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A chi mi ha accolto, con fiori, al mio ritorno

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INTRODUCTION

Today – and even more tomorrow – climate change is the world's greatest challenge. It is a complex and unprecedented problem that calls for effective governance, alignment of domestic and international strategies, and comprehensive global cooperation. Moreover, it is unjust, since it mostly affects those who less contributed to its emergence, and it is multidimensional, since it affects many other societal fields such as human rights, health, security, and migration. As we know, the environment is severely threatened by climate change in many different ways. The proliferation of GHGs in the atmosphere is directly connected to an increase in Earth's surface temperature that is contributing to extreme weather events, which are occurring more and more frequently. The cryosphere melts, the oceans are hotter, broader and more acidic, and the weather is more extreme. As a result, Earth is becoming inhospitable to many species, including humans. Climate change is damaging not only our ecosystems but also our society. Indeed, distributional conflicts and growing inequalities have surged. Although climate change has already caused impressive costs and significant harm to both natural and human environments, international institutions are failing to provide urgent and effective answers. In the light of this, a new form of governance could emerge from the future planetary state of emergency induced by climate change.

How could climate change allow China to become a legitimate planetary sovereign? The aim of this thesis is to explore the real chances of China to become a Climate Leviathan. This thesis runs on two parallel trajectories that meet at a fundamental intersection. On the one hand, political philosophy from Hobbes's sovereignty to Mann and Wainwright's new theories is called on in order to understand the legitimacy of (planetary) sovereignty and states of emergency. On which grounds does authoritarian theory draws its legitimacy when particularly risky phenomena – such as climate change – are in place? On the other hand, since China is presented as a potential future planetary sovereign because of its authoritarian environmentalism, a precise image of the country's

meritocratic system of governance based on Bell's China model is pursued. The first critique lies within the very concept of authoritarian planetary sovereignty, the second critique is based on China's conflicting global image, divided between a stereotype and a multifaceted reality. At the intersection, then, we find the theory and the reality of a new speculation on the future of climate change governance, a proposal which tries to give a real image of China as a potential global Leviathan: the Climate Leviathan with Chinese Characteristics, defined by its ability to protect, effectiveness and rapidity, meritocracy and expertise, and democratic forms of non-confrontational participation. In order to investigate the research question, this thesis used a combination of primary and secondary sources. Examples of the former are policy papers, international agreements, statistical data, and scientific publications; examples of the latter are journal articles, official reports, research publications, and academic books. This thesis is composed of four chapters, each of them dealing with different levels of reasoning.

Chapter one examines the environmental and political challenges posed by climate change, and how these challenges have contributed to the creation and development of the 'politics of adaptation'. Today, it is clear that the future we are building with our lifestyle is frightening. Indeed, the severe alteration of the environment as a result of human activities is leading the Earth to extreme conditions and unprecedented risks. The deep mark that human life is leaving on the planet, which is likely to cause lasting consequences for millions of years, is the outcome of accidental and countless processes of transformation that lead to the disruption of the planet. Indeed, the degree and speed of climate change are determined by both the impact of the growth and distribution of the world's population, and the impact of countries' energy choices and the associated growth of GHGs in the atmosphere. In order to find a strategic response to tackle the challenges of climate change, over the last decades, the Anthropocene has seen the gradual cooperation of international actors. Through the history of climate negotiations, we have pursued a mitigation strategy that has brought different actors from all over the world together to meet this common challenge by ratifying a number of international agreements. Climate negotiations have begun quite successfully but then progressively failed to address the challenge of climate change governance. From the 1992 United Nations Framework

Convention on Climate Change then confirmed with the 1997 Kyoto Protocol, to the 2015 (in)famous Paris Agreement and the recently lost opportunities, the international order has gone through a process of diplomacy, leadership, and, at last, debacle. In particular, the universal and legally binding Paris Agreement was considered a landmark in climate diplomacy as it required all ratifying members to set targets for emissions reduction. However, it was a landmark in international climate law, but it was a failure from the point of view of climate action. With the evolution of events, the international order has gradually abandoned the mitigation approach to pursue an adaptation approach, which, however, has proved to be unsuccessful as well and led to the flaking of climate change governance and multilateralism. Yet, the need to reduce global warming through drastic, rapid, and extensive changes in all facets of society is urgent, and, without an equally urgent and globally-coordinated response, all possible actions to tackle climate change will be diluted and lost. However, in the last decade, climate change governance has become more and more unstructured as climate change grew more and more systemic. The actors involved do recognize that in order to address the issue, they need to fundamentally redefine their lifestyle. Nevertheless, governments are reticent to follow this path because of conflicting priorities with other interests. Yet, although the international response to increasingly pressing environmental challenges has proved to be ineffective in substance, the collapse of the present institutions has the merit to emphasize the structural and political limitations of the current order. Today, it is clear that with the intensification of climate change, governments around the world will be increasingly overwhelmed by the intensity and the scale of such change, and they will not be able to address these challenges and the resulting ones, such as pandemics and violent conflicts. In the light of this, climate change and the related international negotiations have somehow led to a breaking point in the global political order through the politics of adaptation. Yet, it is important to note that these phenomena are not recent. Indeed, the existing political conditions are just exacerbated by climate change. Moreover, the challenges we are now facing with the politics of adaptation are not only causing the debacle of the institutional framework, but first and foremost, they are leading to a transition to a new form of global governance through the adaptation of the politics. The chapter consists of two parts. Part one describes the current state and the future prospects of

climate change by investigating the role of human activity in causing and aggravating the problem. It is based on scientific reports and shows potential future scenarios for the planet. Part two focuses on the political response to the threats of climate change by illustrating the history of international negotiations from initial optimism to the current debacle of multilateralism and its institutions.

Chapter two discusses the process of adaptation of politics generated by ineffective climate change governance. What does it mean to adapt? In biological terms, it is a process of natural selection that guarantees the survival of the fittest. In sociological terms, adaptation brings about functionalism. Today, because of an increasing functionalistic approach to society and its crises, there is an ongoing process of depoliticization of political responses to critical societal problems. Pandemics, economic recessions, wars, and so forth, all share a common process of normalization of emergencies. As a world crisis and state of emergency, the COVID-19 pandemic allowed us to witness a real-time global-scale test of how governments and citizens react to states of emergency. People all around the world have been asked to sacrifice some of their liberties, such as the freedom of movement, to tame the spread of COVID-19. Despite the clear reasoning, these sacrifices have been strongly criticized by some citizens for several reasons. Indeed, the COVID-19 pandemic is bringing to the fore the constraints of the individualist Western culture. Moreover, it is clearly exposing the ability of single governments and international institutions to respond to mass states of emergency. We can measure the effectiveness, the ability, and the legitimacy of our leaders, governments, and social contracts and evaluate a reformation. Indeed, sometimes, it is an external shock that breaks the political order and provides an opportunity for a structural reform. In the light of this, the functional adaptation of society is redesigning nation-state sovereignty into a new form of planetary sovereignty, which will take charge of the greatest state of emergency we have ever known, that is climate change. Indeed, climate change implications will be incredibly long-lasting to such an extent that it is likely that the relative state of emergency will be permanent. In this context, to not surrender to the unavoidable consequences of the Anthropocene, countries will have to cooperate efficiently. However, multilateralism is once again proving ineffective in the face of this kind of extraordinary events. The global political order is thus undergoing a process of adaptation into a new form and idea of sovereignty,

which is planetary sovereignty. Indeed, a world governance is undoubtedly an option when nation states alone encounter insurmountable problems in dealing with severe crises. Moreover, when those crises concern the fate of the whole planet and the state of emergency appears to be inevitable, world governance becomes even more plausible. In the contemporary age, Immanuel Kant, G.W.F. Hegel, and, more recently, other thinkers such as Hannah Arendt, Albert Einstein, Bertrand Russell, Alexander Wendt, and Nick Bostrom further addressed the issue. A fundamental problem of sovereignty in a world governance arises over who has the authority to declare the state of emergency. It is the self-conferral of power and duty to save the Earth that will give rise to a Leviathan in Hobbesian and Schmittian terms, which will make general interests coincide with its own interests. In this sense, China would undoubtedly be a good Leviathan. However, we should understand why and how a stereotypes-free Chinese Leviathan could be legitimate. The pressing consequences of climate change first led to a transformation in politics in the form of climate diplomacy and leadership. Nevertheless, the debacle of mitigation policies and the deficiency of adaptation policies – or rather, adaptation policies which do not selectively favor elites – will generate a transformation of politics in which a new sovereign world government, legitimated by a permanent state of emergency due to climate change, will emerge. The chapter consists of three parts. Part one focuses on the state of emergency, an analysis which is supported by the current example of the COVID-19 pandemic and how this crisis is addressed through the implementation of states of emergency all over the world. Part two investigates the concepts of sovereignty and legitimacy. Based on Hobbes's Leviathan and many other thinkers' opinions, it discusses these topics and extends them to a planetary form that would lead to a potential world government with relative merits and defects. Politics, economics, and technology play a major role in determining the legitimate emergence of the planetary sovereign. Part three presents two potential outcomes resulting from the process of adaptation of politics: the Climate Leviathan and the Climate Mao. The proposals are debated in order to identify their strengths and weaknesses. In particular, structural shortcomings are thoroughly analyzed.

Chapter three intends to propose a more precise image of the identity of China in order to better understand a potential Climate Leviathan shaped on the

China model. In order to formulate a thorough proposal of a Chinese Climate Leviathan, it is essential to understand the Chinese model of governance. The current crisis of governance in the West has shown democracy's weaknesses and it has created room for a political debate on the quality of present institutions. On the contrary, political meritocracy is favored from a merit that the democratic rule cannot grant: it ensures that leaders are selected on the basis of expertise and morality. However, it is deemed that the institutionalization of a system of promotion of individuals based on their merits would lead to the legitimization of elites' position. Moreover, political meritocracy could be vitiated by significant limitations as well, which could undermine its very reason for existence. First and foremost, the problem of gaining legitimacy in the eyes of the people without allowing them to engage in politics, at least to a certain degree. The Chinese government has managed to solve this issue while pursuing a non-democratic rule. Indeed, meritocracy in China has mainly had the merit of an outstanding result: CPC's leaders have led the country out of poverty in the last thirty years. However, in the long run, the problem of political meritocracy's legitimization can only be resolved by introducing democratic elements and finding a way to let them coexist. But how? Paradoxically, the Chinese approve democracy but support non-democratic rule. Indeed, the Chinese understanding of democracy lies its foundations on the concept of guardianship. On this ground, Bell's China model relies on three pillars: at the bottom of the political structure there is democracy, in the middle there is experimentation, and at the top there is meritocracy. Indeed, in a vast, complex, and stratified country such as China, different criteria for the meritocratic and democratic identification of leaders at different levels of government seem appropriate. However, the image of China as an authoritarian country grounded on coercion is difficult to soften when criticism of the regime is still suppressed. Indeed, the stereotype projects an image of China as a country with an oppressive regime and no opposition, which somehow would correspond to a Western democratic country in a state of emergency. Individual freedoms and rights are put aside to make way for top-down governance. This is partially true, but China offers many other fundamental facets to be taken into consideration, and a distorted image of China should be avoided not to invalidate the country's chances to become a Climate Leviathan. Indeed, China could be a very plausible local model of governance for a global-

scale governance of climate change. Therefore, it is important to understand its real characteristics and the viability of extending/exporting such a model. Moreover, the dominant democratic rule could be overturned by the intensification of climate change and the emergence of the Leviathan through a global state of emergency. Since effective policy implementation is crucial for environmental governance, authoritarian environmentalism helps China in improving its international image thanks to rapid and comprehensive responses to climate change challenges. Indeed, China is an excellent example of the effectiveness and celerity of this top-down management. However, it presents a number of potential weaknesses, especially concerning the effects of the constraints on public participation and civil society. Although those limitations allow the eco-elites to deliver top-down and effective responses, they also prevented the development of widespread public interest and awareness on climate change. The chapter consists of two parts. Part one discusses the China model, based on Bell's conceptual understanding of the country in terms of political meritocracy. Political meritocracy is presented as an effective model of governance in managing a vast, complex and stratified country as China, a model whose results cannot be equaled by democratic rule, especially in critical circumstances. Yet it is undermined by some structural limitations which could be slackened with the introduction of some democratic elements. Part two analyzes authoritarian environmentalism, a model of environmental governance based on expertise and eco-elites, to better understand how political meritocracy could coincide with a Western-style state of emergency.

Chapter four focuses on China as a real-time changing environment that is trying to improve its image as a legitimate authority. China has a terrible track record of pollution, which earned it a very bad international image. Moreover, it has a long history of oppression and human rights violation. On this ground, it is hard to imagine an international recognition of China as a popular leader, in spite of the potential benefits of its model. Paradoxically, it is currently positioned in the peculiar conjunction of being the world's largest coal consumer and renewable energy developer at the same time. Unsustainable economic development has brought a number of pressing environmental, safety, and health issues, which became unavoidable in the long run. On the other one hand, impressive environmental efforts have led China to become a pioneer in renewable energy.

The country's potential is developing at an astonishing speed, and China continues its relentless pursuit of power. Through inclusiveness, expertise, and ability for action, China is making real efforts to compensate the systemic gaps which make its model unsustainable for the rest of the world. In this sense, China is strengthening its international image to be considered a good Leviathan. Moreover, the source of legitimacy of the CPC has undergone a process of transformation that is leading to the emergence of a new super-value, that of sustainability. More space is given to a nascent civil society that finds is breeding ground in environmental activism, which represents not only a great opportunity to tackle climate change and mitigate its effects through mass cooperation, but also a significant stimulus for transforming the relationship between the State and the people of China. In recent years the central government has realized the importance and urgency of environmental activism as a matter of legitimacy, and the State has increasingly encouraged its citizens to get involved in public participation at local levels. Nevertheless, the central government still controls public participation, and a radical change is unlikely to happen when compared to a gradual and less threatening approach. In the light of this, it is important to understand how civil society is understood in China and how it contributes to changing the government's approach toward its citizens and their interests. In this sense, to recognize the space of civil society in China is to recognize whether civil society would have the same role in a planetary state of emergency. In a Climate Mao, based on coercion and oppression measures, no place for civil society would be allowed. The sovereign would be absolute and insulated from its subjects. Nevertheless, a Climate Mao relies on an obsolete image of China, an image that no longer corresponds to the identity of the country. A Climate Leviathan with Chinese Characteristics, instead, could be a more precise definition of China taking up its role as a planetary sovereign. Just as authoritarian environmentalism fell into the paradox of responsiveness, just as the central government was forced to accept an increasingly extensive role of civil society in order to maintain its legitimacy, then the revolutionary, non-capitalist, and violent Climate Mao, which accepts no opposition, could be replaced by a Climate Leviathan with Chinese Characteristics based on the China model of responsive authoritarian environmentalism. In this sense, the planetary sovereign would still be a Leviathan in Hobbesian terms, but it would be meritocracy – not the

economic model nor the use of unconstrained coercion – to make China a viable Leviathan. The chapter consists of three parts. Part one describes the Chinese nascent civil society and its mutual influence on both environmentalism and governance. Part two identifies the new environmental portfolio of China which is earning the country a position of leadership as a global green pioneer; it also illustrates CPC's history of legitimacy and how Chinese citizens are changing the rules of the game of legitimacy pushing its sources toward new super-values, from Maoism back to Confucianism and from prosperity toward sustainability. Part three brings forward the proposal of a new understanding of the Chinese Leviathan: from a Climate Mao to a Climate Leviathan with Chinese Characteristics. Conclusions are drawn in the last section.

1. THE POLITICS OF ADAPTATION

The fundamental issue of our time is climate change, whose impact is global in scale and unprecedented in nature. According to the United Nations, climate change "is attributed directly […] to human activity that alters the composition of the global atmosphere and which is in addition to natural climate variability observed over comparable time periods" (United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, 1992). Over the last century, the impact of humanity on the planet has grown to such an extent that the scientific community has coined the term 'Anthropocene' to identify the transition to an era in which the ecosystem is dominated by human actions (Crutzen & Stoermer, 2000). This alleged geological era is characterized by an ever-growing human population with ever-growing demands and needs, which are steadily depleting natural resources and generating enormous amounts of waste.

In particular, climate change has triggered damaging effects on both natural and human environments all over the world in the past few decades. It has exacerbated current environmental threats and created new ones, which are unevenly distributed and affect the most disadvantaged people, vulnerable groups, and developing countries. However, if the Anthropocene binds us together in defining human activities as the decisive force behind climate change, it is clear that different communities around the world experience and come to terms with climate change in different ways and with different responses.

Over the last decades, the Anthropocene has seen the gradual cooperation of international actors in order to find a strategic response to tackle the challenges of climate change. From the 1992 United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change then confirmed with the 1997 Kyoto Protocol, to the 2015 (in)famous Paris Agreement and the recently lost opportunities, the international order has gone through a process of diplomacy, leadership, and, at last, debacle. Although the international response to increasingly pressing environmental challenges has proved to be ineffective in substance, the collapse of the present institutions – which are the symbol par excellence of the

Anthropogenic approach of our society – has emphasized the structural and political limitations of the current order. In the light of this, how have climate change and the related international negotiations led to a breaking point in the global political order through the politics of adaptation?

This chapter examines the environmental and political challenges posed by climate change and how these challenges have contributed to the creation and development of the 'politics of adaptation'. The chapter consists of two parts. Part one describes the current state and the future prospects of climate change by investigating the role of human activity in causing and aggravating the problem. It is based on scientific reports and shows potential future scenarios for the planet. Part two focuses on the political response to the threats of climate change by illustrating the history of international negotiations from initial optimism to the current debacle of multilateralism and its institutions.

1.1. ENVIRONMENTAL CHALLENGES

Climate change poses alarming threats to the environment and to all living species on Earth. According to the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES), about 25 percent of animals and plants are at risk, meaning that 1 million species are currently facing the threat of extinction (The Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services, 2019). Although climate change is induced by human activities, humanity does not face brighter future prospects. In 2019, the National Centre for Climate Restoration of Australia issued a paper that claims that, by continuing along the current path, it is very likely to see the end of human civilization as we know it. In order to further investigate the problem, the report depicts a '2050 scenario' where we reach a total global warming of 3°C – a prediction which is far from being the most extreme. As a result, ecosystems such as coral reefs, the Amazon rainforest and the Arctic ice pack would collapse. In this scenario, some countries would face deadly heat conditions, whereas others would see a significant increase in extreme weather conditions. Food production and water availability would be insufficient to meet the needs of the global

population, and billions of people would be forced to migrate. In this context, governments around the world would be overwhelmed by the intensity and the scale of change, and they would not be able to address these challenges and the resulting ones, such as pandemics and violent conflicts. A nuclear war over resources would also be possible (National Centre for Climate Restoration, 2019).

The environment is severely threatened by climate change in many different ways. The cryosphere melts, the oceans are hotter, broader and more acidic, and the weather is more extreme. As a result, Earth is becoming inhospitable to many species, including humans. Climate change is damaging not only our ecosystems but also our society. For instance, it poses serious challenges for agriculture. Since the life-cycle of food is fundamentally dependent on climate patterns, farms may have great difficulty in coping with rapidly changing weather and extreme events, other than an increasing number of diseases and pests. Climate change affects our health as well. In already polluted areas, the warmer atmosphere increases the formation of smog, which causes respiratory diseases, and the warmer water is more likely to produce bacteria and thus be contaminated. Climate change is also a threat to critical infrastructures, energy systems, and buildings. It affects the way we work, travel, and live, and it makes us vulnerable. Climate change is pervasive, and it spreads throughout society. As human civilization reaches its peak in an era where knowledge and technology are immediately available to all, the planet, i.e. our habitat, is facing its greatest challenge. And so are we.

1.1.1. THE ANTHROPOCENE

From a geological point of view, we are currently living in the Holocene era, which began approximately 12.000 years ago with the end of the Last Glacial Period. Throughout this period, *Homo Sapiens* have proliferated, and human civilization has gradually evolved into its present form. Because of the tremendous impact of human activity on Earth, some scientists have suggested that a new geological era has begun, the Anthropocene (Crutzen & Stoermer, 2000). The proposal to introduce this new era of natural history in terms of

scientific classification is still under discussion, as scientists consider 12.000 years as a matter of seconds in geological terms. However, the academic community agrees on the deep mark that human life is leaving on the planet, which is likely to cause lasting consequences for millions of years. Such effects include ecosystems destruction, species extinction, ocean acidification, hydrological cycles and land sedimentation variations, soil erosion, and an extremely high concentration of greenhouse gasses (GHGs) in the atmosphere due to the heavy use of fossil fuels – which is the most prominent cause of climate change (Di Paola & Jamieson, 2016). In the light of this scientific debate, it is clear that the severe alteration of the environment as a result of human activities is leading the Earth to extreme conditions and unprecedented risks.

However, the Anthropocene has seen a collective enhancement of the human condition as well. Starting with the Industrial Revolution and reaching a point of no return with the Great Acceleration of the 1950s, considered by many scholars to be the potential beginning – or 'golden spike' – of the new era (Steffen, Crutzen, & McNeill, 2007), the standards of living have greatly improved, and an increasing number of people have been given access to food, resources, healthcare, goods, services, information, and technology. Nevertheless, distributional conflicts and growing inequalities have surged as well, and today an alarming number of people still do not benefit from these improved conditions: 10 percent of the global population survive on less than $1.90 a day, and for the first time since the 1990s, the projections suggest that between 40 million and 60 million people will suffer from extreme poverty as a result of the COVID-19 crisis (World Bank, 2020). In spite of the progress made by the globalization phenomenon, there is still a long way to go before we achieve global well-being, and this tremendous effort will be aggravated by the impact of climate change, the most prominent feature and the most significant risk of the Anthropocene.

In a world that has become "globalized, technologized, and production- and consumption-driven" (Di Paola, 2018), the collateral consequences of unconstrained human proliferation and development are detrimental, among others, to humanity itself and, in particular, to its most vulnerable members: the poor, the children, and future generations. These consequences entail first-level issues such as extreme weather events, pandemics, water and food shortages, but also second- and third-level issues such as political instability and mass

migration. It is therefore clear that the Anthropocene is not the era of human mastery over nature, it is not the era of unending growth and universal well-being. The Anthropocene is the outcome of accidental and countless processes of transformation that lead to the disruption of the planet. As a whole, humanity is taking part in this transformation, even though it is not always easy to establish a causal relationship between our actions and their environmental consequences. There are, on the one hand, direct effects that are clearly linked to environmental degradation. For instance, the massive use of fossil fuels which severely increases the amount of CO_2 in the atmosphere. However, even in the realm of direct cause-effect connections, it is not possible to identify a single company or one country as 'The Polluters' and hold them accountable for the spatiotemporally vast phenomenon of climate change. On the other hand, our actions are part of a broader and systemic set of actions that are not directly connected to environmental degradation, but which contribute to its worsening. The businesses that we make, the technology that we employ, the infrastructures that we use, and the goods that we consume may not directly affect the environment or even be 'green', but they are made, employed, used, and consumed in a life-cycle which, at least at one point in its life, contributes to the problem. In the light of this, it is clear that the current system on which human civilization lies its foundations is damaging to the environment and needs to be fundamentally revised.

1.1.2. CLIMATE CHANGE

The presence of greenhouse gasses in the atmosphere has reached an unprecedented peak in recent decades. For instance, the atmospheric concentration of carbon dioxide (CO_2) has increased by an average 1.84 ppm per year over the last 40 years and it is accelerating, with growth rates rising to 2.4 ppm per year over the last decade. The annual increase in CO_2 from 1 January 2019 to 1 January 2020 was 2.64 ± 0.08 ppm, which is slightly higher than the 2009-2019 average, but much higher than the past two decades (NOAA/ESRL, 2020). The proliferation of GHGs in the atmosphere is directly connected to an

increase in Earth's surface temperature, which has already risen by 0.9°C from 1850 to 2000 and is predicted to increase by at least another 1.5°C in the current century (Levy & Patz, 2018). Recent data show that the five warmest years from 1880 to 2019 have fallen since 2015, and 2019 was the second-warmest year on record with an average temperature increase of 0.95°C (NOAA Climate, 2020). The increase in temperature has also affected the ocean, which is the largest collector of solar energy on the planet and contributes to the mitigation of the global temperature by absorbing heat. However, the spread of GHGs prevents the heat of the planet from being expelled into space as before climate change, and the resulting excess of atmospheric heat is returned to the ocean, making it unable to carry out its function. As a result, the ocean heat rate varies from 0.57 to 0.81 watts per square meter in the years 1993-2018; a concerning data since, when compounded by the ocean's surface area of more than 360 million square kilometers, it represents an impressive energy imbalance. Moreover, the heat trapped in the ocean will eventually be discharged, leading the planet to further warming (NOAA Climate, 2020).

