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GENTLEMAN, SCHOLAR, VISIONARY—A LIVING TRIBUTE TO HAROLD K. JACOBSON

*Detlef F. Sprinz**

He was a rare combination of accomplished scholar, beloved teacher, effective administrator and gentleman.¹

When Harold K. Jacobson passed away on August 13, 2001, my co-editor Urs Luterbacher and I had finalized a book for printing, and the very advanced stage of production allowed only for the insertion of this sentence commemorating “Jake” as he was universally known to us at the University of Michigan and around the world. Yet we had prepared a more comprehensive dedication, which much better reflects Jake’s accomplishments:

He was a rare combination of accomplished scholar, beloved teacher, effective administrator and gentleman. A pioneer in the study of the international environment and a tireless supporter of scientific cooperation, he significantly advanced our understanding of international relations and global change through his own research and his encouragement of colleagues and students worldwide. This book is but one testimony to the inspiration he gave to so many.

Each of these attributes represents one aspect of how Jake was perceived by his students, colleagues and friends alike. I will reflect on each of these characteristics and also shed some light on a vision that grew out of the aforementioned attributes, namely how Jake saw the need in the late 1990s to model international negotiations on global climate change.

It was my privilege to be an exchange student at the University of Michigan during the academic year 1984–85 in the fields of economics and political science. While I was technically an undergraduate non-degree student governed by an exchange agreement, I managed to sneak

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1. *INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND GLOBAL CLIMATE CHANGE* iv (Urs Luterbacher & Detlef F. Sprinz eds., 2001).

into Jake's doctoral proseminar on international relations. No doubt, it was a tour d'horizon I will never forget and which contributed to my decision to enter the Ph.D. program in Political Science at the University of Michigan in 1986. Subsequently, I was fortunate to have Jake as a teacher, mentor and chair of my dissertation committee. We remained in contact through related research, visits to Ann Arbor, and international conferences. After my return to Germany, I joined the social systems department of the Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research (PIK), and later Jake agreed to become the ranking social scientist of its scientific advisory council.

ACCOMPLISHED SCHOLAR

Many bemoan the disappearance of generalists in the social sciences, but Jake certainly belonged to those rare personalities who covered the breadth of international relations. His fields of inquiry and publications included, using very broad categories for brevity: foreign policy and security, international political economy, international organization and the United Nations system, international environmental policy, and international law. As the other tributes to Jake will highlight many of his accomplishments to various fields, I will focus on the international environmental politics side of his career.

The field of international environmental policy is of comparatively recent origin. The 1970s and 1980s witnessed the publications by Harold and Margaret Sprout,² Lynton Caldwell,³ John Carroll,⁴ as well as other political scientists and many international environmental lawyers, yet most publications were written in a normative tradition, historical in approach or theory-driven. What was missing at the time was a systematic approach to studying international environmental policy, and the book by David Kay and Harold Jacobson provided the first systematic comparison of international environmental agreements in the period following the 1972 Stockholm Conference on the Human Environment.⁵

2. HAROLD HANCE SPROUT & MARGARET TUTTLE SPROUT, *TOWARD A POLITICS OF THE PLANET EARTH* (1971); Harold Hance Sprout & Margaret Sprout, *Environmental Factors in the Study of International Politics*, in *THE SHAPING OF FOREIGN POLICY* (Harold K. Jacobson & William Zimmerman eds., 1969).

3. LYNTON K. CALDWELL, *INTERNATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY: EMERGENCE AND DIMENSIONS* (2d ed. 1990).

4. *INTERNATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL DIPLOMACY: THE MANAGEMENT AND RESOLUTION OF TRANSFRONTIER ENVIRONMENTAL PROBLEMS* (John E. Carroll ed., 1988).

5. *ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION: THE INTERNATIONAL DIMENSION* (David A. Kay & Harold K. Jacobson eds., 1983).

