

Book Reviews

Environmental Politics: Domestic and Global Dimensions

Jacqueline Vaughn Switzer, 3rd edition, Boston, New York: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2001, 336 pp.

The problem that confronts scholars who intend to engage in organizing issues associated with the environment in a manner that is logical and coherent is that many of those issues are conceptually overlapping, territorially interrelated, and academically multidisciplinary. Added to this are the submerged and not so submerged tensions between environmentalism on the one hand, which restrains the frontier exercise of human power and control over natural resources, and neoliberalism on the other, which ordinarily considers such limitations oddities. Many of the scholars who have been successful in this endeavor have tried to focus on related environmental mediums, issues, or regions.

Despite its wider scope, *Environmental Politics: Domestic and Global Dimensions*, which is in its third edition, weaves through the maze of topics it covers using a process perspective. The book focuses on formal and informal institutions and processes in trying to develop an understanding about how global environmental policies are developed in the United States. It is essential to note from the outset that the domestic and global dimensions of the book basically focus on the United States' responses to those challenges and, accordingly, a foreign reader may read into the title: *The U.S. Environmental Politics: Domestic and Global Dimensions*.

The author, Dr. Jacqueline V. Switzer, does not waste any time in letting the reader know that the approach to the book is through the process model, a process whereby the Congress, the president and his executive branch, and the judiciary jostle for influence in formulating, implementing or redirecting environmental policies (p.viii). An associate professor of political science at Northern Arizona University, the author deploys her understanding of the history, process, and conflicting interests that have shaped the United States' environmental policies both at home and at the international plane, to organize the complex issues covered in the book. The third edition is remarkable for carefully updating a book that is reputed to be an information powerhouse regarding environmental policy, actors, disputes, and processes, up through the final years of the Clinton administration. It also incorporates, in each chapter, a global dimension of the main topic of the chapter, and it revises the "Another View, Another Voice" boxes of each chapter.

This edition, which also contains 12 chapters, retains the essential features of the older editions with a new introduction, photographic illustrations at the beginning of each chapter, expanded appendixes that now include a table of major United States environmental legislation from 1947-2000, a summary of major international environmental agreements of the twentieth century, and a listing of environmental film resources. The author also incorporates in this edition a new annotated list of internet resources. The *Introduction* explains the five steps of its process paradigm, which the author used in organizing the chapters of the book. The sequential five steps of the paradigm are problem identification and agenda formation, policy formulation, policy adaptation, policy implementation, and policy evaluation. She used Yosemite National Park in California as a case study of the changing policies toward preservation. The *Introduction* is followed by chapter 1, titled *A Historical Framework for Environmental Protection*. The chapter provides background history about early concerns for environmental consciousness and awareness in the United States, and identifies five periods in the development of environmental policies. In the context of the process model, the chapter fits in within the problem identification and agenda setting stages.

Considering the framework of the process model, chapter 2, *Participants in the Environmental Debate*, fits within the policy formulation stage. The chapter describes various actors that participate in the environmental debate. It focuses on the mainstream organizations and interest groups that have contributed in influencing environmental policy in the United States. Furthermore, it analyzes the activities of the primary actors and stakeholders in the environmental debate. It concludes with a discussion on various international actors, both multilateral organizations and nongovernmental organizations, including the Green Party movement.

Chapter 3 is titled *the Political Process* and, within the context of the process model, occupies the fourth and fifth stages of policy adoption and policy implementation. The chapter examines all the organs whose decisions matter in adopting and implementing environmental policies. It begins with a discussion of the US Department of the Interior and the Environmental Protection Agency, the primary bodies with responsibilities for implementing environmental policies in the country. It also discusses the role of the President, the Congress and key legislative committees, as well as the role of the courts. It argues that the courts have now become the choice forum for resolving all types of environmental disputes either by environmental groups, to compel compliance, or by industry, to delay and stall implementation of new rules. Further, it provides a brief overview of the role of states and local governments in adoption and implementation of environmental policies.

