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Peer reviewed

Review: Beyond Resource Wars: Scarcity, Environmental Degradation, and International Cooperation

Shlomi Dinar (Ed.)

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Dinar, Shlomi (Ed.). *Beyond Resource Wars: Scarcity, Environmental Degradation, and International Cooperation*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2011. 335pp. ISBN 9780262515580. US \$25.00/£17.95, paperback. Alkaline paper.

This book can be recommended to readers wanting to go beyond the alarmist view of resource scarcity and environmental degradation as a catalyst of interstate conflicts. It admits that they may well constitute sources of conflict, political dispute, and mismanagement between states. For example, in chapter 10, Shields and Šolar list as much as five alternative forms of scarcity (physical, situational, locational, political and social) that can lead to conflicts. The main message is that scarcity may also be the impetus for cooperation, coordination, and negotiation between states.

The book itself is a product of a workshop held at the end of 2006. This makes some of the articles somewhat outdated, while others have stood the time better, or have been updated enough to take into account the changing world. For example, after the failure in Copenhagen in 2009, and the meager outcomes of the following two major climate conferences, an article presenting merely excuses why the United States rejected the Kyoto Protocol does not provide much new insight. Personally, I do not buy Robert Mendelsohn's argument that the reduction targets would have been much harder to meet for the U.S. than for Europe as the U.S. emissions grew 25 percent from 1990 to 2010, and European emissions by only 7 percent. That is undoubtedly true, but it is as well true that the energy-related CO₂ emissions per capita in the U.S. are more or less double that of the European Union, that are again double that of China or the world in general. Thus, there are enormous possibilities for efficiency gains available for the U.S. Indeed Charles Weiss and William B. Bonvillian argued in their book *Structuring an Energy Technology Revolution*, which I had the privilege to review in EGJ 1(29), that the U.S. has more to win than lose with the revolutionary energy/climate policy needed. The U.S. has in the past also been in the forefront in environmental issues, as Elizabeth R. DeSombre's chapter on ozone depletion shows (chapter 3). In the case of acid rain, it was again Sweden pushing forward, as Miranda A. Schreurs shows (chapter 5).

My interest for this book was initially raised by its evoking title *Beyond Resource Wars*. It takes though almost half of the book, and Gabriela Kütting's chapter on conflict and cooperation in the Mediterranean Sea, before the book actually starts to go beyond resource wars. The waves get higher as J. Samuel Barkin takes us out to the high seas arguing that: "...cooperation that is not preceded by escalation and conflict can be less useful in addressing degradation than cooperation that results from conflict" (p. 160). Although his examples come from international fisheries, it might also give some insight to climate negotiations – are we putting too much emphasis on reaching consensus? The most intriguing headline is provided in chapter 9 by Christopher J. Fettweis: "Is Oil Worth Fighting For?" I would like to believe in his answer that "It seems as if the states of the industrialized world have reached the conclusion that oil is not worth fighting one another for. Perhaps, for the first time in history, nothing is" (p. 228).

After these hope-inspiring lines, I want to end this review with some further hopeful thoughts. Could the global climate change and the need to limit our emissions of greenhouse gases be the impetus for cooperation, coordination, and negotiation between states we so urgently need?

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