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As we bear witness to a series of important international crises, from Ukraine to the Middle East and East Asia, it is easy to forget about the structural foreign policy challenges that threaten to become the crises of the future. Among these, climate change and its profound impacts on the water cycle stand out: water is fundamental to human life and scarce in many regions. Changes in the regional and seasonal distribution of rainfall and glacier melting will have significant social, economic, and ultimately political consequences as they change access to and competition over water.

More than 90% of the world’s population live in states that share watercourses. Many important shared basins – the Nile, the Indus, the Ganges, the Euphrates-Tigris, the Amu Darya and Syr Darya, and the Mekong – overlap with regions characterized by substantial interstate and intrastate tensions. Increasing water scarcity and variability, coupled with growing demand due to demographic and economic changes, threatens long-term regional stability in these basins.

Yet shared waters are not necessarily flashpoints of conflicts. Instead, they have often been ‘islands of cooperation’ in otherwise conflictive relationships. For example, the 1960 Indus Waters Treaty has survived three wars between India and Pakistan, cooperation on the Mekong persisted throughout the Indochina wars, and water has served as a crucial means for strengthening cooperation in Southern Africa.

The risks and opportunities related to transboundary basins raise the question of what the international community should do to prevent conflict and maximize water’s potential for reaping greater collective social and economic benefits. To respond to this question, adelphi convened a group of international experts whose discussions have resulted in a new study titled “The rise of hydro-diplomacy. Strengthening foreign policy for transboundary waters”.

Analysing the challenges and drawing on numerous cases, the authors argue that foreign policy makers must do more for and in transboundary basins. Above all, they need to ensure stronger agency at the international level to realize potential synergies between political and technical engagement. To this end, the international community needs to strengthen the diplomatic track of transboundary cooperation on water by investing more in training and capacity-building, expanding efforts to build confidence in shared basins, and improving water-related crisis response and conflict resolution mechanisms.

For further details, please find the new study here. The paper was presented at the World Water Week on 3 September 2014. A video interview is available on the online version of this article. You can also stream the entire side event.
The vast quantities of resources that lie buried under the
Arctic ice will become easier to exploit as the ice melts: 30%
of the world’s unexplored gas and 13% of oil reserves ac-
cording to estimates of the U.S. Geological Survey, along with
considerable amounts of other non-energy minerals.

A new resource rush in the Arctic?

Worldwide, the consumption of fossil fuels and other natu-
ral resources continues to rise. Additionally, several resource
exporting nations today are high risk suppliers – the current
crisis in Ukraine is a telling example – thus reigniting inte-
rest in the Arctic. The five states directly bordering the Arctic
Ocean, namely USA, Canada, Denmark (through Green-
land), Norway and Russia, have all staked their claim on its
resources. While the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea
(UNCLOS) provides a comprehensive regulatory framework,
the claims overlap to some extent. On the positive side, in
2008 the five littoral states declared in Ilulissat, Greenland,
that they would resolve their claims mutually and in ac-
cordance with UNCLOS. However, UNCLOS does not address
environmental risks.

Greenland: natural resources and independence

These developments are of special significance for Green-
land. Although only its foreign and security policies remain
under Danish control since 2008, it continues to be finan-
cially and economically de-
pendent. The majority of the 56,000
Greenlanders are employed in the
public sector or in the fishing and
shrimp export industry. Deple-
ting fish stocks off the coast of Greenland and the desire to
overcome financial dependence on Denmark are prompting
the country to develop its natural resource sector.

“Mining wastes and refining residues, espe-
cially, pose a threat to the environment and
population.”

Like the rest of the Arctic, Greenland is rich in resources. It
possesses large reserves of oil, gas, gold, niobium, plati-
num group metals, tantalum, fluoride, zinc and rare earths

that are used primarily in high tech products. The natural
resource sector was not very significant until now, but this
may soon change as the government plans to pursue a
highly investor-friendly policy. It can expect support from
Denmark and the European Union (EU), both of which
regard Greenland as a strategic partner for improving their
own supply security.

