

Confronting Environmental Change
in East and Southeast Asia:
Eco-politics, Foreign Policy and
Sustainable Development

Edited by Paul G Harris

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backgrounds. Doing so helps to erode some of the intellectual and normative constraints that sometimes straightjacket work in international environmental politics and policy. Just as no single scholar will have the key to solving environmental problems, no single paradigm or theory is adequate to such a huge and important task. In this book, and in the larger project, we often apply similar theories in diverse ways, and we may interpret the same events differently. I welcome these disparate perspectives and I hope readers do too.

By thinking systematically about the issues and approaches contained in this book, I trust that we will better understand how politics and people interact with the environment. This will move us a bit closer to a more harmonious relationship with the natural world upon which we depend for so very much.

I wish to thank the contributing authors for their scholarship and hard work over a prolonged period. All of us are indebted to anonymous readers commissioned by Earthscan and the United Nations University Press (UNUP). Their comments, and the guidance of editors at Earthscan and UNUP, have helped us to convey our ideas more effectively. For this we are most grateful. Lingnan University and its Research and Postgraduate Studies Committee have provided important financial aid to the Project on Environmental Change and Foreign Policy, and Ivy Tsang has given consistently professional administrative assistance. I am especially grateful to Chan Kwok Kin for daily encouragement and support.

*Paul G. Harris
Hong Kong
August 2004*

Chapter 1

Introduction: Confronting Environmental Change – Lessons from East and Southeast Asia

Paul G. Harris

Introduction

In an essay entitled 'The Filthy Earth', Nicholas Kristof poignantly portrays what he describes as an ongoing 'war' in Asia:

It kills 3 million people each year, mostly children and the elderly, and yet it is scarcely noticed. It is the war between humans and the environment, and it is one that both sides are losing. The environment is one of the bleakest prisms through which to view Asia, for it is becoming a brake on development and a challenge to the rest of the world as well. This environmental catastrophe is one reason to temper one's optimism about Asia (Kristof, 2000, p291).

Kristof's comments emphasize what environmental analysts have been saying for several years: as their economies and populations expand, almost all Asian countries are experiencing profound ecological deterioration and degradation of natural resources. It is therefore imperative that they confront environmental change.

The countries of *East Asia*, which are the focus of this volume, are no exception to this general trend in the wrong direction. Most countries in East Asia are experiencing terrible *national* environmental problems, such as hor-

rendous air pollution in cities, water pollution and water shortages, soil erosion and deforestation, and major depletion of natural flora and fauna (JEC, 2000; UNEP, 1999, pp72–97). The poorest of these countries often need, and can always use, financial and technical help from more developed countries in order to address local and national problems. The countries of East Asia also experience the adverse effects of *regional* environmental problems. They use polluted water from shared rivers, they often suffer transboundary air and marine pollution, and they endure the effects of acid rain that can originate far away. Countries of the region are also subject to the effects of *global* environmental problems, most notably global warming and resulting climatic changes (see Watson et al, 1998).

While the countries of East Asia are the victims of environmental change, they are also complicit in causing it at home and abroad. Japan, for example, has been responsible for substantial deforestation in East and Southeast Asia, and China – already the second largest source of greenhouse gases – will eventually overtake the US as the primary source of anthropogenic pollutants causing global warming. To be sure, the poor people of this region are, on a per capita basis, much less responsible for environmental problems than are residents of richer countries, and they do not bear the same *moral* burden to act to prevent and cope with these problems (see Harris, 1996, 1997, 2001a). However, it is impossible to deny that how they live and develop will have increasingly profound consequences for the entire world. For these and other reasons, when confronting the problems of global environmental change, it is certainly worthwhile – and even essential – to look carefully at East Asia.