In re-reading Kay and Jacobson, it is striking how clearly Jake distinguished the implementation of international environmental agreements from compliance and the effectiveness of such agreements in terms of problem solving. Such clarity was partially lost in the research on international environmental agreements in the late 1990s, and it became only retroactively clear to me why he was so encouraging during early presentations of methods to quantify the effect of international treaties.⁶ Because of Jake's long-standing interest in international organization as well as his prior work,⁷ it is not surprising that Kay and Jacobson focused on the functions of international governmental and non-governmental organizations as the major explanatory variables. Given the politically unrealistic hopes for international governance which surrounded the 1992 Rio de Janeiro Conference on Environment and Development and the recent 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development, it is striking how modest and realistic his expectations were in the early 1980s. It may not be surprising that the book by Kay and Jacobson is still quoted twenty years after it has been published, especially since it contributed to the analytical and systematic foundations of comparative analysis in the field of international environmental policy.

What can be found more generally is his role in initiating and helping to provide funding for research projects, designing research that withstood the test of time, analyzing the results, and the delivery of elegantly edited volumes with well-established presses while holding projects together with his gentle style of management.

BELOVED TEACHER

It is rare to receive two awards for excellence in teaching, but perhaps more striking are the recollections former students and colleagues shared at two memorial events at the 2002 conventions of the International Studies Association and the American Political Science Association: three generations all came independently to the conclusions that Jake was always happy to discuss ideas, spend a substantial amount of his precious time on advising students, yet make us not feel his rank but inspire by way of wisdom and kindness and letting us draw on the wealth from his life's experience. Jake was always willing to help, and I was fortunate to count on his impartial advice on several occasions long

6. See Carsten Helm & Detlef Sprinz, *Measuring the Effectiveness of International Environmental Regimes*, 44 J. CONFLICT RESOL. 630, 630-52 (2000).

7. See, e.g., ROBERT W. COX & HAROLD K. JACOBSON, *THE ANATOMY OF INFLUENCE: DECISION MAKING IN INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATION* (1973).

after I left the University of Michigan. He was clearly a role model. Given his many engagements and superb delivery on his promises, one is entitled to wonder how he could do so reliably with respect to the many requests directed at him; his wife Jean recently assured me that he really worried about honoring his promises. Those who had the privilege to be his students certainly appreciate what they have learnt for life.

EFFECTIVE ADMINISTRATOR

During his long career, Jake held numerous administrative appointments within the University of Michigan and professional organizations, while also serving on major journals in international relations and international law. Rather than list the many engagements he held often in parallel, it is perhaps most striking to note that he was able to keep a productive balance between administration, teaching and research—a rare accomplishment in today's academia.

I will briefly highlight only one aspect where Jake made a difference in his administrative capacity: as founding chair of the (International) Human Dimensions of Global Environmental Change Programme (IHDP). The challenge in the late 1980s consisted of building a social science program to complement the growing interest in the natural sciences about global environmental problems such as stratospheric ozone depletion, global climate change, increasing desertification and threats to the world's biodiversity. As founding chair of the IHDP program, Jake facilitated the development of a research agenda which included, *inter alia*, the driving forces of global environmental change and their impacts, and overarching themes such as environmental security as well as interdisciplinary work with natural scientists on land use and land cover. Jake served as the founding chair of the steering committee of IHDP from 1989–1994 and received the Award for International Scientific Cooperation from the American Association for the Advancement of Science in 1995.

Both from an *ex ante* and an *ex post* perspective, IHDP was a daunting challenge. Since IHDP grew out of the representation of each member institution of the International Social Science Council, forming an agenda involved a lot of polite and gentle arm-twisting of academic ballerinas. The international funding agents were initially extremely reluctant to fund the newborn child. As a consequence, IHDP has remained a very ambitious, yet underfunded, venture. The program flourishes today, expanding into a range of interdisciplinary projects with its natural science counterparts, and funding is more forthcoming as compared to

the early days. In the midst of it, Jake served as the communicator across disciplinary divides, elucidated opportunities, and shouldered a very substantial global travel schedule around which some dissertation schedules were built like a seamless clockwork. Would Jake be content with the results? Compared to a counterfactual situation without IHDP, there was certainly progress. But accomplishments certainly did not reach the desired maximum level. Yet would there have been good alternatives to the midwife of this program? I seriously doubt it. Jake did not only study institutions, he also successfully created some.

GENTLEMAN

There may be different meanings of the word “gentleman” in the English literature, yet there is no doubt that Jake was a gentle man if meanings such as honorable, distinguished and kind manners are emphasized.

