

## NEW PUBLICATIONS

### ***Transformation of Resource Conflicts: Approach and Instruments***

**Edited by Mohamed Suliman (Eds.)**  
The book "Transformation of Resource Conflicts: Approach and Instruments" in the Horn of Africa. ECOMAN adapted and built on what the editors refer to as "conflict transformation," an approach that employs action-oriented research as a way of working through the differences between competing sides in a conflict.

***The Local and the Traditional***

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Medhane Tadesse then enlarges the theme of traditional conflict-resolution in “Traditional Mechanisms of Conflict Resolution versus State Intervention,” his case study taken from a pastoralist area of Ethiopia. Tadesse suggests the oft-repeated but always

important idea that resolving resource conflicts requires both the political will of authorities and the sustenance of traditional means of resource sharing (in this case, by interacting groups of livestock herders). But the strength of Tadesse’s chapter fades with his conclusion that cultural elements of resource conflicts should be solved locally, while political aspects require the intervention of state authorities. In practice, such a neat separation of culture and politics and of local and state is problematic in the least, and in many situations proves impossible. Confirming a key argument made in other circles, however, the chapters in Part I emphasize that the equitable and full development of resources is more important than resource conservation to building long-term peace.

### **The Role of the State**

Part II of *Transformation of Resource Conflict*—on the socioeconomic consequences of resource degradation and conflict management—expands on considerations of traditional conflict prevention and resolution. These chapters emphasize the critical role of the state.

In “Conservation and Development Interactions,” Lia Ghebream focuses on conflict between the livelihood needs of subsistence farmers and the conservation interests of the state in the Semienawi Bahri region of Eritrea. Ghebream argues (perhaps too optimistically) that the participation of local communities in the formulation of conservation policies can increase awareness of the benefits of conservation and transform local opposition to state conservation proposals. Seyoum Gebre Selassie and Tesfu

Baraki next argue in “Determinants and Consequences of Environmental Conflict in North Shoa, Central Ethiopia” that the influence of state officials has supplanted the role of tribal leaders in resolving conflicts between interacting groups of farmers, agropastoralists, and herders in the North Shoa Zone of central Ethiopia. Selassie and Baraki explain that the socialist regime in the 1980s introduced “peace committees” composed of tribal leaders. However, the success of these committees depended on the strong backing of the central state, thus underlining their important role in reinforcing peace building at the local level.

In contrast, Atta El-Battahani highlights (in “Tribal Peace Conferences in Sudan”) the potentially problematic role of the state in undermining local-level efforts to resolve conflict. El-Battahani dissects the decline of the *Joudiyya*, a complex customary system led by tribal leaders to prevent, manage, and resolve conflict in the Darfur region of western Sudan. He shows how *Joudiyya* became associated with the politics of the nation-state, and how recent Sudanese governments have systematically weakened the capacity of *Joudiyya* in an attempt to consolidate power within a system of decentralized regional government. The central government now appoints tribal elders to *Joudiyya*, even though the government is not perceived as impartial in its efforts to mediate conflicts at the provincial level.

Trying to work beyond the limitations of traditional institutions for conflict resolution such as *Joudiyya*, El-Battahani argues that “[c]onflict resolution is not only a process of traditional power mediation but should also be a multilateral approach capable of mobilizing a range of intervention strategies” (page 383). This process may indeed entail interventions by the state; yet the problem in Sudan is that the central government’s explicit involvement in the long-running civil war has compromised its ability to broker peace.

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when the state supports particular water uses (e.g., by granting concessions to large-scale mechanized farms or by helping up-stream smallholder peasants to expand irrigated plots), it is always taking sides in local resource struggles—inadvertently or not. Then, in “Microdam Water Management and Common Use by Neighboring Villages in the Eritrean Highlands,” Andemichael Misgina and Zerabruk Tesfamariam enjoin Arsano by examining how the state may intervene to mediate between neighboring villages in highland Eritrea that compete for irrigation water from state constructed micro-dams.


