

The background is a deep, textured purple. Several rectangular frames of varying sizes are floating in the space, some containing horizontal bands of lighter purple and white, while others are empty. The frames appear to be three-dimensional, casting soft shadows on the background.

Kate O'Neill

The Environment and International Relations

SECOND EDITION

This exciting textbook introduces students to the ways in which the theories and tools of International Relations can be used to analyze and address global environmental problems. Kate O'Neill develops an innovative historical and analytical framework for understanding global environmental issues, integrating insights from different disciplines, and identifies the main actors and their roles, thereby encouraging students to engage with the issues and equip themselves with the knowledge they need to apply their own critical insights. This book will be invaluable for students of environmental issues from both political science and environmental studies perspectives.

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- Includes new examples, textboxes and figures throughout to explain key concepts and debates, enabling students to connect theory with practice.
- Features a new chapter examining the emergence and politics of market mechanisms as a new mode of global environmental governance.

Kate O'Neill is Associate Professor in the Department of Environmental Science, Policy, and Management at the University of California at Berkeley.

"Kate O'Neill skillfully surveys a vast interdisciplinary literature to expose the most powerful actors, ideas, institutions, and policies shaping international environmental governance. Her masterful analysis is definitely the best place to start for anyone wanting to understand the politics of advancing global sustainability."

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Themes in international Relations

This new series of textbooks aims to provide students with authoritative surveys of central topics in the study of International Relations. Intended for upper-level undergraduates and graduates, the books will be concise, accessible, and comprehensive. Each volume will examine the main theoretical and empirical aspects of the subject concerned, and its relation to wider debates in International Relations, and will also include chapter-by-chapter guides to further reading and discussion questions.

Preface

Studying the global politics of the environment is a complex, sometimes challenging, but always illuminating task. Those who study this area approach it from many different directions: political science, economics, sociology, law, and ecology, to name but a few. For my own part, I first heard about climate change from my high school biology teacher in the mid-1980s; shortly thereafter, we all found out about the ozone layer as all the hairsprays, deodorants, and other aerosol products containing ozone-destroying chlorofluorocarbons (or CFCs) vanished from store shelves. As an undergraduate studying economics, I learned about “externalities,” “public goods,” and other ways that unregulated capitalism leads, in the absence of intervention, to environmental damage – including damage that travels across national borders. I carried these interests on to graduate school and Ph.D. work in political science, without really expecting to be able to study them in the context of an advanced degree in international relations theory. This all changed following the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), held in Rio de Janeiro. The Earth Summit, as it is often called, brought into focus a whole network of international treaties and agreements set up to manage international environmental problems – and proved to be a watershed moment for an emerging academic field of international environmental politics, particularly the study of international cooperation among nation states for global environmental protection. These days, as a professor in an interdisciplinary environmental studies department, and an active participant in the academic field of global environmental politics, I encounter perspectives outside the political science field that explain the deeply pervasive nature of global environmental change and advocate a range of political solutions above and beyond international diplomacy.

Today’s students were born into a world with serious and widespread environmental challenges, with literally thousands of international agreements, organizations, partnerships, networks, and initiatives attempting to meet these challenges. They also know that many global environmental

trends are in the wrong direction, and serious structural and institutional changes are likely to be needed in order to address them. There are no optimal solutions to global environmental degradation, and many will be grappling with these problems for decades to come. All who work in the field of international environmental politics face a constant tension between the normative aspects of our work – we do, after all, want to save the world and the world's environment for future generations – and the analytical: the need to understand and explain real-world political dynamics, which often fall short of anyone's ideal. This book is informed by the idea that in order to move forward we must understand the shape and dynamics of the governance systems we have now, and it is inspired by the efforts of my students to marry hope to political realities.