In addition, the increase in temperature is contributing to extreme weather events, which are occurring more and more frequently. Depending on the area, precipitations have dropped or increased significantly, causing droughts and floods respectively. The sea level has risen dramatically over the last century, reaching 24 centimeters as of today. Since the 20th century, it accelerated and almost doubled, increasing the probability of flooding of 300 to 900 percent. Going down this road, the average sea-level rise could reach 30 centimeters by 2065 and 63 centimeters by 2100 (NOAA Climate, 2019). The expansion of the ocean is related to the warming of the sea and the melting of the ice. For instance, 2019 was the second warmest year on record in the Arctic, with the region losing about 40 percent of its ice at the end of summer since 1979. Climate scientists have found no evidence of any improvement over this period, as all 13 of the lowest ice extent measurements have occurred in the last 13 years (NOAA Climate, 2019).

The future we are building with our lifestyle is frightening. Climate scientists predict that the average temperature of the Earth is likely to be between 1.1 and 5.4°C warmer by 2100 because of GHGs produced by human activity. Since the primary source of GHGs is fossil fuel combustion, the energy choices

we make today will influence the level of warming of the future (NOAA Climate, 2012). The growth rate of the population is another incisive factor regarding the future of the climate. According to the United Nations, the world's population is predicted to increase from 7.7 billion today to 9.7 billion by 2050 and 10.9 billion by 2100. Such a growth rate means accelerating the consumption of resources and the generation of waste, and thus challenging sustainable development. Moreover, the 47 least developed countries of the world are among the fastest-growing countries, which are already aggravated by constrained availability of resources and high vulnerability to the consequences of climate change (United Nations, 2019). In the light of this, both the impact of the growth and distribution of the world's population and the impact of countries' energy choices and the associated growth of GHGs in the atmosphere will determine the degree and speed of climate change. In the best-case scenario, which assumes that humanity will shift toward more sustainable choices, particularly in the energy field, CO_2 is predicted to grow from the current level of about 9 billion metric tons per year to about 12 billion tons per year in 2040, and then progressively fall to 5 billion metric tons per year – the levels recorded in the 1990s – by 2100. In the worst-case scenario – or the business-as-usual scenario – which assumes that we carry on with the current trend in compliance with our global economy requirements, CO_2 gradually increases from the current level to about 28 billion tons per year by 2100 (NOAA Climate, 2012).

In 2018, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) released a special report on "the impacts of global warming of 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels and related global greenhouse gas emission pathways" (The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, 2018) highlighting the urgent need of reducing global warming through drastic, rapid, and extensive changes in all facets of society, such as land, energy, industry, buildings, transport, and cities. Whereas previous studies focused on calculating damage if temperatures were to increase by 2°C, this report indicates that a large part of the negative impacts of climate change would start at the 1.5°C level. Technically, climate change can still be addressed and mitigated: reducing global warming to 1.5°C rather than 2°C would avoid a number of serious threats. For instance, by 2100, with global warming of 1.5°C compared to 2°C, the sea level rise would be 10 cm lower, the possibility of ice-free Arctic oceans in summer would be once per century rather

than at least once per decade, and coral reefs would deteriorate by 70-90 percent rather than more than 99 percent (The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, 2018). However, without an urgent and globally-coordinated response, all individual actions to tackle climate change would be diluted and lost. Then, human civilization, as the entire planet, would be irreversibly transformed.

1.2. POLITICAL CHALLENGES

According to paleoclimatologists, we have three options in terms of response to climate change: mitigation, adaptation, and suffering. Mitigation is a strategic approach that implies actively tackling the root causes of climate change by reducing their pace and severity. Adaptation is a reactive adjustment to the consequences of climate change which is implemented by reducing the adverse effects of climate change. Suffering is what is left: tolerating climate change by-products which cannot be avoided through mitigation and adaptation (Thompson, 2010). However, to consider suffering as an alternative option to mitigation and adaptation is misleading, since both strategies produce harm, especially with respect to vulnerable groups. Yet, mitigation and adaptation have been presented as antagonistic in terms of utilitarian calculus. Indeed, very often, it is the comparative costs emerging from choosing one over the other option that drives the response of policy-makers to climate change. In the light of this, which strategies are pursuing policy-makers and what results are we expecting from them? According to the IPCC, two future warming pathways are ahead of us. The mitigation scenario projects global temperatures to increase by 1.5°C by 2100 – to reiterate, we have already reached 1°C as of today. The adaptation scenario projects global temperatures to increase by 4.5°C by 2100 (The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, 2018). Today, however, we are experiencing a hybrid condition which combines both responses to climate change. On the one hand, through the history of climate negotiations, we have pursued a mitigation strategy that has brought different actors from all over the world together to meet this common challenge by ratifying a number of international agreements. On the other hand, these negotiations, despite having

been successful in establishing new institutional and political frameworks dedicated to the issue, have gradually proved ineffective in taking urgent and effective action since they were originally based on non-legally binding agreements, and they relied on lax targets and deadlines in the absence of enforcement mechanisms. Therefore, with the evolution of events, the international order has gradually abandoned the mitigation approach to pursue an adaptation approach, which, however, has proved to be unsuccessful as well and led to the flaking of climate change governance and multilateralism. As a result, in order to respond to increasingly severe environmental threats, today's hybrid approach promises both mitigation and adaptation strategies – although the latter prevails – but, in essence, it has revealed the insufficient ability of present institutions to implement either of the two.

1.2.1. CLIMATE DIPLOMACY: THE MITIGATION TREND

In 1988, climate change became a global topic to be discussed within established institutions through the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) formalized by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). This marked the beginning of the age of climate diplomacy, a new framework of international cooperation in which joint efforts were made in order to solve the twin challenges of development and environment protection. The first IPCC report was produced in 1990. It analyzed the impacts of climate change on a scientific basis and provided a common perspective on its political implications. The concerning level of GHGs in the atmosphere was addressed by the report, which suggested to decrease CO_2 by 60 percent in the following years (The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, 1990). Throughout these initial years, several actors got involved in environmental action, such as non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and ministries of the environment. Many coalitions were established, such as the Climate Action Network in 1989 and the International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives in 1990. On the other hand, the industry showed no interest in climate action and acted as a separate field of interest.

With climate diplomacy, the world was no longer fractured along the ideological line of West-East blocs, and a new emphasis was given to the disparities between the global North and South of the planet. Early statements indicated that developed and developing countries had a distinct role in determining climate change, which required differentiated responsibilities. Because of this understanding of the issue, political leadership came into play. This means that industrialized countries – which contributed more to the problem – were not considered as equally accountable as emerging economies, and thus they had to initiate action and bear costs, taking the lead in tackling climate change. In addition, developed countries had to assist developing countries by sharing their technology so that they could be involved as well in the reduction of emissions, although with different degrees and urgencies and in a non-legally binding manner. Therefore, political leadership implied a precautionary approach and targets to be met by developed countries. By 1990, every OECD country, with the exception of Turkey and the United States, established reduction or stabilization targets (Gupta, 2010). The consensus on the severity of the climate change problem led to a gradual political recognition of the issue. As a consequence, the international community gathered together to face the challenge, and new coalitions emerged. Moreover, with the 1990 fall of the Berlin Wall and the end of the Cold War, resources previously dedicated to military use were allocated to new development and environment projects, in compliance with the concept of the peace dividend and in line with a generic optimism due to the end of the conflict.

In 1992, this general sense of commitment culminated in the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), byname Earth Summit, in Rio de Janeiro. It was the largest gathering of heads of state in the world's history, and it led to the ratification of the first international agreements on climate change, such as the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) – which has been ratified by 197 countries as of 2019. With this non-legally binding agreement, which entered into force in 1994 and provided the groundwork for future agreements, countries committed to reducing GHG emissions, and the principle of Common But Differentiated Responsibilities (CBDR) was formalized. Nevertheless, because of pressure from the United States, no measurable targets or deadlines were settled for implementing the

Convention's goals. However, since the UNFCCC required the ratifying parties to meet periodically at the Conference of the Parties (COP), the ambiguous formulation of the Convention was discussed again in 1995 at COP1 in Berlin, where some countries advocated for legally binding commitments with respect to precise deadlines such as 2005, 2010, and 2020. Yet, despite the ratification of the Berlin Mandate, which established the foundation for the Kyoto Protocol, the United States still rejected the idea of a legally binding agreement and only agreed on strengthening general commitments. Therefore, the Berlin Mandate was criticized as a mere diplomatic compromise that was ineffective in promoting immediate action to solve an urgent problem such as climate change.

In 1996, the second IPCC report was issued, claiming that all of the evidence proved that human actions affected the global climate (The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, 1995). This conclusion ignited a controversial debate over climate equity and the costs arising from climate change (Gupta, 2010). Who should bear the burden? The Rio Declaration recognized the Polluter Pays Principle according to which those countries who have polluted more have to pay more in terms of costs and thus compensate for their behavior. This principle is based on historical responsibility and, as such, it has been criticized for raising intergenerational issues, given that the citizens of a major polluting country who are currently alive are not those who actually initiated pollution. Indeed, the direct polluters are unable to pay, since they are dead. Moreover, the consequences of climate-changing activities were unknown to many until the 1980s. Therefore, even if the first polluters were still alive, they could appeal to the common – and excusably – ignorance on climate change to justify their behavior, and thus should be exempted from paying (Caney, 2005). In spite of these controversies, the Polluter Pays Principle is still today the mainstream principle called upon in the international community, since it allows for a clear identification of a group of people whose actions have collectively caused climate change. In a context in which the fragmentation of responsibilities makes ensuring accountability and justice virtually impossible, this principle provided a feasible, although flawed, guideline for reaching climate agreements between developed and developing countries.

As stated before, the arena of climate diplomacy was divided into developed countries (Annex I) and developing countries (non-Annex I). The

former were considered the 'first world' and the latter the 'third world' as, after the end of the Cold War, the 'second world' dissolved and it was reallocated between the remaining alternatives. The fundamental differences between the first world and the third world were the contribution to GHG emissions and the per capita wealth. However, these divergences were not formally articulated. Moreover, because of the considerable financial problems of economies in transition, which previously abandoned the former Soviet Union in order to join the first world group, a third category was established: the Annex II. These countries were the richest developed countries, and only they were held responsible for providing aid to non-Annex I countries. Despite the differences, all countries got involved in the issue and sought a place at the negotiating table. On the one hand, because of the non-legally binding nature of the climate agreements and the absence of severe obligations, developed countries rapidly ratified the Convention and acted as leaders, rather than polluters, in spite of the Polluter Pays Principle. On the other hand, developing countries rapidly ratified the Convention as well since it brought important benefits and opportunities to them. First of all, the Convention allowed them to take part in the rule-making process. Secondly, it was an opportunity to both exert pressure on developed countries and respond to their negative reputation in the field of human rights violations and deforestation, although they also expressed fear of having their growth opportunities negatively affected by the Convention itself (Gupta, 1997).

The UNFCCC reached important results as it created an unprecedented organizational structure that ensured continuous processes of negotiation. In addition, it initiated a process that encouraged all ratifying parties to gradually develop mitigation strategies. Lastly, it brought innovation to the law-making process because countries adopted the Convention before it formally entered into force without waiting for the approval (Gupta, 2010). On the other hand, the Convention still had significant flaws. First of all, developed countries' willingness to reduce their own pollution was crucial. Although the majority of OECD countries – with the exception of the United States and Turkey – formulated national environmental targets before the 1990s, the goal of stabilizing GHG emissions was poorly formulated and inconsistent with pre-1990 expectations. Secondly, the sections concerning assistance and technology support were particularly open to interpretation. Lastly, there were no specific guidelines on the

categorization of countries' statuses, and this caused substantial setbacks since countries generally resisted the re-allocation of their statuses, especially when they had to be included in the Annex I category (Gupta, 2006).

Although these initial years of climate diplomacy provided an unprecedented framework for cooperation and a model for leadership, the premises were more rhetorical than tangible. As stated before, developed countries' targets were lax and developing countries' targets depended on the former assistance for a greater participation in climate action. Moreover, the latter interpreted the financial aid ratified in the Convention as an additional contribution to the already existing aid of 0.7 percent of GNP which was provided for improving development (United Nations Development Programme, 2007). Nevertheless, both development and climate resources fell short of their expectations. In addition, although the General Assembly was in charge of climate change issues rather than the lower bodies of the United Nations, the matter was still perceived as pertaining to environmental, economic, and technological fields (Gupta, 1997). Indeed, in compliance with the global North position, climate change was not seen as a social, and thus political issue. However, the ground for the climate change leadership model was prepared, and the operational approach was globally accepted and implemented.

1.2.2. CLIMATE LEADERSHIP: THE ADAPTATION TREND

By 1997 the post-Cold War optimism vanished in the face of the fact that economic growth was inevitably linked to pollution. Moreover, doubts about the temporary exempt from substantive climate action with respect to major developing countries were expressed. During the year, the United States passed the Byrd-Hagel Resolution through which they refused to limit or reduce their GHG emissions until and unless those targets were applied to the main developing countries as well. This resolution constituted a serious impediment to the ratification of the Kyoto Protocol for the United States, which was adopted later in the year. In 2001, the United States withdrew from the agreement, claiming that it was against the country's and the world's economic interests,

since if the United States had to achieve strong reduction targets, then the world's economy would be substantially affected as well (Gupta, 2010). Nevertheless, the Kyoto Protocol entered into force in 2005 with the participation of enough countries to cover at least 55 percent of global GHGs, even though the world's largest emitter did not ratify the agreement. The Kyoto Protocol was a legally binding agreement which required developed countries to reduce their emissions by 5 percent with respect to the 1990s' levels by the period of 2008-2012. Moreover, it provided a monitoring mechanism to hold countries accountable for their progress. Lastly, it established a carbon market where countries could trade emissions, i.e. the Cap and Trade system. On the other hand, developing countries were still exempted from taking action, including high polluters such as China and India (United Nations, 1997).

This period saw a surge of research in the field of climate change science and governance. New coalitions were established to face the common challenge as the world gained more awareness of climate change. Nevertheless, the Byrd-Hagel Resolution disrupted the belief that developed countries had to lead climate action. The leadership model was called into question and climate diplomacy gradually fragmented as the difference in countries' interests sharpened. On the one hand, developed countries hardened their positions toward pollution. The member states of the European Union had divergent points of view. The United States shifted toward a more hesitant approach in actively taking action because of the transition from a Democratic to a Republican governance and the public opinion polarized on the actual implementation of environmental policies. Russia, which previously accepted to participate as an Annex I country, saw the collapse of its own economy – and, as a consequence, its GHGs plummeted – therefore, it was not ready to consider a reduction plan but only agreed on stabilization targets. On the other hand, developing countries presented their own individual interests. Emerging economies experienced a rapid growth which brought attention to their climate commitment as they were subject to external pressure for reducing their pollution. The Alliance of Small Island States gained a position of relevance and grew more vocal about the marginal role which was given to their interests in the decision-making process; a small number of oil-exporting countries formulated their distinct stance in an attempt to protect their interests and strongly resisted drastic changes; and,

within the G77, internal divergences continued to grow although the group acted as a single actor: the Latin American group and the African group departed from the official G77's position (Gupta, 2010).

As a consequence, with softer targets and the possibility to achieve them through foreign investments, the leadership model gradually acquired a conditional nature. This new approach was perceived by developing countries as a failure. Moreover, the belief that assistance would be given to developing countries gradually faded away, although the Kyoto Protocol clearly stated that developed countries had the duty to further assist them (United Nations, 1997). The approach toward climate change began to change as well. Within the UNFCCC, mitigation rather than adaptation was preferred as it was seen as a more immediate priority. Moreover, adaptation was considered a domestic issue that required local rather than global resources (Gupta, 2010). With the Kyoto Protocol, mitigation was gradually abandoned in favor of adaptation, since strong commitments and initiatives encountered important institutional barriers in their implementation. Moreover, the world was already experiencing a number of relevant climate change impacts which required important adaptation strategies.

During this period, the political dynamics of negotiations changed as well. After the withdrawal of the United States, the European Union encouraged the other members to ratify and implement the Kyoto Protocol. This could have spelled the end for climate diplomacy although, paradoxically, the withdrawal of the United States left more room for negotiations, which culminated in the adoption of the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) that allows developing countries to earn emission credits and encourages sustainable development (United Nations). Nevertheless, this new approach was criticized because it unfairly distributed emission rights on the basis of the 1990s' levels and reinforced the North-South division. In addition, the absence of the United States – the world's largest emitter at that time – disincentivized and slowed down the implementation phase. This left room to new local actors, whose initiatives and projects could interfere with national commitments, giving rise to legal disputes in courts. The dissipation of efforts and the unilateral quest for innovations led to some poorly formulated policies which contributed to additional environmental and social problems in the short-run (Gupta, 2010). In the meanwhile, the fourth IPCC report found out that global pollution reached unprecedented levels in the

world's history. The projections showed a rapid growth of GHGs, which could be contrasted only through emissions' stabilization by 2015 (The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, 2007). Moreover, the 2006 Stern Review estimated that, without critical intervention, the cost of climate change would correspond to annually losing 5 percent of global GDP, "now and forever" (Stern, 2006).

In the light of this, in 2007, a stronger heir of the Kyoto Protocol was demanded. With the COP13, the Bali Action Plan was ratified, planning a new agreement to be adopted by 2009 with the aim to encourage a common vision. In this context, the CBDR principle further strengthened under the pressure of developing countries, which protected their interests by claiming their right to emit on the basis of a broader climate justice context. Moreover, as President Obama was appointed in the United States in 2008, a new wave of optimism toward climate change cooperation spread, while the global financial crisis shifted the local attention toward countries' conflicting needs and agendas. These contrasting events were reflected in the 2009 COP15 in Copenhagen. In addition, the economic progresses made by China, India, and Brazil reinforced the international pressure on these countries in an attempt to impose on them the duty to act, especially taking into consideration that the Chinese emissions surpassed those in the United States at that time (Gupta, 2010). As a consequence, new coalitions arose, such as the G20, which was constituted by both developed and developing countries. Nevertheless, the 2008 G20 Declaration did not pave the way for an efficient agreement at the 2009 COP15 in Copenhagen. The parties were unable to find a consensus on a new commitment and thus created a non-legally binding document which increased the acceptable target from 1.5°C to 2°C, although the widespread scientific concerns on reaching such a level of global warming (United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, 2009). Moreover, neither short nor medium targets were settled, and the COP resulted in utter failure (Council on Foreign Relations, 2020).

With regard to the leadership model, those ratifying members which actively participated and committed from the beginning were left alone. On the one hand, the United States failed to take effective leadership and implicitly encouraged other countries to follow their example. On the other hand, the European Union struggled to take and maintain the burden of a compromised

leadership. In addition, developing countries as China were constantly targeted as free riders in a blame game which produced inconclusive results. In 2010, Joyeeta Gupta claimed that "leadership as a discourse […] has become a casualty [and] the climate crises may already be too far" (Gupta, 2010). Moreover, it was already clear that climate change would particularly harm vulnerable groups, displace them, cause mass migration and, thus, security risks way beyond the institutions' ability to address those issues.

1.2.3. TO AND BEYOND THE PARIS AGREEMENT: THE DEBACLE

Climate negotiations have begun quite successfully but then progressively failed to address the challenge of climate change governance. Despite the UNFCCC's bodies and mechanisms established an institutional order which ensured that the topic was preserved in the international agenda, climate diplomacy suffered three critical deficiencies. Firstly, while climate change is a global issue, it is still subject to nation states' decisions. Indeed, it has not been possible to overcome countries' sovereignty and oblige them to accept stricter commitments, even though scientific findings strongly suggested to do so. Secondly, the leadership model failed to practically address the issue because of a lack of hegemon power among developed countries and a reticence from developing countries to participate constructively in reduction plans. Thirdly, the creation of a market structure related to climate change was compromised by traditional market weaknesses: lack of information, profit maximization, and speculation, among others.

In 2010 at COP16 in Cancun, countries committed to maintaining global warming below 2°C, although climatologists warned that the target was not sufficient to tackle climate change severe impacts and upcoming threats. Nevertheless, in 2013 at COP17 in Durban, negotiations almost collapsed as the 'big three' polluters – notably the United States, China, and India – refused to adopt a new binding agreement. Moreover, in 2012 at COP18 in Doha, while the Kyoto Protocol was extended to 2020, the remaining ratifying members accounted only for 15 percent of global GHG emissions. Lastly, in 2013 at COP19

in Warsaw, the G77 and China requested the development of a new funding mechanism for vulnerable countries affected by climate change events, but their proposal was rejected by developed countries. Therefore, they walked out of negotiations and the conference resulted in utter failure. After this failure, in 2014 at COP20 in Lima, all countries agreed on indicating their national commitment in terms of emissions, such as absolute emission targets for developed countries and per capita emission targets for developing countries (Gupta, 2016).

Eventually, in 2015 at COP21 in Paris, 197 countries signed the Paris Agreement. This universal and legally binding agreement was considered a landmark in climate diplomacy as it required all ratifying members – i.e. both developed and developing countries – to set targets for emissions reduction. The aim of the Paris Agreement was to maintain global warming at least below 2°C, although the preferred level was 1.5°C (United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, 2015). It entered into force in 2016 and the United States withdrew from it in 2017. The Paris Agreement was indeed a landmark in international climate law, but it was a failure from the point of view of climate action: there were no binding deadlines nor limits on emissions and no mention on stopping the use of fossil fuels – i.e. an imperative for achieving the global temperature goals. In 2018, a new IPCC report alerted on the catastrophic consequences of allowing global warming to reach 1.5°C and predicted that, with a business-as-usual approach, the increase will be reached by 2030 (Council on Foreign Relations, 2020). However, countries did not commit to stronger targets, nor they agreed on how to regulate the carbon trade.

In 2019, a summit was hosted in New York in order to review the existing situation and share ideas. Nevertheless, the world's largest emitters, such as the United States and China, did not participate. Moreover, later in the year at COP25, the negotiations failed as participating members were still unable to finalize an agreement on carbon trade and did not reach a compromise over providing compensation to vulnerable countries. Today, because of the COVID-19 pandemic, the COP26 has been postponed. As a consequence of economic crises due to countries' lockdowns, hope for a greater commitment in reducing emissions faded away and experts predict that governments will prioritize their economies' recovery over environmental interests (Council on Foreign Relations, 2020). Moreover, the majority of the current 189 ratifying parties of the Paris

Agreement are missing their targets. Although countries have the technology, power, and knowledge to reduce emissions, they lack political will. Indeed, they should at least double their efforts by 2030 to meet the targets of the agreement, since almost 75 percent of present commitments are considered insufficient as of today. Nevertheless, since the commitments are on a voluntary basis, decisive action is continuously postponed (Watson, McCarthy, Canziani, Nakicenovic, & Hisas, 2019).

In the age of climate diplomacy, the governance of climate change used a technocratic and top-down approach, and, because of an initial North-South mutual trust, the Convention was rapidly ratified. In the age of climate leadership, the issue was presented as in need of a greater structure. On the one hand, developing countries were involved in the negotiations and, on the other hand, their engagement was ensured by the exemption from taking action. At that time, the Kyoto Protocol entered into force in eight years. Progressively, the North-South trust faded away. Today, we came to a number of different conclusions. First of all, the current economic growth system is incompatible with climate action in terms of mitigation and adaptation. Secondly, legally binding targets are a *conditio sine qua non* for efficiently addressing the issue. Lastly, markets, local authorities, courts, and civil society all play a key role in helping nation states to achieve their goals. However, in the last decade, climate change governance has become more and more unstructured as climate change grew more and more systemic. The actors involved do recognize that in order to address the issue, they need to fundamentally redefine their lifestyle. Nevertheless, governments are reticent to follow that path because of conflicting priorities with other interests. For instance, decoupling economic growth from pollution is not easy, and sustainable development as an alternative requires a drastic rearrangement of the society, which is opposed by a great number of actors on many levels. Indeed, the recession resulting from the global financial crisis opened an opportunity for switching to a greener economy, yet little effort was made to drastically change the nature of our global economy. In addition, no mechanism to provide sanctions or enforcement has been implemented, leaving it open to a broad re-interpretation of countries' commitments and goals with no apparent adverse consequence – apart from forthcoming climate change impacts and threats to humanity and the whole planet.

