

Chellaney, Brahma. 2011. *Water: Asia's New Battleground*. Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press.

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Brahma Chellaney tackles a subject of growing global concern: competition over increasingly scarce freshwater resources. His approach is interdisciplinary and concerned with both intra- and interstate water-related conflict. What provides the study with focus is its geographical scope: the continent of Asia, and in particular those areas fed by rivers that rise in the Tibetan plateau. Many Asian states are experiencing growth that Chellaney believes will allow the region to reclaim the economic preeminence it enjoyed prior to the Industrial Revolution in the West. A potential spoiler in this Asian renaissance is water scarcity. Agriculture remains an important economic sector in many states, and irrigation, a notorious water hog, consumes the vast majority of Asian freshwater resources. While Asia has half the global average availability of per capita freshwater, it uses twice as much per capita as comparatively water-rich Latin America. If it continues this unsustainable water-use trajectory, the region will face severe shortages and tensions over water resources will rise.

While Chellaney's ultimate focus is how Asian states should deal with international conflict over shared freshwater resources, he considers domestic circumstances, particularly those related to territory and economic development, to be integral to the larger picture. He begins his analysis with an in-depth look at the Tibetan plateau, the source of watersheds that are the lifeblood of much of South and Southeast Asia. The focus of this analysis is the history of China's interest in Tibet's rich water resources, which China plans to develop in order to supply its increasingly parched northern areas. China's Great South-North Water Transfer Project, which in its third phase involves a series of interbasin transfers, could give China significant power over the supply of water flowing into downstream riparian areas. Adding to downstream riparian concern is the fact that China has thus far been unforthcoming about the specifics of these plans and how they may affect river flows, and has declined to enter into institutionalized cooperation over international rivers.

China's control of the headwaters of Asia's major rivers and its growing economic dominance in the region are a recurring refrain in this study. Of particular concern is the impact that upstream dams and diversions could have on India's water supplies. The major case study presented is of the Brahmaputra River, which flows from China into India before merging with the Ganges River and forming a delta shared between India and Bangladesh. While China claims its plans for development of the river will help reduce flood damage in its downstream riparian neighbors, Chellaney maintains that China's plans will be catastrophic to downstream fisheries and agriculture that depend on the annual replenishment of nutrients brought by flooding. The picture Chellaney paints is of an aggressive China bent on achieving great-power status at significant cost to

India, and a timid India that for too long has followed a Nehruvian-style foreign policy of appeasement. Largely missing from the analysis is recognition that for Bangladesh, India's upstream use of the Ganges and Brahmaputra is of more immediate concern than China's development plans.

Chellaney branches out from the China-India relationship in his final two chapters on intra- and interstate water conflict. Case studies on China, India, Pakistan, and South Korea illuminate the variety of domestic challenges these countries face in terms of managing freshwater supplies, and he examines a number of interstate disputes, ranging from the Middle East to Southeast Asia. It becomes apparent, though, that for Chellaney China is the key player in whether Asia faces a future of increasing tension and possible war over water, or cooperation and sustainable water development. He outlines three policy recommendations for averting conflict: the creation of Asian norms for sharing transnational basins, inclusive river basin organizations to moderate competition, and integrated planning at all levels to achieve water efficiency and sustainable use. In order to attain these goals, China must open itself to institutionalized cooperation.

While many of Chellaney's case studies are by necessity brief, the story he weaves throughout is one of a region experiencing the insecurities of rapid economic development and a shifting balance of power, and the key role water resources will play in the trajectory of these changes. His policy recommendations could have used further discussion. Empirical work has amply shown that states are far more likely to form cooperative institutions than go to war over shared water resources. The question for Asia is not whether such institutions should be formed, but *how* this process should happen, particularly considering China's hesitancy. This study is policy-oriented in a way that would serve as a good introduction for those wishing to learn more about Asia's water challenges from the perspective of someone from the region. It also serves as a reminder that freshwater is intimately tied to economic development and is considered a strategic, rather than environmental, resource by states. To understand how increasing water scarcity will impact interstate relationships, it is necessary to broaden our view beyond the physical fact of scarcity and consider how states use and manage water domestically, as well as water's links to other strategic issues such as territory and state security.