KURK DORSEY

Bernath Lecture

Dealing with the Dinosaur (and Its Swamp): Putting the Environment in Diplomatic History*

At the risk of inflaming dinosaur aficionados, I want to quote from George Kennan's *American Diplomacy* a passage in which he unfavorably compared a certain democracy under attack with an apatosaurus in the same position: "I sometimes wonder," Kennan wrote,

> whether in this respect a democracy is not uncomfortably similar to one of those prehistoric monsters with a body as long as this room and a brain the size of a pin: he lies there in his comfortable primeval mud and pays little attention to his environment; he is slow to wrath—in fact you practically have to whack his tail off to make him aware that his interests are being disturbed; but, once he grasps this, he lays about him with such blind determination that he not only destroys his adversary but largely wrecks his native habitat. You wonder whether it would not have been wiser for him to have taken a little more interest in what was going on at an earlier date and to have seen whether he could not have prevented some of these situations from arising . . .[1]

Not surprisingly, Kennan's colorful and unflattering description has drawn attention from diplomatic historians. Just last year, Mark Stoler featured it prominently in his presidential address illustrating his concern that diplomatic historians do not know enough military history.[2] At the same conference, H. W. Brands also reminded us of the passage in his tribute to Robert Divine's career, as Professor Divine had used it to great effect to demonstrate a common but inaccurate feeling held by many Americans that they are fundamentally

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1. George F. Kennan, *American Diplomacy*, expanded ed. (Chicago, 1984), 66.

2. Mark Stoler, "War and Diplomacy: Or, Clausewitz for Diplomatic Historians," *Diplomatic History* 29 (January 2005): 2.

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peaceful people, minding their own business until provoked by some great outrage.[3]

Divine and Stoler, like almost all diplomatic historians, accepted Kennan's focus on what was important in this image that we all can form of two great beasts battling in a swampy setting, right out of a diorama in any natural history museum in the world: what matters is the battle itself, why it started, and who ultimately prevailed. We diplomatic historians are most interested in the state actors who thrash about on stage, no matter how cunning, aloof, aggressive, or slow-witted. Through biography and the use of personal papers, we work to examine the pin-sized brain of Unclesamosaurus and, sometimes, the brains of those seeking to whack off his tail. Stacks of government documents, media reports, and legislative speeches get us to the motivation, or lack thereof, of our actors as they provoke or respond to provocation. And we generally use a fairly traditional set of lenses to sort out the various strategies of "lay[ing] about" employed by the denizens of this comfortably muddy planet.

I concur that these are all important subjects, but what about this comfortably muddy planet itself? We do not learn whether Kennan's mythical red, white, and blue dinosaur suffers any consequences for wrecking its native habitat. That part of the story was unimportant to Kennan in the 1950s, although in later years Kennan argued that environmental protection should be at the top of the diplomatic agenda, alongside curbing nuclear proliferation.[4] From this perspective, there are in fact two dramas in the primeval ooze. Will the introverted dinosaur survive the attack that rouses it from its slumber, and will it survive what it did to its environment in the process?

To push this reinterpretation further, we can return to Kennan's exasperation that his ancient behemoth failed to take more interest in its surroundings and act to head off the crisis. While he clearly had in mind the nation's unwillingness, if not inability, to understand the motivations, strengths, and weaknesses of its potential enemies, it seems impossible to read those lines in 2005 and not think of global climate change, the devastation of the world's fisheries, or the likelihood that there will be a serious confrontation over some scarce resource, such as oil or clean water.[5] Finally, Kennan's image leaves the swamp as an inanimate object, merely a stage, rather than a dynamic ecosystem that can shape human actions. Environmental historians have been treating nature as an actor for years. At an elemental level, so too have military historians, who have certainly argued that weather is a central factor in determining the outcome of battles and entire campaigns.

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3. Robert Divine, *Perpetual War for Perpetual Peace* (College Station, TX, 2000), 17.

4. George Kennan, *At a Century's Ending: Reflections, 1982–1995* (New York, 1996), 162, 280–81.

5. For a depressing list of potential crises see The Worldwatch Institute, *State of the World 2005: Redefining Global Security* (Washington, DC, 2005).