Impact of mining in the Arctic

Kvanefjeld, a multi-element deposit, illustrates the tremen-
dous challenges. It is one of the largest known rare earth
element deposits in the world and could meet global
demand for 150 years if consumption remains constant. The
site also contains a large amount of uranium. With the lifting
of the zero tolerance policy towards uranium mining in
2013 despite protests from civil society, conditions are now
in place for mining Kvanefjeld.

The Arctic is a very fragile eco-

system. It is extremely difficult to
access information and studies on
the precise environmental and social impacts of the Kvanef-
jeld project. Studies conducted by the Australian company
Greenland Minerals and Energy Limited (GMEL) are not
publicly accessible. Nevertheless, a number of potential en-
vironmental impacts and risks related to mining rare earths
and uranium can be identified.
Regional Highlights: Sub-Saharan Africa

Out of Africa: Prospects of Conflict-Sensitive Adaptation
by Dennis Taenzler, adelphi

When it comes to a potential tool box to address the security implications of climate change, conflict-sensitive adaptation serves as a buzzword: often mentioned but with little conceptual and practical advice. For the African region, Urmilla Bob and Salomé Bronkhorst now offer new food for thought on this topic in their recently published book *Conflict-sensitive adaptation to climate change in Africa.*

The book is the result of a discussion process, which was initiated by the African Centre for the Constructive Resolution of Disputes (ACCORD) in 2011 in the run up to the climate change conference in Durban.

“Any policy and practice of conflict-sensitive adaptation should include development, environment and peacebuilding considerations”

According to the authors, climate changes in temperatures, rainfall, sea levels and ocean acidification affect and will affect livelihood resources and options in Africa, especially amongst the poor. As Tosi Mpanu-Mpanu, the former Chair of the African Group of Negotiators on Climate Change for the UNFCCC, stresses in his foreword, “there is a need to understand specific contexts, requiring a much greater integration of local experiences and voices into science, to establish whether and how climate effects may cause conflicts in communities.”

By exploring insights from a local level in Kenya, Uganda and Sudan, including some coastal areas, the editors are able to illustrate how climate change affects livelihoods, such as the effects on pastoral communities. In the case of Sudan, for example, Bronkhorst explores how pastoralism presents a possible response to climate change. She argues that in addition to potential resource scarcity caused by climate change, non-climatic factors, such as the introduction of legislation on land and mechanised farming, are currently main contributors to scarcities and conflicts between pastoralists and farmers.

High costs and risks curb natural resource exploitation

It is not clear how quickly these developments will occur. The conditions for profitable exploitation on a large scale are often still too adverse and risky; the required investments too high. GMEL’s current activities are primarily focused on further exploring the site’s potential. It is equally possible that the deposits will remain unattractive for a long time if more favourable alternatives are discovered elsewhere – fracking in the USA is one such example – or if there is a fundamental shift in the energy system towards renewable energies.

A longer article on the topic is available in German.

Mining wastes and refining residues, especially, pose a threat to the environment and population. In a worst case scenario these could lead to large scale contamination of the region’s entire river system – right up to the sea – releasing fluoride, heavy metals and radioactive substances. Environmental organizations have warned that GMEL will not be in a position to adequately deal with the anticipated environmental fall-outs.

The risk of water contamination and its impact on drinking water and fish stocks are also one of the main concerns of the local population. At another level, international mining companies tend to employ cheaper or better qualified foreign labour. The resulting influx of migrants can cause not just tensions but also lead to the gradual disappearance of traditional forms of living.

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The Chinese have a saying about drinking poison to quench a thirst, used to warn against hasty remedies with consequences worse than the problem itself. A recently proposed method of tackling illegal logging is just such a case. China is one of the world’s largest importers of timber products. So whether or not the country takes measures to ensure those products are obtained legally affects the survival of the world’s forests and ecologies and China’s international reputation.

Field studies over the last 10 years by the Environmental Investigation Agency (EIA) have found China’s demand for timber is driving illegal logging, with dire global consequences. The Chinese government is taking the problem seriously. But the key challenge is that the country has no relevant law, which means illegally sourced timber often enters China legally. Chinese customs authorities rely mainly on CITES, the UN Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species. But that convention bans trade in a limited number of tree species, therefore only a tiny fraction of illegal timber is stopped at the border.

