

sustainable development emerged after the Cold War. It comprises three pillars, economic, social and environmental. This makes its implementation particularly challenging, as rightly pointed out by the author. Finally, Emmanuelle Tourme Jouannet considers human rights, seen as the third fundamental pillar of current international law. From the end of the Cold War, international human rights law strongly developed in normative and institutional terms. It now affects almost all areas of international law which transforms the liberal aim of classical international law. While welcoming the development of the protection of the rights of individuals, Jouannet warns of an ineffective overexploitation of the concept of human rights in international law. Furthermore, she emphasizes the necessity for international human rights law to adapt to cultural particularisms.

In conclusion, the book illustrates very well the complexity of international law, being not a simple, neutral legal technique but an international policy instrument to pursue certain finalities. International law now combines features of classical international law based on inter-state relationships, and new characteristics seen as a law of intervention. International law aims to govern the lives of states, peoples and individuals. This success of international law may lead to its partial inapplicability. The question of the legal nature of a law that is not totally efficient could have been raised – and this may be the only shortcoming that we notice in a book that is otherwise remarkable in its original, clear, synthetic and didactic analysis. Emmanuelle Tourme Jouannet does not give a univocal answer to what international law is – such is not her objective – but invites the reader to think of the aims of international law and of law in general. Adopting a historical and socio-political approach to international law, the book is of interest to a broad readership, including those who do not have a background in law. It is also to be recommended to academics specializing in international law, as well as undergraduate and postgraduate students of international law, as a supplement to a positivist study of international law, providing a refreshing and original perspective.

*Irène Couzigou**

Maartje Abbenhuis, *An Age of Neutrals: Great Power Politics, 1815–1914*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2014, 239 pp., ISBN 9781107037601, (hb), \$110.00
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The history of the law of neutrality is a dynamic one. Never has there been an area of law that has undulated to the whim of state interest and contended with the extreme demarcation between belligerency and non-belligerency in the way that neutrality has. The struggles of neutrality over the centuries, particularly as an important contributor to the history of international law, have remained largely neglected within academic scholarship. Few authors have embarked on a qualitative

* Lecturer, University of Aberdeen Law School [irene.couzigou@abdn.ac.uk].

treatment of neutrality in its own right. This is understandable, given its contention with the more dominant contexts of war and peace. Dr. Maartje Abbenhuis, however, adds to the small number of academics that have focused on this topic.

Abbenhuis' admirable work on 'An Age of Neutrals' follows the life of neutrality in the 'long' nineteenth century (p. 16), highlighting the quite apparent disparity between its active role and function between 1815 and 1914 as opposed to its virtually redundant and rather different position in today's world. This is not a comprehensive history, as Abbenhuis herself points out early on in the book, but instead exposes the reader to new and different angles from which to view European political and economic powerplay during this dynamic historical period. Neutrality was crucial for all players in the game of war and peace – for belligerent and non-belligerent alike – and contributed massively to the development of international law and the stabilization of the European balance of powers. Whilst all of these insights are valuable for scholarly work into European (and international) history, quite how influential neutrality was for both international law and diplomacy in the pre-1914 era is perhaps the most obvious strength of Abbenhuis' book. Prudently, Abbenhuis posits neutrality as an indispensable tool for all manner of states in foreign policy. It not only reinforced the foundations of the Congress system, but restricted the use of force in the nineteenth century; enhancing global commercial and imperial power, especially for Great Britain, but also the profiles of neutral countries. Essentially, the book delves into the true impact of neutrality, which is often understated or even ignored.

Following the Napoleonic Wars, the Congress of Vienna gave rise to the importance of neutrality for European diplomacy. To avoid future conflicts similar to the one that had come to an end, but to facilitate peaceful and harmonious international relations between states. Neutrality, in this sense, allowed the great states to continue with their *realpolitik* agenda whilst simultaneously hindering them in how to pursue it as such. In order to manage European affairs there needed to be a system that was agreed and adhered to by all states. Neutrality was a means in which to ground international dispute resolution within the congress system, distinguishing itself from previous forms. Placing neutrality centre-court within the Congress, the author explains that neutrality was a useful dispute resolution tool that limited the negotiating leeway amongst states pursuing war or likely to pursue war.

The book also highlights the 'self-serving' nature of neutrality, which was eventually no more appreciated than the super power Great Britain (p. 239). The British Government recognized the benefits of refraining from war with the other great powers, especially through the realization that belligerency may threaten the very core of the global empire that they had fought so hard to build. It was after 1856 that Britain truly understood the value of neutrality, which would allow them to protect and enhance their commercial and imperial interests around the entire globe. With this, the Declaration of Paris was signed, upon which Britain 'promoted and adopted a new set of international rules of economic warfare' and 'overturned not only the Rule of 1756 but also the long-defended idea that Britain should jealously guard its rights to control the seas by aggressive naval means' (p. 87). Whilst over 40 countries signed the Declaration, it is indeed Britain that left its footprint and 'determined

the neutral freedoms offered by the Declaration of Paris' (p. 88). Neutrality admitted states into a global economy in times of war and peace. The desire of the great powers to achieve this was best reflected in the evolution of maritime neutral rights and later crystallized in The Hague Peace Conferences of 1899 and 1907 and the 1909 London Declaration.