Acknowledgments

Attempting to distill a vast and ever-changing body of literature into a single volume is no easy task. Doing the same thing for a second edition of a book about an ever-changing field is even harder. Many people helped me along this journey. I would like to thank John Haslam and others from Cambridge University Press for their patience, encouragement, and enthusiasm. For reading drafts, helping with last-minute edits, and general support, special thanks to Erin Bergren and Laura Driscoll. In addition, thank you to Erika Weinthal, Stacy VanDeveer, and Susan Altman for support, Ben Cashore, Jane Dawson, and Sikina Jinnah – among many others – for using the first edition in their courses and encouraging me to write the second. I truly appreciated all feedback from users and readers. Particular thanks to Wil Burns for his patience and support during this whole process, as well as willingness to work through many seemingly minor details as the text progressed.

I began work on this edition during an immensely difficult transition in my life. I owe an immeasurable debt to my friends and colleagues in the broader Global Environmental Politics community for their support. It is good to belong to such a vibrant – and prolific – academic field.

Abbreviations

AOSIS	Alliance of Small Island States
BASIC	Brazil, South Africa, India, and China
BINGO	Business International Non-Governmental Organization
BRICs	Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa
CBD	Convention on Biological Diversity
CDM	Clean Development Mechanism
CER	Certified Emissions Reduction
CFCs	chlorofluorocarbons
CITES	Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species
COP	Conference of the Parties
CSA	Canadian Standards Association
CSD	Commission on Sustainable Development
CSR	corporate social responsibility
CTE	Committee on Trade and the Environment
ENB	Earth Negotiations Bulletin
ESS	ecosystem services
ETS	emissions trading system/scheme
EU	European Union
EUA	European Union Allowance
FAO	UN Food and Agriculture Organization
FDI	foreign direct investment
FSC	Forest Stewardship Council
G77	Group of 77 Developing Countries
GATS	General Agreement on Trade in Services
GATT	General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade
GDP	gross domestic product
GEF	Global Environment Facility
GEG	global environmental governance
GEP	global environmental politics
GHG	greenhouse gas
GIS	Geographic Information System

GMO	genetically modified organism
HCFCs	hydrochlorofluorocarbons
HFCs	hydrofluorocarbons
HIPC _s	highly indebted poorer countries
IAEA	International Atomic Energy Agency
IAM	Integrated Assessment Model
IBRD	International Bank for Reconstruction and Development
ICC	International Chamber of Commerce
IEP	international environmental politics
IGO	inter-governmental organization
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IMO	International Maritime Organization
INDC	Intended Nationally Determined Contribution
IPBES	Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services
IPCC	Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
IPE	international political economy
ISO	International Organization for Standardization
IUCN	International Union for the Conservation of Nature
IWC	International Whaling Convention
LRTAP	long-range transboundary air pollution
MRV	monitoring, reporting, and verification
MEA	Multilateral Environmental Agreement
MNC	multinational corporation
NAFTA	North American Free Trade Agreement
NGO	non-governmental organization
NIEO	New International Economic Order
NOAA	National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
NSMD	non-state, market-driven (governance)
NTB	non-tariff barrier
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
PEFC	Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification Schemes
PES	payment for ecosystem services
POPs	persistent organic pollutants
RDB	regional development bank
REDD	Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation
RGGI	Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative
RTA	regional trade agreement
SAP	Structural Adjustment Program

SBSTTA	Subsidiary Body for Scientific, Technical, and Technological Advice
SCC	Social Cost of Carbon
SFI	Sustainable Forests Initiative
SIR	system for implementation review
SPS	Sanitary and Phytosanitary Standards
SRI	socially responsible investment
STS	science and technology studies
TAN	Transnational Advocacy Network
TEEB	The Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity
TRIPS	Trade-Related Intellectual Property Rights
TWG	technical working group
UN	United Nations
UNCCD	UN Convention to Combat Desertification
UNCED	UN Conference on Environment and Development
UNCHE	UN Conference on Humans and the Environment
UNCTAD	UN Conference on Trade and Development
UNDP	UN Development Programme
UNEP	UN Environment Programme
UNESCO	UN Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization
UNFCCC	UN Framework Convention on Climate Change
VCLT	Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties
WBSCD	World Business Council for Sustainable Development
WCD	World Commission on Dams
WEO	World Environment Organization
WHO	World Health Organization
WMO	World Meteorological Organization
WSSD	World Summit on Sustainable Development
WTO	World Trade Organization
WWF	Worldwide Fund for Nature/World Wildlife Fund