Jake was a negotiator, facilitator, and moderator in his many professional roles and combined substance with refined manners. His inner balance was certainly striking and much appreciated. The expression “angry Jake” appears to be a contradiction by itself. Jake may have been disappointed at times, but he certainly would hardly show this with his calm voice. He liked to travel the world, explore, enjoy the fine arts and the culinary arts. Nobody in the array of positions Jake held over his lifetime escapes some degree of criticism; there were few that I am aware of, but more striking is the manner in which those few were voiced: honest respect for the person and his accomplishments, and the actual criticism expressed in a kind manner. Conversely, Jake himself did not think of others in terms of opponents and used polite forms of communication when he did not agree with the position held by others. A well-calibrated seismograph was often helpful in detecting the direction of his sentiment. He was a tireless man, taking on a very substantial workload and remained modest himself. In an informal reflection a few days after Jake passed away, Robert O. Keohane described Jake as “one of the most unselfish people I have ever known.” And Jake’s cosmopolitan approach befits his gentlemanly character.

VISIONARY

Perhaps less immediately apparent is Jake’s role as a visionary: Jake anticipated, long before it became official U.S. government policy, that the Kyoto Protocol would not receive support on the American side. He

took early steps to explore how academic research could inform the political debate.

During the 1990s, global climate policy became a major policy issue for the emitters of so-called greenhouse gases, as research began to indicate more and more clearly that humankind influenced the global climate. Responding to this challenge, many countries around the world signed the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in 1992 and its Kyoto Protocol in 1997. While the former agreement is a framework document with limited bite—yet demanding long-term aspirations—the Kyoto Protocol established an emission reduction plan for the industrialized countries for 2008–2012. The major protagonists of the day, the United States, the European Union and Japan, all signed the Protocol, yet it took negotiations until the end of 2001 to finalize the more precise interpretation of what was signed at Kyoto in 1997. By early 2001, President George W. Bush declared that the White House will not seek ratification of the Kyoto Protocol and will stand on the sidelines of further negotiations regarding its evolution. Already in 1997, there were clear signs that the then Clinton Presidency was running into domestic problems with the Kyoto Protocol, yet much of the world expected this to be part and parcel of the domestic political process which would ultimately lead to U.S. ratification of a protocol it fundamentally shaped. But Jake did not expect this to happen. In 1997 he began to form a group of scholars from around the major emitting countries of the world to join in modeling global climate negotiations.

The particular challenge outlined by Jake consisted of deriving the determinants of the positions for country positions in global climate negotiations, simulating the outcomes of negotiations given the core countries' positioning, as well as investigating the ability of countries to implement and comply with such agreements. Typical for Jake, he also envisioned an outreach strategy for public policy makers as he had already done with Edith Brown Weiss on occasion of their previous major collaborative project.⁸ While the application reached the final round for selection in the year 2000, it regrettably did not receive funding from U.S. sources. Most likely, we were a bit ahead of our time as well as ahead of the announcement by President Bush, which galvanized some minds on both sides of the Atlantic.

Given Europe's long-term interest in pursuing an ambitious long-term climate strategy, new potential funding opportunities in the

8. ENGAGING COUNTRIES: STRENGTHENING COMPLIANCE WITH INTERNATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL ACCORDS (Edith Brown Weiss & Harold K. Jacobson eds., 1998); *see also* Edith Brown Weiss, *Interdisciplinary Collaboration With Jake*, 24 MICH. J. INT'L LAW 1019 (2003).

transatlantic area arose. At the time when I wished to discuss these funding opportunities with Jake in late summer 2001, my phone calls were left unanswered, and I learned that Jake passed away following complications after surgery. Yet his basic idea to model future climate negotiations remains as convincing now as when it was conceived in the second half of the 1990s. As a living tribute to Jake's vision, Bruce Bueno de Mesquita and myself will seek funding to replicate major past decisions in conjunction with the UNFCCC as well as its Kyoto Protocol to shed light on potentially missed opportunities. Furthermore, we wish to learn which long-term climate policy goals could be agreeable to the major emitting countries. And finally, we wish to probe whether alternatives to the Kyoto Protocol would be tenable and which core components such an alternative global climate strategy would consist of. Inspired by Jake's leadership, we hope to continue the project he wisely started.