1 Introduction
The Greening of Global International Society

This book explores a profound transformation in international relations: the adoption of environmental stewardship as a fundamental international norm. At the first United Nations (UN) environment conference in 1972, international society declared 'the protection and improvement of the human environment' (Stockholm Declaration) to be the duty of all governments. This was the first time that states collectively accepted a normative commitment to protect the environment, not only within their territories but also at the global level. In subsequent decades, international society followed up this commitment with hundreds of international environmental treaties and created several international organisations dedicated to supporting global environmental protection. This flurry of environmental diplomacy in the last third of the twentieth century contrasts with the preceding half a century of failed efforts to establish environmental protection as an international policy priority. Today, hardly a day passes in the diplomatic calendar without some international forum discussing environmental threats or negotiating global response measures. It is no exaggeration to say that environmental matters have become omnipresent in international relations. If the nineteenth century was the age of nationalism, and the twentieth century the age of democracy, then the twenty-first century may well turn out to be the 'age of ecology' (Radkau, 2011).

In this book I seek to show that the dramatic expansion of global environmental politics (GEP) since the 1970s is not simply a case of yet another collective action problem being added to the list of global policy issues. It signals both a profound shift in the role and identity of states across the world and a significant step in the normative evolution of *global* international society (GIS). Environmentalism has become a fundamental international principle – or primary institution in English School (ES) parlance – that suggests the beginning of a transformation in international legitimacy. Framing the emergence of GEP in this way has important consequences for our understanding of the relationship between environmentalism and international relations. It opens up a new

perspective on how environmental ideas have reshaped the normative order of international society; whether environmentalism has strengthened, weakened or modified existing primary institutions (e.g. sovereignty, territoriality, diplomacy); but also how environmentalism in turn has been influenced and changed by its engagement with GIS.

From an International Relations (IR) perspective, the story of the rise of environmental stewardship is an encouraging one. When viewed within the context of the slow pace of societal development in the international system, understood as the redefining of the moral purpose of the state (Reus-Smit, 1999) and a shift in the foundations of international legitimacy (Clark, 2005), it can be argued that the greening of international society amounts to a significant and comparatively rapid transformative change. The rise of global environmentalism is a distinctive case of international normative discontinuity that has few equals in the twentieth century. This is all the more remarkable as the adoption of environmentalism was not a response to some systemic deficiency in the society of states. States did not, initially at least, accept a duty of global environmental care in order to stabilise the international balance of power or prevent international order from collapsing. Global environmentalism, understood as a social movement that initiated green normative change in international society, arose out of the normative maelstrom of domestic politics, first in the most industrialised economies and then in other parts of the world. Its roots can be traced back to the first environmental organisations of the nineteenth century, though it only developed international political salience after the Second World War, against the backdrop of the looming legitimacy crisis of the nation-state as the guardian of society's well-being and prosperity. As I shall demonstrate subsequently, the international norm of environmental stewardship emerged as a new social purpose, first in domestic politics and then in international relations, growing out of a world societal demand to tame the ecological excesses of global industrialism.

This progressive account of the rise of environmental stewardship looks less persuasive, however, when viewed in the context of the worsening global environmental crisis. The 'great acceleration' (McNeill and Engelke, 2016) of humanity's detrimental impact on the planet since the mid-twentieth century has severely tested the problem-solving capacity of both states and international society. Despite having created numerous multilateral environmental agreements and introduced environmental mandates into other parts of the global governance system, GIS has not managed to curtail, let alone reverse, some of the worst forms of environmental degradation: from the global climate crisis (United Nations Environment Programme, 2018) to mass biological

extinction (Ceballos, Ehrlich and Dirzo, 2017), and from the continuing destruction of tropical forests (Food and Agriculture Organization, 2018) to the dumping of plastic waste in the oceans (Dauvergne, 2018), the society of states seems to be at a loss when it comes to addressing some of the most pressing global environmental problems. Indeed, when measured against the scale of the planetary ecological challenge that humanity faces, it would seem that international society is the wrong place to look for a global environmental rescue.