As the United States has wriggled out of taking a leadership role in tackling climate change – and even compromised cooperation efforts by refusing legally binding targets since the 1990s – and no country succeeded in taking the lead, multilateralism is collapsing, and climate change is getting worse. However, it is important to note that these phenomena are not recent. Indeed, the existing political conditions are just exacerbated by climate change. Moreover, the challenges we are now facing with the politics of adaptation are not only causing the debacle of the institutional framework, but first and foremost, they are leading to a transition to a new form of global governance through the adaptation of the politics.

2. THE ADAPTATION OF POLITICS

Climate change is creating a planetary state of emergency which nation-states, as legitimate representatives of human communities all over the world, fail to address efficiently. The hope of mitigating climate change through international cooperation is gradually vanishing, and the political implications of such an ineffective response to the challenge are becoming more and more evident. Under increasing pressure resulting from the urgency of the problem, our fundamental political structures are collapsing, and new systems of governance are ready to come into existence. Where the politics of adaptation failed, the adaptation of politics is emerging.

What does it mean to adapt? In biological terms, it is a process of natural selection that guarantees the survival of the fittest. In sociological terms, adaptation brings about functionalism. According to functionalism, in a given society, all of its parts are strongly interdependent and are thus understood only because of that same context. In other words, functionalism sees the society as a system in which all individual parts respond to specific functions because of their relation to – that is, the role they play in – that same society. In the light of this, given that people develop certain personal traits largely owing to the environment in which they live, some of those traits become ideologically positive just because they are functional to the society. Those traits then justify a group of people from having a different status – and thus a different behavior – within that society, reinforcing social separation in a self-fulfilling process based on hegemonic thinking, or rather 'common sense'. For instance, being able to make money, perhaps because of a supporting family or easy access to education, is considered a 'successful' social trait which legitimates a subject to enjoy particular benefits, such as a comfortable life, a healthy environment, and a high degree of freedom. Therefore, today, because of an increasing functionalistic approach to society and its crises, there is an ongoing process of depoliticization of political responses to critical societal problems – e.g. declaring the state of emergency because of natural catastrophes or pandemics – which fuels and

reinforces the dominant status quo by making those responses an act of mere 'common sense', not actions with political weight. As a consequence, one can argue that the functional adaptation of society to climate change is redesigning nation-state sovereignty into a new form of planetary sovereignty, which will take charge of the greatest state of emergency we have ever known, that is climate change.

This chapter discusses the process of adaptation of politics generated by ineffective climate change governance. The chapter consists of three parts. Part one focuses on the state of emergency, an analysis that is supported by the current example of the COVID-19 pandemic and how this crisis is addressed through the implementation of states of emergency all over the world. Part two investigates the concepts of sovereignty and legitimacy. Based on Hobbes's Leviathan and many other thinkers' opinions, it discusses these topics and extends them to a planetary form that would lead to a potential world government with relative merits and defects. Politics, economics, and technology play a major role in determining the legitimate emergence of the planetary sovereign. Part three presents two potential outcomes resulting from the process of adaptation of politics: the Climate Leviathan and the Climate Mao. The proposals are debated in order to identify their strengths and weaknesses. In particular, structural shortcomings are thoroughly analyzed.

2.1. THE STATE OF EMERGENCY

The state of emergency is a condition declared by a government that enables such government to implement extraordinary measures in order to protect and provide assistance to the population in case of harmful events. For instance, a state of emergency can be declared because of natural disasters, pandemics, armed conflicts, and so forth. Once the situation has returned to normal, the state of emergency is supposed to end, and the rule of law is thus restored. However, the state of emergency may be extended beyond its natural scope and temporal limit through political negotiations between the parties in charge in the name of the precautionary principle, therefore causing the

normalization of its exceptional nature. Alternatively, it may be used by an individual or a group of actors as a rationale for suspending the rule of law and revoking, by means of martial law, constitutional rights and liberties (Pellegrino, 2020).

In general, two main understandings of the state of emergency have been developed throughout the contemporary liberal history of political philosophy. On the one hand, the state of emergency is seen as the collapse of the legitimate political order. According to this thesis, which is implicitly supported by advocates of the traditional liberal philosophy such as Kant, there is no emergency which justifies any interference with democratic mechanisms. Indeed, the possibility to suspend those civil rights protected by democracy through mechanisms belonging to the democratic system would be a paradox. Therefore, when it is no longer possible to guarantee those rights and liberties, the only available option would be the collapse of the system itself and a return to the state of nature. On the other hand, the state of emergency is a condition necessary for the legitimate political order. This thesis is supported by two different positions. The first position has been theorized by Schmitt and lies its foundations on the figure of the sovereign, a decision-maker who exercises power because he represents the legislative and political order. Therefore, the sovereign, as such, has the arbitrary right to decide on laws, their application, and their interpretation and he may declare the state of emergency when he determines that the necessary conditions for preserving the order and the State are threatened. The second position is represented by Rousseau, who establishes the Republic and is ready to suspend it and assist the State to safeguard the values represented by the Republic itself. He then goes down into the contradiction of temporarily suspending some rights to safeguard other rights and preserve the legitimate political order. The rule of law is then put aside to protect the survival of the State (Pellegrino, 2020).

More recently, Giorgio Agamben thoroughly investigated the concept of the state of emergency. He believes that its declaration suffers from a generalization and normalization of the security paradigm. The state of emergency has become the rule (Agamben, 2003). This view may be reflected in the current COVID-19 crisis, which acts as a test case for the pressing climate change crisis. Pandemics, economic recessions, wars, and so forth, all share a

common process of normalization of emergencies. Yet, climate change, which is undoubtedly greater in scale and scope, is still excluded from the debate over the state of emergency, the form of sovereignty necessary to declare it, and the legitimacy of such an authority. In the light of this, will climate change unite humanity under an unprecedented world government to face the greatest challenge ever known?

2.1.1. THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC TEST

COVID-19 is the most recently identified infectious disease of the family of Coronaviruses, which causes respiratory infections. It started in December 2019 in Wuhan, China, and has gradually become a global pandemic. COVID-19 is very contagious and, as of today, there are no vaccines to oppose its spread (World Health Organization, 2020). As a world crisis and state of emergency, the COVID-19 pandemic has led to major effects on the global political order. Some countries have worked well, and some have not, whether they were based on democratic or authoritarian regimes. The ability of the State to manage the crisis, the trust of citizens in their governments, and the effectiveness of the leadership models were the main drivers behind countries' positive responses in terms of limiting the pandemic's impact. On the contrary, those countries with a weak State, polarized public opinion, and incompetent leaders have performed poorly, and thus exposed their citizens and economies to many vulnerabilities (Fukuyama, 2020). From an economic point of view, such an intense crisis leads to an incredible number of business failures and an unprecedented global recession, which will (more or less) permanently change the world economy. Over time, countries are opening their markets again but with caution, since this re-opening inevitably leads to an increase of infections. However, from a political point of view, the consequences of the crisis are even more severe. People all around the world have been asked to sacrifice some of their liberties, such as the freedom of movement, to tame the spread of COVID-19. Despite the clear reasoning, these sacrifices have been strongly criticized by some citizens for several reasons. Citizens were reluctant to comply with the new anti-COVID laws

once they evaluated their governments' reaction as insufficient or delayed, they suffered from widespread job losses or fear for debt burden, or they advocated for denialist and conspirationist theories.

The COVID-19 crisis allowed us to witness a real-time global-scale test of how governments react to global states of emergency. We can measure the effectiveness, the ability, and the legitimacy of our leaders, governments, and social contracts. In general, East Asian countries have performed better in managing the crisis than the United States and the European Union. Indeed, South Korea, Japan, Taiwan, Vietnam, and even China – despite an initial undervaluation of the seriousness of the disease – have managed to keep the pandemic and its effects under control (Fukuyama, 2020). On the other hand, despite a potential significative state ability, the United States has failed to meet the challenge effectively and has suffered a huge decline in its reputation, especially when compared to its Asian counterpart. For its part, the European Union's response was completely fragmented. It suffered internal movement barriers, and cooperation was replaced by mutual blame, mistrust, and even mockery. In the light of this, could the COVID-19 pandemic lead to the collapse of the already mined democratic liberal order?

It is important to note that the East Asian relative success in responding to the COVID-19 crisis is not a matter of regime; it is a matter of culture (Gardels, 2020). Indeed, the aforementioned countries do not share the same political systems. Authoritarian China and democratic South Korea both have controlled a dramatic outbreak through strong government interventions. Instead, what they do have in common is a relational culture deriving from their Confucian values, in which individual interests are put aside in favor of the group's interests, which have thus the highest priority. Indeed, the Asian relational culture has guaranteed a relatively positive outcome concerning the crisis because of three main factors. First of all, those countries' performances benefited from the ability of their governments to promptly implement plans in technical and operational terms. This has been especially true because of the way they integrated participatory culture with a competent class of policy-makers. Secondly, their citizens do not value privacy over safety, and they generally consented to restrict personal liberties in order to avoid greater risks, allowing their governments to digitally track them. Lastly, their governments are able to make long-term planning and

management because they are not undermined by a polarized public opinion. The COVID-19 pandemic is bringing to the fore the constraints of the individualist Western culture. For instance, in the United States the lack of universal healthcare has undoubtedly made the management of the pandemic more difficult. Similarly, the lack of a well-designed unemployment strategy has led to a failure in managing millions of people who have lost their jobs because of social distancing and lockdown measures. In addition, the Western super-value of privacy in the digital age prevented a balanced debate on a much needed cost-benefit calculus over the fear of the risks associated with data misuse or breaches (Weber & Gilman, 2020).

Sometimes, it is an external shock that breaks the political order and provides an opportunity for a structural reform. Indeed, the COVID-19 pandemic is clearly exposing the ability of single governments and international institutions to respond to mass states of emergency, acting as a test case for what could happen with climate change in the near future. On the one hand, the pandemic has shown the weaknesses of existing institutions, whereas, on the other hand, it has enhanced the importance of State interventions. In addition, pandemics, as other extraordinary social risks that are neither precisely foreseeable nor completely unexpected, are an important example of states of emergency with a challenging time frame since their probability of occurrence has a time horizon that is uncertain. Indeed, the ordinary cost-benefit calculi performed by policy-makers do not take into consideration events which are perceived to be *extra*ordinary. For instance, the COVID-19 pandemic showed how zoonoses are interlinked with the erosion of ecological niches (World Wide Fund for Nature, 2020), a fact which is of general knowledge today. However, although pandemics are becoming more frequent in the Anthropocene because of the impact of human activities on the environment, they are generally excluded from political action plans. Moreover, the temporary nature of this crisis weakens pandemics' chances of being implemented in regular policy planning. Indeed, COVID-19's due date will be determined by the discovery and diffusion of a safe vaccine. On the contrary, climate change implications will be incredibly long-lasting to such an extent that it is likely that the relative state of emergency will be permanent. In the light of this, the current political order will find itself completely unprepared and will be ineffective – to some extent, it has already shown that it cannot come

up to the mark. In order to not surrender to the unavoidable consequences of the Anthropocene, countries will have to cooperate efficiently. However, multilateralism is already collapsing, and it will probably not be the adequate strategy. On the contrary, a new framework could develop leading to a world government legitimated by the greatest state of emergency experienced so far – i.e. climate change – where the ability of the new political order to effectively operate in a long-term perspective will be what matters the most.

2.2. WORLD GOVERNANCE

Particularly risky mass phenomena generate new and elaborated political frameworks. With the COVID-19 pandemic, a prolonged state of emergency is leading to the adaptation of the current systems of governance all around the world. As a test case for climate change governance, the tendency of effective pandemic governance is to rely on strong State intervention. However, since countries are cautious in sharing information and tend to follow their own interests, multilateral cooperation is once again proving ineffective in the face of this kind of extraordinary events. The global political order is thus undergoing a process of adaptation into a new form and idea of sovereignty, which is planetary sovereignty.

In 1977, a 'planetary regime' to combat climate change was theorized for the first time. It would be a "sort of an international superagency for population, resources, and environment [that] could control the development, administration, conservation, and distribution of all natural resources" (Ehrlich, Ehrlich, & Holdren, 1977). Indeed, the 2015 Paris Agreement was a legal and political prefiguration of a potential world government as it laid the foundations for a planetary sovereignty to address the collective action problem of climate change. World governance is undoubtedly an option when nation states alone encounter insurmountable problems in dealing with severe crises. Moreover, when those crises concern the fate of the whole planet and the state of emergency appears to be inevitable, world governance becomes even more plausible. However, one should understand on which grounds a world government could be justified,

which arguments support such a degree of authority that allows for the legitimate declaration of a planetary state of emergency, and how a shift from nation-state sovereignty to planetary sovereignty can occur.

2.2.1. SOVEREIGNTY AND LEGITIMACY

Thomas Hobbes provided the classic formulation of sovereignty as a supreme authority over a given territory and population. He argued that individuals renounce to their freedom and escape the state of nature to seek protection, thus creating sovereign states, because of their vulnerabilities. The power of sovereignty, which is absolute and indivisible, is identified by Hobbes in a mythological creature – the Leviathan – who derives its power from the social contract. Therefore, the Leviathan coincides with the State (Hobbes, 1651). The work of Hobbes is still debated today. Some scholars identify the Leviathan as an endorsement to Absolutism as the only defense against the anarchy of the state of nature; others believe that it lies the foundations of the liberal order (Skinner, 2008); and others again claim that it represents the instability of a power-oriented society (Arendt, 1973). The Leviathan was written during the conflict in England between Charles I and the parliament, which led to a civil war in 1642. The work of Hobbes was thus his response to the uncertainty and violence of his time. To escape the state of nature, which is described as "nasty, brutish, and short", he delineated the fundamental political structures needed to avoid a conflict-driven world (Hobbes, 1651). Indeed, he conjectured a form of governance that did not yet fully exist but potentially could. The greatest Hobbes connoisseur, Carl Schmitt, argued that politics pertains to the dimension of sovereign decision carried out within a framework of actual or potential hostility due to the identification of 'us' and 'them' on the basis of the sovereign's strategic interests. And what about ethics? According to the scholar, no moral obligation can impede the sovereign's decisions once his only duty to protect those who are subject to him is met. More specifically, the sovereign is absolved from any legal obligation, as he is *outside* of the law. It is on this basis that Schmitt valued

legitimacy over law, because the law is just a product of the legitimate authority of the sovereign (Schmitt, 1938).

In the light of this, the sovereign State is a political arena where, by means of power and order, general interests are being put forward. In modern society, this framework became the prerequisite for the preservation of private rights and the establishment of civil society. On the one hand, the State protects civil society through its absolute control of politics. On the other hand, civil society embraces those private fields of domain, such as religion and more generally morality, which the State identifies as non-political and thus rejects. In other words, the relationship between the State and civil society is identified as follows: the former pursues the sovereign's interests and it is released from civil society's issues as long as it provides protection and stability; the latter, in exchange, gives up its freedom. Schmitt's pupil, Reinhart Koselleck, further addressed the issue from a historical point of view. According to him, this definition of politics created the dynamics which caused the collapse of the concept of sovereignty. Where Absolutism guaranteed that same stability which allowed civil society to thrive, it also cultivated an apolitical and moral view of politics which, however, was not able to recognize the very nature of politics itself. This view then led to an inappropriate evaluation of the sovereign by a civil society with no full knowledge of real political dynamics. He argued that this condition weakened the legitimacy of the national interest, a political field that has always been above the realm of ethics. Indeed, an increasingly independent private sphere culminated in the Enlightenment and the idea of criticism which led to the end of the absolutist order, the same order that constituted the breeding ground for the bourgeois' political utopia. As the ethical sphere had detached from the political sphere – when they previously coincided – it has fragmented into endless 'secondary' moralities which compete with the 'main' moral duty, i.e. to protect subjects. Therefore, to divide the sovereign power is to dissolve it, since fragments of power undermine the latter and thus lead to a mutual destruction. He further addressed this idea by claiming that the collapse of Absolutism through movements of revolution and the emergence of the public political life were not acts of emancipation. Rather, they led to the development of extreme ideologies, such as Nazism and Stalinism (Koselleck, 1988).

When alternatives to the absolutist power are presented, two views on the consequences of renouncing to Hobbes's Leviathan open up. On the one hand, Schmitt echoed the reactionary tradition by affirming that real liberty should be free from any liberal process of depoliticization (Schmitt, 1932). On the other hand, Arendt associated the vacuum of power left by the overthrow of the Tsarist and the Austro-Hungarian regimes with an incredibly powerful asset in the hands of totalitarian despots (Arendt, 1973). Her vision of Hobbes and the condition of stateless people foretells a future in which millions of climate refugees – whose status is not recognized – will be left stateless, becoming victims twice: firstly victims of climate change, and then victims of a world where more and more groups will practice fratricidal hatred, especially against their closest neighbors. In one way or another, the Leviathan seems inevitable. It may change its face – Schmitt believed it could evolve into different forms than those planned by its summoners (Schmitt, 1938) – but its essence remains the same. Following Hobbes's belief that *"auctoritas non veritas facit legem"* (authority, not the truth, makes law) (Hobbes, 1651), Schmitt understood the sovereign as the one who makes decisions. Therefore, it is the sovereign who declares the state of emergency and, conversely, what is an emergency is determined by the sovereign himself.

The state of emergency that could result from climate change presents the very nature of the Leviathan. Hobbes postulated the Leviathan as a desperate attempt to put an end to civil war. In political terms, he conceived a supreme authority which is *super partes* and, as such, brings people together and creates unity. On the one hand, the moral duty to end civil war requires people to subject themselves to the sovereign who ends the civil war. On the other hand, by fulfilling his obligation of ending the civil war, he also fulfills his only moral duty. Therefore, the proper performance of his political duty releases him from any other moral duty (Koselleck, 1988). Similarly, the threats posed by climate change resemble those of civil wars. Uncertainty, instability, and even the possibility of civilization's collapse are a severe cause of concern for humanity. Moreover, it is clear that climate change presents political challenges that cannot be solved by the current order. However, the establishment of a new order has been delayed by those same hegemonic elites who are unable to respond to climate change effectively.

In the light of this, the emergence of a new Leviathan is not a matter of ifs, it is a matter of when and in what form.

2.2.2. PLANETARY SOVEREIGNTY

The presence of some form of State seems to be a *conditio sine qua non* to address collective action problems. However, the vast scale of climate change – among other issues – has enhanced how nation states in their current form fall short of what is required to solve global problems. This opens up to a serious debate over planetary sovereignty. However, this is not the first time that the argument has been covered: this idea has a long history in political philosophy, which dates back to Plato. In the contemporary age, Immanuel Kant, G.W.F. Hegel, and, more recently, other thinkers such as Hannah Arendt, Albert Einstein, Bertrand Russell, Alexander Wendt, and Nick Bostrom further addressed the issue.

The focus of Kant's political philosophy is on cosmopolitanism, a view of people as individuals with mutual ethical obligations, including those who are distant in spatial or cultural terms. The liberal multiculturalism that exists today often reflects this position and so the institutionalized development of the concept of human rights. In his Perpetual Peace, he argued for the establishment of a republican federal union of constitutional states which strengthened some legacies of the French Revolution, such as the idea of freedom, while pacifying others, such as the opposition to the State (Kant, 1795). Kant's cosmopolitan constitution is thus a sort of world government which sounds similar to the United Nations – although our current system is far from meeting Kant's peace requirements. It is a universal and peaceful community that acknowledges and protects the dignity of all people. On the contrary, Hegel believed that there could be nothing above the State with the ability to settle conflicts. Indeed, in the case of conflicts, there are only two options. On the one hand, there can be an agreement between the parties promoted by a trans-state entity – such as a United Nations representative with the mandate to assist the negotiation – or there can be war. However, this interstate institution is much more constrained

than Kant's multicultural community, and it could not develop into a world government (Hegel, 1896).

In the aftermath of World War II, the Holocaust, and the Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombings, the consequences and the prospects of a planetary sovereignty in the form of a world government evolving from traumatic and extreme events were once again investigated by some intellectuals. On the one hand, advocates such as Einstein and Russell argue that a uniquely extreme condition, to which humanity was confronted with only two alternative options, emerged from creating weapons of mass destruction. We can either achieve Kant's peaceful Republic by solving the systemic tendency to violence of the international system (Einstein, 1956) or destroy the planet (Russell, 1945). On the other hand, opponents such as Arendt claim that a world government would dissolve real politics, that is "different peoples getting along with each other in the full force of their power" (Arendt, 1973). In the light of this, Arendt believed that world governance always leads to Totalitarianism and thus to the repression of all forms of opposition. This position cannot be refused even in circumstances of a well-designed supernational agency, which would either be ineffective or controlled by the most powerful nation. Her stance neither fully supports Kant's argument nor it declines it. Indeed, from an institutional point of view, she identified the federation as the only viable solution, but it has to have an international – not supernational – nature. In this manner, a mechanism of mutual control over units' power would be in place (Arendt, 1972).

More recently, Wendt claimed that we are inevitably going toward a world state. How could this form of planetary sovereignty be legitimate? The only reason that would be solid enough to allow for such a social reorganization would be the absolute need for a powerful authority, e.g. to prevent a global catastrophe. Indeed, since nations compete with the aim to defend themselves from external threats, arms races have gradually increased in recent decades. However, different technology leads to different defense resources, thus causing tension over the mutual ability of countries to ensure their global recognition. In order to end this perpetual struggle between states, the development of a collective identity and, eventually, of a world government could emerge, just as it occurred with the end of the struggle between individuals and the emergence of nation states (Wendt, 2003).

This idea of a global order with a single decision-making agency is supported by Bostrom's theory of singleton. According to his definition, the singleton has the power to prevent internal or external threats to its hegemony, to assert control over key elements of the system – such as taxation and territorial distribution – and to solve global coordination issues (Bostrom, 2006). Indeed, the main advantage of a singleton is that problems which are impossible to solve in a multipolar world with fragmented sovereignty among a wide number of high-level independent agencies – such as nation states – would now be resolved without much effort. For instance, extreme wars which could possibly lead to mass extinction, future races for arms and space colonization, scenarios with sharp and systemic inequalities, and scenarios with undesirable evolutionary outcomes. Therefore, Bostrom draws fully from the Hobbesian concept of indivisible sovereignty. On the other hand, the main disadvantage of a singleton is that its unconstrained power could compromise the whole civilization, since nothing and no-one would be outside of its domain. Moreover, potential paths to reach a singleton may entail severe costs and risks, especially in the event of a singleton established by force. According to Bostrom, the singleton hypothesis is very plausible. History indicates that there is a steady trajectory toward an ever-higher level of social organization, from hunter-gatherer groups to social systems ruled by tribal leaders, city-states, nation-states and international alliances and organizations, and other facets of globalization (Bostrom, 2006). Indeed, this pattern does reinforce the chances of the creation a singleton in the future.

In the light of this, three outcomes appear to be possible: first, a peaceful republican federal union; second, a realist world dominated by war; third, a world government with planetary sovereignty. It is important to note that the consensus over the development of a singleton could be increasingly established if its creation is (perceived to be) actually necessary to overcome global coordination issues and if the impact of those issues worsens over time. Moreover, catastrophes as mass destruction wars can accelerate such a development. Indeed, two attempts to establish systems of world government, which are the League of Nations and the United Nations, have emerged from the two world wars. Following this path, it is not difficult to imagine a world government growing out of climate change, and thus the realization of the third outcome.

