

1. Introduction

RUSSIA IN THE GLOBAL ENVIRONMENT

Russia's environment is of global importance, for many reasons. First, as the largest country on Earth, Russia remains a major contributor to regional and global environmental degradation. It is the fourth largest emitter of greenhouse gases in the world and a major supplier of fossil fuels – the main single source of greenhouse gases on a global scale. Transboundary air and water pollution originating from Russia gives rise to concern, especially in the neighbouring countries.

The main reason for industrial pollution and the high energy intensity of the Russian economy lies in the deteriorating and inadequately maintained infrastructure built during the Soviet era. Air pollution is deemed high or extremely high in about half of the federal subjects (regions), according to the Russian Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment (Ministerstvo 2010). The number of people living in such areas is about 54 million. Moreover, together with the legacy of Soviet economic planning and the authoritarian system of governance, the country's economic and societal transition has obstructed the development of environmental policy and management (Henry and Douhovnikoff 2008, p.437). This gives rise to fundamental questions about Russia's ability to limit the negative impacts on the environment through domestic efforts alone. At the same time, the situation works as an incentive for Western investment in Russia's environmental sector, creating *win-win* opportunities for both parties.

Second, Russia's natural resources are among the most abundant in the world: for example, Russia accounted for 20 per cent of the total global forest area as of 2010 (FAO 2010, p.12) and 21.4 per cent of proven natural gas resources in 2011 (BP 2012, p. 10). According to a recent WWF report, Russia's natural environment is capable of compensating for a footprint of more than six hectares per person – this is considered to make the country a *donor* to the global environment, as its own environmental footprint is nearly one-third less (*Ria Novosti*, 15 May 2012). Russia is also one of the world's leading fishing nations, ranking fifth in 2010 in terms of volume in capture fisheries (FAO 2012). However, serious depletion

threatens these resources. According to expert estimates, without a sustainable forest management policy, Russian forests are likely to turn from net absorbers of carbon dioxide to net emitters by 2040, because of forest fires, the increasing age of the forests, the spread of tree pests and diseases, and harmful logging practices.¹ Also significant associated petroleum gas reserves have been lost by flaring them as a waste side-product. The 2009 legislation introduced restrictions on this practice, but implementation has been slow (see Kiryushin et al. 2013).

All in all, then, today's Russia has a significant role to play in global environmental and natural resource politics. This also motivates other countries and international actors, the EU in particular, to engage Russia in global environmental politics and to encourage it to take commitments that can facilitate the development of domestic environmental policy. The Russian Federation is a signatory to almost all major international environmental and natural resource agreements, and it participates, albeit not always very actively, in all main environmental policy processes underway at the global level (see Oldfield, et al. 2003; Jørgensen and Hønneland 2006). In addition, especially in the latter half of the 1980s and throughout the 1990s, Russia has been the focus of transnational efforts to promote environmental protection in the country.

Participation in global environmental processes is seldom motivated by environmental considerations alone (see Barkdull and Harris 2002). Nor are agreements exclusively about the environment: they also involve international relations, geopolitics, resource struggles, scientific debates, trade issues, domestic policy struggles, and the like. In his analysis of East–West environmental politics from the 1960s to the 1990s, Robert Darst (2001) notes that both sides often used environmental cooperation to create an image of cooperativeness and to facilitate collaboration in non-environmental issues as well. For example, it is widely accepted that, when the Soviet Union played a leading role in establishing the Long-Range Transboundary Air Pollution regime in the late 1970s, it was motivated largely by the desire to stand out as cooperative and pro-active in international environmental politics in general (see also Hønneland and Jørgensen 2003). Regardless of the concessions required, also the ratification of the Kyoto Protocol was seen by the Russian side as an image-building exercise; this ratification is still often referred to as ‘a political decision’ (see Korppoo et al. 2006, p. 23). The foreign policy and diplomacy traditions of participating states inevitably define their mode of negotiation in international environmental politics. Moreover, as suggested by the metaphor of a two-level game (see below), international and domestic policy goals mutually constitute the state's position *vis-à-vis* the international regime. Accordingly, state involvement in international

environmental regimes is not simply a matter of strictly environmental concerns.

