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In Africa, most major rivers, freshwater lakes, and aquifers are shared by two or more countries. The diversity of political, social, and economic structures and organizations among African countries and the varied temporal precipitation and distribution of water on the continent make the hydropolitical setting very complex and prone to vulnerability. African nations sharing water resources are increasingly vulnerable to conflict, and their vulnerabilities are made more acute by climatic variations in precipitation. This is compounded by a rising population and increasing urbanization, industrialization, and environmental degradation. Currently, less than two-thirds of Africa's population has access to improved water supply, with the coverage dropping to just 50% in the rural areas. Thus, the region has the lowest proportional coverage in the world.

The concept of "resilience" and "vulnerability" as it relates to water resources is tackled within the framework of "sustainability" and relates to the ability of the human and bio-physical systems to adapt to change. Lack of scientific assessment of vulnerabilities, weakness in governance structure, and inadequate required technical, human, and financial resources exacerbate the vulnerabilities along international waters. Yet Africa remains on the cutting edge of institutional design and regional cooperation, both of which help mitigate conflict and enhance sustainable water resources management.

Hydropolitical Vulnerability and Resilience along International Waters

AFRICA

For further information

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