

Australian Foreign Policy and the Challenge of Climate Change

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Abstract

The international governance of climate change was initially informed by two norms concerning *who* should take responsibility for mitigating climate change, and *how* such mitigation should be pursued. Since the early 1990s, these normative structures have been challenged and altered through the process of contestation. In this paper I will argue that the resulting changes are a product of the perceived incongruence between these structures and the domestic conditions of those states they seek to govern. Following an overview of the emergence and contestation of the normative structures of climate governance, I will elaborate on this relationship between international norms and domestic conditions. These theoretical assumptions will then be explored in a more substantive fashion through a consideration of Australia's participation in international efforts to mitigate climate change. As I will demonstrate, the perceived incongruence of the normative structures of climate governance with domestic conditions led Australia's foreign policy-makers to contest these structures and focus on the construction of alternative governance processes. In the final section of the paper, I will explain how Australia's foreign policy-makers have re-framed the issue of climate change to evade the immense challenge posed by the original norms of climate governance to Australia's foreign policy traditions. The diversion of attention away from historical emissions to future emissions and possible technological mitigation options, has temporarily reconciled the governance of climate change with Australia's domestic conditions, albeit at the expense of international equity and long-term national sustainability.

INTRODUCTION¹

The Government is doing a lot, but in the end, what the Australian Government does is going to be of negligible importance compared to what China does or the United States does or India does – that's where you've got to really address this issue.

Alexander Downer, 2006.

In his defence of the Australian Government's response to the threat of global climate change, Alexander Downer exposes the vast gulf that has grown between the early normative structures of climate governance and those that have established dominance in Australia today. Initially, the international governance of climate change was informed by two norms concerning *who* should take responsibility for mitigating climate change, and *how* such mitigation should be pursued. These norms stipulated that developed countries should take the lead in controlling greenhouse gas emissions, and that mitigation should be pursued via domestic targets and timetables. However, upon consideration of Australia's material and ideational conditions, it soon becomes evident that these norms pose an immense challenge to the inherited objectives of foreign policy-making in Australia. Rather than questioning these objectives and re-considering them in light of the challenge of climate change, Australian foreign policy-makers have vigorously sought to reconcile the domestic conditions with the governance of climate change by *re-*

¹ I am grateful to Prof. Timothy Doyle and two anonymous referees for their valuable suggestions and comments on an earlier draft of this paper.

framing the issue and constructing alternative governance structures. Central to this re-framing is a diversion of attention away from historical emissions to future emissions and possible technological mitigation options. The governance of climate change thereby becomes a task of developing technological measures for controlling greenhouse gas emissions in those countries that are likely to be major emitters in the future, namely China and India. Such an approach marks a significant departure from the original normative structures of climate governance. To understand this shift it is necessary to explore the relationship between international norms and domestic conditions and, more specifically, the importance of congruence. Firstly, though, I will turn my attention to the emergence of climate change as an issue of international political concern to introduce the norms which initially guided state behaviour and shaped inter-governmental negotiating agendas.

THE NORMATIVE STRUCTURES OF CLIMATE GOVERNANCE

Since climate change first appeared on the international political agenda in the late 1980s, the normative structures of climate governance have been subject to increasing contestation. Initially, however, these nascent structures were built upon two principal ideas concerning *who* should take responsibility for mitigating climate change, and *how* such mitigation should be pursued. The first norm stipulated that international efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions should be guided by the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities (hereinafter referred to as CBDR) (Bodansky 1993, 503).² The second norm stipulated that climate change mitigation should be achieved through domestic targets to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

As Hoffmann (2005, 8-12) has noted, the negotiations on ozone depletion set a precedent for universal participation in responding to transnational environmental problems, however this was clearly understood in the context of differentiated responsibilities and commitments. The Montreal Protocol on the control of ozone depleting substances required developed countries to meet their targets within five years, while developing countries were granted a concession of ten years to meet their targets (UNEP, 1999). By the late 1980s, the universal participation norm was deeply embedded in environmental governance and its application to the climate change negotiations was generally unquestioned by states in the North and South, non-governmental organisations, intergovernmental organisations, and scientists (Hoffmann 2005, 158). Like the Montreal Protocol, the Framework Convention on Climate Change institutionalised a differentiated interpretation of universal participation, as evident in Article 3:

The Parties should protect the climate system for the benefit of present and future generations of humankind, on the basis of equity and in accordance with their common but differentiated

² While the North and South agreed on the merit of this principle, they justified its inclusion in different ways. The South argued that the North should take the lead to reflect their share of the historical responsibility for generating the threat of climate change, whereas the North agreed to take the lead as a reflection of their financial and technical capabilities.

responsibilities and respective capabilities. Accordingly, the developed country Parties should take the lead in combating climate change and the adverse effects thereof (UN, 1992, 5).