Let us assume that a world government emerges from a planetary state of emergency – from which it draws its legitimization – due to climate change. The configuration of this world government would see a major country presenting itself as a leader acting on behalf of other countries, and thus gaining the substantial authority necessary to pursue general interests – which inevitably coincide with the country's interests. All things considered, the role of technology would be decisive when it comes to assessing which country could be the leader. Indeed, improvements in military technology have always produced political changes, often by redesigning sovereignty and the nature of states' relationships. For instance, today, space races are capturing major countries' attention, such as the United States, China, and the United Arab Emirates' simultaneous Mars missions, to be followed by the European Union and Russia's rovers (Ryan-Mosley, 2020). Some scholars even predict a new imperialism based on space weaponry hegemony (Duvall & Havercroft, 2008). Technology will have a key part in environmental protection as well. As the time window to pursue effective mitigation policies is closing, adaptation strategies are emerging in the form of atmospheric geoengineering. Indeed, in order to not undermine our current lifestyle, technology will be particularly convenient. For instance, the Solar Radiation Management (SRM) technology would artificially alter the atmosphere of the Earth by reflecting solar energy back into space before it warms the planet (Jamieson, 2014). However, this would imply a whole new set of problems. Who decides to implement this technology and to what extent? Who is held accountable for the potential risks of such a new – and not yet fully understood – technology? On whose authority? How should this technology be governed and maintained in the long-run? When is the implementation of this technology legitimated in terms of emergency? Indeed, under the promise of salvation, only a small number of actors would decide on global geoengineering experiments, thus taking control over the future of the whole planet, with little scope for these important questions. In particular, a fundamental problem of sovereignty arises over who has the authority to declare the state of emergency necessary to implement technologies such as SRM. Indeed, the political consequences of these geoengineering projects are both spatial and temporal because their employment would affect the climate everywhere, and would require a perpetual maintenance. As a result, the sovereign who would launch these extreme

programs should also guarantee the preservation of its own power and will to continue doing so, and therefore it would obtain an endless sovereignty (Jamieson, 2014). Obviously, technology alone will not establish planetary sovereignty, yet it could contribute to its development together with other key factors such as accelerated environmental alterations, mass migration, and violent conflicts. More generally, one can argue that the self-conferral of power and duty to save the Earth will give rise to planetary sovereignty.

2.3. THE CLIMATE LEVIATHAN

The pressing consequences of climate change first led to a transformation *in* politics in the form of climate diplomacy and leadership. Nevertheless, the debacle of mitigation policies and the deficiency of adaptation policies – or rather, adaptation policies which do not selectively favor elites – will generate a transformation *of* politics in which a new sovereign world government, legitimated by a permanent state of emergency due to climate change, will emerge. According to Geoff Mann and Joel Wainwright, the future political-economic order will be defined by two criteria. The first is about the prevailing economic structure: will it remain capitalist? The second is about the establishment of a world government with planetary sovereignty. These conditions create four global forms of governance: the Climate Leviathan, the Climate Mao, the Climate Behemoth, and the Climate X (Mann & Wainwright, 2018).

	Planetary sovereignty	Anti-planetary sovereignty
Capitalist	Climate Leviathan	Climate Behemoth
Non-capitalist	Climate Mao	Climate X

Anti-planetary sovereignty prospects will not be discussed in this thesis, which evaluates planetary sovereignty as the most plausible outcome. In particular, the authors claim that the current political path is leading to the capitalist Climate Leviathan, which will reveal itself as dominant in the near future (Mann & Wainwright, 2018). Indeed, the Climate Leviathan embodies a planetary sovereign at its finest. It is a democratically-legitimated regulatory authority that has found a breeding ground in international climate agreements. In particular, the Paris Agreement, which acts as a draft of planetary regulation and encompasses (green) capitalism, represents its first manifesto.

With the term 'Leviathan', the authors refer to Hobbes's and Schmitt's sovereign, who is established and makes decisions precisely because he is able to do so. Therefore, it is a *Climate* Leviathan because it emerges from both its own desire and others' necessity to establish a planetary sovereignty which is theoretically able to save humanity by reclaiming authority, declaring the state of emergency, and restoring the global order (Mann & Wainwright, 2018). The Climate Leviathan will thus be consolidated by the adaptation of politics, according to Agamben's belief that the state of emergency is nothing other than a process of normalization of safety policies and everything within their spheres of influence (Agamben, 2003). In the light of this, "the state of nature and the nature of the state would form a self-authorizing union" (Mann & Wainwright, 2018). Therefore, Hobbes's and Schmitt's Leviathan leaves the national borders in which it was postulated, and acquires a global nature. Indeed, the risks and

targets associated with climate change cannot be respectively reduced and achieved by autonomous regulatory authorities: being a collective action problem, climate change governance will be forced to be more and more global. Nevertheless, as of today, this global nature is nothing other than the extension of global North's hegemonic interests. However, it is important to note that a number of actors who were historically excluded from the negotiating table, such as China and India, would have to authorize any project of planetary sovereignty, and this is what could make things difficult. Indeed, the realization of a Climate Leviathan would not be possible without China's support, which could not be obtained if China's interests were excluded from the power game.

How, then, can we expect the Climate Leviathan to take shape? Two forms could arise. First, a Climate Leviathan guided by the United States which would be the natural extension and preservation of the current liberal order. Second, a Climate Mao guided by China could emerge as well, and, since the political and economic conditions are indeed different, it would constitute a breakage with the hegemonic order. However, as the authors pointed out, the United States alone has no means to establish a new imperialism – let alone other liberal democracies that are currently facing severe structural crises – and it needs allies. As a consequence, the authors believe that the most probable scenario implies a collaboration between the United States and China in the form of a G2 which would not accept any form of opposition by virtue of it being the only hope – and thus legitimate authority – for combating the climate crisis. This collaboration would further be legitimized by global fora such as the United Nations, which would concede them sovereign power (Mann & Wainwright, 2018). Yet, China would not be on the sidelines of the issue and, although the authors argue that the United States cannot become the Leviathan alone, the capabilities of China to go chasing alone the sovereign power are constantly increasing. Indeed, authoritarian regimes adapt themselves more easily than democracies to changing global conditions, seizing the opportunity to increase their domestic and international power. Lastly, as Hobbes teaches us, the sovereign must remain indivisible, or else it would be destroyed. And this, indeed, is an excellent chance for those who are able to bear the burden alone.

2.3.1. THE CLIMATE MAO

Climate change has no borders, yet, besides international agreements, different countries are making efforts to give their own national answers to the emergency. For instance, China is currently leading in the race to fill the green power vacuum in the international arena. Indeed, because of the climate crisis, this gap could correspond to the global hegemonic power in the future. That is just what a Leviathan does: to make general interests coincide with its own interests, and China would undoubtedly be a good Leviathan in this sense. More specifically, what is the Climate Mao? According to Mann and Wainwright, it is a supreme authority based on a non-capitalist economy which makes use of fear to pursuit environmental targets (Mann & Wainwright, 2018). Contrary to the current liberal carbon market, the Climate Mao would be much more effective in managing and achieving emissions reduction, which means it would be the most compelling solution to the climate crisis. Indeed, the state of emergency would guarantee to the Climate Mao the power to decide on the allocation of emission rights, thus avoiding wastefulness of resources and unnecessary consumption. Where democratic means for reaching a global consensus over climate action proved to be ineffective – or at least too slow and chaotic to avoid doom – the Climate Mao would benefit from its capacity in rapid and thorough implementation of reforms: "Climate Mao reflects the demand for rapid, revolutionary, state-led transformation today" (Mann & Wainwright, 2018).

Today, many scholars support the idea of a Climate Mao *in potentia*. According to Minqi Li, at the heart of the global climate diplomacy history, there is China. Indeed, the chances of achieving the stabilization of climate change depend on China's will to take the steps required to reduce emissions and stabilize climate change, otherwise they would be very scarce. However, it remains to be seen how far the Chinese government is willing to go and, therefore, how far it is convenient to go for China as a country. In this sense, the domestic political struggle within China will determine the future of the whole world. Being a Maoist, Li argues that it is through a new Chinese revolution that the world could be saved. He believes that the only chance to move forward and shift the global trajectory concerning climate change lies in the Climate Mao (Li, 2009). However,

in the near future, the Climate Mao is merely an Asian-specific path. Indeed, the conditions to make it happen – i.e. a massive proletarian class, a tradition of radical ideology, and state-led influential economy – do only converge in the Asian region and under the leadership of China. Moreover, Asia is home to millions, and counting, of people who are among the hardest hit by climate change. So many people have so much to lose if climate change impacts are not quickly minimized. This is a recipe for revolution, and it is precisely why scholars such Li believe that only a revolutionary authority, characterized by militancy and mass mobilization, would be able to shift the global status quo (Li, 2009).

Climate change strikes unevenly. First of all, the world's population which risks major threats is geographically-concentrated in the Asian region, particularly in South and East Asia. Secondly, this area has the highest population density. Lastly, it is the world's greatest manufacturing hub where most of the global production occurs. In the light of this, Asia is a powder keg ready to explode. Here, the potential social turmoil caused by climate change and the capacity of the region to adapt to changing global conditions could lead to the Climate Mao. Sooner or later, crises in the Asian region could expand to the rest of the world. In particular, there is no doubt that with one of the largest economies and population densities of the world, China's power will become immense. However, to govern such a territory and economy, in addition to the potential mass migrations due to climate change, and the resulting instabilities of the whole region, will bring instability to the Chinese State, faced with the threat of a real collapse. Then, one could maintain that climate change will not proclaim China's current order with an unconditional hegemony, but a reformed hegemony. Therefore, how the government of China is going to react is definitely a fundamental issue, since it is likely to influence the rest of the world's response. More generally, if the current order fails to address material shortages of water, food, and other commodities, the population will respond; and if they respond, the Climate Mao will occur.

2.3.2. CRITICISM OF THE MODEL

The Climate Leviathan, as conceptualized by Mann and Wainwright, has structural and conceptual deficiencies. On the one hand, in a broader dimension of political philosophy, a Climate Leviathan in the form of a United States-China G2 could not be sustainable in the long run, unless these two countries merge into a single sovereign. As stated before, the Hobbesian sovereignty must remain indivisible not to collapse (Hobbes, 1651). Therefore, the G2 option, which has been considered as very plausible by the authors, is not plausible at all. Or rather, it could be, as the first step in a process of power narrowing, but it could never become the ultimate form of the Leviathan. Indeed, even the first steps in the direction of cooperation have been characterized by a different political weight between the two parties. In 2014, the United States-China climate agreement was announced before the Great Wall of China (The White House, 2014). The implication was clear: it was on the Chinese territory that the G2 recognized its duty toward the planet. Later in the year, the two countries took separate stands concerning the Paris Agreement, but they both committed to it. Then, following the election of President Donald Trump and his political objection to climate change, President Xi Jinping seized the opportunity to double down his efforts to take the lead on climate change (Geall, 2017). In the light of this, the traditional narrative of balance between two superpowers – competing in the past, cooperating today – which somehow should unite two worlds, has insurmountable structural impediments. The problem of the indivisibility of planetary sovereignty is too relevant as it threatens its own success and thus the very emergence of such a system of governance. The division of powers is never sustainable in the long run. Therefore, a G2 Climate Leviathan is an inconceivable option as it is counter to the very idea of the Hobbesian sovereignty. Any Leviathan is thus only possible with a single and supreme sovereign, whether it is United States' Climate Leviathan or China's Climate Mao.

On the other hand, besides the aforementioned fundamental challenges faced by the United States in pursuing a new wave of imperialism, it is its democratic nature that prevents it from becoming a global Leviathan. As stated before, authoritarian regimes do respond better than democracies to crises in

terms of taking opportunities to lead. Authoritarian regimes can restrict citizens' freedoms, democracies cannot – or, at least, they are unable to do so without constraints. Therefore, the United States should renounce to its democratic nature in order to become the planetary leader of climate change. This option hardly seems possible, especially in view of the fact that U.S.'s citizens strongly opposed the restriction of their freedoms because of the COVID-19 crisis. Moreover, China should definitely undergo much less significant changes in order to become the Climate Leviathan compared with the United States. As a consequence, the different natures of these two countries further confirm China's greater capabilities to become a global sovereign and, thus, the Climate Mao proposal appears to have greater chances of success.

Nevertheless, the way the Climate Mao has been theorized by Mann and Wainwright presents obsolete bases. The data within the book date back maximum to 2010 and a decade, for a highly thriving country such as China, makes all the difference. For instance, in 2018, China accounted for about 32 percent of global investment in renewable power in terms of solar and wind power, and hydroelectricity – making it the world's largest renewable energy producer (United Nations Environment Programme, 2019) – and maintained its title of the world's largest electric vehicle market (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2019). Moreover, the authors do not take into account many relevant facets of the current Chinese governance. In the Climate Mao proposal, the country is portrayed as a violent regime that could either use top-down coercion or bottom-up movements of revolution to pursue its non-capitalist power interests. This stereotypical interpretation of China as a country, as a population, and as a culture leaves little room for an interesting investigation of China's actual resources to become a thorough Leviathan. In particular, the authors refer to China as a country lacking "civil institutions mediating between state power and the masses" (Mann & Wainwright, 2018). However, an analysis of China's nascent civil society is particularly relevant not only to understand the true nature of the Chinese State, but also because there is a mutual connection between the Chinese civil society and environmental organizations. Today, China's political tradition is increasingly heterogeneous as it draws inspiration from many different sources, such as meritocracy, Confucianism, and even democracy. These and other relevant considerations will be addressed in the next chapters.

Another fundamental issue concerns the economic structure of China. Although Mann and Wainwright named 'Climate Mao' the Chinese interpretation of the Climate Leviathan, at the present time, the Communist Party of China (CPC) seems more eager to create a capitalist Climate Leviathan rather than a communist one. This is further confirmed by China's relevance in the Paris Agreement, which, as stated before, represents the exaltation of the liberal capitalist order. Indeed, today "it is easier to imagine the end of the world than to imagine the end of capitalism" (Jameson, 2003), but what is the nature of the Chinese capitalism? It is important to note that Chinese capitalism significantly differs from the North American or European ones. This is because of China's history and it cannot be dismissed as a mere variety of 'regular' capitalism. Indeed, its structure does deviate from the rule, since the leading Chinese banks and the most relevant industrial assets are controlled by the central government, a feature that is very far from the liberal concept of laissez-faire. Moreover, the history of capitalism in China is peculiar. Although today China's issues related to capitalism, such as environmental degradation and workers exploitation, are globally deprecated, they are just the outcome of the global mass relocation of industries in the territory of China after the process of deindustrialization of the West. As Wang Hui pointed out, being China the current world's factory, "climate change, the energy issue, cheap labor and even the mechanisms of state oppression are all integral aspects of the new international division of labor" (Hui, 2016). Nevertheless, as things now stand, capitalism is not in question even on the Chinese side. Instead, what should be debated is the model of climate change governance.

As stated before, the state of emergency resulting from climate change would permanently limit individual liberties in order to avoid doom. To a certain extent, this model of climate change governance corresponds to the Climate Mao, since China relies on a model of governance with no opposition in relative terms. In this sense, today, China embodies a local prototype of a global solution to climate change with a state of emergency governance. This is precisely why it is important not to misunderstand the features of a vast, complex, and stratified country such as China. Indeed, to thoroughly investigate today's China could give us a hint of which features planetary sovereignty might present and which not. But first we should understand why and how a stereotypes-free Climate Mao

solution could be legitimate. The answer should be sought in the perpetual emergency profile facing us with climate change. Then, is it legitimate to ask humanity to limit individual liberties and to what extent? Liberal democracies, because of their very nature, strongly oppose the restriction of acquired freedoms and rights. However, there may be no other alternative than to do so, and authoritarian regimes have already demonstrated that, at least in the event of catastrophes, the cost-benefit calculus is much broader and deeper than the one democracies are able to arrive to because of their very nature. The development of a Climate Leviathan or Climate Mao undoubtedly benefits from the current fragmented responses to climate change in spatial and political terms. Small-size and global scale reactions are respectively too limited and too slow to have any significant impact, and thus they encourage the emergence of these regimes. However, what forms the Climate Mao will take and to what extent it could/should limit rights is a matter that is too speculative to be addressed in this thesis. Yet, it is important to note that, from Hobbes onwards, the social contract between the State and its citizens has already constrained freedom in order to provide protection. There is nothing new in this practice and, at some point, we will be back there to rediscuss the terms of a new social contract, the one of the Anthropocene.

3. THE CHINA MODEL

In order to formulate a thorough proposal of a Chinese Climate Leviathan, it is essential to understand the Chinese model of governance. The stereotype projects an image of China as a country with an oppressive regime and no opposition, which somehow would correspond to a Western democratic country in a state of emergency. Individual freedoms and rights are put aside to make way for top-down governance. This is partially true but, as mentioned before, a vast, complex and stratified country as China offers many other fundamental facets to be taken into consideration and a distorted image of China should be avoided not to invalidate the country's chances to become a Climate Leviathan. Indeed, China could be a very plausible local model of governance for a global-scale governance of climate change. Therefore, it is important to understand its real characteristics and the viability of extending/exporting such a model. On which grounds is the China model of governance legitimated? What is the role of meritocracy in China and how is it influenced by democracy? Does the Western democratic understanding of the state of emergency truly correspond to the China model? Could the China model, especially in terms of authoritarian environmentalism, be considered as a valid alternative to the present institutions of climate change governance? Much of the legitimacy of the Chinese government appears to be based on the discourse of guardianship, which provides protection, stability, and progress to its citizens. However, the Chinese model of governance is multifaceted and includes meritocracy, experimentation, and democracy.

The term 'China model' usually refers to China's economic development and governance in the reform era. It is characterized by two conditions: a free-market capitalist economy and an authoritarian one-party system of governance. In this sense, China is portrayed as a country with "a combination of economic freedom and political oppression" (Bell, 2015). However, to reduce a vast, stratified, and complex country such as China to these two aspects is misleading. On the one hand, China does have implemented capitalist elements into its

economic model, yet the State maintains its power over strategic industrial and banking assets. On the other hand, although China heavily invests in security and the government may take harsh means to be able to maintain its control over social stability, after the 1989 Tiananmen Square protests, the CPC has developed a tendency to not undermine its legitimacy with the use of unnecessary violence. Therefore, in this thesis, the term 'China model' takes a different interpretation and refers to Daniel Bell's political definition of the country's system of governance, which sees "democracy at the bottom, experimentation in the middle, and meritocracy at the top" (Bell, 2015). The China model is thus both a reality backed by modern political reforms, and an ideal represented by its potential to strengthen its peculiarities in the future.

This chapter intends to propose a more precise image of the identity of China in order to better understand a potential Climate Leviathan modeled on the China model. The chapter consists of two parts. Part one discusses the China model, based on Bell's conceptual understanding of the country in terms of political meritocracy. Political meritocracy is presented as an effective model of governance in managing a vast, complex and stratified country as China, a model whose results cannot be equaled by democratic rule, especially in critical circumstances. Yet it is undermined by some structural limitations which could be slackened with the introduction of some democratic elements. Part two analyzes authoritarian environmentalism, a model of environmental governance based on expertise and eco-elites, to better understand how political meritocracy could coincide with a Western-style state of emergency.

3.1. POLITICAL MERITOCRACY IN CHINA

Political meritocracy, that is the principle according to which systems of governance should be structured around leaders with greater talents and virtues, has roots far back in time. Plato in the West and Confucius in the East both proposed a meritocratic system that would essentially preclude the majority from participating in politics. For instance, following Confucius's teaching, in imperial China, a system based on meritocracy ensured the selection of worthy officials

through complex exams. Meritocracy in China owes its longevity to a number of societal advantages. This method of selection was perceived as fairer relative to criteria based on a candidate's background, such as status, family, and gender. Moreover, it ensured social stability. It is no secret that the fall of the empire was accelerated by the abolition of the imperial exams in 1905. In this sense, when exams were resumed after the chaos caused by the Cultural Revolution, they contributed to positively enhance people's opinion on the fairness of the system, thus strengthening its legitimacy (Bell, 2015). However, modern societies generally refuse a system of governance based on political meritocracy. Today, accountability has gained a significant societal weight, and leaders need to be seen as legitimate as possible in the eyes of the people – a condition that is generally fulfilled through democratic elections. The role of people in politics seems crucial now more than ever. Yet, the current crisis of governance in the West has shown democracy's weaknesses and it has created room for a political debate on the quality of present institutions. Could meritocracy fill the space emptied by the fall of blind trust in 'one person, one vote'? Indeed, political meritocracy is favored from a merit that the democratic rule cannot grant: it ensures that leaders are selected on the basis of expertise and morality. These are high-quality traits in the process of decision-making, which could be beneficial to a country's performance in both its domestic and international affairs, other than to its international image. On the other hand, political meritocracy could be vitiated by significant limitations as well, which could undermine its very reason for existence. First and foremost, the problem of gaining legitimacy in the eyes of the people without allowing them to engage in politics, at least to a certain degree. In the light of this, it appears that political meritocracy should implement – at least some – democratic elements to its structure in order to strengthen its institutions and thus its legitimacy. But how could meritocracy and democracy coexist? In the 1990s, nobody expected that China could get its economy taken off so fast and so extensively to become the world's second-largest economy (The World Bank, 2020). Could it happen again with political meritocracy? Once again, the Chinese experiment is being observed by the rest of the world.

3.1.1. LIMITS OF POLITICAL MERITOCRACY

From the 1960s, the challenge of how to promote equality became a critical issue for Western theorists. In our complex society, hierarchical structures are required, but scholars generally agree on their problematic nature in moral terms. Therefore, attempts to institutionalize hierarchies within the political system are usually discarded. In general, it is deemed that the institutionalization of a system of promotion of individuals based on their merits would lead to a legitimization of elites' position. In this sense, three major issues with political meritocracy have been identified. First, the problem of power abuse by political leaders who are selected because of their better abilities. Second, meritocratic systems are prone to preserving the status quo and thus would weaken social mobility. Third, the legitimization of the system could encounter objections from those who do not belong to the ruling class (Young, 1958).

Meritocratically-chosen leaders could exploit their powers and commit abuses since citizens would have no power to oppose them or even only replace them. In this sense, it seems that nothing would prevent those leaders from pursuing their own interests. Indeed, in China, the problem of corruption is systemic. It surged in the last thirty years and recently, with the spread of scandals exposed on social media, it became a very serious concern for the stability of the government. When President Xi Jinping took office, he acknowledged the problem of corruption and made this battle a top priority for his mandate by declaring war on corruption. Strong measures have been successfully implemented to such an extent that the current anti-corruption campaign has already hit a significant number of officials (Sheng & Geng, 2017). Actually, from the early beginning of the People's Republic of China, corruption has been fought at every level of the system. With time, mass movements against corruption cases have been substituted by legislative measures and public campaigns. Since no country in the world is unaffected by corruption, it is nearly impossible to eliminate such a problem. Therefore, current Chinese anti-corruption efforts aim to control corruption by decreasing it to a level that makes it possible to manage it (Wedeman, 2005). Because a continuous control over corruption requires an impressive amount of resources to be employed, these

anti-corruption campaigns work as a support element to traditional measures of enforcement. However, not only they increase the rate of detection, but first and foremost, they act as a psychological instrument in the war against corruption. Through the use of theatrics to intimidate, strong mobilization, and randomized investigations, anti-corruption campaigns induce those who are guilty to confess – especially in the first period of clemency, before a harsher crackdown phase – and those who are not to report (Wedeman, 2005). The Chinese government keeps fighting corruption periodically because it represents a serious threat not only to the authority of the State, but also to the political system itself. Indeed, if corruption in a democracy does not bring into question the democratic system since corrupted leaders can be replaced through elections, it does threaten the meritocratic system in a meritocracy since leaders are supposedly chosen because of their merits and virtues. Therefore, with a high level of corruption, what is at stake is the legitimacy of the whole political system. Paradoxically, being a meritocracy, China has a greater interest in fighting corruption compared to democracies. Indeed, if corruption were untamed, more officials would engage in corruption-related activities, creating a negative spiral that would lead corruption to be out of control and thus irremediably undermining the image of the CPC. On the contrary, with harsh anti-corruption campaigns that threat *ex-ante* both rational factors and psychological factors, the government has become able to maintain corruption under control, and it has generally improved its reputation. In this sense, China has proved to be able to restrain corruption without the help of democratic structures such as elections.