The bulk of timber felled worldwide ends up in China, the US or the EU. But in the US and the EU, importers are required to exclude illegal timber. This means that illegal timber is more likely to be sent to China. And over the years, EIA has found that illegal logging and smuggling by Chinese timber firms overseas often involves assistance or direct participation by local companies and officials.

A voluntary code

Now the Chinese Government is promoting a voluntary code of conduct, the Guidelines for Overseas Sustainable Forest Products Trade and Investment by Chinese Enterprises. Despite its good intention, the code fails to deal with the root of the problem and will in fact exacerbate it.

First, the guidelines attempt to control the behaviour of Chinese firms operating overseas, but the most pressing nature of these conflicts is no reason to neglect them from a foreign policy perspective and the support of the German Foreign Office to publish this book as part of its focus on climate diplomacy indicates that there is a growing awareness on adaptation as a means of crisis and conflict prevention.
issue is deciding how to prevent illegal timber from entering China. Secondly, the guidelines are voluntary. Unlike laws or regulations, these will not constrain the behaviour of profit-motivated businesspeople and are of no use in law enforcement or punishment.

“Despite its good intention, the code fails to deal with the root of the problem and will in fact exacerbate it.”

In the past, two similar sets of guidelines have been promulgated and done virtually nothing to stem the flow of illegal timber into China. Chinese forestry officials have privately admitted that the country will eventually need an enforceable law, but said that the cost of legislation would be too high. EIA has heard all this before – policymakers in the EU and the US once had the same concerns.

But times have changed. Global timber markets are becoming more regulated, with illegal timber being excluded from supply chains. Some Chinese firms are participating in this process but unless China bans the illegal timber trade, those responsible firms will struggle to compete with their less honest counterparts and will in effect be punished.

Please read the full version of this article on chinadialogue.

Topics: Early Warning and Risk Analysis

Don’t Forget About Governance: the Risk of Tunnel Vision in Chasing Resilience for Asia’s Cities
by Jim Jarvie, Mercy Corps and Richard Friend, Institute for Social and Environmental Transition

Cities already stressed

Global capital flows are funding incredible building efforts in these new cities. But much of the time, we discovered, development is done without adequate oversight. Many cities already struggle to maintain core systems and services like water, energy, and transportation. Evidence is mounting that critical ecological limits have been exceeded.

“At the end of the day, the resilience of central business districts may have been improved but it’s been done without consent from vulnerable communities”

Preparation for natural disasters is made difficult for a variety of reasons. Stove-piped, single-sector government departments are unable or unwilling to work with one another. Land use planning meant to direct construction and zoning frequently reflects decisions that have already been...
made and implemented in isolation. Short-term outlooks and commercial interests prevent long-term, comprehensive planning.

Confront power dynamics or risk exacerbating conflict

For example, it is technically easy to decide that to reduce flood risk, a city should widen and dredge its canals. To do so though, slum communities may have to be moved, and if the people in these communities don't have formal legal rights to their land, there may be no compensation. At the end of the day, the resilience of central business districts may have been improved but it’s been done without consent from vulnerable communities, further shifting the balance of power and wealth in one group’s favor.

We found there is often an implicit assumption by development policymakers that urban governance is representative and accountable. This is simply not true in many Asian cities, and intervening in the name of resilience has the potential to do significant harm in many places.

Merely adding new funding streams risks reinforcing undemocratic and inequitable processes. Particularly in cities where the poor and unemployed make up significant proportions of the population, doing so also risks deepening resentment and increasing the potential for conflict.

Some potential triggers for violence lie in the destruction of slums inhabited by untenured residents, either through government policy or environmental changes, like rising sea levels. From India to Indonesia and elsewhere in Asia, slum dwellers have been forcibly removed and attacked when they resist, a form of dispossession as a means of accumulation.

Process before projects

There are many points of access to build resilience within cities, but the selection of entry points is a political decision with deep social implications.

