

CONFLICT OVER NATURAL RESOURCES IN SOUTH-EAST ASIA AND THE PACIFIC.
Edited by Lim Teck Ghee and Mark J. Valencia. New York: Oxford University Press. 1990. 256 pp. (Tables, maps.) US\$49.95, cloth. ISBN 0-10-588937-1.

RARELY has a compilation of essays come along which has been so immediately dated and yet which is such a compelling and understated foreshadowing. Policy analysts Ghee and Valencia took five studies from the 1985 United Nations-sponsored, Peace and Global Transformation Project and provide an introductory essay which maps the major sources of conflict in the Pacific Rim and the New World Order of the 1990s. In this volume, resources, and the inequities of who benefits and who pays for development, are the roots of competition which increasingly involves military responses. The first two studies are landbased and the subsequent three focus on marine tenure.

The introduction restates the axiom that such resource-based conflicts “are not accidents brought about by simple greed or survival instincts but rather are the logical conclusions of historical and economic developments” (p. 5). Amen. There is some enrichment of their model with the inclusion of indigenous systems of tenure which invariably involve more localized sources of competition. The essay proscribes the emergence of state systems that are predatory through direct institutional domination and through corruption, and coins the paradoxical term “environmental cannibalism” (p. 9). The editors touch on the need for “ecodevelopment”: Maurice Strong’s term from the 1970s which is so imbued with the optimism and naïvety of the times. The term is defined here as “equitable and sustainable development” (pp. 11-12) with the latter criterion having been hastily forgotten with the events of recent years.

In the subsequent essay, the germ in Tadem’s chronicle of land-based resource use is exploitation of the primary rain forests of the Philippines — of which little now remains. This spectre of squandered wealth, subsequent displacement of indigenous communities, and rural poverty is reiterated across numerous sectors and national borders. What follows is the most compelling essay in the volume: Kitazawa’s exploration of Japanese capital’s means of assuring supplies of raw materials. The contrasts with the boisterous American version of capitalist expansion are chilling. The connotation of the “cannibalism” shifts from feeding frenzy to something far more cool and persistent: “Japan’s much-vaunted ‘stable growth’ is maintained only through the export of stagnant industries to the Third World and a tightening grip on raw material resources abroad” (p. 93).

The second half of this exploration of conflict over natural resources is on marine areas and the not-so-parallel expansion of high technology and militarism. Unfortunately, the manifestations of conflict in such “trouble spots” as Timor are left painfully obscure in terms of the nagging horrors of the 1990s. Ghee’s discussion on fishermen in Malaysia comes closest to the human face of this almost enigmatic “resource conflict”: poor and marginalized communities paying the price for both resistance to the

intrusion of capital as well as acquiescence to the environmental costs of "development."

The final essay by James M. Anthony suggests that the evolution of human conflict in the region is like that of whales: moving from land to the open oceans. Any remaining optimism for the western islands of the South Pacific becoming enclaves of peace and cooperation is shattered. The "American Lake" of the postwar period is reduced to a patchwork of conflicting claims which increasingly turn nasty and have global implications. Incongruously, the volume's appendix is the 1982 *South Pacific Declaration of Natural Resources and the Environment* and its commitment to "special care" of sensitive habitats and "participation of directly affected people in the management of their resources" (pp. 246-247). The book shows us why such concerns have been relegated, in recent years, to polemics.

The most glaring omissions of *Conflict over Natural Resources* are regarding the implications of the wars in Indochina, so out-of-mind in the 1980s, and the rise of the other regional economic powers such as Taiwan and South Korea. Without these pieces of the puzzle, the volume is locked into the mid-1980s even though the vision that it implies is becoming more evident with each new environmental and political crisis.

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THE SPRATLY ISLANDS: A Study on the Limitations of International Law. By R. Haller-Trost. *Canterbury (U.K.): University of Canterbury (distributed in North America by The Cellar Book Shop, Detroit, Michigan). 1991. 95 pp. (Maps, tables.) US\$10.00, paper. No ISBN given.*

THE Spratly Islands comprise an archipelago of hundreds of virtually uninhabitable elevations — the largest being Itu Aba of 0.4 sq. km — in the South China Sea which is a semi-enclosed maritime area within the terms of the 1982 UNCLOS. Claims to their ownership have been lodged by Malaysia, Vietnam, the People's Republic of China, Taiwan, the Philippines and Brunei, on a variety of grounds, including continental shelf, occupation, history, conquest, maps — though often faulty in the extreme — cession, succession (e.g., France to Cochinchina to Vietnam), avulsion, national security, symbolic occupation or administration, and now the EEZ (Exclusive Economic Zone), especially since it is believed there are profitable oil and gas fields under the seabed.

Haller-Trost provides a detailed account of the claims put forward by each of the powers concerned together with a careful analysis of the facts, motives and "law" on which they are based, and concludes that none of them is truly effective if measured by the traditional grounds on which sovereignty rests in international law, although it is a little surprising that in examining these claims the writer has not considered the significance of the Minquiers-Ecrehos Islands dispute between France and the U.K., nor the implications of the *Palmas* decision concerning failure to protest a claim.