### ***A Conflict Transformation Approach***

In the book’s concluding chapter, Günther Baechler elaborates the elements of the conflict transformation approach that is the unifying theme of *Transformation of Resource Conflicts*. These elements include a non-adversarial framework, analytical approach, problem-solving orientation, direct participation of conflicting parties, and moderation or facilitation by a trained third party. Baechler devotes a significant part of the chapter to explaining the *interactive problem-solving workshop*, a conflict transformation technique intended to complement official negotiations to resolve conflict. But these sections (while helpful) would be more effectively placed in the introduction, where the conflict transformation approach is first explored. A summary format would be most appropriate for the concluding chapter, drawing together the assorted issues, perspectives, and proposals arising from the individual chapters.

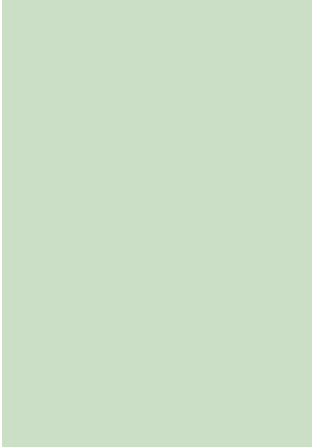
While the title of *Transformation of Resource Conflicts* regrettably does not suggest its regional orientation, the book has many strengths. The greatest of these is the detailed but lengthy narrative explanations of localized conflicts in Sudan, Ethiopia, and Eritrea.

Another strength of the volume is its attention to approaches and instruments that are of immediate relevance to policymaking. And, while many of the chapters have a clear theoretical base in the neo-Malthusian perspective that environmental degradation and population growth might lead to resource scarcity and thus to conflict, the book also uses other valuable theoretical influences (such as political ecology or inquiry into the political sources and consequences of control and use of resources) that add to its explanatory power.

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The book has some weaknesses, however. The narrative explanations lack coherence and editorial consistency as a whole. The inclusion in the introductory chapter of a theoretical section to bring out different perspectives of conflict in the Horn of Africa would make the case study chapters more congruent. Still, these oversights do not devalue the book’s important proposals for redressing conflicts rooted in resource issues. Policy analysts as well as social scientists with a regional interest in the Horn of Africa will find *Transformation of Resource Conflicts* salient and thought-provoking. 

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**H***ydropolitics in the Developing World: A Southern African Perspective* is a valuable volume that contains 17 chapters on water issues. The book is divided into three sections: the first on theoretical issues, the second on legal dimensions, and the last on selected key issues. The chapters deal mostly with Southern Africa, but some also treat the Jordan River basin and international legal issues.

Unfortunately, the book's articles do not directly speak to each other—a fault of many edited books. Thus, the underlying notions of hydropolitics introduced by Anthony Turton at the beginning of *Hydropolitics in the Developing World* find relatively little resonance in most of the book's subsequent text.

#### ***Societal Values and Hydrosocial Contracts***

Turton here defines the emerging discipline of hydropolitics as “the authoritative allocation of values in society with respect to water” (page 16)—a conceptualization that encapsulates how Turton seeks to move the discussion of hydropolitics beyond cooperation and conflict in internationally-shared river basins to a wider range of issues (including consideration of scale). But the book contains relatively little discussion of “values in society,” since these values tend to be multiple, often conflicting, and resolved through political processes.

Indeed, *Hydropolitics in the Developing World* would be more useful if its editors and authors had viewed “values in society” as sources of contestation and sometimes conflict rather than as dominant and uncontested. For example, the notion of paying for water is highly contested in Zimbabwe (Derman and Ferguson, 2003). But Turton's and Richard

arid regions: Real deficits and economically invisible and politically silent solutions”) continues his pioneering and insightful work on how virtual water has permitted Middle Eastern and North African water-scarce nations to have more or less sufficient water. His perspective rests on the insight that water management decisions are ultimately political ones.

Allan’s argument currently is less applicable to much of Southern Africa because water has been less politicized there than in the Middle East and North Africa. However, this situation is likely to change with the current plethora of water reforms across the subcontinent. Water reform brings to the forefront competing interests over water—specifically, water’s sectoral allocations. In addition, the notion of water as an economic good (i.e., something to be paid for) conflicts with many deeper African ideas of water as sacred, expressed in the belief that water’s availability is due to the maintenance of proper relations between the living and the dead as well as in the performance of rain-making rituals.