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It is time for diplomatic historians to deal with that other dinosaur; not the one who battles Godzilla for dominance of a swamp, but the one who fails to pay attention to its environment, fouls its own habitat (and let us not forget that there are many other tenants in that habitat), and seems largely incapable of taking past lessons on the subject and applying them to impending problems. In fact, we should be prepared to study the swamp itself, paying more attention to how nature influences foreign policy. Scholars in other fields, most notably various political scientists, some environmental historians, and the occasional historian of science, have taken international environmental issues seriously; and of course Jared Diamond has become nearly a household name by placing the environment at the center of a grand theory of international relations.[6] For all of the good work these scholars have done, though, diplomatic historians should not leave this area of increasing interest and importance to others; by our training we should be better equipped than other historians to understand the practical dimensions of environmental diplomacy, and we should be able to historicize that diplomacy at least as well as political scientists. Given the steadily increasing importance of environmental challenges, from deforestation to sending our pollution offshore, we diplomatic historians should be as interested in environmental diplomacy as in political relations with various extinct dictators. The opportunity for our field seems to me to be as great as the opportunity presented by the opening of Eastern European archives for Cold War studies.

Some readers no doubt will think that the fundamental problem with environmental diplomacy is that it is relatively less important than the topics that have traditionally drawn our interest. Compared to war and peace, the ideology of empire building, or nuclear anything, most treaties dealing with the environment appear to address smaller or less immediate problems. An adviser faced with a student who wants to work on Vietnam might be concerned about the originality of the topic, but not its importance. But in the long run, it might well be that the most important development of the 1950s was the global expansion of the fossil fuel burning industrial economy that released enormous amounts of greenhouse gases, which in turn might soon render San Jose a port city. Likewise, the global impact of the Vietnam War will probably turn out to be far less than the export of agricultural technology and thinking known as the Green Revolution. As Tom Paterson suggested back in 1990, food production is power.[7] Nick Cullather's fascinating recent *Diplomatic History* article on the Green Revolution is, to my knowledge, the only attempt by a diplomatic historian to tackle either of these problems.[8] Our current environmental crises and

6. Jared Diamond, *Guns, Germs, and Steel: The Fates of Human Societies* (New York, 1999) and *Collapse: How Societies Choose to Fail or Succeed* (New York, 2004).

7. Thomas Paterson, "Defining and Doing the History of American Foreign Relations: A Primer," *Diplomatic History* 14 (Fall 1990): 584–601.

8. Nick Cullather, "Miracles of Modernization: The Green Revolution and the Apotheosis of Technology," *Diplomatic History* 28 (April 2004): 227–54.

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recent environmental diplomacy have deep historical roots that we need to take more seriously.

Beyond this doubt about importance, we have been slow to embrace environmental issues, I suspect, for a variety of reasons. Because environmental diplomacy appears to be new, it might not seem like history yet. We are just now getting to the point where archival material from the 1970s is widely available, so sources on most of the environmental diplomacy that might come easily to mind are still tucked away. In addition, Mark Lytle has argued that part of the reluctance of diplomatic historians to engage the environment comes from the different foci of American environmental and diplomatic historians. The environmental historians are much more focused on the western United States, while diplomatic historians tend to see Washington, DC and New York City as the focal points.[9] I think Mark is correct, although I believe that both groups have been moving toward each other in this respect over the last decade.

I would add that diplomatic historians are handicapped in this effort by two conceptual blind spots. First, nature obviously transcends borders in a way that nothing else does. Animals migrate, air and water flow, ecosystems have fuzzy natural boundaries that rarely match up with political boundaries, and the oceans are completely beyond the state system pale. While this transcendence makes the environment an inherently international topic (and hence a matter of our concern), it also makes it harder for diplomatic historians to deal with nature on a theoretical level. Almost everything else we work with fits within national boundaries or frameworks. Even when we look at race, culture, and gender, we are practically forced to discuss American ideas about race, French culture, or British conceptions of gender, because these things are based on deep stories of national identity. Certainly, there are traditions that transcend borders, perhaps what we might call Western values in the case of the United States, but we tend to focus on their distinctively American development.

Second, at least in the United States, environmental historians tend to be more theoretical and less empirical than diplomatic historians. Students in an environmental history class can spend days haggling over the definition of nature, but past policy decisions are less engaging. In fact, we can argue at length over what "environmental history" even means; the president of the American Society for Environmental History recently engaged in what he called a "death-defying attempt to define our field."[10] Of course, similar discussions occur among diplomatic historians, but it seems that when we argue about what to call our journal or our society it reflects not so much a theoret-

9. Mark Lytle, "An Environmental Approach to American Diplomatic History," *Diplomatic History* 20 (Spring 1996): 279–300.

10. Douglas Weiner, "Environmental History and environmental history: A Death-Defying Attempt to Articulate a Coherent Definition of Our Field," Presidential address delivered to the American Society for Environmental History, Houston, 17 March 2005.

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ical dispute or catharsis but a simple matter of drawing more members, readers, or relevance.