Nevertheless, the representation of climate change as a *global* problem rendered the norm of universal participation susceptible to reinterpretation. As a consequence, the integrity of the norm began to weaken within months of the convention entering into force on 21 March 1994. The first most explicit illustration of this was Germany's proposal to further differentiate the developing countries and begin the discussion of limiting emissions growth in the 'more advanced developing countries' (GFME 1994, 3). Although complete consensus among the developing countries was rare during the climate change negotiations, the South was unified in its opposition to the German proposal, which was subsequently abandoned (IISD 1995; Agarwal et al 1999, 44). Although Germany regretfully accepted the opposition to further differentiation and consideration of commitments for developing countries, the United States ensured that these ideas remained on the negotiating agenda. While ostensibly maintaining support for the CBDR principle, the US announced in 1995 that it was time to consider commitments from developing countries. In accordance with Germany's earlier proposal, the US raised the possibility of establishing new categories and corresponding commitments for developing countries (UNFCCC 1995, 183). Both Germany and the United States justified their proposals on the grounds that stabilising GHG concentrations in the atmosphere at a "safe" level would only be possible if future GHG emissions in both the developed *and* developing countries were limited. Already, then, two distinct interpretations of CBDR were discernible: one emphasising the necessary responsibility that the South should assume, and the other emphasising the historical responsibility and moral obligations which should be assumed by the North. Although the Kyoto Protocol in 1997 re-institutionalised the CBDR principle without imposing quantifiable commitments on the South, the appropriate interpretation of this principle has been subject to continued contestation, in particular from the United States and Australia.

In addition to this norm concerning *who* should bear responsibility for reducing greenhouse gas emissions, the initial norm concerning *how* such reductions should be made has also met with contestation. Indeed, the idea that mitigation should be pursued through domestic targets to reduce greenhouse gases enjoyed only a brief period of stability during the 1980s, since which time it has been consistently challenged in various ways. The emergence of greenhouse gas emissions as an issue of political concern coincided with the signing of two agreements which sought to limit other atmospheric pollutants. The Montreal Protocol and the European Community's Large Combustion Plant (LCP) Directive were based on the assumption that mitigating the damage of CFCs and sulphur dioxide and nitrogen oxide, respectively, required states to adopt domestic emissions reduction targets and timetables. Consequently, it was taken for granted by many state and non-state actors that an international agreement on climate change mitigation would also be based on domestic targets (Grubb 1990, 71-2). This was reflected in numerous declarations and policies in the lead up to the creation of the FCCC in 1992. The 'International Conference of the Changing Atmosphere: Implications for Global Security', convened by the Canadian Government in 1988, called for a reduction in

global CO₂ emissions of twenty percent by the year 2005 (Bodansky 1993, 462). This target, or a similar target, was subsequently adopted by a number of states and cities, including Denmark, Norway, the Netherlands, Japan and Australia (IEA 1992, 24-5). Similarly, the European Community implemented a climate change policy in 1990 which pledged to stabilise the Community's CO₂ emissions at 1990 levels by the year 2000 (Grubb 1995, 43). Nevertheless, by the time the Inter-governmental Negotiating Committee (INC) meetings commenced in 1991, divisions within the North over the appropriate design of a framework convention were clearly apparent. While the EU continued to support a focus on targets and timetables, this approach was strongly opposed by the US who pushed, instead, for a framework convention based on more general national programs and strategies (Bodansky 1993, 478). The resulting convention featured only *qualitative* commitments for Annex I parties, referring to such activities as compiling national GHG inventories, national strategies, and reporting. Crucially, the final text excluded reference to the stabilisation of GHG emissions at 1990 levels by the year 2000, despite the fact that this quantitative commitment appeared in an earlier draft (Agarwal et al 1999, 38-9). Instead, it was agreed that such specific matters should be negotiated later as part of a legal instrument to supplement the framework convention. Accordingly, the Kyoto Protocol, established in 1997, re-institutionalised the idea that mitigation should be pursued via domestic targets, albeit in a rather compromised form. In contrast to earlier environmental and atmospheric agreements, the Kyoto Protocol tied domestic targets to a set of 'flexible mechanisms' which would enable states to meet their commitments in the most cost-efficient manner by investing in GHG mitigation in less-developed countries, or buying emissions credits through a trading system (UN 1997).

In the absence of appropriate legal codes, the normative structures of climate governance initially established the boundaries of appropriate conduct for responding to the problem. Defining *who* should take responsibility for mitigating climate change, and *how* such mitigation should be pursued, the norms outlined above guided state behaviour and shaped the agendas of the preliminary negotiations. However, norms are not fixed and immutable; instead, they are dynamic and open to contestation and re-interpretation (Hoffmann 2005, 164-67). Consequently, the normative structures of climate governance have evolved throughout the years since climate change first emerged as an issue of political concern.

DOMESTIC INFLUENCES ON THE ACCEPTANCE OF INTERNATIONAL NORMS

In seeking to explain cross-national variation in the diffusion of international norms, a number of International Relations scholars have emphasised the conditioning role of domestic actors, institutions, and political culture (Checkel 1999; Risse-Kappen 1994; Cortell and Davis 1996). Keck and Sikkink note that '...international norms must always work their influence through the filter of domestic structures and domestic norms, which can produce important variations in compliance and interpretation of these norms' (1998, 893).