Chapter 4, on *Public and Private Lands*, outlines the continuing debates over management of public lands in the much publicized conditions of national parks and wilderness areas, and less visible ones such as minimal fees charged for mining in public lands. It attests to the view that "public lands have evolved slowly in the United States, from a policy of divestiture and conservation to one of preservation." (p. 105). It also discusses the controversial issue of environmental regulations affecting private lands, especially when such regulations involve physical taking of private property.

In chapter 5, with the title *Waste Management and the Global Toxics Legacy*, the author deals with what she rightly characterizes as a "highly politicized" phenomenon (114). The chapter identifies the various types of waste being produced and the means of their disposal. These include industrial waste, hazardous waste, municipal solid waste, medical waste, radioactive waste, and nuclear waste. The author cites figures estimating that the amount of municipal solid waste generated in the US by the year 2010 will be 250 million tons, or 4.9 pounds per person per day, from the year 2000 estimate of 216 million tons, or 4.4 pounds per person per day. The chapter analyzes regulatory responses to management of various types of waste, and the creation of international regimes to control transboundary movement of hazardous waste to developing countries.

The Politics of Energy is the title of chapter 6. The chapter reviews the political forces and regulatory aspects of energy policy in the United States. It looks at issues relevant to alternative energy sources, including civilian use of nuclear power, arguing that the promising beginning of nuclear power was mainly shortened by the combined effect of the growth of the environmental movement in the early 1970s and antiwar sentiment among citizens. It also contains an overview of global trends for changes in energy use and conservation.

Chapter 7, *Managing Water Resources*, confronts the question: how much water do we need, and how much do we have? The chapter observes that there is hardly a country with an up-to-date assessment of its existing water supply. It addresses global scarcity of water and the reasons for such scarcity, the issue of water quality, and water use. Two federal agencies (the Corps of Engineers and Bureau of Reclamation) are primarily responsible for managing water in the United States, although they share this responsibility in appropriate circumstances with sewage companies and local water interest groups. The chapter demonstrates how policies on water management have recently shifted from the farm and agricultural lobby to urban interests. The chapter finally discusses the nature and sources of water pollution and the political process of its regulatory framework.

Chapter 8 assesses the regulatory standards and environmental impact of air pollution. Titled *Air Quality: Pollution and Solutions*, the chapter explains the elements of air pollution and dabbles into the extremely complex air quality regula-

tory mechanism. It seeks to simplify the understanding of the process through which the Environmental Protection Agency sets standards of pollution exposure and thereby designates air quality status for different regions in the country in order to ensure compliance with federal air quality standards within a target date. Although many Americans still live in areas whose air pollutants exceed the minimum quality standard, one will agree with the conclusion that "improving air quality is one of the great environmental policy success stories" in the United States (p. 192).

Chapter 9 is one of the few that really address the global dimensions of environmental problems. It is titled *The Global Commons*, and it examines a wide range of issues from transboundary pollution, especially between the United States, Mexico, and Canada, to issues relevant to the problems of global warming, stratospheric ozone depletion, and management of the oceans. In addition, it sheds light on international trade and environment, focusing on trade treaties that contain environmental provisions, such as the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade, the World Trade Organization, and the North American Free Trade Agreement.

Endangered Species, Biodiversity, and Forests is the title of chapter 10, which reviews the regulatory history of protection of wildlife, plants, and their habitats, as well as forest management. Predictably, it also reviews the role of nongovernmental organizations, which have been a formidable force in driving biodiversity policy formulations. A major part of the chapter focuses on the continuing saga of species protection in the light of the 1973 Convention International Trade in Endangered Species of Wildlife Fauna and Flora, better known as CITES.

