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Don't set aside "little c" conflicts

By Geoff Dabelko, Director, Environmental Change and Security Program, Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars

The vista of Ethiopia's ancient Rift Valley, speckled with shimmering lakes, stretches before me as our motorized caravan heads south from Lake Langano, part of a [study tour](#) on population-health-environment issues organized by the Packard Foundation. Sadly, the country's unrelenting poverty and insecurity are as breathtaking as the view—Ethiopia currently ranks 170 out of 177 countries on the UN Development Programme's Human Development Index. These numbers become quite personal when child after child sprints alongside the truck, looking for any morsel. Here, I don't need to read between the lines of endless reports to see the country's severe population, health, and environment challenges—they are visible in the protruding ribcages of the cattle and the barren eroding terraces in the nation's rural highlands. When analyzing environment, conflict, and cooperation, scholars and practitioners most often focus on organized violence where people die at the business end of a gun. We commonly set aside "little c" conflict where the violence is not organized. However, while the Ethiopian troops fighting the Islamic Courts in Somalia garner the most attention, we should not miss the quieter—yet often more lethal—conflicts.

For example, Ethiopia, like much of the Horn of Africa, continues to be beset by pastoralist/farmer conflicts over its shrinking resource base— increasingly exacerbated by population growth, environmental degradation, and likely climate change. In today's globalized world, these local conflicts may also have larger "neighborhood" effects, contributing to wars and humanitarian disasters, as in [Sudan's Darfur region](#). Another classic example of local environmental conflict lies in [Ethiopia's national parks](#), which successive governments carved from inhabited land in the mid-1960s and 1970s.

Those disadvantaged by the parks often took their revenge on the state by burning buildings, cutting trees, and hunting wildlife. Some resettled the parks, bringing cattle and cultivating sorghum. This conflict presents a terrible dilemma, but also an opportunity: If the government and its partners can offer residents secure livelihoods tied to sound environmental practices—such as jobs as park rangers or in ecotourism—"parks versus people" might be transformed into "[peace parks](#)".

Practitioners, policymakers, and scholars alike must not forget the carnage of these "little c" conflicts. Against this backdrop, the 12th issue of the [Environmental Change and Security Program Report](#) includes [commentaries from eight African leaders and scholars](#) write about their continent's struggle with resource conflict—and the possibilities for peace that population and environment initiatives may hold. According to 2004 Nobel Laureate [Wangari Maathai](#), poor governance and mismanagement of resources spur the violence that plagues many countries in Africa: "Below the thin layer of racial and ethnic chauvinism, religion, and politics, the real reason for many conflicts is the struggle for the access to and control of the limited resources on our planet." But she also sees hope: "When we manage our resources sustainably and practice good governance we deliberately and consciously promote cultures of peace."

[Geoff Dabelko](#) is director of the Environmental Change and Security Program (ECSP) at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars in Washington, D.C. "Don't set

aside 'little c' conflicts" was first published as the foreword of the recently released [ECSP Report 12, 2006-2007](#).

Along with the [Report from Africa](#), the ECSP Report [includes reviews of recent publications](#) on population, environment, and security; as well as [dotPop](#), which this year gathers recent reports and data sources on the world's water crisis. Formerly a monthly feature in ECSP's e-newsletter [ECSP News](#), dotPop is now part of ECSP's new blog, [The New Security Beat](#), where readers will find information and commentary on the latest news and reports on environmental security and population issues.

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POLICY & RESEARCH

WBGU: Climate Change as Security Risk

Parallel to the beginning of the G8 summit in Heiligendamm, the German Advisory Council on Global Change (WBGU) submitted its report "Climate Change as Security Risk" to the federal government. The key finding of the report is the fact that the impacts of unmitigated climate change will overburden the capacities of many states. As a consequence, the number of weak and fragile states will increase. Furthermore, environment-induced migration will rise and conflicts over scarce resources will become aggravated. Additionally, we can expect severe negative impacts on the global economy. According to the WBGU, the next 10 to 15 years will be decisive to prevent these effects from becoming reality. If the international community fails to act within this period, the outlined negative impacts of climate change will start to materialize in approximately 15 to 30 years. Representatives of the federal government, including the ministries of development, environment, education and research, and foreign affairs therefore emphasized the urgent need for action: Protecting the climate is no longer mere environmental policy, but has become a concern for all policy areas. The upcoming months will be critical to pave the way for starting comprehensive negotiations on a post-Kyoto agreement. Thus, during the public presentation of the study at the 17th Forum Global Issues, Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier expressed the following objective: "We intend to make climate policy a driving force behind international cooperation and stability."