Another fundamental issue of meritocracy is the problem of crystallization, which is the inability of renovation. The very concept of meritocracy is to ensure the opportunity to become officials to those who are worthy regardless of their background. In this way, talents should be selected from every level of society. As a consequence, in a large nation such as China, the ruling class is supposed to have a very heterogeneous background. In reality, it has not. The composition of the highest ranks of the political hierarchy is socially narrow. Because of this, the system is once again at stake. First of all, this narrowness could lead the ruling class to believe that it has an inherent right to rule because of the superiority demonstrated during a 'fair' process of selection, which, in reality, cuts out many talented candidates with a less favorable background. For instance, the

current elite has had the opportunity to get the best possible education in China and also abroad. The issue of access to education has already been addressed with regard to minorities, who are required to have lower grades in order to be admitted to the university (Zeng, 2014). Yet, these incentives are not extended to economically-disadvantaged students. Indeed, measures such as quotas are controversial as they are in contrast with the principle of meritocratic competition, which should be immune to applicants' social conditions. However, in a meritocracy, it is only by increasing the representativeness of different social classes within the ruling class that the system can solve the issue of the predominance of a privileged elite. In 2002, the CPC took the first step in this direction with the inclusion of capitalists in the party to serve as experts for market policy and assist in reforms (Bell, 2015). If the economic competence of capitalists has earned them a place in the ranks of the party, other social classes did not share the same fate. Compared to educated elites, not many disadvantaged people shape the party: the share of farmers and industrial workers in the National People's Congress has fallen below two-thirds in the period 1975-2003 (Wang, 2013). Just as with quotas for minorities, there could be quotas for economically-disadvantaged people. Nevertheless, this should be only a temporary measure to not undermine the 'blindness' of the meritocratic system. The most farsighted solution implies a more egalitarian society achieved through a strong reduction of economic inequalities. Indeed, this alleged society would be less subject to the power of elites. Therefore, it is economic equality that makes a society more meritocratic, at least in political terms. However, the crystallization of the ruling class could be tackled at a different level as well. Even with quotas, the process of selection should be open to a constant debate due to the ever-changing conditions of our world. Indeed, when different paths of individual development are allowed, the system becomes fairer and more responsive (Pines, 2013). The diversification of the sources of merits thus plays a significant role in a meritocracy. How to establish which merits should be evaluated as relevant for future generations? Paradoxically, the answer lies in the Chinese tradition. Historically, China has always relied on experimentation to test the validity of new reforms. In particular, "China's massive transformations over the past three decades are the result of multi-layered and incremental change rather than top-down shock-therapy style reform" (Florini, Lai, & Tan,

2012). Through a decentralized approach mainly based on non-interference with local governments, the Chinese State has been able to maintain its dynamism. On the one hand, the central government can focus on and establish comprehensive targets, on the other hand, local governments are encouraged toward innovation. Then, when experimentations prove to be successful, they are gradually nationalized through the support of the central government. In the light of this, although there is still room for improvement, China is improving its ability to fulfill the requirements of meritocracy by strengthening social mobility and merits diversification, in a process designed to increasingly avoid the preservation of a damaging status quo.

Lastly, there is the problem of legitimacy. In China, this issue was first debated with the 1989 Tiananmen Square protests, which were violently repressed by the mandate of the CPC. The annihilation of the popular demand for reformation was regarded as an act undertaken by a regime lacking legitimacy, otherwise there would have been no need for such extreme measures of coercion. This event prompted scholars all over the world to think that the era of the regime was close to its end. Nevertheless, this was not the case. In general, there is a widespread opinion that, eventually, China will become a liberal democracy. For instance, according to Francis Fukuyama, liberal democracy is "the end of history" since a modern society could legitimate no other form of governance than democracy (Fukuyama, 1989). This stance is further confirmed by Max Weber's tripartite classification of legitimate rule: traditional authority, charismatic authority, and rational-legal authority (Weber M. , 1922). In China, the first one ended in 1911 along with the Qing dynasty; the second one faded following Mao Zedong's death; the third one was expected to emerge with the process of modernization of China's economy (Bell, 2015). Indeed, other Confucian countries, such as Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan, eventually adopted a democratic rule. However, China did not follow the same path: the one-party system endured the struggle and even managed to strengthen its position. No legitimacy issue is posed when the regime works well. In general, Chinese citizens believe that the most appropriate system of governance for their country is their current regime. Obviously, there is dissatisfaction in China as well, but it mostly targets the lower levels of the system (Saich, 2011). Paradoxically, the Chinese approve democracy but support non-democratic rule. How is this possible? In China,

democracy is not understood according to the liberal tradition that promotes people's right to engage in politics by choosing their representatives via elections. Rather, the Chinese understanding of democracy lies its foundations on the concept of guardianship, that is the identification of high-quality leaders who take into account people's needs, interests and demands when taking decisions (Shi & Jie, 2010). In this sense, democracy is intended as "government *for* the people (by elites), rather than government *by* the people" (Bell, 2015). As long as the government works well for its citizens, it is somehow democratic. This is further confirmed by surveys which observe a general support for elections, yet it is believed that they should not be structured around competing parties, and thus competing interests, not to hinder social stability. In the light of this, the Chinese government has managed to become legitimate in the eyes of its citizens while pursuing a non-democratic rule. This political legitimacy derives from three moral justification: nationalism, performance legitimacy, and political meritocracy. Historically, the first source of legitimacy strengthened authoritarian rule in the first stage of the regime, the second one in the reform era, and the third one is currently increasing its political weight (Bell, 2015). As things now stand, the Chinese government has established a solid basis of legitimacy grounded on political meritocracy thanks to, or in spite of, its authoritarian rule. However, to maintains its legitimacy, the meritocratic system needs widespread support by the people, and this is only possible when a space of expression is guaranteed to the people – a condition that is more typical of democracy – who would then be able to make their will of compliance with meritocracy explicit. Therefore, the problem of political meritocracy's legitimization can only be resolved by introducing democratic elements and find a way to let them coexist.

3.1.2. DEMOCRATIC MERITOCRACY

The fundamental problem of making mass political participation coexist with political meritocracy leads us to an attempt to identify new models of governance, which include both democratic and meritocratic elements. For the sake of accuracy, this thesis investigates and proposes a meritocratic system that

welcomes democratic elements, rather than those two principles carrying equal political weight. Three models of democratic meritocracy are presented here. In the first one, democracy and meritocracy meet at the electoral level; in the second one, they merge at the horizontal level of political institutions; in the third one, they are vertically combined with meritocracy at the level of the national level and democracy at the local level (Bell, 2015).

In principle, citizens are able to make wise decisions and use their right to vote for choosing competent leaders to guide society. Yet, they often lack the knowledge and incentive to make rational political decisions. Today, many Chinese scholars believe that China is currently unable to adopt democracy because of an uneducated one half of the population. However, this stance narrows the problem of irrational voters down to their social background, an assumption which has often been confuted by the persistence of irrational voters in relatively industrialized and educated countries (Caplan, 2007). Besides rationality, since voters decide for the common good, they should exercise their right virtuously (Brennan, 2012), yet voters' morality is not an issue open to debate. Even if they choose virtuously, their vote could have devasting consequences for agents in the periphery of power, such as future generations and non-agents. To hand the vote to people does not necessarily guarantee the realization of the common good. Why should we care about voting? From a political point of view, voting should be about providing a good outcome, rather than using good procedures. Therefore, if a good outcome is not ensured, the model can be called into question. To address the problem of irrational and immoral voters while maintaining universal suffrage, J.S. Mill proposed a plural voting scheme. He claimed that everyone should be entitled to have a voice, yet this voice should not necessarily be equal to those of the others. In this sense, he suggested that extra votes should be granted to educated people or people who went through a voluntary exam (Mill, 1861). However, this model presents structural shortcomings. Firstly, such a discrimination would not be widely welcomed. Those who would be excluded from getting the extra votes would dismiss the decision as an attempt from the ruling class to maintain the status quo. Secondly, the group of extra-voters may vary with time, so it should constantly be re-evaluated and thus challenged. In the light of this, it is clear that, in a democratic environment, people would not accept the deprivation of rights or

extra rights. The meritocratic identification of rational and irrational voters appears to be incompatible with democracy, therefore meritocracy and democracy cannot meet at the electoral level.

A horizontal model of conjuncture was already proposed in China by Sun Yat-Sen, co-founder of the Kuomintang (KMT) – the Chinese nationalist party – and advocate for cooperation with CPC aiming to create a united and democratic Chinese nation. He theorized a five-branches constitutional system with legislative, executive, and judicial in addition to other two separate branches: an independent supervisory level and an examination level (Sun, 1994). Within this framework, in order to prove their expertise, democratically-elected leaders should undergo tests. Therefore, this model combined democracy meritocracy at the top level within political institutions. In 1946, the KMT's constitution was designed on Sun's project: the Exam Yuan was established, but it has never had the opportunity to become what Sun envisioned. On the contrary, today it serves as an agency for the meritocratic selection of Taiwanese civil servants, rather than elected officials, who are still elected democratically and are exempted from any examination (Bell, 2015). Indeed, this model encounters political impediments in its practical realization because not only leaders would be concerned with losing power because of mandatory tests, but also voters would not support a system that may exclude their selected leaders from power in case of negative exam results. Even if the examinations were performed before allowing candidates to get involved in an election campaign, the problem of losing an opportunity to be elected despite one's popularity would lead both leaders and citizens to oppose the obligation to take tests. In the light of this, just as control testing appears to be politically impractical for voters, it is the same for leaders. Another hypothesis for combining meritocracy and democracy at the institutional level is to establish two a bicameral legislature (Bell, 2015). One House should be composed of democratically-elected leaders and the other one by meritocratically-chosen leaders. In this manner, the meritocratic House, which would not be influenced by the need for a strategy to be re-elected, would consider the implications of policies in the long run, while the democratic House could satisfy voters' more immediate interests. However, from the point of view of political legitimacy, such a structural reformation would waver because the leaders chosen by voters would have a greater source of legitimacy in the eyes

of the people. Eventually, the meritocratic House would have no solid reason to justify its existence. Indeed, other Asian countries which have transitioned to democracy, such as Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan, have all fully embraced democratic structures without leaving space for other forms of legitimacy. Therefore, as Fukuyama claimed, democracy is truly the end of history (Fukuyama, 1989) since universal suffrage cannot be implemented in conjunction with other political mechanisms of leaders' selection.

Lastly, there is a vertical model of democratic meritocracy, with democracy working at the bottom and meritocracy working at the top. In China, the idea of having democratic institutions at the local level is broadly accepted. In 1988, the central government implemented direct elections in villages with the aim to tackle officials' corruption. In 1998, direct committee elections became mandatory in villages all over the country. By 2008, over nine hundred million Chinese voted (The Carter Center, 2009). More recently, the central government has promoted local deliberative democracy experiments to ensure a fairer representation and promote democratic education (Leib & He, 2006). Generally speaking, it is with a greater presence of democracy that local social issues can be effectively addressed. Indeed, for the Chinese government and its citizens, democracy works well within small communities. However, is democracy's good performance at the local level a factor relevant enough to extend it to the higher levels of governance? In the last thirty years, China has undergone a process of meritocratization of its highest political structures. In order to progress in the command chain, candidates have to take public service exams – competing with thousands of other applicants – and they also have to achieve a good performance at lower levels of the system, which is evaluated through increasingly stringent criteria at each level of government. Although the current system is vitiated by functional defects, which make it subject to external influence over the promotion of officials, there is no question about the significant impact of meritocratization on Chinese political institutions. To ensure that only those with outstanding performances are able to reach the top, cadres are subjected to a demanding process of selection: public administration programs, experience abroad, job rotation, mandatory work in rural areas, and so forth. This multifaceted work experience shapes top officials over the decades. On top of that, the decision-making process occurs within the Standing Committee of the

Politburo which acts as an additional guarantor of sound policy decisions (Bell, 2015). Indeed, it is precisely by virtue of the one-party nature of China that such a meritocratic system is possible. In multiparty democracies, which are characterized by frequent power changes, there is little incentive in pursuing such lengthy processes of training and selection. Leaders' priorities are just different. On the one hand, democratic leaders prioritize short-term policies that give immediate results to boost their popularity and increase their chances to be re-elected. On the other hand, meritocratic leaders prioritize long-term policies that ensure a steady and robust performance to increase their chances of climbing the power ladder.

In China, meritocracy has mainly had the merit of an outstanding result: Chinese leaders have led the country out of poverty in the last thirty years, the greatest accomplishment in the world's history of poverty alleviation. On the other hand, as mentioned before, the current system is vitiated by practical defects such as corruption and abuses of power. The introduction of more democratic elements into the current system would allow it to become more responsive to citizens' concerns. In this sense, democracy in China could take the form of public consultations and deliberative surveys, a greater political space for civil society, or even the use of elections and competition to determine the promotion of meritocratically-selected officials, at least at the lower levels of government (Bell, 2015). In the light of this, different criteria for the identification of leaders at different levels of government seem appropriate for a vast, complex, and stratified country such as China. Democracy at the local level ensures a greater sense of community and a better understanding of local problems. Going up the command chain, the relevance of expertise, talent, and virtue becomes more significant. Problems become more complicated and more interests are at stake since policies affect citizens as well as future generations and non-agents. Therefore, in a country like China, a vertical model would work better in providing a balance between meritocracy and democracy through the selection of appropriate leaders for every level of government.

3.1.3. EXPORTING THE CHINA MODEL?

The China model is based on three pillars: "democracy at the bottom, experimentation in the middle, and meritocracy at the top" (Bell, 2015). Democracy at the bottom emerged as a consequence of the villages' self-governance system. By 1996, every province had taken elections of their representatives, with a high turnout rate. Over time, the quality of elections in freedom and fairness terms has further progressed. Indeed, because of external pressure over bad human rights records, the central government has invested in improving its international image by placing its democratic qualification in the spotlight. However, foreigners' optimism over the extension of village elections to the national level faded away over time: the CPC does not plan to extend the elections to the top, and a democratic transition of China in Western terms is at the very least highly unlikely (Bell, 2015).

Experimentation in the middle is managed by the central government, which monitors policies working at the local level and determines which of them should be extended across the country. This approach has always characterized the CPC since the beginning of its rule, although it is not influenced by Marxism. Rather, it finds its source in Confucianism and the idea of teaching and learning through role models. In particular, Deng Xiaoping, former de facto leader of China between the 1970s and the 1990s, revolutionized the mission of the CPC with a transition from communism to economic growth through experimentations. He created the theory of Socialism with Chinese Characteristics, which led China toward a socialist market economy and, today, is the CPC's official ideology. Generally speaking, 'Chinese characteristics" means the re-interpretation of foreign models of governance, economy, and so forth, on the basis of the peculiar circumstances of China (Ching, 2015). From Deng Xiaoping to Xi Jinping, the scope of policies' innovation widened to economic, political, and social spheres (Florini, Lai, & Tan, 2012). For instance, in 2007, 72 cities had been recognized as an 'experimental point for comprehensive reform' through experimentation such as the implementation of renewable energies (Bell, 2012); in 2014, over 70 cities and counties replaced GDP with more sustainable criteria to evaluate officials' performances (Wildau, 2014). In the light of this, it is clear that

experimentation has been a powerful asset for China's reformation. The adaptability of this system managed to turn a significant number of local projects into successful national programs, acting as a conjunction between the central and the local governments.

Meritocracy at the top, as mentioned before, has a long tradition in China. After the Cultural Revolution, it was decided that officials should have had a set of professional competences and a strong knowledge of their country and the rest of the world. The importance of expertise in selecting and promoting leaders grew constantly. Today, after graduation from university, candidates must pass particularly challenging national examinations. Moreover, to be promoted, officials must respond to increasingly demanding prerequisites. To reach the top levels of government, they begin at a first-level office and then they go through the township, county, department bureau, province/ministry level. Only one out of 140,000 get to the province/ministry level and, to become a vice-minister, one should have at least twenty years of service (Bell, 2015). With many years of work experience in the political field, leaders do not necessarily become more virtuous. Yet, such a system allows for the identification of rational and rapid decisions – especially in case of emergency – and the development of the social abilities necessary to involve masses in policy reforms, making the Chinese leadership quite effective.

Is the China model extensible to the rest of the world? Could some aspects of the political leadership with Chinese characteristics be exported to other countries? First of all, this model is specific to the history of China. Although electoral democracy has been imported from the West, village elections derive from the tradition of village self-governance; experimentation, which was initially conducted during the imperial era, was later institutionalized between the 1930s and the 1950s; political meritocracy is intrinsically linked to the modern Chinese culture and has further developed during the reform era. The Chinese traditional and cultural heritage permeates its model of governance. Secondly, this model is more suitable for vast countries willing to undergo a process of modernization and reformation. Lastly, such a model is possible only within a one-party system. No other country currently shows these same conditions.

However, the pillars on which the China model stands can be adopted by other countries. Democratic elections are a practice which is commonly

supported all over the world. Even in authoritarian countries, this practice could be implemented at the local level just as it occurred in China. Experimentation is relatively more difficult to embrace in democratic countries since short-term electoral cycles hinder long-term experimentations' performance. Moreover, democracies are multiparty systems in which power over separate levels of government is dispersed and those in power may not have the authority to implement national reformation projects. Political meritocracy – the most important element of the China model – is perhaps what encounters more impediments in being exported. Where democracy makes up part of a country's cultural tradition, there is no room for a meritocratization of its political institutions which would imply the limitation of people's right to vote. On the other hand, many countries have not yet consolidated their political institutions and, just as the United States exports democracy abroad, China could do the same with meritocracy. Indeed, some first attempts have already been made to promote meritocracy in Africa, where officials benefit from scholarships to study at the Chinese Academy of Governance (Hulshof & Roggeveen, 2014). In general, China is currently relying on its new soft power to achieve international influence. For instance, it has been lending billions to cover debts, investing in extensive infrastructure works, and promoting the teaching of Mandarin in Africa (Dunga, 2020); it has also launched the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), a massive investment and logistical plan aimed at connecting multiple areas – the Indo-Pacific basin, Africa, the Middle East, Europe and Latin America – through an extended network of economic relations which are beneficial to China's markets, interests, and multilateral diplomacy (China Power, 2020). Although these initiatives represent virtuous events for the mission of exporting the China model by providing an image of a powerful and stable nation, a systemic approach is still missing. Indeed, the image of China as an authoritarian country grounded on coercion is difficult to soften when criticism of the regime is still suppressed. As things now stand, China's soft power is too wavering to actively promote political meritocracy all over the world. However, the dominant democratic rule could be overturned by the intensification of climate change and the emergence of the Leviathan through a global state of emergency. This would be a great window of opportunity for China to strengthen and accelerate its attempts of expanding the China model by proposing the virtue of expertise through meritocracy as the most

effective solution to this unprecedented global issue. In this sense, China could be able to make its interests coincide with general interests, but also to make its model coincide with the future model of planetary governance.

3.2. AUTHORITARIAN ENVIRONMENTALISM

Authoritarian environmentalism is a model of governance characterized by the limitation of individual freedoms and public participation, and the concentration of authority in the hands of allegedly uncorrupted and expert 'eco-elites' who are responsible for the formulation and implementation of environmental policies (Gilley, 2012). Effective policy implementation is crucial for environmental governance. Once the policy direction is decided, citizens are expected to comply with it and mass mobilization is supposed to begin. The advantages of this system of management are "its ability to produce a rapid, centralized response to severe environmental threats, and to mobilize state and social actors" (Gilley, 2012). Therefore, advocates of authoritarian environmentalism maintain that democracies cannot guarantee environmental stability and humanity survival, and its dominance should not prevail because it represents an obstacle to sustainability, which should have the highest priority. Instead, given the importance of environmental policies to protect citizens, they support a model of governance based on meritocracy and policy-makers' expertise.

Indeed, authoritarian environmentalism allows for a rapid and comprehensive response to climate change challenges. China, with its political meritocracy and authoritarian rule, is an excellent example of the effectiveness and celerity of this top-down management: in 2003, the central government established a national energy strategy, and in 2009, a new emissions intensity reduction plan was announced with the purpose to decrease emissions of 40-45 percent by the end of 2020, compared to 2005. Authoritarian environmentalism in China is proving to be effective, both because of the central government's regulatory and coercive powers and local governments' incentives and compliance. Yet, some issues arise from this model. First of all, although authority

pertains to the central government, a system that relies on decentralized implementation is prone to the dispersion of environmental efforts. Secondly, the non-participatory nature of an authoritarian system of governance prevents citizens from engaging in mid-level activism. Therefore, it is believed that a more democratic and cohesive approach could positively affect the process of implementation of environmental policies. If China succeeds in completing top-down structures with bottom-up initiatives, it could avoid fragmentation and achieve a greater level of public participation and awareness that would benefit policy implementation (Gilley, 2012).

3.2.1. ENVIRONMENTAL CHALLENGES AND GOVERNANCE IN CHINA

Authoritarian environmentalism in China presents a number of potential weaknesses. Since China's administration system is characterized by a frequent cadres' turnover, investment in policies that require costs in the short term but show benefits only in the long term – such as environmental policies – is undermined. Local officials with short-termed prospects tend to direct their efforts toward low-quality but quick-outcome policies, to such an extent that demanding areas are affected by underinvestment (Eaton & Kostka, 2014). However, the Chinese model of governance benefits from its authoritarian features, such as legitimized coercive authority, state autonomy, and insulation from societal pressure, which contribute to the success of the eco-elites' strategies. Unfortunately, those features alone do not seem to be sufficiently incisive to guarantee the most effective environmental policy outcomes. For instance, an analysis of cadres' turnover showed that on the one hand, it could bring important benefits to the environmental mission because it favors the closing of institutional gaps which threaten environmental efforts; but, on the other hand, the short lifecycle of turnovers holds cadres in an 'outsider' condition, preventing them from accessing and developing local knowledge and networks. Therefore, it raises difficulties when allocating time, money, and resources on long-termed environmental projects. In the light of this, some scholars recommended the

central government to increase cadres' time prospects in local offices so that the pressure of time constraints and the need for quick outcomes do not hinder their policy investments (Eaton & Kostka, 2014).

The role of local governments has been the subject of several studies on authoritarian environmentalism in China. For instance, some scholars thoroughly investigated the effects of China's 'war on air pollution' through the case of the Hebei province, which heavily relies on the pollution-intensive industry. A turning point in tackling air pollution in China occurred when President Xi Jinping came into office as he prioritized environmental progress as a top concern of his mandate. Nevertheless, because the system of fiscal decentralization gives rise to imbalances and misalignment in central and local incentives, the potential for progress has been compromised. In this sense, the case of Hebei, which was given particularly demanding targets for reducing coal consumption – the so-called '6643 project' – is particularly relevant. To ensure the achievement of those targets, the central government established a system of evaluation that holds senior provincial officials accountable for performance. Yet, the long chain of delegation still diluted accountability. To address this issue, the Ministry of Finance encouraged an administrative reframing, which provided provinces with the direct management of the counties. In spite of this and the central government's economic and directional efforts to support provinces in meeting the desired targets, evidence showed how the single top-down management undermined resource allocation and local incentives. Indeed, provinces are held accountable for their performance, but the real policy implementation is carried out by local enterprises and lower government levels, whose economic and social interests suffer heavily because of cuts to air pollution. The case of Hebei demonstrated that neither assigned responsibility, nor economic and resource incentives, nor clear targets could force the desired implementation outcomes when the local economy and social stability are at stake. In the light of this, "getting the incentives right will be critical to gaining ground in China's war on air pollution" (Karplus & Wong, 2017). Therefore, should the central government opt for a more flexible approach that takes into account the actual options and potential consequences faced by polluters and localities, authoritarian environmentalism would be even more effective.

From the beginning, President Xi Jinping's government took major steps to strengthen actions to tackle climate change. Authoritarian regimes have a comparative advantage in delivering rapid and comprehensive responses to societal concerns, and China, under the leadership of President Xi Jinping has become a green entrepreneurial state that is pioneering in renewable energies. Indeed, China became a global leader in wind energy (2010), solar energy (2013), and electric vehicle production (2017) (Kostka & Zhang, 2018). The President's 'war on pollution' has led to dramatic improvements as a result of his multilateral approach to reducing emissions. Recent reforms allowed provinces to play a greater role in the implementation of policies, switching the system of management to a vertical structure and thus contributing to the reduction of the chain of accountability and the administrative fragmentation typical of the Chinese decentralized model. Nevertheless, a more centralized approach does not necessarily constitute a benefit, since similar reforms have been experimented in the past and ended in a stalemate or even led to a shift back to the previous system. As of today, because of the centralization trend, President Xi Jinping's authoritarian environmentalism has been characterized by a top-down structure, coercive enforcement through campaign-style mechanisms, and tight controls on public participation, in addition to the introduction of new environmental actors and management technologies. In particular, the role of civil society has been critical for the process of green transformation of China, however it has been influenced by the tightening approach adopted by the current government. On the one hand, civil society suffers from a tight regulation enforced by the central government, on the other hand, its demands for environmental protection have been embraced by the CPC as a fundamental matter of legitimacy. The consensus on the importance of environmental action thus brought a number of critical improvements in air pollution control, renewable energies, and electric vehicles (Kostka & Zhang, 2018).