How, then, can we square these seemingly contradictory observations about environmentalism's progress in the international realm? There can be little doubt that, despite some isolated success stories, GIS has repeatedly fallen short of environmental expectations. If the international normative structure has started to be 'greened', as I argue in this book, then this hasn't gone nearly far enough. Indeed, it remains an open question whether the international states system can develop an effective and timely response to the climate change threat, species extinction, resource depletion or biodiversity loss. As I shall discuss in this book, many environmentalists place their hopes, not in international society, but in world society, that is the myriad of non-state actors that have become engaged in the search for global environmental solutions. Yet, given the persistence of the states system and fierce international political contestation around environmental issues, it is clear that international cooperation among states will have to be part of any global environmental response. The environmental crisis may call into question the legitimacy of the states system, but no alternative to the current world political system is currently available. There are many ways in which the current international approach to environmental action can be improved, by strengthening international organisations, boosting environmental aid, enhancing international fairness and justice, increasing institutional transparency and accountability, and improving non-state actor participation in international processes. Yet, most such advances in global environmental governance require the acquiescence or actual support of international society, and powerful states can easily hold up progress towards greater environmental sustainability. It matters, therefore, how GIS is constituted, and how its normative structure can be adapted. The analysis in this book seeks to enhance our understanding of how international environmental norm change has come about in the past, in the hope that this might improve our ability to accelerate it in the future.

This book has been in the making for many years. I first applied ES theory to the rise of global environmentalism in a paper for a special issue of *International Affairs* published twenty years after the Rio 'Earth Summit' (Falkner, 2012). Working subsequently with Barry Buzan on

a project to trace the emergence of new primary institutions, in environmental politics (Falkner and Buzan, 2019) and in global political economy, we developed an analytical framework for empirically tracking the rise of new fundamental norms and assessing their interactions with the existing international order. This book builds on and extends the framework developed by Falkner and Buzan (2019), providing a fuller historical account of the rise of environmental stewardship and introducing further nuances into the story of environmentalism's interaction with GIS.

International Transformations and the English School

The study of change and continuity is at the heart of the IR discipline. Change is, of course, ubiquitous in international politics as much as in all social life. However, profound transformations in the normative structure of international society are rare by comparison (Holsti, 2004: chapter 1). Ever since the emergence of the Westphalian order in the seventeenth century, the modern society of states has been characterised by remarkable continuity in some of its key constitutional elements: the principles of sovereignty and territoriality, which still define contemporary statehood; the rules of diplomacy, which continue to regulate the behaviour of states towards each other; and the operation of the balance of power, which gives order to interstate relations when power is unequally distributed or the power distribution shifts. As Bull and Watson (1984) and others have shown, these fundamental institutions of the Westphalian international order originated in Europe and were gradually globalised, particularly through the creation of colonial empires and then decolonisation. As Europe's international society became a truly global international society, many of its normative foundations remained largely intact.

This is not to say that the international normative structure doesn't change. Far from it, key principles have either changed their meaning, declined in importance (e.g. war; see Buzan, 2004: 196) or disappeared altogether (e.g. dynastic succession; see Buzan, 2004: 246), and new principles have emerged that have had a lasting impact on international legitimacy (e.g. nationalism; see Mayall, 1990). Yet other new norms have struggled to develop the kind of momentum that would make them a candidate for primary institution status in GIS (e.g. human rights; see Buzan and Schouenborg, 2018: 94). Change at the level of international society's constitutional structure is thus possible, though it is likely to be a slow-paced, drawn-out and contested process.