Were we to shed those blinders and constraints and tackle the environment, we might find greater relevance in policymaking—well, perhaps in the next administration, but anything we begin now will not be done by 2008 anyway. The State Department now has a Bureau of Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs, which suggests that the nation's diplomats take the environment seriously, and some historical context from us would be useful. And it is not only the State Department that might benefit from that context, as many of the environmental nongovernmental organizations that are active internationally could use more of a sense of history; for instance, the Worldwatch Institute's latest *State of the World*, which interestingly has a subtitle *Redefining Global Security*, indicates an awareness of the connection between nature and national security, and its authors make connections to historical events, but there are few, if any, attempts to analyze anything before the 1990s or look for relevant perspectives. In addition, the authors noted that the Nobel Committee recognized the connection between environmental problems and international security by awarding the 2004 Nobel Peace Prize to Wangari Maathai, a woman who has spent her life promoting reforestation in Kenya.[11]

But we don't do this work just with the hope that some official will read our books, or really defy the odds and take a lesson from one. Our targets are more diffuse—each other, students, the occasional lay reader, and of course obligated family members. As Michael Hogan described in his presidential address in 2003, members of our field have striven over the last twenty-five years to become more relevant to the reading audience and add a number of new approaches to our still dominant interest in traditional diplomatic topics. In particular, he emphasized how historians have broadened diplomatic history by including race, gender, and cultural studies. Hogan's address responded to Lynn Hunt's observation that a "refashioned" diplomatic history might be "the next big thing" in historical scholarship, and he built upon her observation by emphasizing the rising tide of globalization in that scholarship.[12]

In attempting to lay out a course for globalizing diplomatic history, though, Hogan largely overlooked the globe itself. With two brief references to environmental issues, he did not quite ignore the subject, and he did argue that our society should pay more attention to borderlands (which was the theme of the 2003 SHAFR meeting) and NGOs, both of which would be important in a wave of diplomatic history that examines the environment.[13] But it would be fair to say that those who heard the address or read the longer version in *Diplomatic*

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11. *State of the World*, xix.

12. Michael Hogan, "The 'Next Big Thing': The Future of Diplomatic History in a Global Age," *Diplomatic History* 28 (January 2004): 1–21.

13. In particular, Hogan pointed us to the essay by Nathan Citino, "The Global Frontier: Comparative History and the Frontier-Borderlands Approach in American Foreign Relations," *Diplomatic History* 25 (Fall 2001): 677–93.

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History would not think that nature was as important as race, gender, or culture in this new global history. That we need a reasonably healthy environment to sustain the people who get divided up into races, genders, and cultures, not to mention the historians who think about them, ought to cause us to pay at least as much attention to the environment as the other three.

To be fair, as editor of *Diplomatic History*, Hogan did give those of us who work on environmental diplomacy our shot. I published an article there in 1995 out of my dissertation, and, more important, Mark Lytle's essay challenging diplomatic historians to see green appeared in 1996. So my complaint is not really with Hogan but rather with those of us who have reached the stage where we are no longer dissertators but the advisers of dissertators, those with the power to influence how the next generation defines the field and chooses research topics. It appears that few apprentice diplomatic historians see the environment as an important historical topic, and those who do are easier to find at the environmental history meetings than SHAFR's conferences. Oddly, I suspect that the rest do see the environment as an important current topic. A recent discussion on H-Diplo about the fall of France in 1940 wandered into a discussion of the attributes of democratic foreign policy, and the Kyoto Protocol cropped up as a prime example of ways in which political leaders might fail to use the cover provided for them by an elected legislature. Kyoto comes to mind quickly enough as an example, but as a research topic it is best left to the political scientists.

It seems to me that we can use the development of race as a tool for analyzing foreign relations as a model for how the environment might fit in. Twenty-five years ago, most diplomatic historians would have recognized that racism was a factor in the views of U.S. leaders, but that did not make race a subject of much research. Then a series of books put race at the core of Manifest Destiny, the Pacific war, and the ideology underpinning much of U.S. foreign policy. Since then, we have added the Cold War and World War II diplomacy to the list, and race has become a mainstream category of analysis.[14] At the very least, most of us have to stop and ponder how race might fit into our work, and it warrants discussion in our survey courses. In short, over time, race has become a common topic and a valuable interpretative lens.