The successful diffusion of a particular international norm requires a reasonable degree of congruence between the norm and the domestic conditions of those states it seeks to govern. A perceived incongruence may prompt domestic actors to build congruence between the norm and the domestic conditions through a process of re-interpretation and re-representation. Acharya refers to this process as *localization* (2004). Yet this perceived incongruence may also lead domestic actors to contest or reject the international norm, which may in turn affect the stability of the international normative structure.

As revealed in the preceding section, the normative structures of climate governance have been altered through the process of contestation, which suggests that many states have not been able to build a necessary degree of congruence between the norms and their domestic conditions. The domestic conditions which affect a state's response to international norms are both material and ideational in nature and comprise the domestic social structure, and the key actors' identities and interests. The constitutive and interrelated elements of the domestic social structure are depicted in Diagram 1.

Diagram 1 here

To avoid the structural-bias that is pervasive in norms literature, the conditioning power of social structure must be augmented by consideration of the mutually-constitutive relationship of structure and agency, as captured by the theory of structuration (Wendt 1987). This implies that structure constrains and enables the behaviour of actors, but that structure itself is reproduced and transformed through actors' behaviour. Although the social structure has the power to shape actors' actions and decisions by influencing their understandings of self-identity and interests (O'Neill et al 2004, 162), it is not necessarily static. The social structure is amenable to change due to the capacity of actors to reinterpret their interests and introduce new ideas which, if accepted as legitimate, can result in a reconfiguration of the social structure.

Those norms that are most highly prioritised in the social structure at any given time empower certain actors within the state and international society over others. These key actors derive their legitimacy and authority from the social structure; that is, from the national episteme, political system, institutionalised norms, and material resources. Consequently, their decisions and behaviour tend to reinforce the existing social structure and their own authority. These key actors, their identities and interests, together with the social structure, constitute the domestic conditions that affect a state's internalisation of international norms.

To demonstrate how this theory manifests in the governance of climate change, the following three sections of this paper will examine the response of Australia's foreign policy-makers to the climate change problem. Firstly I will discuss the domestic conditions and assess their congruence, or perceived congruence, with the

normative structures of climate governance. Next, I will turn my attention to the particular ways in which Australian foreign policy-makers have contested these normative structures and sought to construct alternative governance processes. Finally, in the concluding section of the paper, I will discuss the efforts of Australian foreign policy-makers to reconcile the policy challenge of climate change and the domestic conditions by re-framing the issue of climate change.

AUSTRALIA'S DOMESTIC CONDITIONS

Domestic Social Structure

The first component of Australia's social structure is the national episteme, namely, '...the taken-for-granted lens through which actors look at the world' (Kornprobst 2007, 70). Since colonial settlement in 1788, successive Australian governments have maintained an unwavering commitment to developmentalist policies. Indeed, this commitment has become so entrenched in government rationality that its virtues are unquestioned; the development imperative is considered natural and self-evidently positive. It is in this way that 'developmentalism' has become the national episteme of Australia. As the 'taken-for-granted lens' through which Australian political leaders and policy-makers look at the world, developmentalism defines the boundaries of imaginable conduct. It is important to note that the conception of development which constitutes the national episteme does not encompass the broader principles of human welfare, human dignity, and ecological integrity; instead, development is understood primarily in economic terms or, more specifically, with the idea of economic growth (Horne 1983, 275). The developmentalist episteme has passed through a series of phases throughout Australia's history, with each phase characterised by a slightly different degree and type of government involvement.³ The most recent materialisation of developmentalism has been called 'state-sponsored marketisation' (Walker 1999, 81). Emerging in the 1980s, state-sponsored marketisation has been marked by de-regulation, privatisation, and the opening up of the national economy to global market forces (Walker 1999, 34-35). This present phase of developmentalism coincides with the global rise of 'international competition' as a hegemonic discourse. In the pursuit of greater international competitiveness, successive governments over the last three decades have sought to capitalise on Australia's abundant reserves of natural resources, thereby reinforcing this country's dependence on non-renewable 'natural capital' for its economic prosperity. Both Labor and Liberal governments have sought to expand the fossil fuel energy sector by abolishing export controls and encouraging other governments to open up their markets to Australia's energy resource exports (Yu and Taplin 2000, 109). At present, there are no signs of a shift in these trends, especially in light of John Howard's recent pronouncements of his desire to see Australia realise its potential as an "energy superpower" (Howard 2006).

³ For the sake of brevity I will not discuss the earlier phases of developmentalism in this paper. For a useful overview see Walker 1999; and Wanna and Weller 2003.

The second component of Australia's social structure is its liberal-democratic system. Notwithstanding the many positive attributes of such a political system, numerous scholars have noted the constraining effect of the liberal-democratic tradition on the formulation of long-term environmental policies (e.g. Christoff 2005, 41). The tendency for short election terms to produce short-sighted policies is perhaps the most obvious. In an effort to maintain the support of voters, Australia's political leaders are generally reluctant to consider any policy which entails a delayed pay-off while imposing a cost on the current electorate (Christoff 2005, 41). Furthermore, the nature of the national episteme precludes serious consideration of policies that may impede economic growth. As a result of the significant emphasis that has been placed on economic development and growth, these objectives have now become the yardstick for measuring the success or failure of a government's term in power. The widespread belief that the electorate rewards good economic management has led political leaders to disproportionately privilege and protect economic indicators over social and environmental indicators (Head 1986, 55). This characteristic of the Australian social structure has been particularly influential in conditioning the response to the normative structures of international climate governance.