In Zimbabwe, for example, both water reform and land reform are taking place simultaneously. Land is being given away for free—taken from the large-scale commercial farming sector (which is primarily white) and distributed to a range of black Zimbabweans. But Zimbabwean water reform is based on the notion of user pays, which is fundamentally at odds with the land reform program. This difference will itself politicize water distribution. Internationally, the use of Lesotho’s waters through the Lesotho Highlands Water Project is also politicizing water.

Next, a second set of chapters in *Hydropolitics in the Developing World* explores legal issues—both national and international—concerning water. These chapters tend to be descriptive rather than analytical or theoretical, dealing with situations ranging from the SADC protocol on shared watercourses to the new water laws of Namibia, South Africa, and Zambia. In sum, the section is a useful introduction to the degree and amount of international law now involved in relations between countries.

However, the authors give less attention

to changes in national water law and their multiple outcomes. Robyn Stein does give a very positive reading to changes in Namibia, South Africa, and Zambia in her chapter “Water sector reforms in Southern Africa: Some case studies.” Her reading emphasizes how Namibia, South Africa, and Zambia all regard water as too important to be treated as only a commodity—water is an essential public good to be used equitably and efficiently for all sectors. As Stein notes, however, it remains to be seen if these nations can deliver on these principles.

### ***The Promise and Challenges of South Africa’s New Water Laws***

The last set of diverse chapters in the book deals with selected key issues. First, the tensions, contestations, and possibilities in

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South Africa’s new water laws and policies are elaborated upon by three chapters: Barbara Schreiner, Barbara van Koppen, and Tshepo Kumbane’s “From bucket to basin: A new paradigm for water management, poverty eradication and gender equity”; David Molden and Douglas Merrey’s “Managing water from farmers’ fields to river basins: Implications of scale”; and Peter Ashton and Bennie Haasbroek’s “Water demand management and social adaptive capacity: A South Africa case study.”

Within the global water context, South Africa takes on particular importance as a leader. It has already provided a legal right to drinking water, set aside a reserve of water for the environment, shifted from supply management to water-demand management, focused on using water management to address poverty issues, and built new water-governance institutions. These are bold steps—but as Schreiner, van Koppen, Kumbane, and others observe here, such steps do not assure access to water for South Africa’s poorest people.

Indeed, the implementation of water

reform can reinforce existing inequalities instead of reducing them. Molden and Merrey emphasize the goal of using water to enhance human welfare, but point to the difficulties prior development of river basins posed in providing water to poor people. They also stress that stakeholders grow in diversity with larger river basins, and that larger horizontal and vertical scales increase

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difficulties in communication, transport, information transfer, and participation. In many areas of Southern Africa, transportation infrastructure is poorly developed—making it difficult and quite expensive to bring representatives from large river basins together to examine on a regular basis the basin's management problems.

In addition, the groups involved in a relatively large river basin are far more diverse than the groups involved in a small basin or watershed—making the location of common ground, common interests, and common language more difficult as well. Lastly, as water becomes scarcer, vested and more powerful interests usually become more influential (returning to the theme of hydro-politics). Thus, despite the thrust of the new water laws discussed above, there are no easy answers to increase access for the poor within the context of the African continent in general and South Africa in particular.

### ***Dealing with Demand and Supply***

Ashton and Haasbroek as well as Klaudia Schachtschneider's "Water demand management and tourism in arid countries: Lessons from Namibia" promote water-demand management in distinction to water-supply approaches. Poor people, though, have always had to practice water-demand management in the face of limited funds to pay for water, an inability to transport much water, or insufficiency of water supply. These two chapters appear to privilege water managers and current uses rather than the

urgent needs of the poor. Indeed, it is to South Africa's credit that water supply continues to be a high priority for government policy.