In addition to the main report, the WBGU commissioned nine external studies on related topics, among them a world map of environmental conflicts from 1980 to 2005. Their results as well as the English summary of the main report are available on the homepage of the WBGU. (by *Achim Maas*)

For more information, see http://www.wbgu.de/wbgu_jg2007_presse_engl.html

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Water Levels in Central Asia

Fifteen years ago the five riparian countries of the Aral Sea basin signed a cooperation agreement and established the Interstate Commission for Water Coordination of Central Asia (ICWC). To commemorate this anniversary, the Central Asian International Scientific-Practical Conference was held in Almaty from 25-27 April 2007, following the 47th regular meeting of the ICWC. While the ICWC meeting focussed on administrative aspects, such as the ICWC statutes and water withdrawal limits for 2007, the conference

saw presentations and discussions of numerous projects that are being financed by the international donor community in the Aral Sea basin.

The press release issued by ICWC on the occasion of its anniversary painted an entirely positive picture of water cooperation in the Aral Sea basin. Other assessments of the results have been more muted. Kazakh water expert Malik Burlibayev, for instance, stated in an interview with the UN Information service IRIN that few problems have been resolved in the last 15 years. The reason is a lack of common interest among the riparian states. While the upstream countries insist on their right to draw water for energy generation, the lower riparians are demanding more utilization rights for the common resource. Turkmen Deputy Water Industry Minister Begench Mommadov considers inefficient information sharing to be a further hindrance to coordination. This problem at least could be remedied through the Swiss Development Cooperation (SDC) -funded Central Asia Regional Water Information base. The information system was presented at the Almaty conference and recommendations were made by the participants for expanding the system in its second phase. The establishment of a research institute for water and energy to assist in the peaceful resolution of water conflicts in Central Asia was proposed by Kyrgyz foreign minister Ednan Karabaev at a meeting with EU representatives in early April. (by *Annika Kramer*)

More information on ICWC and the conference is available at <http://www.icwc-aral.uz/index.htm> and at IRIN News <http://www.irinnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportId=71799>

For further information on the Central Asia Regional Water Information Base, please see http://www.cawater-info.net/index_e.htm

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The European Commission and Environmental Security

The European Commission (EC) increasingly addresses environmental security. In Fall 2006, the Directorate-General for External Relations commissioned a study on the capacities of the EC to prevent and mitigate environment-related conflicts. The study was carried out by Adelphi Consult as subcontractor of ECORYS and approved by the EC in spring 2007.

The study analyses the Commission's work in different thematic policy areas related to environment and security links (development, external trade, crisis prevention, research, energy, climate, etc.). Existing Commission approaches to the topic range from projects concerned with water shortage, over combating the trade in conflict resources to adaptation measures as response to climate change. However, these activities are mostly conducted in isolation and lack an overarching strategy framework (e.g. European Security Strategy and the EC Communication on Conflict Prevention). Currently they are neither thematically nor operationally linked. Although significant sectoral knowledge exists within the EC, human resources and integrative approaches to capture the cross-sector nature of environmental security remain limited.

Increase in financial and human resources, development of an integrated strategy and the creation of adequate mechanisms for communication and coordination are the key recommendations of the study.

Comprehensive internal EC consultations had already begun during the course of the study. Two institutional innovations allowing for a purposive and integrated dialogue resulted from this process: an intra-administrative working group on conflict and

resources and a facility for financing future activities in the area of conflict resources. In addition, dialogue with civil society on these issues will be intensified within the framework of the Peacebuilding Partnership and the Conflict Prevention Network. (by *Achim Maas*)

Further information on the study is available directly at the Directorate-General for External Relations of the EC (Alessandro.Villa@ec.europa.eu).

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Biofuels: Fuelling Hunger and Climate Change?

In response to the rising demand for biofuels in the upcoming years, the UN-wide initiative UN-Energy developed a policy framework for a sustainable biofuel industry. This is necessary not least because of the negative consequences an uncontrolled use of biofuels may have. One of the key remaining problems is the fact that rising demands in biofuels also increases the price for food, as both use the same resources as raw product. This impacts in particular on impoverished populations in developing countries who already have to spend the majority of their income on food. The early 2007 riots in Mexico following a steady increase of maize prices over the preceding months indicated the conflict potential of using maize as raw material for biofuels.