The third component of the domestic social structure is the collection of norms that have already been institutionalised. The domestic social structure is obviously comprised of a large number of norms which govern different aspects of social conduct; here I will only highlight the four norms that have affected Australia's response to the threat of climate change. As noted earlier, norms tend to be organised hierarchically within the social structure and the most highly prioritised norms will generally have most influence on actors' behaviour. Diagram 2 illustrates the hierarchical order of the norms relevant to climate governance. The political economic norms at the base of the diagram are inextricably connected to the national episteme and are, consequently, hierarchically superior to the environmental governance norms. In such cases where the environmental norms cannot be reconciled with the political economic norms, we could expect that the former would be temporarily abandoned.

Diagram 2 here

In addition to the national episteme, political system, and already-institutionalised norms, Australia's domestic social structure is also constituted by its material resources. Australia is a country very rich in natural resources and the presence of vast reserves of coal, natural gas, uranium, and various minerals has shaped the country's economy. Australia's material prosperity can largely be attributed to its considerable natural wealth. Energy exports, for example, presently earn more than \$24 billion dollars each year (CoA 2004, 1), but this sector employs only a small percentage of Australian workforce (Christoff 2002, 8). Moreover, the large reserves of fossil fuels have provided energy-intensive industries, businesses, and households with energy that is much cheaper than in most countries of the developed world (CoA 2004, 10). In terms of energy resources, Australia's substantial fossil fuel reserves are complemented by large

reserves of non-fossil fuel based energy resources, especially solar and wind. However, the potential of renewable energy sources has been comparatively ignored in favour of non-renewable energy sources (Riedy 2005, 216). Furthermore, as Yu and Taplin have noted, successive Australian governments have failed to take advantage of the country's substantial human capital and high technological potential by focusing, instead, on the export of non-renewable energy, minerals, and agricultural products (2000, 110). The result is an economy that 'lacks structural diversity' (Yu and Taplin, 2000, 110).

Domestic Actors

Consideration of the domestic conditions that have affected Australia's response to the normative structures of climate governance would be incomplete without understanding the actors that are embedded in the social structure, and their corresponding identities and interests. In accordance with the theory of structuration, these actors and the social structure are mutually-constituted: the social structure constrains and enables the behaviour of key actors, but the structure itself is reproduced and transformed through these actors' behaviour. While the social structure has the potential to change if the key actors reconsider their identities and interests and alter their behaviour accordingly, stability of the structure is the norm.

Numerous actors are privileged and empowered in different contexts by Australia's domestic social structure. My purpose in this section is to identify only those actors who have most significantly affected Australia's response to the normative structures of climate governance, namely those involved in foreign policy-making. Although jurisdiction for environmental matters traditionally sits with the States and Territories, the Australian Constitution authorises the federal government to make decisions on matters that have an international dimension or entail international obligations. In terms of public policy, then, climate change can be appropriately understood as an issue of foreign policy, which lies within the jurisdiction of the executive government (Firth 2005, 4). In the context of climate change, foreign policy-making is restricted to the prime minister, foreign minister, trade minister, environment minister, the Cabinet, and their respective advisors (Firth 2005, 76).

Since this issue first arose on the international political agenda, Australia has seen a change in national government, and therefore foreign policy-makers, once. From the late 1980s until 1996, the Labor Party was in power; and since 1996 a coalition government of the Liberal and National parties has been in power. The behaviour of foreign policy-makers in both of these governments strongly reflects the national epistemic and normative dimensions of the domestic social structure; in particular it reflects a strong commitment to the idea of international competitiveness. However differences in their identities and worldviews have produced a slightly different style of foreign policy-making and, subsequently, a slightly different response to the normative structures of climate governance. The worldview of Labor's foreign policy-makers reflected a blend of Idealism and Realism and is perhaps best described as moderately internationalist. Through this lens, cooperation among states in the international community was seen as necessary and desirable to achieve common interests as well as Australia's own national interests. This worldview is reflected most

explicitly in the notion of ‘good international citizenship’, which became a core principle of Australia’s identity during the years of the Hawke and Keating governments (Devetak and True 2006, 244). This principle recognises the importance of balancing the pursuit of national interests with fulfilling Australia’s responsibilities and obligations as a member of the international community. Good international citizenship was considered not merely an idealistic stance or ‘disinterested altruism’, but also a pragmatic approach necessitated by an increasingly interdependent international environment (Evans and Grant 1995, 35).

