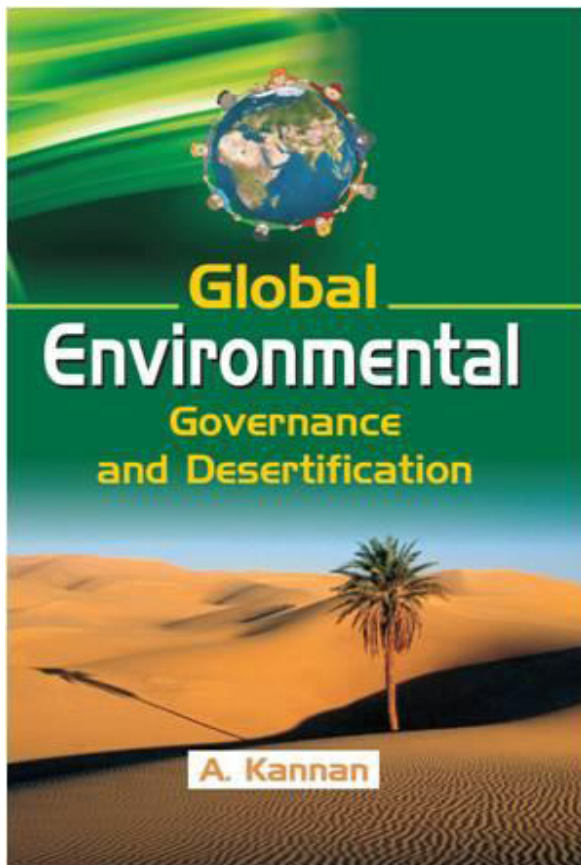


BOOK REVIEW

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***Global Environmental Governance
and Desertification:
A Study of Gulf Cooperation Council
Countries,***

Ambalam Kannan

New Delhi: Concept Publishers, 2011

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Review by

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Desertification is a major global threat and it is estimated that over 250 million people are directly affected by it. It is potentially the most threatening ecosystem change impacting the livelihoods of the poor. It is a detrimental process that brings about a gradual and an unnoticed reduction in the productive capacity of land over a period of years

which in turn leads to the formation of wasteland incapable of producing anything else and hence is termed as “problem without passport.” Due to this, addressing desertification has become a top most priority for the global community. Though the number of actors involved in Global Environmental Governance (GEG) has increased significantly in recent years, national governments continue to be nodal points in protecting environment.

The book *Global Environmental Governance and Desertification: A Study of GCC Countries* by Ambalam Kannan systematically explores how the UN Convention on Combating Desertification (UNCCD) became the newest link in the loosely connected but evolving international system for environmental governance. It examines both the implementation and compliance aspects of UNCCD while discussing the efforts of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries in combating desertification within the framework of GEG.

The author argues that the unprecedented scale and magnitude of environmental problems appear to signal the demand not only for cooperation among countries, but also within them involving civil societies. Growing recognition of the complexity, pervasiveness and mutual interdependence of environmental problems is reshaping environmental regulation and natural resource management. Environmental logic demands broad based international cooperation and coordination of policies and requires the international community to evolve effective global policies which the GEG framework strives to address.

Kannan also goes on to say that the failure of state-centred institutional regimes to address global problems prompted a search for new institutions, partnerships and governance mechanisms. The contemporary global order is more inclusive and is increasingly the outcome of multiple, interlocking patterns of transnational interaction shaped both by state and non-state actors.

The book deals with the environmental issues under the umbrella of GEG. Desertification is identified as one of the major challenges for the developing world due to the intensity of destruction it brings. The Millennium Ecosystem Assessment describes desertification as “potentially the most threatening ecosystem change impacting livelihood of the poor” which can trigger a vicious circle of environmental degradation, impoverishment, migration and conflicts, often also putting the political stability of the affected countries and regions at risk.

The concept of desertification and controversies related with its definition has been discussed in detail in the introductory chapter, while the causes and consequences of environmental problems in the GCC countries have been examined in the subsequent chapter. Furthermore, various dimensions of desertification in the GCC countries as well as the linkages between desertification and other developmental issues such as agriculture, water resources, urbanization, population growth, deforestation and industrialization have been analyzed.

Kannan also scrutinizes the role of state in environmental protection and sustainable development and efforts of international community to protect the environment, especially since the Stockholm Conference of 1972. Moreover, various measures taken by the GCC Countries to

combat desertification including the implementation of Plan of Action of Nairobi Conference (1977) have been comprehensively discussed while looking at the initiatives taken by the GCC Countries under UNCCD and the implementation of West Asia Sub-regional Action Programme and its pilot projects. The sixth chapter underlines the importance of compliance with an international treaty, besides emphasizing on the difference between implementation and compliance with respect to Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEA).

Most importantly this book discusses not only the implementation aspects of international convention undertaken by the national governments but also their compliance. There are very limited studies on the compliance aspects especially in environmental field. However, the book fails to discuss in detail the links between desertification and climate change as well as its relation with food security. Kannan also does not focus much on the issues and challenges of desertification on a large scale.

The book employs UNCCD secretariat indicators to discuss the issue of desertification. But in the backdrop of Global Environmental Governance, it misses the importance of taking a holistic view of the problem, which is provided by the inclusive approach adopted by UN Environmental Programme towards the ecosystem including forests, land, freshwater and coastal systems. Despite this drawback, the book is a timely and important contribution in the field of environmental governance and has been successful in filling up the research gap by focusing on the compliance aspect of international conventions.

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