministry of Ecology and Environment for authority and funding over, say, the energy administration or the Ministry of Commerce, and gives insufficient weight to the intense internal deliberative processes of Chinese policymaking.

Wang-Kaeding then presents three "rhetorics" of Chinese environmentalism – ecological modernization, eco-socialism, and environmental nationalism. Several of these have Western origins but have been adapted for the Chinese context. (She develops this discourse analysis in her strong final chapters on "ecological civilization" and what she calls "utilitarian constructivism.")

She presents her well-structured empirical exploration in three chapters. The first focuses on treaty implementation. She examines procedural versus substantive enforcement and compliance using case studies of the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer and the Convention on Biological Diversity. She finds the first is a success in China, the second a failure. A second empirical chapter focuses on what she calls bilateral influence, although second-track diplomacy or civil society engagement might have been a more accurate description. Here the focus is on an NGO with strong Chinese government ties, the Global Environmental Institute, which attempted to work in Laos with Chinese foreign investors to encourage a more sustainable direction. She profiles one failure, the effort to influence the Ministry of Commerce (MOFCOM), a government agency tasked with reforming Laos' National Land Management Authority, and one "success," the work with Sinohydro to try to compensate communities for the impacts of a hydropower dam by implementing a biogas project. Her third empirical chapter focuses on discourse, delineating China's efforts to offer an alternative norm in environmental governance through the vague concept of "Ecological Civilization."

Wang-Kaeding argues that the varying bargaining power of different domestic groups, and their efforts to gain what she calls "attention" from the central leadership, explain contradictions in domestic and international behavior. In her view, the absence of shared environmental norms makes convergence around economic measures an inevitability. Insightfully, she argues that the government deploys "Chinese versions of environmental norms to defend national interests instead of solving environmental problems" (19). She argues that through its international environmental relations China hopes to "demonstrate political superiority, acquire international scientific and technological advances and improve its national image" (19).

The first two substantive chapters could have benefited from broader context and more attention to what has made the Chinese response any different from that of other countries. In the chapter on

treaties, for instance, Wang-Kaeding argues that the positive contribution of industry helps explain the success of the Montreal Protocol. The refrigeration industry, which she uses as her example, was particularly eager to phase out CFCs to meet the standards of its international customers. By contrast, the opposition of the Traditional Chinese Medicine Association to parts of the Convention on Biodiversity helps explain the disappointing showing there. While Wang-Kaeding's focus on these two groups is revealing, more attention could have been paid to the treaties themselves, as phasing out ozone-depleting chemicals is a very different task from protecting biodiversity. The Montreal Protocol is generally considered the most successful of all global environmental treaties, a fact explained by the small number of ozone-depleting substances involved, the comparative support from industry which saw available substitutes and potential profit to be made by their manufacture, and the willingness of the developed world to take the lead. The case of China follows this pattern. By contrast, the Convention on Biological Diversity is often considered to be a weak treaty in that it focuses on information-gathering and intellectual property protections for genetic materials and is highly voluntary. As Wang-Kaeding points out, no parties have fully complied. That traditional Chinese medicine interests became mired in intellectual property rights is consistent with terms of the treaty and with the implementation experience of other countries.

It would have been germane to hear Wang-Kaeding's analysis of China's implementation of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species, in which the Traditional Chinese Medicine Association also has powerful interests, and of the climate negotiations, where China went from being a laggard and obstructor in Copenhagen in 2009 to a leader in Paris in 2016. How domestic forces might have played into this shift would be of critical concern to the global community interested to know whether and how the kinds of interests she identifies in the book will support or obstruct China's ability to meet stringent carbon reduction goals.

Similarly, in the chapter on "bilateral relations," a broader picture of the activities of Chinese NGOs in the international sphere would have strengthened her discussion, particularly since Chinese ENGOs have been active in climate negotiations and are trying to shift the lending practices of Chinese banking institutions and foreign direct investment through multiple venues and pathways. While love of country and concern about China's mixed international reputation are undoubtedly motivating factors for many groups, the landscape is more complicated. Far from being motivated to help the Chinese government improve its image, some activists even help local communities to resist Chinese projects that violate indigenous rights and cause environmental damage. There are critical opinion-shaping bloggers and local activists motivated by the example of international stars like Greta Thunberg. In this sense, GEI with its close government ties is not representative of the sort of transboundary civil society networks with which Chinese groups and individuals are communicating. Moreover, there is an extensive conversation to be had about the role of international environmental groups working in China as they too shape China's environmental foreign policy through information-sharing and norm-setting.