Labor’s election defeat in 1996 signalled a shift in Australia’s approach to foreign affairs. In contrast to the moderate internationalism which characterised the worldview and identity of the Hawke and Keating Labor governments, foreign policy-makers of the Howard Government have been guided by a strictly Realist understanding of the world. This worldview emphasises the primacy of the nation-state within the international order, underscores the importance of Australia’s alliance with the United States, and interprets multilateralism as a potential challenge to state sovereignty (Devetak and True 2006, 250). In accordance with Australia’s national episteme, Howard’s foreign policy-makers maintain an economic conception of globalisation in which this is a process purely of liberal economic interdependence (Devetak and True 2006, 254; Reus-Smit, 2002, 4). While the economic aspects of globalisation are undeniably crucial, such an exclusive understanding of globalisation fails to acknowledge the cultural, environmental, and political aspects of the compression of time and space (Reus-Smit, 2002, 4). The identity Australia has projected under the present government is evidently Janus-faced. In the context of economic globalisation, Australia is adaptive and cooperative: willing to exploit the opportunities presented by liberalisation; however in the context of non-economic institutional integration, Australia is resolutely sovereign and resistant to normative structures that are not entirely consistent with the national interest (Reus-Smit 2002, 7).

In sum, the identities and interests of Australia’s foreign policy-makers throughout the last two decades are inextricably bound up in the domestic social structure. Although policy-makers of both political persuasions have coalesced around the fundamental objective of maximising Australia’s international competitiveness, the slight differences in their worldviews have affected the pursuit of this objective. In pursuing their conception of the national interest, realist foreign policy-makers have tended to eschew inclusive multilateral fora in favour of selective partnerships, while moderately internationalist foreign policy-makers tempered this pursuit with a belief in the importance of good international citizenship.

AUSTRALIA’S CONTESTATION OF THE NORMATIVE STRUCTURES OF CLIMATE GOVERNANCE

As noted earlier, a positive response to international norms requires a reasonable level of congruence between the norms and the domestic conditions. Like norms, domestic conditions are not immutable but they do have a tendency to remain stable. While the key domestic actors may re-interpret their interests and identities in light of emerging international norms, a perceived incongruence between the norms and the domestic social structure is likely to impede such a response. The subordinate norms of environmental governance, which are evident in Australia’s social structure, render foreign policy-makers somewhat

receptive to international efforts to control atmospheric pollutants. Nevertheless, the normative structures of climate governance pose an enormous challenge to the inherited objectives of foreign policy. The obligation to control GHG emissions, which lies at the core of these normative structures, directly contradicts the national episteme that emerged in conditions of abundant and cheap fossil fuel resources. An obligation to control GHG emissions has inconvenient implications for domestic energy consumption and the pursuit of international competitiveness. Moreover, the CBDR principle has been interpreted as providing Australia's competitors with an unfair advantage in attracting international investment.⁴ This perceived incongruence between the normative structures of climate governance and the domestic conditions has led Australia's foreign policy-makers to contest and re-interpret these structures. However, this was not initially the case. Influenced by the notion of 'good international citizenship' (and perhaps also by a 'veil of ignorance' (Bodansky 1993, 476; Young 1989, 232-33)), Australia played a more constructive role in cooperative efforts on climate change when the issue first emerged on the international political agenda. Illustrative is the adoption of an Interim Planning Target in 1990, based on the Toronto Target. This was followed by the drafting of a national strategy of 'light-handed regulation' to control domestic GHG emissions and meet Australia's obligations under the FCCC (Bulkeley 2001, 158-9). Although the final draft and implementation of the strategy were widely deemed inadequate for meeting these obligations, the adoption of the IPT and the efforts to devise a national strategy do reflect a general acceptance of the international norms.

By 1995, though, Australian foreign policy-makers had begun to contest these norms. Perhaps the earliest manifestation of this was at the first Conference of the Parties, in Berlin, where Australia supported the United States in calling for 'meaningful participation' on the part of developing countries, especially the 'more advanced developing countries' referred to in Germany's earlier proposal (Agarwal et al 1999, 45). In 1996, in a further attempt to redefine the institutionalised norm of CBDR, Australia's foreign policy-makers began to push for a differentiated approach to reduction targets based on '...projected emissions trends; factors such as population growth; and considerations embodied in trade' (IISD 1996). Such a conception of differentiation was clearly informed by an interest in maintaining Australia's international competitiveness and reducing the domestic costs of conforming with an international mitigation agreement. Australia attracted considerable criticism over its insistence on differentiated and favourable treatment, which was ostensibly warranted on the basis of Australia's unique geographic, economic, and demographic features (Australia 1997, 10921). Yet Australia's foreign policy-makers, now under the Howard Coalition Government, continued to push for differentiation and consequently secured a favourable target in the Kyoto Protocol of 108 percent above 1990 emission levels. The only other Parties to secure an increase on their emission levels were Norway and Iceland.

⁴ This interpretation is evident in statements made throughout the past decade by Australia's foreign policy-makers. See, for example, Downer and Kemp 2002; and Kemp 2002.