Few readers of this essay are looking for a dissertation topic, and I know well that professors of all ranks rarely have time to pick up a new historical agenda, whether a research language, an interpretative framework, or a highly statistical method. Therefore, I want to focus on our role as advisers of graduate stu-

14. Reginald Horsman, *Race and Manifest Destiny: Origins of American Racial Anglo-Saxonism* (Cambridge, MA, 1986); John Dower, *War without Mercy: Race and Power in the Pacific War* (New York, 1987); Daniel Aldridge, "A War for the Colored Races: Anti-Interventionism and the African-American Intelligentsia," *Diplomatic History* 28 (June 2004): 321–52; Mary Dudziak, *Cold War Civil Rights: Race and the Image of American Democracy* (Princeton, NJ, 2002); and of course Michael Hunt, *Ideology and U.S. Foreign Policy* (New Haven, CT, 1987).

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dents (including advising undergraduates heading off to graduate school), because we can make them do almost anything in the name of scholarship or, barring that, the job market. Most obviously, we can encourage students to tackle explicitly environmental dissertations, just as we can encourage them to examine gender. But before they get to that stage, they have to read (and read and read), and we do have a lot to say about their reading lists and their supplementary fields.

So let us focus for a bit on books and articles that might go on those lists. Surely, we can all assign Mark Lytle's aforementioned article "An Environmental Approach to American Diplomatic History," which should at least generate discussion if not turn on a light bulb or two. Lytle took his cue from Tom Paterson's 1990 *Diplomatic History* article, which had suggested that the end of the Cold War gave us an opportunity to add the environment to the mix of mainstream topics on which we worked. Lytle expressed concern that our field's focus on political history risked making us irrelevant. With a set of pressing environmental problems facing the world, he called on us to keep pace with current events. Lytle suggested two basic approaches that we could follow. Most obviously, we could look for explicitly environmental topics, such as whaling or the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species. Or we could try the trickier task of reassessing a subject that had drawn a great deal of attention already, such as Vietnam. Once your students have read Mark's essay, they could turn to Akira Iriye's book on NGOs.[15]

Then pile on some environmental history. A few examples stand out. Almost anything by William Cronon would improve anyone's view of nature, but perhaps pairing Cronon's *Nature's Metropolis*, about the rise of Chicago as a market city in the late nineteenth century, with Walter LaFeber's *The New Empire* would create some interesting insights into the role of the business community in promoting expansion at home and abroad. Throw in Patricia Limerick's *Legacy of Conquest*—especially because Limerick recently acknowledged, in *Diplomatic History* of all places, that she has a lot in common with William Appleman Williams and the Wisconsin school—and your poor student won't know where domestic history ends and diplomatic history begins. One of Cronon's many strengths is complicating the way his readers think about nature, so our students would benefit in general from reading his essay "The Trouble with Wilderness: Or Getting Back to the Wrong Nature." If nothing else, they would get a crash course on the limits of environmentalist thinking.[16] This

15. Akira Iriye, *Global Community: The Role of International Organizations in the Making of the Contemporary World* (Berkeley, CA, 1999).

16. William Cronon, *Nature's Metropolis: Chicago and the Great West* (New York, 1991); Walter LaFeber, *The New Empire: An Interpretation of American Expansion*, 35th anniversary ed. (Ithaca, NY, 1998); Patricia Limerick, *Legacy of Conquest: The Unbroken Past of the American West* (New York, 1987); Patricia Limerick, "Dilemmas in Forgiveness: William Appleman Williams and Western American History," *Diplomatic History* 25 (Spring 2001): 293–300; William Cronon, "The Trouble with Wilderness: Or, Getting Back to the Wrong

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whole complication of terms is just as important for those who want to follow the trail of bread crumbs into the thicket of environmental diplomacy as it would be, with different terms of course, for those interested in race or gender.

Any list of great books in environmental history would be long, but I would especially urge our hypothetical historian to pick up next Tom Dunlap's *Nature and the English Diaspora: Environment and History in the United States, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand*.[17] By studying these four societies with common heritage but very different environments, Dunlap is able to map out the two-way relationship between the nature that shapes culture and the culture that molds nature to its desire. His book is an important reminder that there are broad constraints placed on societies—not to mention their diplomatic and imperial actions—by natural forces, but also that modern humans have tapped all sorts of ideas, technology, and brute force to transcend those limits. A book like this can also go a long way to helping us understand national identities and cultures and their impact on or interaction with the environment. No, Australia and New Zealand aren't pretty much interchangeable, and part of their distinctiveness, including how their citizens see the world, is the product of their very different environments.

