

FOREWORD

IT'S NOT EASY BEING GREEN ECOPOLITICS IN THE '90s

It is almost twenty years since the nations of the world came together in Stockholm to plan a global response to the world's international environmental problems. The problems then seemed more hypothetical than real. The 1980s changed that perception.

Many—perhaps most—of the environmental tragedies of the past decade have been felt across borders. In each area of the globe some image seems to sum up this phenomenon. In Scandinavia and Canada, forests and lakes were destroyed by acid rain wafting in from abroad. The sight in Europe of the Rhine River running red with toxins and the invisible threat of nuclear radiation from Chernobyl alarmed the public and soured international relations. In Africa a human-made famine pushed millions of environmental refugees across borders and onto the television screens of the world.

Despite the rapid internationalization of the world's environmental problems, almost no mechanisms exist to solve, or even address, most of the problems that arise. Opinion groups in the United States and Europe have expressed alarm at the destruction of the world's rain forests. Scientists and politicians have voiced concern about a number of global atmospheric questions, including stratospheric ozone depletion and climate change. And yet a clear agenda has yet to emerge from the rhetoric and wishful thinking which have characterized discussion of the environment—it remains a wild card in international politics.

This issue of *The Fletcher Forum of World Affairs* illustrates how age-old politics must be factored into the sustainable environment equation. Two authors offer contrasting suggestions for how public policy must respond to the cloud of scientific uncertainty that surrounds the global warming issue. Another author proposes an economic model to quantify the costs of natural resource degradation. North-South politics, according to one author, have muddied potential solutions to the destruction of Amazonia and impinge directly upon national sovereignty. Two articles challenge the efficacy of international conventions in coping with traveling toxins and the ivory trade. Essays concluding the feature highlight the emergence of ecopolitics within mainstream discussions of justice and security.

Only by paring down the rhetoric that obscures the real interests underlying the environmental debate can we devise permanent solutions to this global dilemma.

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