This is precisely where we put the spotlight in this book: what is involved in Russia's interfaces with other states within the framework of international environmental politics today? Our working hypothesis is that these are not merely 'environmental encounters', but reflections of more general foreign and domestic policies on the part of Russia, and are sometimes also seen as useful 'platforms' for image-building and benefit-seeking, and not primarily the promotion of specific environmental goals.

AIM OF THE STUDY

In this book we analyse Russia's participation in international environmental regimes² by delving into Russian discourses concerning the issues raised by such regimes, and how regime provisions are adopted at the domestic level. We ask:

- What kinds of policy issues arise in the interfaces between international relations and Russian domestic politics in these specific fields?
- What are the motivations behind Russian policy positions?
- How well do Russia's international negotiation positions correspond with its domestic discourses?

We examine examples of international environmental cooperation in three highly topical fields: *climate policy*, *water protection* and *fisheries management*.

This choice of cases may provide stronger evidence of repeating patterns between environmental fields than, for instance, focusing solely on UN-level negotiations, because it may reveal practices that are more deeply rooted than for instance diplomatic training or strategic planning in Russia's various governance bodies. As fields of environmental cooperation, these three cases represent different kinds of cases in terms of coverage. Whereas the climate change regime is negotiated multilaterally under the global umbrella of the UN, the water protection case presented here comes from regional cooperation among the countries with access to the Baltic Sea, and the fisheries management case is an example of bilateral negotiations between Russia and Norway.

Russia has participated in global climate policy-making since the field was recognized as globally important in the late 1980s. Soviet scientists were actually among the first to discuss the phenomenon as a problem,³

but the Western governments were able to dedicate more money for research after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Under the climate convention, the newly established Russia had to take a more marginal role at first, and was granted significant concessions (surplus allowances) as a reaction to the negative effects of the economic transition very much supported by the West. Russia turned from a bystander into an active market promoter after the Kyoto Protocol introduced the Kyoto flexible mechanisms, which opened the possibility of Russia selling its surplus emitting allowances to other governments. But the US withdrawal from the Kyoto pact led to a dramatic decline in demand, disappointing many Russian stakeholders.

Cooperation on the protection of the Baltic Sea environment started back in the early 1970s, and the 1974 Helsinki Convention on the protection of the marine environment of the Baltic Sea area was joined also by the Soviet Union. Encompassing all the coastal states of the sea, the regime has since then issued policy recommendations on environmental protection and guided various scientific activities. Primarily, however, the regime has served as a diplomatic venue between 'East' and 'West', as the Baltic Sea lies on the Cold War dividing line between these two.

And, turning to the third main field of study here, the Barents Sea fisheries management regime was established in the mid-1970s between Norway and the Soviet Union, as a result of major changes in the law of the sea at the time. Coastal states were given the right to manage fisheries in economic zones up to 200 nautical miles from the shore. The two countries immediately agreed to split the major fish stocks in the Barents Sea – including the world's largest cod stock. This cooperation has later been expanded to include coordination in a wide range of fisheries management tasks, including enforcement and technical regulations like mesh size.

We analyse storylines and discourses that characterize Russian participation in the three international environmental regimes, as well as in politics at the domestic level. We have chosen discourse analysis because it takes the explanation beyond mere reference to interests, and allows a focus on how interests unfold in the context of specific socio-historical discourses and institutional practices. It also provides conceptual tools for analysing controversies in their wider political context. Thus, the focus on discourses helps to bring out the motivations behind policy positions. By examining domestic discourse we may learn more about the internal *hinterland* that foreign policy decision-makers *might* take into account. If domestic discourse on a topic within international environmental politics centres on non-environmental factors (for example, economic benefits rather than emissions reductions), *and* that is also the case with Russia's stance in the international regime, then we might plausibly expect a link between domestic discourse and international practice. Our study thus

provides flesh to the bones of the discussion on why Russia acts as it does in international environmental politics.