A few more ideas will round out this brief survey. From political science, we could benefit from reading the work of a senior scholar like Oran Young, who has worked for years on global environmental problems, not to mention a younger scholar like my colleague Stacy VanDeveer. From the history of science, we could follow the lead of Jacob Hamblin, whose forthcoming book on oceanography during the Cold War provides a model for how the study of science, nature, and politics might intersect.[18] Finally, it would really help our budding practitioner of diplomatic history with an environmental twist to have a grounding in ecology. Wherever the environment is a factor, we will almost always find scientists working for governments, NGOs, or on their own. Learning to read scientists is comparable to learning to read a foreign language or picking up sufficient mastery of the literature of cultural studies. And who knows, your provost might be a scientist, and if you speak her language you might get a better parking spot.

Once our graduate student has prepared for exams, it is time to nail down a dissertation topic. Three broad categories exist for environmental diplomacy.

Nature," in *Uncommon Ground: Rethinking the Human Place in Nature*, ed. William Cronon (New York, 1995).

17. Thomas Dunlap, *Nature and the English Diaspora: Environment and History in the United States, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand* (Cambridge, UK, 1999).

18. Good starting points would be Oran Young and Peter Katzenstein, *International Cooperation: Building Regimes for Natural Resources and the Environment* (Ithaca, NY, 1989) and L. Anathea Brooks and Stacy VanDeveer, *Saving the Seas: Values, Scientists, and International Governance* (College Park, MD, 1997); Jacob Hamblin, *Oceanographers and the Cold War: Disciples of Marine Science* (Seattle, 2005).

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The first and most obvious place to work is treaties that deal specifically with environmental topics. Second, the student could work on the influence of the United States on attitudes about nature or uses thereof. And finally, and more ambitiously, the student could rethink some well-explored topic and see whether there is an environmental angle that sheds light on it.

My own current research, on whaling in the twentieth century, fits into the first category. Diplomatic efforts to regulate whaling are seventy-five years old now, and they have covered every continent and ocean. While the United States has generally led these efforts, they have been a truly multinational affair. One result has been the creation of the International Whaling Commission, one of the oldest global intergovernmental organizations (IGOs). Whaling diplomacy has labored on through the Great Depression, appeasement of the fascist states, the early Cold War years, the rise of the Third World, détente, and the post-Cold War shakedown. As much as I might be tempted to offer a grand narrative of U.S. diplomacy through the lens of whaling, I will refrain.

Whaling fits in nicely with the frequent reminders that we have received to be multinational (if not global) in our scope, multiarchival in our research, and catholic in our definition of foreign relations. In the last century, whaling was truly a global industry. Floating factory ships concentrated on the Antarctic seas, but they could be found in every ocean of the world. Every continent was represented in the list of whaling nations, from Australia, to Japan, to South Africa, to Norway, to the United States, and Argentina. Of course, not all nations had the same kind of whaling industries, which ranged from state-owned behemoths favored by the Soviets, to local aboriginal hunting which made up the bulk of U.S. whaling over the past century. And then there was a range of nations active in whaling diplomacy largely because they opposed it, including some of the above states and Mexico as well. The 1937 convention to regulate whaling, which had the fewest signatories of any whaling agreement, still had seven participants. In recent years, the International Whaling Commission has had more than fifty members. As it closes in on its sixtieth birthday, the IWC stands out as a remarkable international institution with a complex international history.

With that many actors, the archival basis is necessarily quite broad. The State Department records have been enormously useful, and a good history could be written just from them and other U.S. government sources. The government archives of other English-speaking countries—Great Britain, New Zealand, Australia, and Canada—have given me a broader understanding of the key issues. Unfortunately, I did not have the foresight to learn Norwegian, Japanese, or Russian in high school, but with the help of a translator I have been plowing through mountains of Norwegian government documents, and I have learned how to pretend that I am a Canadian when I am in Oslo. Russian and Japanese sources are another problem.

But government sources will tell only part of the story, because whaling has been such a matter of public debate and action. Early diplomatic efforts were

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driven by scientists and fisheries bureaucrats and frequently opposed by whalers; humanitarians entered the debate in the 1950s; and of course environmentalists made whaling a litmus test in the 1970s. I have been fortunate to find papers of one of the key American scientists and those of a leading British whaling company. The whaling commission itself and a whaling museum in Norway have a fascinating range of materials. The IWC's actions have frequently been scrutinized by a range of NGOs and private citizens, including John Denver, who enlivened one commission meeting by singing "I Want to Live" in the public comment session at the end. Even the existence of a public comment session is remarkable and says something about the role of public relations in shaping whaling diplomacy. As one official in New Zealand told me, I was free to read through even recent files from the Foreign Ministry because New Zealand held nothing back in criticizing Japan's whaling.

