



Water as a Catalyst for Peace: Transboundary Water Management and Conflict Resolution (Earthscan Studies in Water Resource Management)

By Ahmed Abukhater

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Examining international water allocation policies in different parts of the world, this book suggests that they can be used as a platform to induce cooperation over larger political issues, ultimately settling conflicts. The main premise is that water can and should be used as a catalyst for peace and cooperation rather than conflict.

Evidence is provided to support this claim through detailed case studies from the Middle East and the Lesotho Highlands in Africa. These international cases – including bilateral water treaties and their development and formation process and aftermath – are analyzed to draw conclusions about the outcomes as well as the processes by which these outcomes are achieved. It is demonstrated that the perception of a particular treaty as being equitable and fair is mainly shaped by the negotiation process used to reach certain outcomes, rather than being determined mechanistically by the quantitative allocation of water to each party.

The processes and perceptions leading to international water conflict resolutions are emphasized as key issues in advancing cooperation and robust implementation of international water treaties. The key messages of the book are therefore relevant to the geo-political and hydro-political aspects of water resources in the context of bilateral and multilateral conflicts, and the trans-boundary management of water resources, which contributes insights to political ecology, geo-politics, and environmental policy.

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Water as a Catalyst for Peace: Transboundary Water Management and Conflict Resolution (Earthscan Studies in Water Resource Management) By Ahmed Abukhater Bibliography

- Rank: #6728879 in Books
- Published on: 2013-08-23
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 9.20" h x .90" w x 6.20" l, .0 pounds
- Binding: Hardcover
- 320 pages

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Editorial Review

Review

"We tend to think of scarce natural resources as generators of conflict. This book turns that idea on its head and urges us to think of co-riparians as more than just rivals. Abukhater's principles of process equity help us tame the wicked problem of cross-border water allocation." – Paul C. Adams, Ph.D., Associate Professor and Director of Urban Studies, University of Texas at Austin, USA

"It is often thought that water issues are divisive and a likely source of war. Many water experts consider this mistaken and that water can and should be a source of cooperation. Abukhater's book examines various water disputes and shows that water treaties can indeed lead to cooperation and mutual benefits." – Franklin M. Fisher, Jane Berkowitz Carlton and Dennis William Carlton Professor of Microeconomics, Emeritus, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, USA

"A good addition to the many existing water negotiation frameworks, especially for those practitioners who desire to link equity, in its myriad forms, into the process of governance. Written through the direct experience of a native Palestinian, the book introduces another transformative approach to conflict resolution that integrates rules of engagement, mechanisms of engagement, and neutral third-party mediation that is worthy of serious consideration by Middle East scholars in water diplomacy." – W. Todd Jarvis, Director, Institute for Water & Watersheds, Oregon State University, USA

"Water breathes life into landscapes. Water binds people together and divides people from one and other. Water enables some people to prosper while others struggle. Water divides rich from poor, the healthy from the ill, the leafy from the dusty. This is especially evident in times and places of aridity. The fair allocation of water lies at the heart of Ahmed Abukhater's *Water as a Catalyst for Peace*. The author views water as a potential "venue for cooperation" and suggests useful strategies to pursue this course. Furthermore, Dr. Abukhater argues that water can be a catalyst for cooperation, peaceful interactions, and regional stability. As a result, his book offers a clarion framework for those interested in equity, environmental sustainability, and a peaceful planet." – Frederick Steiner, Dean, School of Architecture and Henry M. Rockwell Chair in Architecture, The University of Texas at Austin, USA

"When I think about recent research on water security, the key process lessons Dr. Abukhater highlights fit quite nicely... It is vital to the long-term success of transboundary water management that water professionals and water users give more attention to the issues raised in this book." – from the Foreword by Lawrence Susskind, MIT and Harvard Law School, USA

"This is a well-written and useful book for anyone interested in transboundary water management, conflict resolution or bilateral management of natural resources. It skillfully demonstrates the potential to use 'low' politics (i.e. hydro-diplomacy) as an entry point into 'high' politics (e.g., international relations)." – Yasmin Zaerpoor, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, USA

About the Author

Ahmed Abukhater is the Global Director of Product Management for Pitney Bowes, and an Assistant Professor of Geography and Planning at the University at Albany, State University of New York, USA. Previously, he served as Esri's Global Industry Manager for Planning and Community Development and Director of PLACES in California, an instructor at the University of Texas at Austin, and Department Director, Planning & Sustainability Department, Ministry of Planning, Gaza, Palestine. He holds a PhD in Community and Regional Planning from the University of Texas at Austin, with a focus on transboundary water resources management and conflict resolution and hydro-diplomacy, a Master's degree in Urban and Regional Planning from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and a Bachelor's degree in Architectural Engineering. Throughout his career, he has authored numerous publications, served on many governing and advisory boards, and received over 20 prestigious awards for his work.

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