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Hydro-hegemony or water security community?

Collective action, cooperation and conflict in the SADC transboundary security complex

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Introduction

After the Berlin Wall came down, the fragile Cold War equilibrium frayed. Dire Malthusian warnings of green wars, especially over water, in areas with high population pressures dominated the 1990s transboundary water literature. After Wolf (1995) showed that violent water conflict is extremely rare and cooperation the norm, attention started to shift to water cooperation and how to achieve it.

In an anarchical global environment, the conflict potential of shared water resources has made rivers subject to high politics (i.e. security). While researchers and diplomats consider regional treaties as cooperation indicators (Wolf 1995), unequal treaties can also be sources of conflict (Warner and Zeitoun 2008). International regimes may institutionalize asymmetric power relations (Kistin 2011), and consequently constitute enmity instead of equity.