In his chapter "Interbasin transfer of water between SADC countries: A development challenge for the future," Piet Heyns follows by promoting interbasin transfer of water as a solution to the greater and more efficient management of water in Southern Africa. Heyns specifies the concerns that need to be addressed in undertaking such activities, including the major uses of hydropower (industrial, agricultural, and domestic).

New water-transfer development criteria, he argues, should include the following: a substantial deficit of water in the recipient basin; adequate present and future supply in the supply basin; a comprehensive environmental assessment to identify impacts in both basins; agreement in both basins that the transfer is acceptable; equal benefits between the two basins; technical, economic, financial, and environmental feasibility beyond a reasonable doubt; and an appropriate legal framework and appropriate water management institutions in place.

However, Heyns does little examination of the environmental consequences of past transfers such as the combination of Kariba and Cahora Bassa Dams on the lower reaches of the Zambezi River. And if the planners had used Heyns' criteria, would these dams ever have been built?

Next, Ashton and Vasna Ramasar provide an important summary of what we do and do not yet know about the interconnections of HIV/AIDS and water in "Water and HIV/AIDS: Some strategic considerations." Ashton and Ramasar first provide a rapid survey of HIV prevalence rates, the Human Development Index, and the patterns of water use in Southern Africa before they turn to the likely consequences of the pandemic upon the human resources of water management.

The authors suggest that HIV/AIDS will cause a growing inability in the region to pay for water; a loss of skilled employees; and a decline in productivity (both industrial and agricultural) as well as an increased vulnerability to water-borne diseases. Ashton and Ramsar also observe that, in general, Southern Africa lacks a systematic and well-

coordinated effort to cope with HIV/AIDS. Their analysis parallels findings in virtually all sectors of Southern Africa.

In fact, the situation is even more difficult than what Ashton and Ramasar suggest because they do not explore how weakened and vulnerable households in rural areas will have difficulty in obtaining sufficient water on a daily basis. Obtaining water—either from wells, boreholes, or streams—becomes an even more arduous chore for those households that AIDS has weakened or left headed by women or children.


In general, this section of *Hydropolitics in the Developing World* ignores the realities of the rural poor in favor of discussions about “productive water,” water-demand management, and other current trends in thinking about water. The rural poor of Southern Africa will need more—not less—water, and many will not have either the labor or financial resources to pay for it. Given the continued rise in AIDS-impacted households in Southern Africa (and, increasingly, throughout the developing world), greater attention needs to be paid to these realities.

### **Final Thoughts**

Turton’s concluding chapter of *Hydropolitics in the Developing World* groups water issues into “clusters,” comprising economic, legal/institutional, and social issues. But it is surprising that this long list does not explicitly address questions related to power.

Who makes decisions about water? Whom do these decision makers represent? How has their power been exercised in Southern African water history?

It is also surprising that a volume on hydropolitics contains no discussion of past and future large regional water projects and if and how past practices regarding such projects should be changed. The book also could have helpfully addressed South African Water Minister Ronnie Kasril’s claim that SADC will be able to avoid conflict over increasingly scarce water resources by increasing cooperation. Perhaps that could have been an alternative conclusion to this significant publication.

But while the overly dense academic language of several chapters will limit the value of the book to those practitioners engaged in water reform, *Hydropolitics in the Developing World* will be of great value to water researchers in diverse disciplines and sectors. To this end, I also urge the publishers to adopt a more reader-friendly format by using a larger font and more space between lines. 

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In other words, our understanding of “security” changes not only with shifts in the primary referent (e.g., from state to individual or community or river basin) but also with shifts in our focus on those referents’ security practices. A different lens (such as gender or ethnicity) provides different insights.

The balance of Part One (“Concepts”) of *Globalization, Human Security, and the African Experience* follows Thomas’ tack. Peter Wilkin (“Human Security and Class in a Global Economy”) looks at class; Ann Tickner (“Feminist Perspectives on Security in a Global Economy”) looks at gender; Jan Aarte Scholte (“Security and Community in a Globalizing World”) looks at alternative, non-state, social forms as the basis upon which to build security; and Aswini Ray (“Justice and Security”) uses the concept of “justice”—including an interrogation of its meaning—to unpack Western claims regarding the ways and means (i.e. economic and political liberalism) of achieving security in low-consumption countries (to use John Devlin’s term in preference to more common ones) (Devlin, 1994). Taken together, this section presents a critical rereading of orthodox approaches to security focused on states and militaries.