By 1997 the shift in worldview of Australia's foreign policy-makers was becoming apparent. This is revealed most clearly in the foreign affairs and trade White Paper, *In the National Interest*, which was released in August. Reflecting a realist worldview, this document emphasises the sovereign state as the principal actor in the international system. Accordingly, it is assumed that Australia's foreign relations should be pursued predominantly via bilateral channels with other nation-states. Multilateral institutions also have a role to play, but only insofar as the objectives of such institutions align with Australia's own core interests, identified as '...the security of the Australian nation and the jobs and standard of living of the Australian people' (CoA 1997, iii). Importantly, the document alludes to a possible shift from broad multilateral cooperation to a strategy of 'coalition-building', namely '...putting together issues-based coalitions of countries to pursue a shared objective' (CoA 1997, vi). Whereas multilateral institutions tend to rely on compromise and bargaining, coalition-building appears to be based on selective cooperation only with like-minded states. All of this points to a view of the world in which nation-states must fiercely protect their national interests from the intrusion and interference of regimes pursuing global interests; unless of course those interests are economic, in which case cooperation is necessary and inevitable. The image of Australia standing strong against a multilateral regime, in defence of the national interest, was repeatedly projected throughout 1997 in the context of climate change. In reference to Australia's advocacy of its differentiation approach, John Howard stated in June 1997: 'I will just continue to put Australia's case... and if at the end of the day we are not successful in obtaining accommodation well, the arrangement will not be something that we can be part of' (1997). This remark points to a fundamental shift away from Australia's erstwhile identity as a 'good international citizen'. Indeed, as Howard himself later defiantly acknowledged, many domestic critics labelled Australia an 'international pariah' for its stance on this issue (1998).

Australia's contestation of the normative structures of climate governance has not been limited to the CBDR principle. Australian foreign policy-makers were also strongly in favour of redefining the norm concerning *how* mitigation should be pursued. Following the signing of the Kyoto Protocol in 1997, the use of the flexibility mechanisms remained an unresolved matter. Disagreement centred around the appropriate *type* of mechanisms and the *extent* of their use. The EU and many developing countries were in favour of placing a cap on the use of flexibility mechanisms, as a means of ensuring domestic targets were met largely through domestic action (Cass 2005, 38-40). Conversely, with a view to prevent any interruption to Australia's own developmentalist trajectory, Australia strongly opposed any restrictions on the use of these mechanisms (IISD 1998). Australia's push for maximum flexibility extended also to the *type* of projects that should be permitted. Whereas several Parties were reluctant to include such projects as carbon 'sinks' and nuclear reactors in the mechanisms, Australia's delegation argued that decisions concerning the exclusion of certain projects should be made by individual developing countries on a case-by-case basis (IISD 1998).

In spite of the favourable concessions that Australian foreign-policy makers had secured through the existing processes of climate governance, in 2001 Australia began to focus on establishing alternative processes. This

was precipitated by the announcement of newly-elected US president, George W. Bush, that the Kyoto Protocol would not be submitted to the US Senate for domestic ratification. In contrast to the condemnation this decision drew from Europe, Japan, New Zealand, environmentalist groups, and other members of the international community (Mann 2001; Anon 2001; Anon 2001b), Australia's response was supportive (Howard 2001). In an allusion to the pending directional change in Australia's approach to climate governance, in April 2001, Robert Hill (then Environment Minister), raised the idea of redesigning the 'international architecture' of climate governance: '(i)f the United States has ... determined that the Protocol is unacceptable ... we will want to explore with the United States its views on the international architecture which can deliver an optimal global response' (2001).

Accordingly, following the Government's re-election in November 2001, Australia's foreign policy-makers became more focused on coalition-building at the expense of constructively contributing to the multilateral processes of the UNFCCC. In 2002 and 2003, Australia established bilateral partnerships with four countries in the Asia-Pacific region: the US, Japan, New Zealand, and China (AGO 2007). In contrast to the Kyoto Protocol's focus on emissions reductions, these partnerships were based on technological development, the sharing of expertise, and promoting greater participation in responding to climate change. This new emphasis on bilateral climate change partnerships coincided with John Howard's formal announcement that Australia would not be ratifying the Kyoto Protocol. In the same week that the EU and Japan ratified the Protocol, Howard told Parliament: '(t)he Australian national interest does not lie in ratifying Kyoto: that is why we are opposed to it' (Australia 2002). Without more active participation from developing countries and the US, Howard argued, the Kyoto Protocol would damage Australian industry and cost Australian jobs. The most significant manifestation of Australia's efforts to construct alternative processes of climate governance was the creation, in July 2005, of the Asia-Pacific Partnership on Clean Development and Climate: a selective multilateral initiative between the United States, Australia, Republic of Korea, China, India, and Japan. According to the Partnership's initial Communiqué, one of the key objectives of the initiative is to '...work together to develop, demonstrate and implement cleaner and lower emissions technologies that allow for the continued economic use of fossil fuels while addressing air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions' (DFAT 2006). In contrast to the focus of the UNFCCC on the direct reduction of GHG emissions through national targets and timetables, the Asia-Pacific Partnership places its faith in uncertain "clean" technology, and potentially in nuclear energy, to mitigate the accumulation of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere while exploiting all available sources of energy. Despite being framed as "clean" and "green", Australia's favoured technology is not benign renewable energy, but rather the capture and underground storage of carbon emitted from the burning of coal (Diesendorf 2003).

RECONCILING CLIMATE GOVERNANCE WITH THE DOMESTIC CONDITIONS

The normative structures of climate governance which emerged in the late 1980s were unambiguously centred around the objective of stabilising GHG emissions. As noted earlier, these structures consequently

pose an enormous challenge to the inherited objectives of Australia's foreign policy, which have themselves emerged from the developmentalist episteme. Rather than questioning these objectives and re-considering them in light of the challenge of climate change, Australia's foreign policy-makers have focused on *re-framing* the issue of climate change to produce a superficial level of congruence between climate governance and the domestic conditions. Entman's definition of framing is useful for understanding the efforts of foreign policy-makers to reconcile climate governance with the domestic conditions. He writes:

To frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the item described (1993, 52).