3.2.2. THE PARADOX OF RESPONSIVE AUTHORITARIANISM

In general, there is a vast literature supporting the comparative advantage of authoritarian regimes in delivering a rapid and comprehensive response to climate change challenges. China's rapid and successful environmental policy implementation is hold up as an excellent example. Nevertheless, many scholars pointed out some concerns over the authoritarian environmentalist model adopted by China. The most persisting consideration refers to the effects of the constraints on public participation and civil society. Although those limitations allow the eco-elites to deliver top-down and effective responses, they also prevent the development of widespread public interest and awareness on climate change, and, potentially, the establishment of a form of bottom-up activism. In particular, the role played by Chinese citizens in drawing the government's attention on the environmental issue has been crucial, implying the great potential of a more inclusive approach, which would guide and allow for public participation while remaining within the authoritarian framework (Gilley, 2012) (Kostka & Zhang, 2018). In the light of this, to effectively implement environmental policies, it is fundamental to obtain a widespread support shared by both the eco-elites and the population. Another major concern is the decentralized system of governance and the new re-centralization trend initiated under President Xi Jinping's government. Some scholars believed that decentralization disperses efforts, causes fragmentation, and dilutes accountability. Instead, they advocated for a renovation of the local government's system of management and a greater participation and awareness about local realities to be exerted by the central government (Karplus & Wong, 2017). However, previous attempts of re-centralization have failed, at least to a certain degree (Kostka & Zhang, 2018). Therefore, an alignment of incentives and a balanced coordination between local needs and central actions are strongly recommended to address the challenges brought by climate change.

As mentioned before, many scholars' opinions are based on the premise that authoritarian regimes are more likely to have greater opportunities to tackle climate change compared to democracies. Democracy is found to be less responsive to urgent and demanding issues because of the short-termism of its

electoral cycles, a condition that pressures leaders into pursuing objectives that do not interfere with their possibility to be re-elected. On the contrary, authoritarian leaders are more socially insulated and comparatively unaffected by this kind of pressure, and thus experience greater freedom of decision and action. Nevertheless, several scholars have opposed this allegation, holding that in case of critical matters, autocracies deliver quick responses, but democracies – especially deliberative democracies – have a more long-term commitment by enabling cooperation and participation (Neumayer, 2002) and by being able to carry sound environmental governance because of public pressure (Ortmann, 2016). Others, instead, claimed that neither autocracy nor democracy nor any other existing system of governance is currently able to provide effective mechanisms to effectively tackle environmental threats (Wells, 2007). However, generally speaking, the potential successful prospects of authoritarian environmentalism are not particularly challenged. There seems to be a broad consensus over the Chinese authoritarian environmentalism and its comparative advantage in delivering a rapid and comprehensive response to climate change challenges, despite some weaknesses illustrated before. However, two important aspects should be further addressed in order to justify and strengthen the premises on which authoritarian environmentalism's success is claimed to lie. First, the role and degree of influence of international cooperation on China's domestic policy direction. Second, the nature of responsive authoritarianism and its relationship with civil society and public participation.

Climate change is an unprecedented collective problem in which global events have local implications and local actions have global influence and as such, it is cooperation-hungry. China's opening to the global economy and institutions is increasing its international relations and, as a consequence, the international pressure on its domestic performance. On the one hand, this process of integration has been influencing China's policy pattern in such a way that, over time, the country has abundantly demonstrated to be eager to improve its global image to such an extent that it is striving to become a green pioneer. On the other hand, China's ever-growing role in the global arena is affecting the international agenda as well, and the country is gaining authority in directing the climate change agenda – and other relevant collective issues – to such an extent that it is on its road toward future global leadership. Therefore, although China's

domestic environmental management currently plays an unquestionable prominent role compared to the international level, the effects of a mutually-influenced international context are pervasive. The more China opens to the rest of the world, the more China and the rest of the world change under mutual pressure. This is precisely why the nature of authoritarianism in China has been changing over the last few decades. Today, China appears to be subject to a paradox of 'responsive authoritarianism' (Bird & Marquis, 2019). From past low or absent tolerance levels over activism, today a nascent civil society is leaving its mark on the Chinese governance; and this civil society owns much to environmental activism. However, despite the current consultative mechanisms provided by the Chinese State through its formal channels, bottom-up activism is tolerated insofar it does not hinder top-down stability. Therefore, both environmental activism and policy implementation are framed within a command-and-control approach. The legitimacy of the regime has lied in its ability to develop economic progress, but today other critical concerns are forging ahead, such as the effects of climate change. Thus, going forward, political legitimacy is likely to come from a broader pool of societal issues. In this sense, the consensus on the urgency of environmental action shared by China's policymakers with its citizens is a clear awareness statement by the former on the changing nature of the source of legitimacy.

In the light of this, we can expect two future prospects. On the one hand, in the absence of powerful groups of interest and a strong civil society, China's current authoritarian environmentalism could end in a stalemate in the long run, thus wasting its comparative advantage on climate change governance compared to the democratic rule. On the other hand, if China manages to involve civil society by promoting a less constrained form of public participation while continuing its successful green transformation and thus increasing its international image, its soft power could strengthen enough to persuade the international opinion about the need of a global model of climate change governance to be shaped on the China model, which enhances eco-elites' expertise and thus legitimate authority.

4. RETHINKING CHINA

In order to go back to the discourse of the Climate Leviathan and understand how a Chinese Climate Leviathan could be in practice in the light of a greater knowledge of the China model and its authoritarian environmentalism, it is now necessary to rethink China under a new perspective. What has the country done to tackle climate change? How has it shifted its trajectory from being the world's first polluter to being positioned in the first rows of climate change governance leadership? Why should we follow such a leadership?

China has a terrible track record of pollution, which earned it a very bad international image. Moreover, it has a long history of oppression and human rights violation. On this ground, it is hard to imagine an international recognition of China as a popular leader, in spite of the potential benefits of its model. As mentioned before, good initiatives aimed at promoting its soft power appear to be at a too early stage to envisage a subversion of its international image, and thus China's stereotype is struggling to find an end. Nevertheless, the country's potential is developing at an astonishing speed, and China continues its relentless pursuit of power. On the one hand, impressive environmental efforts have led China to become a pioneer in renewable energy. However, paradoxically, it is currently positioned in the peculiar conjunction of being the world's largest coal consumer and renewable energy developer at the same time (Climate Action Tracker, 2019). How is this condition possible? The CPC's sources of legitimacy changed through time and, from the reform era and the opening of the country to the world's economy, the Chinese leadership has prioritized poverty alleviation and economic development to boost the country's welfare. This maneuver has gained the CPC a widespread popularity since it was seen as the guarantor of China's prosperity. However, unsustainable economic development has brought a number of pressing environmental, safety, and health issues in the long run, which became unavoidable. In this sense, the source of legitimacy of the CPC has undergone a process of transformation that is leading to the emergence of a new super-value, that of sustainability.

On the other hand, more space is given to a nascent civil society, which finds its breeding ground in environmental activism. However, it is important to understand how this space is used, how civil society is understood in China, and how it contributes to changing the government's approach toward its citizens and their interests. Today, civil society is not yet a fully systemic part of the China model. However, to provide a greater role to such a relevant element would be extremely beneficial. Not only it would offer a democratic form of consensus – and thus legitimization, in the sense of being supported by the people – to the regime, but it would also ensure the cultivation of new ideas and virtues outside of the mainstream path of governance. This is precisely why civil society should be included within the framework of the Chinese tradition of experimentation: new successful ideas could be implemented into the CPC's official policy planning. Just as it is working for environmental issues, it could work for other fields of competence and in wider prospects. However, as things now stand, the policy path is too rigid, and many talents and much expertise residing outside of the official channels are not exploited to their fullest. On the contrary, allowing for a systemic presence of a diverse civil society within the system could be extremely beneficial. In this sense, to recognize the space of civil society in China is to recognize whether civil society would have the same role in a planetary state of emergency. In a Climate Mao, based on coercion and oppression measures, no place for civil society would be allowed. The sovereign would be absolute and insulated from its subjects. Nevertheless, a Climate Mao relies on an obsolete image of China, an image that no longer corresponds to the identity of the country.

This chapter focuses on China as a real-time changing environment that is trying to improve its image as a legitimate authority. Through inclusiveness, expertise, and ability for action, China is making real efforts to compensate the systemic gaps which make its model unsustainable for the rest of the world. In this sense, China is strengthening its international image to be considered a good Leviathan. The chapter consists of three parts. Part one describes the Chinese nascent civil society and its mutual influence on both environmentalism and governance. Part two identifies the new environmental portfolio of China which is earning the country a position of leadership as a global green pioneer; it also illustrates CPC's history of legitimacy and how Chinese citizens are changing the rules of the game of legitimacy pushing its sources toward new super-values,

from Maoism back to Confucianism and from prosperity toward sustainability. Part three brings forward the proposal of a new understanding of the Chinese Leviathan: from a Climate Mao to a Climate Leviathan with Chinese Characteristics.

4.1. CIVIL SOCIETY WITH CHINESE CHARACTERISTICS

Today, China is experiencing an unprecedented development of its civil society by virtue of its environmental NGOs. Although the purpose of these organizations is to address climate change implications, their work has gone further by providing a stimulus for a greater public participation. As pioneers of civil society, environmental activists have experimented with the limits of Chinese advocacy defined by the central government's constraints and have been able to carve a greater space for civic dialogue and gradually push those boundaries. Through a number of strategies and channels of communication, environmental NGOs are thus paving the way for a stronger civil society with Chinese characteristics. Civil society organizations have found a way to cooperate with the central government while setting the bar for more inclusive standards of public participation, thus becoming relevant pressure groups in the political landscape of China.

Alongside with social and economic development, China's civil society has undergone a process of great transformation. From the 1980s to the 1990s, when reforms and the open-door policy had a great impact on civil society, a number of organizations have been established, reaching over 700,000 registered organizations as of 2019 (Kuhn, 2019). Today, the central government supports a 'civil society with Chinese characteristics', which means that public participation and engagement in policy-making are allowed within the consultative authoritarian framework, under the influence of the Chinese Communist Party, and as long as mass mobilization is not involved. Three different types of civil society organizations are allowed: Civilian Organizations, Social Organizations, and Civilian Non-enterprise Units. They work in many fields but have been

particularly relevant in the field of environmental protection and sustainable development.

One can argue that the expansion of civil society and environmentalism is strongly intertwined, since the emergence of citizens' environmental awareness has influenced the establishment of related NGOs, and those associations have contributed to the spreading and organization of environmental public participation. Therefore, environmental activism represents not only a great opportunity to tackle climate change and mitigate its effects through mass cooperation, but also a significant stimulus for transforming the relationship between the State and the people of China. Another important role in the spreading of ideas of public participation and the modernization of civil society organizations is played by China's opening to the international arena. Through an increasing cooperation with global governance institutions such as the United Nations, China is allowing for a greater space of civic dialogue in line with global requirements. However, the central government still pursues harmony, public security, and social cohesion over pluralism and competition, thus it consistently exerts its authority on civil society, which, because of political and legal constraints, still has much to gain.

Nevertheless, public participation can play a significant role in a society despite not being political, especially from an environmental perspective (Martens, 2006). In particular, in China, non-political public participation has translated into a path that allowed environmental NGOs to become relevant pressure groups in terms of policy-making. Indeed, although a report by CIVICUS includes China within the group of countries where civil society is classified as 'closed' (CIVICUS, 2019), it is not absent nor pointless as claimed by some scholars (Ho, 2001). Undeniably, NGOs face a number of restrictions, and unconstrained mass mobilization can lead to a strong response by the State, but the central government's reaction is nuanced as well and does not necessarily involve repression, rather than other forms of control such as censorship, when dealing with controversial issues.

Some scholars believe that the only chances for becoming more relevant and driving policy change in the Chinese political landscape are reserved to GONGOs, which are government-organized non-governmental organizations, because of their proximity with the central government (Dai & Spires, 2017).

Nevertheless, environmental NGOs have achieved astonishing and unprecedented results. Indeed, these organizations have been able to draw the central government's and public attention toward critical issues, proving that their role goes farther than mere service providers. In light of this, past attempts of Chinese environmental activists and organizations paved the way for a non-confrontational strategy of discussion with the state that proved to be the most effective approach in China because of its history and culture. Therefore, by working within the available space and playing by the rules, Chinese citizens' associations have gradually pushed the boundaries of social engagement.

4.1.1. HISTORY OF CIVIL SOCIETY IN CHINA

Although a form of civil society meant as a non-governmental and non-market association of people already existed beforehand, China began to familiarize itself with the concept of 'NGO' in 1995, on the occasion of the United Nations World Women's Conference in Beijing. In general, the history of civil society in China can be divided into three different stages: i) 1911-1949; ii) 1949-1978; and iii) 1978 to the present day. During the first phase, a number of civil society organizations have been established, ranging from guilds to clandestine associations. In 1932, the first legal document on civil society had been issued, and the central government started to regulate civil society's activities. During the second phase, the CPC rearranged civil society organizations under socialist principles. In 1950, another critical legal document was adopted in order to regulate the registration of civil society organizations. In the meanwhile, critical structural changes affected civil society: the politicization of NGOs and the ban of illegal social associations such as guild, political parties, charities, and religious organizations (CIVICUS, 2006). As a consequence, the organization of civil society was allowed as long as its nature was non-political. The number of organizations rapidly increased until the advent of the Cultural Revolution, when civil society came to an end. During the third phase, comprehensive reforms significantly changed the political and social structure of China, and civil society was affected as well. From the 1980s, civil society organizations increasingly

flourished, reaching a peak during the 1990s because of economic reforms and openness. This period was characterized by a system of 'small government, big society' (Brodsgaard & Strand, 1998), which provided the breeding ground for the development of current civil society. In particular, Civilian Non-enterprise Units significantly arose and gained a critical role in supporting the establishment of private schools and hospitals, among many others. At that time, the legal structure concerning civil society, which dated back to the 1950s, could not meet the needs of the organizations anymore, and a new legislation was adopted in 1989, requiring organizations seeking registration to gain a governmental sponsor – a very challenging requirement for most of the independent organizations (Hilton, 2013). Today, despite most of the legislations that regulate civil society in China have been established at the end of the 1990s, two important regulations have been implemented: China's Charity Law (2016) and the Law of People's Republic of China on Administration of Activities of Overseas Nongovernmental Organizations in the Mainland of China (2017) (Kuhn, 2019). The former targets Chinese organizations and it is considered an important step toward modernization, the latter targets international organizations which work in China and it has collected criticism because of its mandatory process of registration. As of 2019, most major NGOs have succeeded in completing the registration process, whereas smaller NGOs are experiencing issues that prevent them from registering or even discourage them from getting involved in China (Kuhn, 2019).

The decades of the 1980s and the 1990s have been particularly relevant for the development of civil society in China. Because of the economic transition from a planned economy to a market economy, a social transition happened as well. The work unit system (*danwei*), which linked individuals to the CPC by acting as a basic first-tier structure of the society, was gradually left behind and thus allowing civil society to flourish on an unprecedented scale. In contrast to the West, where civil society emerged as a need to protect individual rights through collective action, in China it started to develop when the central government gradually transferred part of the social welfare management to its citizens, allowing for more pluralization and autonomy, and for the creation of a civil society that does not necessarily oppose the State (Thibaut, 2011). For this very reason, most of the civil society organizations in China work with social service activities

(CIVICUS, 2006). More recently, the admission of China into the World Trade Organization and its openness and participation to the globalized world significantly contributed to a new system of management of civil society as well. Social actors have multiplied, and self-organizations have been strengthened, becoming beneficial for both national and social interests (CIVICUS, 2006). In the light of this, it can be concluded that the reforms that separated the State from the people, those that provided the impetus for the market economy, and those that led to the participation in the global political arena are the key factors that allowed for a stronger civil society in China.

Today, three different types of civil society organizations can be found in China: i) Civilian Organizations, ii) Social Organizations, and iii) Civilian Non-enterprise Units. Civilian Organizations have to be registered at the Ministry of Civil Affairs to be legally recognized, Social Organizations include associations, leagues, academies, chambers of commerce, eight mass groups, and 25 other approved social organizations, whereas Civilian Non-enterprise Units include private schools, hospitals, and institutions (CIVICUS, 2006). International NGOs usually work in the field of environmental protection and are registered as Civilian Non-enterprise Units, although the central government is currently seeking to move those NGOs into the group of registered Civilian Organizations. Another group of civil society organizations that is worth mentioning is the one of GONGOs, government-organized non-governmental organizations, which work under a certain degree of control by the State. Because of their corporatist structure and their proximity to the State in terms of personal connections (*guanxi*), they are allowed to be engaged with the central government's policy-making process (Dai & Spires, 2017). Nevertheless, GONGOs are currently undergoing a process of modernization, and they will likely become more independent in the near future.

4.1.2. THE RISE, ROLE, AND IMPACT OF ENVIRONMENTALISM

The legacy of Maoist slogans such as 'men conquer nature' left some room for the emergence of environmentalism only in the 1980s-1990s. By virtue of the

reform era, significant changes happened in China and the first pioneers in environmental protection made their voices heard in an attempt to prevent the construction of the Three Gorges Dam, a massive hydroelectric gravity dam praised for its innovation but criticized for flooding archaeological sites, displacing about 1.3 million people, and causing an extensive environmental impact. In 1993, another famous attempt to advocate in favor of environmentalism was made by the journalist Tang Xiyang with his book 'A Green World Tour', which proclaimed him as the leader of the Chinese environmentalist youth (Economy, 2004). Alongside Tang, the adventurer Yang Xin became the face of nature conservation, and many other less famous citizens contributed to redirecting public attention toward environmental awareness. The central government began its campaign for environmental protection as well, organizing top-down campaign-style mass mobilizations, such as the 1993 China Environmental Protection Millennia Journey, an annual event where journalists gathered to discuss the state of environmental protection in 28 provinces. At the same time, environmental awareness was promoted nationwide in schools thanks to the activity of the Communist Youth League (Wu, 2007). Lastly, a turning point in China's environmental movement was the establishment of Friends of Nature in 1994. Working around the nearly impossible two-tier registration process for non-governmental organizations, it became the second organization to be registered with the Ministry of Civil Affairs (Hilton, 2013). After Friends of Nature, many other environmental associations gained the formal status and NGOs channeled environmental activism in China (Wu, 2007).

Today, according to the Civil Society Index Report for China, most civil society organizations are focused on poverty eradication and environmental protection. These data reflect the core values and critical interests of Chinese citizens. In particular, public commitment is stronger in environmental protection and the related civil society organizations are reported to be the most productive. The important role of NGOs in environmental protection has been recognized by the central government. On the one hand, NGOs are able to both engage with local communities and receive international support. On the other hand, the central government has been more and more responsive to the demands and needs of those NGOs, thus establishing different forms of cooperation. Out of the about 3000 NGOs in the environmental field, the most relevant associations are

Friends of Nature, Global Village, Green Home, Shannuo Society, and Green Earth Volunteers. They focus on environmental promotion, forestation, garbage classification, and animal protection, and they support the central government in environmental action and legislation (CIVICUS, 2006). Alongside with NGOs, the engagement of local citizens is contributing to creating the breeding ground for a new expanded system of participation (Thibaut, 2011). On the one hand, growing public demand and concern about environmental issues indicate the need for new participatory mechanisms to be evaluated and implemented at the state level. On the other hand, public participation contributes to strengthen the role of NGOs as well, which in turn advocate for more public participation, creating a circular interconnection of multiple actors: citizens, NGOs, and the State. Nevertheless, despite the widespread recognition of the need for more civil society and the benefits that it could bring to China – in particular in the fields of environmental protection and sustainable development – the central government is still cautious in creating the necessary conditions to let civil society organizations thrive (Hilton, 2013). China's opening to the globalized world allowed for the circulation of new 'images' of civil society, and this has been both an inspiration for its citizens and a concern for its State. However, as China continues its global emergence, it cannot refrain from being influenced by the ideas of the rest of the world.

The astonishing results of environmental NGOs in establishing a new space for civic dialogue in China – especially when compared to other fields of social activism – are better explained taking into consideration their ability to communicate and create networks. Environmentalists developed channels of support which promote and regulate joint cooperation. For instance, Friends of Nature worked as a training camp for its members, some of which used this experience to create other associations that were later supported by Friends of Nature itself. The extent of the impact of networking led NGOs to consider joint cooperation as an activity integrated within their field of work, gradually allowing them to expand beyond urban areas and mobilize citizens through campaigns. In the light of this, the role of environmental NGOs became critical as they first explored the boundaries of advocacy in China. By learning through experience and sharing the results of their experiments with the political constraints, they have found balance in employing non-confrontational strategies and establishing personal connections (*guanxi*) when dealing with the central government. This

cautious – yet effective – approach is one of the reasons why environmental activism has experienced a few episodes of repression when compared to other civil society fields (Wu, 2007). Environmentalism has reached important targets in discussing theoretical ideas as well. Often, the civic space created by green advocacy led to a broader political discourse concerning principles of social justice and human rights. In particular, as the central government began its mission for establishing GONGOs, NGOs strengthened normative principles and explored joint cooperation in order to maintain their activities within local communities and their degree of autonomy from the central government's control, while reaching ever-expanding targets.

The issue of GONGOs is significant since it reflects the State's dilemma over the autonomy of civil society organizations. On the one hand, the State exerts constraints over civil society because of the potential risks of relaxing its authority. On the other hand, the social and economic growth that China experienced has increasingly created a momentum for civil society's development that cannot and shall not be halted. Moreover, although strict, regulations are not preventing citizens from being engaged in environmental protection and the central government itself has expressed a certain degree of toleration, or even has supported some civil society's activities since, otherwise, it would not be able to fulfill the widespread needs and demands for a greener China on its own. Nevertheless, the threat of repression is still a viable option for the State to maintain the social order. It is unclear what is the exact degree of autonomy of environmental advocacy and the level of toleration of its activities. As mentioned before, this balance is constantly negotiated by NGOs and the central government. Indeed, environmental associations have found it easier to deal with the State as an ally rather than as an enemy, giving rise to what Ho defined as "a greening without conflict, an environmentalism with a safe distance from direct political action" (Ho, 2001). On the one hand, this approach could mean that, starting from grassroots organizations, environmental activism has bent to top-down constraints and waived confrontation by working within the parameters dictated by the central government. On the other hand, "civil involvement does not have to be political in order to be significant" (Martens, 2006), therefore, by taking this path, civil society organizations have been able to become a significant pressure group despite the political constraints.

4.1.3. THE MISSING LINK: NGOs

Through the emergence and spreading of environmentalism, civil society in China developed gradually but steadily. The expansion of civil society and the intensification of public participation have led many to wonder whether these changes would prompt a process of democratization. In 1969, S.R. Arnstein investigated the concept of citizen participation within a society and formulated its spectrum with the image of a ladder, where the bottom corresponds to the level of 'manipulation', the top corresponds to the level of 'citizen control', and in the middle there are different degrees of social engagement (Arnstein, 1969). A critical aspect of this ladder is the gap between a powerful or powerless participation: when citizens have no power to intervene and to ensure that their demands will be met, then participation is considered to be a mere 'ritual' that contributes only to maintaining the ruling elites' status quo. Being influenced by the radical years of the 1960s in the United States, the scholar elaborated the ladder system with a tendency toward participatory democracy, thus implying that the lower levels of the ladder are to be considered illegitimate. However, it still is a useful instrument to understand how public participation can have a very nuanced expression within a society, regardless of its form of governance. From what it concerns China, public participation has historically been low-level and downstream (Gilley, 2012). Yet, in recent years the central government has realized the importance and urgency of environmental activism as a matter of legitimacy, and the State has increasingly encouraged its citizens to get involved in public participation at local levels (Guo & Yu, 2019). Nevertheless, the central government still controls public participation, and a radical change is unlikely to happen when compared to a gradual and less threatening approach.

In the light of this, environmental NGOs developed three different strategies to negotiate with the State. First, they pursue a stable and active relationship through institutional means. Second, they present their policy goals only through selected and effective frames. Third, they direct media exposure over their concerns in order to obtain public attention and create pressure over those concerns (Dai & Spires, 2017). By working within the available space for civil society and playing by the rules, Chinese citizens' associations have

gradually pushed the boundaries of allowed social engagement. As mentioned before, NGOs that work in the field of environmental protection have pioneered advocacy in China, paving the way for an extension of civil society. The importance of this achievement has been recognized by NGOs themselves, which have not treated policy advocacy as an exceptional objective but included it into their regular activity. This shows that the "Chinese politics is not immune to influence from nonstate actors" (Anderson, Buntaine, Mengdi, & Bing, 2019). On the one hand, NGOs have urged the State to take action in environmental protection by directing public concern and support. On the other hand, they have served the central government as – at least – service providers in their work field whenever the State was not able to reach the desired targets. As a consequence, NGOs and the central government's joint cooperation led to important policy results. An impressive study led by some professors of Nanjing University and the University of California found out that local governments monitored by environmental NGOs comply better with the central government's requirements and regulations without negatively affecting public satisfaction over local government's performance or media attention over pollution (Anderson, Buntaine, Mengdi, & Bing, 2019). These findings are based on a research that included 50 local governments, half of which were informed of the monitoring, in a time period of three years. This is an excellent example of how NGOs' strategy of cooperation with the central government can improve the overall compliance and results of shared environmental goals. It is interesting to note how, by cooperating with the State, NGOs have contributed to improving its performance and thus, perhaps, helping the central government to maintain social order and cohesion (Teets, 2014). Nevertheless, it is clear that environmental organizations are not only service providers on behalf of the State, but first and foremost, they actively participate in drawing the central government's attention, commitment, and action toward green targets. And this goes way beyond the consultative authoritarianism. Indeed, as soon as the State provides NGOs with channels of communication, those channels are used by NGOs in broader manners than those they were designed for.