Beyond all of the paper, we also have the unusual spectacle of direct protest. Antiwhaling activists generated boycotts against Soviet and Japanese goods, not that boycotting Soviet goods was especially an act of deprivation. They marched wherever the IWC could be found, frequently carrying huge inflatable whales, throwing fake blood on whalers, or committing acts of civil disobedience. Paul Winter made a popular album, "Common Ground," featuring himself on saxophone and several whales on vocals, and of course whales still are popular subjects of TV shows, cartoons, and the whale-watching industry. Protestors became famous for confronting Soviet and Japanese whalers on the high seas, and occasionally even in Soviet territory. I presume that four Canadians in a zodiac trying to catch a Japanese harpoon qualifies as citizen diplomacy. In response, several governments adopted very stringent antiwhaling policies that are open to virtually no negotiation. John Denver might not have reached the Soviets, but he apparently got to Ronald Reagan.

And whether it was via John Denver or via Dean Acheson, who, in 1946, called whales the wards of the entire world, the history of the whaling commission also sheds light on the export of American ideas. The idea for a permanent commission of experts from industry and government to regulate resources came from Washington, and particularly from a strain of Progressive-era thinking. In fact, in proposing the commission and arguing for its likely effectiveness in 1946, the U.S. government turned to a federal wildlife official to lecture the assembled delegates on the past successes of U.S. conservation activities, especially treaties with Canada dealing with fish and seals. The U.S. proposal for the commission's framework prevailed over strong challenges from Britain and Norway, the two main whaling states in the world and hence the nations with the most expertise and experience in dealing with whaling matters. That framework included clauses taken straight from Progressive-era legislation in the United States that protected the rights of both scientists to collect specimens and aboriginal peoples to follow their cultural traditions without much oversight from the international institution. And it did not contain any provisions for trade sanctions, which ran against American conceptions of how

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the postwar world should operate. For a country that did not catch many whales, the United States was certainly willing to tell other people how to manage them.[19]

The study of the IWC and similar organizations should give us some insights into how to build IGOs that achieve their goals. By and large, the IWC has not fulfilled either of its original goals of conserving whales and developing the industry in an orderly fashion. But in surviving numerous challenges, the IWC set a precedent and revealed what is necessary for an IGO to function. In 1964, when the commission seemed headed for oblivion, a State Department official argued that the IWC had to be saved as a symbol that the nations of the world could cooperate to conserve pelagic resources.[20] In later years, as the world community was creating more institutions to deal with the environment, the lessons of the IWC's foibles were there for any to see.

As nations go further in creating these institutions, the history of the older ones will become more valuable. As I read about the scientific debates in the whaling commission, for instance, I cannot help but think that I am watching a preview of the current global climate change debate. Just as there is near unanimity among climatologists that humans have accelerated climate change, there was near unanimity among those who studied whales in the 1950s that the great whales—larger than Kennan's dinosaur—were in serious decline. And yet, in each case, the key word is "near," because in each case there have been voices of varying degrees of legitimacy challenging the consensus. Without consensus, it is easier for those who oppose the most popular solutions to call for more scientific study or simply argue that the problem does not warrant any costly response. In the 1950s, Dutch scientists, by disputing widely accepted estimates of whale populations, managed to slow down efforts to reduce the number of whales harvested by arguing that the data showed population stability rather than decline, and it is pretty obvious today that the Bush administration and the U.S. Senate have generally used the global warming skeptics as cover for dumping the Kyoto Protocol.[21] Rather than act in a prudent fashion, our government is spending billions more on research to reach a definite conclusion about the causes of global climate change—or even its existence—when it is obvious to nearly everyone both that the climate does change and that a prudent society would strive to reduce greenhouse gas emissions to keep that change smaller rather than larger.

Finally, the seventy-five years of whaling diplomacy reveal that environmental diplomacy frequently makes for strange bedfellows. In the late 1930s,

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19. The complete record of the U.S. proposals and the December 1946 meeting that created the IWC can be found in the United States National Archives, Record Group 43.

20. William Herrington to Ron Wall, 26 October 1964, Records of the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries, File 209/2354 FGB 22242, Public Records Office.

21. On the Dutch scientists see Tore Schweder, "Distortion of Uncertainty in Science: Antarctic Fin Whales in the 1950s," *Journal of International Wildlife Law and Policy* 3, No. 1 (2000), 73–92.

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Germany and Britain found themselves allied both in their conception of how to conserve whales and in the need to pressure Japan into joining the whaling conventions. After the war, most participants were surprised to see the Soviets agree to participate in the whaling commission, and in general they and the Americans kept the Cold War out of the commission's deliberations. But most amazingly, the Soviets found themselves allied with the Japanese, with whom they were normally barely on speaking terms, against the Americans and other conservationist nations for most of the commission's history. In whaling diplomacy, nations often found themselves working against their normal interests.