It may be argued that the book owes its readers some explanation for omitting conservation laws of medieval Islamic civilization from its history of legislation on protection of wildlife, plants, and habitats, choosing instead to limit its treatment of "conservation in recorded history" to Roman and Anglo-Saxon laws. Many centuries before conservation became fashionable, Muslim communities had put in place site-specific regulations, such as those of *hima* or those that apply in the *haram* regions; species-specific rules that protect certain creatures such as the sparrow-hawk or the ant; and rules that care for animals in general and protect their welfare. This is an unexplained omission, since the author did not completely ignore Islam as a policy determinant in Muslim countries in her consideration of the relatively unpalatable topic of family planning and population explosion in the chapter that follows (p. 285-6).

The Human Explosion: Managing Population Growth, is the title of chapter 11, another chapter that primarily takes a global perspective. The problems of population growth and inordinate levels of consumption are intertwined in exerting enormous pressure on the biosphere, and the chapter balances both issues which

have often dominated debate between the developed and developing countries. It alludes to the suspicion among developing countries that wealthier countries are more interested in curbing population growth in poor countries as a way of protecting the environment rather than reducing excess consumption in wealthier nations. The chapter reviews trends in population policies and projections over the years, as well as global family planning efforts. "If population growth is to be curtailed in the South to reduce pollution and resource use," the chapter agreeably asserts, "it should be combined with restraint on the consumptive patterns of the North." (p. 219).

Finally, chapter 12 deals with optimism for the coming age of environmentalism. *Emerging Issues for the Twenty-First Century* depicts the various issues that the author identifies as those which will likely dominate environmental policies in future. They issues include the role of science in the political process, collaborative decision making, issues involving genetically engineered products, and world trade in natural resources.

This edition of the book accomplishes its objective of being a text that provides an organized understanding of environmental politics and how that has shaped environmental policy of the United States toward domestic and global environmental issues. But it is not easy to explain why the author chooses to completely ignore certain themes, such as the spiritual dimension to environmental policy making, which are equally vital in shaping the future process of environmental management. She fails to recognize the spiritual dimension of the environmental debate even as an emerging issue. Undoubtedly, religion is shaping environmental discourse, or what the author would refer to as agenda formation in her process paradigm. Scholars and citizens in the United States and, most especially, in Muslim countries, are turning to religion to provide different understandings and answers to environmental issues where other approaches have failed. Examples of problems that have defied traditional approaches include excessive consumption, determination of value of environmental resources through cost-benefit analysis, the issue of population, and the anthropocentric orientation of the politico-industrial complex which asserts that only humans matter.

Many nongovernmental organizations and even the UN Environment Program have recognized that spiritual and ethical dimensions, in conjunction with other material, must complement each other in finding lasting solutions to the environmental crisis. The spiritual dimension is quickly emerging as a new agenda in the process of formulating domestic and global environmental policies, and it may become normatively relevant in our quest to fully resolve the environmental crisis. Recognizing the spiritual dimension of the environmental policy process will provide further avenues to the target readers of the book —students, environmental

activists, and government officials — for understanding the complexities of the politics of environmental management, both domestic and global.

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THE POLITICS OF POLYGENIC ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT

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Environmental law is a complex and ever-evolving field that encompasses a wide range of issues, from air and water quality to land use and resource management. The complexity of environmental law is largely due to the fact that it is a polygenic field, meaning that it is shaped by a variety of different forces and actors.

One of the key reasons why environmental law is so complex is that it is a highly politicized field. Environmental issues are often highly visible and controversial, and they can have a significant impact on the lives of people around the world. As a result, environmental law is often subject to intense political scrutiny and debate.

Another reason why environmental law is so complex is that it is a highly technical field. Environmental law involves a wide range of scientific and technical issues, and it often requires a deep understanding of these issues in order to effectively address environmental problems. This technical nature of environmental law makes it difficult for the general public to understand and engage with.

Finally, environmental law is also a highly fragmented field. There are a wide variety of different actors and organizations involved in environmental law, including government agencies, non-governmental organizations, and private industry. This fragmentation makes it difficult to coordinate and implement environmental law effectively.

Despite these challenges, environmental law remains a vital and dynamic field. It is essential for protecting the environment and ensuring a sustainable future for all. As the world continues to face new and complex environmental challenges, the importance of environmental law will only continue to grow.