In the light of this, as these organizations grow, their voices become louder, and their presence becomes more and more relevant. Although constrained, it is likely that civil society will expand from NGOs and environmental protection. This

does not necessarily mean that China is going to experience civil society and public participation as intended in Western democracies. Rather, China is going to develop further its civil society with Chinese characteristics, with a gradually expanded support by the central government as long as it remains under its control (Kuhn, 2019). However, the State's control over public participation could be relaxed over time. An important contribution to this outcome is China's recent position on environmental protection and sustainable development. On the one hand, China is increasing its engagement in the global arena, for instance, through its partnership with the United Nations and the G20, and important international projects such as the BRI. On the other hand, China is implementing green elements into its domestic policy, for instance, including the concept of 'ecological civilization' – a series of ideas and measures which guide China toward a greener future within a holistic approach to sustainable development – into the Chinese constitution in 2018 (Hansen, Li, & Svarverud, 2018). In the light of this, a more relaxed civil society with Chinese characteristics represents a great opportunity for identifying and experimenting with innovative projects at the domestic level and engaging more extensively in international cooperation. Even though the prominent role of the CPC in managing the system in which civil society finds its expression is clear, the trend of cooperation and the expansion of tolerance toward public participation is clear as well. In this balance, the one issue that still needs to be investigated is how far the political boundaries of civil society can be pushed.

Although China is a country without a democratic history, it has developed a unique form of civil society which is gradually increasing its area of influence. NGOs are becoming the missing link between the people and the State, and both citizens and the central government are working together to fill the public participation gap. China's citizen engagement does not correspond to a traditional Western definition of civil society, yet it finds its expression in the term 'civil society with Chinese characteristics'. On the one hand, this concept is developing beyond the original scope designed by the State and Chinese citizens are carving out their role within the available space for civic dialogue. On the other hand, the central government is showing a certain degree of tolerance over citizens' activities as long as they are not perceived as threatening. The role of environmental activists in experimenting with the limits of advocacy has been

particularly relevant to this effect. Indeed, Chinese environmentalism has been characterized by two different features: it is widespread, and it is non-confrontational. Environmental leaders have been pioneers not only in advocacy experimentation but also in creating networks where they could define their focus and improve their performance, both with the State and the public. Advocacy and communication thus became integral parts of their activities and environmental NGOs have been working beyond their original field of competence. Through time, the role of civil society organizations grew to the extent that they gained the 'social privilege' of denouncing the central government's deficiencies and bad policies, although they usually support the State's goals. Being able to master their role within the boundaries, environmental NGOs have significantly strengthened their influence and presence. As a result of environmental NGOs' efforts, civil society organizations are increasingly effective in educating citizens about social concerns, giving voice to such concerns so that they shall be heard by policy-makers, and, more generally, empowering people.

Even though NGOs are increasingly acting as a pressure group in the political arena, many challenges need to be tackled by civil society organizations. In order to obtain more independence, they need further political liberalization. As they gain a broader support, civil society is likely to expand beyond NGOs. Nevertheless, Chinese civil society does not only need widespread diffusion but, first and foremost, a greater penetration into Chinese customs and traditions. By doing so, public participation would become more normalized and thus it would thrive, although in compliance with Chinese characteristics. For this purpose, it is recommended for civil society organizations to remain autonomous, strengthen their networks, and develop federations. By promoting both domestic and international partnerships, NGOs will be able to push the political boundaries further, enhance their political opportunities, and transform the relationship between the State and the people of China.

4.2. CHINA'S NEW CLIMATE PORTFOLIO

Following its plan of reformation and opening up, China has steadily increased its international influence since the 1970s. Today, its aim is to expand its soft power on a global scale and become a global leader thanks to initiatives such as the BRI. However, this aim cannot be reached only through the pursuit of economic hegemony. Since 2006, unsustainable development led China to become the world's largest emitter. Yet, even though the climate change crisis represents a serious concern for the country – and the whole planet – it also has provided a number of economic and political opportunities. Indeed, from an environmental point of view, China is subject to a number of paradoxes. It is both the world's largest coal consumer and renewable energy developer. In the light of this, it is clear how its domestic – and foreign – policy directions have a strong impact on the ability of the whole planet to stabilize global warming. Although being the world's largest emitter, China currently seems to be meeting its Paris Agreement targets. Many domestic policies concerning environmental sustainability are contributing to China's reformation, and research suggests that, as things now stand, the country will probably peak its GHG emissions before 2030 (Gallagher & Zhang, 2019). Indeed, the CPC is taking up the challenge of turning China into a green entrepreneurial state by finding new markets for the new and fecund global green economy, such as wind and solar energy, other than electric vehicle production (Kostka & Zhang, 2018). Besides the business opportunities brought by climate change, there are political opportunities as well. Although welfare and performance do not award the CPC with the retention of legitimacy in the long run, they are not necessarily hindered by the emergence of sustainability as a new super-value. On the contrary, prosperity and sustainability could merge or could even manage to coincide. And, if this was achieved, the legitimacy of the ruling elite would be further strengthened, having it found a way to persist through times of peace (today) and times of crisis (tomorrow's climate change intensification). In the light of this, if the CPC manages to convert climate change challenges into new opportunities – as it appears to be carrying out – and fill the gaps which have earned it a bad reputation, then its soft power would reach unprecedented peaks. In the light of this, it is clear that China's transformation is

going to yield its most important results in the future. Yet, this future will probably come earlier than other democratic counterparts.

4.2.1. A NEW TRACK RECORD

Over the last thirty years, the impressively rapid economic growth of China brought along the building of cities and infrastructures requiring a massive production of electricity, iron, and cement which were provided by coal industries. Although this unsustainable development generated unprecedented job creation and wealth for the country, it also led to a disastrous environmental track record and severe air pollution, the so-called 'airpocalypse'. Research showed that the airpocalypse had shortened life expectancy by a total of 2.5 billion years for 500 million people in Northern China (Chen, Ebenstein, Greenstone, & Li, 2013). As a consequence, new attention and commitment were given to environmental issues. The issue could not be ignored anymore.

With the ratification of the Paris Agreement, China committed to reduce its GHG emissions and produce 20 percent of energy from non-fossil fuels by 2030 (United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, 2015). However, in 2018, the Chinese emissions further increased, and a general concern over China's ability to achieve its targets spread. The major challenge lied in the reformation of the electric industry. Historically, it is the National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC) that guides China's macroeconomic planning. The NDRC has often supported existing energy producers, such as coal plants. Nevertheless, in 2015, China initiated a process of reform of the energy sector, promoting a greater consumption of renewables. This has been done through two interdependent approaches: on the one hand, energy trading was reformed so that generators with the lowest cost sources – that are renewable sources – would be prioritized; on the other hand, this system lowered the costs of new renewable energy projects, especially solar energy projects. Yet, there is no guarantee of success. Indeed, the businesses impacted by such a reform are huge state-owned companies. Moreover, the owners of coal plants and the local governments of those provinces which produce and consume coal resist change

(Gallagher & Zhang, 2019). Besides, the United States-China trade war and the COVID-19 crisis affected the Chinese economy by slowing down its growth rate and increasing concerns over employment, which could impact the green reformation by strengthening conservative instincts. Lastly, although China invested extensively in wind and solar power, it has also continued the development of coal plants in order to cover its domestic demand. However, the reform of the energy sector will lead to a power overcapacity that could be resolved by favoring the further development of renewable energies through targeted policies.

In spite of conservative resistance and the many challenges that the green reformation has encountered, Chinese leaders have steadily pursued the environmental mission by undertaking aggressive measures to curb GHG emissions. These measures are proving to be beneficial for improving citizens' quality of life, gaining significant shares of green technology markets, and increasing the country's soft power in the international arena. For instance, as other low-cost manufacturing economies began to compete in international markets, China redirected its export market toward new green technologies such as electric vehicles, wind turbines, and solar panels. In order to further increase new opportunities for green development, the CPC has provided special benefits for companies in the renewable energy market, such as free land and low-interest loans; it has also provided direct subsidies and tax incentives to citizens who purchase electric vehicles. Moreover, since 2007 China has become the world's largest producer of solar panels, thus strengthening its market hegemony in green energy technology (Kahn, 2016).

As stated before, China's GHG emissions are expected to increase until 2030. However, the rate of growth is likely to decline by the end of 2020 and the emissions' peak could occur early. China is currently on track to reach its Paris Agreement's Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) both for 2020 and 2030. Moreover, President Xi Jinping has already declared that he intends to apply a strengthening of China's commitment to its NDCs (Climate Action Tracker, 2019). Through its ambitious efforts and a good combination of environmental policies and renewable energy investments, such as industrial and vehicle efficiency, power sector transformation, and emissions trading, China is establishing itself as a global pioneer in climate action. Indeed, hundreds of policies related to

reducing energy consumption and GHG emissions have been implemented in China over the last decade. Examples include the feed-in-tariff scheme for providing renewable energy generators with a guaranteed price, energy efficiency requirements for power plants, motor vehicles, buildings and facilities, targets for non-fossil fuel production, and mandatory limits on coal consumption. To tackle air pollution, China contributed to increasing by 5 percent the world's green leaf area as a part of its forest protection and expansion programs – the Three-North Shelter Forest Program, or 'Green Great Wall' (Chen, et al., 2019). Moreover, it has installed extensive wind and solar infrastructures and has built massive industries to produce solar panels, solar batteries, and electric vehicles. In 2017, the country pioneered a domestic trading scheme which provides a market for GHG emissions' quotas, in stark contrast with other developed countries' domestic performances, such as the United States (Gallagher & Zhang, 2019).

So far, the domestic trading scheme of China has not been particularly significant, but research shows that it will have important effects over the long term since it is designed to increase its price by 3 percent each year until 2030. As a consequence of a higher price for emissions allowances and a decrease in the total GHG emissions after 2025, the trading scheme may become a major driver for China's energy transformation. Another fundamental aspect is the energy efficiency standards, in particular those established for plants, factories, and vehicles which rely on coal. Only through a continuous update of such standards China will be able to ensure a steady progress (Gallagher & Zhang, 2019). Chinese initiatives abroad, such as the BRI, will also have a significant impact on global emissions. By choosing to finance fossil fuel or renewable energy infrastructures in 126 countries, China is estimated to determine the nature of 66 percent of global emissions by 2050 (Climate Action Tracker, 2019). Although the returns of these valuable policies and initiatives will be in the long run, they will be particularly beneficial for China as they are going to improve energy security, economic development, and the reduction of air pollution, and the country's soft power. In general, the greatest challenge in fulfilling the Paris Agreement's NDCs will be to ensure that local governments and businesses comply with the central government's policies. Historically, GDP has been prioritized as the most important criterion to evaluate local governments'

performance. As a consequence, the central government has struggled in enforcing environmental policies at the local level. However, as mentioned before, GDP has already been replaced with sustainability as a yardstick for evaluating the performance of more than 70 local governments (Wildau, 2014). If China confirms its commitment to implementing present and announced environmental policies, it is likely to reach GHG emissions' peak even before 2030, and a new environmental track record will be established.

4.2.2. A NEW SUPER-VALUE

Historically, the CPC was grounded on Mao Zedong's reinterpretation of the communist ideals and thus it drew legitimacy from its ability to meet those ideals. However, today few Chinese support communism in the strict sense, since it is believed to have slowed down the process of modernization of the country. In this sense, we could argue that the CPC has managed to maintain its legitimacy *despite* its official doctrine. How did it succeed? In the past, the principal vehicle of political legitimacy has been nationalism, whose the CPC was the guarantor. Indeed, during the 'century of humiliation', China was subject to a number of important military defeats and it fell into civil war. Because of this, the elites recognized that their politics had become marginal relative to the rising Westphalian order, and they acknowledged that their system had to be revolutionized by strengthening the State at any cost (Carlson, 2011). This is precisely why, when Mao Zedong avenged the national humiliation – with his famous quote "the Chinese people have stood up" (Zedong, 1949) – the CPC gained unprecedented legitimacy. However, legitimacy based on nationalism and military dominance does not last long in times of peace. Gradually, people become more aware of the distinction between what is good for the country and what is good for the ruling elite. Therefore, the elites realized that it was in moral authority that the government could win people's trust, rather than military power. Being aware of this, the CPC opted for a softer form of nationalism with a strong reference to the Chinese traditional values of Confucianism such as harmony and filial piety. The CPC is officially communist, yet the theory of Socialism with

Chinese Characteristics relies more on Confucianism than Marxism. Indeed, President Xi Jinping has officially established Confucianism as a pillar of Chinese traditional culture which will help to fill the moral vacuum that has previously led to issues such as corruption (Kang Lim & Blanchard, 2013). Nevertheless, the CPC could neither officially recognize Confucianism as its ideology, since it still is the *Communist* Party of China, nor completely rely on nationalism to justify its authority, since this sentiment is not powerful and widespread as it was in the past.

Another fundamental source of political legitimacy lied in the Confucian belief that the government has the duty to safeguard people's basic needs in order to improve their chances of moral development (Guo B. , 2010). If the government manages to provide people's basic means of subsistence, for instance, through poverty alleviation, then its political legitimacy is guaranteed. This is precisely what happened with the Deng Xiaoping's reform era and the resulting impressive economic performance of China. Nevertheless, performance legitimacy cannot be sustainable in the long run. Indeed, when the government succeeds in providing the conditions to ensure people's basic welfare, its mission becomes more complex. Over time, interests diversify, and people could struggle to find adequate channels for expressing such interests. If the government is not able to provide institutionalized means of public participation, social stability is at stake (Shaoguang, 2012). Therefore, although political meritocracy and performance are undoubtedly some of the greatest sources of legitimacy for the CPC, especially because of the guardianship discourse, civil society is still emerging because of and thanks to environmental activism and public participation.

Starting from 2012, a yearly survey asked Chinese citizens about their opinions on air pollution, revealing that they considered it a serious problem. In 2013, when the airpocalypse caused the closing of many public facilities, public concern surged. Then it gradually mitigated, perhaps because of the central government's new environmental policies and investments in renewable energy (Pew Research Center, 2016). For years, Chinese leaders focused on poverty alleviation and economic growth as the sources of their legitimacy. Today, public concern shifted toward environmental issues, and so has the central government's attention. Economists have found that an 'energy ladder' is climbed

when economies develop. The wealthier a country is, the more likely it is to shift to more expensive but cleaner fuels (Van der Kroon, Brouwer, & Van Beukering, 2013). Indeed, half of the respondents to the Pew Research Center's survey on China's domestic challenges are willing to trade rapid growth for cleaner air (Pew Research Center, 2016). The fact that the overarching objective of the CPC is maintaining its power does not necessarily mean that the party is uninterested in climate change. On the contrary, if it intends to keep its legitimate authority, it needs to regulate GHG emissions. The CPC is aware that its economic model is economically and environmentally unsustainable. It is also well aware of the country's vulnerability to the impacts of climate change and thus it aims at leading the green technology industry and improving its energy security. This is precisely why the central government is investing in renewable energy, energy efficiency, pollution reduction, and economic reform. As mentioned before, there are some impediments to such a reformation. For instance, the CPC will not promote environmental policies at the expense of too serious economic hardships. Moreover, state-owned enterprises working in polluting industries have a significant political weight and are clearly opposed to such a green reformation. For the CPC, social stability will always be prioritized in order to maintain its authority. However, it is precisely because the Chinese public opinion on the sources of political legitimacy is widening – from poverty alleviation to environmental and health issues – that the CPC must ensure social stability by taking into consideration a wider range of conditions. More democracy would allow for more competition within the CPC and more space for civil society. Nevertheless, the introduction of universal suffrage and a competitive multiparty system would probably exacerbate social conflicts and thus lead to the end of the ideal of social harmony (Bell, 2015). Rather, as stated before, civil society with Chinese characteristics is fundamentally different from Western civil society. It is based on expertise and networks and it works within the system and in compliance with the Chinese institutions and hierarchies. Therefore, a civil society with Chinese characteristics would accept the supremacy of a Leviathan.

CPC's source of legitimacy has varied over time. For the last thirty years, it has been the country's welfare. Today, it seems that welfare should be sustainable to be real. Indeed, to guarantee sustainability would be much easier for the CPC than to open to the Western super-value of freedom, which would

require to go against a millennial political tradition of institutional systems based on the guardianship discourse. Rather, it makes more sense to suppose a transition of the CPC's super-value from prosperity to sustainability. The forms that this sustainability could take are manifold: it could be an economic, social, and environmental sustainability. Yet, it could not be free, in the sense of being unconstrained. According to the traditional liberal doctrine, which recognizes freedom rather than sustainability, as a super-value, sacrifice is unjust. On the contrary, Asian culture prioritizes the common good over individual interests. In other words, there is a fundamental tension between freedom and sustainability, but there is not between prosperity and sustainability. This is precisely why the new super-value of China is becoming sustainability or, better, sustainable prosperity.

4.3. THE CLIMATE LEVIATHAN WITH CHINESE CHARACTERISTICS

Li identified the potential for a new Chinese revolution that would lead to climate change stabilization. He believed that the conditions for a new global order lie in a global mass debate which involves the participation of people in conjunction with the guidance of expert leaders. Once China would initiate such a social transformation, the revolution would then spread throughout the world, and a global consensus on climate change governance would be ensured (Li, 2009). Starting from Li's theory, China could assume planetary sovereignty and command without major obstacles. Indeed, compared to a Western-style Leviathan, responsive authoritarian environmentalism seems to be better adaptable to the urgent need of humanity to survive.

As stated before, in a democracy, citizens' short-term interests will always prevail over long-term or common interests. Environmental issues are an excellent example of this tendency. For instance, if China adopted the per capita emissions scheme of the United States – respectively, 7.05T and 16.56T as of 2018 (Union of Concerned Scientists, 2020) – the planet would be doomed. A full implementation of environmental policies, which would mainly benefit the

interests of those at the margin of the political arena, would be particularly difficult – if not impossible – in a democracy. Even if green parties were to win the elections, they would have to reconcile the competing interests of different parties and find a way to ensure their constant re-election, so that their policies would be protected from change, or insulate their policies from other parties' intervention. At the same time, they would have to find a solid and large source of legitimacy to justify such a high degree of unchecked authority within a democracy. Obviously, this would require a revolution of the Western understanding of democracy. On the contrary, the political structures and institutions of an authoritarian country such as China would already be prepared to fairly easily convert into a Climate Leviathan.

As things now stand, China is making the Climate Leviathan more likely to happen than the Climate Mao. Indeed, the Chinese elites are more prone to embrace a world government based on capitalism than global disorder. Moreover, unconstrained coercion is no longer accepted nor endorsed by the Chinese people themselves. Instead, this thesis proposes a new understanding of the future potential Climate Leviathan, one which is based on the China model: the 'Climate Leviathan with Chinese Characteristics'. Which are the fundamental characteristics of this new proposal? First of all, it is legitimate since it fulfills the basic condition to be a Leviathan. It would have absolute and indivisible authority because it would emerge from the ability to meet the planetary need of protecting humanity and the common good from climate change intensification. Indeed, particularly risky phenomena, such as climate change, are the reason why a model of authoritarian governance – in this case, authoritarian environmentalism – could be globally accepted. Secondly, it is effective and rapid in policy implementation. This is ensured by both its meritocratic and its authoritarian nature. On the one hand, a meritocratic system of governance would safeguard the predominance of expertise in the process of decision-making. On the other hand, an authoritarian system of governance would guarantee the immediacy of policy implementation, even on a global scale. Lastly, it is responsive to the people. Although its authority would be supreme, eventually there would be channels for a non-confrontational but participatory civil society which would include humanity itself in the process of saving humanity. Indeed, sooner or later, the climate change-induced planetary state of emergency will be stabilized and,

although the functional space will be limited, other voices within the system will emerge and shall be heard to maintain social stability. The legitimacy of the Climate Leviathan with Chinese Characteristics is thus multi-sourced. The ability to protect, effectiveness and rapidity, meritocracy and expertise, democratic forms of participation, all of these characteristics are fundamental for successfully confronting climate change. And all of these characteristics pertain to the Climate Leviathan with Chinese Characteristics.

In the light of this, the Climate Leviathan with Chinese Characteristics could be a more precise image of China taking up its role as a planetary sovereign. Just as authoritarian environmentalism fell into the paradox of responsiveness, just as the central government was forced to accept an increasingly extensive role of civil society in order to maintain its legitimacy, then the revolutionary, non-capitalist, and violent Climate Mao, which accepts no opposition, could be replaced by a Climate Leviathan with Chinese Characteristics based on the China model of responsive authoritarian environmentalism, and created with the scope of saving humanity from climate change through the eco-elites' expertise, which is both the basis of its political structure and its peculiar and first source of legitimacy. Then, the planetary sovereign would still be a Leviathan in Hobbesian terms, but it would be meritocracy – not the economic model nor the use of unconstrained coercion – to make China a viable Leviathan.

However, the current hegemonic order in China could be increasingly challenged by the intensification of environmental issues and social imbalances, and the emergence of the Climate Leviathan with Chinese Characteristics will depend on the ability of the CPC to succeed in the resolution of these challenges. As history has taught us, if the Leviathan wants to maintain its legitimacy in the long run, the mere fulfillment of its protection duties – that is performance legitimacy – will be insufficient. Indeed, it is precisely because climate change will be a *permanent* state of emergency with no definitive resolution that the legitimacy of the Leviathan could be wavering at some point. On the one hand, if the Leviathan is able to defeat climate change, its rule will be absolute and unquestionable. On the other hand, if it is not be able to do so, but only to marginalize the threats or stabilize them, then the Leviathan will need all of those different sources of legitimacy – the ability to protect, effectiveness and rapidity, meritocracy and expertise, democratic forms of participation – to maintain its rule.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Although the idea of democracy as the end of history has dominated the hegemonic political thinking, other societies have evolved following different trajectories, in evident opposition with this Western-centric bias. Indeed, not only one alternative – or even more – does exist, but it is also considered legitimate by a large part of the global population. However, as long as alternatives are looked at from the predominant Western-centric point of view, they are diluted, misinterpreted, or stereotyped. In the case of China, the CPC's adaptability to the ever-changing conditions of our world and its ability to self-correct, the effectiveness and complexity of the vertical meritocratic system with democratic elements, and the different sources of political legitimacy have all been disregarded in the theorization of the future of climate change governance. This is a symptom of the persistent bilaterality of the competition for global leadership in the Schmittian sense of us versus them, which has not supported the process of globalization in creating a fair and comprehensive decision-making system. Rather, it has strengthened the Western-centric bias of the hegemonic power.

At first, globalization was predicted to guide us into enhanced international relations. However, the omen of the end of multilateralism was already there when international cooperation confined itself to the unstructured translation of specific models into their planetary reconfiguration. Whether it was a political, economic, or social model, the hegemonic order has just been extended to the rest of the world. Moreover, the stratification of thousands of agents working in or for international institutions has contributed to the dispersion of the efforts. Therefore, one can argue that the present institutions have managed to further widen the gap between taking decisions and taking action. Indeed, they serve the world rather than leading it, and, especially in times of crisis when there is a strong need for leadership, they lack the legitimate authority to do more. The globalization agenda has thus fallen short of the expectations by focusing more on how to reconcile the differences between communities than on the problems which severely affected those communities. Inequality, whether it concerns

economics, resources, costs, or representation, has thus prevailed. In the Anthropocene, the globalization of the problems has not yet led to a real globalization of the political system, but it has exacerbated inequality. Globalization, which has failed its task of renewing our institutions, is collapsing and a new perspective on global challenges cannot be postponed any longer. In the light of this, global politics has begun its transition from multilateral relations between states to the emergence of a world governance. In this sense, climate change, which is undoubtedly the world's greatest challenge in scale and scope, plays a crucial role in the reconfiguration of our political structures because the intensification of its impacts will require planetary sovereignty at some point.