Resilience theory tends not to address issues of power and politics effectively. If we are to apply resilience thinking to the highly politicized and contested context of Asia’s new urban areas, we need to redress this. It is essential that development policymakers recognize the political dimensions of the places they are working in, and make an explicit commitment to rights, social justice, and equity.

By failing to address critical governance gaps, we risk driving policy that might be framed in the language of resilience, but in effect acts against social justice and drives further elite resource capture.

A longer version of this article appeared on New Security Beat. For more information on the topic, read “Mainstreaming Urban Climate Resilience Into Policy and Planning: Reflections From Asia,” published in Urban Climate in March 2014.

Topics: Capacity Building

Investing in Collaboration to Manage Environmental Resource Conflict
by Paola Adriázola and Stephan Wolters, adelphi

Conflict over environmental resources endangers rural people's livelihoods and can increase the risk of broader social conflict. Yet joint action to sustain shared resources can also be a powerful means for community building. The Strengthening Aquatic Resource Governance (STARGO) project demonstrated this in three ecoregions: Lake Victoria, with a focus on Uganda; Lake Kariba, with a focus on Zambia; and Tonle Sap Lake in Cambodia. The results of the project were released at an event in Berlin in early July 2014.

Bringing together government, community and civil society actors, the project helped step up efforts to increase community voices in private sector investment decisions and secure access rights for marginalized households in
the face of competition. In addition, community-based co-management, resource protection and public health were strengthened. Lessons learnt and recommendations derived from this work include:

1. **Local priorities**: Participants should define the priorities and development actions that they want to implement. When defined by locals, measures are more likely to have outcomes that bring direct benefits to the communities. Addressing local disputes often requires support from higher levels of administration, so building capacity within government agencies to convene and facilitate dialogue is critical.

2. **Participation in policy change**: National policy initiatives that are implemented from the top down can leave communities marginalized from decision-making, contributing to local tensions and conflict. Reforms can however facilitate local innovation if national agencies can engage effectively with local communities, adapt, and respond to their priorities.

3. **Institutional and governance context**: Engaging multiple stakeholders in this type of joint assessment is important to identify risks and appropriate areas for support.

4. **Women’s choices and decision-making roles**: Supporting individual change agents who are prepared to advocate for women’s voices and concerns regarding natural resource management can help shift institutional priorities and open new pathways to institutional change.

5. **Civil society organizations**: Civil society organizations are often uniquely well-positioned to initiate a dialogue process if they have legitimacy with communities and experience in working with government actors at different levels. Identifying groups who play such a bridging role and helping to strengthen their capacities in conflict management can complement investments in more formal institutional mechanisms for conflict resolution.

6. **Collaborative dialogue**: Supporting the local innovations that emerge from dialogue means re-orientating many of the conventional practices of project management. Participatory monitoring and evaluation efforts can yield lessons about the dynamics of conflict and collaboration over time, providing opportunities to adjust programme investments and scale up the most promising innovations.

“Bringing together government, community and civil society actors, the project helped step up efforts to increase community voices in private sector investment decisions and secure access rights for marginalized households.”

Investing in capacities for conflict management can thus help build resilient rural livelihoods and strengthen institutions for equitable environmental governance. Government and development agencies should invest in such capacity and integrate collaborative dialogue about environmental resources into programme and policy implementation.

The STARGO-Project is part of the initiative “Collaborating for Resilience”. For more information, please see visit the initiative’s website.
Publications and Resources

Climate Change and Conflict in the Sahel: a Policy Brief on Findings from Niger and Burkina Faso

This policy brief produced by the Foundation for Environmental Security and Sustainability (FESS) for USAID analyses the potential linkages of conflict and climate change in Niger and Burkina Faso. The brief presents specific vulnerabilities that result from the complex setting of institutional, social and environmental factors in both countries. Recommendations for conflict-sensitive action round off the paper, which is available for download.

Human Progress Within Planetary Boundaries: a Contribution to the SDG Debate

The German expert group WBGU (German Advisory Council on Global Change) issued a policy paper contributing to the debate on the goals for sustainable development post-2015. It states that development within planetary boundaries is the only way to help the most vulnerable populations and not an impediment to progress. Despite resistance by OECD countries and recently industrialised economies, a revision of the lifestyles of the better-off classes and international cooperation are crucial for overcoming the world’s challenges, according to the authors.