The purpose of this rapid sketch of some of the key points about whaling diplomacy is to suggest that even the relatively low-hanging fruit of a purely environmental treaty can be nutritious. The issues are important, the solutions that have been tried in the past and the flaws that have undermined those solutions teach valuable lessons, and the conventions and treaties frequently shed light on traditional power relations that still are at the center of our field.

Aside from the study of treaties, a second broad approach that one might take toward incorporating nature and the environment into diplomatic history involves looking for the influence of the United States on the environment overseas, or perhaps under the sea. We have a model here from environmental history in Richard Tucker's fascinating book *Insatiable Appetite: The United States and the Ecological Degradation of the Tropical World*, a title which, if anything, understates Tucker's depiction of the impact of the colossus of the north on the majority of the southern hemisphere. Tucker demonstrates how the twentieth century witnessed an explosion of U.S. demand for tropical commodities, such as sugar, bananas, coffee, specialty lumber, and rubber. None of this demand was the result of traditional diplomacy, but U.S. diplomacy did make it easier for American corporations to work in places like Liberia and Brazil. The real driving force was consumer demand, even though consumers usually had no idea about the consequences of their decisions.[22]

In this vein, we could revive diplomatic historians' interest in the oceans, which has dramatically waned in the last fifty years or so. Our forebears in the field spent a great deal of time looking at fish, or at least at diplomacy surrounding fish, not to mention fur seals. After all, it was Samuel Flagg Bemis who wrote "Amphibious is the fur seal, ubiquitous and carnivorous, uniparous, gregarious, and withal polygamous." The U.S.-British dispute over the North Atlantic fisheries up to the 1910 settlement of fishing claims near Newfoundland would seem to be especially ripe for a new analysis, but there is probably a greater need for someone to examine the modern impact of U.S. fisheries policy and demand for ocean products in general. One key lesson that we could take from these earliest attempts to negotiate a deal with Britain is that a con-

22. Richard Tucker, *Insatiable Appetite: The United States and the Ecological Degradation of the Tropical World* (Berkeley, CA, 2000).

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vention is a fixed device, but fisheries are in a constant state of flux, which dooms most fisheries treaties to nearly instant obsolescence.[23]

Such a study could begin with treaties designed specifically to conserve fisheries, such as the post-1945 negotiations with Japan to limit access to fisheries in the eastern Pacific.[24] But it would need to expand to include diplomatic efforts to assist U.S. fishermen enlarge their operations. One obvious example would be the so-called tuna wars off the west coast of South America. Fisheries policy could also include attempts to exclude or at least limit foreign access to U.S. waters, such as the Pelly Amendment of 1976, not to mention the extension of sovereignty over continental waters that took place in stages after 1945.[25] And finally, one would have to take into consideration the massive impact of the U.S. market for fisheries products, both now and in the past.

Beyond the diplomatic angle, we could examine what might be called a strand of green imperialism. By that, I mean a set of attitudes about the use and conservation of natural resources that the United States exports to other societies, intentionally or not. Included here we would find the role of U.S. scientists and regulators in administering international bodies and monitoring fish stocks, as well as the place of U.S. citizens in international environmental organizations, and perhaps even the power of the U.S. media to create an image of what is desirable. Through these means, the United States exercised a great deal of influence, for good and bad. Admittedly, all of these can cut both ways and Americans import ideas as well as export them.

The recent studies showing a serious decline in fish stocks around the world make it clear that we face a crisis brought on by swelling demand and poor management.[26] And this crisis has come about while the 2.4 billion people of India and China have yet to attain the Western standards of living for which they strive. If things are only going to get worse, as seems likely, we had better understand how they got this way. The rising demand for seafood mirrors the demand for petroleum, precious metals, timber, and things that we don't use much here in the United States, like bear gallbladders and rhinoceros horn. In fact, this trade in endangered species should remind us that the expansion of trade in the post-1945 world has come with enormous unintended environmental consequences.

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23. Samuel Flagg Bemis, *A Diplomatic History of the United States* (New York, 1955), 413; on the incompatibility of treaties and ecosystems, I owe particular thanks to Rob Gee, a former graduate student at UNH, for stating that point succinctly in an environmental history class.

24. A good place to start on some of this fisheries history would be Harry Scheiber, *Inter-Allied Conflicts and Ocean Law, 1945–53: The Occupation Command's Revival of Japanese Whaling and Marine Fisheries* (Taipei, 2001).