International debates about climate change have tended to frame the issue narrowly in scientific and technical terms. Although the mandate of the International Panel on Climate Change encompasses the socio-economic dimensions as well as the scientific and technical dimensions of climate change, these more normative dimensions have been considerably neglected in the Panel's research agenda (IPCC 2007). This agenda has tended to be preoccupied with establishing greater certainty of atmospheric processes through the use of computerised models. These models obviously have no way of accounting for, or explaining, the meanings that societies attach to GHG emissions, or the human practices with which these gases are associated. Consequently, the *social* and *human* dimensions of the issue tend to be overlooked. Divorced from its social and human foundations, the issue of climate change has entered the policy domain dominated by an economic discourse of efficiency: a discourse which recognises value exclusively in monetary terms and reduces the viability of environmental policies to narrow cost-benefit calculations.

The international framing of the issue of climate change within the narrow confines of atmospheric processes and cost-efficiency has provided an opportunity for Australian foreign policy-makers to re-frame the issue for their own purposes. The rejection of the Kyoto Protocol on the basis of its differentiation of developed and developing countries can only be sustained if the social and human dimensions of the issue are obscured. Australia annually generates 27.54 tonnes of GHG emissions for each person living in this country. In contrast, China generates 3.05 tonnes per person, and India just 1.34 tonnes (Carbon Planet 2007). Yet, these figures tend to be cast aside in favour of highlighting the aggregate contribution of China and India to global GHG emissions and subsequently concluding that their emissions must be controlled. The effect of such framing is to present Australia's own domestic emissions as inconsequential and irrelevant. Indeed, on numerous occasions in recent years, Australia's foreign policy-makers have parroted a former industry adviser in claiming that '(i)f Australia closed down completely tomorrow, it wouldn't make one iota's difference to the global greenhouse position' (Quoted in Anon 1997), because China alone would negate any emissions reduction in just eleven months (Campbell 2005). Such framing obscures the energy consumption associated with each tonne of GHG emissions and thereby conflates subsistence emissions and luxury emissions: the consumption associated with each Indian's annual 15 gigajoules of energy is weighted

equally in importance to the consumption associated with each Australian's 250 gigajoules (source of data: Smil 2003). The pursuit of international competitiveness cannot accommodate such considerations of equitable consumption; as a consequence, Australia's foreign policy-makers have sought to sideline these considerations by re-focusing the debate. This is particularly apparent in the 'technology-driven' approach of the alternative governance structures promoted by Australia. Instead of re-considering the way energy is used and addressing the difficult question of how much must be consumed to maintain a desirable level of wellbeing, Australia's foreign policy-makers have sought to continue along the inherited developmentalist trajectory by focusing on the development of technology capable of mitigating the negative effects of over-consumption and globally inequitable consumption.

The role of historical greenhouse gas emissions in generating the threat of climate change has also been displaced in Australia's framing of the issue. In contrast to the CBDR principle, which many understand as obliging the North to take the lead in reducing emissions as a reflection of their historical responsibility, the alternative governance structures promoted by Australia place chief responsibility on the South, on the basis of their *future* projected emissions. A joint statement in which Australia's foreign and environment ministers announced the creation of the Asia Pacific Partnership, is illustrative. In explaining the rationale for this initiative, they said:

... we have never been afraid to state plainly that Kyoto does not - and will not - work.... Developing countries - those expected to account for over half of all greenhouse gas emissions by 2020 - have no Kyoto targets, and are - quite understandably - not willing to sacrifice economic growth to negotiate them.... The importance of developing country participation can be illustrated quite starkly. Australia accounts for only 1.4% of global greenhouse gas emissions. Even if Australia took the alarming step of closing every power station tonight, China's industrial growth is so rapid that the greenhouse gas savings made by this gesture would be replicated by China in just one year. A long-term, effective response to climate change needs to be one that includes all major emitters (Downer and Campbell 2005).

While the UNFCCC processes for responding to climate change posed a challenge to Australia's own prospects for international competitiveness, this re-framing of the issue has effectively transferred this challenge to Australia's regional competitors. This is evident in the Foreign Minister's assertion, as noted in the introduction, that '(t)he Government is doing a lot, but in the end, what the Australian Government does is going to be of negligible importance compared to what China does or the United States does or India does - that's where you've got to really address this issue' (Downer 2006). While the deflection of attention away from Australia's domestic emissions has allowed the Howard Government to protect the short-term material wealth of the country, it is clear that this has come at the expense of international equity and Australia's long-term sustainability.