The responses of East Asian countries to environmental changes are always complicated and frequently disparate. Different historical experiences, cultures, levels of development, political systems and policy-making structures (among many other variables) cause these countries to view their environmental interests differently, to participate differently in international environmental negotiations and to operate environmental protection schemes differently. Among the issues central to international environmental cooperation in East Asia are foreign policy and sustainable development. That is, the relationships of these countries with one another and with other actors outside East Asia, the motivations and processes underlying those relationships, and the ways in which they are (or are not) translated into environmental protection, matter for efforts at all levels to protect the environment of this region and, to an increasingly significant degree, the world.

With these considerations in mind, this book surveys several East Asian countries to better understand – and, hopefully, to better answer – these types of questions: What are the different environmental experiences of East Asian countries? What indigenous factors and particular foreign policy processes

influence whether some countries are more willing than others to join international environmental protection efforts? What are the different underlying stimuli for these countries' positions in international environmental negotiations, and what role do foreign policy institutions play in fostering or preventing international environmental cooperation in East Asia? What variables stimulate governments and other actors to develop in environmentally sustainable ways, and what are the keys to success in this regard? Once environmental foreign policies are formulated by individual states and groups of states, what are the impacts of those policies in affected countries – and how should these impacts be considered when policies are formulated? Our particular interest here is in areas where domestic politics and policy-making interact with international politics and institutions. As such, we are particularly interested in the making and implementation of *foreign policy*, and its effects on environmental protection in East Asia.

Environmental change and foreign policy

Foreign policy encompasses the objectives that officials of national governments seek to attain, the values and principles underlying those objectives, and the methods by which they are sought (see Chapter 2; Barkdull and Harris, 2002). It almost goes without saying that foreign policy objectives and processes can play an important, often vital, role in determining whether countries cooperate to address environmental problems, and often whether they have the capabilities to do so. What is particularly important about foreign policy is that it involves the *crossover* and *interaction* between domestic politics and processes, on the one hand, and international relations and institutions, on the other. Looking at purely local or international variables seldom explains environmental policy within and among countries. Many issues, actors and forces, which act domestically and internationally, affect and influence countries' national environmental regulations and their environmental foreign policies. As a result, they impact upon international environmental cooperation. Yet, despite the clear connections between local and international policy processes, many studies do not account for the foreign policy aspects of environmental protection efforts. This book seeks to do just that, in the process delineating and explicating many of the factors driving policy.

Thinking about foreign policy focuses our attention on interactions among domestic political preferences and the positions governments take in negotiations; the balancing of economic capacity and popular demands for development with foreign pressures to join regimes; and the rivalries and alliances between foreign policy agencies and the individuals working in them

(among many other considerations). A good reason for looking at foreign policy processes more systematically is that they can reveal important national characteristics that shape state behaviour, both domestically and internationally. Many foreign policy officials are simultaneously pressured to follow international norms and promote national interests and ideals. That is, they are buffeted by both domestic and international forces.

Foreign policy is, to be sure, about pursuing and promoting national interests. Complexities arise, however. It is not always clear what a country's national interests are or ought to be, particularly with regard to complex ecological issues, and it is almost always debatable how best to promote them (Webber and Smith 2002, pp43–44). As Roy argues in a discussion of contemporary Chinese foreign policy, policy-making elites will disagree over national goals and how to achieve them:

Beyond its most basic formulation, the national interest is not a monolithic, objective concept, but rather a dynamic and unsettled one, subject to constant debate. [Moreover,] powerful groups and individuals are subject to self-interested behaviour, and may support the policy option [that] they calculate will enhance their power and prestige, even if it is not necessarily the best option for the nation as a whole (Roy, 1998, pp137–138).

Thus, defining national interests and the ways of achieving them is a problematic and complex undertaking, involving actors and institutions seemingly unimportant to the casual observer.