The book quite rightly emphasizes neutrality's place in the development of international law. It, however, also accurately highlights the law's interconnection with cultural and political aspects of neutrality's growth in the long 'janus-faced' nineteenth century, battling growing state rivalry on the one hand, yet as Abbenhuis puts it, 'the golden age of peace activism and international law' on the other (pp. 147–148). Arbitration then became an important and popular method by which to resolve disputes peacefully. The proliferation of arbitration treaties following the turn of the century, and after the famous *Alabama* case, illustrates its popularity well. But neutrality had a large part to play in the way the international system of 'power, pragmatism and idealism' was developing. Abbenhuis rightly points out its function in maintaining state power play, to the facilitation of peace and consequently, within the discussions on and practices of arbitration. It was 'as much a culturally constructed idea, promoted and debated by a variety of interested parties and the educated reading public at large, as it was a principle of international relations and international law' (p. 148).

An Age of Neutrals is an impressive investigation into the political practice of what was a quite crucial concept in a remarkably complex and fascinating era. It should be mentioned, however, that although the book is aptly sub-titled *Great Power Politics*, Abbenhuis clearly affirms that neutrality was fundamentally a 'legal term', 'recognised first and foremost by its legal definition' and a cornerstone in the development of international law (p. 238). One would therefore infer a greater emphasis on substantive legal content than what is actually assessed in the book. Sources such as that of Lassa Oppenheim's *International Law Treatises* or other standard commentaries on the law of nations were certainly included in the analysis, but at a very minimal level. The nineteenth century (and earlier) provides us with an array of relevant legal sources and doctrinal writings on neutrality that, if utilized, would have substantially enhanced the quality of the book in terms of the legal value of neutrality, even if *Great Power Politics* were indeed the focus. In the same way, a more in-depth analysis of the influence and interrelations of legal doctrine, but also non-state actors such as peace activists, on state decision-making, would have done no harm.

Abbenhuis concludes that 'in the war of 1914–1918, most, although not all, of the systematic applications of neutrality that had existed in the previous century collapsed under the excessive pressure put on them by the great-power belligerents' (p. 242). This is briefly explained and later followed by the further assertion that 'nineteenth-century neutrality had an important after-life in the post-war era, particularly as a cultural, humanitarian, scientific and internationalist ideal' (p. 243). Abbenhuis should have paid more attention to at least the demise of neutrality. As it stands, the transition to the end of neutrality upon the arrival of the Great War is surprisingly short and in need of elaboration. Nonetheless, these points, including

neutrality's post-war 'after-life', spark a curiosity for more research into this area. The book provides an opportunity for additional scholarship in this field and a solid basis on which to work. The insight Abbenhuis brings to neutrality should trigger further research, especially since Abbenhuis herself admits that 'the connections that existed among the cultural elements of nineteenth-century neutrality and its twentieth century counterparts were essential and deserve much more research and attention' (p. 243). Despite these slight weaknesses, it is hard to dismiss this well-written and extremely informative piece of work. Abbenhuis, without a doubt, makes a significant contribution to the much-neglected neutrality as much more than a mere concept. The book is therefore interesting not only for historians and political scientists, but also international lawyers.

*Shavana Musa**

Shawkat Alam, Sumudu Atapattu, Carmen G. Gonzalez and Jona Razzaque, *International Environmental Law and the Global South*, Cambridge University Press, New York, 2015, 623 pp, ISBN: 978-1107055698 (hb), \$155.00
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This new book, *International Environmental Law and the Global South*, is a timely, unique and significant contribution to the field of international and comparative environmental law, by four distinguished scholars.

The book is about the big issue in the transition to sustainability – the need to forge greater co-operation between developed, industrialized and technologically advanced states (the 'North') and the developing, least developed and technologically impoverished states (the 'South'), in order to effectively address global threats to the environment. No longer is it tolerable to develop environmental instruments and solutions that neglect or marginalize the genuine realities, aspirations and needs of Southern countries, where many of the poorest and most vulnerable people on earth live. As the United Nations Human Right Council recognized in its resolution 16/11 of 2011, 'environmental damage is felt most acutely by those segments of the population already in vulnerable situations'.¹ To be practical and effective, international environmental governance must emphasize the priorities and perspectives of the poor and vulnerable regions and nations. Despite the increased recognitions of conflicts, divisions and gaps in international environmental governance that stifle the abilities of the global South to effectively take part in, and influence, environmental treaty negotiations, scholars, for many years, failed to offer a rigorous,

* Postdoctoral Researcher at the University of Passau, Germany and Research Associate at Manchester International Law Centre, The University of Manchester, UK [Shavana.Musa@Uni-Passau.De].

¹ United Nations Human Rights Council, *Human rights and the environment*, UN Doc. A/HRC/RES/16/11, 12 April 2011, preamble. See also the Report of the Independent Expert on the question of human rights and extreme poverty, United Nations, *Human rights and extreme poverty A/65/259* (para. 37), 'Environmental degradation disproportionately affects those living in extreme poverty'.