The final empirical section on environmental discourse is the strongest and most insightful, particularly with respect to the international usage of the ideology of ecological civilization. Wang-Kaeding writes that ecological civilization "is evolving into a site of power contestation in global environmental governance" (71). With its emphasis on technocracy, it promotes "an alternative norm which may potentially facilitate the diffusion of the Chinese vision and practice of environmental governance to the international community" (73). As a "composite ideology," it reinterprets the contradiction between economic growth and environmental protection as "harmonious coexistence" (74). While environmental diplomacy can help China reconnect with the outside world after missteps (as happened when Japan restarted international environmental aid after the 1989 Tiananmen Massacre), it is primarily a project of "tough internationalists" who embed the ideology of liberal cooperation in the realist context of national interest calculus. Wang-Kaeding's takeaway argument is that China's international environmental diplomacy is primarily used to strengthen political goals and bolster public perception while safeguarding national interests. The hope that China will take a meaningful leadership role in global environmental governance is ill-founded. Rather,

China's international environmental behavior is primarily concerned with domestic factors. China's "constructivist utilitarian" position is the product of the bargaining of domestic groups jockeying for attention and resources. This explains some of the contradictions in Chinese environmental foreign policy, as nationalism can both facilitate and obstruct treaty implementation, civil society groups can be welcomed or rejected by potential partners, and new discourses are sufficiently vague that they promote China's public image while failing to achieve environmental goals.

doi:10.1017/S1479591421000280

## Review of "Heritage Politics in China: The Power of the Past"

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(Received 21 June 2021; accepted 21 June 2021)

"Heritage Politics in China" examines the process of heritage-making in China, focusing on how "universal" heritage regimes and discourses promoted by UNESCO are appropriated by different stakeholders in China to legitimise the rule of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). Drawing on "value appropriation" as a central analytical framework, Zhu and Maags analyse how state institutions in China have mobilised these "universal" heritage discourses and policies locally to reinforce a collective national identity and promote economic development. Through such value appropriation, local cultural practices are transformed from the private domains into a form of public good amenable to state governance and exploitation. This book engages with these complex politics of heritage appropriation, contestation, and negotiation in contemporary China. It makes an important contribution to research on critical heritage studies, especially in mainland China, which is experiencing a heritage renaissance or what the authors term as "a heritage fever".

This highly accessible book is divided into eight chapters. The first chapter introduces the key concepts that the book engages with. It outlines the historical roots of the term "heritage" and the broader scholarship surrounding the concept of "heritage", before explaining how the notion of "value appropriation" can offer a useful perspective for understanding the power of heritage in both discourse and practice. It then offers a brief account of the emergence of the international heritage regime, focusing on UNESCO and its mechanisms, and how this "universal" heritage regime is appropriated in China, leading to a "heritage fever" or "Chinese renaissance" that has been observed in China over the last two decades. Chapter two traces the cultural history of heritage in China, beginning with an overview of the heritage practices that have existed during the imperial era, to the introduction of Western heritage discourses and institutions from the late Qing dynasty, and the subsequent appropriation and domestication of these discourses to suit the political and economic agendas of the Chinese state government that. Crucially, it highlights how built heritage in imperial China underwent continuous cycles of destruction and rebuilding that chimed with the rise and fall of new political dynasties, which accounts for the lack of material preservation of China's architectural heritage over time. Instead, much of Chinese preoccupation with its material heritage lies within the preservation of its historical records and imperial collections, as well as in the development of Chinese antiquarianism. Chapter three unpacks the organisational structure of China's state heritage institutions, and the heritage discourses they promote, demonstrating how "universal" heritage discourses are translated into state policies for