Many theories of IR struggle with the notion of deep-seated normative change. Realists assume that anarchy, the predominant structural feature in international relations, has remained unaltered over centuries, and that within an anarchic system the main changes occur at the level of the distribution of power capabilities of states. Powers rise and fall, and international order oscillates between multipolarity, bipolarity and unipolarity, but the underlying logic of international behaviour remains the same. The (potential) emergence of environmentalism as a normative principle that expands the core purpose of the state and affects what it means to be a legitimate member of international society does not feature in this theoretical perspective. States may well pursue environmental objectives if these support their national interest, but environmentalism as such is not expected to alter the structure of the international system. The only conceivable way in which environmentalism could become an imperative for the system as a whole is the emergence of a global ecological catastrophe that poses a systemic risk to the survival of a sovereignty-based international order. Much like the threat of a major asteroid strike from space, an environmental apocalypse that threatens the survival of both states and the international system would necessitate a collective response that pushes aside all concern for relative gains and power imbalances.

Liberal and constructivist IR theories do a much better job at accounting for the greater variety of social purposes that can be absorbed into the normative structure of international society. Liberals and constructivists place greater emphasis on the role of ideas and norms, on the possibility for states and state leaders to learn their way out of calamitous international anarchy and on the role of domestic politics within states to change the parameters of behaviour among states. Both liberals and constructivists are able to adopt an evolutionary view of international society in which the arrival of new norms gives rise to the possibility of a restructuring of its normative order. Liberals remain wedded to a rationalist outlook, which treats ideas and norms as intervening factors that do not affect the identity of the state, thereby leaving the nature of the international system largely unchanged by the arrival of new ideas. It is constructivists that have gone furthest in developing a deeper understanding of how normative change can bring about a change in the identity of states themselves, and therefore an evolution in the international structure of international relations.

For a study of the causes, drivers and impacts of long-term and deep-seated norm change in international relations, which is at the heart of my project, liberalism and constructivism offer useful starting points. However, it is the ES that provides a unique, and in my view ideal,

vantage point from which to analyse the arrival of a new norm and its interaction with other established norms of international society. With its focus on the societal dimensions of international relations and the patterns of long-term historical change, it brings into play the normative dimensions of international life and is particularly sensitive to the malleability and historical situatedness of fundamental norms. Its conceptual triad of international system, international society and world society offers a comprehensive framework for examining dynamics of social action within, but also between, these pillars of the global political system. Although the ES used to be associated almost exclusively with the concept of international society and the question of why and how states form a society, at least since Buzan's (2004) reworking of ES theory it has become clear that it is better seen as a master theory that seeks to work out how the three pillars are related, how they interact and how they influence each other (Dunne, 2010: 733–4).

The ES distinction between primary and secondary institutions helpfully distinguishes different levels of international change (Buzan, 2004; see also Holsti, 2004). Within the IR subfield of GEP, analysts usually focus on the creation of secondary institutions, that is international environmental treaties, public or private governance mechanisms and international organisations, and usually only within specific environmental issue areas (such as climate change, biodiversity and chemicals). Rarely does the GEP literature examine the broader historical and normative pattern of institutional development in the environmental field as such. By distinguishing between environmentalism as a primary institution and specific environmental regimes or regime complexes as secondary institutions, ES theory opens up a perspective on how deeply embedded the environmental norm has become in international relations, how it informs the creation of specific secondary institutions and how it relates to other primary institutions that make up international society's constitutional order.

ES theory is also more explicitly normative in its orientation than either liberal or constructivist IR theory. To be precise, normative theory in the ES tradition comes in two forms: a philosophical or ethical tradition that seeks to determine 'the right or the good or the proper form of action' and a sociological or anthropological form that discerns 'the norms or practices of a particular society' in a descriptive sense (Mayall, 2009: 210). The ES tradition has combined both types of normative reasoning, which allows it to develop a much richer discussion of societal development in international relations. Its conceptual dyad of pluralism and solidarism has been used as a set of markers for different normative positions on the desirability of different types of international

order. It can also be employed as part of an analytical–empirical account of international societal evolution, as a set of criteria for measuring and evaluating normative development in international relations. As such, it opens up a fruitful perspective on the greening of international society, which both provides analytical categories for describing empirical developments in GEP and helps to bring to the surface some of the implicit normativity in GEP debates.

