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*International Environmental Law and the Global South* is an edited volume of 29 chapters that examines the multifarious ways in which the ‘North-South’ divide has compromised the effectiveness of international environmental law and the extent to which this divide can be bridged through a range of institutional, political, and legal strategies. The book competes in an established and impressive arena of legal scholarship with the claim to being the first systematic examination of the North-South divide in international environmental law that takes the perspective of the global South; i.e. that emphasizes the need to redress ‘persistent historical inequities’ associated with the use and control of environmental resources. The scope and depth of the scholarship in the five parts of the book is impressive and it is a welcome and important addition to the extant literature. However, failure to critically engage with global South research and the many tensions and contradictions inherent in this concept, tends to reinforce perceptions of a false North-South divide. Despite a nod to the possibility of North-North and South-South tensions in the book, the alignments between developed and developing countries are far more complex than the polarity of a bridge suggests. The extent to which the book engages with scholars situated in developing country contexts is also open to question.

Drawing upon scholarship of the Third World Approaches to International Law (TWAIL) movement, and the environmental justice paradigm, the volume locates the persistent historical inequities underlying the North-South divide in colonial and postcolonial development trajectories that have systemically integrated Southern countries into the global economy as exporters of raw materials and importers of manufactured goods. The key message of this volume is that, at best, international environmental law often fails to centre the concerns of the global South; at worst, it is complicit in entrenching and deepening persistent historical inequities.

Part I sets the scene for subsequent analyses by providing a TWAIL-inspired account of the development of international law; an excursus into the accommodation of Southern concerns under the banner of (un)sustainable development; a discussion of how principles of international environmental law have reinforced or dismantled the North-South divide pre- and post the 1992 Rio Conference on Environment and Development; an examination of ‘South-North’ tensions extending from the Stockholm Conference of 1972 until
Rio+12; and contributions on the institutional basis of global environmental governance. Mickelson's chapter on South-North tensions is the gem of this part, as she shows how '[m]any if not most of the concerns raised by developing countries in current environmental debates have been at issue since the earliest stages of the discipline' (p. 110), and emphasizes the unwillingness of the South to treat environmental problems as separate from the struggle to find models of global governance that reflect concerns about equity, equality, and human well-being.

Part II of the volume is dedicated to examining the North-South divide in practice through selected international environmental law issues. The six chapters of this part examine human rights and the environment; access and benefit-sharing under the Convention on Biological Diversity; climate change mitigation; bioenergy and agricultural land grabs; trade in hazardous waste; and the right to water. The contribution on agricultural land grabs and the chapter on trade in hazardous waste stand out for their insightful analyses of how internal policy and law-making processes systematically de-centre the concerns of the South. Gratifyingly, there is also some examination of selective or strategic solidarity in South-South relations in these areas.

Part III of the volume turns to matters of trade, investment and finance, and contains some of the volume’s strongest contributions. Alam shows, for instance, how the World Trade Organization has interpreted the trade-environment nexus in a manner that increasingly favours the global North before dissecting ‘second-generation’ trade and environment concerns centred on standards, labeling, packaging and certification. Puvimanasinghe’s contribution on international investment law, human rights and sustainable development shows how the absence of a multilateral agreement on investment enables a ‘divide-and-conquer’ strategy, allowing for Bilateral Investment Treaties (BITs) and International Investment Agreements to dominate the international investment landscape in favour of the global North. Her contribution nevertheless notes that a number of Southern states are negotiating, amending or denouncing their BITs. This part also includes notable contributions on project finance; sovereign wealth funds; and transnational corporations and the extractive industries.

Part IV of the book is intended to group scholarly contributions applying environmental justice as a normative frame. It leads with Gonzalez’ powerful critique of the global food system in which she outlines the three ‘food regimes’ underlying the structural transformation of national and global food systems, culminating in the unprecedented status quo domination of agricultural markets by Northern transnational grain traders, seed and agrochemical corporations and retail supermarket chains. She goes on to outline the parameters of a