It would be fatuous to suggest that it is possible to *completely* abstract out the forces of foreign policy, particularly if 'foreign policy' is broadly defined. Foreign policy cannot be separated from, for example, domestic politics and institutions, at one end of a spectrum, and global regimes and international power balances, at the other end. To suggest this would be just as absurd as suggesting that everything that is important can be explained by the international distribution of power (Waltz, 1979) (if so, why are 'weak' states so powerful in international environmental politics?) or domestic interests (Milner, 1997) (why, then, do some states adhere to international environmental norms, even when, by any reasonable measure, those interests would not be advantaged, or would even be harmed, by doing so?). Only rarely, if ever, are states 'unitary rational actors' (Green and Shapiro, 1994; Friedman, 1996), particularly in the environmental issue area. This is why looking specifically at foreign policy can be helpful. What is useful, perhaps, is to go beyond thinking in terms of domestic and international levels of analysis to a 'two-levels-plus' game (cf Putnam, 1988; Evans et al, 1993). In other words, we

ought to consider international political dynamics and domestic politics; but we can also think *explicitly* about the additional 'level' of foreign policy processes, which almost always falls between and affects the international- and domestic-level factors.

With this in mind, this book seeks to bring these considerations into analyses of how states and other actors in East and Southeast Asia confront environmental change through international cooperation and environmentally sustainable development. Although foreign policy processes and factors receive some attention in many studies of international environmental cooperation in East Asia (see Harris, 2002), they are seldom the focus of those studies. And while environmental foreign policy has been the focus of quite a number of excellent journal articles and book chapters, very few books have been dedicated to it. Material is scattered in journals and in books on broader topics. This book, and the larger Project on Environmental Change and Foreign Policy of which it is a part, endeavours to remedy this by bringing together the work of scholars examining, in one way or another, the role of foreign policy in global environmental politics (see Harris, 2000a, 2001a, 2001b, 2002, 2003). By focusing more scholarly attention on foreign policy processes and international variables that shape sustainable development, we can improve our understanding of how, why and when international environmental cooperation happens, how to foster more of it, and how to implement it most effectively.

Eco-politics and foreign policy: Lessons from East and Southeast Asia

This book comprises two parts. The first examines many of the actors, institutions and forces shaping environmental diplomacy and foreign policy in East Asia, with particular emphasis on case studies of China and Japan. The second part of the book looks deeper within the countries of East and Southeast Asia to help us to better understand the relationships between ecological politics, international relations and environmentally sustainable development. Several chapters in the second part focus on how environmental foreign policies impact upon countries in the region as they endeavour to implement environmentally sustainable development. Together, the case studies illuminate how environmental change is confronted – or not – in East Asia. Very importantly, they also teach us general lessons about environmental politics and policy, as well as international environmental cooperation, which can be applied to other regions and other countries.

Environment, foreign policy and diplomacy in East Asia: Actors, institutions and forces

Our case studies begin with Paul G Harris's survey of actors and forces affecting the environmental foreign policies of China and Japan. Chapter 2 describes some of the domestic environmental problems and transnational environmental issues of concern to each country; domestic policy processes related to environmental regulation; variables more obviously associated with foreign policy; and each country's record of international environmental diplomacy. Harris also introduces some theoretical approaches that can focus our attention on key variables. What he finds is that interesting and sometimes overlooked variables can be profoundly important. For example, China's historical near obsession with sovereignty and Japan's sometime obsession with being viewed as a major power shape their *environmental* foreign policies every bit as much as other factors. Indeed, the bilateral environmental relationship between these two countries remains deeply influenced by forces seemingly unrelated to the environment, in particular their 20th-century wartime history.

Chapter 2 serves as a primer for the more detailed case studies in subsequent chapters, which begin with Mika Merviö's analysis of the ideological foundations of Japan's environmental foreign policy. He argues in Chapter 3 that Japan's environmental policies, both domestic and international, are based on 'anthropocentric ideologies' that often neglect the environment per se. He introduces notions such as 'chauvinist anthropocentrism', where environmental protection is presented as an obstacle to economic development and the narrow interests of the local political elites guide policy. While Japan's environmental foreign policy is based on anthropocentric thinking, it is also influenced by broader foreign policy goals. Japan uses environmental issues to expand its influence abroad through, for example, its large amount of development assistance to other countries – much of it tied to environmental objectives. As such, the environment has taken on a more prominent role in Japan's foreign policy and has increasingly permeated other aspects of it. Thus, while anthropocentric ideologies and Japan's more narrow interests remain central, they have had to be reconciled with concerns about the environment.