It was once not uncommon to dismiss the ES as marginal or irrelevant to the study of GEP (Paterson, 2005). This perception was fuelled not least by the ES's early neglect of environmental issues and Bull's influential but reductionist treatment of the rise of environmentalism as a fundamentally anti-statist force that, if successful, would render the states system obsolete. The situation has changed, however, in more recent years, with a growing number of ES scholars engaging with the rise of GEP and reflecting on its significance as a source of normative development in international relations (see Chapter 2). GEP has now emerged as a major empirical case for ES debates on pluralist versus solidarist trends in international society and for the respective roles of states and non-state actors and the intensifying interplay between world society and international society. As I hope to show in this book, the ES can benefit from closer analysis of the rise of environmentalism, as an important test case for progressive societal development. At the same time, scholars of GEP would benefit from greater engagement with the ES's theoretical tradition, which allows them to distinguish between different levels of environmental normative development and place the rise of GEP in a larger historical context. In short, it is time to move beyond what until recently was a case of mutual neglect between ES and GEP scholarship in IR. This book seeks to set the scene for a closer and mutually beneficial engagement between ES and GEP scholarship.

The Argument and Structure of the Book

The argument that I develop in this book can be summarised as follows. Environmentalism has emerged as a fundamental norm of GIS. The origins of the gradual greening of international society can be traced back to the early twentieth century, but it was not until the 1970s that environmental stewardship was accepted by the society of states as a primary institution, as an integral part of its normative structure. Environmental protection was first declared to be the duty of all states at the first UN environment conference in Stockholm in 1972. The new environmental norm overcame initial contestation and reached universal recognition by the time of the 1992 Rio Earth Summit. Much like other

fundamental norms and political ideologies, environmental stewardship contains an inner normative core that is stable over time and a set of peripheral concepts and principles that are adjustable and relate the core norm to specific historical contexts. At its core is an ecological consciousness and concern, that is an awareness of the threat that human activities pose to the health of the planet and an ethic of care for the natural environment that translates into an environmental responsibility for states and international society. Beyond this inner core, environmentalists differ over questions of ethical motivation (whether environmental concern is based on anthropocentric or ecocentric values) and political strategy (whether effective environmental protection requires radical changes to the international system or mere adaptive reforms). The precise meaning of environmental stewardship and how it is to be applied in international relations remain contested, and in this sense the international environmental norm is malleable and open to change. The gradual greening of international society is thus a story of how states came to accept a fundamental commitment to global environmental protection and how they struggled over its precise meaning and relationship with other fundamental norms of GIS.

The rise of environmental stewardship is an important case of international norm transfer from world society to international society. Environmental ideas first arose in domestic and transnational societal debates in the nineteenth century and slowly morphed into a loosely connected global environmental movement. From the early 1900s onwards, environmental campaigners and scientists lobbied governments on numerous occasions to take up the task of global environmental protection. Several attempts to create an international environmental agenda were launched in the first half of the twentieth century, but these largely failed. Only with the rise of the modern environmental movement in the 1960s did sufficient political momentum build behind the internationalisation of environmental protection. The norm transfer from world to international society was not a straightforward process, it was negotiated and contested, and it required leadership by powerful states that championed global environmental protection. Its success is all the more remarkable as environmental stewardship did not arise out of a systemic need to maintain international order. Global environmentalism reflects a new social purpose that international society came to adopt, in response to norm entrepreneurship originating outside the state-centric realm.

