

Book Review

The Environment and International History. By Scott Kaufman. New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2018. xiv + 210 pp. Illustrations, notes, and index. Cloth \$88.00, paper \$26.95, e-book \$24.25.

The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change of 1992, the Kyoto Protocol of 1997, the Paris Agreement of 2016, and so forth—every international environmental agreement has been marked with hopes and disappointments reaching back to the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment in Stockholm in 1972 and beyond. In this book, Scott Kaufman walks the reader through many of them and lays out the political dynamic that came to shape their content. To him, the impact of an increasingly interdependent world provides a key in understanding the international history of environmental politics.

Kaufman begins his account with European anthropocentrism and how that shaped nineteenth-century imperialism. He discusses how the focus of colonizers on the exploitation of natural resources in overseas colonies and protectorates would spark an environmental debate that led to early conservation efforts. Such multinational agreements would come to a standstill with the First World War, after which a series of problems related to fishing, whaling, and oil pollution would lead to a renewed debate channeled through the League of Nations. These deliberations, Kaufman argues, were anthropocentric in nature and understood as no more than a resource for human consumption.

After the Second World War, the United Nations raised the condition of the environment to the forefront of global concern, especially through the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. The Cold War would inform this environmental

debate, especially in the case of radioactive fallouts from the testing of nuclear weapons. Countries would perceive risks associated with fallout differently, and Kaufman unpacks how different perceptions of nuclear threats in Japan, China, the Soviet Union, and the United States informed the international moratorium on nuclear testing in the atmosphere in 1963.

An interesting chapter deals with the legacy of Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* (Houghton Mifflin, 1962) and associated debates in the decade leading up to the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment in Stockholm in 1972. Many historians would place Carson's book as a centerpiece of environmental policy in the United States. After all, Carson herself famously begins her account with: "There was once a town in the heart of America where all life seemed to live in harmony with its surroundings." And the rest of the book is firmly situated in this country. Yet Kaufman places *Silent Spring* in the context of the North-South debate on international politics, the Vietnam War, the health of the ocean, and the decolonization debates that eventually would take place at the Stockholm Conference. It is an intriguing and timely chapter that could generate productive classroom analysis about Carson's legacy.

The account of what happened after the Stockholm Conference is more straightforward. Kaufman engagingly explains to the reader the various international environmental regimes established between 1972 and the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, which took place in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. Topics examined include international negotiations (or lack thereof) with respect to marine life, acid rain, the ozone layer, the Chernobyl disaster, the Gulf war, and various hazardous wastes. The book ends with a chapter covering the more recent discussions of climatic change and the turn toward the anthropocene.

The book has a slight Anglo-Saxon bend, reflecting Kaufman's own interests and the events as he sees them. I kept wondering why Britain and the United States should have such a prominent role in the account. The two places with the most deaths from climate change (according to the 2017 Climate Risk Index)—namely, Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic—are not mentioned in the book. How did their politicians see international environmental negotiations?

I suspect that some readers of *Environmental History* may stumble with deciphering certain abbreviations such as CITES, LDG, UNCLOS, PRC, GEF, and TFAP. The book is peppered with them, making it less readable, especially for those, like myself, who suffer from lingo dyslexia. A list of abbreviations deciphering them at the end of the book would have been helpful and is probably needed if this book is to be utilized in the classroom.

The Environment and International History is largely a synthesis of secondary material and, in this respect, a good overview of the trends in the field of international politics. Kaufman has written a fine study that is well worth the read.

Peder Anker

Gallatin School, New York University

doi: 10.1093/envhis/ema017