In Chapter 4, Hiroshi Ohta examines Japanese foreign policy on global climate change to illustrate the intersections between domestic politics and environmental diplomacy. Ohta argues that Japan's domestic political framework, as well as its quest to make a greater contribution to international affairs (using non-military means), has generated rationales for it to undertake new initiatives in environmental diplomacy. Ohta describes several important events in the recent history of Japan's diplomacy and politics on global climate change, particularly its adoption of the 1992 United Nations Framework

Convention on Climate Change (FCCC). He does this from the perspective of Robert Putnam's 'two-level game' analysis (Putnam, 1988). Putnam proposed a conceptual framework for the analysis of international negotiations, whereby diplomats try to negotiate agreements that satisfy the demands of their domestic interest groups while minimizing the adverse effects of their counterparts' domestic interests. After using the conceptual framework of the two-level game to reconstruct the stories of Japan's domestic politics related to international climate change negotiations, Ohta evaluates the implications of this approach. In the process he highlights the importance of political leadership, public opinion and the active participation of environmental non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

In Chapter 5 Judith Shapiro turns our attention to China. She is particularly interested in the lessons we can learn from the environmental history of 20th-century revolutionary China. During the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution (1966–1976), the Chinese state displaced millions of people and relocated them to the hinterlands. Hundreds of factories and entire work forces were moved to regions inhospitable to human habitation. Coercive and semi-voluntary relocations of people to pristine wilderness areas damaged or destroyed ecosystems even as they created enormous human hardships, exemplifying the link between the suffering of people and the abuse of the land characteristic of the Mao years. Shapiro's case study provides a stark example of the environmental and human repercussions of policies based on narrow conceptions of national interests – in this case, international security concerns. She demonstrates how a preoccupation with perceived external threats can shift attention from other priorities and, specifically, have profoundly negative effects on the environment.

In Chapter 6, Yuka Kobayashi looks at China's environmental policies and diplomacy over the last three decades. While China has become more active in environmental protection regimes during recent years, some observers criticize it as a laggard and as an obstructive, uncooperative actor in these regimes. However, Kobayashi argues that we should consider the extensive domestic implementation efforts that China has been making in order to comply with international environmental agreements. Criticizing China as a recalcitrant actor in international environmental regimes risks being simplistic. China has many impediments that keep it from being more proactive in environmental protection. Kobayashi shows that constraints at both the international and domestic levels, and their interplay, explain Chinese behaviour on environmental issues. Domestic factors, such as geography, demography and history, constrain and shape China's environmental policies. Its role as a leader of the developing world also influences its policies. These constraints are made worse by top-level leaders who still focus on economic growth. Thus, Kobayashi argues, considering these and other constraints, China looks more like a 'troubled modernizer' than a recalcitrant participant in international environmental regimes.

China is one of the most important actors in international environmental affairs, and arguably the most important actor in Asia. In Chapter 7, Jonathan Harrington continues our examination of how it confronts environmental change. He is particularly interested in explaining the role of 'state environmentalism' and the use of environmental issues by senior Chinese leaders to bolster and legitimize their regime. Among other things, Harrington asserts that following the bloody 1989 Tiananmen incident the Chinese leadership sought new ways of boosting its image, both domestically and internationally. The leadership latched on to a 'safe' and symbolic issue that had both domestic and international appeal – namely, expanding participation in global eco-politics – one that it could use to claw its way out of diplomatic isolation. But attention to environmental issues took on a life of its own in China, showing how environmental diplomacy for other reasons can, nevertheless, lead to environmental protection efforts at the national level.

