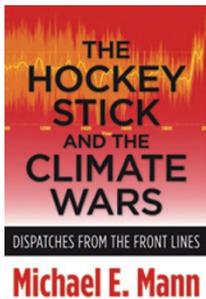


An unwinnable fight



The Hockey Stick and the Climate Wars: Dispatches from the Front Lines

by Michael E. Mann

COLUMBIA UNIV. PRESS: 2012. 395 PP. \$28.95

The climate wars of which this book speaks have been persistent and, not infrequently, dramatic and brutal.

Vast human and capital resources have been invested by both sides in pursuing front-line assaults and covert guerrilla tactics against the enemy. Few prisoners have been taken but many casualties inflicted, including innocent bystanders. Yet decisive victory for either side has been elusive. Recent efforts at mediation by peacemakers such as Jerry Ravetz and Hans von Storch have made little headway ...

I could continue in this trope for several sentences more in summarizing the subject matter of Michael Mann's *The Hockey Stick and the Climate Wars* — the contested practices, products and interpretations of climate science over the past 20 years. The attraction of the war metaphor in many types of communication and journalism is that it is so rich in vocabulary and imagery. Mann succeeds in weaving all of the following metaphors into his account and I may well have missed more: 'assault', 'battle of the bulge', 'battle-scars', 'climate wars', 'denial offensive', 'dispatches', 'drumbeat', 'fight', 'fighting back', 'front line', 'ground attack', 'line of fire', 'trenches' and 'war trophy'. Such metaphors are universally recognisable and appeal to our human proclivity for tribal identity. A two-sided war story makes it easier for us to make sense of the world and our place in it.

But after reading the *The Hockey Stick and the Climate Wars* I am left contemplating the futility of framing the important yet difficult issues surrounding the idea of climate change in this way. Are climate scientists — or indeed are all of us — really in a war over climate change? If so, are we sure about which side we are supposed to be on and are we clear about who is the enemy? And is the war winnable?

Before I reflect further on these questions, we need to consider the book itself. The 'hockey stick' in question is the graph of reconstructed Northern Hemisphere temperature over the past millennium that came to prominence in 2001 through the third assessment report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and was derived from some of Mann's earlier publications. *The Hockey Stick and the Climate Wars* follows two other books similarly written as personal insider accounts of climate science and politics by high-profile American climate scientists: Stephen Schneider's *Science as a Contact Sport* (2009) and James Hansen's *Storms of my Grandchildren* (2009).

Mann's book, then, is written in the first person — it is very clearly his account of events — and, as with Schneider and

Hansen (and indeed as with Al Gore's *An Inconvenient Truth* (2006)), we learn something of the author's family background, his early career and his emotions triggered by some of the events described: surprise, anxiety, anger, pride, hurt and so on. Mann shows "what it means to be a prominent figure in the climate change debate in the United States today". *The Hockey Stick and the Climate Wars* therefore serves a number of different purposes: a public-facing account of Mann's contributions to the scientific literature and to the IPCC; a biography of his professional career; and a defence of the various accusations of scientific error and professional misconduct that have been made against him.

The book consists of 15 chapters — with titles such as 'Born in a war', 'The battle

ON OUR BOOKSHELF



Managing Climate Change Business Risks and Consequences: Leadership for Global Sustainability

edited by James A. F. Stoner and Charles Wankel
PALGRAVE MACMILLAN PRESS: 2012. 256 PP. £62.50

The potential impacts of climate change are well documented, but the knock-on effects for business are often not considered. Nevertheless, a growing number of business 'players' are involved in managing the risks associated with climate change. In this book, management researchers Charles Wankel and James Stoner bring together key lessons in how to avoid the worst ravages of climate change based on the experiences of some of the businesses that are already actively managing their climate risks.



Fly and Be Damned: What Now for Aviation and Climate Change?

by Peter McManners
ZED BOOKS PRESS: 2012. 192 PP. £14.99

In *Fly and Be Damned*, consultant and author Peter McManners explores the sustainability of the aviation industry and calls for a fundamental change in our travelling habits. McManners argues that aviation is stuck in a stalemate between misguided policy and a growing imperative to deal with its environmental impact, suggesting that there is now little possibility of a smooth transition into sustainable flying.