

Great Powers, Climate Change, and Global Environmental Responsibilities

Robert FALKNER and Barry BUZAN

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The increasing deleterious effects of climate change have led to the emergence of multilateral environmental regimes and different understandings of responsibilities. *Great Powers, Climate Change, and Global Environmental Responsibilities*, edited by Robert Falkner and Barry Buzan, is an excellent book covering case-based examples of special environmental responsibilities. It aims to close the gap between International Relations (IR) theories on great powers and Global Environmental Politics (GEP) to illuminate the definition of environmental great power, differences in global environmental responsibilities, and the role of great powers regarding global environmental issues, particularly climate change.

Buzan and Falkner argue that climate change is a global threat to international society that requires great powers to assume special responsibilities. Hence, this book seeks to bring together IR approaches to the study of great power and Great Power Management (GPM) to explain how great powers acquire legitimacy to justify their unequal status by accepting special rights and responsibilities as an institution of international society and how GEP perspectives shape the roles played by major powers (p. 6). The research questions of this study are as follows: (1) What are the features of environmental great powers? (2) Do environmental powers accept special responsibilities to combat climate change that correspond with their positions in global environmental politics? and (3) Have great powers securitized climate change, that is have they evaluated it as an issue that is related to maintaining international order and conserving stability in international society? The main argument of the book is that great powers have not developed a common understanding of their environmental responsibilities because they do not evaluate climate change as a systemic threat to the international system. Furthermore, whether it is a developed or developing country, the interests of great powers have blocked the securitization of environmental issues.

The book is divided into four parts comprising thirteen chapters, with an introduction and conclusion. Each chapter discusses different countries and regions in the context of climate change

and their environmental responsibilities. The central theoretical and conceptual framework of the book is presented in Part 1 in the Introduction, Chapter 1, written by Falkner and Buzan. As a continuation of the Introduction, the second chapter includes the relations between the great power concept and GEP, the definition of great environmental power, and their corresponding special rights and responsibilities. Firstly, the concept of great power is accepted as a social phenomenon that is related to a recognition by others that it is a responsible power with special rights and duties (p. 27). Then, as a theoretical context, Buzan and Falkner distinguish between the material and social understanding of power. Therefore, the book defines great environmental powers in two forms: negative power and positive power. Negative power relates to states' ability to control the ecosystem and natural resources that produce environmental degradation and to refuse cooperation on environmental issues. Positive power, the constructive use of power, is the state's capacity to bring about positive change in international environmental politics and support practical solutions for environmental problems. Buzan and Falkner claim that environmental power is a neutral concept, reflecting states' power and ability to influence. Therefore, an environmental great power has both a negative and positive use of power depending on its political, diplomatic, military, and economic strength.

The second part, which is called Environmental Powers, applies this framework through conventional great powers and emerging powers (the United States, China, European Union, Brazil, India, and Russia). In chapter three, "Great Expectations: The United States and the Global Environment," Robyn Eckersley discusses the reluctance of the United States to embrace special environmental responsibilities. Pichamon Yeophantong and Evelyn Goh analyze in chapter four, "China as a 'Partial' Environmental Great Power," China's duality in environmental policies as a partial environmental great power. In chapter five, "The European Union: A Green Great Power?," Katja Biedenkopf, Claire Dupont, and Diarmuid Torney focus on the EU as an environmental great power thanks to its positive power in climate change and chemical safety. Kathryn Hochstetler analyzes the environmental leadership of emerging power Brazil at home and in its environmental negotiations as a leader or laggard in chapter six, "Brazil: A Boundary Case of Environmental Power." Miriam Prys-Hansen examines, in chapter seven, "Politics of Responsibility: India in Global Climate Governance," India's shifting politics of responsibility and its understanding of responsibility. Alina Averchenkova discusses whether Russia can be considered a great power in international environmental politics, especially in the context of its climate policies, in chapter eight, "Great Power Ambitions and National Interest in Russia's Climate Change Policy." This second part of the book clearly illustrates the positions of the conventional great powers and emerging powers on environmental issues in the international system and to what extent they adopt their special responsibilities within the understanding of Falkner and Buzan's great environmental powers and environmental responsibilities.

The third part of the book, entitled International Institutions and Issue-Areas, contains four chapters on a variety of issue areas. In chapter nine, "Great Power Responsibility for Climate Security in the United Nations Security Council," Shirley Scott examines how the securitization of climate change would look at the international level and the role of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) in the securitization of climate change. Sanna Kopra then elaborates on the linkage between great power responsibility and leadership in

international climate politics in chapter ten, “Great Power Responsibility and International Climate Leadership,” while in chapter eleven, “Environmental Great Powers and Multilateral Environmental Agreements,” Susan Park summarizes how great powers have formed their policies and contributed to protecting the environment through laws on ozone layer depletion, whaling, and hazardous waste. Finally, Stacy D. VanDeveer and Tim Boersma examine the responsibilities of great powers in coal politics in chapter twelve, “World on Fire: Coal Politics and Great Power Responsibility.” This third part of the book showcases the role of the great powers in other environmental regimes, as well as coal politics, and the role of institutions, such as the UNFCCC, in crafting and implementing climate change politics.

In Part 4, chapter thirteen, the book concludes that there is no interconnected system with great power rights and responsibilities for climate change since the climate powers have never developed a shared understanding of their special responsibilities. Furthermore, climate change cannot come into prominence without accepting and increasing the special responsibilities of a few major environmental powers that hold the future of the planet in their hand (p. 279).

The book provides a rethink of the notion of power and great power in global environmental politics, with certain countries counting as great powers on environmental issues that need to bear their responsibilities of being environmental great powers. Therefore, it develops a new analytical perspective on the role of environmental great powers and connects IR and GEP in this framework, thus creating a clear and detailed theoretical background. Furthermore, the book is well-structured and well-written. While it includes a few countries from different writers and perspectives, it refers to the theoretical background of the book according to their approach in every chapter, which makes it logical to follow and understand. Moreover, one of the book’s main strengths is its comprehensiveness, since it evaluates the role of institutions, other environmental regimes, and countries in climate change politics.

However, two chapters (India and Coal Politics) work systematically, doing text analysis through speeches, policies, and negotiations. In other words, only two chapters depict the methods clearly. Therefore, it can be said that there is a weakness regarding methodology in explaining the methods of the chapters expressly. Another weakness of this well-structured book is the lack of comparative case studies since only Chapter 12 compares three cases (the US, China, and the EU). Besides, while it has a broad evaluation ranging from countries to institutions, there is a lack of case studies about the role of institutions. In other words, the book includes the UNSC as an institutional case, but an institution such as NATO could also have been included, since it has broadened its environmental agenda and pushed forward developments with green defense.

Overall, with a holistic approach revealing the intersection of IR and GEP in the context of climate change, *Great Powers, Climate Change, and Global Environmental Responsibilities* provides a valuable source for academics, policymakers, and students studying climate change and the role of great powers in this issue by analyzing their policies and priorities. I enthusiastically recommend the book to all scholars and students of IR and Global Environmental Politics who want to deepen their knowledge about climate change and environmental great powers.