In Chapter 8, Wen-chen Shih analyses Taiwan's international environmental policies, particularly its efforts during the 1990s to balance trade with environmental protection. Taiwan is in a strange position by international standards. It is subject to international criticism for its environmental conduct, yet it is unable to participate in most international forums that deal with environmental issues (because mainland China will not permit this to happen). Shih argues that Taiwan now has a policy of voluntary compliance with multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs), although he shows that the underlying reason for this policy is the protection of Taiwan's economic and trade interests – not environmental protection *per se*. This policy followed threats of trade restrictions and sanctions during the early 1990s from some MEAs to which Taiwan is not a party. This puts Taiwan in a very difficult position in the international debate over the compatibility between free trade and MEAs. In undertaking his analysis of Taiwan, Shih highlights some of the principal forces and actors shaping the environmental foreign policy of an important actor in East Asia.

Eco-politics, international relations and strategies for sustainable development in East and Southeast Asia

In the second part of this book we look more specifically at the effects that environmental politics and diplomacy have upon the negotiation and practice of environmentally sustainable development, and vice versa. We are concerned with how environmental foreign policy emanating from individual states and from international institutions is implemented in East and Southeast Asia, and the lessons from these experiences for those who formulate environmental foreign policies. In Chapter 9, Ho-Ching Lee explores China's policies toward the climate change agreements, which require little of China. Lee's chapter

exposes some of the issues that must be addressed if China is to take on a greater role in combating climate change. Lee argues that major factors influencing China's actions include, for example, access to financial assistance and technology transfer, and China's desire for greater international recognition. Lee suggests that reducing carbon dioxide emissions through domestic measures (such as improved energy efficiency and tree planting) would promote China's current and long-term interests. In promoting its broader interests, China may reduce its environmental footprint, even if it is not required to do so by international environmental treaties.

In Chapter 10, Jak Sangchai examines Thailand's policy toward the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). Thai politics are often described as being dominated by bureaucrats. The government wants to join the CBD because it contains provisions for financial aid and technology transfer, and could help conserve Thailand's biodiversity. However, since the late 1980s there have been an increasing number of Thai NGOs claiming to represent the people and trying to influence government policies. NGOs can use environmental issues to further their objectives, such as promoting the rights of the poor, farmers and local communities. Some Thai NGOs view the CBD as a trap set by developed countries and transnational companies wishing to take advantage of rural people and the poor. Sangchai describes the struggles among the government and other actors as Thailand debates whether to implement the CBD. He shows, in particular, how NGOs can be active in shaping national policies toward international environmental goals, and how they use environmental issues to promote their own particularistic interests.

Many countries face serious challenges related to the resources they share with neighbours. This is often the case with states who share rivers susceptible to upstream development initiatives that can result in serious ecological consequences. Power relations between countries, and the advantages of upstream states, often define the issue. The Mekong River in Southeast Asia provides such an example as downstream states deal with China's construction of dams on the river's upper reaches. In Chapter 11, Peter Stoett examines the national, human and environmental security aspects of international efforts to manage the Mekong River. Stoett describes the current situation within and among countries along the Mekong's course, highlighting the foreign policy dilemmas raised by disputes over the river and its resources. In the view of Stoett, human security must be considered alongside, or even above, national security. He argues that scholars should look more carefully at the impact of environmental alterations on the people who rely on rivers for their well-being and who are often marginalized in decision-making processes related to river management.

The role played by international assistance in Vietnam's efforts to protect its marine environment is examined by Tran Duc Thanh, Tran Dinh Lan and Pham Van Luong in Chapter 12. The Vietnam Sea, with its densely populated

islands and coasts, has become an area of active economic development. Human activities have resulted in many new problems for Vietnam's marine environment, making its protection an urgent requirement. Chapter 12 shows how Vietnam has undertaken substantial domestic efforts toward this end. These efforts derive much of their strength from international relationships, which have often emanated from Vietnam's participation in international environmental agreements. Indeed, Vietnam's international relations in the area of environmental protection have been among its most open policies over the last decade. Importantly, Vietnam's marine protection efforts have been bolstered by international assistance for capacity-building and local development projects. NGOs have also been involved through implementing small-scale projects. The authors show that international assistance, when wisely allocated, can be instrumental in bringing about major advances in environmental protection at the national level.