Upcoming Events

Yale University, New Haven, USA (5-7 September 2014)
Human Rights, Environmental Sustainability, Post-2015 Development, and the Future Climate Regime

The focus of the 3rd UNITAR-Yale Conference on Environmental Governance and Democracy is human rights in environmental contexts. In particular, participating researchers and practitioners are expected to make a joint contribution to several ongoing international processes including the post-2015 development debate. The Information Note contains all relevant details.

Rotterdam, Netherlands (24-26 September 2014)
Deltas in Times of Climate Change II

This international conference draws attention to the multifaceted challenges posed by changing climate to human settlements located in river deltas. Participants get a chance to attend round table discussions with decision-makers and experts from delta cities as well as a wide variety of working sessions covering policy issues and scientific research. Please also consult the programme for side events and activities.

Washington, D.C., USA (30 September 2014)
What’s Next? Fostering the Next Generation of Energy Security Conference

This one-day event organised by the American Security Project (ASP) looks into the prospects of energy provision that help face climate change without slowing down the economy. The four panels deal with the role of the USA on (liquid) natural gas markets, the search for oil alternatives in transport, incentivising innovation and the potential of fusion energy. To register, please visit the ASP website.

Newsletter Edition 2/2014
A Film About the Marikana Massacre: *Miners Shot Down*

*Miners Shot Down* is a film by the South African director Rehad Desai that attempts to reconstruct the events at the Marikana platinum mine on 16 August 2012. Almost two years ago, a miners' protest against their working conditions was suppressed by the police who shot more than 30 people. This triggered further protests in the country and an international uproar. The filmmaker offers his own answers to the question of how such an outbreak of state violence can be possible in a democracy.

The New EU Energy Security Strategy

The European Commission recently presented a new energy security strategy for the EU along with a comprehensive study on the issue. Proposed measures aim to reduce energy dependency e.g. by diversifying supply, developing the internal energy market, improving energy efficiency as well as supporting indigenous renewable resources. The strategy has been criticised for the emphasis on traditional solutions like investing in natural gas infrastructure and for its lack of vision. At the Brussels summit in June 2014, the G7 states also reiterated their commitment to a low-carbon economy, climate action and reducing energy vulnerabilities.

CNA Military Advisory Board: National Security and the Accelerating Risks of Climate Change

The CNA Military Advisory Board (MAB) recently issued a new publication on climate change that updates insights on the topic shared in the 2007 report *National Security and the Threat of Climate Change*. The MAB stresses that some of the predicted trends have been shown to have developed even more dynamically than anticipated and repeatedly urges the international community to take appropriate action. After analysing international and domestic threats, the authors state that climate change has the potential to become a "catalyst for conflict", not just a "threat multiplier".

Oxfam Study: Food Security and Climate Change

Oxfam assessed ten major factors that promote food security around the world. The organisation concludes that due to poor performance in all these areas the preparedness of food systems for impacts of climate change is low. To explore Oxfam’s work on the link between climate change and hunger, which is part of its GROW campaign, please visit the website.

Environmental Justice Atlas

The recently launched *Environmental Justice Atlas* has been created by the Environmental Justice Organisations, Liabilities and Trade (EJOLT) initiative, which receives support from the European Commission under the EU's Seventh Framework Programme for Research (FP7).

The map illustrates conflict around commodities in order to draw end-consumers' attention to the environmental and social impact of production chains. The information on conflict cases and community resistance is gathered from users. It can be easily filtered by commodity, company, country or type of conflict. Over a thousand cases have been reported to date.
The newsletter „Environment, Conflict, and Cooperation“ is published several times a year. To subscribe or unsubscribe, please click here.

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adelphi research recommends visiting the websites linked to this newsletter. Following a judgment by the Hamburg Regional Court (Landgericht), we must, however, dissociate ourselves from the design and content of all linked pages in order to prevent any compensation claims.

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