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Abstract. This article reviews a recent book by Hilary French, vice president for research at the Worldwatch Institute.

Vanishing Borders must be appraised within at least three contexts. The first is as a publication of the Worldwatch Institute, a nonprofit policy research organization in Washington, D.C. that focuses on global environmental and developmental Issues. The second is as a primer on contemporary concerns for the environment in an era of globalization. The third is as an impetus for action affecting not only the global environment but also the nexus of Issues stemming from an interaction of the global environment with socio-cultural, economic, military, and political phenomena--e.g. war and peace.

As a publication of the Worldwatch Institute, Vanishing Borders very closely typifies the tradition of global environmental advocacy going back at least as far as Lester Brown's World Without Borders that was published in 1972. Herein lie both strengths and weaknesses. The strengths include a clear and coherent presentation, data strongly supporting contentions, and the financial support of an impressive roster of foundations. These same strengths, however, become weaknesses. The presentation may be too clear and coherent, the data too strongly supportive, compared with extant information developed by various scientific experts on ecology and the environment. Moreover, the dependence on specific foundations almost necessarily constrains the types of information that the Institute can impart. In essence, policy advocacy inherently suggests the triumph of ideology over fact or what becomes perceived as fact. Even advocacies constructed with the most careful of qualifications and suspensions of belief and disbelief inevitably point towards an ideological point of view. Here ideology can denote both a worldview and a belief system harbored by the exploited and nurtured by those who exploit.

As a global environmental primer, Vanishing Borders delineates the main Issues of contemporary discourse. The primer is essentially in two parts. The first, "The Ecology of Globalization," describes global concerns related to the exploitation of natural resources, biotic mobility, human sustenance, the export and proliferation of toxic substances, and human activities and the atmosphere. The second, "Reforming Global Governance," identifies problems and solutions related to trade wars, international financial processes, treaties and various policies, and institutions--especially non-governmental organizations. There is little new here for policymakers and for concerned world citizens who have been following the contemporary discourse. However, the book could be quite valuable as an introduction for a point of view for discourse newcomers. It is not and does not pretend to be a dispassionate treatise parsing disparate perceptions.

As an impetus for action, Vanishing Borders is most problematic. This has to do with its explicit and implicit messages that most political and psychological borders must vanish to environmentally and ecologically protect the planet in an era of globalizations. A nexus of concurrent messages--either primary or epiphenomenal--is that a movement towards world government or a lesser number of national or other macro-governmental entities is the correct path. Another nexus suggests that a salient and primary self-identity of each individual should be as a supra-national world citizen.

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All such messages as to the environmental and ecological Good are not necessarily "the Truth" based on the main epistemological approaches of reason, empiricism, and experimentalism. As importantly, neither are such messages conducive to "the Truth" about shaping world peace. And the crucial linchpin of contention involves the desirability of political and psychological borders. While borders may be said to needlessly induce and reinforce differences among people--differences that can be exploited for purposes of war--they also may be said to prevent or minimize that which can be so exploited. The latter case can be made by arguments appealing to the evolutionary adaptiveness of political borders, the psychiatric delineation of diagnoses typified by a loosening of intrapsychic borders and the permeability of interpersonal borders, the transactional significance of borders serving as rules of engagement for conflict and cooperation, and the simultaneous reinforcing of taboos and the attractiveness to violate taboos by borders in specific population segments.

As with initiatives for biodiversity-related peace parks that are alleged to have a benign environmental, ecological, and peace pay-off through the weakening of political borders, French's advocacy of vanishing borders for the same pay-offs may be countered with disconfirming theory and data. It may well be that protecting the planet and closing the gap towards peace on earth will involve combinations of border strengthening and border weakening activities. In fact, advocates of protecting the planet might develop an action plan based on the psychopolitical study of borders. Depending on the situation, vanishing borders may be either a threat or an opportunity for peace and war, for the health or demise of the planet. (See Brechin, S.R. (1999). Objective problems, subjective values, and global environmentalism: Evaluating the postmaterialist argument and challenging a new explanation. Social Science Quarterly, 80, 793-809; French, H. (2000). Vanishing borders: Protecting the planet in the age of globalization. W.W. Norton & Co.; Hayashi, O., & Kubo, N. (1997). The reasons and the conditions for sustained global environment conservation behavior. Japanese Journal of Social Psychology, 13, 33-42; Levi, D., & Kocher, S. Virtual nature: The future effects of information technology on our relationship to nature. Environment and Behavior, 31, 203-226; McComas, K., & Shanahan, J. (1999). Telling stories about global climate change: Measuring the impact of narratives on Issue cycles. Communication Research, 26, 30-57.) (Keywords: Borders, Boundaries, Ecology, Environment, Peace.)