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1 Introduction: The Environment and International Relations

In December 2015 the official representatives of nearly 200 countries met in Paris to negotiate an agreement that would govern the global response to climate change and its impacts well into the twenty-first century. Climate change is among the most serious problems facing the international community. Rising global temperatures are threatening livelihoods and lives worldwide, through changing weather patterns, drought, and sea-level rise that threatens the very existence of the world's small island nation states. Even so, global action to date had proven deeply disappointing. The world's largest economy, the United States, had pulled out of negotiations. Others – even the member states of the European Union (EU), usually considered a strong supporter of environmental action – were barely meeting the low targets they had agreed to, and the new engines of the global economy – China, India, and Brazil – were rapidly increasing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions without any obligation to act. The science behind climate change continued to come under fierce attack from skeptics. Activist groups and even business actors felt excluded from the governance arena, despite the ideas and initiatives they were offering.

Global climate politics reached a nadir after the 2009 Conference of the Parties (COP) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in Copenhagen. Much hope and optimism in the lead-up suggested that this would be the time the international community broke through and came up with a strong, binding legal agreement to meet commitments. Instead, the meeting almost foundered on the rock of national interests, and the resulting Copenhagen Accord – not even a formal agreement – was deeply disappointing to many, setting only weak goals and vague commitments to a new global fund.

The Paris meeting – the twenty-first COP to the UNFCCC – was different. On the last day of the conference nation-states announced an agreement where, rather than being allocated targets they had to meet, they had crafted individual plans of action for reducing emission, called Intended Nationally Determined Contributions (INDCs). The agreement also

contained processes for monitoring (and perhaps strengthening) those commitments over time, and general commitments to help the weakest states adapt, to encourage carbon storage, and to aspire to keep the global temperature rise to 1.5 degrees Celsius. The exhausted delegates, officials, and other observers stood to applaud at the conclusion of the meeting and the creation of the Paris Agreement.

The Paris Agreement has been hailed as a turning point, a success in the fight against climate change (Light 2015; Busby 2016). Previously uncommitted countries – the USA as well as China and other emerging major powers – have joined, and non-traditional actors, such as non-governmental organizations (NGOs), have new roles to play. Best estimates suggest that if the targets states have already set are met, we will avoid the worst impacts of global temperature rise. Paris also represents a major shift in how climate change is governed globally. It represents a more diffuse, “bottom-up” approach to global governance, which, as we shall see, is not how global environmental governance (GEG) is usually carried out. At the same time, many criticized the agreement, including many scientists, arguing that commitments are still far weaker than needed, and questioned the will of nation-states to maintain and strengthen commitments over time in the absence of strong monitoring and transparency rules, as yet to be negotiated (Sethi 2015; Geden 2015).

The outcome of the Paris meeting illustrates a major theme of this book, which directly addresses the relationship between international relations theory and the politics of GEG. From an environmentalist perspective, international actions around climate change and many other environmental problems are inadequate: they are too slow, and possibly too weak, to manage the problems we face. They do not challenge the basic global economic and political structures that drive unconstrained growth regardless of ecological limits.

From the perspective of a political scientist, especially from international relations, however, these steps represent significant progress. Given a world with a history of conflict and failed cooperation, the steps we have taken, and the extent of global environmental cooperation over the past five decades, are tremendous. We have built new organizations and institutions, empowered new actors, fostered science, knowledge building and new technology, and have nearly 200 vastly different nation-states working together in unprecedented ways. This particular tension – between environmentalist and political science views of the world – motivates this work, and much of my own thinking about global environmental politics (GEP), as a political scientist in an environmental studies department. The chapters that follow will, I hope, further illuminate this tension and suggest ways forward.