In this context, on which grounds could the new global agenda be established? How could the present international institutions prioritize and deal with global crises? With the disappointing performance of the current international order in managing the COVID-19 pandemic, it is difficult, if not impossible, to further believe in multilateralism's chances of addressing climate change effectively. And, in times of globalized crises, the ability to provide effectiveness and security becomes crucial: when people need protection and stability, the one who will be able to offer them it is likely to have carte blanche. In the last decades, climate change governance has used international negotiations and agreements as political instruments for trying to go beyond nation states' divergencies and address the problem of climate change. However, this approach proved to be too slow, lax and ineffective to initiate a real change and overturn the state of things. Indeed, agreements have been formulated with vague deadlines and non-legally binding objectives, which have taken us in the opposite direction of taking urgent action. On the contrary, the radicalization, rather than the mitigation, of politics is now at the heart of the theories on the future of climate change governance. The fact is that in the short run – and most probably also in the long run – climate change cannot be solved and will cause a permanent state of emergency. However, it needs to be addressed and with extreme urgency. The direction is established, and the intensification of its impacts lies just ahead of us. In the light of this, since multilateralism has failed, what we can do is to fundamentally redesign our political structures into wider mechanisms of governance. In this sense, one can argue that just as we altered the planet with human activities, the Anthropocene is altering our social systems to the core.

As the current order puts off the inevitable by washing its hands of its responsibilities and continuing to diagnose the problem but avoiding treating it with extreme but required remedies, a new system of governance is gradually emerging, one that fundamentally re-discuss our political categories and structures. What kind of system will emerge from this? This thesis started from the concept of the Climate Leviathan and its ability to ensure the survival of humanity to understand the features of the future world governance with planetary sovereignty. Through the self-conferral of legitimate authority because of such ability, the future sovereign could go beyond human rights, individual freedoms, and even the law to ensure the protection of the world's population, or at least a part of it, and thus the fulfillment of its only obligation. Again, as stated in this thesis, the emergence of a global Leviathan appears to be not a matter of ifs, but a matter of when and in what form. But who will win such a planetary sovereignty? According to this thesis, the most plausible answer is China. Indeed, if the CPC is able to improve some critical aspects, such as environmental protection, civil society enhancement, and legitimacy strengthening, and succeeds in developing the country's international image and soft power, China could be able to make its interests coincide with general interests, but also to make its model coincide with the future model of planetary governance.

By exploring Mann and Wainwright's Climate Leviathan theory and Bell's China model analysis, this thesis has shown how China could become a global Leviathan with legitimate planetary sovereignty because of the intensification of climate change. While the limits of such a speculative thinking prevent the certainty of any result, especially when considering that the process of transformation of the international order has just begun, this thesis aimed to provide new insight into the real chances of China to become a Climate Leviathan. In particular, it was demonstrated that a legitimate alternative to the Western-style Climate Leviathan or the communist Climate Mao does exist. It is an alternative model based on the ability to protect, effectiveness and rapidity, meritocracy and expertise, and democratic forms of non-confrontational participation. This thesis calls the alternative at issue the 'Climate Leviathan with Chinese Characteristics'.

In order to explore the research question, four chapters dealt with different levels of reasoning. Chapter one introduced the context of climate change

governance and revealed the debacle of the current politics of adaptation, which is paving the way to the emergence of a new form of world governance. Chapter two discussed the process of the adaptation of the politics by analyzing a wide range of philosophical theories on (planetary) sovereignty and legitimacy in order to explore the re-opening of the debate on the terms of our global social contract, and provided a structural critique of the Climate Leviathan and the Climate Mao theories. Chapter three identified a conceptual critique of China in the light of its authoritarian environmentalism and its meritocratic model of governance in order to provide a more precise image of the identity of China and investigated the feasibility of exporting/expanding these political structures to the rest of the world. Chapter four focused on the CPC's efforts to fill stereotype-inducing gaps that encourage an obsolete image of China as a country with a system of governance solely based on coercion and exploitation – and thus, pollution – through an empirical critique of the real-time changing conditions of the CPC's legitimacy and its ability to retain authority by virtue of self-correction. Lastly, the proposal of the Climate Leviathan with Chinese Characteristics has been brought forward.

Because of its vastness and its authoritarian and meritocratic model of governance, China is already able to adopt and enforce new policies any day now, and to strongly influence the rest of the world with those domestic policies. Moreover, these policies are decided on the basis of the policy-makers' expertise and cannot be rebutted from competing parties and interests. Once the ruling elite decides to implement them, no particular impediment shall occur. Obviously, the CPC does not have absolute power and its authority is still dependent on the will of the people. However, as China's responsive authoritarian environmentalism has shown, when both the people and the ruling elite collaborate toward a common goal, the results are impressive. Indeed, the rhythm and the intensity of change that China is able to produce cannot be reproduced by any other country. Because of its system, China could undoubtedly be able to provide a rapid global strategy made of policies, experimentation, expertise, and also risks. Would this strategy be able to hinder climate change? Many obstacles, such as the problems of retaining legitimacy and ensuring social stability in the long run, can interfere with the results, and it is currently impossible to predict whether China will be successful in fulfilling the expectations. Moreover, to become a Climate Leviathan with Chinese Characteristics instead of a Climate

Mao, the ruling elite must seek to ensure that the voice of the people is heard – at least to some extent – while maintaining its absolute power. The power game is open, the stakes are the highest, and the results are unforeseeable. All we know is that the Chinese leadership is likely to be effective, and that it will probably be the only available alternative once climate change intensifies, multilateralism becomes a distant memory, and the other counterparts fail to take up the new leadership of climate change governance.

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SUMMARY

Today – and even more tomorrow – climate change is the world's greatest challenge. It is a complex and unprecedented problem that calls for effective governance, alignment of domestic and international strategies, and comprehensive global cooperation. Moreover, it is unjust, since it mostly affects those who less contributed to its emergence, and it is multidimensional, since it affects many other societal fields such as human rights, health, security, and migration. As we know, the environment is severely threatened by climate change in many different ways. The proliferation of GHGs in the atmosphere is directly connected to an increase in Earth's surface temperature that is contributing to extreme weather events, which are occurring more and more frequently. The cryosphere melts, the oceans are hotter, broader and more acidic, and the weather is more extreme. As a result, Earth is becoming inhospitable to many species, including humans. Climate change is damaging not only our ecosystems but also our society. Indeed, distributional conflicts and growing inequalities have surged. Although climate change has already caused impressive costs and significant harm to both natural and human environments, international institutions are failing to provide urgent and effective answers. In the light of this, a new form of governance could emerge from the future planetary state of emergency induced by climate change.

Although the idea of democracy as the end of history has dominated the hegemonic political thinking, other societies have evolved following different trajectories, in evident opposition with this Western-centric bias. Indeed, not only one alternative – or even more – does exist, but it is also considered legitimate by a large part of the global population. However, as long as alternatives are looked at from the predominant Western-centric point of view, they are diluted, misinterpreted, or stereotyped. In the case of China, the CPC's adaptability to the ever-changing conditions of our world and its ability to self-correct, the effectiveness and complexity of the vertical meritocratic system with democratic elements, and the different sources of political legitimacy have all been

disregarded in the theorization of the future of climate change governance. This is a symptom of the persistent bilaterality of the competition for global leadership in the Schmittian sense of us versus them, which has not supported the process of globalization in creating a fair and comprehensive decision-making system. Rather, it has strengthened the Western-centric bias of the hegemonic power.

At first, globalization was predicted to guide us into enhanced international relations. However, the omen of the end of multilateralism was already there when international cooperation confined itself to the unstructured translation of specific models into their planetary reconfiguration. Whether it was a political, economic, or social model, the hegemonic order has just been extended to the rest of the world. Moreover, the stratification of thousands of agents working in or for international institutions has contributed to the dispersion of the efforts. Therefore, one can argue that the present institutions have managed to further widen the gap between taking decisions and taking action. Indeed, they serve the world rather than leading it, and, especially in times of crisis when there is a strong need for leadership, they lack the legitimate authority to do more. The globalization agenda has thus fallen short of the expectations by focusing more on how to reconcile the differences between communities than on the problems which severely affected those communities. Inequality, whether it concerns economics, resources, costs, or representation, has thus prevailed. In the Anthropocene, the globalization of the problems has not yet led to a real globalization of the political system, but it has exacerbated inequality. Globalization, which has failed its task of renewing our institutions, is collapsing and a new perspective on global challenges cannot be postponed any longer. In the light of this, global politics has begun its transition from multilateral relations between states to the emergence of a world governance. In this sense, climate change, which is undoubtedly the world's greatest challenge in scale and scope, plays a crucial role in the reconfiguration of our political structures because the intensification of its impacts will require planetary sovereignty at some point.

In this context, on which grounds could the new global agenda be established? How could the present international institutions prioritize and deal with global crises? With the disappointing performance of the current international order in managing the COVID-19 pandemic, it is difficult, if not impossible, to further believe in multilateralism's chances of addressing climate change

effectively. And, in times of globalized crises, the ability to provide effectiveness and security becomes crucial: when people need protection and stability, the one who will be able to offer them it is likely to have carte blanche. In the last decades, climate change governance has used international negotiations and agreements as political instruments for trying to go beyond nation states' divergencies and address the problem of climate change. However, this approach proved to be too slow, lax and ineffective to initiate a real change and overturn the state of things. Indeed, agreements have been formulated with vague deadlines and non-legally binding objectives, which have taken us in the opposite direction of taking urgent action. On the contrary, the radicalization, rather than the mitigation, of politics is now at the heart of the theories on the future of climate change governance. The fact is that in the short run – and most probably also in the long run – climate change cannot be solved and will cause a permanent state of emergency. However, it needs to be addressed and with extreme urgency. The direction is established, and the intensification of its impacts lies just ahead of us. In the light of this, since multilateralism has failed, what we can do is to fundamentally redesign our political structures into wider mechanisms of governance. In this sense, one can argue that just as we altered the planet with human activities, the Anthropocene is altering our social systems to the core.

As the current order puts off the inevitable by washing its hands of its responsibilities and continuing to diagnose the problem but avoiding treating it with extreme but required remedies, a new system of governance is gradually emerging, one that fundamentally re-discuss our political categories and structures. What kind of system will emerge from this? This thesis starts from the concept of the Climate Leviathan and its ability to ensure the survival of humanity to understand the features of the future world governance with planetary sovereignty. Through the self-conferral of legitimate authority because of such ability, the future sovereign could go beyond human rights, individual freedoms, and even the law to ensure the protection of the world's population, or at least a part of it, and thus the fulfillment of its only obligation. As it will be stated in this thesis, the emergence of a global Leviathan appears to be not a matter of ifs, but a matter of when and in what form. But who will win such a planetary sovereignty? According to this thesis, the most plausible answer is China. Indeed, if the CPC is able to improve some critical aspects, such as environmental protection, civil

society enhancement, and legitimacy strengthening, and succeeds in developing the country's international image and soft power, China could be able to make its interests coincide with general interests, but also to make its model coincide with the future model of planetary governance.

Because of its vastness and its authoritarian and meritocratic model of governance, China is already able to adopt and enforce new policies any day now, and to strongly influence the rest of the world with those domestic policies. Moreover, these policies are decided on the basis of the policy-makers' expertise and cannot be rebutted from competing parties and interests. Once the ruling elite decides to implement them, no particular impediment shall occur. Obviously, the CPC does not have absolute power and its authority is still dependent on the will of the people. However, as China's responsive authoritarian environmentalism has shown, when both the people and the ruling elite collaborate toward a common goal, the results are impressive. Indeed, the rhythm and the intensity of change that China is able to produce cannot be reproduced by any other country. Because of its system, China could undoubtedly be able to provide a rapid global strategy made of policies, experimentation, expertise, and also risks. Would this strategy be able to hinder climate change? Many obstacles, such as the problems of retaining legitimacy and ensuring social stability in the long run, can interfere with the results, and it is currently impossible to predict whether China will be successful in fulfilling the expectations. Moreover, to become a Climate Leviathan with Chinese Characteristics instead of a Climate Mao, the ruling elite must seek to ensure that the voice of the people is heard – at least to some extent – while maintaining its absolute power. The power game is open, the stakes are the highest, and the results are unforeseeable. All we know is that the Chinese leadership is likely to be effective, and that it will probably be the only available alternative once climate change intensifies, multilateralism becomes a distant memory, and the other counterparts fail to take up the new leadership of climate change governance.

How could climate change allow China to become a legitimate planetary sovereign? The aim of this thesis is to explore the real chances of China to become a Climate Leviathan. This thesis runs on two parallel trajectories that meet at a fundamental intersection. On the one hand, political philosophy from Hobbes's sovereignty to Mann and Wainwright's new theories is called on in

order to understand the legitimacy of (planetary) sovereignty and states of emergency. On which grounds does authoritarian theory draws its legitimacy when particularly risky phenomena – such as climate change – are in place? On the other hand, since China is presented as a potential future planetary sovereign because of its authoritarian environmentalism, a precise image of the country's meritocratic system of governance based on Bell's China model is pursued. The first critique lies within the very concept of authoritarian planetary sovereignty, the second critique is based on China's conflicting global image, divided between a stereotype and a multifaceted reality. At the intersection, then, we find the theory and the reality of a new speculation on the future of climate change governance, a proposal which tries to give a real image of China as a potential global Leviathan: the Climate Leviathan with Chinese Characteristics, defined by its ability to protect, effectiveness and rapidity, meritocracy and expertise, and democratic forms of non-confrontational participation.

This thesis is composed of four chapters, each of them dealing with different levels of reasoning. Chapter one examines the environmental and political challenges posed by climate change, and how these challenges have contributed to the creation and development of the 'politics of adaptation'. Today, it is clear that the future we are building with our lifestyle is frightening. Indeed, the severe alteration of the environment as a result of human activities is leading the Earth to extreme conditions and unprecedented risks. The deep mark that human life is leaving on the planet, which is likely to cause lasting consequences for millions of years, is the outcome of accidental and countless processes of transformation that lead to the disruption of the planet. Indeed, the degree and speed of climate change are determined by both the impact of the growth and distribution of the world's population, and the impact of countries' energy choices and the associated growth of GHGs in the atmosphere. In order to find a strategic response to tackle the challenges of climate change, over the last decades, the Anthropocene has seen the gradual cooperation of international actors. Through the history of climate negotiations, we have pursued a mitigation strategy that has brought different actors from all over the world together to meet this common challenge by ratifying a number of international agreements. Climate negotiations have begun quite successfully but then progressively failed to address the challenge of climate change governance. From the 1992 United Nations

Framework Convention on Climate Change then confirmed with the 1997 Kyoto Protocol, to the 2015 (in)famous Paris Agreement and the recently lost opportunities, the international order has gone through a process of diplomacy, leadership, and, at last, debacle. In particular, the universal and legally binding Paris Agreement was considered a landmark in climate diplomacy as it required all ratifying members to set targets for emissions reduction. However, it was a landmark in international climate law, but it was a failure from the point of view of climate action. With the evolution of events, the international order has gradually abandoned the mitigation approach to pursue an adaptation approach, which, however, has proved to be unsuccessful as well and led to the flaking of climate change governance and multilateralism. Yet, the need to reduce global warming through drastic, rapid, and extensive changes in all facets of society is urgent, and, without an equally urgent and globally-coordinated response, all possible actions to tackle climate change will be diluted and lost. However, in the last decade, climate change governance has become more and more unstructured as climate change grew more and more systemic. The actors involved do recognize that in order to address the issue, they need to fundamentally redefine their lifestyle. Nevertheless, governments are reticent to follow this path because of conflicting priorities with other interests. Yet, although the international response to increasingly pressing environmental challenges has proved to be ineffective in substance, the collapse of the present institutions has the merit to emphasize the structural and political limitations of the current order. Today, it is clear that with the intensification of climate change, governments around the world will be increasingly overwhelmed by the intensity and the scale of such change, and they will not be able to address these challenges and the resulting ones, such as pandemics and violent conflicts. In the light of this, climate change and the related international negotiations have somehow led to a breaking point in the global political order through the politics of adaptation. Yet, it is important to note that these phenomena are not recent. Indeed, the existing political conditions are just exacerbated by climate change. Moreover, the challenges we are now facing with the politics of adaptation are not only causing the debacle of the institutional framework, but first and foremost, they are leading to a transition to a new form of global governance through the adaptation of the politics.

Chapter two discusses the process of adaptation of politics generated by ineffective climate change governance. What does it mean to adapt? In biological terms, it is a process of natural selection that guarantees the survival of the fittest. In sociological terms, adaptation brings about functionalism. Today, because of an increasing functionalistic approach to society and its crises, there is an ongoing process of depoliticization of political responses to critical societal problems. Pandemics, economic recessions, wars, and so forth, all share a common process of normalization of emergencies. As a world crisis and state of emergency, the COVID-19 pandemic allowed us to witness a real-time global-scale test of how governments and citizens react to states of emergency. People all around the world have been asked to sacrifice some of their liberties, such as the freedom of movement, to tame the spread of COVID-19. Despite the clear reasoning, these sacrifices have been strongly criticized by some citizens for several reasons. Indeed, the COVID-19 pandemic is bringing to the fore the constraints of the individualist Western culture. Moreover, it is clearly exposing the ability of single governments and international institutions to respond to mass states of emergency. We can measure the effectiveness, the ability, and the legitimacy of our leaders, governments, and social contracts and evaluate a reformation. Indeed, sometimes, it is an external shock that breaks the political order and provides an opportunity for a structural reform. In the light of this, the functional adaptation of society is redesigning nation-state sovereignty into a new form of planetary sovereignty, which will take charge of the greatest state of emergency we have ever known, that is climate change. Indeed, climate change implications will be incredibly long-lasting to such an extent that it is likely that the relative state of emergency will be permanent. In this context, to not surrender to the unavoidable consequences of the Anthropocene, countries will have to cooperate efficiently. However, multilateralism is once again proving ineffective in the face of this kind of extraordinary events. The global political order is thus undergoing a process of adaptation into a new form and idea of sovereignty, which is planetary sovereignty. Indeed, a world governance is undoubtedly an option when nation states alone encounter insurmountable problems in dealing with severe crises. Moreover, when those crises concern the fate of the whole planet and the state of emergency appears to be inevitable, world governance becomes even more plausible. In the contemporary age, Immanuel Kant, G.W.F.

Hegel, and, more recently, other thinkers such as Hannah Arendt, Albert Einstein, Bertrand Russell, Alexander Wendt, and Nick Bostrom further addressed the issue. A fundamental problem of sovereignty in a world governance arises over who has the authority to declare the state of emergency. It is the self-conferral of power and duty to save the Earth that will give rise to a Leviathan in Hobbesian and Schmittian terms, which will make general interests coincide with its own interests. In this sense, China would undoubtedly be a good Leviathan. However, we should understand why and how a stereotypes-free Chinese Leviathan could be legitimate. The pressing consequences of climate change first led to a transformation in politics in the form of climate diplomacy and leadership. Nevertheless, the debacle of mitigation policies and the deficiency of adaptation policies – or rather, adaptation policies which do not selectively favor elites – will generate a transformation of politics in which a new sovereign world government, legitimated by a permanent state of emergency due to climate change, will emerge.

Chapter three intends to propose a more precise image of China in order to better understand a potential Climate Leviathan shaped on the China model. In order to formulate a thorough proposal of a Chinese Climate Leviathan, it is essential to understand the Chinese model of governance. The current crisis of governance in the West has shown democracy's weaknesses and it has created room for a political debate on the quality of present institutions. On the contrary, political meritocracy is favored from a merit that the democratic rule cannot grant: it ensures that leaders are selected on the basis of expertise and morality. However, it is deemed that the institutionalization of a system of promotion of individuals based on their merits would lead to the legitimization of elites' position. Moreover, political meritocracy could be vitiated by significant limitations as well, which could undermine its very reason for existence. First and foremost, the problem of gaining legitimacy in the eyes of the people without allowing them to engage in politics, at least to a certain degree. The Chinese government has managed to solve this issue while pursuing a non-democratic rule. Indeed, meritocracy in China has mainly had the merit of an outstanding result: CPC's leaders have led the country out of poverty in the last thirty years. However, in the long run, the problem of political meritocracy's legitimization can only be resolved by introducing democratic elements and finding a way to let them coexist.

But how? Paradoxically, the Chinese approve democracy but support non-democratic rule. Indeed, the Chinese understanding of democracy lies its foundations on the concept of guardianship. On this ground, Bell's China model relies on three pillars: at the bottom of the political structure there is democracy, in the middle there is experimentation, and at the top there is meritocracy. Indeed, in a vast, complex, and stratified country such as China, different criteria for the meritocratic and democratic identification of leaders at different levels of government seem appropriate. However, the image of China as an authoritarian country grounded on coercion is difficult to soften when criticism of the regime is still suppressed. Indeed, the stereotype projects an image of China as a country with an oppressive regime and no opposition, which somehow would correspond to a Western democratic country in a state of emergency. Individual freedoms and rights are put aside to make way for top-down governance. This is partially true, but China offers many other fundamental facets to be taken into consideration, and a distorted image of China should be avoided not to invalidate the country's chances to become a Climate Leviathan. Indeed, China could be a very plausible local model of governance for a global-scale governance of climate change. Therefore, it is important to understand its real characteristics and the viability of extending/exporting such a model. Moreover, the dominant democratic rule could be overturned by the intensification of climate change and the emergence of the Leviathan through a global state of emergency. Since effective policy implementation is crucial for environmental governance, authoritarian environmentalism helps China in improving its international image thanks to rapid and comprehensive responses to climate change challenges. Indeed, China is an excellent example of the effectiveness and celerity of this top-down management. However, it presents a number of potential weaknesses, especially concerning the effects of the constraints on public participation and civil society. Although those limitations allow the eco-elites to deliver top-down and effective responses, they also prevented the development of widespread public interest and awareness on climate change.

Chapter four focuses on China as a real-time changing environment that is trying to improve its image as a legitimate authority. China has a terrible track record of pollution, which earned it a very bad international image. Moreover, it has a long history of oppression and human rights violation. On this ground, it is

hard to imagine an international recognition of China as a popular leader, in spite of the potential benefits of its model. Paradoxically, it is currently positioned in the peculiar conjunction of being the world's largest coal consumer and renewable energy developer at the same time. Unsustainable economic development has brought a number of pressing environmental, safety, and health issues, which became unavoidable in the long run. On the other one hand, impressive environmental efforts have led China to become a pioneer in renewable energy. The country's potential is developing at an astonishing speed, and China continues its relentless pursuit of power. Through inclusiveness, expertise, and ability for action, China is making real efforts to compensate the systemic gaps which make its model unsustainable for the rest of the world. In this sense, China is strengthening its international image to be considered a good Leviathan. Moreover, the source of legitimacy of the CPC has undergone a process of transformation that is leading to the emergence of a new super-value, that of sustainability. More space is given to a nascent civil society that finds is breeding ground in environmental activism, which represents not only a great opportunity to tackle climate change and mitigate its effects through mass cooperation, but also a significant stimulus for transforming the relationship between the State and the people of China. In recent years the central government has realized the importance and urgency of environmental activism as a matter of legitimacy, and the State has increasingly encouraged its citizens to get involved in public participation at local levels. Nevertheless, the central government still controls public participation, and a radical change is unlikely to happen when compared to a gradual and less threatening approach. In the light of this, it is important to understand how civil society is understood in China and how it contributes to changing the government's approach towards its citizens and their interests. In this sense, to recognize the space of civil society in China is to recognize whether civil society would have the same role in a planetary state of emergency. In a Climate Mao, based on coercion and oppression measures, no place for civil society would be allowed. The sovereign would be absolute and insulated from its subjects. Nevertheless, a Climate Mao relies on an obsolete image of China, an image that no longer corresponds to the identity of the country. A Climate Leviathan with Chinese Characteristics, instead, could be a more precise definition of China taking up its role as a planetary sovereign. Just as authoritarian

environmentalism fell into the paradox of responsiveness, just as the central government was forced to accept an increasingly extensive role of civil society in order to maintain its legitimacy, then the revolutionary, non-capitalist, and violent Climate Mao, which accepts no opposition, could be replaced by a Climate Leviathan with Chinese Characteristics based on the China model of responsive authoritarian environmentalism. In this sense, the planetary sovereign would still be a Leviathan in Hobbesian terms, but it would be meritocracy – not the economic model nor the use of unconstrained coercion – to make China a viable Leviathan. Conclusions are drawn in the last section.