In explaining why Russia acts as it does we lean on the literature on the intersection of comparative politics and international relations (IR) which emphasizes the interactive relationship between domestic and foreign policies in explaining a state's approach to international policy-making (see Rosenau 1969; Krasner 1978; Putnam 1988). This relationship is bound to shift over time, so the relative weights of international and domestic factors will vary. The metaphor of a two-level game, introduced by Robert Putnam, sees the politics of international policy-making as a game in which domestic groups pursue their interests by pressuring the government to adopt favourable policies, while governments seek to satisfy these pressures and simultaneously minimize the adverse consequences of developments abroad (Putnam 1988, p.434). The metaphor thus suggests that domestic and international goals are often entangled, forming 'synergistic issue linkages', and that international and domestic politics are mutually constitutive of each other.

Laura Henry and Lisa McIntosh Sundstrom (2012, p. 1317) argue that in contexts like that of Russia, where meaningfully democratic political institutions are lacking, approaches to international policy-making are more influenced by the executive leader's framing of national interest than by tough domestic bargaining. As Putnam's model entails analysing the bargaining processes in detail, we do not apply it as such here; however, in the discussion part of this book, we use the metaphor to reflect the discourses identified in the cases *vis-à-vis* the wider agendas of the domestic and foreign policy levels. This is to show how the motivations behind Russia's conduct in international environmental regimes are based on the larger agendas of these policy levels, rather than on environmental concern as such.

The overarching goal of our analysis is to contribute to the understanding of Russia's conduct in international environmental regimes. This is important not only because of the specific importance of Russia as regards global ecological systems, but also because of the acknowledged need to complement international environmental policy analysis by studies that are sensitive to diverse systems of environmental management and governance across the post-socialist region (see Oldfield 2005, p. 16). Our study is intended contribute to the understanding of the dynamics of Russia's environmental policy-making at large: not only will it tell something about changes that international environmental regimes trigger in Russia and the limitations set by various domestic economic and political dynamics – it can also help other parties to see more deeply behind the Russian position, which may at times seem obscure. In turn, this should facilitate interpreting Russian positions in future negotiations.

METHODOLOGY: ENVIRONMENTAL DISCOURSE

Our research material builds on the study of public documents, numerous interviews and (partly participant) observation. The empirical material is explained in detail in the case studies; the empirical information and insights presented here are based on the authors' 15-plus years of experience in the subject matter; and specific material for the case studies has come from various research projects in which the authors have been involved over the years. It is against this backdrop that we map Russian discourses and practices regarding its involvement in international environmental regimes.

Although the term 'discourse' is employed in widely varying ways in the social sciences, the modern concept of *discourse analysis* generally refers to a type of research activity carried out from a post-modernist viewpoint, aimed at revealing the influence of language on human behaviour and society. Along with other theories in the post-positivist tradition, discourse analysis aims at explaining how actors' interests are formed, whereas theories in the realist and institutionalist traditions take actors' interests largely for granted (see, for example, Jørgensen 2010).

What, then, is a *discourse* – a word that in everyday speech is used to refer to a discussion or a conversation?²⁴ In his textbook on discourse analysis, Neumann (2001, p.17) lists various definitions of the term, ranging from '*a process* reflecting a distribution of knowledge, authority, and social relationships, which propels those enrolled in it' (see Barth 1993), and '*a system* for the formation of statements' (see Bartelson 1995), to '*practices* that systematically form the objects of which they speak' (see Foucault 1972) (emphasis added). We may add to this list definitions that present a discourse as '*a shared way of apprehending the world*' (Dryzek 1997, p.8, emphasis added) and '*a specific ensemble of ideas, concepts, and categorizations* that are produced, reproduced, and transformed in a particular set of practices and through which meaning is given to physical and social realities' (Hajer 1995, p.44, emphasis added). However, more important than this sizeable divergence in categorizing discourse as a source or reflection of something is the conception of what this 'something' contains and what its effects are. Discourses are generally seen as producing or reflecting specific ideas, concepts or statements. These, in turn, are held to affect those who produce (or reflect) them or their context. Hence, discourse is 'something' that affects the way 'someone' conceives of and talks about 'something'. The challenge lies in identifying that social 'something' which brings forth, affirms and preserves specific modes of understanding, and revealing *how our understanding of the world is created, maintained and reproduced*.