CONCLUSION

Climate change is a complex and multi-dimensional problem which carries important implications for environmental, social, cultural, economic, and political sustainability. It is unsurprising, then, that international efforts to govern climate change have met with strong resistance from a variety of state and non-state actors. Since this issue first appeared on the international political agenda nearly two decades ago, the norms concerning *who* should take responsibility for mitigating climate change, and *how* such mitigation should be pursued have gradually evolved through a process of contestation. The case of Australia has illustrated how this contestation emerged as a result of the perceived incongruence between the initial normative structures and the domestic conditions. In contrast to the initial normative structures of climate governance which emphasised the responsibility of the North to mitigate GHG emissions via domestic targets and timetables, the alternative approach promoted by Australia places chief responsibility on the South to control their emissions via technological means. This shift in the governance of climate change does not bode well for long-term sustainability and international equity.

In this paper I have sought to develop a greater understanding of the relationship between international norms and domestic conditions, and an appreciation of the importance of congruence, by exploring this relationship in the context of Australian foreign policy-makers' response to the governance of climate change. However, a greater understanding of the relationship between international norms and domestic conditions generates a significant challenge for norm entrepreneurs and other members of the international community. If the successful diffusion of a particular norm is dependent on its congruence with the domestic conditions of those states it seeks to govern, the capacity of the international community to adequately respond to complex and threatening transnational problems is significantly compromised. The challenge for norm entrepreneurs and other relevant actors is to promote a process of localisation and congruence-building that legitimises the existing norms while ensuring that the initial objectives of governance are not undermined. This is indeed a matter which merits further research within the discipline of International Relations.

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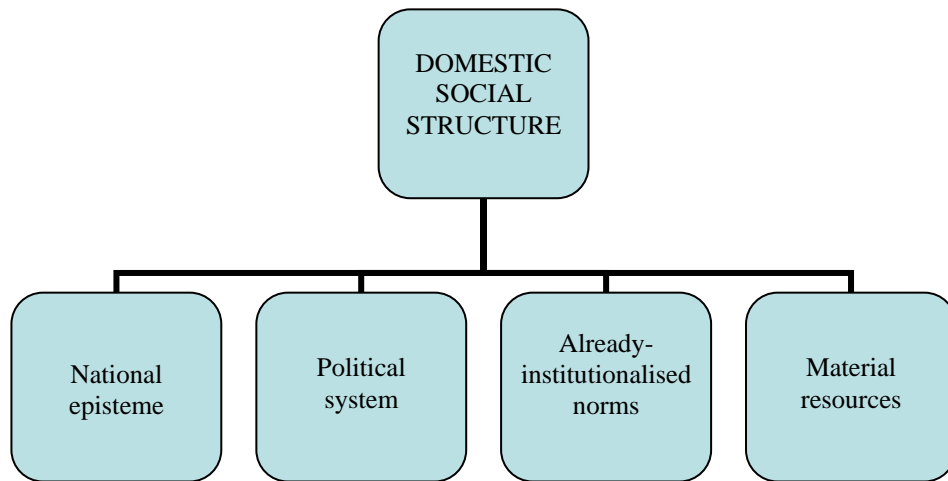


Diagram 1: Domestic social structure.⁵

⁵ This conception of the domestic social structure is informed by the work of Bernstein 2001, 186; Kornprobst 2007; and Risse-Kappen 1994, 187 and 208-209.

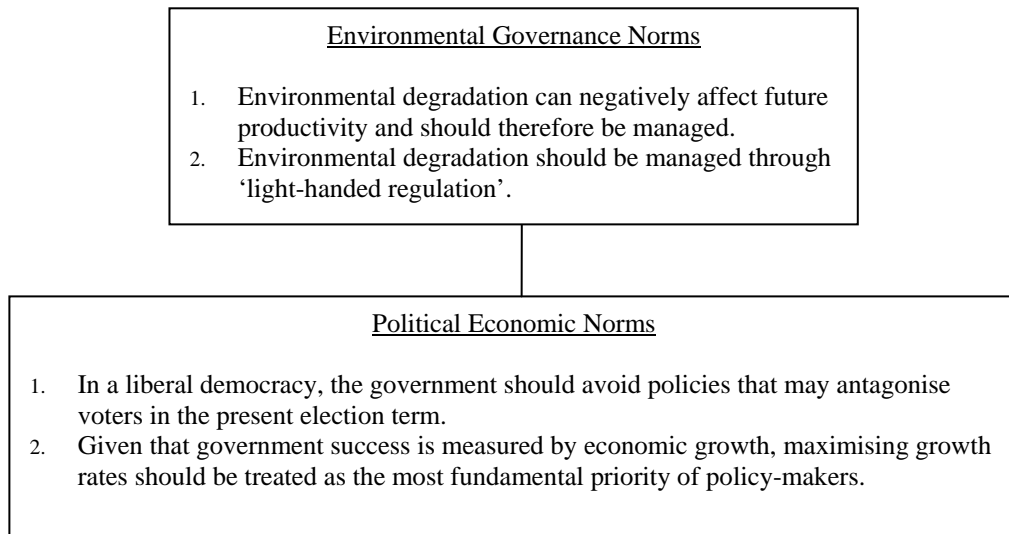


Diagram 2: Hierarchy of Australian Norms⁶

⁶ For further discussion on the first environmental governance norm, see Christoff 2005b, 27-30. For further discussion on the second environmental governance norm, see Papadakis and Grant 2003.