Furthermore, biofuels are not necessarily more climate friendly than conventional fuels. In Indonesia, for instance, vast areas of forests are converted into oil palm plantations by slash and burn agriculture. This deforestation increases CO₂ emissions, diminishes biodiversity and also reduces significantly the forests potential as a carbon sink. The UN-Energy study addresses those and other problems and outlines a number of alternative approaches, which are backed up by different case studies. The conception of a political framework, however, is still in its infancy: the recommendations are currently still kept abstract and need to be specified in order to assure the sustainable use of biofuels on a local, national and international level. (by *Achim Maas*)

For more information on UN-Energy, see: <http://esa.un.org/un-energy/>

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CONFERENCE REPORTS

Climate Changes Security in Southern Africa

Is there value added in putting climate change on the security agenda? And is it at all correct to place climate change there? These were some of the questions addressed in a workshop organized by Germanwatch and Adelphi Research as part of the McPlanet.com 2007 congress. Three input papers drawing on examples from southern Africa illustrated the impact of climate change on human security. In her presentation, Lwandle Mqadi from South Africa highlighted that sectors especially vulnerable to climate change in southern Africa, such as water, energy, agriculture and health, are already affected due to non-existent or deficient infrastructure and the lack of financial, human and natural resources. Climate change has aggravated the situation through increasingly frequent droughts followed more and more by heavy floods. Mqadi emphasized that these impacts in southern Africa need to be viewed against the backdrop of social and political tensions and, above all, the existing poverty. Annika Kramer's (Adelphi Research) presentation

focused on the consequences this can have on water and human security. Lack of access to water can have massive negative fall-outs for human health and food supply. When societal or international tensions are added to this mix, there is potential for violent conflict, which in turn negatively impacts regional stability. Thus, Christopher Bals (Germanwatch) concluded, climate change is very much part of the security debate. However, it must be understood to include the broad concept of human security needs. Adaptation strategies will play a crucial role, although in many cases such strategies will not even need to be developed from scratch. Water management and poverty eradication are already some of the key action areas of development cooperation. Climate protection can consequently also play a role in conflict prevention. *(by Annika Kramer)*

For more information on the conference, please see www.mcplanet.com

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Resource Management for Sustainable Development

Successful and sustainable natural resource management requires responsible governance and transparent payment flows – possible only through close cooperation between the private sector, civil society and governments.

This kind of cooperation can come about in different ways, as experts from academia and government pointed out during a workshop on "Resource management for sustainable development" organized by the Development and Peace Foundation (SEF) and the Federal College for Security Studies (BAKS) in Berlin on 10 and 11 May.

While initiatives such as Publish What You Pay and EITI, which are working for greater transparency, have been active for quite some time, other ideas for a more equitable distribution of profits from the mining sector are now being conceptualized. Mongolia, for instance, recently introduced a "windfall tax". This involves charging an additional tax on all income from gold and copper mining above a minimum price. The tax revenues are channelled into a development fund, two thirds of which are earmarked for financing social programmes and investments while the remainder is saved for future uses. Such an arrangement is advantageous when mineral resource prices are high, but at the same time encourages dependence on international price fluctuations. It is also likely to increase resource smuggling. The implementation of this regulation should therefore be preceded by an adequate lead time to ensure the buy-in of mining investors and companies and to prevent any drastic impacts on the sector.

There was also a heated debate on the issue of compensation payments to resource rich countries if they refrained from exploiting their natural resources to avert environmental and social repercussions. Ecuador, for instance, put forward a proposal to forgo development of its oil reserves in the Amazon basin if the international donor community were prepared to provide adequate compensation for the lost revenues. Different methods of sustainable natural resource management therefore frequently have advantages and disadvantages, and these need to be carefully balanced. The establishment of the required international normative framework for enhancing transparency in this sector is still in its infancy. Within the concerned countries, capacity building is also required to strengthen their position during the negotiation and award of licences. *(by Christiane Roettger)*

Further information on the workshop is available at <http://www.sef-bonn.org/de/veranstaltungen/index.php>

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New Direction for the World's Protected Areas: Refining Categorization to Improve Nature Conservation

May 7 marked the first day of the IUCN Protected Areas Categories Summit, in Almería, Spain. Over 100 experts from about 40 countries have gathered to explore the best way to enhance the internationally-recognized IUCN Categories System for Protected Areas. Over the past decade, the system has proven to be a useful and unique tool in the conservation of the Earth's natural crown jewels. This meeting sets out to clarify the six protected area categories, whilst improving their application on the ground.

"The IUCN Categories System, which fills a void unfilled by others, has been endorsed by international conventions like the CBD and regional agreements," stated Julia Marton-Lefèvre, Director General of the World Conservation Union (IUCN). "It is increasingly used by numerous countries around the world, including in application in legislation and policy instruments. The protected areas system of the host of the Category Summit, Andalusia (RENPA) is probably one of the best examples on how to apply this tool in very innovative ways," she added.

Protected areas are essential for the conservation of biological and cultural diversity, as well as for the provision of ecosystems services, such as clean water. The current Protected Area Management Categories System dates back to 1994, and is applied and used as a guiding tool for protected area planning in numerous countries around the world. It provides the only mechanism for effective comparisons of protected areas at national, regional and international scales.