We draw on the approach to environmental discourse offered by Hajer (1995). According to Hajer, actors can make sense of the world only by drawing on the terms of the discourses available to them. Hence, persons are *constituted* by discursive practices. Hajer further contends that change and permanence alike are caused by social practices, ascribing both to ‘active discursive reproduction or transformation’ (1995, p. 56). He takes up Davies and Harré’s (1990) concept of *storylines* as a main mechanism in this respect, defining the concept as ‘a generative sort of narrative that allows actors to draw upon various discursive categories to give meaning to specific physical or social phenomena’ (Hajer 1995, p. 56). A storyline captures certain aspects of a problem complex in a simple and understandable manner. The argument is that people draw on such simplified representations of ‘reality’ rather than complex systems of knowledge in creating a cognitive comprehension of a subject matter. Storylines play a key role in positioning subjects in a discourse. They re-order people’s understandings of problems and can thereby cause political change. Therefore, finding the appropriate storyline becomes an important mechanism of political agency. Once a storyline has been established in a discourse, it settles in as ‘the way we talk around here’. Even when the objective is to challenge a dominant storyline, people can be expected to position themselves in terms of known categories, expressing themselves within the same discursive frame. And so, society is reproduced in a process of interaction between active agents and constraining structures – a process that constantly re-invents the social order.

In line with the example given by Hajer, we approach the discourses through storylines in order to distinguish the orientations of different actors in different domestic discussions on Russia’s participation in international environmental regimes. This methodology enables us to analyse how various interests are constituted and play out in the context of specific socio-historical discourses. It also provides conceptual tools for analysing controversies over various issues in their wider political context. Thus, the focus on discourses helps to indicate the motivations behind policy positions, and to recognize also the ‘non-environmental’ side of the story.

STRUCTURE OF THIS VOLUME

In Chapter 2, we begin by situating our approach within the wider context of international environmental politics, followed by an overview of major trends in international environmental politics of recent decades. Then we introduce the Russian system of environmental governance, and examine its evolution since the Russian Federation was established as the successor-state to the Soviet Union in 1992. In addition to the

environmental bureaucracy, there are various other powerful institutional structures and actors that are pivotal in determining Russia's conduct in international environmental regimes. We also provide a brief introduction to Russian foreign policy, pointing out how certain cleavages have dominated the Russian foreign policy debate for nearly two centuries, and outlining the basic approaches that define Russia's external relations in the environmental sector as well.

The two introductory chapters are followed by three chapters focusing on the three case studies outlined above: on climate politics, on water protection and on fisheries management. Each of these chapters starts by outlining the problem at hand and the international regime that has been established to handle it. Then we go on to map the general Russian discourse surrounding the issue, before presenting the Russian stance taken in the international regime. We also provide a description of how the issue is dealt with in domestic Russian politics, in order to situate the national discourse and Russian international-level practice in a broader context. On that basis, in Chapter 6 we discuss the extent to which Russia's participation in the international regimes is indeed a reflection of *environmental* encounters with other states – or whether it is more an expression of broader Russian foreign and domestic policy concerns, and what kind of concerns. This question is debated on a broader scale in the concluding chapter.

NOTES

1. See Angelina Davydova (2013), 'Russia's silence on climate change helps no one', *The Conversation*, 25 November, available at: <http://theconversation.com/russias-silence-on-climate-change-helps-no-one-20661> (accessed 31 March 2014).
2. The terms 'agreement', 'arrangement' and 'regime' are used interchangeably in this book. For all practical purposes, we will be dealing with one specific international agreement, or more commonly a set of interrelated agreements, and the related institutional setting, such as conferences, panels, commissions and secretariats.
3. Soviet scientists were very active in authoring the first key reports of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (1990, 1992). See also Budyko and Izrael (1987).
4. This and the following discussion draw on Hønneland (2003).