Using Canadian experiences and practices as a comparative backdrop, Tse-Kang Leng, in Chapter 13, analyses sustainable development in Taiwan. Taiwan's rapid economic development has caused environmental pollution and deterioration of natural resources. The Taiwanese and Canadian experiences suggest that sustainable development requires the integration of different national goals, an open process for public participation, accountability through multi-stakeholder supervision and market-based incentives for international participation. Economic development and sustainable development are not necessarily in conflict. Marketable environmental technologies, such as high-efficiency clean technologies, are important in creating win-win relationships between the state and the business community. Participation in international environmental cooperation can boost technological innovation and increase business opportunities for environmental industries. International cooperation, combined with mechanisms for collaborative governance among government, business and civil society, can move countries toward successful sustainable development.

Effectively confronting environmental change in East Asia will require the involvement of the international community. But doing so cannot be divorced from the priorities of people on the ground, their group interests and their everyday conflicts. Bearing this in mind, we conclude our look at strategies for sustainable development in East Asia with a study of how community-based conflict management has assisted environmental protection in Papua New Guinea (PNG). In Chapter 14, Philip Scott Jones describes projects in 'sustainable livelihoods' related to the implementation of international environmental objectives. He is particularly interested in policy approaches that enable local people and vulnerable groups to participate in policy-making, thereby improving policy formulation and implementation. He argues that the tools and principles of conflict management, appropriately applied within a framework

of sustainable livelihoods, provide flexible methods for managing environmental conflicts and for developing appropriate policy mechanisms. Well-designed, locally relevant conflict management and sustainable livelihood training can be powerful entry points for bringing stakeholders at all levels into the process of confronting and managing environmental change in East Asia.

Conclusion

The findings of the contributors to this volume enhance our understanding of how and why states and other actors work to protect the environment – or fail to do so. We are particularly interested in the important role played by foreign policy processes, broadly defined, in influencing international environmental cooperation and in the implementation of environmentally sustainable development. We have reached many interesting and important conclusions, including – but certainly not limited to – the following.

Domestic politics can be the determining variable in shaping environmental foreign policy, even in nominally less pluralistic countries. In many or even a majority of cases, the most important determinants of environmental foreign policy are found within countries. This will come as no surprise to students of international environmental politics. We know, for example, that domestic politics are very important in shaping the foreign policies of the US, including its policies related to the environment (Harris, 2000, 2001a, 2001b). However, while the US case shows the importance of pluralism – the degree of access that civil society actors have in the policy process – it is not always clear how this plays out. A case in point is Japan. Although Japan is a recognized and well-established democracy, there is relatively little pluralism, especially compared with the US. Non-governmental actors and the public have less influence than many casual observers would expect, whereas bureaucrats and business interests are very influential in shaping policy. In contrast, and perhaps paradoxically, in China – a country ruled by an authoritarian government and hardly classified as democratic – quite a large number of actors shape policy. These actors range from interested governmental officials and scientists – even foreign scientists – to local officials and industry leaders, among others. Even the semi-independent media and NGOs have played a more important role than one might expect – perhaps a more important role than in Japan and some other more democratic countries, at least with regard to *global* environmental issues (at times the Japanese public has vigorously pushed the domestic environmental agenda, especially at the local level).