In light of its increasing use and the unprecedented conservation challenges posed by a rapidly changing world, the Categories System requires careful revision in order to ensure its adaptation to new realities. The Summit is one step in a wider consultation process leading to specific recommendations to be presented at the upcoming IUCN World Conservation Congress in Barcelona 2008.

"We are not looking at the validity of the Categories as these are used as a reference guide internationally," said Nik Lopoukhine, Chair of the IUCN World Commission on Protected Areas (WCPA). "We are looking at how to provide guidance on their application, in order to best support governments, decision-makers and protected area managers in their conservation efforts," he added. *(by Sarah Gindre, IUCN Programme Protected Areas)*

More information on the IUCN Protected Area Categories is available at <http://www.iucn.org/themes/wcpa/theme/categories/categories.htm>

Or contact Sarah Gindre, IUCN Programme Protected Areas: sarah.gindre@iucn.org

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UPCOMING EVENTS

"Revenue Transparency and Natural Resource Extraction" in Geneva (6 July 2007)

The Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI) in collaboration with UNCTAD will host a half-day seminar on Revenue Transparency and Natural Resource Extraction - progress and challenges of the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative. Good

governance is a precondition for converting large revenues from extractive industries into economic growth and poverty reduction. The EITI was launched in 2002 to support improved governance in resource-rich countries through the verification and full publication of company payments and government revenues from oil, gas, and mining. The event offers an opportunity to review progress of the EITI to date, discuss challenges ahead and explore efforts that can help ensure that local populations benefit more from all their mineral assets.

For more information, please see <http://www.eitransparency.org/>

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"Illegal Logging Update and Stakeholder Consultation Number 10" in London (9-10 July 2007)

The tenth in a series of meetings coordinated by Chatham House and funded by DFID, the next illegal logging update meeting will be held on the 9th and 10th of July 2007. These meetings are free and open to all, but registration is essential.

For more information and to register, please contact Parthena Karypidou at pkarypidou@chathamhouse.org.uk

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"Community forest management and enterprises: global issues and opportunities" in Rio Branco, Acre, Brazil (16-20 July 2007)

Organized by the International Tropical Timber Organization and Rights and Resources Group, this conference will bring together about 250 leaders of forest communities, public forest agencies, forest industry and conservation groups to share experiences in community forest management and enterprises from around the world. It will explore case studies from over a dozen community forests and debate the best ways of assisting the sustainable development of community-based operations.

For more information, please see

<http://www.itto.or.jp/live/PageDisplayHandler?pageId=223&id=3191>

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"World Water Week 2007" in Stockholm (12-18 August 2007)

The World Water Week in Stockholm is the leading annual global meeting place for capacity-building, partnership-building and follow-up on the implementation of international processes and programmes in water and development. More information about the plenary sessions, seminars, workshops, side events and special activities that will take place during the next World Water Week in Stockholm can be found at <http://www.worldwaterweek.org/>.

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FOCUS

This section serves as a platform for Institutions and Initiatives to present their activities on Environment, Conflict, and Cooperation.

The Forum Civil Peace Service

The Forum Civil Peace Service (forumZFD) is a non-governmental organisation, which is an amalgamation of roughly 40 organisations and 280 individuals that have come together as advocates of the Civil Peace Service concept, and work towards resolving conflicts without the use of violence.

The aim of and conviction behind the work of forumZFD is establishing the Civil Peace Service as a constructive, lasting and dignified method of conflict resolution, so that it can be increasingly used both in international security and peace policies, and in handling escalating conflicts within Germany. forumZFD is currently running 11 projects in the Middle East and in the Western Balkans.

The Academy for Conflict Transformation in the Forum Civil Peace Service (forumZFD) imparts knowledge and skills for sustainable peace work at home and abroad in courses, workshops and seminars. It offers facilities to learn about and discuss current issues of peace development, civil conflict transformation and the Civil Peace Service.

forumZFD therefore sees its work as a part of worldwide efforts to develop a workable alternative to military conflict resolution. It initiated the establishment of the European Network for Civil Peace Service (EN.CPS), and is a member of the global Nonviolent Peaceforce. On a German level, forumZFD is a member of the Civil Peace Service Group (Konsortium ZFD), the amalgamation of all supporters of Civil Peace Service in Germany.

For more information, please see www.forumZFD.de/about_academy.html

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Publisher:

Alexander Carius
Adelphi Research gGmbH

Caspar-Theyss-Strasse 14a
D - 14193 Berlin

Phone +49-30-89 000 68 0
Fax +49-30-89 000 68 10
www.adelphi-research.de

Editorial team:

Contact: editor@ecc-platform.org

Moira Feil, Annika Kramer, Christiane Roettger, Achim Maas, Alexander Carius
Translation support by Anya Malhotra

This newsletter is part-financed by the German Federal Environmental Agency and the Federal Ministry for Environment, Nature Protection and Nuclear Safety.

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