25. A good discussion of the evolution of ocean law is Ann Hollick, *U.S. Foreign Policy and the Law of the Sea* (Princeton, NJ, 1981).

26. The recent Pew study can be found at http://www.pewoceans.org; see also Andrew A. Rosenberg et al., "The History of Ocean Resources: Modeling Cod Biomass Using Historical Records," *Frontiers in Ecology and the Environment* 4, no. 2 (February 2005): 84–90.

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The third and final strand of environmental diplomacy that we ought to pursue is the reexamination of well-studied events in U.S. foreign policy, looking for the influence of environmental factors. I do not mean that we need to rewrite World War II to make it about or a product of the environment (although a little environmental determinism is not a bad thing), but it does seem that some old standards—including almost everything before 1900—could use a fresh look. Given both Lyndon Johnson's desire to remake the Mekong River into an Asian Tennessee Valley Authority and the decision to attack the jungle with defoliants to fight the Viet Cong, which recently sparked a lawsuit by Vietnamese citizens against U.S. chemical companies, it does not seem far-fetched to study the Vietnam War through an environmental lens.[27] That would not mean throwing out any of the old approaches necessarily, but it could mean new insights into the war, or possibly into the antiwar movement.

Even more promising is a reexamination of the Cold War. An environmental analysis might emphasize that the United States and the Soviet Union were competitors for commodities as much as rivals in the political field. Rather than seeing the two nations as split by, for instance, their ideologies, which they certainly were, we could also see them as joined by a common definition of natural resources as commodities to be utilized primarily for economic growth. The comparison would not be perfect of course, but each nation engaged in massive dam building projects, created dust bowls out of marginal agricultural land, relied on nuclear power, and placed great faith in technological solutions to natural resource problems.[28]

Such an approach would not assume that the United States and the Soviet Union were equivalent. Indeed, an environmental approach would have to bring in those dissidents in both societies who worried about the complete and overt commodification of nature. In the United States, those dissidents won a series of victories using the political institutions of the state against the nation's ideology. In the Soviet Union, dissidents managed to survive purges and win a few battles, not through open fighting, but largely by hiding behind science, and it is hard to imagine a Russian version of Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring*. In the end, the USSR's inability to handle its environmental crises probably played a role in its collapse, especially by causing dissatisfaction throughout the Eastern bloc. We also cannot overlook the role of the international environmental community, particularly as it related to nuclear power and weapons, in putting the brakes on the Cold War. The antinuclear protestors of the 1980s were driven in part by apocalyptic scenarios of a dead Earth—freezing in a nuclear winter—in the aftermath of a future nuclear war. Especially after the Chernobyl disas-

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27. For the lawsuit, which was subsequently dismissed, see the *Boston Globe*, 28 February 2005.

28. Two good sources on the Soviet Union are Douglas Weiner, *A Little Corner of Freedom: Russian Nature Protection from Stalin to Gorbachev* (Berkeley, CA, 1999) and Paul Josephson, *Red Atom: Russia's Nuclear Program from Stalin to Today* (New York, 2000).

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ter of 1986, pressure grew intensely on Mikhail Gorbachev and his internal opponents to throw open their country to outside influences. Ironically, Gorbachev has now become something of a spokesman for international environmentalism, serving as founder and chairman of Green Cross International, which focuses on international water issues.[29]

In recent months, I have enjoyed reading Thomas Friedman in the *New York Times* as he advances the cause of the geo-greens. Friedman has argued that "green" policies, specifically those that discourage use of imported petroleum, will advance U.S. geopolitical interests, specifically the spreading of democracy in the Middle East.[30] He believes that lowering demand in the United States will push prices down, which will in turn force governments like Iran's and Saudi Arabia's to reform their systems in the face of economic discontent. Reducing demand for oil will also remove a potential flashpoint with China, whose own rising purchases of oil are partially responsible for driving oil over $50 per barrel.

Friedman's line of thinking might turn out to be false prophecy or bad advice, but he deserves credit for promoting the idea that power politics and environmental policies can be related, whether for good or ill. In this case, our demand for oil (which, I might add, is a product of primordial ooze and maybe bits of dinosaur) encourages the government to pursue the free flow of it, no matter the ethical or environmental cost. Here, before our eyes, Kennan's dinosaur and swamp have come to life as fuel. We historians of American foreign relations should be prepared to deal with it.

29. The potential for conflict over freshwater supplies is the subject of Jeffrey Rothfeder's *Every Drop for Sale: Our Desperate Battle over Water in a World about to Run Out* (New York, 2004).

30. Friedman's most recent foray into this argument came in the *New York Times*, 27 March 2005.

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