In contrast to the power of domestic forces, international factors can, at least in some cases, shape environmental foreign policy; in short, international politics can shape foreign and domestic policy on the environment. To say that

domestic politics can be paramount is, of course, not to say that international influences are not germane in many cases. Indeed, they can be central to policy formulation. Japan is again a case in point. Its environmental foreign policy is arguably not driven by domestic politics, or even by concern about threats posed by global environmental changes for the nation or its people. Instead, Japan's environmental foreign policy has been driven by its desire to be viewed as a legitimate major power in the eyes of other industrialized countries. Environmental diplomacy is a way for Japan to peacefully increase its power vis-à-vis other states. Similarly, China has substantial 'environmental power' because its growing contribution to global pollution gives it the ability to make or break many international environmental agreements. It wields this 'power' to enhance its international position and reputation, not simply to join others in addressing environmental problems or to respond to environmental concerns among influential actors in the policy process. Taiwan provides another example of how international forces can be important. Its environmental policies are arguably a function of its dependence upon international trade and its desire to avoid environmental sanctions. Environmentalism on the part of the government and the people of Taiwan has a relatively minor role in shaping its environmental foreign policies.

History matters, sometimes a great deal, even if it appears to be totally unrelated to the global environment. This is one of the more interesting conclusions that come from studies of environmental politics and policy in East Asia. History quite unrelated to the environment can shape environmental foreign policy. China, for example, has been (at least until recently) virtually obsessed with its treatment by foreign powers in past centuries. One of its primary goals when joining and implementing environmental accords – and, indeed, other international agreements – is to avoid the humiliation it experienced during the 19th and 20th centuries. This has practical consequences – for example, when China refuses to be bound by certain verification measures that are viewed as important to effectively implement international agreements for sustainable development. In the case of Japan, war history shapes much of its foreign policy, including its *environmental* foreign policy and the responses to that policy by other countries in East and Southeast Asia. Japan's environmental aid to other countries in the region is, to a significant degree, an effort to atone for (or appear to atone for) the way it treated neighbouring countries during the first half of the 20th century, and its neighbours expect it to be this way. In short, wars and colonialism of a century ago can be central determinants of current policies on, for example, financial assistance for sustainable development in East Asia. Thus, the degree to which history influences environmental foreign policy in East Asia should not be underestimated.

The number and type of actors shaping most environmental foreign policies is usually very large. There is an understandable tendency among some

scholars to seek parsimonious explanations for environmental foreign policies and international environmental affairs more broadly. However, as in other issue areas, the process of environmental policy-making and implementation is complex, and seldom as easy to explain as many would have us believe. In addition, the usual actors we identify as being important may not be working in the way that we expect. An example might be the role played by NGOs in shaping US environmental foreign policy. The US has many prominent organizations with environmentally friendly names that, in fact, work hard to prevent their government from joining or implementing international environmental agreements. But it gets even more complicated. For example, the case of Thailand and the biodiversity convention shows that even pro-environmental organizations may oppose international environmental accords if, in so doing, they can achieve other important (and usually laudable) goals or (more cynically) if they or their officials can garner additional power in or with government. Which actors, institutions or forces are the most important? It depends upon the country being studied, the particular environmental issues at stake, the country's level of economic development and (among many other variables) the combination of domestic and international forces at play – including the ecological problems themselves.)

Environmental foreign policy is often not about the environment. As indicated by several case studies in this volume, countries may act on environmental issues for reasons partly or totally unrelated to the environment. As suggested previously, Japan's environmental foreign policy is, in part, about establishing itself as a credible global power and an influential actor in this issue area, to some degree because it cannot easily do so in others (for example, security affairs). China's substantial efforts to join international environmental negotiations and regimes during the early 1990s were much less motivated by environmental concerns than by the desire to garner international financial assistance and technology for its economic development, its interest in being viewed as a leader of the developing world in this issue area, and (most interestingly, perhaps) its efforts to escape the diplomatic isolation imposed on it by much of the Western world following the Tiananmen crackdown in 1989.)

We can conclude that foreign policy processes are crucial in shaping the domestic and international environmental policies and behaviours of states. Foreign policy processes are conduits of communication and influence among individuals, bureaucracies, states, international institutions and forces, and foreign policy-makers. They are the venues for forming *environmental* foreign policy, determine the degree to which it enters international dialogue, and influence its implementation. In short, whether (and the degree to which) the natural environment is protected is in large part a function of foreign policy and all of the actors, institutions and forces of which it is comprised.