Part Two of the book focuses on what the editors call “African experiences.” However, none of the chapters in this section brings any of Part One’s different approaches to bear in a sustained way. Instead, we find here a series of well-articulated arguments regarding what might be called “the political economy of insecurity in Africa”—Michel Chossudovsky with a rereading of the causes of genocide in Rwanda (“Human Security and Economic Genocide in Rwanda”); Mohammed A. Mohammed Salih on the Horn (“The Horn of Africa: Security in the New World Order”); Max Sesay regarding ongoing crises in West Africa (“Security and State-Society Crises in Sierra Leone and Liberia”); and Ali Mazrui on the erosion of the state and the need for African “self-conquest” (“The Erosion of the State and the Decline of Race as a Basis for Human Relations”). Each author is highly critical of the African state and the international political economic system.

### ***Finding a Locus For Real Security***

For me, the strongest chapter in this section is by Anne Guest (“Security in the Senegal River Basin”). The Guest and Scholte chapters together offer a pair of extremely insightful essays regarding not only why the juridical state is most often a source of insecurity in Africa, but also how difficult it is to construct or empower sub- or trans-state social forms that might serve as the locus for human security.

Scholte presents a concise critique of both “communitarian” and “cosmopolitan” approaches to building secure human communities. Communitarian approaches have sought security through violence, exclusion, and “othering”—i.e., in order to

**This collection of essays can help us think more clearly about the fallacy and consequences of equating military spending with security, particularly in the context of poverty and HIV/AIDS.**

build a “we,” a “they” must first be identified. In his view, communitarianism historically has been a “defensive reaction against imposition of cosmopolitan projects” (page 63), with the nation-state as the result. In contrast, all cosmopolitan approaches to building community rest on an “essential truth” proclaiming the unity of humankind. Yet, in his view, “past universalistic claims have in practice reflected particularistic experiences and interests” (page 63). All contributors to this volume regard neoliberalism as a truth-claim made by a particular group of actors who benefit disproportionately from actions taken in its name.

Scholte argues that alternatives to each of these approaches must consider the following five criteria: (1) they must celebrate rather than fear or seek to oppress differences among peoples; (2) they must rest on person-to-person intimacy (not only face-to-face localism but also new technology-facilitated globalism); (3) they must be based on relations of reciprocity; (4) they must accept responsibility for each other; and (5) there must be a central role given to restraint—

that is, one must practice the politics of persuasion without compulsion (page 68). Finding “solidarity among large, heterogeneous populations in the context of continual social change” is no small challenge—as demonstrated in Guest’s chapter on the Senegal River Basin.

Guest describes the negative impact of both communitarian and cosmopolitan

approaches to security—particularly on pre-existing, local communities built largely upon Scholte’s five factors above—among the

on Human Security”) is least helpful in this regard, issuing such unfortunate statements as the following: “Clearly something has gone wrong with development to date” (page 182). Given the book’s foregoing and carefully articulated argument regarding power and order in the international system, such a conclusion seems intentionally ironic. At the end of the day, Thomas is reduced to saying that “as a central pillar of human security, development must be oriented toward the human security of everyone” (page 183). But “development”—in theory and practice—is a political act, and as such is as much about power as anything else. One need only look to the Persian Gulf for explication of this fact.

*Globalization, Human Security and the African Experience* is part of a Lynne Rienner series on “Critical Security Studies,” which is edited by Ken Booth. As with each of the studies in the series,<sup>2</sup> this volume features

contributions that engage extremely important questions about security—what it is, who has it, who does not, and why? While there may be an overwhelming desire to do something—to contribute something practical in the face of so much human misery—this book in its best moments does something important: it speaks truth to power. And that act alone helps all those interested in shifting state spending away from fighter jets toward anti-retroviral drugs, safe water, adequate shelter, and a life worthy of respect for all.

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