

Levy, David L., and Peter J. Newell, eds. 2005. *The Business of Global Environmental Governance*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

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This edited volume opens with a simple observation: firms are important actors in international environmental politics both because they are leading contributors to environmental degradation and because they are capable of influencing how societies respond to environmental changes. According to the editors, firms shape responses to environmental problems not only by pressuring governments to adopt policies consistent with corporate objectives and by implementing business strategies to confront changing markets and regulatory climates, but also through more informal means such as promoting corporate norms of environmental stewardship. Rejecting the state-centrism of regime analysis and supplementing existing work on nonstate actors in environmental governance that has focused on civil society, the authors aim to elevate the place of the corporation within the study of global environmental politics, examining how corporate interests fare in international politics and unpacking the determinants of corporate interests themselves.

The volume is divided into four parts. The first provides a literature review and conceptual framework, and the three empirical sections that follow deal in turn with corporate strategies toward environmental change, how corporate strategies are influenced by the regional context in which firms operate, and how firms have contributed to the “privatization of governance” in specific issue areas. Although several contributors to the volume do not apply the approach, Levy and Newell orient the empirical chapters by presenting a Neo-Gramscian framework for analyzing business influence in international environmental politics. The appeal of the Neo-Gramscian approach lies in its potential to identify the importance of structural sources of business power while also suggesting that political outcomes result from contests that are fought and won with ideas as well as with material resources. The centerpiece of the Neo-Gramscian framework is the concept of hegemony, which results when a coalition succeeds in promoting its agenda by exerting control over political institutions and securing the consent of civil society to maintain this control. The dominance of a hegemonic bloc is continually contested, however, and bargaining and competition among actors eventually give rise to new hegemonic coalitions, which are themselves vulnerable to challenges.

While the Neo-Gramscian framework offers a useful way of conceptualizing the relationships among corporations, political institutions, and civil society in the process of constructing environmental governance, the chapters that draw on this approach (by Levy, Andrée, Jagers et al., and Ford) illustrate the hazards of applying the framework in empirical analysis. One common problem with these contributions is that they fail to delineate the scope of influence of the hegemonic blocs whose fragmentation they seek to explain before they

initiate their studies of hegemonic transformation. Without documentation of the extent of hegemonic power in shaping existing environmental practices it is hard to know whether a ruling coalition is really being displaced or reformed at all. For example, consider Levy's study of corporate responses to the climate change issue. The collapse of the industry coalition that initially sought to weaken international efforts to combat global warming might be interpreted not as a weakening in the hegemony of the oil industry, but as an unsuccessful challenge to a global hegemonic bloc composed of scientists, national governments, and representatives of civil society promoting an agenda encouraging reductions in greenhouse gas emissions.

Although the application of the Neo-Gramscian approach to the study of global environmental problems may lead analysts to attempt to identify hegemonic blocs influenced by industry associations at the global level, demonstrating the influence of such blocs at this level of governance appears to be a difficult enterprise. The influence of corporate actors in national and supranational governance processes is easier to establish. Strong chapters by Dauvergne and Coen examine how the political environment in which firms operate determines the nature of their actions in the face of increased environmental regulation. Dauvergne notes that informal networks between private actors and governments in Southeast Asia have enabled corporate loggers to resist international pressures to adopt more environmentally benign practices. According to Coen, informal networking also represents a point of entry for corporate influence in the decision-making process in the European Union, which provides multiple channels of access that give business interests a privileged voice in environmental policy-making. Even chapters that aim to examine the global influence of corporate actors reinforce the point that national contexts are important determinants of corporate strategies and the ability of business to shape governance processes. The "biotech bloc" that Andrée describes has thrived politically in the United States, but has encountered resistance in the European Union and elsewhere. Similarly, divergent responses to climate change among oil giants, as Levy argues, can be attributed in part to differences in national approaches to regulation and consumer pressures within national markets.

In addition to examining the dynamic relationship between corporate strategies and environmental governance, the volume also contributes to the debate over whether corporate power has led to a weakening of the state, and the chapters provide multiple answers to this question. For Clapp, the increasing role of corporations in international environmental governance has weakened the voice of developing states, while Finger argues that privatization ventures have led firms to favor increasing state capacity in some areas as a means of serving their own interests.

This thorough and informative volume deserves the attention of both students of global environmental politics and IPE willing to heed the call to take the role of corporations in environmental governance seriously and ready to examine the diverse relationships between firms, states, and civil society in the international political economy.