

BOOK REVIEW

Audley, John *Green Politics and Global Trade: NAFTA and the Future of Environmental Politics* Georgetown University Press, American Governance and Public Policy Series (1997), 212 pages with appendices and index. Paper, \$21.95.

Review by Mark J. Spalding

Green Politics and Global Trade attempts to grapple with the first experience of the US environmental non-governmental organizations (ENGOs) in directly influencing US trade policy as part of the NAFTA negotiations. Audley has made excellent use of Congressional and ENGO documents, personal interviews and media coverage to construct his chronology of the NAFTA debate. He begins by recognizing that the reconciliation of international trade with environmental goals is difficult. "Market-based economies and . . . the principles of 'free trade,' advocate constantly expanding economies to meet human needs, while ecologically centered 'sustainable development' asks humans to balance their needs with those of other species living together in complex ecosystems." (p. xi). Thus is the NAFTA debate framed.

The book is built around three questions: "How and why were environmental issues included in NAFTA negotiations?" "[W]hy did environmental groups differ in terms of the participation and perception of NAFTA's environmental provisions?" and "[W]hat is the nature of the changes to the regime responsible for U.S. trade policy?" (p. 5). The answers, while extremely complicated are summarized by the author as follows: "First, historical circumstances and political sequence of events created a unique opportunity for environmental groups to modify the political agenda for trade policy negotiations to include environmental issues. . . Second, the source of political leverage used by environmental organizations during negotiations was their ability to threaten NAFTA negotiations." (p. 3). This took the form of a good cop/bad cop set of roles as the ENGOs divided among those opposed to NAFTA and those willing to make compromises to achieve change. In doing so, those who worked with the Bush and Clinton Administrations slowly neutralized those in opposition. And thus, in answer to the third question, "environmental concerns over trade policy lacked sufficient leverage or opportunity to substantively alter the norms and principles of trade policy." (p. 4).

The book is organized into seven chapters. The first chapter provides a background to analyze the players, the institutions and the policies at stake. The second is a concise, well-detailed tracing of the history of the free trade and environmental movements, including an explanation for the beginnings of the linkage between trade and environmental policies. Chapters three through five track the chronology of the NAFTA debates, and the key roles played by the ENGOs, from the first disputes over fast track authority for President Bush in 1989 to the voting on the NAFTA package, including its environmental components, in 1993. The final two chapters explain the effects of the NAFTA related trade and environment debate and the potential for future changes in US trade policy. To augment the excellent historical review and analysis of the debate and the role of eleven key ENGOs, the author provides 14 tables and

four appendices which present the reader with useful and clear visual pictures of the complex chronologies and the inter-relationships of players and policy options.

While Audley's work betrays his advocacy against NAFTA on behalf of the Sierra Club (a position he held for 2.5 years during the NAFTA debate), he bends over backward to remain as objective as possible. Most importantly, he does not perpetuate the argument that those who made compromises to get the NAFTA environmental provisions and environmental side agreements undercut the leverage for fundamental change of the US trade regime. He acknowledges that "[w]hile the accommodating coalition received most of the criticisms for their compromise, in the end it may have been their ability to establish a set of conditions within reach of the U.S. negotiators, and neutralize the opposition voice from within the environmental community, that gained environmental organizations the concessions now embodied in NAFTA." (p. 152). The power to illicit fundamental change did not exist, and the trade regime was far too embedded and this meant that only the least amount of change was possible.

Audley accomplishes an unprecedented and thorough analysis of the role of the ENGOs in the formation of trade policy, and a remarkably detailed chronological history of their participation in the debates and negotiations surrounding NAFTA. Audley recounts the serious infighting which took place among ENGOs during the NAFTA debate, acknowledges the unprecedented advances achieved, but asserts the ENGOs failed to change the fundamentals of US trade policy which is focused more on a blind search for continued economic growth than on seeking a balance that includes environmental protection. However, "[g]iven the dominance of trade over the environment, the environmental provisions found in the NAFTA Package are actually quite incredible." (p. 141). In addition to analyzing the successes, compromises and omissions of the environmental community, the author speculates on the ENGO community's future prospects for influencing the international trade policy.

For his analysis, the author makes use of highly academic institution, regime and public policy models. However, after a review of these models in Chapter One, and as part of a explanation of the sources and bias of the research, the author applies the theoretical in an unobtrusive manner. While the reader may disagree with some of Audley's more speculative analysis, the history of the NAFTA debate is accurate and the conclusions drawn regarding the role of ENGOs is well supported. The text only falters in looking into the future with more pessimism than some readers may feel is warranted.

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