

PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

THE GERM OF THE IDEA that eventually evolved into this book came on the eve of the 1992 Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro. It was a time of great hope for people who shared a concern over the fate of the global environment, but tempered by uneasiness over the course the summit set for understanding and addressing these problems. Almost 10 years later, the legacy of those ideas and decisions—a legacy I label the “compromise of liberal environmentalism”—remains powerfully in place. It can be found in the ideas that undergird many of the most important and far reaching international environmental treaties such as on climate change and biodiversity, in the policies and programs of international environment and development organizations ranging from the United Nations Environment Programme to the World Bank and throughout the United Nations system as a whole, and in the way powerful non-environmental organizations such as the World Trade Organization—which increasingly finds itself making decisions with potential environmental consequences—try to respond to the demands to accommodate environmental and development concerns in their decisions and policies. Even many nongovernmental organizations rest their proposals for action on this framework, as do many states in their domestic policies.

Given the potential impact of these institutions and policies for the fate of the planet’s ecological systems and human life and health, I thought it crucial to uncover the reasons why states and international in-

stitutions treat global environmental problems the way they do, and the underlying forces of world politics that pushed global environmental governance in this direction. Only with this knowledge did it seem possible to make informed judgments about the prospects for future action, or provide a basis on which to critically assess and debate whether there is a need for deeper change. This task seems even more important today—given the disappointment many feel, despite some notable successes, over progress on the world's most severe environmental problems since 1992.

The second inspiration for this book came from a frustration, typical among many of my fellow graduate students at the time, with most of the literature on international institutions. It seemed to forget that international institutions are not simply a vehicle through which states cooperate, but that the cooperation they enable is for some purpose or goal. Purposes and goals and the politics that drives them were simply left out of most International Relations scholarship, as if all that mattered was whether an institution formed or not. What it actually did (or did not do) mattered not at all. A new literature in International Relations—which now falls under the label 'constructivism'—challenged the discipline by bringing politics and common or collective purposes back into the analysis of international institutions. However, it faced heavy criticism initially for being too concerned with big theoretical questions at the expense of adding to our knowledge of important and pressing problems in world politics. My hope is that this book is one in a growing list that responds to this criticism.

I owe a great many people thanks for support, encouragement, constructive criticism, and even inspiration as I developed my ideas. At University of Toronto, Janice Gross Stein, Ronald Deibert, Louis Pauly, Robert O. Matthews, and Craig Scott asked the tough questions and pushed and prodded my work to reach beyond its initial limitations. David Welch merits special mention for what in hindsight must have been a painstaking task; his willingness to read and comment in detail on multiple versions of each portion of what would later become a draft manuscript.

A great many other people helped along the way through thoughtful discussions, insights, and comments on the research that eventually coalesced into this book. They include Thomas Biersteker, Ben Cashore, Dorinda Dallmeyer and other participants in the 1996 ACUNS/ASIL Summer Workshop on "The Role of Governmental, Intergovernmental, and Nongovernmental Institutions in Global Governance" at Brown University, Andrew Deutz, Elizabeth DeSombre, Joanne Gestrin, Thomas

Homer-Dixon, Richard Herrmann, Andrew Hurrell, Rhona Leibel, Karen Litfin, Miriam Lowi, Richard Matthews, Don Munton, Shaun Narine, Norrin Ripsman, and Lisa Young.

I especially want to acknowledge my intellectual debt to James Busumtwi-Sam whose collaboration on a related project greatly helped my thinking on many theoretical aspects of this book. Our work together at times became so intertwined that he deserves some credit for whatever intellectual contribution is made here. Of course the blame for any errors of fact or judgment are solely my own.

Other people took time out of their busy schedules to discuss their experiences and issues about which they knew far more than me. While the formal interviews directly quoted are listed in my bibliography, I also thank Louise Comeau, Alden Meyer, Peter Timmerman, Jeffrey Watson, and Doug Whelpdale, among others, who talked to me about their research or participation in various international environmental negotiations. I am also grateful to Peter Berry who shared his interview notes on ozone negotiations and research with me. I especially want to thank Louise Comeau and Jennifer Morgan, of the Climate Action Network, for helping me arrange to attend the first Conference of the Parties for the Framework Convention on Climate Change in Berlin, and for giving me full access to CAN's strategy sessions and information.

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All this would have been for naught without the commitment and support for the project from Kate Wittenberg at Columbia University Press. The comments of the two anonymous reviewers she chose helped make the final manuscript a much stronger and more coherent piece of work. I am also grateful to Leslie Bialler and the rest of the staff at Columbia for their

efficiency and professionalism in ushering a first-time author through the arcane editorial process.

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This book would never have been written without the unwavering support and inspiration of my partner and wife, Linda White. Her painstaking scrutiny of virtually every word I have written related to this project made it a far better product than I ever could have produced on my own. She constantly pushed me to clarify my ideas, asking the fundamental questions about my work that others would not. I dedicate this book to her.

Steven Bernstein
Toronto, Canada
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The Compromise of LIBERAL ENVIRONMENTALISM