Once adopted as a fundamental norm, environmental stewardship underwent a process of social consolidation and globalisation. This involved ongoing contestation and resistance, as well as normative

accommodation and change. Over time, however, international society's commitment to environmental protection hardened, even if the implementation of international environmental rules has been patchy and their environmental effectiveness remains uncertain. As the commitment to environmental stewardship deepened, the interplay between the environmental norm and other primary institutions of GIS has intensified. Environmental stewardship has provided a good fit with some fundamental norms, leading to an expansion of diplomacy and international law, while it has had little or no impact on other primary institutions, such as the balance of power, war, great power management and nationalism. The international environmental norm has posed a challenge to some primary institutions that stand in the way of a more internationally centralised response to environmental problems, most notably sovereignty, territoriality, the market and developmentalism. As such, the environmental norm has undergone considerable normative accommodation, which has enabled it to establish itself as part of the international normative structure. It has also worked against strict interpretations of certain pluralist institutions, such as sovereignty and territoriality, contributing to a certain reinterpretation, though not a fundamental transformation, of the meaning of modern sovereign statehood.

The book is divided into three main parts. The *first part* sets out the theoretical and conceptual contexts within which my analysis is situated. Chapter 2 introduces the main tenets of the ES. It discusses how ES theory has engaged with environmental issues in the past, moving from a near total neglect of environmentalism in its early stages to the development of an ever more comprehensive framework for studying environmentalism as a source of international normative change. The chapter concludes with a summary of the analytical framework that underpins this book.

Thereafter, Chapter 3 reviews the origins and evolution of environmentalism as a set of ideas, as a political ideology in its own right and as a social and political movement that has reshaped politics in the twentieth century and beyond. The first part introduces the main variants of environmentalism that have emerged out of the broad tradition of environmental thinking in the nineteenth century. The second part considers how environmentalism, an ideology not originally concerned with international relations, came to be applied to questions of international order. Using the ES's conceptual dyads of pluralism and solidarism, and international society and world society, four ideal types of a global green order are identified: *Green Westphalia* and *global environmental governance* representing the pluralist and solidarist ends of the spectrum within state-centric international society, and *eco-localism* and *eco-globalism* as the corresponding concepts in world society.

The *second part* of the book takes a historical perspective on the emergence of environmentalism as a fundamental norm of international society. Chapter 4 traces the origins of the environmental movement and its gradually expanding impact on national politics in the nineteenth century. It reviews the largely failed efforts to establish an international agenda for environmental protection, from the pre-First World War years to the League of Nations, highlighting the limitations of an environmental movement that still lacked broader mass support across the industrialised world.

Chapter 5 examines the historical context in which international society came to adopt environmental stewardship as a primary institution. It opens with a review of the post-1945 situation, when international society took the first tentative steps towards a greater environmental role. It then charts the emergence of the modern environmental movement from the 1960s onwards, and specifically its impact on national environmental policy in leading industrialised countries. The chapter concludes with an analysis of the 1972 Stockholm conference, the constitutional moment in the greening of international society. Stockholm was the moment when environmental stewardship was adopted as a fundamental international norm, but it also witnessed deep divisions, mainly between developed and developing countries, over how the norm was to be interpreted.

Chapter 6 considers how, once formally adopted, the new environmental norm evolved into a truly global primary institution, applicable not only in the Global North but also in the countries of the Global South. The chapter traces the consolidation of environmental stewardship as a primary institution, through the creation of a large number of secondary institutions and through the institutionalisation of environmental diplomacy.

Chapter 7 completes the set of historical chapters by following the evolution of GEP into the contemporary era, identifying processes of both normative consolidation and contestation. It explores the interaction between international and world society in strengthening the applicability of environmental stewardship in new forms of transnational environmental governance involving non-state actors. And it examines continuing areas of contestation over how environmental stewardship is to be interpreted and how the environmental norm relates to other primary institutions.

The *third part* of the book abandons the chronological structure of part two and adopts an analytical focus on the underlying drivers of the greening of international society. Engaging the conceptual toolkit of the ES, Chapter 8 considers the impetus in GEP for a strengthening of the solidarist elements within the state-centric order, from cosmopolitan