

The focus on the role of nation-states as key actors in the international system flows from their capacity to formulate and—crucially—implement public policies on the scale needed to address national and global problems. In the case of climate change, this may involve national states stopping doing certain things, like subsidizing fossil fuels, as much as getting them to do new things, such as pricing carbon. The ultimate success of climate change mitigation efforts still rests on persuading national governments that it is in their interest to act in some way.

Moreover, Harris's effort at reframing the issue in terms of distributional justice could have the effect of further complicating the politics of climate change within individual countries. In effect, it would require attempting to impose the costs of mitigating climate change on what are, in most cases, the most powerful and politically influential constituencies within the societies involved. The challenge is compounded by the consideration that these are constituencies that many, still at the lower end of the income scale, aspire to join, and for whom less materially based sustainability and wellbeing remain abstract concepts.

That said, Harris's work highlights the tensions between advocates of narrowly focused strategies designed to achieve the rapid reductions in GHG emissions needed in the short term to prevent what the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change has termed 'dangerous' climate change, and those who believe that such outcomes can only be achieved in the context of an effort to address wider issues of sustainability and social justice.

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A journey in the future of water. By Terje Tvedt. London: I. B. Tauris. 2014. 272pp. Index. Pb.: £14.99. ISBN 978 1 84885 745 2.

In *A journey in the future of water*, Terje Tvedt employs his extensive knowledge of history and global water issues to present a vivid and eminently readable journey through the world of water. The book, which has evolved from two successful documentary series covering the history and future of water, spans 25 countries to illustrate the multiple values of water and the current and future pressures that are being placed on our most precious resource. Tvedt draws on short country case-studies and powerful illustrations to accentuate the political, economic and cultural dimensions of water. The case-studies span important topics from human rights to desalination. The brevity of each case-study creates space to cover a wide range of topics and perspectives, but occasionally leaves the reader wanting more detail. For example, a discussion of the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam and its politics are notably missing from the chapters covering Egypt and Ethiopia. I also missed the mention of the role of Allan's virtual water concept, and trade as a framework to understand how water journeys around the world. The multiple forms of water and its relationship with states and markets are touched on in the introduction to chapter two and later, but their importance to a general understanding of how we use water demands further attention. The occasional lack of detail is something that one might expect to find in a television documentary, but a book should allow for more space to discuss these topics in depth. The book draws mainly from a specific country focus that is effective in illuminating grounded and colourful examples that bring life to the current water challenges facing billions of people around the globe. However, at times this scalar focus tends to de-emphasize the important role of river basins—only brief space is given to the Mekong and the Amazon, and there is no mention of the Congo.

Tvedt's observations and discussions with a wide range of actors do a superb job of highlighting the political nature of water management and the hubris that drives forward

herculean engineering schemes designed to deliver water to areas where it is deemed scarce. Particularly poignant examples of ambitious engineering projects from Russia, China and the United States are all carefully woven into lessons from past failures. Contrasting these failures with current technocratic fixes demonstrates the complexity and risk facing today's great water projects such as China's South–North Water Transfer. These case-studies also draw attention to mankind's seemingly unquenchable thirst to gain dominion over nature.

Overall, the book provides a valuable and convincing account of the global water challenges and their determining role in sustainable development to a wide readership. The broad scope will also whet the appetites of undergraduate students seeking water knowledge. I did, however, feel the need for stronger links to ecosystems and the environment. The book does not ignore the environment, but the anthropocentric uses of water take precedence over water's ecological considerations. Recognizing that predictions about the future are often difficult and wrong, this book presents a well-informed analysis of the past and the present, which deftly allows readers to make up their own mind about what lies ahead for the future of water.

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International history

The bombing war: Europe 1939–1945. By Richard Overy. London: Allen Lane. 2013. 880pp. £30.00. ISBN 978 0 71399 561 9. Available as e-book.

If the term 'magisterial' had not been so devalued by its echoes of unreadable works which sum up more than anyone cares to know about the subject at hand, Richard Overy's book would count as magisterial. Better simply to call it a well-written, densely argued, coherent and fair-minded account of the bombing of Europe by British, German, Soviet, Italian and American forces during the Second World War. It unerringly skewers received wisdom; it is also a compulsive page-turner.

The story, as Overy tells it, begins with the invention of aerial bombs by Simon Petrov, a captain in the Bulgarian army, who dropped them on a Turkish railway station in the course of the Balkan war of 1912. The comeuppance came in 1943 when American bombers attacked marshalling yards in Sofia. The purpose was to force Bulgaria out of the war. This it failed to do, and the failure of aerial bombing runs as a *leitmotiv* throughout the book. The bombing war was at best an adjunct to, not a replacement for, the hard slog of boots on the ground.

Overy is cruel to received wisdom—particularly the view that the *Luftwaffe* was a uniquely bestial institution, with a propensity to unleash terror on civilian populations. The attacks on Warsaw in September 1939 were a case in point: 'As Warsaw was a defended city, it was legitimate for German air forces to join the German artillery in the siege'. The bombardment was 'designed to speed up the capitulation of the armed forces defending the city, but no more than that'. The bombing of Rotterdam on 14 May 1940 was different: Dutch authorities were negotiating its surrender and an air strike was called off, but only half the *Luftwaffe* received the order to cancel. The attack killed 850 people and not, as an RAF training manual put it, 30,000.

Operation Chastise, an RAF attack on the night of 16–17 May 1943 on three dams which supplied the Ruhr with water and electricity was, though a public relations triumph in Britain, decidedly less triumphant on the ground. Two-thirds of the water in the reservoirs was released, killing 1,924 workers, of whom 493 were foreign nationals; but the dams