

**Suliman, M. (ed). Ecology, Politics and Violent Conflict. Zed Books, London. 1999.
ISBN 1 85649 602 3. Price: unknown.**

This book puts together a variety of perspectives by some of the most distinguished authors about the history, causes, and impacts of environmental conflicts on a global scale. It consists of 14 individual authored papers, each dealing with an example of violent environmental conflict in different geographical and contextual settings. It focuses strongly on developing countries, and establishes a balance between conceptual issues such as hypotheses and research agendas (the first five chapters), and practical case studies of day-to-day conflicts over freshwater, marine resources, agricultural land, mining resources and forests (chapters 6 – 11). While environmental conflicts often arise from scarcity due to degeneration and climatic change as well as the unfair distribution of environmental assets, the environment is also often a coincidental casualty of wars and power struggles. In countries where people are many and resources are scarce, many group conflicts that appear to be based on ethnic divisions have their roots in environmental scarcity. The book convincingly drives home the point that environmental degradation can lead to war, and that there is a strong link between environmental custodianship and peaceful coexistence, social justice and equitability. The final three chapters deal with conflict resolution and cooperation, at a conceptual global level and in specific geographic settings. Amongst the many lessons about resolution, one that stands out is that those most directly involved in conflicts should be the ones resolving or managing it. Role play, one that stands out is that those most directly involved in conflicts should be the ones resolving or managing it. Role players external to the conflict tend to favor their own interests rather than those of the conflicting parties.

Despite missing the opportunity of producing an all-encompassing synthesis, the book is well-written and represents a landmark in the environmental conflict literature. It is strongly recommended.

C. FABRICUS

Head: Environmental Science Programme, Rhodes University

P.P.Box 6140 Grahamstown, South Africa.

Web address: <http://www.Rhodes.ac.za/environmentalscience>