

1-1-2001

Sharif S. Elmusa, Water Conflict: Economics, Politics, Law and Palestinian-Israeli Water Resources

Makayla A. Shannon

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.du.edu/wlr>



Part of the [Law Commons](#)

Custom Citation

Makayla A. Shannon, Book Note, Sharif S. Elmusa, Water Conflict: Economics, Politics, Law and Palestinian-Israeli Water Resources, 4 U. Denv. Water L. Rev. 449 (2001).

This Book Notes is brought to you for free and open access by the University of Denver Sturm College of Law at Digital Commons @ DU. It has been accepted for inclusion in Water Law Review by an authorized editor of Digital Commons @ DU. For more information, please contact jennifer.cox@du.edu, dig-commons@du.edu.

Sharif S. Elmusa, *Water Conflict: Economics, Politics, Law and Palestinian-Israeli Water Resources*

concerns. Easterbrook makes a convincing argument that the doomsday predictions and pessimism of the past may be the Achilles' heel of the environmental movement. In addition, Easterbrook provides thoughtful suggestions on how man and nature can interact and progress into the twenty-first century.

Patrick Nackley

SHARIF S. ELMUSA, WATER CONFLICT: ECONOMICS, POLITICS, LAW AND PALESTINIAN-ISRAELI WATER RESOURCES, Institute for Palestine Studies, Washington, D.C. (1997); 362pp; \$29.95; ISBN 0-88728-268-7, hardcover.

Disputes over scarce water resources rage in the arid Middle East. However, there are no systematic assessments of these conflicts that address water quality and quantity, the ability to develop available resources, water related economic policies, and future need. *Water Conflict* attempts to provide this type of assessment for the Palestinian-Israeli water dispute. In this book, Sharif Elmusa, a Palestinian, analyzes the political economy of the water conflict between Israelis and Palestinians, and suggests how it may be resolved on the basis of equity and mutuality. *Water Conflict* also provides a comprehensive source of information on the water sector of the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

Chapter One discusses in detail the available water resources of geographic Palestine-Israel, the West Bank, and the Gaza Strip, and examines the topographic, climatic, and hydrologic factors that determine them. The resources are divided into two categories: groundwater aquifers and surface water. The author examines all the components of the resource categories, including individual streams, wadis, and aquifers.

Chapter Two examines the control, supply, and distribution of municipal water resources. The book focuses on the sub-standard conditions Palestinians face (such as an insufficient, polluted water supply and the unavailability of piped water to nearly one-fifth of the population) as a result of severe restrictions imposed by Israelis. Also, the author discusses developments in the water infrastructure since the signing of the Declaration of Principles in 1993, and efforts at improvement by international "donors."

Chapter Three consists of three parts: the economics of water use in households and agriculture, "extended" water use balance, and demand projections. The author's primary argument is that the low-income level of Palestinians cannot explain their low level of water use. Thus, a latent, unsatisfied water demand in both the municipal and agricultural sectors exists. Data presented in the economic section supports this contention. In the second part of Chapter Three, the author proposes that the standard water balance, which includes only

the irrigated sector, be extended to include the rain fed sector, as well as the water used for trading foodstuffs. Finally, Chapter Three contrasts water use projections from several analysts and discusses the inherent difficulties in making such projections.

Chapter Four provides the meat of the book and analyzes the issues raised by the first three chapters. Specifically, Chapter Four addresses six issues: (1) the land-water nexus; (2) the maldistribution of water rights and the water use gap between the two sides; (3) the Israeli settlers' encroachment on Palestinian water resources; (4) Israel's control of water institutions and legal mechanisms; (5) out-of-basin water transfers; and (6) future management of common water resources. In order to illustrate these issues, the author compares water conditions in Israel and Israeli settlements with those of the Palestinians. Additionally, Chapter Four addresses the Israelis' and Palestinians' changing perception and ideology of water, and how this change affects the general conflict.

Chapter Five addresses how the conflict described in Chapters One through Four might be resolved equitably and cooperatively. The author argues the international law doctrine of "equitable apportionment" provides the best guide for resolving the water conflict. This doctrine weighs factors such as prior use, social and economic needs, and capability to obtain alternative resources to ensure fairness. International law also advocates joint management of shared resources. By applying these principles of international law, the author argues that Palestinians are entitled to a greater share of the water resources and should play a larger role in their management.

Makayla A. Shannon

**BRENT M. HADDAD, RIVERS OF GOLD: DESIGNING MARKETS TO
ALLOCATE WATER IN CALIFORNIA;** Island Press, Washington, D.C.
(2000); 196pp; \$60.00; ISBN 1-55963-712-9, softcover.

Rivers of Gold presents a plan for water allocation in the state of California using market-based theories. Specifically, the book focuses on the effort to reallocate developed portions of water from agricultural use to urban and environmental uses in California. Also, it generally examines the other arid western states. The author provides a framework on how to better accommodate the needs of markets and communities by using detailed case studies of water market transactions and the institutional design issues associated with them.

In the *Introduction*, Haddad presents the problem of Owens Valley circa 1913. Officials from Los Angeles convinced Owens Valley farmers to unwittingly sell their land and water rights to the city. Subsequently, the once prosperous valley floundered. Haddad demonstrates what can happen to an agricultural community when it surrenders water rights to a "thirsty, growing city." Although